



Sorrento  
*Writers Festival*

April 24—27

2025



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# Welcome



## Welcome to the 2025 Sorrento Writers Festival

In the Introduction to *Watsonia: A Writing Life*, historian and award-winning author Don Watson writes: "I never set out to be a writer but drifted into it."

The Sorrento Writers Festival never set out to be Victoria's biggest literary festival; we drifted into it. Our inaugural festival in 2023 was a toe-in-water experiment to see if people would come. Last year, we built on that experiment by staging 135 events and welcoming 190 speakers to our coastal township.

We sold 15,736 tickets and provided opportunities for around 6000 festival-goers to meet and listen to some of Australia's greatest writers, thinkers, creators and leaders.

In just two years, Sorrento has developed a deep affection for its literary festival. We've welcomed visitors from Melbourne, from regional Victoria and from interstate. And we are now an Australian cultural calendar highlight.

In 2025, we are back – bigger (more than 160 events and 200-plus participating speakers), with new venues and an ambition to build a fiscally responsible, year-round, not-for-profit organisation that supports children's literacy projects on the Mornington Peninsula.

Sydney producer and podcaster Kel Butler not long ago said: "Writers festivals are a reflection of where our country is at at any given moment."

"They put a megaphone to the national and global social issues that our governments are either creating, exacerbating or ignoring completely."

In 2025, we need these megaphones more than ever before. And as our Festival's success shows, people are keen to listen. They want to hear respected Australians discuss Big Picture issues. They are prepared to be prodded and challenged, and they are keen to hear new ideas.

Our speakers are also up for the adventure. This year, more than 200 writers, publishers, community leaders, opinion

makers, journalists, artists, musicians, creators, inventors and academics will come to Sorrento to discuss a plethora of topics. From historical fiction to footy, to faith, film, Shakespeare, *Countdown*, geopolitics and gardening, we have offerings for people of all ages and interests.

Fiction writers will discuss how their imaginations work and why they create the plots and characters they do. Biographers will talk about the challenges of writing someone else's life story. Meanwhile, award-winning journalists will tell us what it's like to work in a profession where their stories are regularly described as "fake news".

How gaga is MAGA? What is the role of civilised conversation in a democracy? Telling the truth about Australia's history. Who is running our corporate world and are they up to the job? Stop hurting our women. Fifty years since the dismissal of the Whitlam government and what have we learnt? How to handle China? Books vs screens, parents' great battle. These are just some of the weighty topics our speakers will tackle in Sorrento in April.

Sorrento Writers Festival will deliver some difficult, tough conversations. And not everyone will like them. But just as we celebrate freedom of speech, we celebrate freedom of choice. Come to our events however and whenever you choose.

Thank you for your support, thank you for buying tickets and we look forward to welcoming you to Sorrento April 24-27.

**Corrie Perkin**  
Founder and Director  
Sorrento Writers Festival



[sorrentowritersfestival.com.au](https://sorrentowritersfestival.com.au)

Share your moments with us #sorrentowf2025



## From our Festival *President*



On behalf of the Committee and the Festival team, we present to you the 2025 program. Over four and-a-half days, more than 200 speakers will engage and entertain across 160-plus events. And everyone is welcome.

It is remarkable to think back to November 2021 when the Sorrento Writers Festival was just an idea sketched on a piece of paper. The inaugural

event was held in April 2023. One year later, in 2024, Sorrento Writers Festival became Victoria's biggest literary gathering in terms of tickets sold, festival events and number of speakers who attended.

This year, we expand our schools program to include Mornington Peninsula Secondary School students who will be treated to a special Shakespeare morning. We'll also be hosting a community family afternoon where children can engage with their writer and illustrator heroes. Our belief is that if children interact with books, their literacy skills improve, learning becomes a passion, reading becomes easier, their imaginations are sparked and school is an exciting place in which to thrive.

Please know that the Sorrento Writers Festival is committed to supporting literacy and reading projects for children. Throughout the year, we will be working with schools to connect young readers and writers. We are now a year-round not-for-profit cultural and community organisation. And the future is very exciting.

The Festival once again will offer several free events as part of our Writers on Writing series. Students under 25 will receive free entry to all mainstream Festival sessions. We also have some special evening gatherings, including two Words & Music concerts (Friday and Saturday), an "in conversation" with British crime writer Sir Ian Rankin, who will beam in from Edinburgh, the annual Barry Jones Oration, which this year sold out in three hours and will be delivered by former Prime Minister Julia Gillard, and the much-loved Talking Footy night.

I am enormously proud of our hard-working Committee – Narelle Cormack, Rose Donohoe, Nicholas Martin and Mandy Rethus – and thank them for their immense contribution. Our Director and Founder Corrie Perkin and her small team continue to dream big, raise the bar and work hard to achieve our goal to become one of Australia's most important literary festivals and we all congratulate them for putting together such a fine 2025 program.

To our 130-plus volunteers, and to those local community organisations who get behind our annual event with gusto, to our partners and donors, and to you, our festival-goers, we offer heartfelt thanks. Without your support, there would be no writers festival. You are our greatest advocates and our treasured friends.

We hope you enjoy the 2025 Sorrento Writers Festival. Welcome to our beautiful coastal town, and we look forward to seeing you on April 24-27.

**Peter Inge OAM**

## On behalf of our *writers*



I think there are two hopes that writers have when they come to festivals. One is to meet their readers; the other is to be reminded, sometimes after sustained solitude, that they're part of an ecosystem – they have work friends, collaborators, even rivals.

Sorrento Writers Festival delivers on both needs in the best possible ways. There are big, generous audiences who

are engaged and well read. There are panels that might plonk you between the hero who inspired you to take up the craft and a whip-smart newcomer who's busy re-defining it.

Then there are the ways in which this festival is like no other, things that in two short years have already become institutions: the phenomenal roster of journalists, the inter-session crush on the staircase and the calendar position that entwines Essendon-Collingwood with a literary festival like Laocoön and his snakes.

There's disagreement – a vital, civilising function for which the wider community has lost patience. And the green shoots that disagreement brings – bravery, humility, clarity.

Add to that the feeling of finding your book nestled next to the ones by the hero and the prodigy in the nation's best pop-up bookstore, the extraordinary band of volunteers, the coffee, the ocean and the autumn afternoon sun on the limestone, and I don't know why you'd be anywhere else.

**Jock Serong, award-winning author**

# Sorrento *Writers Festival*

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The Sorrento Writers Festival acknowledges the Bunurong People of the great Kulin nation, the custodians of the lands on which our Festival meets. We pay our respects to their elders, past and present. We acknowledge the land on which we meet is the place of age-old ceremonies, celebrations, initiation, renewal and storytelling. We also acknowledge the Bunurong community's living culture continues to play a unique and important role in the life of this region.



## How the program evolved

This year our Festival will bring to Sorrento more than 200 writers, academics, commentators, community leaders, artists, business experts, former politicians – and a former prime minister.

We have scientists and researchers coming to Sorrento, award-winning journalists, musicians and actors, a famous television scriptwriter and a treasured Australian of the Year.

Some of the nation's most respected First Nations writers and leaders will be with us. Children's storybook authors and illustrators, sporting heroes, opera singers, Shakespeare performers and a former director of the National Gallery of Victoria are all joining our Festival in April.

Discussions will be far-ranging and thought-provoking. Like previous years, they will cover a vast range of topics – from the 2025 Federal Election to Donald Trump's America (Part Two) and the curious rise and rise of Elon Musk.

During our Festival we will talk about romance novels and why we love them. We'll acknowledge the 100th anniversary of F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* and ask: is it truly the Great American Novel?

We will talk about crime novels, we will meet Miles Franklin Award winners and nominees, we'll assess the impact of Gough Whitlam and his government, 50 years after the dismissal.

We will discuss (and listen to) music and poetry. We'll talk about gardens, Jane Austen, the power of Indigenous art, 21st century feminism, Ukraine's future, how to get your novel published, the power of



water to heal and restore, how to nurture future leaders, screenwriting, racism, parenting, the post-Covid generation. And yes, we'll talk about footy, too.

Putting the 2025 program together, I was guided by four lightbulb moments.

The first occurred midway through last year when I was digging through some old family photographs and realised 2025 is the 50th anniversary of the dismissal of the Whitlam Government.

This date also made me realise that in 2025, we are completing the first quarter of the 21st century.

How far have we come? What have we achieved? Are we better or worse off as a planet, a species, as a community, as families, as individuals? These are big questions worthy of some interesting discussions.

But back to Gough. Many of us can still remember exactly where we were when we heard the news that Sir John Kerr had sacked the prime minister. After just three years, the government that had promised – and indeed delivered – so much, mismanaged its way out of office.

What was that shooting star that flew across our national orbit? What did you think at the time? There is no doubt Gough Whitlam and his ministers forever changed the way Australia saw itself. They initiated Australia's first federal legislation on human rights, the environment and heritage. They made university education free, they abolished conscription and brought Australian troops home from Vietnam. They made huge progress in the area of Indigenous rights and recognition, multiculturalism, they threw money at the arts, welfare, the regions.

Like all fun parties, the music had to stop some time. To this day, Gough Whitlam has fierce and bitter critics. But what happened, how did it happen – and how did Australia find the courage to shift from the conservative Menzies era to

Gough in just seven years? Why was he sacked and how did that day unfold? Will Australian politics ever see another visionary charismatic leader like Gough Whitlam?

The 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary is an appropriate moment to reflect. That's why we have invited (among others) historian and Whitlam biographer Jenny Hocking, Barry Jones, a Victorian MP during the Whitlam years, Kerry O'Brien who, as a young reporter covered the Vietnam moratoriums and followed Canberra closely during that time, historian Judith Brett, and David Marr, Sir Garfield Barwick's biographer and one of our nation's most astute journalists and commentators, to join these conversations.

1975 was also the year a young Australian academic, Anne Summers, published her seminal feminist work *Damned Whores and God's Police*. Anne went on to have a successful international career as a journalist and magazine editor. She also worked with various PMs departments as an adviser – most recently, on the topic of violence against Australian women. We are delighted that Anne is joining us for four sessions across the festival weekend, including an "in conversation" with Ramona Koval.

In late 1974, a colourful and exciting new pop music show called *Countdown* went to air on the ABC. In 1975 it was the first Australian program to go live in colour. The yellow catsuit of Skyhooks lead singer Graeme "Shirley" Strachan beamed into our living rooms and Australian rock music was never the same.

My second Festival lightbulb moment was last May. While assessing ticket sales data for the 2024 event, we realised those events relating to the US, the future of democracy and the then-forthcoming November presidential election were off-the-charts popular. Our festival-goers love politics, they love American



politics. They treasure democracy and its institutions and they are interested in the world around us.

Donald Trump will notch 100 days as president – for the second time – over our Festival four days. With the Great Disrupter back in the White House, and given last year's box office, we wanted to make sure audiences were presented with discussions they'd appreciate.

My third light bulb moment: the 2025 Federal Election. For months and without knowing the date, we worked in the dark. Six months ago the pundits were predicting a clear return of the Albanese Government. Meanwhile, if there was to be a May election and all the Canberra journos are on the campaign trail, who will be free to come to our annual Political Lunch at The Baths?

Thankfully we have nailed again a fabulous Canberra commentator team. The campaign and the thorny issues has it raised will be discussed over the weekend.

A final light bulb went off during the back half of 2024 as we watched some of Australia's greatest writers accept – or be shortlisted for – exceptional literary awards.

Our literary writers continue to inspire us with their imaginations and their belief in their work. We are thrilled to include in our line-up a wide range of authors, including award-winners, authors of 20 or more books, the next wave – the talented under-40s – and the debut authors who will share with us their own writing journeys.



## Who's coming to Sorrento in 2025?

Former Prime Minister Julia Gillard will deliver this year's Barry Jones Oration. Also on the guestlist: Pulitzer Prize-winning writer Geraldine Brooks; the brilliant and extraordinary Helen Garner; twice Miles Franklin winner Michelle de Kretser; Robert Dessaix, Robbie Arnott and Jock Serong; crime writers Dervla McTiernan, Christan White, Chris Hammer, J.P. Pomare and Shelley Burr, and a legend of Australian publishing, Di Morrissey.

Thinkers, policy-makers, former politicians, academics and researchers, such as 2024 Australian of the Year pathologist Richard Scolyer and medical director of the Victorian Melanoma Institute Professor Victoria Mar will be with us.

Kim Williams, Chair of the ABC, is coming. So, too, Professor Marcia Langton, whose new co-authored book, *65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art*, on the history of Indigenous Art, is outstanding and beautiful.

Highlighting good journalism and offering our community a chance to celebrate – rather than attack – our nation's media is an important foundation stone of the Sorrento Writers Festival.

This year we will welcome Adele Ferguson, Paul Kelly, Kerry O'Brien, Eric Beecher, Stan Grant, Joe Aston, Norman Swan, Alan Kohler, Virginia Trioli, Rick Morton, John Silvester, Greg Sheridan, Caroline Wilson, Paddy Manning and Erik Jensen, among many other award-winning scribes.

If you love food, we have your back. Visiting chefs and cookbook authors will include Annie Smithers, Ben Shewry, Karen Martini, Alice Zaslavsky and Julia Busuttil Nishimura.

Among the new literary voices, we have plenty of rock stars, including Luke Horton, Raeden Richardson, Santilla Chingaipe, Gail Holmes, Kate Wild, Isaiiah Firebrace, Aarti Betigeri, Marion Taffe, Madeleine Cleary and Jane Yang.

Reading to children and the importance of giving a book to little readers and encouraging their imaginations and creativity is a big part of our festival

script. Our schools program this year extends to two days and we'll also be bringing secondary school students from Dromana and Rosebud Secondary Colleges to see Shakespeare performed in Sorrento.

What better way to connect children with books than to bring their heroes to Sorrento? Among our storytellers we will welcome Alison Lester, Isabelle Carmody, Judith Rossell, Tony Armstrong, Jane Godwin and Anna Walker.

Speaking of anniversaries, 2025 marks the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen's birth. We have an exciting breakfast session planned around this. And in the year of an election campaign, our Breakfast with the Bard this year will look at the political plays of William Shakespeare, the power struggles, the heroes and the villains.

Talking Footy is back. And we'll have a couple of late-in-the-day sessions, under the somewhat inventive titles 'Drinks with the Journos', 'Drinks with the Publishers' and 'Drinks with the Sportswriters'. These informal sessions offer our Festival attendees a chance to hear the other side of how stories are made, how they sometimes fall apart, win awards, find friends and enemies alike, and how every now and then they change thinking, legislation, policy – and then change people's lives.

On Friday April 25 our Festival will pause until 1pm to honour Anzac Day, its traditions and our fallen heroes. I am thrilled and delighted that this year we will host biographer Peter FitzSimons in conversation to talk about his new book on World War I hero Albert Jacka. We will also welcome lawyer and former TV producer Steve Vizard whose new book *Nation, Memory, Myth: Gallipoli and the Australian Imaginary* is certain to create discussion.

None of this vast and extraordinary offering would be possible without the participation of our writer and speaker friends. Their excitement about coming to Sorrento has been infectious and we thank them for giving so generously their time, their ideas and their insights. We are also grateful to the Australian publishing houses who work with us throughout the year to ensure their authors are represented at Victoria's biggest literary festival.

On behalf of our tiny Festival team whose dedication, creativity, great ideas and hard work inspire me every day, we hope you enjoy our 2025 program and wish you a wonderful long weekend.

**Corrie Perkin**  
Director

# Young Readers



Over two days St Joseph's and Sorrento Primary School will host a plethora of Australia's leading children's authors, illustrators and storytellers including Alison Lester, Anna Walker, Jane Godwin, Tony Armstrong, Judith Rosell, Jess Racklyeft, Jess Sanders and many more.

On Thursday after school we invite young families to participate in our Family Afternoon at St Joseph's Primary School. This will include a storytelling stage, activity stations and a chance to meet many of our favourite children's authors that we all know and love.

Local bookshop Antipodes will be on site for book sales and signings throughout the event and have generously donated vouchers for our dress-up competition.

This year we are thrilled to have been able to extend our Festival program to include year 9-12 secondary students at Rosebud and Dromana Secondary Schools. Students will visit the Festival to participate in our "Shakespeare Unpacked" series that explores three of Shakespeare's works that the students are currently studying.

Literature and English students will also be able to attend Festival sessions of their choosing free of charge, with thanks to Festival donors who have specifically donated to support this scheme.

We are sincerely grateful to Rosemary and David Geer for their support of our Children's Program. And if you would like to know more about our literacy projects for children on the southern Mornington Peninsula, or if you would like to donate to this important work, please contact us at [hello@sorrentowritersfestival.com.au](mailto:hello@sorrentowritersfestival.com.au)

The Sorrento Writers Festival's mission to improve literacy and enhance learning through books and reading continues in 2025. This year we are delighted to extend our program to both local primary and secondary schools and we will host a public Family Afternoon on Thursday April 24.



Established in 1872, Hotel Sorrento is an iconic establishment that has been welcoming locals and visitors for decades. As a third-generation family business, Hotel Sorrento prides itself on offering the best of the Mornington Peninsula. With two restaurants, four bars, conference facilities and luxury accommodation, there is something for everyone.



For bookings and enquiries scan the QR code.

5-15 Hotham Road, Sorrento, 3943  
03 5984 8000  
[hotel@hotelsorrento.com.au](mailto:hotel@hotelsorrento.com.au)

**HOTEL  
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EST. 1872

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**E** Eckersley  
Garden  
Architecture

# Events Map

## Places to shop

- Bookshop**
- 01 Antipodes Gallery & Bookshop
  - 02 Avenue Bookstore Festival Pop-Up
- Gifts & Homewares**
- 03 Cape Merchants (Sorrento Writers Festival Merchandise Store)
  - 04 Cape Outdoor
  - 05 Coastal Living
  - 06 Big Chair Living Sorrento Provincial Home Living
- Fashion**
- 07 Debs Boutique
  - 08 Siren Fine Jewellery
  - 09 Connie Collector
  - 10 Cable Melbourne
  - 11 Cross Classics Sorrento
  - 12 Viktoria & Woods Sorrento
  - 13 Husk Sorrento
  - 14 Country Road — Sorrento
  - 15 Saltwater Trading
  - 16 Sorrento Collective

## Places to eat

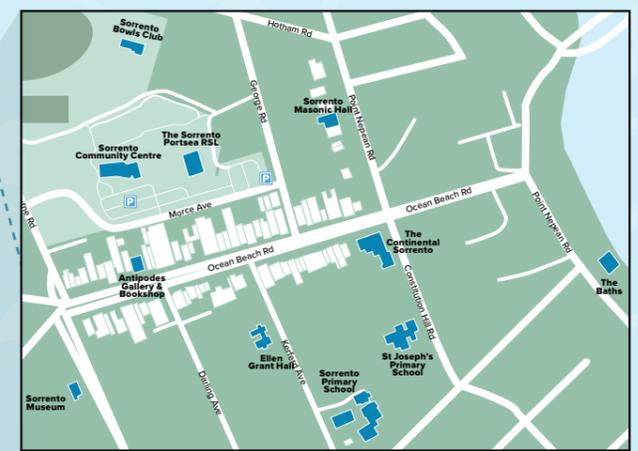
- 01 The Atrium
- 02 The Conti Bar
- 03 Audrey's
- 04 Itali.co Sorrento
- 05 Bistro Elba
- 06 Sage Sorrento

## Places to get coffee

- 01 The Atrium
- 02 The Sisters Kitchen Garden Cafe
- 03 Baked in Portsea
- 04 Buckley Sorrento
- 05 Stringers Sorrento
- 06 St Pauls General Store
- 07 Flat Blk
- 08 Le Capucin

## Accommodation

- 01 InterContinental Sorrento
- 02 Hotel Sorrento



## Festival venues

- 01 Sorrento BOWLS Club
- 02 Sorrento Community Centre
- 03 The Continental Sorrento
- 04 The Sorrento Portsea RSL
- 05 Sorrento Museum
- 06 The Baths
- 07 St Joseph's Primary School
- 08 Sorrento Primary School
- 09 Sorrento Masonic Centre
- 10 Sorrento Sailing and Couta boat Club
- 11 Ellen Grant Hall

F Sorrento Ferry stop  
 \*Locations are indicative, please check exact location yourself

Sorrento Writers Festival

10

# Words matter

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THE  
**CREATIVE  
 COACH**



The Sorrento Writers Festival is fortunate to have access to some of the town's most beautiful spaces. We have rooms with views, rooms with character and buildings that date back to the late 1800s.

This year, our Festival venues are all within walking distance from one another and all are around the main street environs.

We thank our friends from those community organisations who support our Festival with a "come and use our space" welcome. From the bowls club to the RSL, the spirit of Sorrento is alive and well.

And don't forget a visit to Antipodes, Sorrento's own indie bookstore and a highlight for all book-lovers.



## The Continental and InterContinental Sorrento

Our Festival Hub is The Continental Hotel, one of the Mornington Peninsula's architectural gems. Built in 1875 by Melbourne theatre impresario George Coppin, The Continental's two main Festival spaces are Halcyon Hall and The Ballroom.

This year, The Barlow will become the speakers own Green Room area and Avenue Bookstore will set up its Festival bookshop in the Coppin Lounge on level one.

You will find the Festival Box Office on the ground floor just near the stairs in front of the Barlow Room.

With the InterContinental Hotel next door and a selection of bars, restaurants and coffee spots, The Continental will be abuzz with activity over the Festival weekend.

The Continental and the InterContinental Sorrento are our treasured Festival partners and once again we thank them for their support. We look forward to staging together another remarkable four-day event.

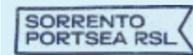
And if you are looking for a place to stay, visit [sorrento.intercontinental.com](http://sorrento.intercontinental.com) for luxury accommodation at the heart of the Festival.

