

# DISCOVER THE STORIES BEHIND THE STORIES.



NEWCASTLE  
WRITERS  
FESTIVAL

4 - 6 APRIL 2025



# OUR SUPPORTERS

Newcastle Writers Festival would not be possible without the generous support of our sponsors and partners. Their contribution enables us to celebrate the power of storytelling, foster creativity, and bring together writers and readers from near and far.

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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

Stories are at the heart of human connection. They teach us, challenge us, and inspire us to imagine new possibilities. At their core, stories remind us of our shared humanity—how deeply we share things in common, even when our experiences differ.

This year's festival program celebrates the power of storytelling to spark dialogue, encourage empathy, and create change.

Whether you're here to learn more about a favourite author, discover an exciting new voice, or simply enjoy the collective buzz of people who love books, you are part of this vibrant community.

The festival is made possible by the incredible contribution of our staff, board, writers, volunteers, sponsors, contractors, and event hosts as well as you, our audience. Your passion for literature is what fuels this event and keeps the spirit of storytelling alive.

This April, we are welcoming a number of first-time festival guests including **Eric Beecher, Geraldine Brooks, Michelle de Kretser, Sulari Gentill, Alyx Gorman, Peter Greste, Jeanine Leane, John Safran, Jessie Tu, and Markus Zusak.**

Returning writers include **Robbie Arnott, Jimmy Barnes** — who can forget his powerful performance at the 2018 opening



night! — **Nikki Gemmell, Hugh Mackay, Thomas Mayo, Rick Morton, Jock Serong, Nardi Simpson, and Clare Wright.**

We have listened to your requests for more Saturday evening options and introduced a free event featuring writers reading aloud from their recent books, as well as a Philosopher's Cafe.

The 2025 program owes much to the hard work of Program Manager **Amy Lovat** and I have no doubt you will be thrilled by the stellar lineup of leading and emerging writers. See you at the festival!

*Rosemarie Milsom*

Rosemarie Milsom - Festival Director

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The Newcastle Writers Festival acknowledges the Awabakal, Worimi and Wonnarua peoples, the traditional owners of the unceded land on which our events are held. We pay our respects to Elders past and present, and recognise the continuing connection to land, water, and community.

# FESTIVAL INFORMATION

## Event Tickets

For this festival, there are two main ticketing providers. Ticket links are available in the individual event information on the festival website.

Most events are ticketed via Trybooking. [trybooking.com/eventlist/nwf](http://trybooking.com/eventlist/nwf)

Events being held in City of Newcastle venues – Newcastle City Hall and the Civic Playhouse – can be booked via [civictheatrenewcastle.com.au/NWF25](http://civictheatrenewcastle.com.au/NWF25)

Some free events require registration so that we can manage the size of the audience. These links are available via Trybooking.

All other free events are offered on a 'first in, first served' basis and we recommend arriving at least 15 minutes before the start time. If the venue capacity is reached and you can't be admitted, please respect the directions of the volunteers on duty.

If you have any questions or require assistance, please email [ticketing@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](mailto:ticketing@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au)

## TICKETS

Tickets are available via our website [newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](http://newcastlewritersfestival.org.au) or by scanning the QR code below.



## Gift Vouchers

Stuck for a gift idea for a relative or friend? We have introduced gift vouchers. They are valued from \$25 to \$200 - with plenty of choice in between. The vouchers are valid for 12 months from the date of purchase and can be used to buy tickets to any festival event/s held in that time and administered by Trybooking, including special events.

Please note, this excludes events held in City of Newcastle venues as they manage separate ticketing for these.

## Festival Team

Director // Rosemarie Milsom  
Program Manager // Amy Lovat  
Digital Manager // Zoe Drew  
Volunteer Manager // Louise Mackay  
Assistant Volunteer Manager // Barbara Rodham  
Artist Logistics // Cherrie Sheldrick  
Ticketing Manager // Melissa Chandler  
Creative Agency // Enigma  
Graphic Designer // Miranda Whittle  
Sound and Staging // Scion Audio  
Production // Laura Kebby, Paige Webster  
Accessibility Coordinator // Sarah Peddie-McGuirk  
Website Manager // Oliver Welbourn, Core Web Designs  
Intern // Myra Grierson

## Festival Board

President // Kate Robinson  
Vice-President // Rosemarie Milsom  
Treasurer // Annette Morrissey  
Secretary // Jenny McPeak  
Member // David Couri  
Member // Ofa Fitzgibbons  
Member // Lyn Thurnham

# GETTING AROUND



## Accessibility

Newcastle Writers Festival has embarked on a journey towards greater accessibility which is detailed in our Disability Inclusion Action Plan. We are committed to ensuring the festival is accessible in the following ways:

- An audio version of the festival program is available via the Accessibility page on our website
- All major venues are accessible by wheelchair
- Auslan interpreters can be booked for specific sessions by contacting us by 14 March
- We will be live streaming select sessions and they are identified in the program
- Assistance dogs are welcome
- Hearing loop will be available in the Conservatorium of Music Concert Hall and Newcastle City Hall
- Tickets can be bought using a Companion Card by contacting [ticketing@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](mailto:ticketing@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au)

Up-to-date information is available via the Accessibility page on our website [newcastlewritersfestival.org.au/accessibility](http://newcastlewritersfestival.org.au/accessibility).

For more information please contact Sarah Peddie-McGuirk at [access@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](mailto:access@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au).

## Wed 2 April

### 01 SPECIAL EVENT

**Literary Trivia hosted by Nick Milligan**



7.00PM - 9.00PM

CUSTOMS HOUSE

Can you name the town where Tim Winton's most recent book *Juice* is set? (Trick question) What is the title of this year's Booker Prize winner?

Get a team together and join the fun. Teams are limited to 8 participants and solo competitors can be accommodated.

There is no lift and access to the upstairs venue is by a staircase.

Tickets \$20

## Wed 2 April

### 02 MASTERCLASS

**Historical Fiction Masterclass for Primary Students**



9.00AM-3.00PM

NEWCASTLE MUSEUM THEATRETTE

Join the festival's dynamic Story Hunter program for an all-day workshop.

Interact with museum objects and learn how to blend historical settings with your own imagination to create a short story. This workshop is designed for high potential and passionate young writers in Stage 3 (grades 5 and 6).

Bookings are strictly limited. Email [storyhunter@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](mailto:storyhunter@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au) to confirm your place.

Tickets \$32

## Thur 3 April

### 03 SPECIAL EVENT

**Reading the Waters**



5.30PM-7.30PM

PORT STEPHENS ARTISAN COLLECTIVE

This special event celebrates the enduring influence of water on stories: as a symbol, motif, and source of inspiration. Writers **Dael Allison, Joanna Atherfold Finn, Annette Higgs, Jean Kent and Micheál Lovett** will share readings from their work.

Hosted by **Alison Rogers**.

Tickets \$20

Ticket includes one glass of wine on arrival.

## Fri 4 April

### 04 WORKSHOP

**Untold: A Storymaking Workshop**



10.00AM-3.00PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

What's your story? Take a walk on the wild side with Voices of Women Artistic Director **Liane Clarke** and unleash your senses, play with word fragments and watch as your unique story comes to life. Record a podcast together, and share the stories in readings.

Note: This is a workshop for all women over 18 to explore the female perspective including female identifying and non-binary creatives.

