

# WHERE STORIES TAKE FLIGHT



NEWCASTLE  
WRITERS  
FESTIVAL

27 - 29 MARCH 2026



*Roccatuzzo*

# 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

I have subscribed to Maria Popova's brilliant weekly newsletter The Marginalian for more than a decade. It is a beautifully curated meditation on art, literature, science, and philosophy. Recently, she added a midweek offering she describes as "a sanity oasis". It's a phrase that resonates with me and captures the appeal of literary festivals. For a few days each year, we create a space where reflection is encouraged, curiosity is welcomed, and the deeper parts of ourselves have room to breathe.

Sharing stories has a way of steadying us, especially in times when the world feels loud and relentlessly fast. The 2026 festival brings together writers whose work opens windows into other lives while offering a clearer view of our own. Some sessions grapple with urgent questions; others celebrate creativity and humour. Whether you're seeking insight, inspiration, or simply the pleasure of hearing artists think out loud, I hope you'll find moments that provide you with your own version of a sanity oasis.

Newcastle Writers Festival exists because of a remarkable network of people who care deeply about literature and its impact. My heartfelt thanks to my colleagues, whose numbers increase during the busy



festival preparation, board, volunteers, writers, contractors, patrons, sponsors and partners. Your generosity and commitment shape this event and allow it to flourish.

Whether you're returning or joining us for the first time, I'm thrilled to welcome you.

See you at the festival!

*Rosemarie Milsom*

Rosemarie Milsom  
Founding 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 Humanitix. [events.humanitix.com/newcastle-writers-festival-2026](https://events.humanitix.com/newcastle-writers-festival-2026)

Events being held in Newcastle City Hall, including the Cummings and Hunter rooms, can be booked via [civictheatrenewcastle.com.au/what-s-on/all-shows/newcastle-writers-festival-2026](https://civictheatrenewcastle.com.au/what-s-on/all-shows/newcastle-writers-festival-2026)

In 2026, the festival has added a reduced ticket price for those aged under 25 for events booked via Humanitix. Please have ID ready to present to ushers.

For the first time, you are required to book for free events. This will help the festival volunteers manage crowds and also assists us to communicate any program changes.

If you book a free ticket and can no longer attend, please contact [ticketing@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](mailto:ticketing@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au) so we can offer the ticket to someone else.

If you require assistance email [ticketing@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](mailto:ticketing@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au)

Cover image by Rocco Fazzari

## Festival Team

Director // Rosemarie Milsom  
Program Manager // Amy Lovat  
Festival Producer // Cassie Gilmartin  
Digital Manager // Zoe Drew  
Volunteer Coordinator // Nerida Walker  
Assistant Volunteer Coordinator // Denise Nolasco  
Volunteer Assistant // Barbara Rodham  
Fundraising and Development Manager // Grace Frey  
Artist Logistics // Cherrie Sheldrick  
Ticketing // Melissa Chandler  
Designer // Miranda Whittle  
Creative Agency // Enigma  
Production // Kristy Dale, Myra Grierson, Amber Wilkes  
Accessibility Coordinator // Eila Vinwynn  
Website Manager // Oliver Welbourn  
Intern // James Deefholts

## Festival Board

President // Kate Robinson  
Vice-President // Rosemarie Milsom  
Treasurer // Annette Morrissey  
Secretary // Jenny McPeak  
Member // Jane Albert  
Member // David Couri  
Member // Dan Cox  
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 9 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](https://newcastlewritersfestival.org.au/accessibility)

For more information please contact Eila Vinwynn at [access@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](mailto:access@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au)

## FESTIVAL TICKETS

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



# NEWCASTLE FRINGE 14-29 MARCH 2026



Joylyn Secunda, The Routine

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Winni Wizard And Her Magical Smells

# READ THE ROOM

SUNDAY 22 MARCH // 5PM - 6PM  
NEWCASTLE OCEAN BATHS

Settle in under the open sky for the launch of the Festival's Read the Room project, a series of reading parties to be held in venues across Newcastle in 2026.

Enjoy a relaxed afternoon of reading, conversation and community. Reading parties are a gentle invitation to slow down, share space, and rediscover the quiet pleasure of reading together, unhurried and offline.

Bring your current book, discover new favourites, and enjoy the atmosphere among fellow readers. Leave your phone in your bag on silent.

Artwork by Eirian Chapman



## Sun 22 March

### 01 SPECIAL EVENT

#### Celebrate the Festival's First Reading Party



5.00PM-6.00PM

#### NEWCASTLE OCEAN BATHS

Settle in under the open sky for the launch of the Festival's Read the Room project, a series of reading parties to be held in venues across Newcastle in 2026. Enjoy a relaxed afternoon of reading, conversation and community. Bring your current book, discover new favourites, and enjoy the atmosphere among fellow readers.

Bring a book, a cushion, and leave your phone in your bag on silent. This event will not proceed in bad weather.

Hosted by **Rosemarie Milsom**.

