



# BYRON WRITERS FESTIVAL

## 2018 Annual Report

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# Byron Writers Festival 2018 Annual Report

*Byron Writers Festival is a non-profit member organisation presenting workshops and events year-round, including the annual Festival. We acknowledge the Arakwal Bumberbin People of the Byron Shire as the traditional custodians of this land.*

During 2018 the Byron Writers Festival (Byron WF) was chaired by Jennifer St George until the annual Festival with Adam van Kempen assuming the role of Chair post Festival in August 2018. Edwina Johnson continued in her role as Director to lead an expanded team of Festival staff. Jennifer St George and Kate Cameron stepped down from the Board in 2018.

## Key Achievements

An overview of notable achievements from the year include:

- Ticket sales for the Festival: \$716,233, Sponsorship: \$149,322 cash and \$195,851 in-kind
- Memberships reached 916, the highest level in the history of the organisation
- StoryBoard conducted 136 total visits, exceeding the target of 116 visits
- In 2018 Byron WF continued to collaborate with Bendigo Writers Festival, *Griffith Review*, NORPA, Lismore Regional Gallery, Screenworks Northern Rivers, Word Travels, PEN, Byron School of Art and Lennox Arts Board, Walkley Foundation, Dumbo Feather, ABC North Coast, Friends of the Library and other organisations
- AUSLAN was available as an on-demand service again in 2018, with three of the biggest sessions being interpreted every day
- 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.
- 2018 marked the 18<sup>th</sup> year of the Byron WF Residential Mentorship program which has been inspiring writers on the path to publication since 2000. The program has resulted in more than 17 published authors in that time.
- Together with the multitude of writers' festivals around the country, Byron WF can lay claim to contributing to a vibrant literary culture in Australia



## **Mission, Vision, Purpose and Values**

In late 2018 the team began a series of conversations (culminating in a visioning day in January 2019) to re-examine and articulate our mission, vision and values. We believe it to be extremely important to return to the question of Why? Why does the organisation exist and what is its purpose. This was the result:

### **Mission**

We connect people and communities through the power of storytelling

### **Vision**

A world connected through stories

### **Purpose**

We foster the development of new skills in our region's writers. We excite the next generation about literature and literacy, giving them tools to create their future one story at a time. We create shared moments of human connection through the exchange of stories and ideas.

### **Values**

Connection, Hope, Courage, Adventure and Integrity



## With thanks to all our partners and supporters for their ongoing support

### CORE FUNDER



### MAJOR PARTNERS



### MAJOR MEDIA PARTNERS



### MAJOR VENUE PARTNER

### FESTIVAL PARTNERS



### SUPPORTING PARTNERS



### CULTURAL PARTNERS



### MEDIA PARTNERS



### FESTIVAL PATRONS WITH THANKS

Bob & Patti Lowry  
Chris Hanley & Dawn Standfield  
Christopher & Lynda Dean  
Dion & Sandra Abrahams  
Jane Reffell & Robert Hanson  
John & Melissa Hertzberg  
Scott Malcolm & Jane Taylor  
Tom & Sibylle Vidal

Australian Decorative & Fine  
Arts Societies  
Bay FM  
Bayshore Bungalows  
Beach Hotel Byron Bay  
Bandigo Writers Festival  
Brian Warrick  
British Library  
Byron School of Art  
Byron & Beyond 2018

Byron Bay Chocolate Company  
Common Ground  
Griffith Review  
Habitat Byron Bay  
Harlequin Books  
HarperCollins Australia  
Jane Adams  
John Bennet & Jennifer Regan  
Mullum Music Festival  
Northern Rivers Plant Hire  
Rob Doolan

Southern Cross University:  
School of Law & Justice  
Stone & Wood  
Susi Muddiman  
The Rails Hotel  
Wategos Treehouse  
Plus all the publishers who  
assisted in creating the 2018  
Byron Writers Festival program



## Byron Writers Festival 2018 Highlights

**12,000** tickets sold  
**117** onsite Festival sessions  
**18** schools program sessions  
**14** offsite feature events, including **8** for \$25 or under  
**12** workshops  
**5** regional towns visited on the Byron Writers Festival Roadtrip

**3,000** student participants during Schools Days

**98%** of attendees rated the Festival atmosphere excellent or good  
**95%** rated the Festival program excellent or good  
**97%** said they would return in 2019

