

Katharine Susannah Prichard Foundation - AGM Report - 2020

Elizabeth Lewis – Chairperson

A different year

It is my pleasure to provide an overview of the happenings at Katharine's Place for 2020. Thank you for having me as Chairperson of KSP Writers' Centre for another year. It has been a very different year, full of unexpected challenges but also successes. I am pleased to report we have had another year of encouraging many writers in their creative journeys, albeit with a few interruptions, however, we have learnt a few things and hope to continue stronger and more effective into the next year.

Covid-19

The global pandemic derailed our regular literary program in March this year. In accordance with health department advice and then local government rulings, we closed KSP for just over 2 months. This is a first in the history of the centre and like the rest of the nation and world we had to think quick to adapt to a different way of delivering services and keeping our community connected.

Fortunately, we had recently invested in an upgrade to our office software, allowing the transition to work from home to happen easily. Staff were able to log in from home to keep in touch and keep providing our regular newsletter as well as corresponding with members and upcoming writers-in-residence. Shannon instituted a new monthly Quarantine Quill flash fiction competition and a Top Tips from our KSP Writing Alumni blog. Board meetings moved to Zoom and we all learnt new skills!

Writing Groups

I cannot praise our writing group facilitators highly enough - Wence, Helen, Linda, Jane, Phil, Mardi, Andy, Renee - for their adaptability and care for their groups. Our writing groups quickly found ways to move online, corresponding by email, meeting on Zoom and Skype and Messenger. It was so heartening to see our writers committing to keeping in touch and continuing to write together, keeping community over this stressful time.

Later, as we moved through the phases of re-opening, group facilitators were supportive of the new safety and hygiene measures we needed to put into place, attending online meetings and embracing the new socially-distanced layout of the writing room. Thank you one and all for your kindness, flexibility and care for each other during such an unusual and stressful event.

Thank you to all members for the messages of support and encouragement you sent us over this time, it really did lift our spirits while we were figuring out how best to keep things going, to stay in touch and how we might pandemic-proof KSP in the future (a lot to think about!)

Literary program and Writers in Residence

Like many other arts organisations we had to make the difficult decision to cancel a significant amount of our literary events program for the year, including some workshops, literary dinners and open days. Others were rescheduled to later in the year. This was necessary due to

social distancing regulations disallowing our larger events and was in part affected by the fact that our program is based around our Writers in Residence (WiRs) for the year, many of whom were due to visit from interstate and even overseas.

Due to the rapidly changing nature of the Covid situation, much of the year was spent postponing bookings and waiting for announcements of the next phase so we would know what we could reschedule and when. Thank you to our 2020 cohort of residents and fellows for bearing with us, for your patience and willingness to reschedule even into next year. This of course has implications for our calendar of accommodation bookings for next year, given that we will be receiving a new cohort of writers for 2021 and also accommodating those of 2020 who have not yet been to stay. We are waiting on Phase 5 to reschedule our Writers in Residence from further afield.

An extra special thank you to Mark Keenan, KSP alumni and 2020 Fellow for co-ordinating catch-ups for our KSP Fellows and WiRs, providing encouragement, writerly inspiration and community.

Programs that did go ahead

6 out of 10 of our writing workshops went ahead this year, as well as 2 Holiday Hubs for young writers and our popular Spring Story Retreat with accomplished mentor Laurie Steed. Our Spooky Stories awards ceremony was presented online via Zoom and was well attended with good vibes, complete with emoji clapping. Thank you to our competition sponsor Tabetta Rogers Beggs of Little Black Dress Productions, our judge Carolyn Wren and all who entered this year. We also introduced a new Zoom writing course led by KSP Alumni and award-winning author Chloe Higgins and look forward to our Katharine's Birthday competition awards ceremony which will be online via Zoom on Sunday the 6th of December. In a lovely partnership project, Writing NSW invited us to produce a video tour of the centre to be shared as part of a tribute to Katharine later this year.

Silver linings

While it was difficult in many ways to close down the centre for a time and cancel many of our programmed events, it gave us the time and space to consider how we can continue do what we do more efficiently, to review some of our processes and look at ways we can invest in supporting our small team of staff and volunteers to continue doing their good work.

- Submittable

At the beginning of the year we took the plunge and invested in a subscription to Submittable – an online platform to allow us to better manage the huge amount of submissions we receive each year for our 3 residency categories, our fellowships and multiple competitions. Sincere thanks must go to our literary committee – Mardi, Rashida, Melinda, Guy, Melissa, Nathan and our patron Glen Phillips, not only for the time and thought they put into selecting our Writers in Residence and Fellows, but also for hanging in there with admin as we figured out how to use this new software and for providing valuable feedback to streamline our processes. We also thank David Caddy and Juliet Marillier who finished their time with the Literary Committee this year. We thank them for their wisdom and support.