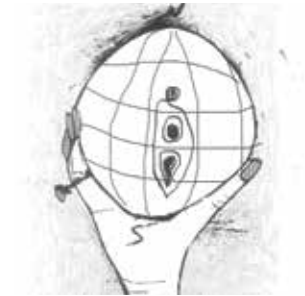
FREE

Booking is essential.

## Fri 4 April

### 05 EXHIBITION

**Voluminous: Meet the artists**



5.30PM-7.30PM

BACK TO BACK GALLERIES COOKS HILL

Celebrate this annual exhibition, which features 19 Hunter region artists responding to the work of authors featured in the 2025 Newcastle Writers Festival program.

Meet the artists: Friday 4 April 5.30pm-7.30pm.

The exhibition runs from 28 March to 13 April.

FREE

## Fri 4 April

### 06 OPENING NIGHT

**Dicey Topics with Gina Chick and Benjamin Law**



7.30PM-9.00PM

NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

In Good Weekend magazine, **Benjamin Law** asks public figures to discuss the subjects we're told to keep private by getting them to roll a die. The numbers they land on are the topics they're given. Join us for a special live edition of Dicey Topics with **Gina Chick**, the inaugural winner of *Alone Australia* and author of best-selling memoir *We Are The Stars*.

MC **Dan Cox**

Supported by

GoodWeekend

Tickets \$50

**07**

**The Way We Are: Hugh Mackay in Conversation**



10.00AM–11.00AM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC CONCERT HALL

In his new book—his 24th—social psychologist **Hugh Mackay** unveils a compelling portrait of Australia through the lens of a lifetime of research and thousands of insightful interviews. *The Way We Are* explores the shifting dynamics of our society, delving into the ways we connect, communicate, and navigate the complexities of modern life.

Hosted by **Ailsa Piper**.

This event will be live streamed.

Tickets \$15  
Live stream \$15

**08**

**Breaking the News: The Future of Media**



10.00AM–11.00AM

CIVIC PLAYHOUSE

The ability of journalists to publish news in the public interest without interference and threats to their own safety is under increasing pressure. Diminishing resources, AI, and disinformation are just some of the threats to media freedom. Join journalists **Eric Beecher** and **Rick Morton** as they shed light on the state of media and what it means for the future of democracy.

Hosted by **Kylie Morris**.

Tickets \$25

**09**

**The Yirrkala Bark Petitions: Clare Wright in Conversation**



10.00AM–11.00AM

NUSPACE X321

In 1963—a year of agitation for civil rights worldwide—the Yolnu of northeast Arnhem Land created the Yirrkala Bark Petitions: Naku Dharuk. ‘The land grew a tongue’ and the land-rights movement was born. The final book in **Clare Wright**’s historical trilogy tells the story of how the people of Yirrkala changed the course of Australian Democracy.

Hosted by **Jock Serong**.

Tickets \$15

**10**

**Coming of Age Stories**



10.00AM–11.00AM

NUSPACE X320

What does it really mean to ‘come of age’? Is the journey to adulthood more perilous depending on culture and circumstance? Join **Dylín Hardcastle** and **Molly Schmidt** in conversation with **Benjamin Law** as they tackle the big topics of identity, change, and growing up.

Tickets \$25

**11**

**Modernity and Absurdity**



10.00AM–11.00AM

NUSPACE X301

Cancel culture, the invisibility of ageing women, celebrity mania, art-versus-artist, a disappearing finger, all the nine-year-old children around the world inexplicably dropping dead. Recent novels by **Chris Flynn**, **Liam Pieper** and **Jane Tara** draw on surrealism, satire, and speculation to explore the absurdity of the modern world.

Hosted by **Hayley Scrivenor**.

FREE

**12**

**Some Like It Cosy: Sulari Gentill in Conversation**



10.00AM–11.00AM

NUSPACE X207

Murder is having a moment in the literary world, but it’s not the gory kind. **Sulari Gentill** is one of Australia’s most acclaimed writers at the helm of the rising ‘cosy crime’ trend; in other words, murder that is strangely comforting. Blending historical settings from the 1930s and beyond, with compelling characters, danger, and intrigue, Sulari’s books have dazzled readers internationally.

Hosted by **Nicola Moriarty**.

Tickets \$25

**13**

## Remembering Dorothy



10.00AM–11.15AM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

When Dorothy Hewett died in 2002, fellow poet John Kinsella described her as ‘the heart and soul of literature’. To commemorate the centenary of Hewett’s birth in 2024, her son Joe Flood worked with co-curator Marilla North on the book *Remembering Dorothy*, which includes recollections, poems written for her, and academic articles about her work.

Join this celebration of Hewett’s life and work, which will include performances and a panel discussion. With **Joe Flood**, **Helen Musa**, **Arne Neeme**, **Marilla North**, and **Pearl Nunn**.

FREE

**14**

## A Wild Life: Markus Zusak in Conversation



11.30AM–12.30PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC CONCERT HALL

From the international bestseller, *The Book Thief*, to his most recent memoir *Three Wild Dogs and the Truth*, **Markus Zusak**’s stellar writing career has taken him down unexpected paths. In his first appearance at Newcastle Writers Festival, Markus sheds light on the good, the bad, and the ugly moments in a life full of love, sorrow, and success.

Hosted by **Dan Cox**.

This event will be live streamed.

Tickets \$33  
Live stream \$15

**15**

## Crimes of the Cross: Anne Manne in Conversation



11.30AM–12.30PM

CIVIC PLAYHOUSE

For decades, Newcastle was the centre of an extensive paedophile network run by members of the Anglican church – and protected by parishioners and community members who looked the other way. **Anne Manne**’s *Crimes of the Cross* is a searing exposé of institutional child abuse and a tribute to the survivors who refused to be silenced.

Hosted by **Jackie Dent**.

Tickets \$15

**16**

## A Call to Action: Nature Writing



11.30AM–12.30PM

NUSPACE X321

**James Bradley**’s recent book *Deep Water* explores the awe-inspiring depths of the world’s oceans. Science writer **Lauren Fuge**’s memoir *Voyagers* traces the history and trajectory of human exploration to illuminate our perilous future. **Inga Simpson**’s latest novel *The Thinning* is an apocalyptic thriller that imagines a world where the Great Barrier Reef is dead and the last koala extinct. Join them for a conversation about the ways writing can make sense of the anxiety about our world, acting as both catharsis and truth-telling.

Hosted by **Jennifer Byrne**.

Tickets \$15

**17**

## Uncovering Your Family History



11.30AM–12.30PM

NUSPACE X320

Family history is so much more than births, deaths and marriages; it’s about discovering unique stories to help us understand our place in the world. **Julie McIntyre** hosts this conversation with **Cassie Gilmartin** and **Shaun Gilmartin**, authors of *The Family History Book*, and **Andra Putnis**, author of *Stories My Grandmothers Didn’t Tell Me*. They speak about the light and dark of digging into the past, and share their research tips.

Tickets \$25

**18**

## Host City: David Owen Kelly in Conversation



11.30AM–12.30PM

NUSPACE X301

It’s the 1980s in Darlinghurst, Sydney, and strange rumours abound: that you can catch the ‘gay plague’ from kissing, or a mosquito bite. There’s talk of quarantines and army intervention, and violence increases on the streets. **David Owen Kelly**’s *Host City* fuses memoir with alternative history to spin a tale of joy and survival.

Hosted by **Keri Glastonbury**.

