



2017 Annual Report
Prepared by Byron Writers Festival staff



'Yours is the best writers' festival...the vibe is unlike anywhere else.'

PAUL BARCLAY, ABC RADIO NATIONAL 'BIG IDEAS'

*'An extraordinary convergence of wonderful people, great art and ideas,
and a gorgeous locale...'*

DAVID GEORGE HASKELL, AUTHOR (USA)

Byron Writers Festival 2017 Annual Report

During 2017 Byron Writers Festival (Byron WF) was chaired by Jennifer St George with Adam van Kempen as Deputy Chair. Edwina Johnson continued in her role as Director to lead an expanded team of Festival staff. An overview of notable achievements from the year include:

KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

Festival:

- The Festival made a surplus of \$157,158 and maintained steady sponsorship with new supporters.
- Festival Saturday sold out for the fourth consecutive year.
- Writer drinks at The Atlantic on the Saturday night were a very popular innovation.
- 365 children from flood-affected schools of the Northern Rivers attended the Festival for free as a result of donations from Festival-goers.
- The very successful inaugural Early Bird Festival Launch was held at Future Dreamers.
- New artisan stalls a successful innovation, brought in additional \$6000.
- Donated \$10000 from the John Clarke event to Natures Trust.

Annual Activities

Out of Season:

- For the first time in many years, Helen Garner and Richard Flanagan returned to Byron Bay for sell-out acclaimed Out of Season events.
- AC Grayling returned to Byron for two 2017 events and proclaimed his desire for a Byron Bay residency.
- Edwina Johnson visited India with the Australia Council and invited three Indian authors to attend the 2017 Festival.
- Most workshops broke even or made a small profit.
- Member Book Club launched.
- Raised \$9000 for Festival charity, the Indigenous Literacy Foundation (at Festival and Flanagan event).
- Byron WF arranged hundreds of donated books from publishers to assist in the rebuilding of flood damaged school libraries in the region.
- The 2017 membership drive was conceived at the Visioning day (Dec 2016). The concept of weekly prizes plus a chance to win the Golden Ticket created the Festival's most successful ever marketing drive. The dual purpose of the drive was to educate members that ALL memberships expire at the end of February, thus encouraging higher renewal rates.
- Emma Keenan secured a Fundraising Mentorship through Creative Partnerships commencing in 2017 and continuing throughout 2018.
- Edwina Johnson invited to participate in NSW Regional Arts 'Artstate', Lismore, on a panel about Festivals.
- ANZAC project off and running with Penny Leonard as project manager.
- Byron Writers Festival was a finalist in the 2017 NSW Tourism Awards – Byron WF's inaugural entry.
- Approval from Board to appoint a General Manager; process began in December with noted Sydney based arts recruiter Tony Grierson of Aegeus.
- New Byron WF Board appointment: Hilarie Dunn.

Storyboard:

- The StoryBoard bus was launched by Children's Laureate Leigh Hobbs at Byron Bay Public School in April 2017.
- StoryBoard worked with some 7500 individual students in the Northern Rivers well exceeding our 3500 target
- 121 visits to schools and libraries (exceeding target:116)
- Highly successful Southern Tour to Grafton, Bellingen, Kempsey and South West Rocks



MORE HIGHLIGHTS

Literary Liaisons:

In January 2017, Edwina was selected to travel to India as part of the 3rd Australia Council India Literary Exploratory with a group of publishers and fellow Festival Director Laura Kroetsch from Adelaide Writers Week. Edwina was a panellist in relevant festival-related sessions in Chennai, Jaipur and also at the publisher roundtable at the Australian High Commission in New Delhi. Wonderful connections were made and three Indian authors participated in Byron WF 2017 as a result of this trip. Edwina discussed funding possibilities with tour leader and Australia Council executive Wendy Were and subsequently the Australia Council made funding available for outcomes from the Exploratory. This grant funded much of the cost of bringing Kunal Basu, Vayu Naidu and Venkat Shyam to Byron Bay. They were all warmly received by audiences with many significant connections made including a resonating session broadcast on ABC RN with Sarah Kanowski.

