



## Our Mentors

### **Sarah Armstrong**

**Genre:** Fiction, Memoir

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Sarah's first novel *Salt Rain* (Allen & Unwin) - set in the Northern Rivers - was shortlisted for the 2005 Miles Franklin Literary Award, the Queensland Premier's Literary Award and the Dobbie Award. Sarah was formerly a journalist at the ABC where she won a Walkley Award. One of Sarah's short stories, *The Long Wet*, has been made into a short film and an Australian film production company has bought the rights to make a film of *Salt Rain*. Her latest novel, *Promise*, also set in the northern rivers, was released to critical acclaim in 2016.

Sarah has been teaching writing since 2004, in weekly face-to-face classes, writing retreats in Byron Bay and Bali, and via online courses.

### **Sunil Badami**

**Genre:** Fiction, Non-Fiction

**Location:** Sydney (Zoom meetings only)

Sunil Badami is a writer, broadcaster and academic. He has a Masters in Creative and Life Writing (Distinction) from the prestigious Goldsmiths College at the University of London, as well as a Doctor of Creative Arts from the University of Technology, Sydney, where he teaches creative writing, film studies, digital literacy and other subjects.

In addition to being a literary critic for over 20 years, he's a former Chair of a NSW Premier's Literary Awards judging panel, former selection panellist and current Academy Member of the Asia Pacific Screen Awards and a manuscript assessor and mentor for the Australian Society of Authors.

Sunil's work has been published in every major Australian media outlet, including *The Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Australian*, *The Guardian*, *The New Daily*, *The Monthly*, *The Drum Online*, *Art + Australia*, *Australian Gourmet Traveller* and more, including prestigious literary journals *Southerly*, *Island*, *Meanjin* and *Westerly*, and his work has been anthologised in Australia and overseas, including in *Best Australian Stories* and *Best Australian Essays*.

### **Tristan Bancks**

**Genre:** Children's and Young Adult Literature

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Tristan Bancks is a children's and teen author with a background in acting and filmmaking. His books include *My Life & Other Stuff I Made Up* (book two out 2014), *Mac Slater Coolhunter* (Australia & US), *Galactic Adventures First Kids in Space* and the *Nit Boy* series (about a kid with the worst case of nits in world history). Tristan's Young Adult novel, *it's yr life* was co-written via email between Byron Bay and L.A. with actress / author, Tempany Deckert. His short films as writer and director have won a number of awards and have screened widely in festivals and on TV. He is currently working on *Two Wolves*, a crime novel for middle-graders (March 2014) and an immersive cross-platform story for

kids.

Tristan is excited by the future of storytelling and inspiring others to create. Check out Story Scrapbook, his free multimedia story brainstorming app, and chat to Tristan at [www.tristanbancks.com](http://www.tristanbancks.com)

### **Tony Birch**

**Genre:** Fiction & Short Stories

**Location:** Melbourne (Zoom meetings only)

Tony Birch is the author of three novels: the bestselling *The White Girl*, winner of the 2020 NSW Premier's Award for Indigenous Writing, and shortlisted for the 2020 Miles Franklin literary prize; *Ghost River*, winner of the 2016 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Indigenous Writing; and *Blood*, which was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award. He is also the author of *Shadowboxing* and three short story collections, *Father's Day*, *The Promise* and *Common People*. In 2017 he was awarded the Patrick White Literary Award for his contribution to Australian literature. His website is: [tony-birch.com](http://tony-birch.com) He is also an activist, historian and essayist.

### **Lisa Brockwell**

**Genre:** Poetry

**Location:** Byron Bay

Lisa Brockwell lives on a rural property near Byron Bay with her husband and young son. She was runner-up in the University of Canberra Vice-Chancellor's International Poetry Prize in 2015, and has been shortlisted for the Australian Catholic University, Newcastle, Montreal International and Bridport Poetry Prizes. Her poems have been published in *The Spectator*, *Australian Love Poems*, *The Australian*, *The Canberra Times* and *Best Australian Poems*. *Earth Girls* was published by Pitt Street Poetry in 2016 and commended in the Anne Elder Award for best first collection published in Australia. Lisa runs regular workshops, performs at readings and appears at festivals and conferences both in the Byron Shire and around Australia.