FREE

**19**

**Lyrebird:  
Jane Caro in  
Conversation**



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X207

Best known for her thought-provoking writing on gender, politics, and social justice, festival favourite **Jane Caro** turns her attention to crime fiction with *Lyrebird*, which is set in the Hunter Valley against the backdrop of rapidly escalating climate change. Jane speaks with **Marieke Hardy** about her compelling book and its themes of mothers and daughters, racism, the vulnerability of trafficked women and an older woman rediscovering her courage.

Tickets \$15

**20**

**Flower Ash:  
Bilingual Poetry**



11.30PM-12.30PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Visiting Australia for the first time, **Huang Fan 黄梵** is a well-known and prolific poet, writer of fiction, and educator, based in the historic capital of Nanjing. Join Huang with his translator **Josh Stenberg** as he discusses and reads from his new bilingual book, *Flower Ash 花的灰烬*, a work of 'powerful, exquisite poems' (Phillip Lopate). Huang also surveys the contemporary Chinese poetry scene.

FREE

**21**

**After the Voice  
Referendum:  
Thomas Mayo  
in Conversation**



1.00PM-2.00PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF  
MUSIC CONCERT HALL

In his newest book *Always Was, Always Will Be*, **Thomas Mayo** investigates 'what's next?' for reconciliation and justice in Australia after the failed Voice to Parliament referendum. Thomas speaks with **Clare Wright** about lessons from the past, a path towards the future, and the new generation of Indigenous leaders who are ready, resilient, and hopeful.

This event will be live streamed.

Tickets \$15  
Live stream \$15

**22**

**Theory and  
Practice: Michelle  
de Kretser in  
Conversation**



1.00PM-2.00PM

CIVIC PLAYHOUSE

For 25 years, award-winning author **Michelle de Kretser** has been dazzling readers with her novels. Her new book, *Theory & Practice*, is set in 1980s Melbourne and is an exquisite blend of fiction, memoir and essay. Michelle makes her first appearance in Newcastle to speak with **Michaela Kalowski** about craft, creativity, and the enduring influence of Virginia Woolf.

Tickets \$25

**23**

**For Life:  
Ailsa Piper in  
Conversation**



1.00PM-2.00PM

NUSPACE X321

When **Ailsa Piper's** husband died suddenly, she fled her shattered world in Melbourne and migrated north to Sydney where she learned to swim, walked the harbour cliffs and rebuilt a new life, alone. In conversation with **Magdalena Ball**, Ailsa speaks of love, loss, and living fully, sharing stories and reflections from her memoir, *For Life*.

FREE

**24**

**Things We Don't  
Speak About:  
Pleasure**



1.00PM-2.00PM

NUSPACE X320

In this returning series of conversations on things we don't speak about, we invite authors to share how they interrogate tough topics in their writing lives. **Hilary Caldwell, Alyx Gorman** and **Georgia Grace** discuss sex, pleasure, and shame.

Hosted by **Kate Mildenhall**.

Tickets \$25

**25**  
**First Time Lucky?  
 Overcoming  
 Second Book  
 Syndrome**



1.00PM–2.00PM

NUSPACE X301

It's a well-known phenomenon: the anxious, agonising process of releasing a second book after a successful debut. Is the new book too similar to the first? Or maybe too dissimilar? Was the debut effort a fluke? **Courtney Collins, Hayley Scrivenor,** and **Jessie Tu** open up about imposter syndrome, creative blocks, and debunk second-book blues.

Hosted by **Amy Lovat.**

Tickets \$25

**26**  
**Stories Shaped  
 by Culture**



1.00PM–2.00PM

NUSPACE X207

**Natasha Rai** and **Raeden Richardson** have created rich, layered novels that resonate with authenticity and depth — at the centre of each is a character whose life story is shaped by their cultural background. **Elfy Scott** speaks with the authors about family, community, and identity in fiction.

FREE

**27**  
**Siblings and  
 Secrets in Crime  
 Fiction**



1.00PM–2.00PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

From fierce loyalty to unbridled rivalry, long-held grievances and deep-seated secrets, sibling relationships ramp up the tension in the latest crime novels by **Ashley Kalagian Blunt, Anna Downes** and **Petronella McGovern.** They speak to **Abby Millerd** about why families provide the best fodder for thrillers.

Tickets \$15

**28**  
**The Zine  
 Collection**



2.00PM–4.30PM

NEWCASTLE LIBRARY

Celebrate the vibrant world of zines and explore their rich culture, creative processes, and underground significance at the launch of Newcastle Library's new zine collection.

**2.00pm–4.30pm:** Zine Market. Discover local makers, collectors, and enthusiasts.

**2.30pm–3.15pm:** Panel discussion with zine makers **Vanessa Berry, Bastian Fox,** and **Nina Katzmarski.**

**3.30pm–4.30pm:** Workshop. Get hands-on and create your own zine.

Hosted by **James Turvey.**

FREE  
 Booking is essential.

**29**  
**Book Launch:  
 The Alibi by  
 Nikki Lee Taylor**



2.00PM–3.00PM

THE PRESS BOOK HOUSE

Join us for the launch of *The Alibi* by local author **Nikki Lee Taylor.** Nikki will be in conversation with **Carol Duncan** about her crime novel inspired by a real-life case at Stockton.

FREE

**30**  
**Memorial Days:  
 Geraldine Brooks  
 in Conversation**



3.00PM–4.00PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF  
 MUSIC CONCERT HALL

On Memorial Day in the US in 2019, **Geraldine Brooks** received a call from a brusque resident doctor that upended her world. Her beloved husband Tony Horwitz was dead. For three years she kept sorrow at bay until she returned to Flinders Island, a place of meaning and mourning. Geraldine joins **Rosemarie Milsom** for a heartrending conversation about her memoir, *Memorial Days*, and her journey towards peace.

This event will be live streamed.

Tickets \$33  
 Live stream \$15



**31**  
**The Men Who Killed the News: Eric Beecher in Conversation**



3.00PM–4.00PM

NUSPACE X321

What's gone wrong with our media? Crikey owner and former Fairfax and News Corp editor **Eric Beecher** reckons the answer lies in the owners – at least, the big guys. Join Eric in conversation with award-winning former journalist **Jennifer Byrne** about his book, *The Men Who Killed The News*, which lifts the lid on the abuse of power by media moguls, and the implications for our future.

Tickets \$25

**32**  
**Wing: Nikki Gemmell in Conversation**



3.00PM–4.00PM

NUSPACE X320

Four teenage girls go missing in the Australian bush on a school trip, and a male teacher volunteers to look for them. What happens next blows up friendships, divides families, and threatens reputations. **Nikki Gemmell's** recent novel, *Wing*, explores the fault lines of female friendship, gender, power, and what it means to be a woman today.

Hosted by **Jane Caro**.

Tickets \$15

**33**  
**Close to Home: Colonial Violence and Family Histories**



3.00PM–4.00PM

NUSPACE X301

Now, more than ever before, we seem more willing to acknowledge difficult histories in our family trees. At the same time, historians are increasingly writing about colonial violence and challenging long-held myths. What impact is this having on how we see Australia's past, as well as our own? **John Maynard, Mark Dunn, Stephen Gapps,** and **Kate Grenville** speak with **Julie McIntyre** about their experiences of encountering dark moments in their research.