Create NSW (formerly Arts NSW) multi-year funding continued in 2017. In late 2017 Byron WF was informed that current funding levels would continue for another year in 2019, ahead of Create NSW's foreshadowed revision of funding procedures.

As predicted, the near 2016 near cyclonic weather meant that many patrons chose to delay 2017 ticket purchases until last minute weather forecasts. This highlights the need for alternative income sources to ensure Byron WF is not so reliant on the outdoor annual Festival to fund year-round activities.

Despite changes to buying patterns in the lead up to the Festival performance figures remained steady, resulting in a positive financial position with a net surplus of \$164,092. Edwina Johnson liaised with publishers and arts organisations to generate \$29,738 towards author travel costs. Byron WF continues to be crippled by dramatically increasing travel and accommodation costs year on year, making these travel partnerships all the more imperative.

Storyboard:

In April, the Festival's StoryBoard van, home of our creative writing program for school children of the Northern Rivers was formally launched at Byron Bay Public School with Leigh Hobbs, the then Children's Laureate in attendance. StoryBoard achieved extraordinary outcomes in its first full year on the road. More detail provided in the StoryBoard Report on page 16.

The Byron Writers Festival Road Trip took place once again in 2017 under tour leader Zacharey Jane and visited Glenn Innes, Casino and Tenterfield. Writers featured included Sophie Green (Hamley), Jennifer Down and Miles Merrill.

Zacharey made this reflection on the road trip: *In 2017 we had an excellent contrast of work, between Sophie's classic, rural focussed narrative and Jennifer's grittier, modernist urban narrative. All three writers approached the regional audiences with the good humour and open-mindedness that is necessary to make the Road Trip a success.*

Staffing:

Festival 2017 staffing included several revised positions:

- Partnerships Manager (4 days a week from Feb - Sept; 3 days for remainder of year)
- Marketing & Communications Manager (retained 3 days a week from Feb – Sept and 2 days a week for remainder of year, with contract publicist for Festival period).
- Newly created position of Festival Administrator (9-day fortnight to coordinate ticketing, schools and the Residential Mentorship among other duties). Post Festival this role was reduced at the employee's request to 3 days a week for the remainder of the year.
- StoryBoard Coordinator resigned two weeks prior to the annual Festival. We employed our then Festival Volunteers Coordinator for this role commencing at the conclusion of the Festival. Plus one-day administrative support from the Festival Administrator.

BYRON WRITERS FESTIVAL: the annual August Festival

Byron WF continues to proudly showcase Australian writers. Since inception, the vision for the Festival has been to promote Australian literature and ideas and enhance the skills of writers, as well as fostering a culture of reading and writing among all age groups in the Northern Rivers region and beyond. The artistic vision of Byron WF is informed by a belief in

the importance and power of literature in shaping our lives as represented in our tag line: *Where Stories Take You*. The Festival attracts impressive national and international literary talent and provides a platform for local writers to engage with audiences and meet with publishers and agents. Guests in 2017 included Australians Hannah Kent, Kate Grenville, Jimmy Barnes and Bruce Pascoe, alongside international writers, including Christina Lamb and Dava Sobel.

Byron WF 2017 was a hit with authors and patrons alike, with thousands converging on the beautiful Festival grounds to listen, connect, reflect and soak up the glorious Byron sunshine. **98%** rated the festival atmosphere as excellent or good, and **94%** say they would come again next year.



The Festival launched with a spectacular 'Welcome to Country' ceremony by the Bunyarra Dancers. Festival favourites such as the pop-up bookshop, book signing tent, local food and coffee stalls, and the beautiful sculpture walk complemented new developments including over 1,200 extra seats and an onsite artisan marketplace. Festival Saturday sold out, and sessions attracted capacity crowds across the weekend, including excited young fans at Sunday's Kids Big Day Out.

