

Katharine Susannah Prichard Writers' Centre – 2018 AGM – Chairperson's Report

by Elizabeth Lewis

What an inspiring year! I had the privilege of stepping into the role of Chairperson of the Board at KSP following the delightful Tabettha Beggs at the end of 2017. I quickly learned just how much goes on at this community writing hub and second home for many, affectionately known as Katharine's Place, a place in which the spirit of encouragement, teaching and sharing is still very much alive. The full program of residencies, events, groups and competitions would not be possible without the dedication of a faithful team of supporters, staff and volunteers.

Thanks

Huge thanks must go to the Shire of Mundaring, whose continued financial support demonstrates the value placed on literature, culture and community in this special part of Perth and allows us to employ administration staff to oversee the running of the centre.

We are grateful to grants from Lotterywest for the fabulous new roof on our verandah and shade sails in the courtyard, and to Bendigo Bank Mundaring and the Shire of Mundaring for funding our competitions for another year. I'd also like to acknowledge the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC, formerly, WA Department of Culture & the Arts) for a creative development grant to publish KSP's bumper 2017 youth anthology, *From the Darkness*, and for its commitment to supporting KSP for the next two years:

As announced in our most recent newsletter, KSP has received a two-year funding contract with DLGSC, in conjunction with Fremantle Press, WA Poets Inc, Peter Cowan Writers' Centre and The Fellowship of Australian Writers WA, as part of a new Emerging Writers Pilot Program. This funding will be used for administration and to subsidise existing KSP programs, and to purchase software and equipment, with our main aim being to create more opportunities for emerging writers to develop their manuscripts towards publication. More details to follow when we announce our 2019 literary program.

A special thank you goes to generous donors, Peta Shaw, Tabettha Rogers Beggs of Little Black Dress Productions, Flora Smith, Ken Wyatt MP, Agnes O'Kane, Folker Kruger and Karen Treanor and our Friends of Katharine for 2017/18 Dr Bill Leadbetter (Rose Donor) and Nadine Browne (Daisy Donor). A full list of Katharine's Friends can be seen on our website. As a not-for-profit organisation, every donation allows us to continue the valuable work of encouraging writers and building creative community in this place, and gives honour to the legacy of Katharine Susannah Prichard, who I like to think would quite enjoy the bustling, welcoming energy still alive and well in her house.

We appreciate the continued support and generosity of Patrick Bertola of Lion Mill Winery (what's a literary event without fine wine?), writingWA, Douglas Sutherland-Bruce from Swan Magazine, our Life members, Westerly and WA Writers United, and of course, all of you, our valued Foundation members, without whom we would not exist.

And the thanks don't stop here! Our KSP family is a full and talented one. Our Board of Management – myself, Secretary: Lisa Wolstenholme, Treasurer: Bob Perks and Board members: Valerie Everett, Mardi May, Michael Kyd, Lisa Holt and Ben Ivson have met tirelessly throughout the year to resolve all issues relevant to the property, program and running of KSP and I'm constantly impressed by their selflessness in pursuing what's best for the centre and its members. The Board and family members also cater for our literary dinners and set-up and pack-up for all events as well as cleaning up endless dishes! (extra thanks to Mark Wolstenholme, Gavin Holt & the entire Holt family and Sam Gray who often get roped in to carry things, clean up and act as general fix-it people).

Our beautiful grounds here are maintained by the perpetually hardworking Fern Pendragon, our Landscape Committee Coordinator with assistance from the Caversham Comet Care School students and Woorloo Prison Project 95 volunteers. It's a big job and Fern always has a smile for everyone.

Not forgetting our esteemed patron, Professor Glen Phillips who champions KSP, is a regular presence at our literary dinners and who launched his collected lifetime works of poetry 'In the Hollow of the Land, Vols 1&2' at KSP in July to an overflowing room. Congratulations and thank you Glen.

Staffing & New Projects

We've been privileged this year to see an expansion in our staff team. At the helm is our Director, the wonderful Shannon Coyle. I don't think I've seen anyone so dedicated with such varied skills take on so many different challenges all at once. Shannon is the reason we have the funding and processes and people to do what we do. She is quietly behind the scenes writing applications, liaising with stakeholders and sponsors, coordinating volunteers, overseeing the various committees and groups and visitors, updating the website, compiling our newsletter and making sure we have tea, coffee and toilet paper!

Thanks to Ben Ivison for his social media assistance and photography skills, and for his dedicated service on the Board. Ben is stepping down this year and we are grateful for the time, energy and support he has given to KSP. Many thanks also to Fay Dease, our weekly office volunteer and competitions secretary.