### THE CONTINENTAL SORRENTO

1-21 Ocean Beach Road, Sorrento

### THE INTERCONTINENTAL SORRENTO

23 Constitution Hill Road, Sorrento



## Sorrento-Portsea RSL

Founded in 1919, the Sorrento-Portsea RSL brings together a strong community to honour the spirit of service and mateship. The building, tucked down below George Street, has a long tradition as a local hub for celebrations, commemorations and community support. It is home to the generations-old Tom Katz Live Music and Entertainment venue as well as the fabulous Sorrento Thai Restaurant and Jack's Bar and Lounge, and The Terrace.

Sorrento-Portsea RSL is a proud community-based, volunteer-run and not-for-profit organisation. There are no gaming machines and club members are proud to tell you its operation is supported by the hard work of members.

3 HURLEY STREET, SORRENTO

## Ellen Grant Hall and St Andrew's Presbyterian Church

The limestone St Andrew's Church was built in 1888 (it is one of only three intact limestone churches left on the Peninsula) and is one of Sorrento's finest buildings. Next door, the timber Ellen Grant Hall – a popular Festival venue – was built in 1937. Both buildings are a three-minute walk from The Continental's Festival hub.

43 KERFERD ROAD, SORRENTO



## Sorrento Museum

The Nepean Historical Society established its Museum in the Mechanics' Institute, a National Trust-classified building built of local limestone in 1876-77. The Museum is home to the Heritage Gallery, multimedia and lecture facilities, an extensive photo collection and documentary archive. Research and copying services are available on request, and visitors can search some open indexes and material online.

827 MELBOURNE ROAD, SORRENTO



## Sorrento Bowls Club

Sorrento Bowls Club is an iconic destination on the Mornington Peninsula and offers personalised barefoot bowls sessions year round, plus competitive pennant and social bowls from September until July. It is the oldest bowls club on the Mornington Peninsula and has been welcoming locals and tourists alike since 1934.

Festival events are held in the clubhouse, which can be accessed via Hotham Street or the football oval, the David Macfarlan Reserve.

The Sorrento Bowls Club is a 7-10 minute walk from the main street.

35 HOTHAM ROAD, SORRENTO



## The Baths, Sorrento

The Baths restaurant is located on the Sorrento foreshore with breathtaking views across Port Phillip Bay. The fully licensed restaurant offers casual relaxed dining every day for lunch, dinner, snacks, weddings and corporate events.

Each year, The Baths is the venue for our Political Lunch, this year on Thursday April 24. It's just a five-minute walk down the hill from The Continental and a great place for a coffee or meal.

3278 POINT NEPEAN ROAD, SORRENTO



## Sorrento Community Centre

Sorrento Community Centre aims to create a healthy, connected and vibrant community.

Through consultation and collaboration, the centre delivers community-driven programs, which include social, educational, recreational and support activities.

With seating for up to 300 people, it is the Festival's largest venue. You will find the centre at the bottom of the supermarket carpark – a brisk 5-7 minute walk from The Continental.

860-868 MELBOURNE ROAD, SORRENTO



## Antipodes Bookshop

Antipodes Bookshop & Gallery is a beautiful retail space in Sorrento's main street, and a year-round hub for book and literary activities and art exhibitions.

We encourage our Festival visitors to drop by Antipodes and enjoy the peaceful environment of a truly local indie bookstore.

138 OCEAN BEACH ROAD, SORRENTO

## Sorrento Masonic Centre

This year, Sorrento Writers Festival welcomes the Sorrento Masonic Centre into its venue mix. Just up the short hill behind Stringers café in the main street, it is a three-minute walk from The Continental and features two rooms – the main Masonic Hall and its adjacent meeting room.

The Masonic Centre was built in 1929 and is the home of the annual summer art show.

3385 POINT NEPEAN ROAD, SORRENTO

Please refer to our map on page 10 for directions.



# Special Events

## A festival of talks, debates, readings – and fun

Our 2025 program features more than 160 sessions across five days – from Festival Eve on Wednesday, April 23, through to our final afternoon on Sunday, April 27.

Apart from our ticketed sessions, we once again welcome back our free entry sessions: The Morning Feed, in which Tom Wright discusses the day's news with our experts, and Writers on Writing, in which authors talk about their work process, their writing journeys, their books and their future books.

Core program events are available to Early Bird, Weekend Pass and individual session ticket holders. But we also offer some special events which, over the past two years, have become crowd favourites/must-attends/wouldn't miss it/serious FOMO-triggers.

Our Special Events require separately purchased tickets, so please note that when you're booking your tickets and planning your Festival schedule. What we promise to deliver in turn: amazing talent, incredible discussions and value-for-money thought-and-life-changing experiences.

Sometimes, a glass of wine is included. In the case of our annual Political Lunch @ The Baths, there's a two-course lunch and at Words & Music 2 on Saturday night, a live band and non-stop dancing.

We hope you'll come along, bring your family and friends, and make the most of your Festival experience. We can't wait to see you.



### Wednesday April 23

5pm-7pm

Sorrento Portsea RSL

#### Don't Shoot The Messenger Live Podcast

Cost: \$45

Join Caroline Wilson and Corrie Perkin and special Festival guests as they bring to life a special Sorrento Writers Festival episode of their highly successful Don't Shoot The Messenger podcast.

### Thursday April 24

12 noon-2pm

The Baths Sorrento

#### Political Lunch @ The Baths

Cost: \$110

Our annual Political Lunch will be held on Thursday, April 24. Once again, Barrie Cassidy will discuss current Australian politics with our esteemed panel of journalists. This year, we welcome *The Australian's* editor-at-large Paul Kelly and award-winning journalist, author and commentator George Megalogenis.

### Thursday April 24

4pm-6pm

Halcyon Hall

#### Barry Jones Oration

\$55 (SOLD OUT)

(The Barry Jones Oration also includes opening night drinks and the presentation of the annual Sorrento Creative Writing Prize.)

We are delighted to welcome Julia Gillard, the 27th Prime Minister of Australia, as this year's Barry Jones Orator. Julia serves as the inaugural Chair of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership and is the Chair of Wellcome, a global charitable foundation which supports science to solve urgent health challenges. Julia is also an author, a podcaster and her oration will embrace those principles close to the heart of our great Festival friend, Barry Jones, AC.

Prior to drinks being served, we will present the annual \$5000 Sorrento Creative Writing Prize, generously donated each year by Dr Helen Sykes of Future Leaders.

This evening event is one of the highlights of our Festival program and booked out within three hours. You are welcome to join a waiting list via [hello@sorrentowritersfestival.com.au](mailto:hello@sorrentowritersfestival.com.au)

### Thursday April 24

6.15pm-7.30pm

Halcyon Hall

#### Talking Footy

Cost: \$40

Our panel of experts is back again – this year in a bigger venue. Join us for a drink and have a listen while our football friends discuss season 2025.

### Friday April 25

5.30pm-7pm

Halcyon Hall

#### Words & Music Act 1

##### The Voice in Music: How choirs enhance composition and musicianship

Cost: \$40

Hear Radio National *Music Show* host Andrew Ford, actor and singer Richard Piper, First Nations author and singer Nardi Simpson, musician and Chair of the ABC Kim Williams and arts writer and author Michael Shmith discuss the role of the choir in our musical lives. (This may include a choir performance!)

*Proceeds from this event go toward the Musical Enrichment Program for the Children of the Mornington Peninsula.*

### Saturday April 26

6.30pm-9pm

Sorrento Portsea RSL  
(the 21st century home of Tom Katz)

#### Words & Music Act 2

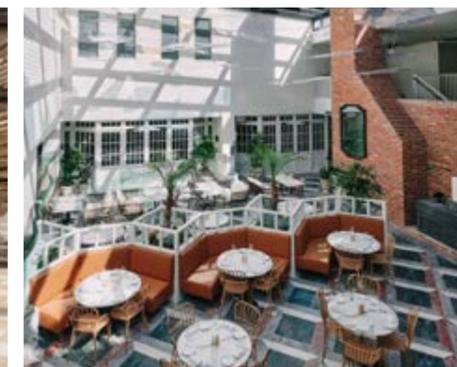
##### 1975: 50 Years Since The Oz Rock Explosion

**\$110 includes drink on arrival and pass-around food (with drinks and food available throughout the night at RSL bar prices).**

Dress code: 1975

Our Words & Music 2 is a show of two halves. Act 1: Moderator Michael Veitch (plus a surprise host) and panel Rebecca Barnard, Andrew Ford, Red Symons and Peter Wilmoth discuss the impact of *Countdown*, one of the great TV shows of Australian television history.

Act 2: After a 20-minute interval, The Screamin' Eagles – one of Australia's great rock 'n' roll bands – will sing the hits of 1975.



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Proud Supporter of Sorrento Writers Festival

# Wednesday Highlights

## Festival Eve *kick-off*



Four amazing author events, nine outstanding authors, a live podcast recording and a glass of wine at the end of the day – what a great way to start your Sorrento Writers Festival 2025.

At 11.30am our Writers Life series at the Sorrento Portsea RSL kicks off with children’s book team Jane Godwin and Anna Walker (*Go Go and the Silver Shoes, Starting School, Today We Have No Plans*). They will be joined by multi-award-winning children’s author Alison Lester (*Magic Beach, Noni The Pony, Are We There Yet? Imagine, Clive Eats Alligators*) for a discussion about their work, their lives and the joys of writing for children.

From 12.30pm-1.30pm Festival Director Corrie Perkin will interview chefs Annie Smithers and Ben Shewry about their new memoirs, while at 2pm crime writer Chris Hammer and actor, director and author Ailsa Piper will discuss their new books. From 3.30pm-4.30pm historian and biographer Judith Brett and bestselling author, journalist Peter FitzSimons, will discuss writing biographies and how they each approach their research.

At 5pm, the annual *Don’t Shoot The Messenger* live podcast recording will get under way. Co-hosts Caroline Wilson and Corrie Perkin will be joined by special guests for 90 minutes of conversations, interviews, book and film reviews, footy and fun. We thank our friends at Sorrento Portsea RSL for hosting our Festival Eve afternoon. Drinks and snacks will be available at bar prices and we hope to see you there.

### Melbourne’s most experienced Family Law firm. Now here on the Peninsula.

Families, in all their various shapes and sizes, are what life is all about. Literally.

Which doesn’t mean we’re all automatically equipped to deal with the challenges they throw at us.

If only.

The intricacies of marriage and blended marriages; the complexities of property; the challenges of protection and distribution. Taxes. Inheritance.

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And if something threatens that fairness, there’s nothing more important than having experienced professionals on your side.

At Cote Family Lawyers, we’ve been insisting on fairness since 2002. We wouldn’t go so far as to say we’ve seen it all, but we’ve seen most of it. We’re uniquely well qualified to help you to insist on fairness for you and your family.

We’ve recently opened a “boutique” office in Balnarring.

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Balnarring  
03 6927 5010



Special separate ticketed SWF event

Free event

Time	Venue	Sorrento Portsea RSL	Sorrento Museum
11:30am –12:15pm		A Child’s Life: Jane Godwin, Alison Lester, Anna Walker with Laura Macdonald (M)	
12.30pm –1.30pm		A Cook’s Life: Two authors discuss how food inspired their writing. Ben Shewry and Annie Smithers with Corrie Perkin (M) Please note this session may have previously been incorrectly advertised at 2.30pm (12.30pm is the correct start time)	
2pm –3pm		A Writer’s Life: Chris Hammer and Ailsa Piper discuss their author journey with Jaclyn Crupi (M) Please note this session may have previously been incorrectly advertised at 3pm (2pm is the correct start time)	
3.30pm –4.30pm		A Biographer’s Life: Peter FitzSimons and Judith Brett in conversation with Tom Wright (M)	
5pm –7pm		Don’t Shoot The Messenger Live Podcast with Corrie Perkin, Caroline Wilson and Festival guests This event is supported by Red Energy	Bunurong on the Peninsula: From the Beginning of Time.

## You wouldn’t read about it!



The beautiful library at Village Glen Retirement Community is absolutely state-of-the-art, with thousands of books, and there’s barista coffee in CJ’s lounge, right next door.

Of course, when you are not reading, there’s bowls, golf, the gym, the pool, croquet... all in a wonderful garden setting.



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# Thursday Highlights



## In Conversation: Robbie Arnott

Thursday April 24  
9am-10am

[The Ballroom, The Continental Sorrento](#)

Tasmanian writer Robbie Arnott is one of Australia's most exciting and talented authors. His debut novel *Flames* (2018), won a *Sydney Morning Herald* Best Young Novelist award and a Tasmanian Premier's Literary Prize. It was also short-listed for several other awards.

Robbie's second book *The Rain Heron* (2020), won *The Age* Book of the Year award and was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award, the ALS Gold Medal, the Voss Literary Prize and an Adelaide Festival Award.

We are thrilled Robbie is coming to Sorrento to help us celebrate his latest novel *Dusk*, described by *The Guardian* as "deeply felt book reimagines myths with fascinating results". We look forward to his discussion with Celia Hirsh at The Continental.



## Grey Nomads on Tour

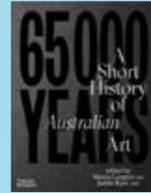
Grey Nomads On Tour – and other reasons to discover Australia

Thursday April 24  
1pm-2pm

[Masonic Hall 2](#)

Fiona Brockhoff, Heather Ewart and Anthony Sharwood with **Steve Perkin (M)**

Join journalist and *ABC Back Roads* host Heather Ewart, garden designer, author and nature lover Fiona Brockhoff, nature writer and author Anthony Sharwood and journalist and frequent outback traveller Steve Perkin as they discuss the joys, the fun and the freaky moments of exploring Australia via van, car or four-wheel drive.



## Art Stream (3) 65,000 Years, Indigenous art and its impact

Thursday April 24  
12 noon-12.45pm

[The Ballroom, The Continental Sorrento](#)



Marcia Langton, Margo Neale and Judith Ryan with **Katrina Strickland (M)**

Professor Marcia Langton and former NGV Australian art curator Judith Ryan – together with publisher Thames and Hudson – have produced a beautiful hard cover tribute to First Nations art over the past 65,000 years.



We are pleased to present this session as part of our Annual Art Stream. This event is supported by OTOMYS Contemporary Art Gallery.



## Gallipoli 110 Years On

What does this controversial military campaign tell us about ourselves and our current world?

Thursday April 24  
2.30pm-3.30pm

[Sorrento Community Centre](#)

Peter FitzSimons, Amanda Laugesen and Steve Vizard with **Michael Veitch (M)**

On Friday April 25 there will be no Festival sessions until 1pm, after the town's official Anzac Day ceremonies have concluded. We urge our Festival visitors to take part in the Dawn Service on the Sorrento foreshore, join the RSL breakfast or be part of the annual march at 12 noon.

This year on Anzac Day Eve, we host a special tribute to Australia's most famous campaign. Discussing his new book *In Nation, Memory, Myth*, Steve Vizard will discuss the foundational myth of Gallipoli as a sacred bearer of Australian national values and identity with author Peter FitzSimons and academic Amanda Laugesen.

Peter's new book examines the life of Gallipoli and Western Front soldier Albert Jacka, the first Australian soldier to be awarded the Victoria Cross in World War I.

Associate Professor Amanda Laugesen is Director of the Australian National Dictionary Centre at the Australian National University. Among other books, she is the author of *Diggerspeak: the Language of Australians at War* and *Boredom is the Enemy: The Intellectual and Imaginative Worlds of Australian Soldiers in the Great War and Beyond*.

# Thursday Highlights



## The Next Gen: Meet our hottest new writers

Thursday April 24  
2.30pm-3.30pm

[Masonic Hall 1](#)

Jumaana Abdu, Luke Horton, Raeden Richardson and Madeleine Ryan with **Jo Dyer (M)**



Australia is a nation of rich storytelling and fine literary traditions. Our publishing sector frequently punches above its weight and, as our 2025 Festival line-up shows, there is extraordinary depth and creativity within the nation's writing pool.



This session pays tribute to those young writers who have taken the plunge. With former Adelaide Writers Week Director Jo Dyer as our host, we will meet four young writers whose new books are swiftly finding reader fans.



## In Conversation: Barry Jones

Thursday April 24  
2.30pm-3.30pm

[Halcyon Hall, The Continental Sorrento](#)

Barry Jones with **Ranald Macdonald (M)**

Each opening night, the Sorrento Writers Festival presents The Barry Jones Oration. Since 2022 when the Festival was just a whacky idea, Barry has offered friendship, ideas, support and wisdom on a raft of session topics.

An academic, lawyer, writer and author, former federal science minister and respected social activist, Barry Jones is admired across all political parties and in all states.

He also loves books – and has written a few, too. So when it came to deciding who we might honour with our annual Oration, Festival Director Corrie Perkin said there was one stand-out leading Australian whose liberal views and compassionate sensibilities align well with our Festival's.

"Barry's life mission is to make the world a better and more civilised and rational place," says Corrie. "He deserves all our thanks for a lifetime's contribution to the Australian community. Our annual Barry Jones Oration will always have prime time place in our Festival program."

This year we decided that prior to the Oration, you might like to hear Barry's story for yourself. We asked Ranald Macdonald, former newspaper proprietor, academic and great friend of Barry's, to host this important interview and program highlight. We hope you enjoy their chat.



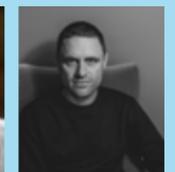
## The Barry Jones Oration By Julia Gillard and the presentation of the 2025 Sorrento Creative Writing Prize

Thursday April 24  
4pm-6pm

[Halcyon Hall, The Continental Sorrento](#)

We are honoured to acknowledge Julia Gillard, lawyer, board member, former prime minister, podcaster and author as the presenter of this year's Barry Jones Oration.

Julia's speech will be followed by the presentation of the 2025 Sorrento Creative Writing Prize, awarded each year by Dr Helen Sykes of Future Leaders.



## Drinks With the Crime Writers

Thursday April 24  
6pm-7.30pm

[The Ballroom, Continental Hotel](#)

Kirsten Alexander, Shelley Burr, Chris Hammer and Christian White with **Fiona Gruber (M)**

The first of our 'Festival Drinks With ...' series kicks off on Thursday night with journalist, presenter and writer Fiona Gruber in conversation with four Australian crime writers about their work, their stories, their on-tour stories and off-tour highlights.

On Friday night Drinks with the Publishers will be followed by Drinks with the Journos. And then on Saturday it's Drinks With The Sportswriters.

Grab a glass of wine at the bar and join us in The Ballroom and Halcyon Hall at The Continental Hotel for this fun new series.