As Australia's largest and leading regional celebration of literature and ideas, Byron WF 2017 presented more than 150 sessions, workshops, and special events during Festival Week in the renowned surrounds of Byron Bay. Byron WF once again showcased Australian writers as the core of its programming, with around 140 predominantly Australian writers and thinkers participating in the Festival, attracting more than 70,000 individual attendances across the week including approximately 3000 school students. The Festival continued to draw people from far and wide, while maintaining a strong local support base. This year, 52% of attendees came from the Northern Rivers area, and 48% came from elsewhere in Australia. One out of three 2017 attendees were newcomers.

In 2017 Byron WF continued to collaborate with Bendigo Writers Festival, *Griffith Review*, NORPA, Tweed Regional Gallery & Margaret Olley Arts Centre, Screenworks Northern

Rivers, Word Travels, Red Room Poetry, PEN, Byron School of Art and Lennox Arts Board amongst others. Together with the multitude of writers' festivals around the country, Byron Writers Festival can lay claim to contributing to a vibrant literary culture in Australia.



WHAT THEY SAID

In the words of some of the 2017 participating writers and guests:

- **Hannah Kent, author:** ...one of my favourite events in Australia, both as a writer and a reader.
- **Tex Perkins, author:** ...a world-class event that I'm now totally in love with.
- **Jock Serong, author:** ...A huge thank you for a truly great festival experience. I genuinely can't think of an improvement I'd suggest. Just wonderful.
- **Ailsa Piper, author:** You've done it again! ... All the sessions I attended as audience were rich and nuanced and instructive. Those I chaired were a real privilege... You have made something so generous and encompassing – holding tradition but also widening and broadening it. And deepening it...deepening our understanding of what it is to be human. Thank you for a truly wonderful Festival.
- **Tony Doherty, author:** Thanks for the Byron experience. Quite faultless in organisation. Those charged with the preparation, the hosts at the speaking points, the buzz of the Green Room, every volunteer we met, the lovely generous campus. One of my highlights was on that sunny Sunday morning arriving early before any patrons had crowded the area and being greeted by a sole piano filling the area with the magic of Gershwin. Beyond beautiful.
- **Ali Yeldham, Festival patron:** Congratulations on creating an extraordinary writers' festival this year. Your program was exceptional, with incredible diversity, interest and people. The atmosphere at the Festival was charged and vibrant, and so beautifully set up and organised. I loved my time there and really look forward to returning next year.
- **Jane Hutcheon, author:** Can I just say what a fantastic job you and your colleagues and all the volunteers did? An excellent program well executed! Easily the best fest I've been to and to see so many happy people on Sunday, was a true gift.

- **Jane Finemore, Text Publishing:** I am calling it guys. 2017 was a stunner. The sessions, the happy audiences, the site, the Green Room, the weather – all completely amazing. I really want you all to know that your enthusiasm and attention to every little detail does not go unnoticed by us or by the authors.
- **Julia Baird, author:** I had the best time at your Festival, it was so fun, you did an outstanding job. I even heard the whales singing to each other under the water when out on the reef – magic.
- **Emrys Westacott, author, USA:** I found the Festival incredibly stimulating. I was especially impressed by the range of issues discussed, the quality of the participants, and the size, enthusiasm, and level of engagement of everyone present. My only complaint is that Byron Bay isn't a bit closer to New York.



COMPARATIVE TICKET SALES

- Trybooking was the ticketing agent for 2017 after a decision not to continue with Eventbrite. Ticket sales commenced on 24 May, a 10-day shorter selling period than 2016.
- Early Bird tickets sold out in a **record 4 days**.

| Year | 2012 | 2013 | 2014 | 2015 | 2016 | 2017 |
|-----------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Type | Sold | Sold | Sold | Sold | Sold | Sold |
| 3-Day passes | 1274 | 1580 | 1939 | 2158 | 2280 | 2098 |
| Youth passes | 293 | 121 | 206 | 184 | 132 | 198 |
| Friday passes | 467 | 479 | 537 | 600 | 628 | 601 |
| Saturday passes | 503 | 360 | 867 | 879 | 729 | 912 |
| Sunday passes | 193 | 151 | 335 | 295 | 374 | 331 |
| Workshop | 184 | 189 | 189 | 205 | 206 | 200 |