FREE - Bookings required

## Tue 24 March

### 02 MASTERCLASS

#### Flash Fiction Masterclass for Primary Students



9:30AM-3:00PM

#### LOVETT GALLERY, NEWCASTLE LIBRARY

In this masterclass, students in grades 5 and 6 will be introduced to the various elements of characterisation, plot development and editing their work. Led by professional writers in the festival's Story Hunter team. Schools are encouraged to send up to 12 students.

Email Emma at [storyhunter@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](mailto:storyhunter@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au) for more details.

Tickets \$16

## Wed 25 March

### 03 SPECIAL EVENT

#### Literary Trivia hosted by Nick Milligan



7.00PM - 9.00PM

#### CUSTOMS HOUSE HOTEL

Our literary trivia night is back! Can you name the Australian city UNESCO declared a City of Literature in 2023? Who is the youngest Booker Prize winner? What is the name of Sally Hepworth's most recent book?

Gather your bookish friends and put your literary smarts to the test. Great 'literary' prizes to be won including bundles of new books and festival tickets.

Teams are limited to 8 participants and solo competitors can be accommodated.

*Note: this venue is not accessible.*

Tickets \$25 per person  
Table of 8 \$180; Table of 4 \$90

## Thu 26 March

### 04 MASTERCLASS

#### Historical Fiction Masterclass for Primary Students



9:30AM-3:00PM

#### MCINTYRE THEATRETTE, NEWCASTLE MUSEUM

The experienced writers and educators from Story Hunter have joined forces with the expert historians and curators at Newcastle Museum to lead this hands-on, informative day where our next generation of writers can try their hand at historical fiction focused on tales of our local past.

Designed for grades 5 and 6, schools are encouraged to send up to 12 students.

Email Emma at [storyhunter@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](mailto:storyhunter@newcastlewritersfestival.org.au) for more details.

Tickets \$16

# BEFORE THE FESTIVAL

Thu 26 March

05 BOOK LAUNCH

**BOOK LAUNCH: A trio of haiku zines by Morgan Bell**



3.00PM-4.00PM

TOMAREE LIBRARY,  
PORT STEPHENS

Join us for the launch of local poet **Morgan Bell**'s trio of haiku zines: *The Sound of Colour* (2023), *Animalian Bites* (2024), and the upcoming *Glancing The Hold* (2025). Morgan will perform a reading and discuss haiku as a form and colour as inspiration with **Kerri Shying**.

FREE - Bookings required

Thu 26 March

06 SPECIAL EVENT

**A Picture Paints 500 Words**



5.30PM-7.30PM

PORT STEPHENS  
ARTISAN COLLECTIVE

Writers and visual artists come together in this lively cross-disciplinary showcase. Five Hunter region storytellers – **Dael Allison, Joanna Atherfold Finn, Morgan Bell, Micheál Lovett** and **Damien Linnane** – unveil 500-word pieces sparked by striking works from local artists. Join us for a special evening where creativity leaps across forms.

Tickets \$20 (includes one glass of wine on arrival)

Fri 27 March

07 WORKSHOP

**Undercurrents: What's Your Story?**



10.00AM-3.00PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Draw on your imagination and reveal your story with Voices of Women artistic director **Liane Clarke**. Enjoy a sensory walk, play with written and spoken words, and create and record a collaborative podcast. No experience necessary.

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

Tickets \$35  
Under 25 \$26.25

Fri 27 March

08 SPECIAL EVENT

**Radical Newcastle: A History Walk**



10.00AM-12.00PM

MEET AT  
NEWCASTLE MUSEUM

Join this two-hour walking tour through Newcastle's Civic precinct – from Newcastle Museum to the library – and discover some of the city's radical histories.

With **Jude Conway, Helen Cummings, Nancy Cushing, Justin Ellis, Keri Glastonbury, Effie Karageorgos, Phoebe McIlwraith**, and **Nik Orr**.

A collaboration with



Tickets \$30  
Under 25 \$22.50

# OPENING EVENT

Fri 27 March

09 OPENING NIGHT

**An Evening with Kathy Lette**



7.30PM-9.00PM

NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

**Kathy Lette** first achieved succès de scandale as the teenaged co-author of Aussie classic *Puberty Blues* and has since hidden Julian Assange in her attic, tongue-kissed Prince William, and written 20 more best-selling books.

Prepare for brutal honesty and lots of laughter as the much-loved humorist reflects on writing, resilience, and the highs and lows of being a feminist of a certain age.

Kathy will also speak about her new novel, *The Sisterhood*, a sharp, joyful rallying cry for female friendship, political awakening and the power of women refusing to fade quietly from view.

This unmissable conversation will be hosted by **Yumi Stynes**.

MC **Dan Cox**

Tickets \$50  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

10

## Bold Women: Natasha Lester and Tara Moss in Conversation



10.00AM-11.00AM

CONCERT HALL, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

Bestselling authors **Natasha Lester** and **Tara Moss** draw on meticulous research and propulsive storytelling to reanimate overlooked lives. In this special event, they'll explore the remarkable women who inspire their historical fiction.