Venue	Halcyon Hall (The Continental Sorrento)	The Ballroom (The Continental Sorrento)	The Barlow (The Continental)	Ellen Grant Hall	Sorrento Bowls Club	Sorrento Community Centre	Sorrento Masonic Centre (1)	Sorrento Masonic Centre (2)	The Baths	Sorrento Museum
<b>8am –8.45am</b>	<b>The Morning Feed</b> Judith Brett and Barry Jones with <b>Tom Wright (M)</b> <i>This session is supported by Pitcher Partners</i>	<b>Art Stream (1)</b> <b>In Conversation:</b> Patrick McCaughey with <b>Fiona Gruber (M)</b> <i>This session is supported by Otomys Art Gallery</i>	<b>In Conversation:</b> Richard N. Haass (via Zoom from New York) with <b>Brendan Donohoe (M)</b>							
<b>9am –10am</b>	<b>In Conversation:</b> Robbie Arnott with <b>Celia Hirsh (M)</b>	<b>All Fired Up: How books change children’s lives</b> Jane Godwin and Alison Lester with <b>Francesca Carter (M)</b> <i>This session is supported by Mornington Peninsula Foundation</i>		<b>You Can Be In My Gang: Exploring the powerful dynamic of friendship groups in fiction</b> Kirsten Alexander, Christine Keighery and Christian White with <b>Laura Macdonald (M)</b>	<b>In Conversation:</b> Ben Shewry with <b>Jaclyn Crupi (M)</b>	<b>In Conversation:</b> Peter FitzSimons with <b>Heather Ewart (M)</b>	<b>Shakespeare Unpacked: A special event for Mornington Peninsula secondary school students and festival goers</b> <b>Act 1</b> <b>9.45am-10.30am</b> <i>This discussion will include questions such as: Who was the Bard? What do we know about the times in which he lived? What inspired his great plays? How have they inspired other stories in fiction, film and TV? Why are his stories still relevant 400 years later?</i> Barry Jones, Gail Holmes, Jane Montgomery Griffiths and Richard Piper with <b>Michael Cathcart (M)</b> <i>This program is supported by The Balnaves Foundation</i>	<b>My New Book (1):</b> Three new writers discuss their work practice, their stories and their lucky break Theodore Ell, Laura McCluskey and Raeden Richardson with <b>Tim Byrne (M)</b>		
<b>10.30am –11.30am</b>		<b>Art Stream (2)</b> <b>My Family and Art</b> Christabel Blackman and Alexander Edward Gilly with <b>Hannie Rayson (M)</b> <i>This session is supported by Otomys Art Gallery</i>		<b>The Good, The Bad and the Seriously Disturbed: How to create memorable characters</b> Emily Maguire, Sophie Green and Christian White with <b>Jayne Tuttle (M)</b>	<b>Does History Repeat? (And if so, should we be nervous?)</b> Judith Brett, Dennis Glover and Don Watson with <b>Tom Wright (M)</b>	<b>Between Us: Two friends discuss the ties that bind</b> Annie Smithers and Virginia Trioli with <b>Katrina Strickland (M)</b>	<b>10.30am-10.45am INTERVAL</b> <b>10.45am-11.30am</b> <b>Act 2</b> A deep dive into three of Shakespeare’s top works: <i>A Midsummer Night’s Dream, Macbeth and Romeo and Juliet.</i> Richard Piper and Jane Montgomery with <b>Michael Cathcart (M)</b> <b>11.30am-11.45am</b> <b>Shakespeare Q&amp;A</b> <i>This program is supported by The Balnaves Foundation</i>	<b>The Ghosts Are Here: First Nations perspectives on European explorers</b> Craig Cormick, Darren Rix, Anthony Sharwood and Tasma Walton with <b>Natasha Mitchell (M)</b> <i>This session will be recorded for ABC RN’s Big Ideas podcast</i>		<b>Russia and Ukraine: A complicated history explained</b> Robert Horvath and Marko Pavlyshyn with <b>Peter Inge</b>
<b>12 noon –12.45pm</b>	<b>Art Stream (3)</b> <b>After 65,000 Years, Forever New Indigenous art and its impact</b> Marcia Langton, Margo Neale and Judith Ryan with <b>Katrina Strickland (M)</b> <i>This session is supported by Otomys Art Gallery</i>	<b>In Conversation:</b> Di Morrissey with <b>Fiona Gruber (M)</b>		<b>65 Years Since Green Eggs and Ham: And other children’s classics we love</b> Alison Lester, Kate Mildenhall and Jess Sanders with <b>Nicole Hayes (M)</b> <i>This session is supported by Mornington Peninsula Foundation</i>	<b>Why We Love A Strong Woman Story</b> Kylie Mirmohamadi, Sophie Green and Tasma Walton with <b>Charlotte Guest (M)</b>	<b>My Australian Landscape</b> Robbie Arnott, Chris Hammer and Nardi Simpson with <b>Jock Serong (M)</b>	<b>How A Faraway Place Inspired My Story: Exploring the importance of setting</b> Theodore Ell, Irma Gold and Ailsa Piper with <b>Michael Veitch (M)</b>	<b>Our Modern World, In My Book</b> Melanie Cheng, Luke Horton and Madeleine Ryan with <b>Rose Donohoe (M)</b>	<b>The Political Lunch:</b> Paul Kelly and George Megalogenis with <b>Barrie Cassidy (M)</b>	
<b>1pm –2pm</b>	<b>Kitchen Controversial</b> Why restaurant life is not for the faint-hearted Karen Martini, Ben Shewry and Annie Smithers with <b>Celia Hirsh (M)</b> <i>This session is supported by Hotel Sorrento</i>	<b>Max Dupain in Focus (4)</b> Helen Ennis discusses her biography of one of Australia’s greatest photographers with <b>Michael Shmith (M)</b> <i>This session is supported by Otomys Art Gallery</i>		<b>Books v Screens: The Great 21st Century Parenting Challenge</b> Jane Godwin, Norman Swan and Anna Walker with <b>Jayne Tuttle (M)</b> <i>This session is supported by Mornington Peninsula Foundation</i>	<b>My First Book (2): Three new writers discuss their work practice, their stories and their lucky break</b> Gail Holmes, Madeleine Cleary and Jane Yang with <b>Mel Fulton (M)</b>		<b>Grey Nomads On Tour – and other reasons to discover Australia</b> Fiona Brockhoff, Heather Ewart and Anthony Sharwood with <b>Steve Perkin (M)</b>	<b>Meet My Family: Our memoir writers discuss how their own tribe’s story became a good book</b> Christabel Blackman, Lech Blaine and Samah Sabawi with <b>Jane Hone (M)</b>		
<b>2.30pm –3.30pm</b>	<b>In Conversation:</b> Barry Jones with <b>Ranald Macdonald (M)</b>	<b>Art Stream (5)</b> <b>How ‘Blue Poles’ Forever Changed Australia’s Gallery Landscape</b> Tom McLroy with <b>Virginia Trioli (M)</b> <i>This session is supported by Otomys Art Gallery</i>		<b>It Takes A Village: The role of small-town communities in fiction</b> Sophie Green, Irma Gold and Laura McCluskey and with <b>Charlotte Guest (M)</b> <i>This session is supported by the Sorrento Chamber of Commerce</i>	<b>Walking Together: The potential of First Nations culture to enhance our lives</b> Craig Cormick, Anita Heiss, Margo Neale and Darren Rix with <b>Inala Cooper (M)</b>	<b>Gallipoli 110 Years On: What does this controversial military campaign tell us about ourselves and our current world?</b> Peter FitzSimons and Steve Vizard with <b>Michael Veitch (M)</b>	<b>Dear Son: Talking about fatherhood, families and raising boys</b> Thomas Mayo and Norman Swan with <b>Hannie Rayson (M)</b>	<b>The Next Gen: Meet our hottest new writers</b> Jumaana Abdu, Luke Horton, Raeden Richardson and Madeleine Ryan with <b>Jo Dyer (M)</b>		
<b>4pm –5pm</b>	<b>4pm-6pm</b> <b>The Barry Jones Oration by Julia Gillard</b> SWF Creative Writing Prize presented by Helen Sykes of Future Leaders <i>This event includes Opening Night Drinks</i>	<b>What I Learned: Three biographers explain the impact of writing another person’s life story</b> Judith Brett, Helen Ennis and Anthony Sharwood with <b>Jane Montgomery Griffiths (M)</b>		<b>Writers On Writing</b> Gail Holmes, Finegan Kruckemeyer, Kylie Mirmohamadi, Luke Horton and Samah Sabawi with <b>Irma Gold (M)</b>	<b>Re-imagining The Past: How I found my historical novel</b> Malcolm Knox, Emily Maguire and Jane Yang with <b>Mel Fulton (M)</b>	<b>Hold the Front Page: A fluid space to discuss the world’s fast-moving events</b>				<b>5pm-5.45pm</b> <b>The Sorrento Boys – Lost at Fromelles.</b> <b>Please book via TryBooking</b>
<b>6pm –7.30pm</b>	<b>6.15pm-7.30pm</b> <b>Talking Footy</b> Craig Hutchison, Titus O’Reily and Caroline Wilson with <b>Steve Perkin (M)</b>	<b>Drinks With The Crime Writers:</b> Kirsten Alexander, Shelley Burr, Chris Hammer and Christian White with <b>Fiona Gruber (M)</b>								



## Richard N. Haass Wither American diplomacy?

Friday April 25  
1pm-2pm

Halcyon Hall, The Continental Sorrento

Richard N. Haass **with Brendan Donohoe (M)**

Richard Nathan Haass is an American diplomat. He was president of the Council on Foreign Relations from July 2003 to June 2023, he is a former director of policy planning for the US Department of State, and he was a close adviser to Secretary of State Colin Powell in the George W. Bush administration.

We are honoured that Richard will be joining us via Zoom from his home in New York. Host Brendan Donohoe will discuss with Richard a raft of topics, including the Trump administration's Russia policy, the war in Ukraine, Gaza and what next, and other global political issues. We highly recommend this session.



## The Great Gatsby on its 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary

Friday April 25  
2.30pm-3.30pm

Ellen Grant Hall

Lucy Grant, Seth Robinson, **Jonty Claypole and Sophie Gee (M)**

"My new novel appears in late March: *The Great Gatsby*," wrote F. Scott Fitzgerald to book editor friend Max Perkins in 1925. "It represents about a year's work and I think it's about ten years better than anything I've done. All my harsh smartness has been kept ruthlessly out of it..."

One hundred years after it was first published, *The Great Gatsby* endures. The book's themes of class and privilege, the pursuit of the American Dream, power and success still resonate. It remains one of the 20<sup>th</sup> century's most-studied and discussed texts.

Is it the greatest American novel? Our panel – writer Lucy Grant, academic and writer Seth Robinson, writer, documentary producer and arts administrator Jonty Claypole, and his *Secret Life of Books* co-host, literature academic Sophie Gee – discuss.



## It Started With A Dot: Understanding melanoma and other cancer stories

Friday April 25  
2.30pm-3.30pm

The Ballroom, The Continental Sorrento

Jess Armstrong, Victoria Mar, Paula Fox, Richard Scolyer **with Norman Swan (M)**

Join Radio National Health Report presenter and author Norman Swan as he discusses cancer and its life-changing impact with Australian of the Year Professor Richard Scolyer, melanoma expert Professor Victoria Mar, FUCA founder Jess Armstrong and philanthropist Paula Fox.



## Unpacking the 2025 Election

Friday April 25  
2.30pm-3.30pm

Sorrento Community Centre

George Megalogenis, Rick Morton and Julianne Schultz **with Sally Warhaft (M)**

A year ago, local political pundits were tipping an almost-certain second term for the Albanese government. Twelve months later, the mood in the room – and across the nation – has shifted. The 2025 Federal Election will be a popular talking point across our Festival weekend. Let's start with journalists George Megalogenis and Rick Morton, and media academic Professor Julianne Schultz in this important session, moderated by presenter Sally Warhaft as part of the Wheeler Centre's Fifth Estate series.



## Sometimes My Imagination Just Runs Away...

Friday April 25  
2.30pm-3.30pm

Room 2, Sorrento Masonic Centre

Melanie Cheng, Michelle de Kretser, Malcolm Knox and Jock Serong **with Rosemarie Milsom (M)**

Fiction writers depend on active imaginations and wildly audacious plots to create their novels. So how does that work when, just like all of us, they pause the laptop to pay the car rego, drop kids at school, visit the supermarket and all those other mundane life chores? Melanie Cheng, Michelle de Kretser, Malcolm Knox and Jock Serong discuss with Newcastle Writers Festival Director Rosemarie Milsom the workday escape to a literary land of make-believe.



## How To Handle Europe and Other Urgent World Issues

Friday April 25  
4pm-5pm

Ellen Grant Hall

John Lyons, Greg Sheridan, Bruce Wolpe **with Sally Warhaft (M)**

The future of Ukraine, NATO and the wider European community is being threatened by – who'd have thought? – the new US President, Vice-President and Secretary of Defense.

Vladimir Putin is emboldened, the Far Right is on the rise, and China is watching.

Meanwhile Gaza continues to demand the world's urgent attention.

With enormous drama and speed, the world has changed since we first started planning this session six months ago. All the more reason to hear the latest from ABC award-winning journalist and author John Lyons, *The Australian's* foreign affairs specialist Greg Sheridan, Bruce Wolpe of University of Sydney's United States Studies Centre with journalist Sally Warhaft in the moderator's chair.



## The Voice In Music

Friday April 25  
5.30pm-7pm

Halcyon Hall, Continental Hotel

### Words & Music Concert Act 1

Long before there were orchestras, there were voices. The art of singing together as a group is only a few centuries old and choirs are now a vital part of musical performance.

Our panel – Radio National *Music Show* presenter Andrew Ford, actor and singer Richard Piper, musician and writer Nardi Simpson, and Kim Williams, composer, musician and ABC Chairperson, will discuss the role of choirs in our lives with journalist and former *Age* opera critic Michael Shmith.

*Please note: funds raised from your ticket purchase to this event will go toward the Mornington Peninsula Musical Enrichment Program, a project that buses local schoolchildren to the Arts Centre in Melbourne to see musical performances. This important initiative fosters a love of classical music in young people and inspires children to follow their own music dreams.*



## An Evening With Sir Ian Rankin

Friday April 25  
7pm-8pm

Halcyon Hall, Continental Hotel

Ian Rankin **with Jason Steger (M)**

Ian Rankin is one of Britain's most popular crime writers. His Inspector Rebus novels are international bestsellers and 13 of the books have been adapted for television.

Coming to us via Zoom from his home in Edinburgh, Sir Ian will discuss his work, his life and his new novel *Midnight and Blue* with Jason Steger. Join us for a glass of wine and an evening with the engaging Ian Rankin.

Venue	Halcyon Hall (The Continental Sorrento)	The Ballroom (The Continental Sorrento)	Ellen Grant Hall	Sorrento Bowls Club	Sorrento Community Centre	Sorrento Masonic Centre (1)	Sorrento Masonic Centre (2)	Sorrento Museum	St Andrew's Church
1pm - 2pm	In Conversation: Michelle de Kretser with Fiona Gruber (M)	Come Together: How books can create connections between black and white Australia Anita Heiss, Thomas Mayo, Margo Neale and Tasma Walton with Inala Cooper (M)	Why Are Our Kids Anxious and Other Perplexing Parenting Issues Jess Sanders and Norman Swan with Stephen Lunn (M) <i>This session is supported by Coote Family Lawyers</i>	Nature, My Great Escape: Tales of growing, re-wilding and rejuvenating Robbie Arnott, Shelley Burr, Anthony Sharwood and Amanda Walton with Jane Hone (M)		The Whitlam Legacy, 1975: Why Australia was never the same again Jenny Hocking, Tom McIlroy, Henry Rosenbloom and Anne Summers with Tom Wright (M)	Up Close and Personal: The trials and triumphs of writing biography Alexander Edward Gilly, Sean Kelly and Grantlee Kieza with Jaclyn Crupi (M)	Migration Stories in the Round: How human journeys impact storytelling Jumaana Abdu, Aarti Betigeri (M), Melanie Cheng and Samah Sabawi	Spreading The Word: The role of books in faith Stan Grant and Greg Sheridan with Laura Macdonald (M)
2.30pm - 3.30pm	Food As Solace: How cooking helps me through the bad times and the good Julia Busuttill Nishimura, Karen Martini and Virginia Trioli with Caroline Wilson (M) <i>This session is supported by Hotel Sorrento</i>	It Started With A Dot: Understanding melanoma and other cancer stories Jess Armstrong, Victoria Mar, Paula Fox, Richard Scolyer with Norman Swan (M)	<i>The Great Gatsby</i> 100 Years On: Is it the great American novel? Lucy Grant, Seth Robinson, Jonty Claypole and Sophie Gee (M) <i>This session is supported by Coote Family Lawyers</i>	In Conversation: Kim Williams with Kerry O'Brien (M)	It's About The Optics, Stupid: Unpacking the 2025 election George Megalogenis, Rick Morton and Julianne Schultz with Sally Warhaft (M)	In Conversation: Anne Summers with Ramona Koval (M)	Sometimes My Imagination Just Runs Away... Melanie Cheng, Michelle de Kretser, Malcolm Knox and Jock Serong with Rosemarie Milsom (M)	Bad Guys I Have Known: Murder mysteries and how to write them Shelley Burr, Chris Hammer and Mark Smith with Tim Byrne (M)	I Talk To The Trees: In praise of nature's enduring force Inga Simpson, Dave Witty and Harry Youngman with Steve Perkin (M)
4pm - 5pm	How To Handle Europe and Other Urgent World Issues John Lyons, Greg Sheridan, Bruce Wolpe with Sally Warhaft (M)	Your Life, My Words: The art of telling someone else's story Julia Baird, Santilla Chingaipe, Grantlee Kieza and David Leser with Michael Veitch (M) <i>This session is supported by Village Glen</i>	Media Moguls, The Old and The New Eric Beecher, Randal Macdonald with Tom Wright (M)	Drinks With The Publishers Ben Ball, Michael Heyward and Catherine Milne with Corrie Perkin (M)		In Conversation Stan Grant with Jason Steger (M)	I Wrote a Bestseller - And Then What? Lech Blaine and J.P. Pomare with Hannie Rayson (M)	When The Past Invades Our Present: Three novelists discuss their style of historical fiction writing Anita Heiss, Malcolm Knox and Tasma Walton with Inala Cooper (M)	
5.30pm - 7pm	The Evening Feed & Drinks With The Journos Eric Beecher, David Marr, John Silvester, Caroline Wilson, Geraldine Brooks with Corrie Perkin (M) <i>This session is supported by Pitcher Partners</i>	Words & Music Act 1 The Voice in Music: How choirs enhance composition and musicianship Andrew Ford, Richard Piper, Nardi Simpson and Kim Williams <i>Presented by the Musical Enrichment Program for the Children of the Mornington Peninsula</i>		5pm - 6.30pm Barefoot Bowls and Read Out Loud: Our speakers read and recite some of their favourite passages, poems, speeches and soliloquies Jonty Claypole, Lucy Grant, Finegan Kruckemeyer, Jane Montgomery Griffiths, Ailsa Piper, and Clara Tuite with Michael Cathcart (M)				5pm Limeburners, Convicts, Drunkenness and Death: Point Nepean 1835-1840	
7pm - 8pm	In Conversation: Ian Rankin (via Zoom from London) with Jason Steger (M)	7pm-8:30pm Story Slam with Jane Hone							

# Anzac Day in Sorrento

The Sorrento Writers Festival's end-of-April scheduling means that some years, our event will fall on Anzac Day. We remain deeply committed to the remembrance and acknowledgement of our past and present service men and women. With our friends at the Sorrento Portsea RSL, we work hard to ensure our community organisations deliver outstanding Anzac Day events for all local residents and visitors. Here are some of the Anzac Day offerings in Sorrento, Friday April 25. **From 6am:** The Dawn Service will be held at Sorrento Foreshore near the war monument and opposite the Koonya Hotel. All welcome as the Sorrento Portsea RSL and wider Sorrento

community gather to pay tribute to those who have fallen during war service **7.30am:** Community breakfast at the Sorrento Portsea RSL, 3 Hurley Street, Sorrento **11.30am:** The Anzac Day March takes place down Sorrento's main street **1pm:** The Sorrento Writers Festival resumes in various Sorrento locations The Festival also has scheduled some discussions relating to conflict, world hot spots, war and key war figures. We hope you will join us. Lest we forget.

## Wednesday April 23

3.30pm-4.30pm  
Sorrento Portsea RSL

### A Biographer's Life:

Peter FitzSimons and Judith Brett in conversation with Tom Wright (M).

## Thursday April 24

9am-10am  
Sorrento Community Centre

### In Conversation:

Peter FitzSimons will discuss his Albert Jacka biography and other war books including *Kokoda* (2004), *Gallipoli* (2014) and *The Battle of Long Tan* (2022) with ABC journalist and presenter Heather Ewart (M)

## Thursday April 24

2.30pm-3.30pm  
Sorrento Community Centre

### Gallipoli 110 Years On: What does this controversial military campaign tell us about ourselves and our current world?

Peter FitzSimons, Amanda Laugesen and Steve Vizard with Michael Veitch (M)

## Thursday April 24

4pm-5pm  
Ellen Grant Hall

### How To Handle Europe and Other Urgent World Issues

Author and ABC Washington correspondent John Lyons, *The Australian's* foreign affairs correspondent Greg Sheridan, US politics commentator Bruce Wolpe with Sally Warhaft (M)

## Saturday April 26

12 noon-1pm  
Sorrento Masonic Centre

### World War Fiction: For novelists, it's an ongoing rich and dramatic landscape

Best-selling novelists Belinda Alexandra and Natasha Lester with Michael Veitch (M)



## Sunday April 27

12 noon-1pm  
Sorrento Bowls Club

### Telling the Truth About Australia's History

Santilla Chingaipe, Thomas Mayo and Don Watson with Inala Cooper (M)

## Sunday April 27

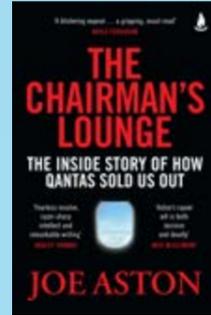
3pm-4pm  
Halcyon Hall, The Continental Sorrento

### Enter The Strongman: How and why has authoritarianism become popular again?

Nick Bryant, Dennis Glover, Julianne Schultz and Barry Jones with Brendan Donohoe (M)

# Saturday Highlights

# Saturday Highlights



## What went wrong with Qantas?

Saturday April 26  
9am-10am

Halcyon Hall, The Continental Sorrento

Joe Aston with **Brendan Donohoe (M)**

When former *AFR* Rear Window columnist Joe Aston's book on Qantas arrived in bookshops last November, it became one of the most sought-after reads and a Christmas 2024 bestseller. How could a successful aviation company with an internationally-respected reputation so quickly become a boardroom basket case plagued by ego and mismanagement?

Joe Aston will discuss his new book *The Chairman's Lounge: The inside story of how Qantas sold us out* with award-winning journalist Brendan Donohoe.



## In Conversation: Helen Garner

Saturday April 26  
10.30am-11.30am

Sorrento Community Centre

Helen Garner with **David Leser (M)**

Join respected Australian feature writer David Leser as he chats with one of the greats of Australian literature. Over her long career, Helen Garner (*Monkey Grip*, *The Children's Bach*, *The First Stone*, *Joe Cinque's Consolation*, *This House of Grief*, *The Season*) has won most of the nation's major book awards, including the National Book Council Award, the Ned Kelly Award, the Victorian, Queensland, West Australian and New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards, and a Walkley Award.

We look forward to her discussion with award-winning feature writer David Leser.



## The Morning Feed Our experts discuss the day's big news stories

The Morning Feed  
8am-8.45am

Halcyon Hall, The Continental Sorrento

Tom Wright and daily guests

Between 8am and 8.45am on Thursday, Saturday and Sunday our host Tom Wright will discuss the day's news with two special Festival guests. These are free sessions and all are welcome, so grab your coffee and croissant and join us for a stimulating start to the day.

There is no Morning Feed on Friday, April 25, due to Anzac Day services. Please join Tom and Festival Director Corrie Perkin for a 5.30pm-7pm special Evening Feed and Drinks With the Journos, including David Marr, John Silvester and Caroline Wilson (Please note: this is not a free session, tickets are \$30 with drinks at bar prices.)

## The evolution of Australian food

Saturday April 26  
10.30am-11.30am

The Ballroom, The Continental Sorrento

### From Mashed Peas to Smashed Peas:

How Australian family food has evolved in 50 years

Julia Busuttill, Nishimura, Sarah Pound and Lauren Samuelsson with **Jaclyn Crupi (M)**

Saturday April 26  
12 noon-1pm

Ellen Grant Hall

### From Lamingtons to Legacy: *Australian Women's Weekly's Culinary Influence*

Nadine Ingram, Lauren Samuelsson and Deborah Thomas with **Celia Hirsh (M)**

On Saturday April 26 we will host two food sessions that celebrate the evolution of Australian cuisine and the development of a food culture that has inspired chefs, cooks and restaurant owners around the world.

Join our food writers, chefs, TV presenters and food historians in a walk down memory lane as we trace the journey from mashed peas with (very grey) roast lamb and gravy, to smashed peas on crostini accompanied by toasted pancetta crumbs and feta.



## Donald Trump's first 100 days

Saturday April 26  
3pm-4pm

Halcyon Hall, The Continental Sorrento

### The First 100 Days Donald Trump's second presidency

Nick Bryant, Emma Shortis, Don Watson and Bruce Wolpe with **Corrie Perkin (M)**

Heads are spinning, anxiety is high and American Democrats are still wondering: what went wrong in November, and how did we get to a point where the world's greatest 20<sup>th</sup> Century democracy is threatened?