Supported by



Tickets \$25

**34**  
**Journeys of the Self**



3.00PM–4.00PM

NUSPACE X207

**Lauren Fuge's** memoir is a call to action to address climate change. **Kris Kneen's** *Fat Girl Dancing* is a meditation on binaries and the body. **Jo Peck** rebuilds a brand new life from the ashes of a shocking marriage break-up. Join these three authors in conversation with **Summer Land** about blending personal truth with artistic expression when writing memoir.

Tickets \$15

**35**  
**Book Launch: Flying Islands Press**



3.00PM–4.00PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Celebrate the launch of five books from Flying Islands Press: *The Heart's Lush Gardens* by **David Adés**; *Tadpoems* by **Tug Dumbly**; *Bitumen Psalms* by **Lizz Murphy**; *Filmworks* by **Brian Purcell**; *Separation Blues: Poems 1994–2024* by **Nathanael O'Reilly**; and *Stranded* by **Bronwyn Rodden**. Plus the launch of the new *100 Poets Anthology* edited by **Brian Purcell** and **Kit Kelen**.

Hosted by **Magdalena Ball**.

FREE

**36**  
**Philosopher's Cafe**



3.00PM–4.15PM

MOMO WHOLEFOOD

Join Newcastle philosopher **Russell Blackford** for a deep dive into the values, principles, and assumptions behind some of the big news stories of the day. Led by questions from the audience, the group will explore the issues together, with Russell providing input from philosophers past and present. Come along with an open mind and willingness to listen.

Tickets \$25

**37**

**Read the Room:  
Live Readings**



2.00PM–4.00PM

NUSPACE X201

Pull up a beanbag or a comfy chair and engage in the meditative enjoyment of listening to a writer read from their work.

- 2.00pm **Jo Peck**
- 2.20pm **Naima Brown**
- 2.40pm **David Owen Kelly**
- 3.00pm **Liam Pieper**
- 3.20pm **Debra Oswald**
- 3.40pm **Khin Myint**

Supported by



FREE

**38**

**A Life in  
30 Books:  
Di Morrissey in  
Conversation**



4.30PM–5.30PM

CIVIC PLAYHOUSE

**Di Morrissey** is one of Australia's most beloved and prolific writers. Born in the tiny NSW town of Wingham where she still lives today, Di's life story is almost as exciting as the high-drama books she publishes each spring. In a conversation hosted by her long-time agent and friend, **Jane Novak**, Di will discuss her 30th book, *River Song*, and reflect on her extraordinary journey.

Tickets \$25

**39**

**Dusk: Robbie  
Arnott in  
Conversation**



4.30PM–5.30PM

NUSPACE X321

Tales of escaped big cats have long haunted the colonial-settler imagination in parts of Australia. In **Robbie Arnott's** latest novel, *Dusk*, the award-winning author refashions a century of stories into a tale of twins Iris and Floyd, who take it upon themselves to hunt down a puma in the Tasmanian highlands, a place of 'old beauty haunted by new violence'. Robbie speaks to **Michaela Kalowski** about exploring myth, human relationships, and the natural world.

Tickets \$25

**40**

**Stories With  
Heart: Anita Heiss  
in Conversation**



4.30PM–5.30PM

NUSPACE X320

From rom-com to historical fiction and everything in between, **Anita Heiss's** novels underscore the significance of communication across cultures and generations. With *Dirrayawadha*, the follow-up to *Bila Yarrudhanggalangdhuray*, Anita explores resistance and resilience against the backdrop of the brutal frontier wars in 1800s Bathurst. In her most recent fiction, *Red Dust Running*, **Courtney Collins** hosts this wide-reaching conversation about Anita's deep desire for truth-telling in fiction.

Tickets \$25

**41**

**The Art of Brevity  
vs the Depth  
of Narrative**



4.30PM–5.30PM

NUSPACE X301

Join well-known writers and scholars **Cassandra Atherton** and **Paul Hetherington** along with **Kate Forsyth** and **Annette Higgs** as they reflect on some of the key narrative strategies they have used in their own work, or which have impressed them in works they have read. The discussion is inspired by the theme of this year's Joanne Burns Microlit Award, 'ricochet'.

Includes launch of Spineless Wonders' microlit anthology Ricochet and presentation of prizes to the 2025 Joanne Burns Microlit Award winners.

FREE

**42**

**Diet Culture  
Be Gone:  
Emma Beckett  
in Conversation**



4.15PM–5.15PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Newcastle-based food and nutrition scientist **Emma Beckett** has spent more than 15 years studying food and how it interacts with our bodies. Her new book, *You Are More Than What You Eat*, is part-manual, part-memoir, part-manifesto, packed full of sassy and straightforward advice that puts diet culture to shame. Join Emma in conversation with **Dan Cox** about how to ditch the guilt, embrace our unique selves, and heal our relationship with food.

FREE

**43**

## Writing Other People's Stories



4.30PM-5.30PM

NUSPACE X207

As journalists, **Jackie Dent** and **Sarah Gilbert** are all too familiar with the often-extractive way in which the media uses people's stories. As a writer and social researcher, **Andra Putnis** appreciates the power of storytelling to help us better understand ourselves and the world around us. All three have written powerful non-fiction books that engage with the complexities and ethics of telling other people's stories.

Hosted by **Kylie Morris**.

FREE

**44**

## Poetry Salon @ The Press



5.30PM-6.45PM

PRESS BOOK HOUSE

Join us for an evening of poetry readings by international and Australian artists. Featuring **Larry Buttrose, Ally Chua, Shawn Hoo, Hasib Hourani, Daryl Lim Wei Jie, Omar Sakr,** and **Paris Rosemont**.

Hosted by **Gillian Swain**.

Tickets \$20

**45**

## Words & Music



5.30PM-7.00PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC CONCERT HALL

Drawing on the work of influential writers, an eclectic lineup of songwriters and musicians will transform words from the page to the stage. Featuring **Chai Chester, William Crighton, Chain Daisy, Tim McPhee, Khin Myint, Melody Pool, Ziggy Ramo, Symphony Rain Riley, Chelsea Reed** and **Dave Wells** with friends.

Curated and hosted by **Nick Milligan**.

This event will be live streamed.

Supported by



Tickets \$35  
Live stream \$15

**46**

## Yarn Up



5.00PM - 8.00PM

THE WOLLOTUKA INSTITUTE UNIVERSITY OF NEWCASTLE CALLAGHAN

For thousands of generations First People in our country have gathered in a continuing practice of coming together to share knowledge, celebrate country, and strengthen ongoing relationships. In the spirit of this continued gathering practice, The Wollotuka Institute, in partnership with Newcastle Writers Festival, invites you to an evening of community, corroboree, and celebration.

**5.00pm-5.30pm - Gawimarra: Gathering - A reading by poet Jeanine Leane**

Award-winning Wiradjuri poet and academic **Jeanine Leane** will read from her most recent collection, *Gawimarra: Gathering*, which moves from deeply tender meditations on Country, culture and kinship, to experimental archival poems dissecting the violence and destruction of the settler-colony.

**5.00pm-6.00pm - Scribbling Magic for Kids**

Bring the kids to draw along with award-winning illustrator **Dub Leffler**. Art supplies provided.

**5.35pm to 6.30pm- What Happens Next? Thomas Mayo in Conversation.**

As a leader of the 'Yes' campaign for the Voice to Parliament referendum, **Thomas Mayo** has a motivating message of hope to share in his new book, *Always Was, Always Will Be*. He speaks about the way forward and what is needed for First Nations people to receive justice. Hosted by **John Maynard**.