Also, supporting Shannon in the office this year is Lisa Wolstenholme who has stepped up as Executive Officer of the newly re-launched Wild Weeds Press, KSP's self-publishing imprint. Under Lisa's management, Wild Weeds Press has seen 7 new clients since the start of this year, published 3 full length works, will publish 2 more in the next month and has another 2 works in progress. The press is looking to build on this number over the next year. Wild Weeds Press has also run 2 successful publishing workshops this year with another in the next month. Plans for next year include a presence at the Perth Writers' Festival, Margaret River Writers' Festival and a series of 4 workshops towards developing local writer's manuscripts for publication. Lisa has also supervised 2 interns from Murdoch University – Chelsea Cook and Zoe Hoffman, to develop a social media plan for Wild Weeds Press and assist with all things editing and publishing. It's been great to have the girls on board.

Lisa Wolstenholme has stepped down as housekeeper to focus on Wild Weeds Press so we welcome Sheree Lewis as our new Housekeeper.

The office administration is now shared over the week between Shannon, Lisa and myself which allows for the covering of office duties for sick leave and holiday leave.

Literary Program & More Thanks!

Our literary program this year has seen a full cohort of 6 Writers in Residence and 20 Fellowships as well as many local and interstate writers choosing our pay-and-stay option to progress their manuscripts in our unique writing cabins. With thanks to Mardi May and the Literary Advisory Committee we've just confirmed our 6 Writers in Residence for 2019.

Applications for 20 regular Fellowship positions plus 1 CALD fellowship, with thanks to Rashida Murphy, 1 Foundation Fellowship in partnership with Varuna Writers' House in NSW and the new First Edition Fellowship for up to 4 WA authors close on Sunday the 28th of October.

Following the success of our Spring Story Retreat with Dr Laurie Steed we are pleased to be offering the First Edition Retreat over the next two years with a focus on 3 writers polishing their manuscripts for publication.

There have never been more opportunities available for emerging writers to progress their work at KSP. 2019 looks to be an exciting year!

Also, newly announced, we are launching an anthology competition in 2019 to commemorate the 50th anniversary of Katharine Susannah Prichard's death in 1969, as part of a series of celebration activities. The deadline to submit is late February - please check our website for details. Thank you to Nathan Hobby for being our resident KSP expert and for his regular newsletter columns on her life and accomplishments.

Our young writers' groups this year, both Homeschoolers and Scribe Tribe, have been going strong, thanks to Renee Hammond, Rosanne Dingli and Maddie Godfrey and also to Melinda Tognini and Guy Salvidge for continuing to champion our holiday Press Clubs. Attendance to the holiday programs has dropped this year so we are hoping to start 2019 with some fresh ideas for youth holiday activities.

Our adult writers' groups continue to encourage, inspire and produce accomplished anthologies thanks to the dedication of group facilitators (Mardi May, Lisa Holt, Jane Wallis, Phil Mayne, John Beaton, and Wence Vahala) who give their time, energy and positivity. We welcome the new writing group, the Autistic Authors Alliance, starting in Term 4 of 2018 and led by Lisa Holt.

Our Events Committee have outdone themselves again this year with a program of 4 fun-themed and well-attended Literary Dinners to celebrate our Writers in Residence (who frequently report the dinners as being one of the highlights of their stay), 6 Sundowner Sessions featuring guest authors and 4 open mic sessions and a series of sold-out workshops. Despite a bit of rain, our May Open Day was a packed affair with visitors old and new celebrating everything we do here at KSP to create and support a vibrant writing community in WA.

I'm looking forward to Katharine's birthday celebration event on the 2nd of December and the announcements of our 2019 fellowship recipients, the 2018 Hugo Throssell Award and the new 2018 Meritorious Service Award, to recognise an exceptional KSP staff member or volunteer (nominations close 30th October) at our Volunteer thank you event at the end of this busy and successful year.

Challenges

Our philanthropic Hospital Poets program is yet to find a new home, however, committee coordinator Shey Marque is dedicated to seeking out new options for the program, so fingers crossed for 2019.

Sadly, Katharine's cottage is closed to the public due to recent termite damage. We are currently gathering quotes to apply for a restoration grant. We hope to restore Katharine's studio fully in 2019.

Due to low entries, KSP will be replacing the Non-Fiction competition that started in 2017 with an annual themed anthology competition published by Wild Weeds Press.

That's a Wrap

Well we're not quite at the end of the year but phew! what a year! It really is a team effort to make all of this magic happen at KSP and I'm indebted to everyone who has shown me the ropes and welcomed me this year. If I've missed anyone, my apologies. You're all doing a fabulous job to make Katharine's place the warm, welcoming and inspiring community that it is.

I look forward to doing it all again in 2019 and I'm especially excited about some of the new opportunities for writers we have coming up. Keep an eye on the newsletter and newly revamped website for updates.

Thanks, and warmest regards,

Elizabeth