[www.lisabrockwell.com](http://www.lisabrockwell.com)

### **Alan Close**

**Genre:** Fiction, Memoir, Creative Non-fiction, Feature Writing.

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Over a thirty-year career, Alan Close has published books of fiction, memoir and creative non-fiction. His most recent book is *Before You Met Me: A Memoir Of One Man's Troubled Search For Love*. He has been a freelance feature writer for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Australian* and his stories, poems and essays have been published in newspapers and literary magazines both internationally and in Australia. He edited the anthology *Men Love Sex*, a collection of stories by men about love, sex and relationships, has written widely on men and relationships in the national print media and was a columnist on men's issues in *Good Weekend* magazine. He has a MA in Creative Writing (in Creative Non-Fiction) and has been a Creative Writing tutor at Southern Cross University and QUT. His specific field of interest is in men writing about the personal but he also consults on all aspects of manuscript development and assessment, is a structural and copy editor and, working both face-to-face and online, is an enthusiastic writing mentor and teacher.

### **Laurel Cohn**

**Genre:** Fiction, Children's Books, Narrative Non-fiction and Illustrated Non-fiction

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Laurel Cohn has been working with writers since the late 1980s, including five years with one of Australia's top literary agents and four years as Consultant Editor to the NSW Writers' Centre. As a freelance editor she works with individual writers, publishers, businesses and community organisations, as well as presenting workshops and seminars on pathways to publishing, editing, manuscript assessment and options for writers in the digital age. She is experienced in editing fiction, children's books, narrative non-fiction and illustrated non-fiction.

### **Jessie Cole**

**Genre:** General Fiction, Literary Fiction

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Jessie Cole grew up in an isolated valley in Northern New South Wales, where she still lives in her childhood home. Her first novel, *Darkness on the Edge of Town*, was shortlisted for the 2013 ALS Gold Medal and longlisted for the Dobbie Literary Award. Her second novel, *Deeper Water*, was released in 2014 to much critical acclaim.

Her work has also appeared in many Australian publications, including *Best Australian Essays*, *Meanjin*, *Kill Your Darlings*, *Island Magazine*, *The Lifted Brow*, *Good Weekend*, *Big Issue*, *Daily Life* and the *Guardian*.

Jessie's memoir, *Staying*, was released in 2018, with Tim Winton calling it — 'A wounded, lovely, luminous book about grief, trauma and the strange healing power of words.'

### **Marele Day**

**Genres:** Crime, Fiction

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Marele Day is the author of four crime novels – *The Life and Crimes of Harry Lavender*; *The Case of the Chinese Boxes*; *The Last Tango of Dolores Delgado* and *The Disappearances of Madalena Grimaldi* as well as a collection of crime-comedy stories, *Mavis Levack, PI*. Other novels include best-selling *Lambs of God*, which was published to international acclaim with film rights optioned by Twentieth Century Fox; *Mrs Cook: The Real and Imagined Life of the Captain's Wife*; and most recently *The Sea Bed*.

Marele is editor of *How To Write Crime* and co-editor of *Making Waves: 10 Years of the Byron Bay Writers Festival*. She is a highly experienced speaker, teacher and mentor, and has won several awards, including the Ned Kelly Lifetime Achievement, 2008. She is currently mentor for the Northern Rivers Writers' Centre Residential Mentorship.

### **Garry Disher**

**Genre:** Children's writing, Young Adult, Crime, Fiction

**Location:** Victoria (Zoom meetings only)

Garry Disher is one of Australia's best-known authors. A full-time writer since 1988, he's published over 50 books: general/literary novels, crime thrillers, story collections, fiction for children and teenagers, anthologies (as editor), creative writing handbooks and Australian History textbooks. His award-winning crime novels have earned an international reputation, with editions published in the USA, England, Germany, Holland, Denmark, Italy, Spain and Hungary. Many of his children's and Young Adult titles continue to be studied in schools. *The Bamboo Flute* is regarded as a modern classic and has never been out of print, and *The Divine Wind* has sold over 100,000 copies in

Australian and overseas editions. His writers' handbook *Writing Fiction* is widely used in schools, TAFEs and universities.