Due to the accessibility of Submittable our entries this year have doubled for certain competitions. We will be working on how best to manage increased submissions in the coming year.

- **Access**

The KSP Board has been supportive of practical technology upgrades this year, to make the work of admin staff easier. The KSP Access database, used to manage memberships and important mailouts has been updated for the first time in over 10 years – thanks to the Board and to Kate Robinson Database Solutions for the upgrades to our database that has saved hours of admin time.

Thank you Lisa

For the past 2 years Lisa Wolstenholme has been employed in the position of Retreats and Residencies Co-ordinator thanks to funding from DLGSC managed by Fremantle Press under the 4 Centres Emerging Writers Pilot Program. Lisa has brought her energy, warmth and skill to managing retreat bookings, fellowships, our Writers-in-Residence program and implementing new opportunities for emerging writers. During this time Lisa also built Wild Weeds Press into a quality self-publishing service for our members. We thank Lisa for the dedication and heart she has brought to these roles and wish her all the best with her own writing journey.

Next steps for Wild Weeds Press

Rebekah Sheedy has volunteered in events and as our Wild Weeds Press intern for the past 2 years and will be continuing the administration of Wild Weeds Press going forward. Bek is dedicated, hardworking and passionate about assisting our members to achieve their publishing dreams.

Maintaining a heritage building

The Board has committed to a dedicated maintenance allowance in the budget which has enabled staff to action much needed repairs such as new gutters and downpipes to fix the flooding of the KSP kitchen every winter! Big thanks to our landscape team led by the vibrant Fern and to new volunteer Jade, not to mention the team from Wooroloo prison, who all keep Katharine's garden looking beautiful. Big thanks also to Sheree our friendly, dedicated housekeeper and her husband Bernie who can be found regularly clearing out the gutters, weeding the garden and changing lightbulbs. I think Katharine would be pleased to know her home and gardens are in such good hands.

Thank yous

Thank you to Shannon Britza, our wise and multi-talented Director.

Thank you to our Board of Management: Shireen, Jake, Mel, Lisa W, Lisa R, Mardi, Valerie, Agnes, and a special thanks to Michael Kyd who is stepping down this year, for your loyalty and enthusiasm and your big smile lighting up our events and meetings over the years.

Postscript: Following the AGM we received the sad news that our friend and fellow board member Michael Kyd had just passed away after a recent illness. Michael was a respected

and cherished part of the KSP family and will be missed. See this link to our blog post honouring Michael's life and contribution to KSP: <https://www.kspwriterscentre.com/single-post/vale-michael-kyd>

A huge thank you as always to the Shire of Mundaring for their continued support; the funding we receive from the Shire allows us to employ staff to run our program, look after the heritage home of Katharine and support all the writers who attend the centre. The hills community continues to champion the arts and we are so privileged to be part of a community and a Shire who sees the value of creative community spaces and provides practical support. We would not be able to do what we do without them. Thank you to the Council and to Shannon Foster, Manager Community Engagement.

Thank you to our donors for 2019/2020:

Rashida Murphy - our CALD fellowship sponsor, Peta Shaw, Flora Smith and Karen Treanor.

Thank you to our grant partners and corporate sponsors: Lotterywest, The WA Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Patrick Bertola and Lion Mill Winery for continued generosity in supplying fine wines for our events and friend of KSP, Douglas Sutherland-Bruce and Swan Magazine.

A big thank you to our Public Fund donors - Daniel Defendi and Dr Bill Leadbetter

Thank you to the Department of Social Services and to the endorsement of Ken Wyatt AM MP for the volunteer grant for new garden tools and equipment – much appreciated!

Coming up

We are excited to announce we have been successful in being awarded a *National Library of Australia Community Heritage Grant* to undertake specific training to manage, catalogue and care for our heritage collection. Workshops begin later this year and will include our partner writing centres.

We have contracted HR company *Employsure* to provide an organisation review and assist us in updating our staff contracts and policies to ensure we are meeting best practice in our sector.

We have applied for funding to conduct an organisational health check and engage in strategic planning for a post-covid environment, to ensure the sustainability of KSP so that we can maintain our support for WA's vibrant and diverse writing community for years to come.

This year has been challenging but we've come through with new lessons, skills and goals. KSP is so privileged to have such a supportive community, I am thankful for you all, so often.

Let's continue to build a warm, encouraging, inspiring home for writers together. Let's continue to be open to new and better ways of doing things, of growing together.