Our festival coincides with the 100<sup>th</sup> day since Donald Trump took over the Oval Office – for a second time. The swiftness with which he has brought change demands discussion. Our panel of esteemed America-watchers, authors and academics will help us on the journey. Join Nick Bryant, Emma Shortis, Don Watson, Bruce Wolpe and Festival Director Corrie Perkin for this current affairs highlight.



## A reading of *The Greer Effect*

Saturday April 26  
4.45pm-6pm

Halcyon Hall, The Continental Sorrento

A read-through of Vanessa O'Neill's play-in-progress with **Hannie Rayson (M)**

Join Melbourne playwright Vanessa O'Neill and her team as we read through *The Greer Effect*, Vanessa's work-in-progress play about writer and feminist activist Germaine Greer.

In the days before Sorrento, Vanessa and her acting troupe will have just completed their La Mama residency; they are keen to test-drive the show with our Festival audience and we said "great idea!"

With playwright Hannie Rayson as our narrator, this first-time public reading of a play about one of Australia's most important cultural contributors is a must-attend for anyone who loves theatre, life stories and watching creative projects come to life.



## Why crime writers love a flawed hero

Saturday April 26  
4.30pm-5.30pm

Room 1, Sorrento Masonic Centre

Tim Ayliffe, Dervla McTiernan and J.P. Pomare with **Liz Porter (M)**

"You're nicked!" It's the kind of line we hear so often at the end of a terrific detective story. But sometimes heroes arrive unexpectedly. Sometimes they have complicated personal lives. Sometimes they are unwilling bystanders who find themselves caught up in a web of deceit and violence.

Always, they are fascinating and, frequently, flawed. And they make for terrific storytelling.

Join celebrated crime writers Tim Ayliffe, Dervla McTiernan and J.P. Pomare in a discussion about the unlikely heroes who solve their crimes.



## 1975, an Aussie rock turning point

Saturday April 26  
6.30pm-8.30pm

Sorrento Portsea RSL

Sherbet, Skyhooks, Hush, JPY, Molly Meldrum. And from the international music scene, Status Quo, The Captain and Tennille, Fleetwood Mac, ABBA, Earth, Wind and Fire.

If you were around in 1975, you'll remember these bands and be able to sing their songs, word-perfect.

If you weren't born yet ... we feel certain that once the band starts playing, you'll be on the dance floor with your mum and dad, aunts and uncles.

Our Words & Music Act 2 will feature The Screamin' Eagles playing all the hits of 1975. This follows a special *Countdown* celebration: 50 years since the ABC's most popular music show went live in colour to astounded households around the country. Join us for this very special event.

Venue	Halcyon Hall <small>(The Continental Sorrento)</small>	The Ballroom <small>(The Continental Sorrento)</small>	Ellen Grant Hall	Sorrento Bowls Club	Sorrento Community Centre	Sorrento Masonic Centre (1)	Sorrento Masonic Centre (2)	Sorrento Portsea RSL	Sorrento Museum
<b>8am –8.45am</b>	The Morning Feed John Lyons and Julianne Schultz with Tom Wright (M) <i>This session is supported by Pitcher Partners</i>	Breakfast With Jane Austen – on her 250th birthday Jonty Claypoole and Sophie Gee (M)  The Secret Life of Books podcast with Clara Tuite pays homage to one of our greatest novelists							
<b>9am –10am</b>	In Conversation: Joe Aston with Brendan Donohoe (M)	I'm Still Here: Getting to 90 – and knowing you're 90 Karen Inge, Norman Swan and Sean Wilson discuss the ageing Baby Boomer generation with Stephen Lunn (M) <i>This session is supported by Village Glen</i>	In Conversation: Grantlee Kieza with Amanda Smith (M)	Writing About Me: How hard was that, anyway? Lech Blaine, Kim Carr and Ailsa Piper with Hannie Rayson (M)	1975: The Dismissal: The moment Australian politics changed forever Jenny Hocking, Paul Kelly, Barry Jones and Kerry O'Brien with Barrie Cassidy (M)	From Laptop to International Bestseller Dervla McTiernan, Sally Hepworth and Natasha Lester discuss the journey of their novels with Liz Porter (M)	Imagination On Steroids: Speculative fiction, magic realism, fantasy and imaginary worlds in fiction Isobelle Carmody, Marion Taffe and Finegan Kruckemeyer with Seth Robinson (M)		The Healing Power of Nature Joëlle Gergis, Caroline Parker, Inga Simpson and Paulette Whitney with Jonathan Green (M)
<b>10.30am –11.30am</b>	Between Us: Two friends discuss the ties that bind Stan Grant and Marcia Langton with Inala Cooper (M)	From Mashed Peas to Smashed Peas: How Australian family food has evolved in 50 years Julia Busuttill Nishimura, Sarah Pound and Lauren Samuelsson with Jaclyn Crupi (M)	When and Why Did Climate Fall Off The Election Agenda? Joëlle Gergis, Simon Holmes à Court and George Megalogenis with Jonathan Green (M)	Island of My Mind: The role of Flinders Island in my writing Geraldine Brooks and Jock Serong with Corrie Perkin (M)	In Conversation: Helen Garner with David Leser (M) <i>This session is supported by Coote Family Lawyers</i>	What's Your Agenda, Mark Zuckerberg? Masculine energy, 'manarchy' culture and aggression in the workplace Josh Bornstein and Catherine Fox with Natasha Mitchell (M)  <i>This session will be recorded for ABC RN's Big Ideas podcast</i>	Ta Da! Introducing, Our New Books Hilde Hinton, Kylie Ladd, Robert Lukins and Charlotte McConaghy with Jaclyn Crupi (M)		
<b>12 noon –1pm</b>	In Conversation: Josh Frydenberg with Cameron Stewart (M)	In Conversation: Kate Grenville with Rosemarie Milsom (M)	From Lamingtons to Legacy: Australian Women's Weekly's Culinary Influence Nadine Ingram, Lauren Samuelsson with Celia Hirsh (M)	Nothing Personal: How to imagine characters who are not like you (or your mum, or your boss, or your best friend) Jumaana Abdu, Sean Wilson, Michael Brissenden and Nikki Gemmell with Jason Steger (M)	If Rupert Dies, What Next? The future of News Ltd and the great dynasty crisis Eric Beecher, Erik Jensen and Paddy Manning with Madeleine Grummet (M)	Writers on Writing Anita Heiss, Nina Kenwood and Inga Simpson with Michael Shmith (M)	World War Fiction: For novelists, it's an ongoing rich and dramatic landscape Belinda Alexandra and Natasha Lester with Michael Veitch (M)		
<b>1.30pm –2.30pm</b>	2025: The Year The World Goes Nuts: What does our global landscape look like in 2025? John Lyons, Greg Sheridan, Emma Shortis and Josh Taylor with Natasha Mitchell (M) <i>This session will be recorded for ABC RN's Big Ideas podcast</i>	Telling Australian Stories Via The Big And Little Screens Shaun Grant, Andrew Knight and Hannie Rayson with Laura Macdonald (M)	Dear Prime Minister, What Are You Scared Of? How social media and other technologies are undermining democracies Sean Kelly and Don Watson with Barrie Cassidy (M)	Are Aussie Men Okay With Women? Kate FitzGibbon, Simon Holmes à Court and David Leser with Jo Dyer (M)	Inside The Boardroom: Who is running our corporate world and are they up to the job? Joe Aston, Josh Bornstein, Adele Ferguson and Rick Morton with Tim L'Estrange (M) <i>This session is supported by Thomson Geer</i>	In Conversation and book launch Dervla McTiernan with Tim Byrne (M)	The History of Music In 256 Pages Andrew Ford with Michael Shmith (M)		Writers on Writing Jumaana Abdu, Sally Hepworth and Christian White with Seth Robinson (M)
<b>3pm –4pm</b>	The First 100 Days Donald Trump's second presidency Nick Bryant, Emma Shortis, Don Watson and Bruce Wolpe with Corrie Perkin (M)	Between Us: Two friends discuss the ties that bind Thomas Mayo and Kerry O'Brien with Rosemarie Milsom (M)	Lust, Love And The Whole Courtship Thing Belinda Alexandra, Nina Kenwood and Annie Lawson with Sophie Gee (M)	1975: Then, Now and Beyond 50 Years of Feminism in Australia Catherine Fox and Anne Summers with Amanda Smith (M)	Shining A Light In Dark Corners Is investigative journalism an endangered species? Adele Ferguson, Rick Morton and John Silvester with Sally Warhaft (M) <i>Presented in partnership with The Wheeler Centre</i>	I Grow, I Cook, I Eat: In Praise of the Veggie Patch Fiona Brockhoff, Paulette Whitney and Jaclyn Crupi (M)			<b>3.30pm</b> Origins: Mornington Peninsula. A look back at our region's early days The History of the Mornington Peninsula in pictures from the past and today.
<b>4.30pm –5.30pm</b>	<b>4.30pm-6pm</b> Drinks With The Sportswriters Mike Clayton, Gideon Haigh, Titus O'Reilly, Caroline Wilson and Don Watson with Steve Perkin (M) <i>This session is supported by Kay &amp; Burton</i>	<b>4.45pm-6pm</b> The Greer Effect A read-through of Vanessa O'Neill's play-in-progress with Hannie Rayson (M)	Outside The Box: Why our writers like to experiment and play with form  Michelle de Kretser, Dennis Glover and Jock Serong with Fiona Gruber (M)	Writers On Writing Michael Brissenden, Hilde Hinton and Jessica Stanley with Ailsa Piper (M)	In Conversation: David Marr with Ramona Koval (M)	The Unlikely Hero: From the flawed to the failed to the fluke, these characters give thrillers their spark Tim Ayliffe, Dervla McTiernan and J.P. Pomare with Liz Porter (M)			<b>5pm</b> The Great Land Grab, George Coppin, Father of Sorrento - Or Was He?
<b>6pm –7pm</b>	From Podcast to Platform: Exploring new ways to tell stories today Julia Baird, Shaun Grant, Paddy Manning and Christian White with Libbi Gorr (M) <i>This session is supported by ArtFuel</i>	Let's Talk Love: Diving into the heart of fiction (with drinks at the bar) Andrea Goldsmith, Annie Lawson, Richard Piper and Jessica Stanley with Jonty Claypoole (M)						<b>6.30pm -8.30pm</b> Words & Music: Act 2 Countdown, 50 Years Rebecca Barnard, Andrew Ford, Red Symons and Peter Wilmoth discuss with Michael Veitch (M) followed by The Screamin' Eagles playing the hits of 1975 <i>This session is supported by Kay &amp; Burton</i>	

Saturday April 26

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Sorrento Writers Festival

Saturday April 26

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## In Conversation: Geraldine Brooks

Sunday April 27  
9am-10am

Sorrento Community Centre

Geraldine Brooks with **Santilla Chingaibe (M)**

Geraldine Brooks is one of Australian publishing's most celebrated writers and successful exports. The Australian-American former journalist divides her time between Sydney and the US. She is the author of both non-fiction books and newspaper commentary including her new memoir *Memorial Days*, as well as several award-winning novels, including *Year of Wonders*, 2005 Pulitzer Prize-winning *March*, *People of the Book* and 2023 Indie Book Awards fiction winner *Horse*.

Geraldine will be joined by journalist and author Santilla Chingaibe.



## When inspiration comes in waves

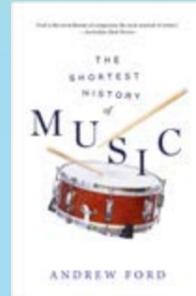
Sunday April 27  
9am-10am

Sorrento Portsea RSL

Julia Baird, Gina Chick, Charlotte McConaghy, Rusty Miller and Jock Serong with **Jane Hone (M)**

The Sorrento Writers Festival's commitment each year to honour the natural world in which we live continues with this special Sunday morning event dedicated to the seas and oceans around our coastal village.

Writer and journalist Julia Baird, author Gina Chick, writer Charlotte McConaghy, icon surfer Rusty Miller and author and surfer Jock Serong will discuss the impact of water on their lives with local writer and fellow surf beach fan Jane Hone.



## Who's better: Bach or Mozart?

Sunday April 27  
10.30am-11.30am

Sorrento Portsea RSL

Andrew Ford and Barry Jones with **Michael Cathcart (M)**



In classical music, you can have favourites. But why do people deem one composer to be better than another? By whose measure? And how do you judge the extraordinary sounds of Bach, Mozart, Beethoven, Chopin and the team?

At our Sunday morning session, we thought we'd have some fun with author and ABC Radio National presenter of *The Music Show* Andrew Ford, and our Festival treasure and classical music aficionado Barry Jones. Hosting this session of musical provocations and other crazy stuff is historian, author and radio arts presenter Michael Cathcart.



National Library of Australia, PIC MSR 12/14 #R5669.

## Telling the Truth About Australia's History

Sunday April 27  
12 noon-1pm

Sorrento Bowls Club

Santilla Chingaibe, Thomas Mayo and Don Watson with **Inala Cooper (M)**

Author of *Black Convicts: How Slavery Shaped Australia* Santilla Chingaibe, First Nations writer, advocate and community leader Thomas Mayo and historian and award-winning author Don Watson will discuss the telling of Australian history with University of Melbourne academic and author Inala Cooper.



Darren James

## How to write memoir and other personal stories

Sunday April 27  
12 noon-1pm

Ellen Grant Hall

Julia Baird, Kate Grenville and Gideon Haigh with **Jason Steger (M)**

Autobiographical writing is difficult and demanding. How much of your own story should you give away? And how do you avoid starting every sentence with "I"?

Joining us is Julia Baird, journalist and award-winning author of the 2020 hit *Phosphorescence*, Kate Grenville, whose new book *Unsettled: A Journey Through Time and Place* sees Kate unpacking her family's colonial past, and Gideon Haigh, author of *My Brother Jaz*, a profoundly moving memoir on grief and resilience. Former *Age* books editor Jason Steger will moderate this session.



## Authoritarianism and why it's on the rise again

Sunday April 27  
3pm-4pm

Halcyon Hall, The Continental Sorrento

Nick Bryant, Dennis Glover, Julianne Schultz and Barry Jones with **Brendan Donohoe (M)**

Enter The Strongman: How and why has authoritarianism become popular again?

We conclude our 2025 Sorrento Writers Festival with a review of the past, an assessment of the current state of global political play, and a pitch forward to what next. Authors and respected political and social commentators Nick Bryant, Dennis Glover, Julianne Schultz and Barry Jones will join Brendan Donohoe for this important discussion.



## Gina Chick, up close and personal

Sunday April 27  
3pm-4pm

Sorrento Community Centre

Gina Chick with **Virginia Trioli (M)**

Gina Chick's new memoir *We Are The Stars* is one of the most successful Australian memoirs of the past year. We are delighted Gina will join journalist and author Virginia Trioli in our final "In Conversation" for the 2025 Festival.



## Helping Mother Nature

Sunday April 27  
1.30pm-2.30pm

Ellen Grant Hall

Joëlle Gergis, Simon Holmes à Court and Harry Youngman with **Madeleine Grummet (M)**

Climate scientist and author Joëlle Gergis, businessman, climate activist and convenor of Climate 200 Simon Holmes à Court and Harry Youngman, grazier, soil and sustainable farming expert, will discuss new ways of thinking in the fight against global warming. Madeleine Grummet from Human Cogs will lead this fascinating discussion.

Venue	Halcyon Hall (The Continental Sorrento)	The Ballroom (The Continental Sorrento)	Ellen Grant Hall	Sorrento Bowls Club		Sorrento Community Centre	Sorrento Masonic Centre (1)	Sorrento Masonic Centre (2)	Sorrento Portsea RSL
8am–8.45am	In Conversation: Richard Scolyer with Norman Swan (M)	The Morning Feed Emma Shortis and Josh Taylor with Tom Wright (M) <i>This session is supported by Pitcher Partners</i>		8am-9am Breakfast with The Bard The Political Plays: Jonty Claypole and Sophie Gee of Secret Life of Books podcast (M) with Jane Montgomery Griffiths and Richard Piper					
9am–10am	Our Political Parties: Where to from here? Frank Bongiorno, Kim Carr and Paul Kelly with Jo Dyer (M)	9.15am-10.15am: The Art of the Cookbook Nadine Ingram, Samantha Denmark, Guy Mirabella and Alice Zaslavsky with Celia Hirsh (M)	Is Australia a Racist Country? Aarti Betigeri, Julianne Schultz, Erik Jensen and Thomas Mayo with Rana Hussain (M)	Yeah, Nah, Just Joking, Mate: Are Australians as eloquent and hilarious as we think? Andrew Knight and Don Watson with Libbi Gorr (M)		In Conversation: Geraldine Brooks with Santilla Chingaipe (M)	From Newsroom to Bookshelf Tim Ayliffe, Michael Brissenden and Marion Taffe with Peter Wilmoth (M)		Smooth Runs The Water The impact of swimming, surfing, waves and coastlines on my writing Julia Baird, Gina Chick, Rusty Miller and Jock Serong with Jane Hone (M)
10.30am–11.30am	Stop Hurting Women: Enough is enough Tarang Chawla, Kate FitzGibbon, John Silvester and Anne Summers with Stephen Lunn (M)	Reimagining Australia: How to make this next quarter of the 21st century really matter Inala Cooper, Joëlle Gergis, Sean Kelly and Emma Shortis with Tom Wright (M) <i>This session is supported by the Sorrento Chamber of Commerce</i>	In Conversation: Robert Dessaix with David Leser (M)	The Art of Planting Beautifully Teena Crawford and Lisa Ellis of Plantology with Jane Hone (M)		In Conversation: John Lyons with Heather Ewart (M)	The DEI Dilemma: How corporate Australia might handle the backlash Mim Bartlett, Catherine Fox and Alan Kohler with Madeleine Grummet (M)	My New Book Three writers discuss their latest novels, and the journey from idea to bookstore Tim Ayliffe and Jessica Stanley with Laura Macdonald (M)	Who's Better: Bach or Mozart – and other ridiculous musical provocations Andrew Ford, Michael Shmith and Barry Jones with Michael Cathcart (M)
12 noon–1pm	Elon, AI, No Boundaries, No Truth. Where To For The Media? Eric Beecher, Paddy Manning and Josh Taylor with Amanda Smith (M) <i>This session is supported by ArtFuel</i>	Between Us: Two friends discuss the ties that bind Andrew Knight and Steve Vizard with Jonathan Green (M)	Writing Memoir: The art of autobiography Kate Grenville and Gideon Haigh with Jason Steger (M)	Telling the Truth About Australia's History Santilla Chingaipe, Thomas Mayo and Don Watson with Inala Cooper (M)		Where To, America? (Or, How Gaga is MAGA?) Geraldine Brooks and Bruce Wolpe with Nick Bryant (M)	Where Is All The Big-Picture Thinking? Talking political leadership, visionary policy and new ideas Frank Bongiorno, Kim Carr, Dennis Glover and Simon Holmes à Court with Sally Warhaft (M)	All In The Family: Some of fiction's best plots happen under the one roof Sally Hepworth, Kylie Ladd and Robert Lukins with Peter Wilmoth (M)	The Great Australian Nightmare: Housing in Crisis Kevin Bell and Alan Kohler, Russel Howcroft with Libbi Gorr (M)
1.30pm–2.30pm	Simmer Down: The role of civilised conversations in a healthy democracy Rana Hussain, Randal Macdonald and David Marr with Peter Inge (M) <i>This session is supported by Thomson Geer</i>	The Craft of Murder Michael Brissenden, Dervla McTiernan and J.P. Pomare, with Tim Byrne (M)	Mother Nature – Why She Needs Our Help Joëlle Gergis, Simon Holmes à Court and Harry Youngman with Madeleine Grummet (M)	Writers on Writing Non-Fiction Santilla Chingaipe, Erik Jensen and Rick Morton with Katrina Strickland (M)		My Life and India A conversation about the nation, its people and its great diaspora Aarti Betigeri, Gideon Haigh with Sally Warhaft (M) discuss			
3pm–4pm	Enter The Strongman How and why has authoritarianism become popular again? Nick Bryant, Dennis Glover, Julianne Schultz and Barry Jones with Brendan Donohoe (M)	Between Us: Two friends discuss the ties that bind Andrew Rule and John Silvester with Peter Wilmoth (M)	Australian Writing, From Where I Sit David Marr and Kate Grenville with Jason Steger (M)			In Conversation: Gina Chick with Virginia Trioli (M) <i>This session is supported by Outlook Communications</i>			
4pm–5pm	Festival concludes with farewell drinks								

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# Speakers and Moderators

## Jumaana Abdu

Jumaana Abdu is a Dal Stevens Award winner, an alumnus of the Wheeler Centre's Next Chapter program and the author of *Translations*. She is also a medical doctor.

## Kirsten Alexander

Kirsten Alexander is the author of three novels with her fourth due out in May. Her books have been longlisted for numerous prizes, including the Bath Novel Award, Sisters in Crime Davitt Awards and Ned Kelly Awards. Kirsten was born in San Francisco, raised in Brisbane and lives in Melbourne with her two sons.

## Belinda Alexandra

Belinda Alexandra is the author of 11 bestselling novels, a non-fiction book about women and cats, *The Divine Feline: A Chic Cat Lady's Guide to Woman's Best Friend*, and historical fiction, *The Masterpiece*. Her books have been published around the world, including in the US, Spain, France, Germany, the UK, Turkey, Hungary and Poland.

## Jess Armstrong

After a breast cancer diagnosis, Fuca Skincare founder Jess Armstrong was frustrated by the lack of support in the beauty industry for women like her. Recommended products contained ingredients she no longer wanted in her beauty and personal care products. She created a range of fragrance-free formulas that catered for even the most reactive skin.

## Tony Armstrong

A proud Gamilaroi man, Tony Armstrong grew up in rural NSW and played professional AFL for Adelaide, Collingwood and Sydney before becoming a radio and television presenter. He is a talented writer and creator who is currently developing a slate of television projects. His debut picture book, *George the Wizard*, was published in 2024. *Maggie the Dragon* is his second book.