### **Russell Eldridge**

**Genre:** Fiction, Journalism, Feature Writing, media training, proof-reading

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Russell Eldridge is an author, journalist and media trainer. He wrote the critically acclaimed *Harry Mac*, a novel set in the darkest days of apartheid. *Harry Mac* won the Varuna Litlink Unpublished Manuscript Award, and was named Book of the Month on Booktopia. Russell is an award-winning journalist and former newspaper editor, who has worked in South Africa and Australia, on the Johannesburg Star and the Sydney Morning Herald. He has experience of hard news writing, features and long-form journalism, and has tutored and guest-lectured in journalism at Southern Cross University. Russell has won several media awards, including a Walkley Award Commendation, Northern NSW Journalist of the Year, Sir Harry Budd award for Country Journalism and a Special Merit Award for South African Sports Writing. Russell also conducts media training for journalists and Australian organisations. He is a founding member of the Byron Writers Festival, and regularly chairs panel discussions, as well as interviewing visiting writers. He has also chaired at the Ubud Writers and Readers Festival.

### **Melaina Faranda**

**Genre:** Children's, Young Adult and General Fiction

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Melaina Faranda is the author of 35 Young Adult and Children's books, published nationally and internationally by Random House, Allen & Unwin, Pan Macmillan, Omnibus Scholastic, Pearson, Heinemann, Macmillan Ed, and Rigby etc. Having worked intensively with twenty professional editors over a decade enables Melaina to swiftly get to the heart of your manuscript and offer feedback, advice and specific suggestions that can radically improve your story in record time.

### **Jim Hearn**

**Genre:** Life Writing, Fiction

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Jim Hearn is the author of *High Season: a memoir of heroin and hospitality*, which was published by Allen & Unwin in 2012. He also published the novella *River Street* with Text in 2012, which won the inaugural Griffith Review Novella Competition. He has had three other pieces published with *Griffith Review* – one essay and two short stories. Jim also won the New Philosopher Writers Award in 2014 for his short story, *Shanghai Baby*.

During the 1990's, Jim worked on the screenplay for the feature film *Chopper* (2000) and wrote and directed four short films that screened on SBS.

As an educator, Jim holds a PhD in Cultural Studies from UTS and teaches Creative Writing and Cultural Studies at Southern Cross University, Lismore. He has supervised 10 Honours year projects where students write a 25, 000-word thesis, most of which have involved students writing an extended work of prose.

*I genuinely enjoy working with people on their creative writing projects, whatever form their writing takes, and wouldn't do it if I didn't feel I had something positive and substantial to add to their best efforts.* - Jim Hearn

**Nette Hilton**

**Genre:** Fiction, Children's and Young Adult

**Location:** Tweed Coast

Nette Hilton is a multi-award winning author of many short-listed and translated books, including *Proper Little Lady*, *The Web*, *Sprite Downberry* and *The Innocents* (which is currently being developed for film). Her work is available throughout the world – listed as White Raven award recipient in Bologna – and she has recently undertaken a trip to America to meet with publishers there. She is a sought-after mentor with the ASA and primary and secondary schools where she runs workshops, talks and information sessions for children, young adults and adults. Most recently she has worked in mentorship with Flinders University in South Australia.

**Zacharey Jane**

**Genres:** Fiction, Childrens' Picture Books, Literary Fiction

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Zacharey Jane is the author of the acclaimed novel *The Lifeboat* (UQP), published internationally and short-listed for the Barbara Jeffris Award, and the children's picture book *Tobias Blow* (illustrated by Rosalie Street), which is included on the Premier's Reading List. Zacharey's background includes fifteen years in the film and television industry, advertising and fashion magazines, and several successful exhibitions of her paintings in Sydney galleries. She is also a high school English and History teacher.