**6.30pm to 7.00pm - BBQ** (Food available at no cost)

**7.15pm to 7.45pm - Traditional dance to close**

Tickets \$15 or FREE for community members who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander but booking required to assist with catering.

**47**

**Kink in the Tale:  
Live Storytelling  
for Grown-ups**



6.00PM–7.30PM

CIVIC PLAYHOUSE

Six storytellers tell their true (enough) sex stories. Laugh, gasp, blush and cry all at the same time with sex-positive, inclusive stories told live on stage.

You'll hear from award-winning authors **Kris Kneen** (*Fat Girl Dancing*) and **Dylin Hardcastle** (*A Language of Limbs*), sexologist **Hilary Caldwell** (*Slutdom: Reclaiming shame-FREE sexuality*), artist, author and performer **Helen Hopcroft** (*The Nights*), **Dan McIvor**, and host, **Donné Restom**.

Tickets \$30

**48**

**One Hundred  
Years of Betty:  
Debra Oswald in  
Conversation**



6.00PM–7.00PM

NUSPACE X321

**Debra Oswald** has long charmed us with her novels, children's books, and screenwriting prowess (*Police Rescue*, *The Secret Life of Us*, *Offspring*). Now, she's introducing readers to *Betty*: storyteller, feminist, eternally curious, and about to turn 100. On the eve of her birthday party, she tells her story, from poverty in pre-war London to the 21st century in Australia.

Hosted by **Amy Sambrooke**.

Tickets \$25

**49**

**The Cost of War:  
Gideon Levy  
and Antony  
Loewenstein in  
Conversation**



6.00PM–7.00PM

NUSPACE X320

Join award-winning journalists **Gideon Levy** and **Antony Loewenstein** for an urgent and thought-provoking discussion about the evolving situation in Palestine. They will speak to **Drew Ambrose** about the broader regional impact, the profound humanitarian catastrophe, the role of international actors and media, and the complex challenges to achieving lasting peace.

**Gideon Levy** will join via live stream.

Tickets \$25

**50**

**Artist as  
Activist**



6.15PM–7.15PM

NUSPACE X301

Does art have any power to drive social change? **James Bradley**, **Hasib Hourani**, and **Catherine McKinnon** discuss the role of creativity in shaping culture, inspiring collective action, and interrupting long-held stories and beliefs. They share their personal experiences as both creators and activists.

Hosted by **Kate Mildenhall**.

FREE

**51**

**Mean Streak:  
Rick Morton in  
Conversation**



6.00PM–7.00PM

NUSPACE X207

A moral vacuum, a dodgy debt generator and a multi billion-dollar Liberal government shake down – this is the true story of robodebt, an initiative described in the Royal Commission's report as a 'massive failure of public administration' caused by 'venality, incompetence and cowardice'. Award-winning journalist and author **Rick Morton** followed the case closely, and now brings us *Mean Streak*, an enraging, compelling account of how the government gaslit its own citizens.

Hosted by **Abby Millerd**.

Tickets \$25

**52**

**Your Time  
Starts Now: An  
Evening with  
Julie Goodwin**



6.30PM–7.30PM

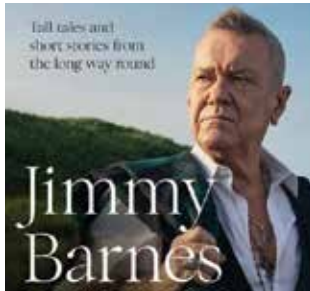
CESSNOCK PERFORMING  
ARTS CENTRE

We were first charmed by **Julie Goodwin** when she served up simple, authentic dishes during the debut season of *Masterchef* – and took home the main prize. It was the beginning of a dizzying number of opportunities that included hosting an award-winning breakfast show and writing best-selling cookbooks. What we didn't see was the mounting pressure of success. Julie will speak about her extraordinary experiences and how they have shaped who she is today.

Hosted by **Jane Tara**.

Tickets \$30

**53**  
**Highways and Byways: Jimmy Barnes in Conversation**



8.00PM–9.00PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC CONCERT HALL

From larger-than-life adventures to vivid and poignant tales of the imagination, no one tells a yarn quite like **Jimmy Barnes**. In his fourth memoir *Highways and Byways*, he takes readers on another enthralling tour, this one complete with the odd detour, and a roundabout or two, through the life of one of this country's most successful and beloved artists.

Hosted by **Richard Glover**.

This event will be live streamed.

Tickets \$35  
 Live stream \$15

**54**  
**Politics in the Age of Anxiety**



7.30PM–8.30PM

NUSPACE X321

In his Quarterly Essay *Bad Cop*, which explored Peter Dutton's rise to power, **Lech Blaine** pinpointed the opposition leader's *raison d'être*: 'Make Australia afraid again'. As a BBC foreign correspondent, **Nick Bryant** was posted in Washington, South Asia, Australia, and New York to cover the Trump years. Ahead of the federal election, they share their observations of the interplay of power and politics in Canberra as well as their predictions about where we're headed.

Hosted by **Virginia Trioli**.

Tickets \$25

**55**  
**Change My Mind: Psychedelic Medicine**



7.30PM–8.30PM

NUSPACE X320

After prohibiting use of MDMA, commonly known as ecstasy, for decades, Australia now finds itself a global leader in the adoption of MDMA therapy to treat PTSD. It has also been legal since 2023 for psychiatrists to prescribe psilocybin for treatment-resistant depression. Join **Rebecca Huntley** and **Sarah Naphthali** who will share their personal experiences of psychedelic medicine and explore the history, controversy, and transformative potential of the treatment.

Hosted by **Steph Harmon**.

FREE

**56**  
**Beyond the Stars: Imagining Outer Space**



7.30PM–8.30PM

NUSPACE X301

At the heart of recent works by **Larry Buttrose** and **David Dyer** is a deep and irrevocable respect for that which we don't fully understand. Whether reimagining the 1969 space landing or speculating about post-colonisation life on Mars, each author has drawn on research and creative license to blend what we know about space and the stars, with what remains a mystery. They speak with **Katharine Pollock** about outer-space imaginings.

FREE

**57**  
**Better Off Said: Eulogies for the Living and Dead**



8.00PM–9.30PM

CIVIC PLAYHOUSE

*Better Off Said: Eulogies for the Living and Dead* is a spoken-word salon celebrating words, stories and human experiences. Is there someone still out there in the world waiting to hear an important message, or a time in history you wish you'd used your voice? Now is the opportunity to leave no verbal stone unturned. To find closure. To sing truth from the rooftops before it's too late.

Festival guests **Robbie Arnott**, **Nikki Gemmell**, **Sulari Gentill**, and **Anita Heiss** will speak to the phrase "The words I wish I'd said" and deliver a living eulogy to someone or something still of this earth, to celebrate the best in our lives while we're here to hear it. **David Marr** is our special guest eulogist to round out the evening.

Hosted by **Emilie Zoey Baker**.

Produced by **Marieke Hardy**.

Tickets \$30

**58**

**Jane Austen 250:  
The Letters**



9.00AM-5.00PM

NUSPACE X204

Celebrate 250 years since Jane Austen's birth with **Jane Austen Society Hunter** as members and invited community readers present a reading of the author's letters to her beloved sister Cassandra and family and friends. Drop in for a few minutes or settle in for an indulgent day's listening and revel in Austen's thoughts, feelings, and witty observations of the world around her.

