



KSP Writers' Centre Annual Report 2017

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Chairwoman
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FORGING FORWARD

Once again it is my pleasure to present this Chairperson's report. As I sat down to compose something succinct and on point, I found myself reflecting on the year with equal measures of pride and exhaustion. The KSP Writers' Centre is an outstanding organisation, with a reputation that continues to go from strength to strength. Anyone who has spent more than five minutes here knows it is so much more than a community group or hobby Centre; it is a place that offers solace, support and a social outlet for what can at times be an insular endeavor. KSP forms an essential part of the creative arts ecosystem.

KSP is often under-acknowledged as an operation that effectively runs 24/7. It takes incredible hard work and dedication of a devoted and passionate team to make it all happen. The Board, the staff and our army of volunteers are the quiet achievers who work tirelessly towards, not only the betterment of the Centre, but for the greater good of the entire writing community of WA.

2017 has come with its equal share of successes and challenges; challenges such as an aging plumbing system and having to replace two hot water systems in the cabins. These were things we couldn't ignore, and inevitably took a big chunk off of our bottom line. Thankfully our management team, driven to think outside of the box due to lack of state government funding across the arts sector, made some smart operational decisions, which meant we had the money to cover it.

Financial challenges will always be something that any non-for-profit organisation will battle against and while a review of the writing sector in WA is currently being conducted by the Department of Culture and the Arts (formerly) there is no guarantee that a decision to reinstate funding will be forthcoming, therefore KSP must continue to find alternative ways to make ends meet.

Where KSP has been fortunate, is in the recognition from our local government authority, the Shire of Mundaring. After some extensive community consultation and lobbying on our part, the Shire has agreed to provide funding to KSP for the next four years. We are indebted to the Shire for their continued support and their investment in the Centre. This means we are able to maintain full time administration of the business, which is a much-appreciated luxury that none of our fellow Centres have at present.

Even with the security of the Shire's generous funding, we still need to be vigilant and targeted with our spending decisions. Saying that, we agreed unanimously as a Board that KSP's annual Writer-in-Residence and youth writing programs were a priority and we will continue to look for ways to reinstate the original structure and financial offerings of these programs.

This year we piloted a new Fellowship program, an initiative aimed at nurturing aspiring and emerging writers from grassroots level. We have been thrilled by its popularity, accommodating thirteen (13) new writers from across the country in its inaugural year. The idea was conceived and executed by our Director, Shannon Coyle, and not only has it been a triumph for this sector of writers, but the revenue raised for the Centre assisted in funding our traditional residency program. I wish to formally acknowledge both Shannon for her ingenuity in implementing this and to Mark Keenan, one of our first Fellows, who instigated a regular 'meet and greet' of the selected groups, which many have commented as being a highlight of their stay. The deadline for the 2018 program closes on 24 November and we expect another bumper load of submissions.

Our youth program continues to be successful, with a regular group attending the weekly Scribe Tribe and Homeschoolers groups. Our rebranded school holiday KSP Press Club has been fun and productive and I thank our special Press Club guests throughout the year who volunteered to be interrogated by the teens; they are Campbell Jefferys, Marty Denniss, Lee Battersby and Dave Caddy. I must also express thanks to Rosanne Dingli who runs our weekly Scribe Tribe and Renee Hammond who runs the Homeschoolers group. Gratitude too, to Melinda Tognini and Guy Salvidge for facilitating our KSP Press Club in the school holidays and accepting our new form of currency for their efforts, retreat stays instead of cash.

Our Sunday Sessions have remained popular and I'd like to offer thanks to everyone who has been part of the program this year. Nathan Hobby, Renee Schipp, Nadine Browne, Rose van Son, Carolyn Wren, Kevin Pampling, Douglas Sutherland Bruce and Tineke van Eecken. We look forward to welcoming the final guests for 2017, before we move these sessions to a monthly Friday night in 2018.

Our long-running Writing Groups continue to attract new and existing members and we are indebted to our dedicated facilitators who turn up every week or month to offer their time and expertise in helping new work develop. Writing groups are the heart of this Centre and we are proud of the work that comes out of these groups and the anthologies they produce annually.

For years KSP has been trying to create its own publishing imprint and I am extremely thrilled to announce that the newly structured Wild Weeds Press is nearly ready to launch. Board Secretary Lisa Wolstenholme has taken the reigns with this project and along with her team of sub-committee members have developed a professional website, new logo and comprehensive range of services aimed at members of KSP who wish to self-publish or print small batch print runs. Congratulations to Lisa and the team for making this a reality.