Zacharey is adept at working with novice and junior writers, helping them find their voice and hone their ideas, to create a fertile seed from which their story can grow. Her background in the visual arts also makes her ideal to work with writers wanting to combine images and words in picture books, for adults or children.

**Anneli Knight**

**Genre:** Freelance journalism, Non-fiction, marketing.

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Anneli Knight is a contributing feature writer to the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* newspapers and has written for travel magazines including *Australian Geographic Outdoor*, *Conde NasteTraveler* and online at Holiday Goddess. Before going freelance she was a staff journalist at *Sydney Morning Herald* and worked in features, general news, foreign desk, arts and business sections. She studied a Master of Arts in Journalism at University of Technology, Sydney, and later taught journalism and media law at UTS.

For the past six years she's been making the most of the freelance lifestyle living and writing between Melbourne and the Kimberley and has now planted her feet in the Northern Rivers.

**Zanni Louise**

**Genre:** Picture Books, Early Readers, Junior Fiction

**Location:** Byron Shire

Zanni Louise is passionate about writing quality books for children, making kids laugh, and inspiring people to write their own stories. Based in Alstonville, Zanni has collaborated with award-winning illustrators to create four picture books, including the popular Errol series. She's written a 6-book independent reader series called Tiggy and the Magic Paintbrush and her first junior fiction series Stardust School of Dance is out mid 2019.

Zanni's books have been described as quirky, curious and funny, and are sold in 19 foreign territories. She's been twice listed in the CBCA Notables, and her book Archie and the Bear was selected for the highly prestigious international children's catalogue: The White Ravens. Zanni teaches 'Writing Picture Books' and 'Writing Chapter Books' through the [Australian Writers Centre](#). She also runs her own course through various writing centres and festivals throughout Australia. Zanni has also workshopped with thousands of kids in schools around Australia, and is one of the passionate StoryBoard authors working with Byron Writers Festival. She has mentored new and established writers for a number of years. Several of Zanni's clients have gone onto secure publishing deals. [www.zannilouise.com](http://www.zannilouise.com)

### **Mirandi Riwoe**

**Genre:** Fiction, Historical Fiction & Short Stories

**Location:** Tweed Coast

Mirandi Riwoe is the author of Stone Sky Gold Mountain. Her novella The Fish Girl won Seizure's Viva la Novella V and was shortlisted for the Stella Prize and the Queensland Literary Award's fiction prize. Riwoe's novella Annah the Javanese was joint-winner in the Griffith Review Novella Project, 2019. Her work has appeared in Best Australian Stories, Meanjin, Review of Australian Fiction and Best Summer Stories. Mirandi has a PhD in Creative Writing and Literary Studies (QUT).

### **Kirli Saunders**

**Genre:** Poetry

**Location:** South Coast NSW (Zoom meetings only)

Gundungurra Born and Raised Gunai Woman, Kirli Saunders is an award-winning international Children's Author, Poet, Teacher, and Artist. She leads Poetry in First Languages, delivered by Red Room Poetry. Kirli's debut picture book The Incredible Freedom Machines was shortlisted for the Prime Ministers Literary Awards and CBCA notables. Her poetry collection, Kindred was Highly Commended in Black&Write. She is the inaugural winner of the Daisy Utemorrhah Award and University of Canberra ATSI Poetry prize. Kirli was shortlisted for the 2020 NSW Woman of the Year. She was guest writer for the Embassy in Jakarta and Bali (2019).

### **Sara El Sayed**

**Genre:** Memoir

**Location:** Brisbane (Zoom meetings only)

Sara El Sayed is a writer based in Meanjin (Brisbane). Her debut memoir, *Muddy People*, will be published by Black Inc. in 2021. Her work is anthologised in *Growing Up African in Australia* (Black Inc.) and *Arab-Australian-Other* (Pan Macmillan). She has been published in *frankie*, *Overland* and *The Lifted Brow*. In 2019 she was shortlisted for the Richell Prize for emerging writers. She is currently shortlisted for the 2020 Queensland Premier's Young Publishers and Writers Award.