From previously untold stories to unforgettable heroines, they'll discuss the challenge and joy of bringing women of courage to life on the page, and share insights about balancing fact and fiction.

Hosted by **Jane Caro**.

Tickets \$35

Ticketed by Civic Theatre

11

## Hawke PM: The Making of a Legend



10.00AM-11.00AM

CUMMINGS ROOM, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

The second instalment of historian **David Day's** biography of Bob Hawke, which chronicles the public and private lives of Labor's longest-serving prime minister, has been described as 'masterful, gritty'.

Tracing Hawke's rise from union firebrand to PM, David speaks to **Julie McIntyre** about the mythmaking surrounding the politician and why his legacy continues to shape Australian politics.

Tickets \$20

Ticketed by Civic Theatre

12

## This Writing Life



10.00AM-11.00AM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC CONCERT HALL

**Hannah Kent**, **JP Pomare**, and **Heather Rose** reflect on the realities of a life shaped by writing. They discuss building a career, navigating the publishing industry, and balancing creative work with family and everyday demands – offering candid insights into sustaining a writing life over the long term. What does it take to keep going when the work feels fragile?

Hosted by **Kate Evans**.

Tickets \$20

Live stream \$15  
Under 25 \$15

13

## Dusk: Robbie Arnott in Conversation



10.00AM-11.00AM

NUSPACE X321

In **Robbie Arnott's** award-winning novel *Dusk*, the author refashions Australian stories of escaped big cats into a tale of twins Iris and Floyd, who hunt down a puma in the Tasmanian highlands, a place of 'old beauty haunted by new violence'.

Robbie speaks to **Michael Williams** about exploring myth, human relationships, and the natural world.

Tickets \$30

Under 25 \$22.50

14

## Slippery Truths: Gail Jones and Toni Jordan



10.00AM-11.00AM

NUSPACE X320

Recent novels by acclaimed authors **Gail Jones** and **Toni Jordan** probe the delicate boundaries between fact and fiction, memory and imagination, and the haunting echoes of what remains unresolved.

They join **Ashley Hay** for a conversation about the power of storytelling and how they shape narratives that convey emotional truth.

Tickets \$20

Under 25 \$15

**15**  
**Surviving the Surviving: Jane Messer in Conversation**



10.00AM-11.00AM

NUSPACE X301

**Jane Messer's** new book *Raven Mother* is a powerful blend of memoir and history that retraces her Jewish family's fractured and tragic past and its reverberations across generations.

Speaking with **Magdalena Ball**, Jane reflects on the risks of looking closely at inherited trauma – and what it means to carry these histories into the present.

FREE - Bookings required

**16**  
**The Question of Identity: Alli Parker and Emma Pei Yin**



10.00AM-11.00AM

NUSPACE X207

**Alli Parker** and **Emma Pei Yin** write compelling high-stakes historical novels that reach across generations and borders to examine inheritance, silence and survival.

In this conversation, they speak with **Phoebe McIlwraith** about centring women in their stories, the trauma and legacy of war, and the real-life family histories that inspired their work.

FREE - Bookings required

**17**  
**Studio Weekends with Jazz Money**



10.00AM-12.00PM

NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY

**Jazz Money** is the special guest at this free inclusive and accessible art-making session for families.

Jazz will read from her debut children's book *The Frog's First Song*. No bookings needed, just drop in and get creative!

FREE - No bookings needed

**18**  
**Defending Democracy: A Lecture by AC Grayling**



11.30AM-12.30PM

CONCERT HALL, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

In this special lecture, philosopher **AC Grayling** examines the authoritarian forces undermining our democratic ideals – from gerrymandering and partisanship to corporate interference and tainted donations – and offers bold solutions to the erosion of freedom and civil liberties.

Followed by an audience Q & A.

Tickets \$35  
 Ticketed by Civic Theatre

**19**  
**Discipline: Randa Abdel-Fattah in Conversation**



11.30AM-12.30PM

CUMMINGS ROOM, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

**Randa Abdel-Fattah's** recent novel *Discipline* follows the intersecting lives of Hannah, a young Muslim newspaper journalist, and Ashraf, an academic. It is a timely exploration of truth and power.

Speaking to **Maeve Marsden**, she reflects on the role of fiction in challenging injustice and offers insight into her writing process and the urgent themes shaping her work.

Tickets \$30  
 Ticketed by Civic Theatre

**20**  
**Talking Footy: Helen Garner and Brandon Jack**



11.30AM-12.30PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC, CONCERT HALL

In their recent books, former Swans player **Brandon Jack** and Western Bulldogs tragic **Helen Garner** explore the culture, traditions, and tensions of the AFL. From the emotions that shape players to the dramatic highs and lows that stay with fans, they'll explore how sport becomes story – and why the game continues to echo far beyond the field.

