



NEWCASTLE
WRITERS
FESTIVAL

Hello everyone,

It has been a challenging couple of days and the festival team has been focused on the job of winding down this year's festival. It is a surreal and heart-breaking position to be in and we are grateful for the support we have received from writers, other festival directors, sponsors, publishers, and our dedicated audience. It has meant the world.

The decision to cancel this year's event three weeks out was not taken lightly. I had been closely monitoring the rapidly evolving COVID-19 crisis and staying in contact with key agencies. On Friday morning a publisher withdrew four of its writers from the program and I knew at that point that it would only be a matter of time before others followed. We could not expect writers to commit to an event three weeks away given the circumstances.

The Federal Government's advice on Friday afternoon that non-essential events with an audience over 500 be cancelled cemented our decision to cancel. Our priority has always been the health and safety of our guest writers, volunteers, audiences and staff. I felt relief once the decision was made, but I also shed tears. I have worked for a year to create a program that would enable writers – and our city – to shine.

I am privileged to have the opportunity to work with writers. I respect and admire them. They are going to need our support more than ever as the cascade of cancelled festivals and events continues. Please keep buying their books. We will do all that we can to continue to draw attention to their work and we will let you know what is planned as soon as possible.

As you can imagine, the cancellation of the festival has left a gaping hole in our budget. We are in the process of refunding tickets and many of you have asked about donating your refund. We have not wanted to complicate the logistics, but you are able to make a tax-deductible donation via this link on our website <https://www.newcastlewritersfestival.org.au/donate/>

Thank you for your understanding and support.

I look forward to welcoming you to next year's festival. Please note the change of date from April to May 14 to 16, 2021.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rosemarie Milsom', written in a cursive style.

Rosemarie Milsom

Director

Newcastle Writers Festival