FESTIVAL ACTIVITIES

- **AUSLAN** was available as an on-demand service in 2017.
- **PEN Empty Chair** was part of 2017 Byron Writers Festival. The Empty Chair model was used on multiple stages with chairpersons reading the statements of writers imprisoned for their writing. The Empty Chair acts as a powerful symbolic gesture and Byron WF will continue its ongoing support of PEN initiatives.
- **Indigenous Literacy Foundation (ILF)** For the fourth year running the ILF was the charity chosen for the 2017 Byron WF. ILF had a clear presence on-site and their volunteer staff were bold amongst the crowd. An ILF statement was read at selected sessions during the weekend to help encourage patrons to support the cause. ILF raised just over \$8,000 to help support remote Indigenous communities.
- **Kids Big Day Out** Sunday's Kids Big Day Out was a huge success and included a series of activities and workshops throughout the day to complement the main stage programming.
- **Susie Warrick Young Writers Award 2017** was presented to Tara Anne. SWYWA continues to be supported by ADFAS, Bangalow Lions and Brian Warrick and shows the Northern Rivers potential and creative flare.
- **Red Room Poetry collaboration** Byron WF worked with Red Room to commission New Shoots poetry from local Byron Shire poet Lisa Brockwell. The Poem was reproduced on 'seed cards,' which were placed on the pillows of guests at Elements Resort and handed out in a poetry session with Lisa Brockwell and David George Haskell.



PRIMARY SCHOOLS DAYS

- There was an increase in the actual number of students, up 163 from 2016.
- 43 schools or 3,000 students from Banora Point to Coraki, including Rainbow Region Home schoolers attended sessions in Murwillumbah, Byron Bay, Lismore and Ballina.
- 350 flood-affected students attended free of charge thanks to the generosity of Festival ticket purchasers

SECONDARY SCHOOL DAYS

- The attendance cost was increased from \$15 in 2016 to \$17 per student in 2017
- 17 Secondary Schools attended with a total of 552 students
- 15 flood-affected students were given free tickets

EXTENSION ENGLISH

- Extension English students could also attend the Friday program at a cost of \$20, an increase from \$15 in 2016
- 22 students attended on Friday

Feedback from both Primary and Secondary schools students, teachers, volunteers and MCs was both uplifting and humbling. A highlight was from **Dungay School** after finding out about the free flood tickets: *THANK YOU SOOOOOOOOOOOO MUCH! WOW, I can't believe how happy you have made us! We will be forever grateful.*

The kids loved it, and so many of them were inspired by Clementine Ford that they decided to do a 'feminist' or 'human rights' club... My aspiring writers found Hannah Kent particularly intriguing, and loved her advice about writing and publishing. An invaluable experience...

Kyogle High School

Thank you for the wonderful opportunity you gave to our students. They thoroughly enjoyed the day and felt very fortunate to be working with such inspirational authors and a professional organisation. I am sure that the experience will have long lasting benefits for many of them. **Shearwater School**

This is an event that is great for our kids, particularly the large percentage who would otherwise not be able to afford to hear authors speak about their craft and how they come up with their ideas **Ballina Public School**

PARTNERSHIP ACHIEVEMENTS

- Emma Keenan, Partnership Manager, increased her participation to four days per week Feb – Sept. Partnership relationships continue to strengthen as evidenced by post-festival feedback.
- Cash sponsorship total was \$124,494 + GST. This was down on 2016, but it was significantly up on 2014 and 2015 (\$97,696 & \$112,211 respectively).
- 2017 revenue highlights included:
 - \$6,450 private donations from 'Festival Patrons' (\$400 more than 2016)
 - \$4,727 donations with ticket purchases (for flood schools tickets). This is the highest figure reached since implementing ticket donations (donations last year were less than \$200; 2015 total \$2350).
 - \$6,000 market stall revenue
- New cash partners included Pukka Tea, TryBooking, SAE, Byron Farmers' Markets, Velvet Café, Chris Hanley & Dawn Standfield
- New in-kind partners included LAMY Australia, Audrey Wilkinson, Slow Magazine, Newrybar Merchants
- Other highlights include the early-bird launch event at Future Dreamers, a new system for sponsor seating in the marquees, inaugural writer drinks at The Atlantic on Festival Saturday, securing a fundraising mentorship with Creative Partnerships Australia.