Hosted by **Corrie Perkin**.

Tickets \$30  
 Under 25 \$22.50  
 Live stream \$15

**21**

**On Stolen Land:  
Tyree Barnette  
and Thomas Mayo**



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X321

**Tyree Barnette** and **Thomas Mayo** explore identity, justice and belonging across cultures and countries.

Drawing on Tyree's powerful reflections on race, migration and shifting privilege, and Thomas' passionate advocacy for First Nations rights, they discuss the complexities of Australian identity and the stories that shape who we are – and who we hope to be.

Hosted by **Loren Collyer**.

FREE - Bookings required

**22**

**This Modern  
Life: Siang Lu,  
Katharine  
Pollock, and  
Clare Stephens**



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X320

**Siang Lu, Katharine Pollock, and Clare Stephens** use humour, insight, and sharp observation to reflect our modern world back at us. From AI translation to chaotic fandom to the cascade of an internet pile-on, their novels offer fresh takes on the contradictions and joys of contemporary life and work.

Hosted by **Dan Cox**.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

**23**

**BOOK LAUNCH  
Living with Illness  
and Disability:  
Poised on the  
Pointe of Pain**



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X301

Celebrate the launch of this powerful collection of personal essays from people living with chronic pain, illness and disability, as well as those who care for them. Includes readings, directed discussion, and audience participation.

Hosted by **Michelle Hamadache**.

FREE - Bookings required

**24**

**The Art of  
Growing Older**



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X207

Join **Carol Lefevre** and **Jacinta Parsons** for a grounded, generous discussion about ageing, identity, and the creative life.

In conversation with **Holly Wainwright**, they'll share the experiences and insights that have shaped them, and reflect on what it means to grow older with intention, curiosity, and a strong sense of self.

FREE - Bookings required

**25**

**BOOK LAUNCH  
Flying Islands  
Poetry**



11.30AM-12.30PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Celebrate the launch of six books from Flying Islands Press: *Blimmin Wimmin* by **Dael Allison**; *New Ordinance for the Dead* by **Ronald Arana Atilano**; *Thin Reed Throat* by **Damien Becker**; *Food of Love (Concert Pieces)* by **Kit Kelen**; *Still Alive in Dubbo* by **DG Lloyd**; and *Screaming & Euphoria* by **Gillian Rubinstein**.

Hosted by **Magdalena Ball**.

FREE - Bookings required

**26**

**Truth, Food  
and Memory:  
Kate Reid and  
Laurie Woolever**



1.00PM-2.00PM

CONCERT HALL,  
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

From working with a British Formula 1 racing team to the intense heat of New York kitchens and creating award-winning croissants, **Kate Reid** and **Laurie Woolever** have been shaped by ambition and a hunger for meaning.

Drawing on their brilliant memoirs, they speak to **Kate Evans** about the price of perfection and the significance of food in their lives.

Tickets \$35  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

**27**  
**The Truth Will Set You Free: Tim Pockock in Conversation**



**1.00PM-2.00PM**  
**CUMMINGS ROOM, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL**

Actor and advocate **Tim Pockock**'s memoir *The Truth Will Set You Free* candidly explores themes of faith, identity, and living authentically. From growing up as a devout Catholic in the conservative Opus Dei community, to embracing his true identity as a gay man, Tim unpacks it all – and more – with **Kaya Wilson**.

**Tickets \$25**  
 Ticketed by Civic Theatre

**28**  
**A Vanishing World: Charlotte McConaghy in Conversation**



**1.00PM-2.00PM**  
**CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC, CONCERT HALL**

**Charlotte McConaghy**'s third novel, *Wild Dark Shore*, opens with a woman washing up on a remote island halfway between New Zealand and Antarctica. Who she is and why she's there is the mystery that propels the narrative.

In her first festival appearance, Charlotte speaks with **Courtney Collins** about writing grief and resilience into ecological fiction – and the human cost of a vanishing world.

**Tickets \$35**  
**Under 25 \$26.25**  
**Live stream \$15**

**29**  
**Secrets Between Friends: Kate Mildenhall and Holly Wainwright**



**1.00PM-2.00PM**  
**NUSPACE X321**

In their recent, gripping novels, **Kate Mildenhall** and **Holly Wainwright** establish secluded, seemingly idyllic worlds where tensions build and secrets emerge. The question transpires: how well do we really know our friends?

In conversation with **Nina Cullen**, Kate and Holly speak about betrayal, trust, and the pressures of parenthood.

**Tickets \$25**  
**Under 25 \$18.75**

**30**  
**My Father Bryce: Adam Courtenay in Conversation**



**1.00PM-2.00PM**  
**NUSPACE X320**

**Adam Courtenay** speaks to **Susan Wyndham** about his candid memoir *My Father Bryce*.

In this intimate conversation, Adam will explore memory, legacy, and the complexities of family, offering fresh insight into the man behind the bestselling books and the stories that shaped one of Australia's most iconic authors.

