



The Katharine Susannah Prichard Foundation Inc 2021-22 Chairperson's Report – presented at the KSPF Annual General Meeting held 15 October 2022

By Elizabeth Lewis

In the 5 years I've had the privilege of being the Chairperson of the KSP Writers' Centre, I've seen Katharine's Place go from strength to strength thanks to the dedication and hard work of our wonderful staff and volunteers and the support of the WA writing community and our sponsors and champions. This year has been no exception.

It's been another year of challenges and celebrations and also one of transitions. This year has seen a focus on necessary maintenance of our well-used heritage building so we can continue to provide a creative home for writers both local and from abroad.

Literary Program:

This year we hosted 8 Writers in Residence, our usual 6, with 2 carried over from previous years, they had been postponed due to Covid travel restrictions.

We welcomed a complement of 22 Fellows and continued our wonderful partnership with the Westerly Writers Development Program, offering retreats to 3 Emerging writers and 2 Mid-career fellows.

We featured a total of 10 workshops this year, with most sold-out and 2 still on the way. What a talented community we have, here in WA and welcoming interstate and even international writers. I'm constantly struck by the richness of creative skill, energies and story arriving at the Centre each week.

Our collaboration with the Shire of Mundaring Libraries continues with the annual Shire of Mundaring Poetry Competition, the theme for this year is 'New leaves, unfurling', a hopeful theme following the challenges of the last couple of years, all WA poets are encouraged to enter.

The 4 Centres Emerging Writers Program coordinated by Fremantle Press in partnership with the KSP Writers' Centre, Fellowship of Writers WA, Peter Cowan Writers' Centre, and WA Poets Inc. Funded by the WA Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries

continues. KSP's offering, the First Edition Fellowships supports 9 emerging writers to receive an annual mentorship & retreat at KSP plus a series of development workshops with Fremantle Press between 2021-2023. You can see our First edition fellows and all other Writer's in Residence and Fellows from this year featured on our website.

Our annual competitions saw consistent high entries. Short Fiction 268 entries, Poetry 338 entries and Spooky Stories 256 entries. Thank you to our judges Bindy Pritchard and Natalie D-Napoleon as well as our Spooky Story competition long-listers: Shannon Brie, Lauren Pratt and Lisa Rodrigues and as always, much appreciation to our Spooky Stories judge Carolyn Wren who donates her time and brings such enthusiasm each year. Thank you to Tabettha Rogers Beggs for your generous sponsorship of this competition and thank you to Lisa Wolstenholme and Rebekah Sheedy of Dragonfly Publishing who produced our 2022 Spooky Stories anthology.

A very special event this year was the launch of *The Red Witch: A biography of Katharine Susannah Prichard* by Nathan Hobby. Congratulations Nathan. We also hosted a fascinating and well-attended online interview with Nathan for Love to Read Local week. Thank you to the Copyright Agency Cultural Fund and WritingWA for making this event possible.

Challenges:

Covid continued to cause rescheduling of retreats, distancing requirements, capacity limits and mask wearing over the past year. We managed to continue business-as-almost-usual by investing in staff work-from-home options and conducting Board meetings via Zoom. We are still alert to government advice and have now returned to in-person meetings and I must say it's lovely to be back meeting in the writing room at KSP and to feel the connection to the heritage building that has welcomed and inspired so many writers over the years.

It's been a year of upgrades and replacements. It seems that we hit the expiry date for a few major appliances at KSP this year. Both the oven in the main house and the fridge/freezer have been replaced. Big thanks to Sam at Allset Rentals for sourcing quality, affordable appliances for us.

Both office computer hard drives and the house computer were upgraded this year, they were very slow and clunky, so we've seen a huge increase in productivity for staff. The cabins were upgraded to enable Wi-Fi and laptops were purchased and set up for staff to work at home when required. We also have a new laptop for workshops and events and successfully streamed our Spooky Stories Awards Night to at-home audiences. Thank you to Kris Thomas from Plasmasource for generously donating your time and expertise to install our tech upgrades.

It has been a difficult year to source quotes and labour for maintenance works due to the high demand on the building services industry. We have found quotes to be noticeably more expensive than in previous years. The house has needed gutters replaced, a new handrail and a new front gate. Thanks to Shane Halse our excellent handyman for your good work, and extra thanks to our volunteers Fern Pendragon, Bernie Lewis and Sheree Lewis, who pick up

the unpaid maintenance for the house and grounds, your care and service is invaluable and doesn't go unnoticed.