FREE

**59**

**Family Fun**



9.30AM-1.15PM

NEWCASTLE MUSEUM  
THEATRETTE

Featuring **Nat Amooore**, **Jeremy Lachlan**, and **Dub Leffler**.

Plus join us for the launch of our Story Hunter anthology *I Live Here*.

MC **Jerry Ray**

See details on page 41.

Gold coin donation

**60**

**Unsettled: Kate  
Grenville in  
Conversation**



10.00AM-11.00AM

CONSERVATORIUM OF  
MUSIC CONCERT HALL

**Kate Grenville** starts each book with a question. The latest one she asked is, 'What does it mean to be on land taken from other people?' The result is *Unsettled* – a book that grapples with what it means to descend from people who were, as she puts it, 'on the sharp edge of the moving blade that was colonisation'. Kate speaks with **David Marr** about the pilgrimage of the past, uncovering family stories, and confronting difficult truths.

This event will be live streamed.

Tickets \$33  
Live stream \$15

**61**

**The Art of  
Small Joys:  
Virginia Trioli in  
Conversation**



10.00AM-11.00AM

CIVIC PLAYHOUSE

Best known as a Walkley Award-winning journalist and broadcaster, **Virginia Trioli** is also a dedicated – almost obsessive – foodie. She tells anyone who listens that food gives us the perfect metaphor for how to seek, recognise, and devour the real flavour of life. Virginia speaks with **Naima Brown** about her new book, *A Bit on the Side*, which is an ode to joy, wisdom, and memory.

Tickets \$25

**62**

**Things We Don't  
Speak About: The  
Body as Taboo**



10.00AM-11.00AM

NUSPACE X321

In this returning series of conversations, we invite authors to share how they interrogate tough topics in their writing lives. **Dylín Hardcastle** and **Kris Kneen** discuss the body as the last great taboo in our society.

Hosted by **Amy Sambrooke**.

Tickets \$25

**63**

**The  
Correspondent:  
Peter Greste in  
Conversation**



10.00AM-11.00AM

NUSPACE X320

Based on extensive interviews, research and first-hand experience, **Peter Greste's** *The Correspondent* provides firsthand insight into the challenges facing Western media in the face of terrorism – from Trump's phony war on 'fake news' and the repression of Putin's Russia, to the war zones in Ukraine and Gaza.

Peter speaks to **Ben Mckelvey** about the ongoing importance of investigative journalism to shine a light amid the darkness of war.

Tickets \$25

**64**

## On Love and Loneliness



10.00AM–11.00AM

NUSPACE X301

Recent novels by **Melanie Cheng, Raeden Richardson,** and **Molly Schmidt** grapple with the turbulent relationship between love and loneliness. The authors discuss the complexities of bereavement and grief, identity politics and culture, silence and connection.

Hosted by **Steph Harmon.**

FREE

**65**

## Culture and the Creative Spirit



10.00AM–11.00AM

NUSPACE X207

In **Nardi Simpson's** *The Bellbird*, the author and musician reimagines the history of Sydney in a story that spans a contemporary setting and the 18th century, inspired by stories of Barangaroo and Bennelong. **Dirrayawadha** by **Anita Heiss** similarly resurrects a crucial time in Australian history in a story that follows Aboriginal warrior and resistance leader Windradyne during the frontier wars of the 1820s. Nardi and Anita speak with **Kate Mildenhall** about blending history with imagination and drawing on culture in their work.

Tickets \$25

**66**

## The Limits of Language: Poetry as Protest



10.00AM–11.00AM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

"History, despite its wrenching pain / Cannot be un-lived, but if faced / With courage, need not be lived again." — Maya Angelou.

Poetry has long served as a powerful form of protest, but where do we turn when words aren't enough? **Jeanine Leane** and **Omar Sakr** speak with **Miles Merrill** about speaking out, bearing witness, and the transcendent yet limiting potential of language.

Tickets \$15

**67**

## Pushing the Boundaries: John Safran in Conversation



11.30AM–12.30PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC CONCERT HALL

Writer and filmmaker **John Safran** is best known for his bold, satirical approach to exploring complex social and cultural issues. Mixing humour with investigative journalism, John's new book *Squat* is a stranger-than-fiction account of squatting in Kanye West's abandoned Californian mansion. With the widely condemned celebrity's promotion of Hitler as a kick-off point, Safran explores threads of Jewishness, identity and belonging.

Hosted by **Marieke Hardy.**

Tickets \$33

**68**

## Things We Don't Speak About: Great Australian Myths



11.30AM–12.30PM

CIVIC PLAYHOUSE

In this returning series of conversations, we invite authors to share how they interrogate tough topics in their writing lives. **Mark Dapin** and **Clare Wright** challenge some great Australian myths and their long-lasting hold on our identity.

Hosted by **Catherine McKinnon.**

Tickets \$25

**69**

## The Power of Place



11.30AM–12.30PM

NUSPACE X321

From the familiar to the alienating, the setting of a novel is more than just a location—it's a character, a mood, and a driving force in storytelling. From the wintry depths of Canada, to the gothic architecture of Edinburgh, the backstreets of Fitzroy and war-torn Colombo, **Ashley Kalagian Blunt, Shankari Chandran** and **Jock Serong** explore the interplay between memory, imagination, and geography.

Hosted by **Nick Wasiliev.**

Tickets \$25

**70**  
**It's Complicated: Mothers and Daughters in Fiction**



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X320

Recent novels by **Jumaana Abdu**, **Emma Darragh**, and **Jessie Tu** grapple with the complexities of motherhood—from tenderness to tension, loyalty to abandonment—set against cultural and generational division. The authors speak with **Zohra Aly** about exploring the dynamics of fractured mother-daughter relationships.

FREE

**71**  
**Long Yarn Short: Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts in Conversation**



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X301

Lawyer and inaugural Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children and Young People Commissioner **Vanessa Turnbull-Roberts** is committed to amplifying the voices of Black Lives. Her advocacy is grounded in a deep understanding because of her own experience, which saw her forcibly removed from her family when she was 10. Vanessa will speak about her memoir, *Long Yarn Short*, a call to action from one of the most powerful voices of her generation.

FREE

**72**  
**Writing to the Edge of Reality**



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X207

In **Chris Flynn's** *Orpheus Nine*, a mysterious global event causes the simultaneous death of every nine-year-old. Everyone prays it is a dream. In **Inga Simpson's** *The Thinning* two teens race against time; the Great Barrier Reef is gone, the last koala has died. The authors join **Michael Sala** in conversation about their apocalyptic thrillers set in a ravaged Australian landscape.

Tickets \$25

**73**  
**Lion City Lit: The Singapore Salon**



11.30AM-12.30PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

The festival is thrilled to feature **Ally Chua**, **Shawn Hoo**, and **Daryl Lim Wei Jie** – three dynamic writers from Singapore who write across genre and form. Ranging from experimental eco-poetics to feminist rage writing, these artists will showcase the unique, playful and powerful writing coming out of contemporary Singapore.

Hosted by **Emilie Zoey Baker**.

Supported by



FREE

**74**  
**Book Launch: The Fuchsia Sari by Meryl Dunton-Rose**



11.30AM-12.30PM

THE PRESS BOOK HOUSE

Join us for the launch of local author **Meryl Dunton-Rose's** new novel *The Fuchsia Sari*, set across Bombay and Manchester at the turn of the twentieth century.