**Tickets \$25**  
**Under 25 \$18.75**

**31**  
**The Rot: Evelyn Araluen in Conversation**



**1.00PM-2.00PM**  
**NUSPACE X301**

Critic Alison Croggan has described award-winning poet **Evelyn Araluen**'s blazing new collection *The Rot* as 'an experiential plunge into the nightmare of the present moment'.

Exposing decayed hopes and injustices under late-stage capitalism, *The Rot* is alive with rage – and hope. Evelyn speaks to **Jazz Money**.

**FREE** - Bookings required

**32**  
**Date with a Debut**



**1.00PM-2.00PM**  
**NUSPACE X207**

Recording live for the 'Date with a Debut' podcast, meet three authors whose dream of being published was finally realised.

**Samuel Elliott, Alejandra Martinez** and **Emma Pei Yin** share the highs and lows of debut author life and spill secrets from behind the scenes.

Hosted by **Nick Wasiliev**.

**FREE** - Bookings required

**33**

**BOOK LAUNCH**  
**In Early Light** by  
**Kit Kelen**



1.30PM-2.30PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Join us for the launch of *In Early Light* by poet **Kit Kelen**. Kit will perform a reading from the book, followed by a conversation with **Magdalena Ball**, accompanied by a slideshow of artworks related to the book.

Launched by **Josh Stenberg**. Some of Kit's paintings will also be displayed.

FREE - Bookings required

**34**

**From Beauty to Beast: Reimagining the Gothic Fairytale**



1.00PM-2.00PM

NEWCASTLE LIBRARY  
GROUND FLOOR

Debut author **Lily Crozier** discusses *Vow of Eternal Night*, a gothic, slow-burn romantasy inspired by Beauty and the Beast.

Featuring a vampire prince, a captive bride and an impossible curse, this enemies-to-lovers tale explores power, desire and the many faces monsters wear.

Hosted by **CA Wright**.

FREE - Bookings required

**35**

**BOOK LAUNCH**  
**Wildling Road** by  
**Nikki Lee Taylor**



2.00PM-3.00PM

THE PRESS BOOK HOUSE

Join us for the launch of local writer **Nikki Lee Taylor**'s first installment in her new thriller series.

A blend of suspense, emotional depth, and strong female characters set against a uniquely Australian backdrop, at its heart is the powerful bond between a search and rescue officer and her working dog.

Hosted by **Carol Duncan**.

FREE - Bookings required

**36**

**BOOK LAUNCH**  
**Iconic Loved Unexpected**



2.00PM-3.00PM

NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY

A project 45-plus years in the making, Newcastle Art Gallery's limited-edition publication celebrates iconic works, audience favourites, and unexpected gems.

Inviting perspectives from interdisciplinary writers, *Iconic Loved Unexpected* provides a refreshed exploration of one of the nation's most significant collections. Hear from key contributors **Santilla Chingaipe**, **Jazz Money** and **Ana Tiquia**.

FREE - Bookings required

**37**

**Censorship and its Consequences**



2.30PM-3.30PM

CONCERT HALL,  
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

"In this age of censorship... I mourn the voices that will be silenced" – Judy Blume.

Against a backdrop of shifting laws, social media restrictions and legal and political pressure, **Josh Bornstein**, **AC Grayling**, and **Antoinette Lattouf** examine the impact of censorship – and what we stand to lose.

They consider whose stories disappear first, and how silence reshapes culture.

Hosted by **Peter Greste**.

Tickets \$35  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

**38**

**Murder, They Wrote: Candice Fox and JP Pomare**



2.30PM-3.30PM

CUMMINGS ROOM,  
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

Dive into the dark world of crime fiction with bestselling writers **Candice Fox** and **JP Pomare**, who are making their festival debut.

They'll discuss how they build tension, create unforgettable characters and why they are drawn to exploring the darker corners of human nature. Don't miss this peek behind the scenes.

Hosted by **Abby Millerd**.

Tickets \$25  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

**39**

**Seed: Bri Lee in Conversation**



2.30PM-3.30PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC, CONCERT HALL

In **Bri Lee's** compelling new novel, the award-winning author probes antinatalism, climate despair and what it means to love – and betray – in extremis.

Set in an Antarctic research facility, *Seed* also explores what happens when personal longing collides with a warming planet and shifting social expectations. Bri speaks with **Amy Lovat**.

Tickets \$35  
Under 25 \$26.25  
Live stream \$15

**40**

**Democracy, But Make it Downloadable**



2.30PM-3.30PM

NUSPACE X321

As podcasts replace newspapers and nightly bulletins, **Madison Griffiths, Clare Stephens, and Cam Wilson** examine how audio consumption is reshaping political understanding.

Who sets the agenda, how is trust built, and what happens to journalistic accountability when news arrives via earbuds on demand?