**30%** of patrons attended for the first time

**10%** of attendees used the new solar powered train

**\$9,600** raised for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation

### Top selling books:

*The Girl with Seven Names* by Hyeonseo Lee  
*Eggshell Skull* by Bri Lee  
*Gold from the Stone* by Lemn Sissay  
*On Mother* by Sarah Ferguson  
*Boy Swallows Universe* by Trent Dalton



Hyeonseo Lee





## Sunshine and the power of hope at Byron Writers Festival 2018

*It's my first time at the Festival and what's not to love? The beauty of the atmosphere, the energy, the diversity of stories, the passion of the writers, I am on a HIGH. It's filled my heart, my spirit and my imagination being here.'*

Kon Karapanagiotidis, author of *The Power of Hope* and founder of the Asylum Seeker Resource Centre.

More than 140 writers and thinkers from across Australia and around the world converged on Byron Bay to share remarkable stories in the glorious sunshine for the 22<sup>nd</sup> Byron Writers Festival.

Numerous sessions attracted capacity crowds including former President of the Human Rights Commission Gillian Triggs delivering the annual Thea Astley Address on *'Speaking Up in a Post-Truth World'*; *'Memoir: Making a Place for Myself'* with North Korean defector Hyeonseo Lee, Saudi activist Manal al-Sharif and Australia's first federal MP of Muslim faith Anne Aly; Kitty Flanagan, Andrew Hansen and Mandy Nolan sharing laughs and insights into why *'Comedy is the most addictive thing you'll ever do'*; and UK poet Lemn Sissay in conversation with ABC's Richard Fidler at the Byron Theatre.

"We were honoured to have so many writers grace our stages to share their stories and help us find meaning, connection and the power of hope in our fast-spinning world. The connections made can be profound and it is my hope these vital conversations will continue to resonate long after the Festival has finished," said Festival Director, Edwina Johnson.



Anne Aly and Kon Karapanagiotidis

Kurt Petersen  
KURT PETERSEN PHOTOGRAPHY





## Audience Profile: Snapshot

The 2018 Festival attracted **48% of its audience from outside the local region**, and maintained strong local support from within the **Northern Rivers (52%)**. People visiting from elsewhere mainly came from other parts of NSW, SE QLD and VIC.

**55% of visitors stayed for four days or more**, and **12% for over seven days**. Around **80% ate at local cafes** and restaurants and **41% went shopping** while they were in Byron Bay.

There was a significant proportion of newcomers, with **1 in 3 attending for the first time**. **25-44 year-olds were most likely to be newcomers** (55% of them), as were those living outside the Northern Rivers region (although we have also seen an increase in newcomers from within the region).

Primary topics of interest for attendees were **social issues, arts and culture, politics and environmental issues** (in that order).

There continues to be a strong bias towards **females (73%)**.





## Festival Digital & Social Media Reach

period from 24 May 2018 (early bird sales) to 15 August 2018 (post-Festival)

**228,360** web pages viewed

**46,000** website sessions

**30,000** website users

**14,612** e-news subscribers

**7,122** Facebook followers

**261,897** Facebook page reach

**3,668** Twitter followers

**312,000** impressions on Twitter

**2,873** Instagram followers

Social media followers are predominantly women 25-44



The screenshot shows the Byron Writers Festival website with a blue header containing the logo and navigation links: About Us, Members, What's On, Festival, StoryBoard, Antzac, Get Involved, Blog, Contact Us, TICKETS, Become a Member, Donate, and Subscribe. Below the header is a grid of four event listings, each featuring a portrait of the speaker and a brief description.

Date	Event Title	Description
FRI 3 AUG	Peter Greste in conversation with Jane Hutcheon – SOLD OUT	Veteran correspondent Peter Greste was arrested in Cairo in 2013 and released without explanation after 400 days. Part memoir, part history, <i>The First Casualty</i> is about how the war on journalism has spread from Middle East battlefields to Western governments.
FRI 3 AUG	Lemn Sissay in conversation with Richard Fidler	Be inspired by Lemn Sissay poet, playwright, occasional broadcaster and consummate performer. Awarded an MBE for services to literature by the Queen of England he is Chancellor of the University of Manchester and a TEDx alumnus.
FRI 3 AUG	The Saturday Paper's 'Bedtime Stories'	There is nothing more comforting than being read to as a child. During Bedtime Stories listen as Brigid Delaney, Kon Karapanagiotidis, Tom Keneally and Sarah Krasnostein retell their books as if for children. With music by Tim Rogers.
SAT 4 AUG	Australian Poetry Slam – Byron Heat	MC: Miles Merrill, featuring Jesse Oliver Your local poets, storytellers, hip-hop artists, stand-up comedians... Whatever they do with words, they get two minutes to set the mic alight. Further details: <a href="http://australianpoetryslam.com">australianpoetryslam.com</a>