We are always delighted to deliver our annual events to the community. Our Open Day and KSP Big Quiz night are always well-received and we thank our friends and members who supported these events. Last year our quiz night raised enough funds to purchase the new curtains for the writing room and this year we hope to raise funds towards replacing the linens for the retreats. It is essential to upgrade these items with hotel standard items as our occupancy rates increase with the promotion of the retreats as a pay and stay option for writers, as well as the greater numbers of fellowships and residency programs happening.

Again, one of the most popular events of the year was our Spooky Stories Night attracting over 70 visitors to the Centre. Thank you to the extended team that made this night happen, including Carolyn Wren who judged the competition and Lisa Holt who coaxed her entire family into running the event. Thanks also to Ben Ivison who has fitted well into the role of social media publicist at all our events this year. Credit to the Events and Marketing team for the amazing job they do, planning and executing these events.

Moving forward, we will shortly employ a part time administrator to oversee the daily operations such as memberships, newsletter, and day to day running of the Centre. Shannon will reduce her hours but remain in the role of Director dedicating more time to program development, sourcing funding, managing the Residency and Fellowship programs and coordinating the higher level functions of the business. Shannon is a priceless asset to this organisation, with a wealth of intellectual property and knowledge about the industry. By employing a part-time officer, we are safeguarding the organisation by ensuring more than one person is able to cover the office during annual leave and any unplanned absences. We hope to have this in place prior to Christmas.

There is a truckload of people to thank for helping in big and small ways to create the shiny happy place that some of us call our second home. Unfortunately our wonderful cleaner Erin Moody resigned earlier in the year in order to further her university studies. Erin has been a treasured asset to KSP for many

years, so we wish her well for the future. She will be replaced by Lisa Wolstenholme and we are pleased to have her step into the role.

We have struggled to maintain a consistent Treasurer on the Board this past year and so I would like to pay a debt of gratitude to former Treasurer Bob Perks, for keeping us on track while we look for a suitable replacement to fill the position. Bob is always happy to help us out and we are truly grateful for his time.

To all our facilitators who go over and above the call of duty to run their writing groups each month, we couldn't do it without you. To all our volunteers on the sub-committees including Shey Marque who is making great headway with the Hospital Poets program, for Lisa and the Wild Weeds Press Team, our amazing Literary Advisory Committee headed by Mardi May who make all the right choices in selecting the best of the submissions for all the residency and fellowship programs. To our eminent Patron Glen Phillips who continually advocates for KSP and the sector, and also serves on KSP's Lit Com. Also to our favourite green thumb Fern Pendragon and her team of helpers, including the Comet Kids and the Wooroloo Prisoners who assist in weeding, cleaning and maintenance of the large property. You always make us feel proud to show off Katharine's Place.

We have been incredibly blessed to have some personal financial donations to increase our Public Fund this year: thank you to Flora Smith, Anna Jacobs, Denise Faithfull, Laurie Steed, Nadine Browne, Karen Treanor, Michael Batten, Wendy Campbell, Sue Worth, Richard Harding, Dave Caddy, Christopher Oakeley, Carole Rogers, Ken Wyatt, Bill Leadbetter and Karen Treanor, among others. Also thanks to Patrick Bertola from Lion Mills Winery in Helena Valley for keeping our wine supplies in stock for events.

We also thank Bendigo Bank Mundaring, Shire of Mundaring and the Department of Culture and the Arts for granting project and competition funding in 2017.

It has been wonderful this year to see everyone pulling together as a sector, as part of WA Writers United (WAWU). Our sister centres have been active in promoting each other's activities as well as offering reciprocal discounts to members. Thank you to: Westerly magazine, Fellowship of Writers WA, Peter Cowan Writers Centre, OOTA, WA Poets Inc, writingWA, and the Society of Women Writers WA.

To the Board. We have been a small Board who have been stretched with the enormity of the workload required. But instead of grumbling and hiding in a dark corner, Mardi May, Michael Kyd, Valerie Everett, Lisa Wolstenholme, Shannon and myself, simply keep getting on with it, We are a team with great resilience and fortitude and I thank you from the bottom of my heart for being a cohesive force. It is in no small part the fact we work so well as a united voice that we have been able to make good business decisions, and can pat ourselves on the back knowing that in 2017, when we had little external funding, we were able to end the financial year in a healthy profit position. So well done team.

We look forward to welcoming new members Lisa Holt and Ben Ivison to the Board this year and for the foreseeable future our existing team have all chosen to remain also.

I apologise for anyone or anything I have missed in this report, but 12 months is a long time at KSP and each month goes by at lightning speed, thanks to everything we are involved in, internally and externally. We will continue to work towards being the best writing centre we can be and nurture the unique culture we and all those before us have created over the years.

I thank the Board and members for allowing me to sit at the helm once again and I am committed to continue for a little while longer.

Thank you.