Hosted by **Kylie Morris**.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

**41**

**Writing Romance Across Genre**



2.30PM-3.30PM

NUSPACE X320

Romance refuses to sit quietly on the page. **Amie Kaufman, Natalie Murray, and Melanie Saward** bring energy, tension, and heart to their books, which encompass speculative worlds and historical settings to contemporary fiction.

Speaking with **Katharine Pollock**, they explore what love ignites in narrative and why emotional connection remains important to readers.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

**42**

**Masculinity and Mental Health**



2.30PM-3.30PM

NUSPACE X301

Join **Tyree Barnette, Brandon Jack** and **Andrew Pippos** for a thought-provoking conversation about their new books, which offer insight into the complexities of men's lives.

They'll talk to **Michael Williams** about masculinity and identity, and the impact of men speaking openly – or not – about what hurts.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

**43**

**Love, Loss and Writing: Debra Adelaide in Conversation**



2.30PM-3.30PM

NUSPACE X207

After meeting at school, writers **Debra Adelaide** and Gabrielle Carey became lifelong friends, sharing a passion for books and words, taking care of each other's children, receiving acclaim as authors, and enduring failure and disappointment. Debra reflects on Carey's final days and lays bare how friendships endure, and unravel, over decades.

Hosted by **Ashley Hay**.

FREE - Bookings required

**44**

**Lineage and Legacy**



3.00-4.15PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

**Eunice Andrada, Jennifer Compton, and Omar Musa** consider how poets reshape what they inherit. In a conversation exploring the creative tension between legacy and reinvention, they delve into the risks of breaking patterns and the rewards of crafting work that speaks across generations.

Hosted by **Katherine McLean**.

A collaboration with Hunter Writers' Centre. Includes a performance by Omar Musa and cellist Mariel Roberts.

FREE - Bookings required

**45**

**Drawn From Life: Sarah Firth and Lee Lai**



**2.30PM-3.30PM**  
**NEWCASTLE LIBRARY LEVEL 2, LOVETT GALLERY**

Celebrate the art and power of graphic novels with acclaimed cartoonists **Sarah Firth** and **Lee Lai**. They'll discuss transforming lived experience into striking visual narratives, the humour and honesty of personal storytelling, and how imagery creates space for connection as we navigate the everyday moments that shape our lives.

Hosted by **Bastian Fox Phelan**.

**FREE** - Bookings required

**46**

**The Library That Made Me**



**2.30PM-3.30PM**  
**NEWCASTLE LIBRARY GROUND FLOOR**

This year marks the 200th anniversary of the State Library of NSW and to celebrate, a line-up of contributors to a new book commemorating the milestone reflect on the libraries that shaped them as readers and writers.

With **Gail Jones, Yumna Kassab, Sarah Krasnostein,** and **Corey Tutt**.

Hosted by **Phillipa McGuinness**.

**FREE** - Bookings required

**47**

**Celebrating 30 Years of The Cook's Companion**



**4.00PM-5.00PM**  
**CONCERT HALL, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL**

*The Cook's Companion* is a staple in many kitchens across the country: a beloved recipe book that has taught generations how to cook and transformed the weeknight menus of everyday Australians since it was first released in 1996. Join national treasure **Stephanie Alexander** as she reflects on its lasting impact.

Hosted by **Heather Rose**.

**Tickets \$35**  
 Ticketed by Civic Theatre

**48**

**An Unfree World: Randa Abdel-Fattah, Evelyn Araluen and Cheng Lei**



**4.00PM-5.00PM**  
**CUMMINGS ROOM, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL**

From the rise of autocracy and resurgent racism to widening inequality and the tightening grip of censorship, there are pressures shaping an increasingly unfree world. **Randa Abdel-Fattah, Evelyn Araluen** and **Cheng Lei** explore how these forces play out in daily life – and how we can reimagine the future.

Hosted by **Josh Bornstein**.

**Tickets \$30**  
 Ticketed by Civic Theatre

**49**

**Conspiracy Nation: Ariel Bogle and Cam Wilson in Conversation**



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

Through extensive investigations and interviews, journalists **Ariel Bogle** and **Cam Wilson** take us into the homes, secret chat rooms and luxury Byron Bay retreats where conspiracy theories spread.

They speak with **Maddison Connaughton** about the unsettling way these movements take hold and what they reveal about trust and power in contemporary Australia.

**Tickets \$25**  
**Under 25 \$18.75**

**50**

**Resilience and Vulnerability: Liz Cameron, Sonia Orchard, and Kate Reid**



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

Through memoir, **Liz Cameron, Sonia Orchard** and **Kate Reid** share deeply personal narratives that explore the complexities of human strength and fragility. From trauma and justice, to reinvention and recovery, the authors speak with **Courtney Collins** about resilience in the face of adversity.

**Tickets \$25**  
**Under 25 \$18.75**

51

## The Way We Write



4.00PM-5.00PM

NUSPACE X301

**Lee Lai, Carol Lefevre,** and **Lucy Nelson** speak to **Jackie Dent** about how they shape stories for the page. From voice and structure to form, process, and revision, they reflect on the decisions behind their work, revealing how technique, experimentation, and discipline transform ideas into books.