## What others are saying about Byron Writers Festival 2018...

“Another terrific festival, buzzing with stimulating sessions, and an overall great vibe.”

***Paul Barclay, ABC Radio National***

“I can honestly say that Byron was the most interesting, stimulating, intelligent festival program I've ever experienced and the setting was amazing!”

***Margot Saville, Crikey journalist***

“...Byron Writers Festival is one of the best, a showcase of some of the world's finest writers, in idyllic surrounds, a true celebration of not just writing, but reading too, which is just how it should be.”

***Samuel J Fell, Rhythms Magazine***

“...everyone from authors to punters raved about what a warm, friendly, communal, engaging and inspiring atmosphere there was: a real collection of great minds, wonderful talent and excellent conversation.”

***Sunil Badami, Author and journalist***

“Every year without fail I am completely swept away by someone or something I have listened to at the festival.” ***Festival Patron***

“The Festival took me around the world and back home again, with love and new inspiration”

***Australian Stage***

“Three days of laughter, enlightenment, inspiration and sharing. A great experience and I will be there next year” ***Festival patron***



## Festival Activities

- **PEN Empty Chair** was part of 2018 Byron WF. The Empty Chair model was used on multiple stages with chairpersons reading the statements of writers imprisoned for their writing. Writers represented in 2018 included Behrouz Boochani, Dareen Tatour and Me Nam. 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 fifth year running the ILF was the charity chosen for the 2018 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 a record \$9600 to help support remote Indigenous communities.
- **Susie Warrick Young Writers Award 2018** was presented to Ella Hill-Smith, who received \$1000 in prize money and had her work published in *northerly*. SWYWA continues to be supported by the Bangalow Lions Club and Brian Warrick and demonstrates the potential and creative flare of young people between 13-21 years-old in the Northern Rivers.
- **Flash Fiction competition.** In 2018 Byron WF held a flash fiction competition garnering 108 entries. Ten stories were shortlisted and displayed at the Festival site while a winner and two runners-up won Festival passes.





## Memberships

In 2018 Byron Writers Festival achieved the highest membership numbers of any other year, providing services to thousands of people in the Northern Rivers area.

Membership increased from 701 in 2017 to 916 in 2018, this included 16 Organisational members.

Generally, membership feedback reveals high levels of satisfactions with Byron WF year-round activities and the services provided.





## Annual Activities

- For the first time in many years, Tim Winton returned to Byron Bay for a sell-out event in March
- Overall workshop and event income for the year was \$31,131
- Edwina Johnson was selected to participate in The Australia Council's Arts Leadership Program for 12 months commencing in February 2019
- Emma Keenan completed a Fundraising Mentorship through Creative Partnerships
- Sarah Ma completed a SafeWork NSW Mentorship and is currently the Byron WF Safety Officer

## ANZAC Project

The Anzac Centenary Arts and Culture Fund grant funding was employed to create a number of events and projects that engaged with the local youth community in the relevance of history, war and remembrance to their lives now, and in the future. The local community was also engaged through the public Project presentation and Festival session. Six arts projects were commissioned from youths aged 14-22 years-old encouraging research and creative cultural and artistic endeavours, which also engaged the local community.