BYRON WRITERS FESTIVAL YEAR-ROUND OPERATIONS

2017 CORE FUNDING

- \$126,500 (ex GST) CREATE NSW
- \$40,250 inc funding for Indian authors (ex GST) AUSTRALIA COUNCIL
- \$51,700 ANZAC grant, Federal Ministry of Arts
- \$100,000 (ex GST) CATALYST funding for StoryBoard

In 2017 core funding from Create NSW remained at \$125,000 (ex GST); this will remain in place until end 2019. Australia Council Festival funding also increased from **\$27,540 (ex GST)** in 2016 to **\$30,250** in 2017. Please note that in the Australia Council October 2017 round, Byron WF was unsuccessful in its application for project funding. The Director of Literature explained there was no fault in the application, that only 13% of organisations were successful in that round and that there simply were not sufficient funds. She encouraged resubmission in the next round (Feb 2018) which has occurred, including a change in assessment categories from 'Access and Participation' to 'Audiences'. The grant announcement is due in April.

2018 CORE FUNDING

Confirmed:

- \$126,500 (ex GST) CREATE NSW
- \$51,700 ANZAC grant funding from Federal Ministry of Arts
- \$100,000 (ex GST) CATALYST funding for StoryBoard

Unconfirmed:

- \$37,865 (ex GST) AUSTRALIA COUNCIL

MEMBERSHIP

During 2017, Byron WF provided membership services to thousands of people in the Northern Rivers area. Membership increased moderately in 2017, with a year-end total membership of 701, which includes 9 Organisational members. Generally, membership surveys reveal high levels of satisfaction with Byron WF activities and affirm the quality of the services provided.

KEY ACTIVITIES

- 2017 year-round program was well received. Overall, the workshop program for 2017 delivered 10 workshops (excluding the Festival workshops) to a total of 116 participants at a net surplus of \$4046.
- 14 workshops during the August Festival week with a total of 205 participants.
- 11 out-of-season events in 2017, six of which were free for members. Two sold out 'In Conversations' with authors and the third year of live-streaming sessions of Sydney Writers' Festival: 'Live and Local'.

The event program surplus was \$11,081 reaching approximately 1000 attendees. Both members and non-members attended these events in 2017. We continue to liaise closely with publishers and other partners to ensure an interesting and engaging calendar of events for our members throughout the year.



OUT OF SEASON

The 2017 **out-of-season events:**

- Book Club featuring Marele Day
- The Age of Genius with A.C. Grayling
- Susan Faludi & Ivan Coyote, a double feature
- Live'n'Local (Syd WF)
- Book Club featuring Russell Eldridge
- Book Club featuring Laura Bloom
- Democracy with A.C. Grayling
- Book Club featuring Sarah Armstrong
- Richard Flanagan in conversation with Kerry O'Brien
- Helen Garner in conversation with Matt Condon
- Members Christmas Party
- Professor Michele Goodwin in partnership with SCU

MENTORSHIP SESSIONS:

- 14 mentorship sessions throughout 2017. In addition, members sought phone support and advice regarding manuscripts, publishing and self-publishing options, contracts and literary agents.
- First Hand Feedback 3 sessions
- Manuscript Assessment 5 sessions
- Meet the Agent 6 sessions
- In total, approximately 3800 people accessed Byron WF services in 2017 (either in person by attending meetings, workshops, events, accessing the library, or via phone or email enquiries). This figure does not include Festival enquiries.
- The Writing Hour group continues to be held weekly in Byron Library.

RESIDENTIAL MENTORSHIP WITH MARELE DAY



- In 2017, Byron WF hosted its 17th annual Residential Mentorship for four new and emerging writers, marking Marele Day's 16-year involvement as mentor. The aim of this project is to provide a context in which new and emerging writers can be identified and guided in the development of their work. It also provides an understanding of the practice and business of writing and publishing. In 2017, the Residential Mentorship attracted 25 submissions, up five from 2016.
- An honour roll of alumni successes and their testimonials has been published on the Byron WF website.