FREE - Bookings required

52

## The Vanishing Reader



4.00PM-5.00PM

NUSPACE X207

Amid stark global shifts in reading habits – from international data showing declining reading for pleasure to concerns about children’s shrinking attention and literacy – **Danielle Binks, Sally Rippin** and **Corey Tutt** discuss why reading matters. They explore what the trends tell us about culture and education, and how we might respond.

Hosted by **Corrie Perkin**.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

53

## BOOK LAUNCH A Glimpse by Debbie Robson



4.30PM-5.30PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Join us for the launch of *A Glimpse* by local writer **Debbie Robson**. Debbie will speak with host and fellow poet **Jean Kent** about how she chose just 20 poems from 30 years of writing poetry – all of which form a coherent whole to show a glimpse into life as an artist and mother.

FREE - Bookings required

54

## The Best Bar None: Michael & Zara Madrusan in Conversation



4.30 FOR A 5.00PM START

BARTHOLOMEW'S  
145 KING ST, NEWCASTLE

Newcastle-born **Michael Madrusan** is one of the world’s foremost authorities on classic and forgotten cocktails. He returns to his hometown with wife and co-author **Zara** to discuss *The Madrusan Cocktail Companion*, regarded as the most ambitious drinks guide ever published. In conversation with **Ben Groundwater**, they’ll explore cocktail culture’s colourful history and share expert tips for mastering the perfect drink at home.

Your ticket price includes a cocktail curated by Michael Madrusan on arrival. Non-alcoholic option available.

Tickets \$40

55

## The Hidden: Bryan Brown in Conversation



6.00PM-7.00PM

CONCERT HALL,  
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

**Bryan Brown** returns to the festival to speak about his recent novel *The Hidden* and the stories that fuel his writing. With his trademark wit and grit, Bryan will chat to **Dan Cox** about how he shapes unforgettable characters and channels a lifetime of screen storytelling into fiction that’s as sharp, surprising, and compelling as he is.

Tickets \$35  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

56

## Guardian Australia’s Are You Game Show



6.00PM-7.00PM

CUMMINGS ROOM,  
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

Quick thinking and close reading take centre stage in this lively battle of literary wits. Play along with The Guardian Australia’s signature game show as two teams of writers battle it out for the ultimate prize: bragging rights.

With **Robbie Arnott, Brigid Delaney, Thomas Mayo** and **Toby Schmitz**. Hosted by culture editor **Steph Harmon** with team captains from The Guardian Australia.

Tickets \$30  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

**57**

**Words & Music**



**5.30PM-7.00PM**  
**CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC, CONCERT HALL**

Drawing on the work of influential writers, including those appearing at this year's festival, an eclectic lineup of songwriters and musicians will transform words from the page to the stage. Featuring **Jamie Hay, Kingsley James, Symphony Rain, Regikay, Miller Roberts, Liz Stringer, The Duke of Erlington, Grace Turner**, and **Urthboy**.

Curated and hosted by **Nick Milligan**.

Supported by



**Tickets \$35**  
**Under 25 \$26.25**

**58**

**Newcastle Poetry Prize Presentation**



**5.30PM-7.00PM**  
**NUSPACE X321**

Join Hunter Writers' Centre for the announcement of the Newcastle Poetry Prize, one of Australia's most esteemed poetry awards, presented with Principal Partner the University of Newcastle. Celebrate the winning poets and the launch of the new anthology, which showcases remarkable contemporary work from poets across the country.

**FREE** - Bookings required

**59**

**Arborescence: Rhett Davis in Conversation**



**5.30PM-6.30PM**  
**NUSPACE X320**

**Rhett Davis's** original and tender novel *Arborescence* is speculative fiction at its best. It centres on people who begin transforming into trees. Is it a cult? Performance art? Or something else entirely? He speaks to **Kate Mildenhall** about the themes that drive his compelling narrative – love, grief and belonging – and why imagining radical futures can help us understand the present.

**Tickets \$25**  
**Under 25 \$18.75**

**60**

**Writing Queer Lit**



**5.30PM-6.30PM**  
**NUSPACE X301**

Join **Madeleine Gray, Alli Parker** and **Zoe Terakes** for a powerful, candid conversation about what it means to write – and live – queer stories today. **Kaya Wilson** will speak with the authors about identity, love, resistance, and representation in their most recent works of fiction.

**Tickets \$25**  
**Under 25 \$18.75**

**61**

**AI and the Writer**



**5.30PM-6.30PM**  
**NUSPACE X207**

What does the future of the arts look like in an AI-driven world? **Cadance Bell, Danielle Binks**, and **John Fischetti** delve into the big questions facing writers right now – from threats to intellectual property to the far-reaching implications of the recent Productivity Commission report. Expect a lively discussion about creativity, ethics, and what's worth fighting for.

Hosted by **Amy Sambrooke**.