### **Jock Serong**

**Genre:** Fiction

**Location:** Victoria (Zoom meetings only)

Jock Serong was once a criminal lawyer. He's since been the editor of *Great Ocean Quarterly*, and a regular writer in the surfing media and more generally in publications such as *The Monthly*, *The Guardian*, the *SMH* and the *Australian Financial Review*. His first novel, *Quota*, appeared in 2014, and since then his work has been awarded the Colin Roderick Prize, the Staunch Prize and an ACWA Ned Kelly. His current book, *The Burning Island*, is the second novel of a trilogy about the early history of Bass Strait's Furneaux Islands. He's in the late stages of a Creative Writing PhD based around his first historical novel, *Preservation*. More than anything, he likes to write about the sea.

### **Laura Shore**

**Genre:** Poetry

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Laura Shore has taught composition, literature and poetry at several colleges as well as offering creative writing courses privately since 1980. Her young adult novel, *The Sacred Moon Tree*, Bradbury Press, NY, 1986, was nominated for the Washington Irving Children's Book Award. Her poetry has appeared in literary magazines and anthologies in the US, New Zealand, Italy and Australia.

In 1996, she initiated the Dangerously Poetic reading series. This evolved into a community press ([www.dangerouslypoetic.com](http://www.dangerouslypoetic.com)) which has published nine books. Her collection, *Breathworks*, was launched at the Byron Writers Festival in 2002 by Dorothy Porter. Winner of the 2009 FAW John Shaw Nielson Award and the 2006 CJ Dennis "Open Poetry" Literary Award, she was chosen by the Poet's Union for the 2003 Poets on Wheels Tour. Laura's poems have twice been broadcast on Radio National's *Poetica*. *Water over Stone*, her latest collection, won IP Picks Best Poetry 2011 and was published by Interactive Press, Brisbane.

### **Jennifer St George**

**Genre:** Commercial Romance

**Location:** Northern Rivers & Gold Coast

Jennifer St George is a best-selling romance author whose sexy stories feature courageous, career-minded heroines, strong heroes in glamorous international settings. She has seven books published with Penguin Books Australia. Her story, *Her Small Town Christmas Wish*, was published in the *Hot Christmas Night* anthology with six other Australian and NZ authors. Jennifer's third novel, *The Love Deception*, was nominated for 2013 ARRA Awards in the Favourite Short Category Romance section and *The Billionaire's Passionate Revenge* was nominated for the same award in 2015. She spent the first 20 years of her career in corporate marketing and management consulting roles. She won a clutch of awards including Outstanding Sunshine Coast Business Woman of the Year and the Public Relations Institute of Australia Golden Target Award. She has a graduate business degree and completed an MBA where she was presented with the Rupert Murdoch Fellowship.

Jennifer is a past Vice-President of Romance Writers of Australia and the past Chair of the Byron Writers Festival Board. She currently teaches public relations and creative writing at Bond University.

### **Lisa Walker**

**Genres:** Women's Fiction, General Fiction, Romantic Comedy

**Location:** Northern Rivers

Lisa is the author of the romantic comedies *Sex, Lies and Bonsai* (HarperCollins, 2013) and *Liar Bird*

(HarperCollins, 2012) and the ABC Radio National play, *Baddest Backpackers* (2008). She is an award winning short story writer and her story *Blossom* appeared in the Review of Australian Fiction in 2012. She was a recipient of the Varuna HarperCollins Award in 2011, leading the publication of her first novel and has almost completed a masters in creative writing at the University of Queensland where she is writing a comedy about climate change. She has previously worked as a manuscript assessor, freelance journalist, wilderness guide, tertiary lecturer and environmental communicator. [www.lisawalker.com.au](http://www.lisawalker.com.au)