PREMISES

The Byron Writers Festival office remains at Level 1, 28 Jonson Street, Byron Bay. There is a sub-committee tasked with seeking alternative premises within the Shire. Opportunities are constantly being explored.

northerly (the bi-monthly magazine for Byron Writers Festival)

In November 2017 the decision was made to reduce production frequency from bi-monthly to quarterly in line with the seasons, whilst increasing the page count from 24 to 36 internal pages. The magazine has undergone a redesign, with the new look *northerly* due to be launched with the first 2018 edition (March).

FINANCIAL

In 2017 income for the year-round organisation remained static and expenses increased leading to an acceptable overall net surplus of \$59,930. A decision was made to invest Byron WF retained earnings of approximately \$40,000 in StoryBoard. This highlights the cost of running the year-round organisation and the current reliance on annual Festival profitability to gain a year-end positive outcome. A key focus of a new general manager will be the diversification of income sources. Net assets at the end of 2017 were \$539,480.

STAFFING

As referenced above, the Board made a clear commitment to improving the staffing of the organisation again in 2017, notably with the decision to employ a General Manager. This will have a powerful impact in continuing to create a more professional organisation over the next 20 years.

By the end of 2017 staffing levels were:

- Director – full-time position (37.5 hrs per week)
- Program Manager – full-time position (37.5 hrs per week)
- Partnerships Manager – permanent part-time position (30 hours per week)
- Marketing and Communications Manager – permanent part-time contract (22.5 hours per week)
- Festival Administrator – permanent part-time position, 3 days a week including one day SB admin support.
- StoryBoard Co-ordinator – 24 hours a week on contract.
- Book keeper – permanent part-time position (3 hours per fortnight)
- Magazine editor and designer – contract positions

VOLUNTEERS



Volunteers remained an integral part of Byron WF throughout 2017, as every year. They offer assistance to the Program Manager during *northerly* mail-out, as well as ongoing administrative support throughout the year. The staff and Board of Byron WF continue to be enormously grateful to our volunteers for the time, energy and enthusiasm they bring to the organisation.

YEAR-ROUND SERVICES

As noted in the summary, more than 3,800 people (both members and non-members) availed themselves of activities and services during 2017. This included attendance at workshops and events (see below), as well as through mentorships and requests for information.

YEAR-ROUND ACTIVITY

In 2017 the organisation ran a series of workshops featuring topics of interest to the diverse cultural groups who make up the Northern Rivers, as well as the keenly contested residential mentorships.

WORKSHOP PROGRAM (ex Festival)

| Workshop/Event | Host | Paid Attended | Income | Expenses | Loss | Profit |
|------------------------------|--------------------|---------------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Blogging for Writers | Zanni Louise | 6 | \$ 400 | \$ 418 | \$ 18 | \$ - |
| Tools of the Trade | Natasha Reddrop | 11 | \$ 426 | \$ 313 | \$ - | \$ 113 |
| Book Club | Marele Day | Free | \$ - | \$ 100 | \$ 100 | |
| Structure | Laura Bloom | 9 | \$ 855 | \$ 767 | \$ - | \$ 88 |
| An evening with A.C.Grayling | A C Grayling | 197 | \$ 5,909 | \$ 1,660 | \$ - | \$ 4,249 |
| Writing Safari | Tristan Bancks | 20 | \$ - | \$ 600 | \$ 600 | \$ - |
| Publicity | Jennifer St George | 5 | \$ 505 | \$ 600 | \$ 95 | \$ - |
| Susan Faludi/Ivan Coyote | SWF | 65 | \$ 2,750 | \$ 4,410 | \$ 1,660 | \$ - |
| Live'n'Local | SWF | Free | \$ - | \$ 200 | \$ 200 | \$ - |
| Book Club | Russell Eldridge | Free | \$ - | \$ 160 | \$ 160 | \$ - |
| Writing a Novel course | Sarah Armstrong | 13 | \$ 1,964 | \$ 1,320 | \$ - | \$ 644 |
| Democracy | A.C. Grayling | 108 | \$ 3,585 | \$ 1,766 | \$ - | \$ 1,819 |
| Book Club | Sarah Armstrong | Free | \$ - | \$ - | | |
| Manuscript Assessment | Alan Close | 0 | \$ 425 | \$ 300 | | \$ 125 |
| Richard Flanagan | Kerry O'Brien | 273 | \$ 6,465 | \$ 2,824 | | \$ 3,641 |
| Comedy into Character | Mandy Nolan | 9 | \$ 545 | \$ 413 | | \$ 132 |
| The Writers' Toolbox | Melissa Ashley | 7 | \$ 680 | \$ 915 | \$ 235 | \$ - |
| Grant Writing | Siboney Duff | 8 | \$ 470 | \$ 350 | | \$ 120 |
| HSC Ext 2 English | Siboney Duff | 28 | \$ 1,035 | \$ 754 | | \$ 281 |
| Helen Garner | Matt Condon | 202 | \$ 5,785 | \$ 2,293 | | \$ 3,492 |
| TOTALS | | | \$31,799 | \$ 20,164 | \$ 3,068 | \$14,703 |