With such a lot of writers coming to stay, our cabins have also needed some TLC with plumbing, tiling, re-grouting, new kettles, linen and a replacement bedframe being a few of the repairs and upgrades this year. In consultation with the Board, our wonderful staff Shannon and Sheree have compiled an extensive maintenance schedule for the Centre so we can track the works that need to be planned and budgeted for.

When we think of KSP it is easy to think of the vibrant program and stream of writers coming and going. The literal framework that supports this wonderful community is the heritage-listed residence and grounds. It is a big undertaking and expense to maintain the property that is Katharine's place and the Board will continue to focus on this as one of our key objectives.

We had planned to build a fit-for-purpose laundry room closer to the cabins to ease the workload on our housekeeper and to be more convenient for guests, however skyrocketing building and materials costs have made this project unfeasible so it has been cancelled for now.

Thank you:

It is now my pleasure to recognise the incredible team of people that are the heartbeat of the KSP Writers' Centre.

Fern Pendragon, our wonder woman Landscape Coordinator. Fern, I am always inspired by your energy and passion for Katharine's garden, for poetry and for life. You are a force of nature. Congratulations to Fern on winning the Meritorious Service Award 2021 for a KSP Volunteer who goes above and beyond in their contribution to the Centre.

Thank you to the Wooroloo Prison Farm Project 95 team for your assistance around the property.

Heartfelt thanks to Mardi May, another powerhouse woman of KSP – Life-member, longest standing board member, writing group facilitator, poet extraordinaire. Thank you especially for coordinating the KSP Literary Committee for many years with such dedication, wisdom and support for our KSP Writers-in Residence.

Sheree & Bernie Lewis, it's not often you get to work alongside your parents, and for the rest of the community to see the treasures that they are. I constantly hear comments from our writing community about the difference their presence makes around Katharine's place. Their attention to detail and care and generosity of time can be seen in the tidy house, constant clearing of gutters, fixing of windowsills, hand stitched curtains, sweeping of verandahs, pruning of storm-broken trees and tending the gardens, whatever is needed to look after this unique place. Thank you both, it's been very special to have you on the team here.

Thank you to the KSP Board of Management for your work behind the scenes. The Board is made up of skilled volunteers who give their time and consideration to look after the governance of KSP, help with events and support our small team of staff. It's been an honour to work with you - Mardi, Jake, Jayde, Kate, Lisa and Tess. Farewell Tess and we wish you all the best with your next chapter.

Thank you to our valued Literary Committee, a team of esteemed local authors who volunteer their time to select our KSP Writers-in-Residence and Fellows – Nathan Hobby, Guy Salvidge, Glen Phillips, Emily Paull, Josephine Taylor, Melissa O'Shea, Carolyn Wren, Mardi May and Melinda Tognini.

Thank you to Glen Phillips, our Patron for your continued encouragement and support of our writers and events at KSP and a special thank you for donating an Honour shield to acknowledge our KSP Coordinators.

Thank you to our KSP Librarian Brenda Berrisford for your constant care of the special books at KSP.

What would KSP be without our writing groups? KSP is home to 10 vibrant and varied writing groups facilitated by fabulous volunteers who give their time to open the Centre regularly and create a space for writers of all genres and levels of experience.

A sincere thank you to Jane Wallis (Writefree), Wence Vahala (Non-fiction Group), Renee Snow (Scribe Tribe and Homeschoolers), Andy Ward for your time facilitating our Fantasy, Scifi & Horror group (Fish) and our new Fish facilitator David Wildsmith, Mardi May (Past Tense and Poets), Phil Mayne and Tim Nelson (Thursday Night Group). Welcome to the new Novel Writers Collective (with so much interest there are 2 groups on alternating Mondays) – facilitators – Kate Driver and Henry Plunkett and welcome to our new Past Tense group facilitator Tamara Kabat. Many thanks to Helen Doran-Wu and Debbie Cooper for facilitating our first online group Words and Writers, which has now closed. What a wonderful bunch of writing groups available to the community.

Donors, Partners & Sponsors:

The running of the KSP Writers' Centre would not be possible without the faithful support of the Shire of Mundaring, our biggest champion. How wonderful to be in a Shire that values the Arts so highly and seeks to promote creative community in the Mundaring Hills. Thank you to the Shire Councillors for their continued interest in our events and program, we couldn't do it without you.

We thank the WA Department of Local Government, Sports and Cultural Industries who continue to fund the 4 Centres Emerging Writers Program, such a valuable opportunity, and we thank Fremantle Press for administrating this program and underpinning so many development and publishing opportunities for writers in our state.