Hosted by **Karen Eastwood**.

FREE

**75**  
**Australia's First Golfers: John Maynard in Conversation**



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X201

Historical accounts reveal that some traditional Aboriginal games bore similarities to golf, long before the sport gained global prominence. Join University of Newcastle Emeritus Professor of History **John Maynard** for a conversation about his new book, *Golf Dreaming*, which explores the sport's unique cultural intersections and its challenges, providing a fresh perspective on golf's place in Australia's sporting and cultural history.

Hosted by **Ray Kelly**.

FREE



**76**  
**Your Time Starts Now: Julie Goodwin in Conversation**



1.00PM-2.00PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC CONCERT HALL

We were first charmed by **Julie Goodwin** when she served up simple, authentic dishes during the debut season of Masterchef. It was the beginning of a dizzying number of opportunities, but what we didn't see was the mounting pressure of success. Julie will speak about her extraordinary experiences and how they have shaped who she is today.

Hosted by **Naima Brown**.

This event will be live streamed.

Tickets \$33  
 Live stream \$15

**77**  
**American Horror Story: Nick Bryant in Conversation**



1.00PM-2.00PM

CIVIC PLAYHOUSE

**Nick Bryant** doesn't believe that Donald Trump's rise to power and presidency is unprecedented. In his new book, *The Forever War*, the former BBC foreign correspondent blends brilliant storytelling with historical research to show how America's political polarisation is 250 years in the making. Join Nick in conversation with **Matthew Bevan** as they unpack everything from the Civil War to the storming of the Capitol, from JFK to George Floyd.

Tickets \$20

**78**  
**Rapture: Emily Maguire in Conversation**



1.00PM-2.00PM

NUSPACE X321

In her daring 10th novel and first historical fiction, award-winning writer **Emily Maguire** introduces readers to the wild and brilliant Agnes, who avoids the expectations of marriage and motherhood by disguising herself as a boy and joining a 9th-century monastery. So begins her life as John the Englishman: a revered scholar with a matchless connection to God. Join Emily in conversation with **Amy Lovat** about gender, faith, and feminism across centuries.

Tickets \$15

**79**  
**Christabel Blackman in Conversation**



1.00PM-2.00PM

NUSPACE X320

Join author, artist and fine art conservator, **Christabel Blackman**, in conversation with Newcastle Art Gallery curator **Miriam Kelly**, as they explore a fabulous portal of art and love between Charles and Barbara Blackman. This special event will feature a discussion about Christabel's highly acclaimed book *Charles & Barbara Blackman: A decade of art and love*.

Supported by



FREE  
 Booking is essential.

**80**  
**Complicated Characters**



1.00PM-2.00PM

NUSPACE X301

**Lisa Kenway, Nicola Moriarty** and **Hayley Scrivenor** have crafted complicated characters who are multi-faceted, morally ambiguous, and not altogether likeable. They'll discuss the ways in which nuanced characters blur the line between good and bad, provoke empathy, and mirror the contradictions of real life.

Hosted by **Abby Millerd**.

Tickets \$15

**81**  
**Family Sagas**



1.00PM-2.00PM

NUSPACE X207

**Lech Blaine** and **Khin Myint** grew up on opposite sides of Australia in very different families, but they have written compelling memoirs brimming with understated humour, honesty, and sharp-eyed observations. Join them for a conversation about fractured families, identity, and healing childhood trauma.

Hosted by **Drew Ambrose**.

Tickets \$15

82

## Breaking Out: Student Readings



1.00PM-2.00PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Ranging from fiction to the intimately autobiographical, four up-and-coming undergraduate and postgraduate writers from the creative writing program at the University of Newcastle share their work.

Featuring **Honey Kassel**, **Bronwyn Rennex**, **Cade Turner-Mann** and **Jackson Turton**.

Hosted by **Michael Sala**.

Includes announcement of the 2024 Karen Thrift Poetry Prize winner

FREE

83

## Into the Darkness



1.00PM-2.00PM

NUSPACE X201

Join **Deborah Callaghan**, **Melanie Cheng**, and **Zahid Gamiieldien** for a thought-provoking conversation about exploring complexity, darkness, and moral ambiguity in their most recent novels. **Anna Downes** speaks with the authors about the psychological depths of their characters and the real-world issues that inform their storytelling.

FREE

84

## Newcastle Short Story Award Presentation



1.00PM-2.00PM

FOGHORN BREWERY

Celebrate the 2024 Newcastle Short Story Award!

Hosted by **Hunter Writers' Centre**, this event features the announcement of this year's winners and the launch of the *Newcastle Short Story Award Anthology*.

Hear from some of the nation's finest emerging and established storytellers as we honour the talent, craft, and creativity behind their work.

All are welcome.

FREE

85

## About a Boy: Helen Garner in Conversation



2.30PM-3.30PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC CONCERT HALL

**Helen Garner** returns with her signature candour and wit in an exuberant new book *The Season*, an account from the sidelines of the highs and lows of her youngest grandson's footy team. Helen speaks to festival director **Rosemarie Milsom** about the vulnerability of boys and the bittersweet experience of loving them and letting them go.

This event will be live streamed.

Tickets \$33  
Live stream \$15

86

## Words of Warning: The State of Democracy



2.30PM-3.30PM

CIVIC PLAYHOUSE

At a time when democracy faces unprecedented challenges, literature remains a powerful tool for reflecting, resisting, and reclaiming freedom. Join **Antony Loewenstein** and **Misha Zelinsky** for a thought-provoking conversation about the current state of democracy, the alarming rise of totalitarianism, and the role of writers in a time of crisis.

Hosted by **Peter Greste**.

Tickets \$20

87

## Setting the Record Straight: Mark Dapin in Conversation



2.30PM-3.30PM

NUSPACE X321

With a doctorate in military history and several true crime books under his belt, historian and journalist **Mark Dapin** turns his attention to Australian war myths. From Simpson's donkey and the Emu War to Vietnam and Ben Roberts Smith, Australian military history is full of events that didn't happen the way most people think they did. Which begs the question, are we overlooking the real heroes and celebrating the wrong people?

Hosted by **Michaela Kalowski**.

Tickets \$15

88

## Out of the Shadows: In Praise of Ghostwriters



2.30PM–3.30PM

NUSPACE X320

They've been up close and personal with the famous and infamous, and written beloved, bestselling, even award-winning books, but there's a catch: their name isn't on the cover, or is in fine print. **Summer Land**, **Ben Mckelvey**, and **Liam Pieper** emerge from the background to share their experiences of ghostwriting in this conversation led by **Elfy Scott**.

Tickets \$25

89

## Writing Identity and Inequality



2.30PM–3.30PM

NUSPACE X301

Join novelist **Jumaana Abdu**, essayist **Eda Gunaydin**, and poet **Paris Rosemont** in a conversation with **Magdalena Ball** about how literature can give voice to the complexities of identity, privilege, and social injustice.

FREE

90

## Slipping Through Time



2.30PM–3.30PM

NUSPACE X207

**Courtney Collins** and **Jock Serong** play with the question 'What if?' in their latest novels. *In Bird*, the 14-year-old protagonist is seemingly living two parallel lives. *Cherrywood* is a classic ghost story with a hint of magical realism, set between Melbourne and Edinburgh, moving between the 1910s and the 1990s. The authors speak with **Amy Sambrooke** about time-slipping, sliding doors, and the power of past lives.