Tim Winton



ANZAC Project winners

*Kim Peters*



## Annual Activities (cont.)

### WRITERS ON THE ROAD

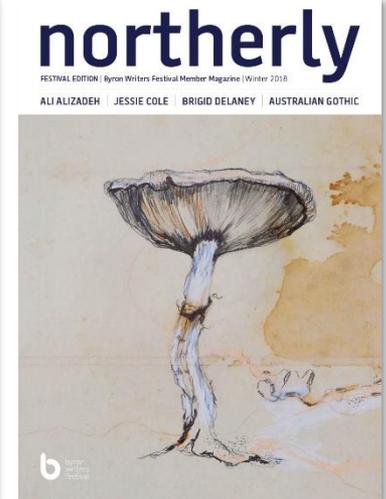
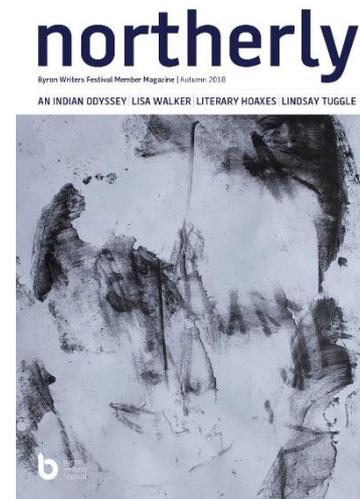
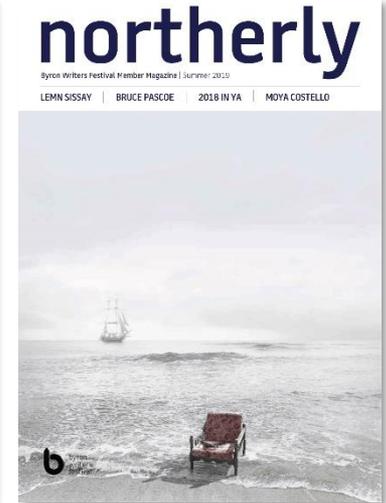
The Byron Writers Festival Road Trip took place once again in 2018 managed by tour leader Zacharey Jane. Participating writers included Sarah Armstrong, Kári Gíslason, Ben Hobson and Australian Poetry Slam Champion Jesse Oliver. The towns visited on this trip in the lead up to the annual Festival were Kyogle, Alstonville, Tenterfield, Bonalbo and Brunswick Heads. The trip included delivery of StoryBoard workshops to students at Kyogle High School, Bonalbo Central School and Alstonville High School.

### NORTHERLY

Our member magazine *northerly* underwent a redesign; switching to full colour, more pages, and distributed quarterly in Autumn, Winter, Spring and Summer. It has been well-embraced by members.

### VOLUNTEERS

Volunteers remained an integral part of Byron WF throughout 2018, as every year. They offer assistance to the then 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.





## Staffing

### Management Resourcing

The Board made a clear commitment to improving the staffing of the organisation again in 2018. This primarily focused on the search for a General Manager, which was thorough but unsuccessful for a number of reasons. Board member Hilarie Dunn was appointed to the role of acting General Manager during the Festival period.

When Adam van Kempen assumed the role of Chair, he suggested a revised structure, promoting internally and engaging additional administrative support. Notably the decision to elevate two existing staff managers to Heads of Department and extend the Festival Administrator's hours, plus employment of a part-time Partnership Coordinator in 2019. Of note too is that Sarah Ma (Head of Operations) celebrated 10 years at the Festival in 2018 and will take long service leave in 2019.

By the end of 2018 staffing levels were:

- Director – full-time position (37.5 hours per week)
- Head of Operations – full-time position (37.5 hours per week)
- Head of Development – 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 (30 hours per week - including 7.5 hours StoryBoard admin)
- StoryBoard Co-ordinator – (24 hours per week on contract)
- Book keeper – permanent part-time position (5 hours per fortnight)
- Magazine editor and designer – contract positions



## Mentorships & Opportunities

### Residential Mentorship

In 2018, four northern rivers writers, Nella Tynan, Robert Walker, Nick Couldwell and Richard Everist, took part in the 18<sup>th</sup> Byron Writers Festival Residential Mentorship. The recipients spent five days staying at Possum Creek in the Byron hinterland and received one-on-one mentoring from author and board member Marele Day, who has lead the highly successful program for the past 17 years.

### Members Mentorship Scheme

Byron Writers Festival launched its Members Mentorship Scheme this year, providing four members with the opportunity to receive feedback on their work from an industry professional free-of-charge.

Three writers, Lynton Burger, Carly Lorente and Heather Roper, received a Firsthand Feedback session with Marele Day, Lisa Walker and Laurel Cohn respectively, while Elizabeth Allen participated in a block mentorship with Laurel Cohn.

### Editorial Consultations

Byron Writers Festival facilitated editorial consultations for both members and general public in 2018. Four 30-minute consultations took place in Bellingen with editor Laurel Cohn in September. Following this, 10 individual consultations of 20-minutes took place in November in Byron Bay with editor Shel Sweeney and literary agent Alex Adsett.