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

2017 was the second year running with the new Byron WF name, branding and website. Communications milestones achieved include:

- New website homepage design to better direct users to appropriate section of the website and enable feature highlights.
- Development and implementation of clear strategies for promoting our year-round calendar of events and workshops, including collateral and campaign pack templates.
- Ongoing relationship with *Byron Shire Echo* enables the promotion of Out of Season events and workshops free of charge via a contra arrangement.

Social Media

Social media channels continue to attract new audiences.

- Mailchimp (e-newsletter platform): Subscriptions leapt from 9,007 in July 2017 to 9,721 in December. A slight drop-off noted (289 people unsubscribed throughout the Membership Drive campaign), tallying an annual new subscribers total 414. Given the high unsubscribe rate resulting from the Membership Drive Campaign, the 2018 campaign will target 'active subscribers' only.
- Facebook: A 12% increase in Page Likes (up to 6,299 from 5,364) in 2017, with post reach and engagement continuing on an upward trend. Facebook engagement has remained active throughout the year, with the usual 'spike' around the Festival campaign.



- Twitter: We ended 2017 with just over 3,500 followers, up from 3,200 earlier in the year.

Story Board

- StoryBoard worked with 7500 individual students in the Northern Rivers, exceeding the target of 3500 (see Table 1)
- 121 visits to schools and libraries (exceeding target of 116)
- Coralie Tapper was integral to the initial success of the program and Appointed Gabby Le Brun who oversaw many improvements, particularly to governance
- Consistent committed team of volunteers and bus drivers.
- Project came in under budget, enabling the investment in a StoryBoard website upgrade in January 2018.
- Ongoing Masterclasses in Ballina and Lismore Library, increasing to fortnightly in Term 1, 2018. Masterclass participants' stories have been collated into two Anthologies, to be published in *northerly*.
- Highly successful Southern Tour to Grafton, Bellingen, Kempsey and South West Rocks: 7 outer regional schools, with Authors Oliver Phommavanh and Belinda Murrell.
- StoryBoard Bus has been an extremely valuable asset, allowing broader geographical reach. We have also increased and streamlined the resources inside the Bus with a self-contained pop-up classroom ready to go.
- Collaborations with community organisations such as Future Dreamers has enabled diversification beyond schools and libraries.