## Robbie Arnott

Robbie Arnott is the author of *Dusk*, *Limberlost*, *The Rain Heron* and *Flames*. He is a two-time winner of *The Age* Book of the Year award and has twice been shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Literary Award, as well as the Dylan Thomas Prize. He lives in Hobart with his family.

## Joe Aston

Joe Aston is an influential commentator on business, finance and politics. From 2012 to 2023, his *Australian Business Review* column *Rear Window* was involved in some of the country's biggest stories, including the Rio Tinto Juukan Gorge scandal and the sacking of CPA Australia CEO Alex Malley. In 2023, Joe and his colleagues won a Walkley Award for their coverage of the PwC tax leaks scandal.

## Tim Ayliffe

Tim Ayliffe's thriller novels have been informed by his 25-year career as a journalist. He has been managing editor of TV and video for *ABC News* and executive producer of *News Breakfast*. He is the author of the *John Bailey* series: *The Greater Good*, *State of Fear*, *The Enemy Within*, *Killer Traitor Spy* and *The Wrong Man*. Tim's thrillers are being developed for TV.

## Julia Baird

Julia Baird is a Sydney-based author and journalist. She writes for the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and the ABC. Her first book, *Media Tarts*, was about the portrayal of female politicians. *Victoria*, her biography of Queen Victoria, was a *New York Times* top 10 book. Her third book, *Phosphorescence*, was a bestseller and her latest book, *Bright Shining*, is shortlisted for the Australian Book Industry Award (ABIA) for Non-Fiction Book of the Year.

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*"In life we make progress by conflict and in mental life by argument and disputation. If you care about the points of agreement and civility, then, you had better be well equipped with points of argument and combativity, because if you are not then the "centre" will be occupied and defined without your having helped to decide it."*

– Christopher Hitchens, *Letters to a Young Contrarian*  
Published by Basic Books, Hachette Book Group (2005)

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# Speakers and Moderators

## Rebecca Barnard

Rebecca Barnard is a singer/songwriter who led the band Rebecca's Empire, which featured in Triple J's Hottest 100 in three consecutive years. She has sung on recordings for Paul Kelly, Tim Rogers and Stephen Cummings and released three EPs and two albums with Rebecca's Empire. In 2006, she released her solo album, *Fortified*, on her own record label. She regularly appears on SBS's *Rockwiz* and ABC's *Spicks and Specks*.

## Mim Bartlett

Mim Bartlett is the brains trust behind ChangeUp and the broader suite of Mim Bartlett Consulting programs. Mim's background as a corporate lawyer and psychotherapist has enabled her to curate a transformative program based on best practice in leadership and wellbeing.

## Eric Beecher

Eric Beecher is the chairman and co-founder of Private Media, publisher of Crikey, *The Mandarin* and Smart Company, chairman of Australian Communities Foundation and a board member of the Public Interest Journalism Initiative. He has been an editor and executive at Fairfax and News Corp and was co-founder of Text Media.

## Kevin Bell

The Honourable Kevin Bell AO KC is a former justice of the Supreme Court of Victoria, commissioner with the Yoorrook Justice Commission and director of the Castan Centre for Human Rights Law at Monash University (where is now an adjunct professor). He has a masters degree in international human rights law from Oxford University where he is currently an independent writer, researcher and educator in human rights.

## Aarti Betigeri

Aarti Betigeri is a journalist and former foreign correspondent based in Canberra. She is a correspondent for *Monocle* and contributes to local and foreign media outlets. During almost a decade in India, she reported for the *New York Times*, the *Wall Street Journal*, *Newsweek* and *Time*. She has worked on major investigative initiatives, including an ABC *Foreign Correspondent* documentary on international surrogacy.

## Christabel Blackman

Christabel Blackman is the daughter of artist Charles Blackman and author Barbara Blackman. She is a fine art conservator and specialist in easel paintings. She lived in Spain for 25 years, where she restored Gothic and Renaissance masterpieces. She is a visual artist and photographer. *Charles and Barbara Blackman, A Decade of Art and Love*, published by Thames & Hudson, is her first book.

## Lech Blaine

Lech Blaine is the author of the memoir *Car Crash* and the *Quarterly Essay's* Top Blokes and Bad Cop. He was the 2023 Charles Perkins Centre writer in residence. His writing has been published in *Good Weekend*, *Griffith Review*, *The Guardian* and *The Monthly*. His latest book is *Australian Gospel*.

## Frank Bongiorno

Frank Bongiorno AM is a historian and author based at the ANU where he is professor of history. He is the author of *Dreamers and Schemers: A Political History of Australia* (La Trobe) and, with Nick Dyrenfurth, *A Little History of the Australian Labor Party* (NewSouth Books). He is president of the Council for the Humanities, Arts and Social Sciences.

## Josh Bornstein

Josh Bornstein is an award-winning lawyer specialising in employment and labour-relations law who has successfully sued badly behaved corporations and acted for sacked rabbis and employees sacked for expressing political views. He is a contributing author to *The Wages Crisis in Australia: What it is and what to do about it*, published in 2018. He is a board member of The Australia Institute. His latest book is *Working for the Brand*.

## Judith Brett

Judith Brett AM is professor of politics at La Trobe University. She is the author of *Australian Liberals and the Moral Middle Class: From Alfred Deakin to John Howard* (Cambridge, 2003), *Relaxed and Comfortable: The Liberal Party's Australia* (*Quarterly Essay* issue 19), and, with Anthony Moran, *Ordinary People's Politics* (Pluto, 2006).

## Michael Brissenden

Author and journalist Michael Brissenden worked for the ABC for 35 years as a foreign correspondent, political editor and an investigative reporter for *Four Corners*. He has published both fiction and non-fiction books. His first two novels were *The List* and *Dead Letters*. His latest book, *Smoke*, was published in June 2024 by Affirm Press.

## Fiona Brockhoff

One of Australia's best known garden designers, Fiona Brockhoff's book, *With Nature*, was published in 2022.

## Geraldine Brooks

Geraldine Brooks AO is a journalist and author who worked for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Wall Street Journal*. In 2006, she was awarded the Pulitzer Prize in fiction for her novel *March*. Novels *Caleb's Crossing*, *People of the Book* and *The Secret Chord* were *New York Times*' bestsellers, while *Year of Wonders* was an international bestseller. She is also the author of non-fiction works *Nine Parts of Desire* and *Foreign Correspondence*. Her novel *Horse* won multiple awards, including the ABIA Literary Fiction Book of the Year Award and Fiction Indie Book Award for 2023.

## Nick Bryant

During a career spanning almost 30 years in Washington, south Asia, Australia and New York, Nick Bryant was regarded as one of the BBC's finest foreign correspondents. His writing has appeared in *The Economist*, *The Washington Post*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, *The Age* and *The Monthly*. He broadcasts regularly on the BBC and ABC. His book, *When America Stopped Being Great: A History of the Present*, is an analysis of the factors that paved the way for Donald Trump's presidency.

## Shelley Burr

Shelley Burr is the author of three crime novels: *Wake*, *Ripper* and *Vanish*. She is establishing a small permaculture farm and studying sustainable agriculture at the University of New England.

## Julia Busuttill Nishimura

Julia Busuttill Nishimura is a cook, author and presenter. Her food is influenced by her Maltese heritage, the seasons and her time living in Tuscany. She is a columnist for *Gourmet Traveller*, *Good Weekend* and *The Design Files* and the author of *Ostro, A Year of Simple Family Food*, *Around the Table*, and *Good Cooking Every Day*.

## Tim Byrne

Tim Byrne is a freelance writer and theatre critic for *Australian Book Review* and *Time Out Melbourne*. He is also a bookseller and interviewer, conducting author interviews at Avenue Bookstore. He maintains an arts blog that focuses on theatre, film, and books and is working on a novel.

## Isobelle Carmody

Isobelle Carmody is an acclaimed author of fantasy, in particular her much-loved *Obernewtyn Chronicles*. She has also written several picture books as well as collections of short stories for children, young adults and adults.

## Kim Carr

Kim Carr is the longest-serving Victorian Labor senator in history and a former tech-school teacher. He is a vice-chancellor's Professorial Fellow at Monash University and a director of Made in Australia Campaign Limited.

## Barrie Cassidy

Former ABC television journalist, presenter and author Barrie Cassidy was awarded a Melbourne Press Club Lifetime Achievement award in 2018. In 1986, he became Bob Hawke's press secretary, leaving when Paul Keating took over the leadership in 1991. In 2013, he co-authored *An Ocean of Cricket* with son Adam.

## Francesca Carter

Francesca Carter is a communications specialist and a member of the Sorrento Writers Festival programming committee. She began her career as a journalist with Fairfax and News Limited, where she developed a deep understanding of what makes a compelling story. As a mother of three young children, Francesca is passionate about how storytelling can inspire a lifelong love of reading.

## Michael Cathcart

Michael Cathcart was born in Melbourne in 1956. He has worked as a teacher, university lecturer and theatre director, presented ABC radio and television programs and written several books, including *Defending the National Tuckshop* and *The Water Dreamers*.

## Tarang Chawla

Tarang Chawla is a speaker, writer and founder of Not One More Niki, working to end violence against women. He is a gender equality, human rights and mental health advocate who was named a Young Australian of the Year finalist and listed as one of Australia's top 40 under 40 Asian Australians.

## Melanie Cheng

Melanie Cheng is an award-winning writer and general practitioner from Naarm/Melbourne. Her debut short story collection, *Australia Day*, won the 2018 Victorian Premier's Literary Award for Fiction. Her debut novel, *Room for a Stranger*, was longlisted for the 2020 Miles Franklin Award. Her latest novel is *The Burrow*.

## Gina Chick

Gina Chick is a rewilding facilitator, adventurer, writer and speaker. She was one of 10 participants in the first series of *Alone Australia*, made by iTV and screened on SBS in 2023. After 67 days of unforgettable moments, Gina was the last person standing, and the second woman to win an *Alone* solo challenge. Gina's articles have been published in *The Guardian*, news.com.au, *Mamamia* and SBS online.

## Santilla Chingaipe

Santilla Chingaipe is a filmmaker, historian and author whose work explores colonialism, slavery and postcolonial migration in Australia.

## Jonty Claypole

Jonty Claypole is CEO of Red Room Poetry, Australia's leading organisation for commissioning, creating, publishing and promoting poetry. He was formerly director of arts at the BBC, sat on the advisory board of the Booker Prize and was regularly in *The Bookseller's* 100 most influential people in publishing. He is the author of *Words Fail Us: In Defence of Dysfluency*.

## Mike Clayton

Mike Clayton is a modern golf renaissance man – a student of the game, historian, course architect, former touring pro and journalist. He played on the Australasian Tour for 26 years, winning seven titles, and competed on the European Tour for 18 years, winning the 1984 Timex Open. For many years, he wrote regularly for *The Sunday Age* and also writes for *Golf Australia*.

## Madeleine Cleary

Madeleine Cleary is a writer who lives at the foothills of the Dandenong Ranges in Melbourne. Her debut novel of historical fiction, *The Butterfly Women*, is set to be published in May with Affirm Press. It was inspired by a connection to the thieves and prostitutes of the early colony of Melbourne. *In Her Own Words* was shortlisted in 2024 for the Australian Fiction Prize.

## Inala Cooper

Inala Cooper is a Yawuru woman with German and Irish heritage, from Rubibi/Broome in Western Australia. She has a masters degree in human rights law and has long been an advocate for Indigenous rights, access to education and social justice. She is a regular contributor on *ABC News Breakfast* and *The Drum*.

## Craig Cormick

Dr Craig Cormick OAM is an award-winning author and science communicator. He was born on Dharawal Country (Wollongong) and currently lives on Ngunnawal land in Canberra. He has been chair of the ACT Writers Centre and co-host of the literary podcast *Secrets from the Green Room*. He has written more than 40 books – fiction and non-fiction.

## Teena Crawford

Teena Crawford has more than 40 years' experience as a horticulturist. She was a regular co-host on 3AW's gardening program and has written for various publications. She is co-author of *Plantology: The Essential Guide to Better Gardens*.

# Speakers and Moderators

## Jaclyn Crupi

Jaclyn Crupi is a book editor, author, event moderator and bookseller. She has written numerous books for children and adults. *Garden Like a Nonno* was shortlisted for an Indie Book Award and longlisted for an ABIA. Her most recent children's book, *The ABC Kids Guide to Loving the Planet*, won the Wilderness Society's Environment Award for Children's Literature.

## Ian Darling

Ian Darling is an award-winning documentary filmmaker. He is executive director of Shark Island Institute and its production arm Shark Island Productions.

## Michelle de Kretser

Michelle de Kretser was born in Sri Lanka and moved to Australia in 1972 when she was 14. From 1989 to 1992, she was a founding editor of the *Australian Women's Book Review*. Her fourth novel, *Questions of Travel*, won the 2013 Miles Franklin Award, the ALS Gold Medal and the Prime Minister's Literary Award for Fiction. Her 2017 novel, *The Life to Come*, won both the Miles Franklin Award and the Christina Stead Prize for Fiction. *Theory & Practice* is her seventh novel.

## Robert Dessaix

Robert Dessaix's best-known books are the autobiography *A Mother's Disgrace*, the novels *Night Letters* and *Corfu*, and the travel memoirs *Twilight of Love* and *Arabesques*. His most recent publications are *What Days Are For* – a meditation on what makes for a good life in the face of death – and *The Time of Our Lives*, which focuses on ageing well.

## Brendan Donohoe

Award-winning journalist Brendan Donohoe was Channel Seven Melbourne's state political editor for 30 years. He is also a former Victorian Government deputy director of communications.

## Rose Donohoe

Rose Donohoe has worked in journalism, advertising and publishing in Australia and Europe. She is head of strategic communications for Australia's largest architecture firm, Architectus, and is a board member of Brainwave and the Sorrento Writers Festival.

## Jo Dyer

Jo Dyer is a writer, literary curator and producer of theatre and film. Most recently director of Adelaide Writers' Week, Jo has held leadership roles at the Sydney Writers' Festival, Sydney Theatre Company and Bangarra Dance Theatre. Her freelance productions have been staged at such venues as the Sydney Opera House and the Tropicana Hotel in Las Vegas. Her films have been screened worldwide, notably at the Berlin International Film Festival.

## Theodore Ell

Theodore Ell co-founded the international journal *Contrapasso Magazine*, where he was co-editor. From 2018 to 2021, he lived in Lebanon, accompanying his wife on a diplomatic posting. Theodore's essay, *Façades of Lebanon*, about Lebanese revolution and the Beirut port explosion, won the 2021 Calibre Essay Prize. His poetry collection, *Beginning in Sight*, shared the 2022 Anne Elder Award.

## Lisa Ellis

Lisa Ellis has more than 20 years' experience as a garden designer and horticulturist. As principal designer of Lisa Ellis Gardens, she has worked on residential, corporate and government projects and has won national and state design and horticultural awards. She is the co-author of *Plantology: The Essential Guide to Better Gardens*.

## Helen Ennis

Helen Ennis, emeritus professor at the ANU, writes on photography and photographers. *Max Dupain: A portrait* is her latest book. Her biographies, *Margaret Michaelis: Love, Loss and Photography* and *Olive Cotton: A Life in Photography*, were published in 2005 and 2019. The latter was awarded the 2020 Magarey Medal for Biography.

## Heather Ewart

Heather Ewart is an award-winning journalist and popular host of ABC TV's *Back Roads*. During her four decades as an ABC journalist, Heather worked as a foreign correspondent in London, Washington and Brussels as well as in other senior reporting roles.

## Adele Ferguson

Adele Ferguson AM is an award-winning investigative journalist, columnist and author, best known for her series on franchising, wage fraud, cosmetic surgery and financial services sectors. She has won a Gold Walkley, nine Walkley awards, a Logie and the Graham Perkin Journalist of the Year award. She wrote the unauthorised biography *Gina Rinehart: The untold story of the richest woman in the world* and *Banking Bad*.

## Kate Fitz-Gibbon

Kate Fitz-Gibbon is an internationally recognised expert in violence against women and children. She is a professor in the faculty of business and economics at Monash University and an honorary professorial fellow with the Melbourne Law School. She recently founded Seque Consulting, which is committed to advancing safety and equality globally.

## Peter FitzSimons

Peter FitzSimons AM is Australia's bestselling non-fiction writer and, for the past 35 years, a journalist and columnist with the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Sun-Herald*. He is the author of acclaimed titles *Breaker Morant*, *Burke and Wills*, *Monash's Masterpiece*, *Kokoda*, *Ned Kelly* and *Gallipoli* as well as biographies of such notable Australians as Sir Douglas Mawson, Nancy Wake and Nick Farr-Jones. He and wife Lisa Wilkinson AM have three children and live in Sydney.

## Andrew Ford

Andrew Ford's music has been performed and recorded around the world, played by ensembles such as the Australian Chamber Orchestra, the Brodsky Quartet and the New Juilliard Ensemble, and sung by the likes of Yvonne Kenny, Katie Noonan and Iva Bittová. He presents *The Music Show* on ABC Radio National and has written 10 books. His latest is *The Shortest History of Music* (Black Inc.)



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## Catherine Fox

Catherine Fox AM is a leading commentator on women and the workforce and an award-winning journalist, author and presenter. During a long career with the *Australian Financial Review*, she wrote the weekly Corporate Woman column and has published several books. *Stop Fixing Women* was awarded the 2017 Walkley Award for Women's Leadership in Media, and her latest book, *Breaking the Boss Bias: How to get more women into leadership*, was launched in 2024.

## Paula Fox

Paula Fox is one of Australia's most active and influential philanthropists. The wife of businessman Lindsay Fox, Paula was diagnosed with melanoma in 2016. She has been committed to improving melanoma outcomes for the community and The Paula Fox Melanoma and Cancer Centre at the Alfred Hospital is a state-of-the-art facility that brings cutting edge treatment to patients.

## Josh Frydenberg

Josh Frydenberg is a former politician who served as federal treasurer and deputy leader of the Liberal Party from 2018 to 2022. He also served as a member of parliament for the division of Kooyong from 2010 to 2022. After leaving politics, he became chairman at the Australian arm of investment bank Goldman Sachs.

## Mel Fulton

Mel Fulton is a writer and radio broadcaster who lives on Dja Dja Wurrung Country in Castlemaine, Victoria.

## Helen Garner

Helen Garner is a critically acclaimed writer of novels, stories, screenplays and works of non-fiction. In 2006, she received the inaugural Melbourne Prize for Literature and in 2016, she won the prestigious Windham-Campbell Prize for non-fiction. She was honoured with the Australia Council Award for Lifetime Achievement in Literature in 2019. In 2023, she was awarded the Australian Society of Authors Medal for her outstanding contribution to Australian literature.

## Sophie Gee

Sophie Gee teaches in the English department at Princeton University in the US. She is also Vice Chancellor's Fellow at the University of Sydney, where she's engaged in deepening conversations around the value of universities. She's the author of scholarly monographs and a historical novel and co-hosts the popular *Secret Life of Books* podcast.

## Joëlle Gergis

Dr Joëlle Gergis is an award-winning climate scientist and writer. She served as a lead author on the United Nations' Intergovernmental Panel on the Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report – the global authority on climate change science. Joëlle is the author of three books *Sunburnt Country: The future and history of climate change in Australia*; *Humanity's Moment: A Climate Scientist's Case for Hope*; and *Highway to Hell: Climate Change and Australia's Future*.

## Julia Gillard

Julia Gillard AC was Australia's 27th prime minister. She is the inaugural chair of the Global Institute for Women's Leadership. She is also chair of Wellcome, a global charitable foundation which supports science to solve urgent health challenges. She led the Royal Commission into Early Childhood Education and Care in South Australia.

## Alexander Edward Gilly

Alexander Edward Gilly is a writer, translator and magazine editor who was born in New York City and has lived in Australia, Canada, France, California and the UK. One of his translations, Thierry Cruevillier's *The Master of Confessions*, was longlisted for the 2015 PEN Translation Prize. *Devil's Harbor* (Forge, 2015) was his first novel. He is the nephew of the late James Fairfax.

## Dennis Glover

Dennis Glover is one of Australia's leading speechwriters. His first novel, *The Last Man in Europe*, was nominated for several literary prizes, including the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction. His second novel, *Factory 19*, was published in 2020, and his third, *Thaw*, in 2023.

## Jane Godwin

Jane Godwin is one of Australia's best-known authors for children and young adults and has more than 30 titles to her name. She was inducted into the Australian Book Industry Awards Hall of Fame in 2024. She lives in Melbourne and works with school students and Indigenous children through the Indigenous Literacy Foundation.

## Irma Gold

Irma Gold is an award-winning author and editor of works for adults and children. She has written five picture books, a novel, *The Breaking*, and a short fiction collection, *Two Steps Forward*.

## Libbi Gorr

Television personality, radio broadcaster and actor Libbi Gorr has authored two books, *The A-Z of Mummy Manners: An Etiquette Guide for Managing Other Children's Mothers* and *The Bedtime Poem for Edible Children*.

## Shaun Grant

Shaun Grant, one of Australia's most awarded screenwriters, regularly works with director Justin Kurzel. They have had two features at the prestigious Cannes Film Festival – debut *Snowtown* and controversial *Nitram*. They adapted Peter Carey's *True History of the Kelly Gang* and Richard Flanagan's *The Narrow Road to the Deep North*.

## Stan Grant

Stan Grant is a Wiradjuri and Kamilaroi man who has worked as a journalist, presenter, filmmaker and author. He has reported from more than 80 countries, won three Walkley Awards, a Logie and four Asia TV awards. His bestselling book *Talking to My Country* won a Walkley Book Award. His latest book, *Murriyang*, is his response to the Voice referendum.

## Jonathan Green

Jonathan Green has been an editor, writer, commentator and broadcaster in a 40-year career as a journalist. He left *The Age* in 2006 to edit Crikey, then moved to the ABC as founding editor of *The Drum*. He is the author of *Around Australia In 80 Days* and *The Year My Politics Broke*. He now presents *Blueprint for Living* on ABC Radio National.