### Meet the Publisher

During the 2018 Festival, Byron Writers Festival facilitated seven 40-minute consultations for writers with publisher Annette Barlow from Allen & Unwin and Faber Writing Academy. Barlow offered feedback on the first 20 pages of the applicants' manuscripts, discussed its suitability in the current market place and suggested ways forward for each writer.



## Year-Round Program

Month	Workshop/Event	Presenter	Format
February	Mapping ART - Strategic Planning for Writers	Siboney Duff	workshop
	Feature Writing with Barnaby Smith	Barnaby Smith	workshop
March	Cooking up a Synopsis	Laurel Cohn	workshop
	Alexander McCall Smith	Alexander McCall Smith	event
	Tender Hearts, Sons of Brutes: Tim Winton	Tim Winton	event
	HSC Workshop - Extension 2 English	Siboney Duff	workshop
April	Writing for Children with Zanni Louise	Zanni Louise	workshop
	Writing for Social Action	Aidan Ricketts	workshop
	The Next Draft: Structural Editing	Laurel Cohn	course
May	Live & Local	SWF	event
	Johann Hari: Lost Connections	Johann Hari	event
	Short & Sharp: Writing Flash Fiction	Emma Ashmere	workshop
June	Zen and the Art of Cover Design	WH Chong	workshop
	It's all about you...or is it? Marketing and promotion	Jesse Blackadder	workshop
	An Evening with Sisonke Msimang	Sisonke Msimang	event
	Bellingen: Structural Editing	Laurel Cohn	workshop
September	Bellingen: Manuscript Consultations	Laurel Cohn	opportunity
	Building a Character in Fiction	Sarah Armstrong	workshop
	Life Story Writing	Graeme Gibson	workshop
November	Kerry O'Brien: A Memoir	Kerry O'Brien	event
	Meet the Agent & Editor	Alex Adsett	opportunity
	Literary Agents & Publishing Contracts Explained	Shel Sweeney	seminar
	Germaine Greer on Consent	Germaine Greer	event
	Best of Insiders	Barrie Cassidy	event
	December	Addiction? How Addiction Affects Every One of Us	Matt Noffs



## Storyboard Project

Storyboard is Byron Writers Festival's free creative writing program for children in Northern NSW, bringing leading authors and illustrators into schools and libraries. Since 2016, StoryBoard has reached some 17,000 young people across the region with author talks, hands-on writing workshops and masterclasses.



### Photos

Top: Casino Public School with Author Zanni Louise

Bottom: Smithtown Public School with illustrator Tony Flowers



## Storyboard Project (cont.)

In 2018 we significantly broadened the project's reach and engagement via the following achievements:

- 136 total visits in 2018 (exceeding target of 116 visits)
- **Attendances:** more than 8600 students in the Northern Rivers including:
  - **70** school visits (including 16 focus school visits and 54 one-off school visits) –several regional school visits had a few authors at a single visit
  - **122** creative writing and/or illustration workshops accessing 2985 students including four Regional Tours and 1 x workshop with students from Woodenbong Public School who attended the Lismore Primary Schools Day
  - **57** x author and/or illustrator presentations accessing a further 4538 students
  - **61** x Masterclasses accessing 929 students at Byron Bay, Lismore and Ballina Libraries (some repeat attendances)
  - **3** x Holiday Programs accessing 60 students – including Writing Safari with Tristan Bancks, My Life and Other Stuff I Made Up with Tristan Bancks (Term 1 : Jan) and one collaboration holiday workshop with Brunswick Picture House (Term 4 October)
  - **4** x Festival Workshops including 4 workshops at StorySpace at the Festival Kids Big Day Out (100 attendances)
  - Tristan Bancks Story Sleuthing, Zanni Louise Book-Making, Podcasting with Samantha Turnbull, Illustration and story with Misa Alexander and Erin Knutt