I'd also like to acknowledge:

Further KSP donors for 2021/2022 - Flora Smith on behalf of Annette Cameron, Karen Treanor

Public Fund donors 2021/2022 - Caroline Mahoney

KSP grant bodies and corporate sponsors 2021/2022 - Shire of Mundaring, WA Department of Local Government, Sports and Cultural Industries (4 Centres Emerging Writers Program), Patrick Bertola (Lion Mill Winery), Westerly Magazine, Wooroloo Prison Farm, the Copyright Agency via Writing WA for Love to Read Local Week

KSP program partners - WA Writers United, Fremantle Press, Writing WA, Westerly, Mundaring Arts Centre, Dragonfly Publishing.

This support for KSP speaks to the warmth and collegiality of the WA writing scene and those who believe in the power of words, stories and community.

Staff/Board Transition & Farewells:

KSP is going through a transition period, and we thank our volunteers and members for walking the journey with us as we farewell some of our special people and welcome new members to the team.

We were lucky to have Lindsay Fletcher-Hammond as our part-time Community Engagement Officer until the end of 2021, followed by the delightful Lauren Pratt who started in the position at the beginning of this year and has just moved on to a full-time job with UWA Publishing, congratulations Lauren. We'll be looking at hiring a new part-time staff member in early 2023.

Thanks to the NLA heritage grant received last year, we were able to upskill some of our staff and volunteers in Heritage Collection Management. Nathan Hobby, our resident Katharine expert, worked as our first official Heritage Officer this year, inventorying our extensive collection of books and artefacts owned by Katharine and Hugo. Nathan has since found full-time work so this position will be filled by the very capable Shannon Britza in 2023. It is a great achievement to be able to dedicate a role to caring for the collection and memory of Katharine Susannah Prichard and we aim to utilise new digital cataloguing systems and technology to preserve her legacy for future generations.

Big thanks to our housekeeper Sheree Lewis for covering the KSP office and performing valuable work as our temporary maintenance officer while Shannon took long service leave.

Farewell and sincere thanks to Renee Snow – who has been our valued Scribe Tribe and Homeschoolers Youth Tutor for many years. Congratulations on your new employment Renee and thank you for all the wisdom and guidance you've shared with our young writers over the years. Caitlyn Hammond will commence as our new Youth tutor, welcome Caitlyn.

The biggest news of this year is that our beloved CEO Shannon Britza has retired from her position at KSP, after 10 years of serving our community. Shannon, there aren't words to sum up the contribution you have made to KSP over your years of service. You have brought such dedication and heart to the running of KSP and you have lifted our writing community in this part of the world to where it is now, a thriving, well respected, professional, warm and

welcoming hub for writers in our community and beyond. KSP is in an excellent position because of your hard work, insight and care. You will be so missed. It has been an absolute pleasure working with you.

The Board of Management is pleased to award Shannon Britza with a KSP Life Membership in gratitude and recognition of her dedication and passion in caretaking Katharine's Place and memory and for her warmth and professionalism in prospering KSP as a welcoming, supportive hub for writers everywhere.

We are pleased to announce that the Board has contracted Shannon part-time over the next 6 months to provide training to our new Coordinator, to ensure a smooth transition as they learn the role.

A very warm welcome to our new KSP Coordinator Sofija Stevanovic. Sofija is a member of the KSP Novel Writers Collective and in the short time she has been working for KSP has brought a new wealth of administration experience, enthusiasm, energy and passion for the Centre and the local writing community. We are so pleased to have her on the team.

Supporting Sofija into the next year are our dedicated and experienced Board of management Kate Driver, Jake Liddelow, Lisa Rodrigues, Mardi May and Jayde Robinson-Clancy. KSP is in capable hands.

Without further ado, the time has come for me to pass on the torch of Chairperson of KSP. The new Chair will be voted in at the next Board meeting. It has been an absolute privilege to shine a light for the Centre and our lovely community over the past 5 years and to work with such an inspiring team of people. I've met so many talented writers who I now call friends. What a gift. Thank you to Shannon, Lisa & Tabetha for your support and friendship and to all who've given their time and energy to KSP because they believe in the power of writing and what writers can achieve.

Writers' Centres are magical places where inspiration can be found, in the spirit of those who've gone before and in those who hold the light when you doubt your own creativity. Thank you for this opportunity, thanks for all the fantastic memories and as always, happy writing!

- Elizabeth