## Sophie Green

Sophie Green's debut novel, *The Inaugural Meeting of The Fairvale Ladies Book Club*, was a top 10 bestseller and shortlisted for the 2018 Australian Book Industry General Fiction Book of the Year. Other top 10 bestsellers were *The Shelly Bay Ladies Swimming Circle*, *Thursdays at Orange Blossom House*, *The Bellbird River Country Choir* and *Weekends with the Sunshine Gardening Society*.

## Kate Grenville

Kate Grenville AO has published 18 books. Her nine novels include *The Secret River* (shortlisted for the Booker Prize). Other books have also won international and Australian prizes, been adapted for stage and screen, and appear in translation. Her non-fiction work includes biographies and books about the writing process. Her most recent non-fiction book, *The Case Against Fragrance*, is about the health problems caused by synthetic fragrances.

## Fiona Gruber

Writer and broadcaster Fiona Gruber writes on the arts for *The Australian* and reviews books, theatre and film for the *Times Literary Supplement* in the UK. She has been a regular contributor to ABC Radio National and is a sought-after moderator and events host.

## Madeleine Grummet

Madeleine Hanger (Grummet) is an award-winning serial entrepreneur, ABC journalist, presenter and author. She is the host of the Human Cogs and Flounder podcasts, a regular media contributor and was founding CEO of edtech platforms Girledworld and Future Amp.

## Charlotte Guest

Charlotte Guest is a books industry professional with over ten years' experience across bookselling and publishing. Her poetry, essays and short fiction have been published in national literary journals, and in 2023 she was awarded a PhD in Creative Writing from Deakin University.

## Richard Haass

Dr Richard Haass is an American diplomat. He was president of the Council on Foreign Relations from 2003 to 2023. Previously, he was director of policy planning for the US Department of State and a close adviser to Secretary of State Colin Powell in the George W. Bush administration. He is the author or editor of 13 books on American foreign policy. His latest book is *A World in Disarray*.

## Gideon Haigh

The author of more than 50 books, many of them on cricket, and others on business and crime, Gideon Haigh has been a journalist for 40 years. He has done so without a blog, a tweet or Facebook.

## Chris Hammer

Chris Hammer is an award-winning author of bestselling crime fiction. Before turning to fiction, Chris was a journalist for more than 30 years, dividing his career between covering federal politics and international affairs. Chris has also written two non-fiction books.

## Nicole Hayes

Nicole Hayes is an award-winning author and podcaster. Her young adult novels have won or been shortlisted for multiple awards, including the Children's Peace Literature Award, the NSW Premier's Literary Awards, the WA Premier's Literary Awards and the Children Book Council Awards.

## Anita Heiss

Dr Anita Heiss is an internationally published, award-winning author of 23 books of non-fiction, historical fiction, commercial women's fiction and children's fiction. She is a proud member of the Wiradjuri Nation of central NSW, an ambassador for the Indigenous Literacy Foundation and the GO Foundation, and professor of communications at the University of Queensland. Anita is also Publisher at Large of Bundyi, an imprint of Simon & Schuster cultivating First Nations talent.

## Sally Hepworth

Sally Hepworth is the bestselling author of nine novels which have been translated into 20 languages. Her most recent novel, *Darling Girls*, has been optioned for TV by Made Up Stories. She lives in Melbourne.

## Michael Heyward

As well as being an author and editor, Michael Heyward is the managing director and publisher for Text Publishing, a multi-award-winning independent publishing company in Melbourne.

## Hilde Hinton

Hilde Hinton avoided being a writer for many years, but after her debut novel *The Loudness of Unsaid Things* made a number of bestseller lists, everything changed. Now the stories won't stop. Hilde lives in Melbourne.

## Celia Hirsh

Celia Hirsh is a journalist, broadcaster and podcaster who also contributes questions to the weekly TV show *Have You Been Paying Attention?* Celia is a keen cook, food and cookbook lover.

## Jenny Hocking

Professor Jenny Hocking AM is an award-winning biographer, Emeritus Professor at Monash University and inaugural Distinguished Fellow at the Whitlam Institute, Western Sydney University. She is the author of three biographies, including the acclaimed *Gough Whitlam: His Time*, which won the Fellowship of Australian Writers' Barbara Ramsden Award.

# Speakers and Moderators

## Gail Holmes

Gail Holmes grew up in Scotland, worked for an international energy company in London, married and had five children. Her writing journey began while in Shanghai when she started writing short stories about living in that city. She later completed writing short courses, moved to Australia in 2013 and did a Masters degree in Creative Writing, Editing and Publishing at Melbourne University. *In the Margins* is her first novel.

## Jane Hone

A lifestyle journalist and copywriter who has written for numerous magazines and websites, Jane Hone is also a yoga teacher. She is a sought-after Story Slam host who lives on the Mornington Peninsula.

## Luke Horton

Luke Horton is a former editor of *The Lifted Brow Review of Books*, teaches creative writing at RMIT and is a member of indie-rock band Love of Diagrams. His debut novel, *The Fogging*, was highly commended for the Victorian Premier's Award for an Unpublished Manuscript in 2019. His latest book is *Time Together*.

## Robert Horvath

Dr Robert Horvath is a specialist on Russian Politics. His current research preoccupations include the response of Russia's democratic opposition to the Russia-Ukraine war, and the role of the Kremlin's "human rights defenders" in Russia's autocratisation. His commentary has been published in widely in the Australian media. His most recent book is *Putin's Fascists: Russkii Obraz* and the *Politics of Managed Nationalism in Russia*.

## Russel Howcroft

Former advertising agency executive and chairman of the Advertising Federation of Australia, Russel Howcroft is now the co-host of 3AW's *Breakfast* program.

## Rana Hussain

Rana Hussain is a leading figure in inclusive leadership, diversity and inclusion. She's a prominent woman of colour in sports administration and media, also featuring across the summer of cricket as a broadcaster and presenter. As the founder of consultancy Good. Human, she guides organisations in fostering inclusive, high-performing cultures. With governance roles in Reconciliation Australia and Victorian Women's Trust, she blends her diverse background as a Muslim, Indian Australian into her work.

## Karen Inge

A leading dietician, Karen Inge is also an award-winning author of books on eating for health, fitness, sport and wellbeing. She contributes regularly on radio and television.

## Peter Inge

Peter Inge OAM is a lawyer, human rights and migration specialist, and managing director of the Zig Inge Group. Peter serves on several industry and not-for-profit boards. He is president of the Sorrento Writers Festival

## Nadine Ingram

Nadine Ingram has worked in high-profile restaurants around the world, including London's Le Gavroche and The Ivy, as well as Sydney's MG Garage and Bourke St Bakery. In 2011, she realised her dream of establishing a bakery. Flour and Stone in inner Sydney is now a thriving institution and her books *Love Crumbs* and *Flour and Stone* share signature recipes.

## Erik Jensen

An award-winning journalist and author, Erik Jensen is founding editor of *The Saturday Paper* and editor in chief of Schwartz Media. He is the author of several books, among them, *Acute Misfortune*, an acclaimed biography of artist Adam Cullen.

## Barry Jones

Teacher, lawyer, academic, former state and federal MP, polymath and author, Barry Jones AC was Australia's longest-serving minister for science from 1983 to '90. Now 92, he is an official 'national living treasure'. The Sorrento Writers Festival's annual oration is named in his honour.

## Christine Keighery

Christine Keighery (who also writes as Chrissie Perry) is the author of more than 35 novels for children and young adults. She wrote 13 books in the hugely successful *Go Girl!* series. Her title, *Whisper*, won a White Raven and IBBY award and was shortlisted for the CBCA and the WA Premier's awards. Her work has been published in 10 countries.

## Paul Kelly

Paul Kelly is a political journalist, author and television and radio commentator from Sydney.

## Sean Kelly

Sean Kelly is author of *The Game: A Portrait of Scott Morrison*. He is a regular columnist and a former adviser to Julia Gillard and Kevin Rudd.

## Nina Kenwood

Nina Kenwood won the Text Prize for her debut young adult novel, *It Sounded Better in My Head*, which was a finalist for the American Library Association's William C. Morris Award and was shortlisted for several Australian awards. Her second book, *Unnecessary Drama*, continued her success both in Australia and overseas. *The Wedding Forecast* is Nina's first novel for adults.

## Grantlee Kieza

Grantlee Kieza OAM is the author of more than 20 bestselling books, including biographies of great Australians Vivian Bullwinkel, John Monash, Banjo Paterson and Hudson Fysh. Grantlee was inducted into the Australian Boxing Hall of Fame for both his sports writing and his work as an assistant trainer for some of Australia's greatest fighters.

## Andrew Knight

Andrew Knight is an TV writer and film and television producer, known for his work on *Rake*, *Jack Irish*, *Hacksaw Ridge*, *Ali's Wedding* and *The Water Diviner*.

## Malcolm Knox

Malcolm Knox is the former literary editor and award-winning cricket writer of the *Sydney Morning Herald*, where he broke the Norma Khouri story, for which he won one of his two Walkley Awards. He has written many award-winning works of fiction and non-fiction.

## Alan Kohler

Alan Kohler is the finance presenter on ABC News and a columnist for *The New Daily*. A former editor of *The Age* and the *Australian Financial Review*, he is the author of several non-fiction works.

## Ramona Koval

Ramona Koval is a writer, journalist and former broadcaster. She is an Honorary Fellow in the School of Communication and Creative Arts at Deakin University. She is the author of several books, including *By the Book: A Reader's Guide to Life* and *A Letter to Layla*.

## Finegan Kruckemeyer

Finegan Kruckemeyer was born in Ireland and now lives in Adelaide. He is an award-winning playwright, whose works have been performed on six continents and in eight languages. *The End and Everything Before* is his first novel.

## Kylie Ladd

Kylie Ladd is a novelist and psychologist. Her six novels have been published in Australia and overseas. She has also co-edited and co-authored two non-fiction books, and her essays and articles have been published in *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald*, *Griffith Review*, *Meanjin*, *O Magazine* and *Good Medicine*. She lives in Melbourne with her husband and two children.

## Sam Lane

Sam Lane is a respected broadcast journalist, interviewer, host and author. Her award-winning work spans print, television, podcast and radio.

## Marcia Langton

Professor Marcia Langton AO, anthropologist, geographer, academic and public intellectual, is a descendant of the Yiman and Bidjara nations of Queensland. Since 2000, she has been foundation chair of Australian Indigenous Studies at the University of Melbourne, where she is Associate Provost.

## Annie Lawson

Annie Lawson is a former journalist and author of *Stoic At Work* and *Stoic in Love*.

## David Leser

David Leser is a Walkley award-winning journalist and author of seven books, including *Women, Men and the Whole Damn Thing*, about the history of patriarchy and misogyny in the age of #MeToo. A former Middle East and Washington correspondent, David is a regular contributor to *Good Weekend* magazine and columnist for the *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Melbourne Age*.

## Alison Lester

Author and illustrator Alison Lester is an icon of children's publishing. Her picture book classics include the *Clive Eats Alligators* series, the *Noni the Pony* series, *Magic Beach*, *Imagine* and *My Farm*. Novels include *The Quicksand Pony* and the *Bonnie and Sam* series. In 2011, she was named the Australian Children's Laureate.

## Natasha Lester

Natasha Lester is a bestselling author of historical fiction and a former marketing executive for L'Oreal. Her novels, including *The Paris Seamstress*, *The Paris Orphan* and *The Paris Secret*, have been translated into 21 languages.

## Robert Lukins

Robert Lukins' debut novel, *The Everlasting Sunday*, was shortlisted for the NSW Premier's Literary Prize, the UTS Glenda Adams Award and the ALS Gold Medal for Literature. His second novel, *Loveland*, was shortlisted for the Readings Prize. Robert lives in Naarm/Melbourne and his latest novel is *Somebody Down There Likes Me*.

## Stephen Lunn

Stephen Lunn is *The Australian's* social affairs editor, covering such policy issues as ageing, population, disability, welfare and migration. He has also worked in public policy advocacy in the private sector, and practised as a lawyer in Australia and the UK.

## John Lyons

Currently global affairs editor at the ABC, senior journalist and former

foreign correspondent John Lyons has won three Walkley Awards. He was the 1999 Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year.

## Laura Macdonald

Laura is a filmmaker, writer and editor. She worked at William Dalrymple's Jaipur Literature Festival, then programmed the Dungog Film Fest and the Cockatoo Island Film Festival. She edited her father Randal's book and is completing a documentary about the media.

## Ranald Macdonald

Media commentator, former newspaper executive and journalism academic Ranald Macdonald AO is passionate about press freedom and public interest reporting. He founded the Australian Press Council and has written a book, *The Voice of Australia*, about his experiences.

## Emily Maguire

Emily Maguire is the author of three non-fiction books and seven novels, including *An Isolated Incident*, which was shortlisted for the Stella Prize and the Miles Franklin Literary Award in 2017, and *Love Objects*, which was shortlisted for the Australian Book Industry Awards Literary Fiction Book of the Year and the Margaret and Colin Roderick Literary Award in 2022.

## Paddy Manning

Journalist Paddy Manning is the author of several award-winning books, including biographies of Malcolm Turnbull and Nathan Tinkler. He is also the creator and presenter of the podcast *Rupert: The Last Mogul*.

## Victoria Mar

Victoria Mar is the director of the Victorian Melanoma Service at The Alfred and adjunct associate professor at the School of Public Health and Preventive Medicine at Monash University.

## David Marr

David Marr is an award-winning journalist, author of numerous books and respected political and social commentator. His areas of expertise include Australian politics, the law, censorship, the media and the arts. He also writes for *The Monthly*, *The Saturday Paper* and *Guardian Australia*.

# Speakers and Moderators

## Karen Martini

Karen Martini is one of Australia's most beloved chefs. She was the resident chef on long-running lifestyle television series *Better Homes and Gardens* and a regular columnist for *Good Weekend*. She is the author of eight cookbooks. Her newest, *Cook*, is by far her most comprehensive and ambitious, cementing her place as the voice of a generation.

## Thomas Mayo

Writer and First Nations campaigner Thomas Mayo is well known for his passionate and articulate advocacy for constitutional recognition of The Voice. With veteran journalist Kerry O'Brien, he wrote *The Voice to Parliament Handbook*. He is the author of *Finding the Heart of the Nation*, *Dear Son* and the bestselling children's books *Finding our Heart* and *Freedom Day*.

## Patrick McCaughey

Patrick McCaughey studied at the University of Melbourne before becoming art critic at *The Age* in 1966. He was appointed professor of visual arts at Monash University in 1972 and director of the National Gallery of Victoria in 1981. He was later director of the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford, Connecticut, and the Yale Center for British Art. He has published widely on Australian, American and European art.

## Laura McCluskey

Laura McCluskey is a writer, editor and actor. *The Wolf Tree* is her debut novel and she has penned several film and television projects for her production company, Sibylline Films. Laura is a co-founder of Three Fates Theatre Company and has performed across theatre, film and television.

## Tom McIlroy

Tom McIlroy is a political correspondent with the *Australian Financial Review*, based at Parliament House in Canberra. He has written for *The Age*, the *Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Houston Chronicle* and the *Canberra Times*.

## Dervla McTiernan

Dervla McTiernan is the critically acclaimed and award-winning author of six novels, including the much-loved Cormac Reilly series and two No.1 bestselling thrillers *The Murder Rule* and *What Happened to Nina?* Both were *New York Times* Best Thrillers of the Year and are in development for screen adaptation. Her new book is *The Unquiet Grave*.

## George Megalogenis

George Megalogenis has had more than 30 years' experience in the media. His book, *The Australian Moment*, won the 2013 Prime Minister's Literary Award for Non-Fiction and the 2012 Walkley Award for Non-Fiction. He is also author of *Faultlines*, *The Longest Decade*, *Australia's Second Chance* and *The Football Solution*.

## Kate Mildenhall

Kate Mildenhall's debut novel *Skylarking* was longlisted for the 2017 Indie Book Awards for Debut Fiction and the 2017 Voss Literary Prize. *The Mother Fault* was shortlisted for the 2021 Aurealis Science Fiction Novel of the Year. *The Hummingbird Effect* was shortlisted for the 2024 ABIA Literary Fiction Book of the Year. In 2024, she released her first picture book, *To Stir with Love*, illustrated by Jess Racklyeft.

## Rosemarie Milsom

Rosemarie Milsom is the founding director of the Newcastle Writers Festival, which is in its ninth year. She is also an award-winning journalist who has worked mainly with Fairfax Media in Sydney and Newcastle, as well as with ABC Newcastle.

## Guy Mirabella

As one of Australia's most highly regarded book designers of the 1990s, Guy Mirabella left his fingerprints everywhere, including on seminal cookbooks bearing the names of Stephanie Alexander, Christine Manfield and Charmaine Solomon. He opened and operated Shop Ate Café & Store in Mount Eliza for 20 years until 2022.

## Kylie Mirmohamadi

Kylie Mirmohamadi is a writer and academic. Her first novel, *Diving, Falling*, was published by Scribe in September 2024 and listed as a best book of 2024 by *Guardian Australia*, *The Saturday Paper*, *The Australian*, *InReview* and *Good Reading Magazine*. Kylie is an adjunct senior research fellow in English and creative writing at La Trobe University.

## Natasha Mitchell

Natasha Mitchell is the host of the ABC's popular *Big Ideas* program and podcast. She is an award-winning journalist, radio presenter, podcaster and documentary maker.

## Jane Montgomery Griffiths

Jane Montgomery Griffiths has combined a career as an actor, playwright and academic. She has performed with companies including Bell Shakespeare, MTC, Malthouse and Belvoir, and had her work produced by Malthouse, ABC Radio, Belvoir and Victorian Opera. She was the Judith E. Wilson and Leventis Fellow in Greek Drama at Cambridge and Professor of Theatre Practice at Monash University. Awards include best actor (White Rose; Manchester Evening News; Greenroom Awards); best new opera (libretto) (Greenroom Awards); best new work (R.E. Ross Award). Her work has been shortlisted for the Sydney Theatre and NSW and Victorian Premiers' Literary Awards.

## Di Morrissey

Di Morrissey AM is one of Australia's most successful and prolific authors with a dazzling career of consecutive bestsellers spanning three decades. Her novels connect readers with people and place, exploring the ties that bind communities together. Di's 30th novel, *River Song*, was published in 2024.

## Rick Morton

Rick Morton is the author of four non-fiction books, including the critically acclaimed bestseller *One Hundred Years of Dirt*, which was longlisted for the Walkley Book of the Year 2018 and shortlisted for the National Biography Award 2019. Rick is a senior reporter with *The Saturday Paper* and a two-time Walkley Award winner for his coverage of the robodebt saga. His latest work, *Mean Streak*, documents that ill-fated policy.

## Margo Ngawa Neale

Emeritus Curatorial Fellow (NMA) Neale is an internationally acclaimed, award-winning art curator and author. Of Aboriginal and Irish descent, she is a member of the Gumbaynggirr and Wiradjuri nations with clan affiliations to others. She has authored, co-authored, edited and co-edited 21 books including the Oxford Companion to Aboriginal Art and Culture and most recently the on-going First Knowledges series with Thames and Hudson. Margo's major exhibitions include the international touring Songlines (2017 on-going) and Emily Kame Kngwarreye (1998 and 2008).

## Kerry O'Brien

Kerry O'Brien has won six Walkley awards including the Gold Walkley and the Walkley for outstanding leadership in journalism. In a career spanning more than 50 years, he has worked for newspapers and television.

## Vanessa O'Neill

Vanessa is a playwright, performer and teacher. She has worked for theatre companies throughout the UK and Australia. Her one-woman-show *Happy With Half Your Life* toured nationally and internationally. Her play *In Search of Owen Roe* had two seasons at La Mama Theatre and toured with Regional Arts Victoria. Vanessa was awarded a Fellowship by the University of Melbourne to research a play based on the Germaine Greer Archive. *The Greer Effect* was shortlisted for the Queensland Premier's Drama Award and received The Varuna Eric Dark Fellowship for outstanding non-fiction.

## Titus O'Reily

Titus O'Reily is a writer, presenter, performer and broadcaster known for capturing the trials and tribulations of an obsessive sports fan. His commentary and sporting round-ups have attracted more than 300,000 followers on social media.

## Caroline Parker

Caroline Parker is a herbalist, farmer, forager and facilitator. She grows herbs and flowers for her business, The Cottage Herbalist, where she sells her award-winning, certified organic and wild-crafted tea blends.

## Marko Pavlyshyn

Marko Pavlyshyn is Emeritus Professor in the Mykola Zerov Centre for Ukrainian Studies in Monash University's School of Languages, Cultures and Linguistics. His research specialisations include modern and contemporary Ukrainian literature, post-colonial approaches to the study of Slavic literatures and cultures, and issues of culture and national identity. He is the author of *Ol'ha Kobylanska: Interpretations* (Kharkiv, 2008), *Canon and Iconostasis* (Kyiv, 1997), and more than 80 chapters in books and articles in scholarly journals.

## Corrie Perkin

Award-winning journalist Corrie Perkin is also an editor, writer, MC, podcaster and Founder and Director of the Sorrento Writers Festival.

## Steve Perkin

A journalist for 50 years, Steve Perkin covered sport and general news and wrote daily columns for *The Age* and the *Herald Sun*. A former *Sunday Age* sports editor, he was also an executive producer of Channel 9's *The Footy Show* for three years. Steve has written three novels, as yet unpublished.

## Ailsa Piper

Ailsa Piper's book, *For Life*, is a moving insight into loss, hope and starting again - aided by the healing power of nature and some unexpected angels. Previous books were her walking memoir, *Sinning Across Spain* and *The Attachment: Letters From A Most Unlikely Friendship*, co-authored with Tony Doherty. Her script, *Small Mercies*, was co-winner of the Patrick White Playwright's Award. Ailsa has written for Griffith Review, the SMH, Slow Living and the Guardian. She's also an accomplished audiobook narrator.

## Richard Piper

Richard Piper has had a distinguished acting career in England and Australia, appearing in more than 80 productions, including 40 for the Melbourne Theatre Company. After training at the Central School of Speech and Drama in London, he appeared in West End productions *Grease* and *Elvis*. In the 1980s he travelled to Australia as part of the band The Bouncing Czecks, before moving to Melbourne permanently.