FREE

91

## Book Launch: To Speak of Grasses by Kathryn Fry



2.30PM–3.30PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Join us for the launch of local author **Kathryn Fry**'s new poetry collection *To Speak of Grasses*.

**Jean Kent** will launch the collection.

FREE

92

## Read the Room



2.35PM–4.55PM

NUSPACE X201

Pull up a beanbag or a comfy chair and engage in the meditative enjoyment of listening to a writer read from their work.

- 2.15pm **Katharine Pollock**
- 2.35pm **Emma Darragh**
- 2.55pm **Kate Forsyth**
- 3.15pm **Zahid Gamielien**
- 3.35pm **Deborah Callaghan**
- 3.55pm **Chris Flynn**

Supported by



FREE

93

## Philosopher's Cafe



3.00PM–4.15PM

MOMO WHOLEFOOD

Join Newcastle philosopher **Russell Blackford** for a deep dive into the values, principles, and assumptions behind some of the big news stories of the day. Led by questions from the audience, the group will explore the issues together, with Russell providing input from philosophers past and present. Come along with an open mind and willingness to listen.

Tickets \$25

**94**

**If You're Listening LIVE with Matt Bevan**



**4.00PM-5.00PM**  
**CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC**

The ABC's award-winning podcast and TV show *If You're Listening* returns to the festival with a live event, looking at the historical context of current news events.

In an event which will be recorded for ABC Radio, host **Matt Bevan** will incorporate music, sound, archival vision and witty writing to explain the key background behind some of the biggest news stories around the world.

FREE

**95**

**Human: Ziggy Ramo in Conversation**



**4.00PM-5.00PM**  
**CIVIC PLAYHOUSE**

Written on the precipice of becoming a parent and fuelled by his imaginings of how life could look for his child, Wik and South Sea Islander artist **Ziggy Ramo's** book *Human?* is part-memoir, part-manifesto, and an attempt to bridge a nation-wide knowledge gap — a heartfelt and impassioned cry out to Australia to acknowledge the truth of our history so we can move forward and heal together.

Hosted by **Miles Merrill**.

FREE

**96**

**Dangerous Desires**



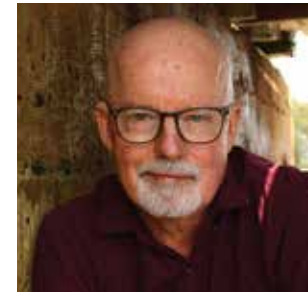
**4.00PM-5.00PM**  
**NUSPACE X321**

Drawing on Greek mythology, mediaeval monastic history, and fairy tale lore, **Kate Forsyth**, **Emily Maguire**, and **CA Wright** explore the duality and dangers of womanhood in their recent novels. In conversation with **Katharine Pollock**, they discuss myth, magic, and romance.

Tickets \$25

**97**

**20 Years of Crime: Michael Robotham in Conversation**



**4.00PM-5.00PM**  
**NUSPACE X320**

It's been 20 years since **Michael Robotham** published his first novel *The Suspect* and he has emerged from his 'cabana of cruelty', aka his home office, with new bestseller *Storm Child*, the latest in his Cyrus Haven series. Join this festival favourite in conversation with **Anna Downes** as he spills the secrets to his success.

Tickets \$25

**98**

**Date with a Debut**



**4.00PM-5.00PM**  
**NUSPACE X301**

Meet three authors whose career trajectory took a turn when their dream of being published was finally realised. **Zahid Gamiel**, **Lisa Kenway**, and **Natasha Rai** spill secrets, engage in myth-busting, and share the highs and lows of debut author life with *'Date with a Debut'* podcast host **Nick Wasiliev**.

FREE

**99**

**Things We Don't Speak About: Motherhood and Mental Health**



**4.00PM-5.00PM**  
**NUSPACE X207**

In this returning series of conversations, we invite authors to share how they interrogate tough topics in their writing lives. **Ariane Beeston** and **Oceane Campbell** discuss the secrets and stigma around maternal mental health, perfectionism, and society's expectations.

Hosted by **Katharine Gillett**.

Tickets \$15

Abby Millerd - 27, 51, 80  
 Ailsa Piper - 7, 23  
 Alison Rogers - 3  
 Ally Chua - 44, 73  
 Alyx Gorman - 24  
 Amy Lovat - 25, 78  
 Amy Sambrooke - 48, 62, 90  
 Andra Putnis - 17, 43  
 Anita Heiss - 40, 57, 65  
 Anna Downes - 27, 83, 97  
 Anne Manne - 15  
 Annette Higgs - 3, 41  
 Antony Loewenstein - 49, 86  
 Ariane Beeston - 99  
 Arne Neeme - 13  
 Ashley Kalagian Blunt - 27, 69  
 Bastian Fox - 28  
 Ben Mckelvey - 63, 88  
 Benjamin Law - 5, 10  
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 Bronwyn Rennex - 82  
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 CA Wright - 96  
 Cade Turner-Mann - 82  
 Carol Duncan - 29  
 Cassandra Atherton - 41  
 Cassie Gilmartin - 17  
 Catherine McKinnon - 50, 68  
 ChaiChester - 45  
 Chain Daisy - 45  
 Chelsea Read - 45  
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Full speaker bios are available on our website at [newcastle-writersfestival.org.au](http://newcastle-writersfestival.org.au)



DAVID MARR



CHAI-CHESTER



ALYX GORMAN



JEANINE LEANE



BENJAMIN LAW



## Family Fun - Sunday 6 April

9.30am - 1.00pm

### 9.30am-10.15am Book Launch - *I Live Here: Story Hunter Anthology*.

In 2024, the festival's Story Hunter program took local authors into primary schools across our region to work with students. Join us for the launch of the latest anthology, which showcases poems and stories from the next generation of Hunter writers. Aged from 8 to 12, the students hail from the Singleton, Cessnock, Dungog, Port Stephens, Lake Macquarie and Newcastle.

### 10.30am-11.15am *The Long and Winding Road* with **Jeremy Lachlan**.

Join best-selling author **Jeremy Lachlan** for an in-depth chat about his creative life. Jeremy will talk about the long and winding road to becoming an author, the inception of his epic action-adventure series *The Jane Doe Chronicles*, his creative process, and how personal triumphs and tragedies have shaped the plots of his award-winning novels.

### 11.30am-12.15pm *Draw Along With Me* - **Dub Leffler**

Join Australia's leading First Nations illustrator, **Dub Leffler**, and create your own work of art. Materials supplied.

### 12.25pm-1.15pm *Shower Time!* with **Nat Amoire**

Nat's new junior fiction series is all about a teleporting shower. But how on earth did she get that idea? Aren't showers just boring? Not when you're **Nat Amoire**. Find out the whacky shower stories behind this hilarious new series and maybe even help Nat create the next Shower Land blockbuster. Don't forget your shower cap!

MC **Jerry Ray**

**Tickets: Gold coin donation**

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## Lucia Osborne-Crowley:

### The Trial of Gislaine Maxwell

Join us on **February 28** for a special pre-festival event with Lucia Osborne-Crowley, who will speak about her powerful book, *The Lasting Harm: Witnessing the Trial of Gislaine Maxwell*.



SCAN TO BOOK TICKETS



## Marie Curie's Legacy: An Afternoon with Dava Sobel

Join us on **March 9** for an afternoon with Pulitzer Prize finalist and New York Times bestselling author Dava Sobel.



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