- Grouping of small regional school visits has enabled further reach in day trips and expanded accessibility.
- The author pool has been growing and consistent over the last part of 2017. A Professional Development Day for Authors in late December was held to evaluate and further develop the StoryBoard program and to provide peer support.
- Excellent cultural fit between indigenous students and Lucas Proudfoot.
- Facebook Social Media engagement: 165 followers: 158 Likes
- Particular thanks go to Byron WF Board members Jesse Blackadder and Lynda Hawryluk for their vision and time devoted to StoryBoard

Table 1: StoryBoard Program projected vs actual Program reach in 2017

| STORYBOARD PROGRAM REACH AND VISITS | Goal for visits | Actual visits | Goal for work-shops run | Actual work-shops run | Goal for children reached in work-shops (avg. 25) | Actual children reached in work-shops | Additional children reached in present-ations | Total children reached |
|--|-----------------|---------------|-------------------------|-----------------------|---|---------------------------------------|---|------------------------|
| Term One school visits | 10 | 9 | 10 | 9 | 225 | 282 | 287 | 569 |
| Term Two school visits | 30 | 29 | 30 | 37 | 750 | 1065 | 1337 | 2402 |
| Term Three school visits | 20 | 22 | 20 | 28 | 500 | 797 | 1897 | 2694 |
| Term Four school visits | 20 | 27 | 20 | 31 | 500 | 835 | 543 | 1378 |
| Total individual students reached | | | | | | | | 7043 |
| Term One Masterclasses | 4 | 4 | 4 | 4 | 100 | 59 | 0 | 59 |
| Term Two Masterclasses | 9 | 7 | 9 | 7 | 225 | 88 | 0 | 88 |
| Term Three Masterclasses | 9 | 9 | 9 | 9 | 225 | 45 | 0 | 65 |
| Term Four Masterclasses | 9 | 12 | 9 | 12 | 225 | 151 | 0 | 151 |
| School Holiday Workshops | 3 | 1 | 3 | 1 | 75 | 17 | 0 | 17 |
| Festival StoryBoard workshops | 2 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 50 | 60 | 0 | 60 |
| | | | | | | | | |
| TOTALS | 116 | 121 | 116 | 141 | 2875 | 3399 | 4064 | 7483 |

BOOKS-2-SCREEN MENTORSHIP PROGRAM

The second year of the program in collaboration with Screenworks under the direction of Jesse Blackadder and Coralie Tapper. In 2017, Books-2-Screen included a one-day workshop for authors and content creators who want their work to be noticed by screen producers. A screen producer, a literary agent and two broadcasters (including one who oversees Screen NSW's script development program) explained what they look for in choosing books to adapt for film, TV and online productions. A screen industry specialist and a graphic designer guided the workshop participants on how to prepare a pitch that will appeal to screen producers. Guest speakers included Angie Fielder from Aquarius Films (*Lion*), Sally Riley from ABC TV, Karen Radzyner from SBS TV and Screen NSW's Amplifier and Pippa Masson from Curtis Brown.

APPRECIATION

In summary, 2017 was a most exciting year headed by a definitively successful Festival and interspersed by a range of profitable out-of-season events ensuring 2018 started on a financially sound footing. Plans for the 2018 Festival are well advanced. Budget pressures are vigilantly monitored to minimise the impact of increased Festival site and accommodation costs, and staff salaries.

BOARD

In closing, I would like to acknowledge the enormous efforts made by all current Board members. Jennifer St George (Chair), Adam van Kempen (Vice Chair), Russell Eldridge (Secretary), Cheryl Bourne (Treasurer) and committee members Jesse Blackadder, Kate Cameron, Marele Day, Lynda Dean, Hilarie Dunn, Lynda Hawryluk and Anneli Knight. All gave generously of their time and wisdom, as ever.

At the December Board meeting, Jennifer St George announced her intention to step down as Chair after the 2018 Festival. Adam van Kempen will take over as Chair at that point. A new Deputy Chair is to be confirmed after the 2018 annual Festival.

On behalf of the staff and Board I would like to acknowledge Jennifer's incredibly hard work, positive attitude and generous camaraderie throughout her tenure as Chair.

Byron Writers Festival will continue to focus on its core values to support writers (and readers) in the world of words and big ideas and share the knowledge and experience within our organisation to all who seek it.

Edwina Johnson, Director

and the entire Festival team:

Sarah Ma, Program Manager

Emma Keenan, Partnerships Manager

Anika Ebner, Communications Manager

Siobhan Foley, Festival Administrator

Gabby Le Brun, StoryBoard Coordinator