## J.P. Pomare

J.P. Pomare is an award-winning author whose debut novel, *Call Me Evie* (2018), won the Ngaio Marsh Award for Best First Novel. *In the Clearing* (2019) was made into a Disney+ original series while *Tell Me Lies* (2020) was a No.1 Audible bestseller. *17 Years Later* is his seventh novel.

## Sarah Pound

Sarah Pound is a nutritionist, recipe developer and mother of three. Through her online community, Wholesome by Sarah, she has become a trusted resource for home cooks, offering easy, family-friendly recipes that make healthy eating accessible for all. In May 2024, Sarah fulfilled a lifelong dream with the release of her debut cookbook, *Wholesome by Sarah*.

## Liz Porter

Liz Porter is a crime author, novelist and freelance journalist. Liz writes about 'the real CSI' in books that tell how real-life forensic scientists solve crimes and mysteries. Her first forensic science book, *Written On The Skin*, shared the 2007 Ned Kelly Prize for best true crime book. Her second, *Cold Case Files*, won the 2012 Sisters in Crime Davitt Award for best true crime book. Her third was *Crime Scene Asia*.

## Ian Rankin

Sir Ian James Rankin OBE is a Scottish crime writer and philanthropist, best known for his Inspector Rebus novels. He has also written standalone novels, including *Doors Open*, plus several novels under the pseudonym 'Jack Harvey' and two plays.

## Hannie Rayson

Award-winning playwright, screenwriter, presenter and author, Hannie Rayson's works include *Hotel Sorrento*, *Inheritance* and *Life After George*. The latter was the first play to be nominated for the Miles Franklin Literary Award.

## Raeden Richardson

Raeden Richardson was raised in Melbourne and has lived in Singapore and New York City. He is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and author of *The Degenerates*. His writing has appeared in *Griffith Review*, *Kill Your Darlings*, *The Masters Review*, *The Age*, *Strangely Enough* and *New Australian Fiction*.

## Darren Rix

Darren Rix, a Gunditjmarra-GunaiKurnai man, grew up in the tin huts and tents of 'Silver City', South Nowra, with his 11 siblings. He later attended school in Bega and, at 14, moved to Ngunnawal country (Canberra) where he has songline ties through his Ngarigo bloodlines. He has worked as a radio reporter for the Brisbane Indigenous Media Association and with the Ngunnawal people as a cultural sites officer in Canberra. Darren is an accomplished musician, as was his uncle, Archie Roach.

# Speakers and Moderators

## Seth Robinson

Seth Robinson is a writer, producer and academic. He is the author of *Welcome to Bellevue (2020)*, the first full-length novel in Grattan Street Press's original fiction collection. His work has featured in *Kill Your Darlings*, *The Saturday Paperman*, *Everything All at Once* (the Ultimo Prize Anthology), *Resilience* (the Mascara Literary Review 15th anniversary collection) and *Aurealis Magazine*, among others.

## Andrew Rule

Andrew Rule has reported on life, crime and catastrophes (and sometimes sport) for more than 45 years. He has worked for each of Melbourne's daily newspapers and also spent time in radio and television production and making documentaries on subjects ranging from crime to horse racing.

## Judith Ryan

Art historian Judith Ryan AM is senior curator-art museums at the University of Melbourne and was previously senior curator of Indigenous art at the National Gallery of Victoria. While there, she played a key role in the development and scholarly interpretation of a nationally important collection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art.

## Madeleine Ryan

Madeleine Ryan is a writer, director and author. Her articles and essays have appeared in the *New York Times*, *SBS*, *Vogue*, *Daily Telegraph*, *Sydney Morning Herald* and *Vice*. She is working on the screen adaptation of her first novel, *A Room Called Earth*. Her latest book is *The Knowing*.

## Samah Sabawi

Samah Sabawi is an author, playwright and poet and a recipient of national and international awards. Her theatre credits include the critically acclaimed and award-winning plays *Tales of a City by the Sea* and *Them*. In 2020, she received the Green Room Award for Best Writing in the independent theatre category, and was shortlisted for both the NSW and Victorian Premier's Literary Awards.

## Lauren Samuelsson

Dr Lauren Samuelsson holds a PhD in history from the University of Wollongong, where she is an honorary fellow. Lauren's research interests include cultural history, the history of food and drink, the history of popular culture and gender history. Her award-winning work has been published in *History Australia* and *Australian Historical Studies*. She is a regular guest on Australian radio.

## Jess Sanders

Jess Sanders is a social worker, educator and award-winning author. She has a passion for creating resources that provide children with the knowledge and tools to understand tricky topics. Jess regularly presents to young people, parents and educators on topics such as grief and loss, body acceptance and self-care.

## Julianne Schultz

Professor Emeritus Julianne Schultz AM FAHA is the chair of *The Conversation*. She was the publisher and founding editor of *Griffith Review* and is professor emeritus of media and culture at the Griffith Centre for Social and Cultural Research, and a member of the board of the Sydney Writers' Festival. She is an acclaimed author of several books, including *Reviving the Fourth Estate* and *Steel City Blues*. She has served on the board of directors of the ABC, Grattan Institute and Copyright Agency.

## Richard Scolyer

Professor Richard Scolyer AO, along with colleague Professor Georgina Long AO, is a medical director at Melanoma Institute Australia. Together, they were named 2024 Australians of Year for their pioneering work in melanoma and for their work in applying that science to brain cancer. Richard is also a senior staff specialist at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital in Sydney and conjoint professor at the University of Sydney. Richard is going through his own cancer journey after being diagnosed with glioblastoma in June 2023.

## Jock Serong

Jock Serong is the author of seven novels and the winner of several awards, including the ARA Historical Novel Prize, the Ned Kelly Award for First Fiction and Britain's Staunch Prize, which is given to thrillers where no women are victims of violence. He is a former solicitor.

## Anthony Sharwood

Anthony Sharwood is a Walkley Award-winning journalist and author of three books set in the Australian high country: *From Snow to Ash (2020)*, *The Brumby Wars (2021)* and *Kosciuszko (2024)*. Part historical biography, part travelogue, *Kosciuszko* follows the trail of the great Polish freedom fighter before switching focus to the Ngarigo people as they seek to reclaim the original name of Australia's highest peak.

## Greg Sheridan

Greg Sheridan AO is foreign editor of *The Australian* and a hugely respected journalist. He's also a man of deep Christian faith and is fascinated by the intellectual, spiritual and human aspects of Christianity. His most recent book is *Christians*. Previous books include *God is Good For You* and *When We Were Young and Foolish*.

## Ben Shewry

Ben Shewry is the renowned chef and owner of Attica, a husband, father, son, brother, friend and creative obsessive. He has written two books – *Uses for Obsession* and *Origin: The Food of Ben Shewry* – is a semi-pro playlist builder, amateur filmmaker, part-time photographer and full-time renovator.

## Michael Shmith

Michael Shmith is a former *Age* arts editor and opera critic and a former communications director of the Australian Ballet. Michael is also an author, editor and writer.

## Emma Shortis

Dr Emma Shortis is director of The Australia Institute's International and Security Affairs Program. She is a historian and writer, focused on the history and politics of the US and its role in the world.

## John Silvester

John Silvester is Australia's longest-serving crime reporter, having covered the beat since 1978. He has won four Walkley Awards, the Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year Award, nine Melbourne Press Club Quills, nine Victorian Law Foundation Awards, a Ned Kelly Award for true crime writing, a Ned Kelly lifetime achievement award, an ASEAN Fellowship to study crime and corruption in South-East Asia, and has been elevated to the Australian Media Hall of Fame.

## Inga Simpson

Inga Simpson is the author of *The Thinning*, *Willowman*, *The Last Woman in the World*, *Mr Wigg*, *Nest*, *Where the Trees Were*, as well as *Understory: a life with trees* and, for children, *The Book of Australian Trees*, illustrated by Alicia Rogerson. Inga's books have been listed for numerous awards, including the Miles Franklin and Stella Prize.

## Nardi Simpson

Nardi Simpson is a Yuwaalaraay storyteller from NSW's north-west. As a member of Indigenous duo Stiff Gins, Nardi has travelled nationally and internationally for the past 22 years. Her debut novel, *Song of the Crocodile*, won the 2017 Black&write! fellowship and the ALS Gold Medal, and was longlisted for the 2021 Stella Prize and Miles Franklin Literary Award. Her second novel, *The Belburd*, came out in 2024.

## Amanda Smith

Amanda Smith is a former ABC Radio National presenter. Her program credits include *The Sports Factor*, *Life Matters* and *The Body Sphere*.

## Mark Smith

Mark Smith is the author of five novels: *Three Boys Gone*, *The Road To Winter*, *Wilder Country*, *Land Of Fences* and *If Not Us*. He is also an award-winning writer of short fiction and co-curator of *Minds Went Walking*, *Paul Kelly's Songs Reimagined* and *Into Your Arms*, *Nick Cave's Songs Reimagined*.

## Annie Smithers

Annie Smithers is a highly regarded chef and one of the first to truly epitomise the paddock-to-plate ethos. Her restaurant du Fermier, in Trentham, features a menu du jour based on classic French farmhouse cooking using vegetables harvested that day from her kitchen garden, plus local meats and poultry. Annie has written four books and also writes for *The Saturday Paper*.

## Jessica Stanley

Jessica Stanley is an Australian novelist living in London. She grew up in Melbourne, studied in Canberra and worked in journalism and on progressive political campaigns before moving to the UK in 2011. Her first novel, *A Great Hope*, was published by Picador in 2022 and was widely praised. *Consider Yourself Kissed* is to be published in May.

## Jason Steger

British-born Australian journalist Jason Steger was a long-serving literary editor for *The Age* and an ABC TV *First Tuesday Book Club* panel member.

## Cameron Stewart

Cameron Stewart is the chief international correspondent at *The Australian*, combining investigative reporting on foreign affairs, defence and national security with feature writing for the *Weekend Australian Magazine*. He is a former winner of the Graham Perkin Award for Australian Journalist of the Year.

## Katrina Strickland

Katrina Strickland is a writer and journalist. She has been editor of *The Age* and *Sydney Morning Herald's Good Weekend* magazine for the past eight years; prior to that she was editor of *The Australian Financial Review Magazine*. Her book *Affairs of the Art*, about the estates of some of Australia's most renowned artists, was published by Melbourne University Publishing in 2013.

## Anne Summers

Dr Anne Summers AO is a bestselling author, journalist and thought-leader with a long career in politics, the media, business and the non-government sector in Australia, Europe and the US. She is the author of eight books, including the classic *Damned Whores and God's Police*, published in 1975.

## Norman Swan

Dr Norman Swan is a physician and journalist who co-hosts Radio National's *Health Report* and *What's That Rash?* He also reports for 7.30 and other ABC TV shows and has won multiple awards, including the Gold Walkley. He has written three books: *So You Think You Know What's Good For You*, *So You Want to Live Younger Longer* and the latest, *So You Want to Know What's Good For Your Kids*.

## Marion Taffe

After a 20-year career as a newspaper journalist and editor, Marion Taffe studied professional writing and editing at RMIT. She was awarded a Varuna Residential Fellowship in 2023 to work on her debut novel *By Her Hand*, a historical fiction about a young woman scribe in early medieval England.

## Josh Taylor

Josh Taylor is a Guardian Australia reporter based in Melbourne.

## Virginia Trioli

Virginia Trioli is a two-time Walkley award-winning journalist and the author of two books: her 2024 food memoir *A Bit on the Side* and the feminist investigation *Generation F*. She is the host of ABC TV's *Creative Types*.

## Clara Tuite

Clara Tuite works in the literary and cultural history of romanticism, with a particular interest in the works of Jane Austen and Lord Byron.

## Michael Veitch

Author, actor and broadcaster Michael Veitch has written 11 books in the spheres of history, military history, travel and Australia's role in the Pacific War.

## Steve Vizard

Steve Vizard is an Australian television and radio presenter, producer, writer, lawyer and businessman.

## Anna Walker

Anna Walker is an award-winning illustrator and author of numerous picture books for children. Her books include *Florette*, which was named a *New York Times*/New York Public Library Best Illustrated Book.

## Amanda Walton

A keen environmental advocate with a business background, Amanda Walton works with Bioregional Australia, inspiring property developers and precinct managers to strive for a world that lives within the limits of one planet. She invests in organisations that create positive social and environmental impact and recently visited rewilded places and spaces in the British Isles, seeing how degraded ecosystems can be restored.

## Tasma Walton

Tasma Walton studied at NIDA and has worked extensively as an actor in such TV series as *Blue Heelers*, *The Secret Life of Us* and *City Homicide*. As a scriptwriter, she has several screenplays and a television series in development. She is also an accomplished artist. *Heartless* is her first novel.

## Sally Warhaft

Sally Warhaft is a Melbourne broadcaster, anthropologist and writer and the host of the Wheeler Centre's live journalism series, *The Fifth Estate*, now in its third year. She is a former editor of *The Monthly* magazine and the author of the bestselling book *Well May We Say: The Speeches that Made*

# Speakers and Moderators

*Australia.* Sally is a regular host and commentator on ABC radio.

## Don Watson

Don Watson was Prime Minister Paul Keating's speechwriter and adviser. He is the author of many critically acclaimed books, including *Caledonia Australis*, *Recollections of a Bleeding Heart*, *American Journeys*, *The Bush* and *The Passion of Private White*. He has twice won *The Age* Book of the Year, in addition to the National Biography Award, the Alfred Deakin Essay Prize, the Australian Literary Studies Association Book of the Year, a Walkley award, the NSW Premier's Award, the Queensland Literary Award and the Independent Booksellers Book of the Year (twice).

## Christian White

Christian White is an author and screenwriter whose credits include the feature film *Relic* and the Netflix series *Clickbait*. His debut novel, *The Nowhere Child* (2018), was one of Australia's bestselling debut novels ever, with rights sold in 17 international territories and a major screen deal struck. Christian's second book, *The Wife and the Widow* (2019), and his third book, *Wild Place* (2021), were instant bestsellers. *The Ledge* is his fourth novel.

## Paulette Whitney

Paulette Whitney lives with her family on a pocket of land in the foothills of Kunanyi/Mount Wellington, south of Nipaluna/Hobart. With her farmer/chef husband Matt, she grows seedlings, vegetables and seed crops and sells produce at the Salamanca Market in Hobart. They have nurtured relationships with herbalists, gardeners, chefs and botanists. For Paulette, waste is a dirty word.

## Kim Williams

Kim Williams AM has long been involved in the arts, entertainment and media industries in Australia and overseas. He is chair of the ABC and has held various executive roles since the late 1970s: chief executive at News Corp Australia, Foxtel, Fox Studios Australia, the Australian Film Commission, Southern Star Entertainment and Musica Viva Australia and chairman of the Sydney Opera House Trust.

## Peter Wilmoth

Peter Wilmoth is a Melbourne-based journalist, writer and publisher. He spent many years at *The Age* and *The Sunday Age* writing news and

feature articles, as well as editing. He has co-written autobiographies of footballer James Hird, actor Bud Tingwell, businessman Harold Mitchell and cyclist Cadel Evans. Other titles include *Glad All Over: The Countdown Years 1974-1987* and *Geelong: In Our Own Words*.

## Caroline Wilson

Caroline Wilson is a Walkley award-winning sports journalist, broadcaster and co-presenter of the *Don't Shoot the Messenger* podcast. Caroline's numerous awards include a Lifetime Achievement Award from the Australian Sports Commission in 2010, the Graham Perkin Australian Journalist of the Year Award in 2013 and the Melbourne Press Club's Lifetime Achievement Award in 2021.

## Sean Wilson

Sean Wilson's short stories have been published in Australian and international journals, anthologies and literary magazines, including *Island* and *Narrative*. He was shortlisted for the Patrick White Playwrights Award by Sydney Theatre Company. He now lives in Melbourne. *Gemini Falls* is his first book.

## Dave Witty

Dave Witty is the author of the acclaimed *What the Trees See: A Wander Through Millennia of Natural History in Australia*, which examines aspects of history through indigenous and non-indigenous trees. He is the recipient of the 2021 Rosina Joy Buckman Award in the Nature Conservancy Nature Writing Prize, and his work appears widely in literary journals.

## Bruce Wolpe

Bruce Wolpe is a Senior Fellow (non-resident) at the US Studies Centre. He is a regular contributor on US politics across media in Australia. Bruce worked with the Democrats in Congress during President Barack Obama's first term, and was Prime Minister Julia Gillard's chief of staff.

## Tom Wright

Actor, director and writer Tom Wright is a former associate director of the Sydney Theatre Company. Productions of his work have been staged in Pakistan, Belgium, Canada, the US, the UK, China and New Zealand, as well as throughout Australia.

## Jane Yang

Jane Yang was born in the Chinese enclave of Saigon and raised in Australia where she grew up on a diet of superstition and family stories from Old China. She established a scientific career but is still sometimes torn between modern, rational thinking and the pull of old beliefs passed down by family. Her debut novel, *The Lotus Shoes*, set in 1800s China, is inspired by her grandmothers' memories.

## Alice Zaslavsky

Alice Zaslavsky is a food literacy advocate, bestselling cookbook author and creator of *Phenomenom*, a free digital toolbox helping teachers slip more serves of veg into the curriculum.

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## What's on at The Continental

As Point Nepean Road turns south to climb the hill to Sorrento's main street, the majestic structure of one of the Mornington Peninsula's great landmarks comes into view. The Continental Hotel, built and opened in 1875, is said to be the largest limestone structure in the southern hemisphere. It is also the Sorrento Writers Festival Hub and for four days in April, becomes the heart of intense literary activity. In late 2021, a few months before it re-opened after a massive \$120 million redevelopment, Festival Director Corrie Perkin discussed with representatives from The Continental, and its site colleague the InterContinental Hotel, the possibility of hosting her bold new writers festival idea. The owners and management team were keen and 18 months later, in April 2023, the inaugural Sorrento Writers Festival was launched in Halcyon Hall at The Continental.

With heartfelt thanks, we acknowledge The Continental as our Festival Hub. Once again, we welcome new and returning guests to these beautiful spaces and wish everyone a happy visit.

The Continental Hotel sits on the traditional lands of the Boonwurrung/Bunurong people of the Kulin nation. For thousands of years, Boonwurrung/Bunurong people managed the lands and waterways, but their traditional way of life was interrupted by the arrival of European settlers in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Half-a-century later in the 1870s, George Coppin, a politician and theatrical entrepreneur based in Melbourne, arrived in the area and named the town after the Italian resort town of the same name. Coppin established the Sorrento Ocean Amphitheatre Company, sold off allotments of land, built seaside villas, The Continental Hotel, a pier and sea baths.

In 2018, work started on a major redevelopment of the original Victorian building, with additional accommodation and amenities' buildings added to Coppin's master plan.

Our two main Festival spaces from April 24-27 are Halcyon Hall on level two, and The Ballroom on the mezzanine level.

This year, the ground floor Barlow nightclub will become the Speakers' Green Room area with a bigger box office area just in front.

Festival-goers need never leave The Continental. In-house lunch, dinner and all-day grazing are available from the Atrium, the Conti Bar and the Beer Garden, as well as coffee and snack stations dotted around the hotel.

And for fine dining, we recommend Audrey's on level one. Named after chef Scott Pickett's grandmother, this elegant space was recently described by *The Age Good Food Guide* team as "a special-occasion-worthy room with a killer wine list and a menu that will please most people ..."

*Time Out* says: "Down on the Mornington Peninsula in Sorrento, there's really only one establishment to go to for such an elevated dining experience: Audrey's at the Continental Hotel."

For accommodation, remember the InterContinental Sorrento. Right next to our Hub, at the centre of the action, with pool, day spa and room service facilities, it is the ideal place to stay if you're planning a weekend. To book, visit [sorrento.intercontinental.com](http://sorrento.intercontinental.com)

## The Festival Hub bookshop

Once again, Avenue Bookstore will create its wonderful pop-up Festival bookshop in Coppin's Lounge, level one, The Continental Hotel.

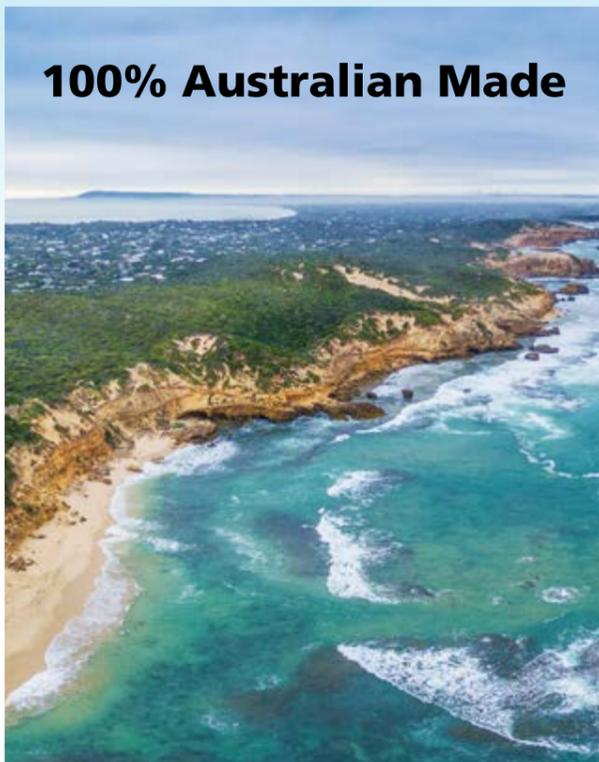
Right near the InterContinental Hotel entrance and lobby, the bookshop team will have hundreds of books for you to browse through and shop.

The Hub pop-up will also be the official book-signing venue for authors after their sessions.

Avenue Bookstore will also run book stands at various venues around Sorrento to accompany guest writers' sessions.

We thank Avenue Bookstore owner Chris Redfern and his team of talented and knowledgeable booksellers for joining us again at Sorrento.

And if you live in Melbourne, don't forget to visit Avenue's three beautiful bookstores in Albert Park, Elsternwick and Richmond.