### Photos

Top: Masterclass in Ballina with Zanni Louise

Bottom: Holiday Program in Byron Bay with Tristan Bancks





## Marketing and Communications

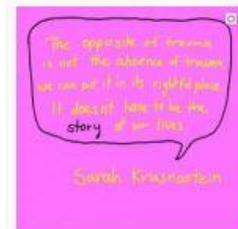
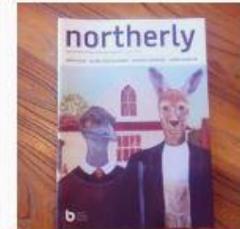
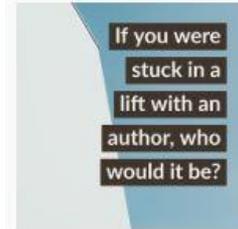
Continued, steady growth of social media followers, surpassing targets outlined in the 2016 – 2018 Strategic Plan. Of particular note:

- **Facebook:** 38% increase from 5,200 in Jan 2016 to almost 7,200 in Dec 2018
- **Instagram:** 100% increase from approx. 1,500 in 2016 to almost 3000 in Dec 2018
- Increased reach in Festival campaign materials via social media
- Facebook post engagement in 2018 was typically 100% higher than in previous years (post reach averaged 2000, with several posts reaching > 6000 people)

## Key Statistics (digital and social media reach)

Period 1 Jan – 31 Dec 2018

- 346,804 web pages viewed
- 74,000 website sessions
- 46,000 website users
- 13,015 e-news subscribers
- 7,244 Facebook followers
- 3,707 Twitter followers
- 3,059 Instagram followers
- Social media followers are predominantly women 25-44





## Fundraising Achievements

Emma Keenan was promoted from Partnership Manager to Head of Development. The new role continues oversight of fundraising activities and adds new responsibilities in the areas of marketing, membership and StoryBoard. Emma completed a fundraising mentorship through Creative Partnerships. The program was an excellent way to learn more about the fundraising landscape in the arts sector, particularly donations and philanthropy. 2018 revenue highlights included:

- Total cash revenue from sponsorship and donations for the year was \$166,464.45
- Cash sponsorship revenue \$150,272
  - \$15,322.45 over target and \$24,828.45 increase on 2017 cash revenue
  - Total donations of \$16,692, exceeding target of \$15,000
  - \$6,000 market stall revenue
  - Travel grants \$1980 and \$2400 respectively from NORLA and Creative New Zealand
- We retained all Major Partners
- New cash partners included The Walkley Foundation, Aesop, Ingramsark
- New in-kind partners included Everywhen (graphic design), Kill Your Darlings, *Dumbo Feather*, The Northern Hotel.





## Fundraising Achievements (cont.)

### 2018 CORE FUNDING

\$125,000 Create NSW – last year of multi-year funding agreement, extended to 2019/2020.

\$100,000 CATALYST funding for StoryBoard (second year of multi-year funding agreement).

Regional Cultural Fund awarded \$80,000 to fund three Writers on the Road tours in 2018/2019.

No Festival funding from Australia Council in 2018.

Byron WF was unsuccessful in its application for project funding with Australia Council in 2018. 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. The Festival has since been successful in applying for 2019 funding.

### 2019 CORE FUNDING

- **\$125,000** Create NSW
- **\$100,000** CATALYST funding for StoryBoard
- **\$33,500** AUSTRALIA COUNCIL
- **\$80,000** REGIONAL CULTURAL FUND (split 2018/2019)



Gillian Triggs, Thea Astley Lecture 2018



## Board and Summary

In summary, 2018 was an exciting year headed by a definitively successful Festival and interspersed by a range of successful out-of-season events ensuring 2019 started on a financially sound footing. Plans for the 2019 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, we would like to acknowledge the enormous efforts made by all current Board members. Adam van Kempen (Chair), Cheryl Bourne (Treasurer), Russell Eldridge (Secretary) and committee members Jesse Blackadder, Marele Day, Lynda Dean, Hilarie Dunn, Lynda Hawryluk and Anneli Knight. All gave generously of their time and wisdom, as ever.

At the December 2017 Board meeting Jennifer St George announced her intention to step down as Chair after the 2018 Festival at which point Adam van Kempen assumed the role. On behalf of the staff and Board we would like to acknowledge Jennifer St George's 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.

With thanks

**Edwina Johnson**, Director

**Sarah Ma**, Head of Operations

**Emma Keenan**, Head of Development

**Anika Ebner**, Communications Manager

**Emily Brugman**, Festival Administrator

**Gabby Le Brun**, StoryBoard Coordinator

**Aarna Hudson**, Partnerships Coordinator