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Escape to Sorrento this June for a cavalcade of events at Taste Sorrento. Here's a sample of what's to come:

- June 1: Masterchef Lunch
- June 6: Soul Night Market
- June 21: Winter Solstice Dawn Swim
- June 21: Sorrento Burning Man
- June 28: Sorrento Art Tour

So many more...

For more information visit: [sorrento.org.au](http://sorrento.org.au)

# What I've Learnt

A podcast about lessons learnt, mountains climbed, rivers crossed.

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Amazon  
and other platforms

With journalist & podcaster Deborah Blashki-Marks featuring Trent Dalton, Nikki Gemmell, Jane Harper, Eric Bana, Kate Ceberano, Layne Beachley and many more...

# Our Beautiful Sorrento

The Mornington Peninsula can be particularly beautiful in the autumn, when the mornings are fresh, the days mild and the bay still pleasantly warm for swimming.

Sorrento is unique in that it's located on the skinny end of the peninsula, where it's walking distance between the calm, pristine beaches of Port Phillip Bay and the wild, rugged Bass Strait. Our slice of the peninsula is home to lush parks, awe-inspiring walks and magical places to take a dip.

As well as offering plenty of ways to immerse yourself in the natural world, our pretty town features several spots to dust off the cobwebs or find a sense of serenity. Those looking to boost wellbeing can do it here in Sorrento.

**Jane Hone, local author**



## Sorrento Foreshore and Jetty

If time is of the essence, explore Sorrento's foreshore and jetty – the backdrop in several scenes of Hannie Rayson's classic play, *Hotel Sorrento*. It's also the site of what was once Erlandsen's Sea Baths, which featured diving boards and saltwater baths heated by briquettes, plus an adjoining tearoom. Festival venue The Baths now stands in its place.

## Sorrento-Portsea Artists' Trail

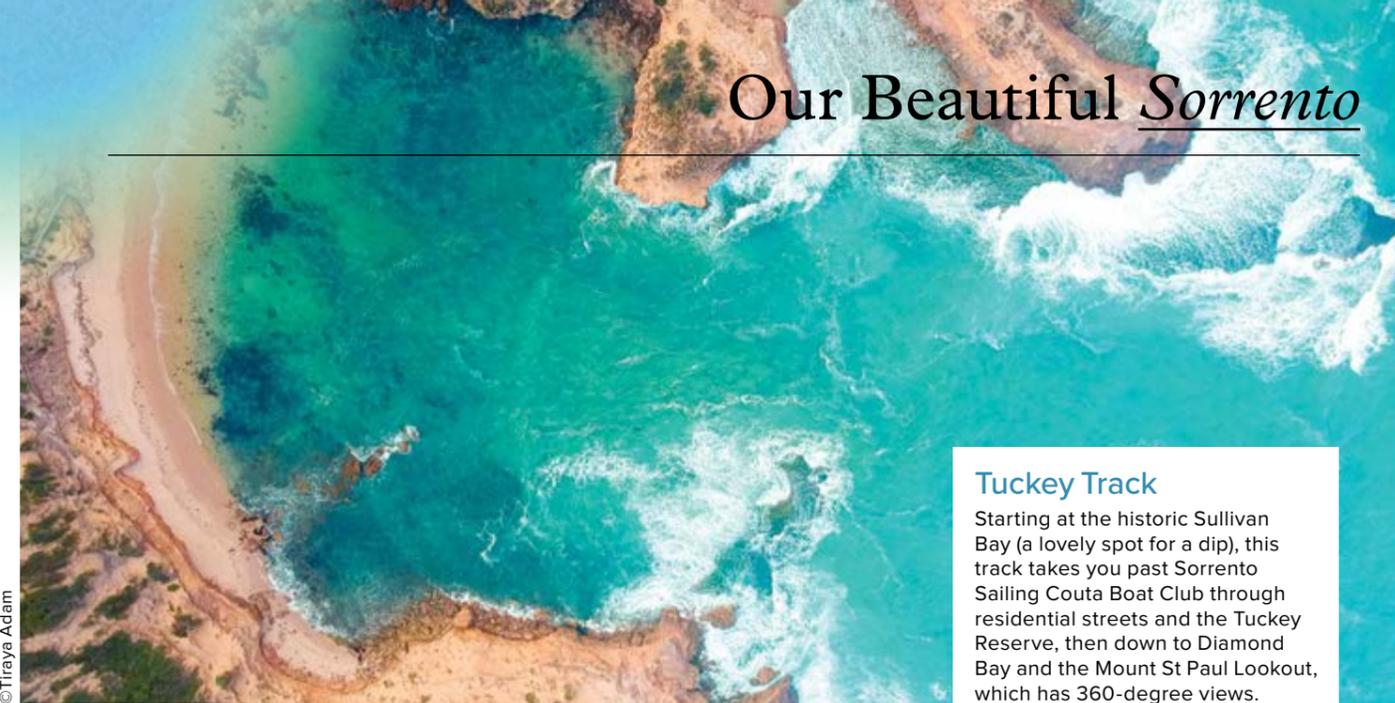
What could be better than blending exercise, jaw-dropping vistas and art? This trail takes in 14 of our most stunning locations through the eyes of such artists as Sir Arthur Streeton, Arthur Boyd and John Perceval. Journey between each reproduced painting by car or foot, starting at Websters Corner Beach (local tip: grab a coffee from nearby St Paul's General Store before embarking) and then wind your way via Sorrento Park through part of the Millionaire's Walk in Portsea, as well as London Bridge. Your last stop is the eternally charming Diamond Bay.

## Sorrento Historic Park

Adjacent to local institution Hotel Sorrento, Sorrento Park has manicured lawns, flower gardens and large trees, as well as picnic tables and a wooden playground. The park has been popular since the 1800s, when it was used for lawn games and dances. It fell into disrepair after World War II, but was eventually restored to its former glory and is now beloved for its grassed areas, shady trees and bay views.



# Our Beautiful Sorrento



## Tuckey Track

Starting at the historic Sullivan Bay (a lovely spot for a dip), this track takes you past Sorrento Sailing Couta Boat Club through residential streets and the Tuckey Reserve, then down to Diamond Bay and the Mount St Paul Lookout, which has 360-degree views.



## Sorrento Back Beach and Rock Pool

Survey the wild beauty of Bass Strait from the back beach and, at low tide, explore a phenomenal rock pool. From the beach, you can take the five-minute stair climb to Coppin's Lookout and enjoy the view, walk along the track to Sphinx Rock, Portsea Village or London Bridge (4km) or head the other way towards Koonya Back Beach (3.6km).



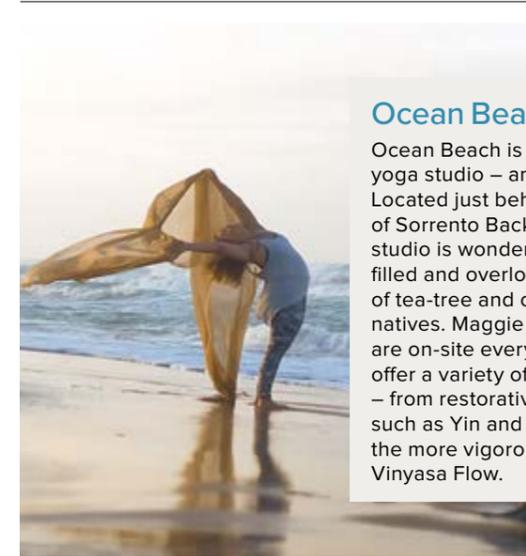
## Aurora Spa

If you're in need of rest and respite, step inside this luxurious subterranean bath house and spa in the Continental Hotel. The all-weather bath house offers an 11-step journey through such rituals as warm and cold pools, an aromatherapy steam room, salt therapy room, traditional sauna, 'Glacial Mist Room' and more. Float rooms and spa treatments are also available at this wellness mecca.



## Marlo Spa

A long-time Sorrento treasure that is now housed in the iconic Hotel Sorrento, Marlo Spa is the place to go for such beauty treatments as pedicures and sumptuous spa treatments – many of them inspired by ancient Ayurvedic (Indian medicine) rituals. You can also book a range of delicious 'Steam Lounge Rituals' in Marlo's steam room.



## Ocean Beach Yoga

Ocean Beach is our resident yoga studio – and it's a gem. Located just behind the dunes of Sorrento Back Beach, the studio is wonderfully light-filled and overlooks a canopy of tea-tree and other coastal natives. Maggie and her team are on-site every day and offer a variety of yoga classes – from restorative practices such as Yin and Gentle yoga to the more vigorous Sculpt and Vinyasa Flow.



## Recovery Deck at Recreation Sorrento

As well as a fully equipped gym and fitness studio, Recreation Sorrento has added a 'Recovery Deck' for those adventurous enough to experiment with contrast (hot and cold) therapy. Spend 20 or 50 minutes moving between an infrared sauna and ice bath, taking deep breaths along the way. It's the perfect place to focus on your body and experience autumn invigoration.

# Thank You



©Britt Gaiser

## The Festival thanks...

Festivals are only as strong as their communities. The Sorrento Writers Festival is blessed to have in its court the residents of Sorrento, Portsea and Blairgowrie and the greater Mornington Peninsula. Without their enthusiasm, volunteering, ticket purchases, sponsorship and ambassadorship, there would be no gathering of great minds and exchange of ideas.

We thank everyone who travels down the highway, across the hills, over from Flinders and Shoreham, from Frankston – and of course from Melbourne – to be part of this great event.

To our regional Victorian friends (hello those on the Bellarine Peninsula across the bay!) and interstate visitors, welcome to our coastal village and thank you for hitting the road/bus/train/ferry/plane to be with us.

Sorrento Writers Festival treasures its corporate partners and we thank all those business leaders who acknowledge our role in making a difference. To our generous donors, foundations such as the Sidney Myer Fund and the Margaret Lawrence Bequest, and government bodies like the Mornington Peninsula Shire Council and the Mornington Peninsula Regional Tourism Board, we thank you for your ongoing commitment to our mission to bring writers and readers together.

Heartfelt thanks to our guest speakers for giving up their time to be with us, for travelling to Sorrento and sharing their ideas. Without your books, newspaper articles and comment pieces, your research, your storytelling, film and TV scripts, poetry and sheer energy, our country would be a poorer place.

A shout-out to the community organisations that have graciously allowed us to fill their meeting rooms, halls and churches with festival folk. Your sense of welcome and inclusion is greatly appreciated – and we love your beautiful spaces.

A special thank you again to The Continental Sorrento, our Festival Hub, for hosting so many of our events. We also thank the Intercontinental Sorrento and the Pitt Family, owners of Hotel Sorrento, for generous offers of 'in kind' hotel rooms for some guest speakers. To bring more than 160 guests to Sorrento is not an inexpensive exercise and we appreciate your support.

To the Festival blue T-shirt brigade – our 140-plus volunteers who guide our visitors, check tickets, sweep floors, tidy chairs and accompany writers to their next appearance – we remain indebted. You each personify all that is good about community connectedness and getting involved. Thank you for the care you bring to our event.

Overseeing the organisation is the Festival Committee – led by President Peter Inge OAM and comprising Narelle Cormack (Treasurer), Rose Donohoe, Nicholas Martin and Amanda Rethus. Our community is lucky to have their stewardship and wisdom and I am enormously grateful for their friendship and guidance.

Thank you also to our subcommittee members, our contractors, our website and IT supporter I-Nex, our photographers, graphic designers and publicity team at Project Hutton – you all contribute so much to our organisation.

The Sorrento Writers Festival team is tiny but mighty. Operations Manager Isabel Pinkster, Partnerships Manager Fiona Poletti and Program Manager Olivia Fleetwood each bring enormous skill, experience and dedication to their roles. I am grateful to have them as my colleagues and appreciate their companionship as we land this big Festival plane.

A final thank you, as always, to the Hon. Barry Jones AC FAA FAHA FTSE FASSA FACE FRSA. It is a privilege to lead a festival with an oration that bears his name. The annual Barry Jones Oration will always reflect those things Barry holds dear and for which he has advocated all his life: education, inquiry, justice, democracy, the arts, science and the environment. We are delighted to welcome this year's Oration presenter Julia Gillard, and we thank the former prime minister for changing her international schedule to deliver this speech in her friend Barry's honour.

The Sorrento Writers Festival is a remarkable event in a remarkable setting – an ancient place of immense beauty, where the bay meets the ocean. It is home to many of us and it is a place where generations of holidaymakers share so many happy times.

Our annual writers festival offers us new reasons to gather and in 2025 we will host more events throughout the year and offer more opportunities for the local community to meet their hero writers.

It's official – we now have a thriving, exciting year-round community organisation in our midst. There's a lot to do, and hundreds more discussions to hear. It is a privilege to have you share our journey and on behalf of the Festival Committee, I thank you all.

**Corrie Perkin**  
Festival Director

# Thank You



©Pat Whelen

## And thank you to our 2024 speakers who kindly waived their appearance fee (in full or in part) so our Festival can survive and thrive:

Fiona Austin  
Ben Ball  
Mim Bartlett  
Eric Beecher  
Judith Brett  
Michael Carr-Gregg  
Peter Christoff  
Jan Cochrane-Harry  
Brendan Donohoe  
Marg Downey  
Jane Eckett  
Jon Faine  
Lindsay Fox  
Kate Fullager  
Michael Gawenda  
Shaun Grant  
Gideon Haigh  
Bill Hamilton  
Amanda Hampson

Lesley Harding  
Celia Hirsh  
Greer Honeywill  
Ross Honeywill  
Russel Howcroft  
Karen Inge  
Belinda Jeffrey  
Barry Jones  
Gail Jones  
Bill Kelty  
Betty King  
Dave King  
Jennifer Kloester  
Sarah L'Estrange  
Michael Lucas  
Stephen Lunn  
Ranald Macdonald  
Jack Manning Bancroft  
David Marr  
Stephen Mayne

David McAllister  
Zoe McKenzie  
Lisa Millar  
Natasha Mitchell  
Kendrah Morgan  
Simon Plant  
Steve Perkin  
Nick Reece  
Bernard Salt  
Niki Savva  
Mike Sheahan  
Michael Smith  
Cameron Stewart  
Fiona Sweet  
Lyn Swinburne  
Hedley Thomas  
Ilaria Walker  
Caroline Wilson  
Bruce Wolpe

Thank You

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Sorrento Writers Festival

Thank You

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Sorrento Writers Festival



## Sorrento Writers Festival

The Sorrento Writers Festival Incorporated is a registered not-for-profit charity. The entity is run by a Committee of Management with the assistance of financial advisory firm, the Kearney Group. We are fiscally responsible, we believe in good governance, regular reporting back to stakeholders, and although we plan within our means, we dream big. And we give back to the community; the Festival will be an employer of casual staff, volunteers and interns keen to gain experience in the events-books-culture-hospitality spaces. Our goal is to become a best-practice community cultural organisation, and one that engenders pride and respect.

### The Sorrento Writers Festival Team

#### Committee of Management

**President:** Peter Inge OAM

**Festival Director:** Corrie Perkin

**Treasurer:** Narelle Cormack  
Rose Donohoe  
Nicholas Martin  
Mandy Rethus

#### Sub-Committees

**Communications:** Rose Donohoe, Simon Traynor, Olivia Fleetwood, Corrie Perkin

**Finance:** Narelle Cormack (Chair), Peter Inge, Nicholas Martin, Corrie Perkin

**Fundraising:** Peter Inge (Chair), Nicholas Martin, Fiona Poletti, Corrie Perkin

**Operations:** Mandy Rethus (Chair), Isabel Pinkster, Melinda Williams, Corrie Perkin, Coco Carter

**Program:** Corrie Perkin (Chair), Francesca Carter, Rose Donohoe, Olivia Fleetwood, Isabel Pinkster, Mandy Rethus, Simon Traynor

#### Operations Team

**Festival Founder, Director & CEO:** Corrie Perkin

**Operations Manager:** Isabel Pinkster

**Program Manager:** Olivia Fleetwood

**Partnerships & Stakeholders:** Fiona Poletti

**Festival Coordinator:** Coco Carter

**Volunteers:** Melinda Williams

**IT, data, website and box office:** I-Nex

**Bookkeeper:** Leng Na

#### Business Address

Sorrento Writers Festival Incorporated's registered business address is c/o Kearney Group, Suite 137/425 Smith St, Fitzroy VIC 3065

#### Postal Address

Sorrento Writers Festival Incorporated  
ABN 20 955 969 821  
PO Box 277  
Sorrento, Victoria, 3943

#### Email Address

hello@sorrentowritersfestival.com.au

**Media and PR:** Project Hutton

**Graphic design:** Jasmin Tulk and Sonnet Studios

**Printed program:** Kate Slattery and Janelle Ward

**Legal advice:** Peter Inge and Richard Janko

Program printed by:



Together in print.

## Festival Patrons

*The Sorrento Writers Festival thanks our wonderful Patrons. Kate Baillieu, Michael Kirby, Marcia Langton, Lady Marigold Southey and David Williamson, our keen advocates and great supporters.*

*They represent a vast range of interests, community work, professional experience and talents, and we thank them for their contribution to our Festival, and to Australian cultural and community life.*

Kate Baillieu  
Michael Kirby AC CMG  
Professor Marcia Langton AO  
Lady Marigold Southey AC  
David Williamson AO

## Our Donors

*We are grateful to all our donors – big and small – for investing in us, and helping to grow and sustain our Festival and its programs. Your generosity will support our long-term commitment to encourage literacy and learning in our community. Already, we are working with local Mornington Peninsula organisations to bring writers and young readers together. Please know, your financial support is making a difference to our school children. Thank you for believing in our Festival and its capacity to spark important conversations, inspire, and change lives.*

#### Cornerstone

Annie and Andrew Bell  
Mim and Michael Bartlett  
Suzy Calley and Garry Johnson  
The Cadden Family  
Christine and Terry Campbell AO  
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Paula Fox AO and Lindsay Fox AC  
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Gianna Totaro  
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John Gibson  
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Katrina and Simon Holmes à Court  
George and Rosa Morstyn  
Susan Nathan  
Ross Stephens  
The Shelmerdine Family  
Janet Whiting AM and Phillip Lukies

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Sally Howe AM  
Karin McNab  
Terry Murphy KC and Margaret Lodge  
Susan Renouf  
Lady Marigold Southey AC  
James Best and Doris Young

#### Friend

Primrose Bright  
Jenn Collett  
Simonetta Cunningham  
Susanna Mason  
Ralph Renard  
Helen Sykes  
Gillian Watson  
Lyn Williams

# Our Partners

## Founding Partner



## Major Partners



## Supporting Partners



## Venue Partners



## Cultural Partners



## Media Partners



## Community Partners



# Our Volunteers / Prize Announcement



## Blessed are the blue-shirt brigade

More than 140 people this year joined our Festival volunteers posse, with many more expressing interest to lend a hand if needed.

To all our generous friends – led by the highly organised and hard-working Mindy Williams – we say thank you. Thank you for coming to the briefing sessions, standing by the venue doors, scanning tickets, offering advice on where to find the best coffee in town, driving authors to their next event, acting as MC and welcoming people to each session. You set up chairs, you pack up chairs, you open venues, you close venues. At the bowling club, you cook scones to serve to hungry guests. At the church, you offer your back yard in which Festival staff may park. At the Museum, you even offer to put on some history talks for any visitors keen to learn more about our beautiful southern Morn Pen region.

Meanwhile the amazing team at the Sorrento Portsea RSL work hard to meet our logistical needs while at the same time as staging their biggest event of the year, Anzac Day. If you see one of our vols in their blue festival t-shirt, know that you have a new friend. If you need advice or help, they're there to assist.

Thank you, dear volunteers, for the joy and laughter and sheer man and womanpower you bring to our events. We wouldn't be here without you.

# Creative Writing Prize

Future Leaders

2025

## Prize announcement

The winner of the annual \$5000 Sorrento Creative Writing Prize is a Festival opening night highlight. Once again, at the conclusion of the Barry Jones Oration by Julia Gillard, Future Leaders founder and prize donor Dr Helen Sykes will announce the decision by her esteemed judging panel and our winning writer will have a chance to say a few words.

More than 200 entries from around Australia were received this year, and we look forward to the announcement.

The Festival thanks Future Leaders, a national philanthropic initiative that focuses on leadership and the future of Australia, for this generous prize. And congratulations to all entrants for your commitment to your craft and thank you for entering our competition.

# 2024 Highlights

Last year's Sorrento Writers Festival was an extraordinary gathering of great ideas, enthusiastic audiences and remarkable speakers. Here are some highlights:

*"Congratulations on staging such a successful Sorrento Writers Festival. As someone with a strong interest in the local community it is genuinely exciting to see it come to life and to have grown to the extent it has in such a short time. We love the association we have with the festival and would very much like to stay involved as you move forward. Well done again!"*

**Matt Mahon**  
President of the Portsea Surf Life Saving Club



*"I want to say a very big thank you for the wonderful few days I've spent at the festival. Words really can't describe just how much I loved it. I feel full to the brim with inspiration having listened to so many wonderful writers, authors, and journalists."*

**Belinda Jeffery,**  
cook, food writer and author



*"I thoroughly enjoyed being part of the Sorrento Writers Festival - it made our little town come alive!"*

**Jo Roberts**  
Volunteer



*"What a great festival - so lovely to be there in that buzz! Thanks so much for inviting me."*

**Kate Grenville**  
Award-winning author



*"Just a note to say a heartfelt 'thank you' for a marvellous outing in Sorrento! I think it's the most fun I've ever had at a writer's fest. Everyone I wanted to see was there - the sessions fabulous and the setting sublime. Your volunteers were amazing and looked after me so well - do thank them for me!"*

**Wendy Harmer**  
Broadcaster, comedian and author

*"All in all an amazing stimulating four days which I will never forget. We are so happy to support the Sorrento Writers Festival. It is the best."*

Anonymous donor

*"My deepest gratitude to you, the staff, and all the volunteers. I had the best of times."*

**Thomas Mayo**  
Writer, community leader,  
First Nations and human  
rights advocate

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