**FREE** - Bookings required

**62**

**An Evening with Peter FitzSimons: The Courageous Life of Weary Dunlop**



**6.30PM-7.30PM**  
**CESSNOCK PACC**

Join 'Australia's favourite storyteller', **Peter FitzSimons** for a special evening as he brings to life the gripping true story of Australian surgeon and POW Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop.

Fitzy will share how Dunlop inspired fellow soldiers in the face of unimaginable hardship and forged a legacy that continues to inspire.

Hosted by **Paul Bevan**.

Supported by



**Tickets \$30**  
 Ticketed by PACC Cessnock

# SATURDAY 28 MARCH

63

## Poetry Slam: Speak Your Truth



6.30PM-8.30PM

THE PRESS BOOK HOUSE

Newcastle poet **Lamisa Siddique** invites emerging spoken word artists to participate in the festival's inaugural competition and present original work inspired by the theme 'speak your truth'. Expect fearless words and bold performances.

Prize money to be won.

FREE - Bookings required

64

## The Mushroom Tapes: Conversations about a Triple Murder Trial



7.30PM-8.30PM

CONCERT HALL, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

Three of Australia's most acclaimed nonfiction writers – **Helen Garner, Chloe Hooper** and **Sarah Krasnostein** – discuss the Erin Patterson case and our collective obsession with her strange and terrible crime.

When Patterson stood trial, accused of three counts of murder and one count of attempted murder, the court case gripped the nation and fascinated people all over the world.

Together, the writers joined the daily media scrum at the Latrobe Valley Law Courts and spent long days immersed in the case's sinister and complex themes: love, hate, jealousy, revenge, marriage, money, mycology and murder.

The Mushroom Tapes is a true-crime book like no other—an unputdownable record of the writers' private conversations about their impressions from inside the courtroom. Speaking to Michael Williams, the three writers explore the gap between the certainties of the law and the messiness of reality, their own ambivalence about the true crime genre, and all that remains unknowable about Erin Patterson.

Tickets \$35  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre



# SUNDAY 29 MARCH

Ticketed by Civic Theatre

## 65 Real Pigeons Live Mystery

9.30AM-10.15AM // CONCERT HALL, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL // ADULTS \$15; KIDS \$10

Your favourite pigeon crime-busters have found themselves in the middle of a brand-new live mystery and they need YOUR help to solve it! Author Andrew McDonald and illustrator Ben Wood are bringing the Real Pigeons to life with a fresh, exciting pigeon mystery packed with live drawings, sound effects, and all your fearless feathered friends. Don't forget to come dressed in your best pigeon crime-fighting gear, as you never know when you might be called upon to assist the Real Pigeons – and you could even win a prize. Recommended for ages 4+.

## 66 Poetry and Picture Books with Maxine Beneba Clarke

9.30AM-10.00AM // CUMMINGS ROOM, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL // FREE

Lyrical language, passionate paragraphs and tongue-twisting tales take centre stage in this session with acclaimed writer Maxine Beneba Clarke. Through poetry and picture books, Maxine celebrates the music of words, playful storytelling and big ideas for young minds. Recommended for ages 4+.

## 67 Caution! This Event Contains Deadly Reptiles

10.45AM-11.30AM // CONCERT HALL, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL // ADULTS \$15; KIDS \$10

Are you ready to meet some deadly (in a good way!) reptiles? Corey Tutt takes the stage for an exhilarating journey into the world of Australia's scaly critters. Packed with mind-blowing science and rich First Nations knowledge, this adventure into the world of reptiles will share fascinating insights into Australia's most scaly creatures. Recommended for ages 4+.

## 68 Family Fun: Sally Rippin

10.15AM-10.45AM // CUMMINGS ROOM, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL // FREE

Join bestselling children's author Sally Rippin for a joyful family session packed with stories, characters, and creativity. Sally will share behind-the-scenes insights, read from her books, and inspire young readers and writers through fun, interactive activities. Recommended for ages 5 to 10.

## 69 LET'S GO! with Andy Griffiths and Bill Hope

12.00PM-1.00PM // CONCERT HALL, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL // ADULTS \$15; KIDS \$10

Get ready for laughs, leaps of imagination and lots of live drawing as author Andy Griffiths and illustrator Bill Hope take young and old on an interactive romp through their YOU & ME series and their brand-new book, LET'S GO! A perfect afternoon for those who love stories with humour, adventure and just the right amount of chaos. Come and be creative and funny together! Recommended for ages 6 to 12.

## 70 What Characters Teach Us About Courage with Jess Black

11.15AM-11.45AM // CUMMINGS ROOM, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL // FREE

Newcastle children's book author Jess Black shares inside stories about the impossible messes she cooks up for her characters, the chaos they drag her through, and why getting stuck is when all the fun begins.

Supported by



71

## Ghost Cities: Siang Lu in Conversation



10.00AM-11.00AM

HUNTER ROOM,  
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

**Siang Lu's** Miles Franklin Award-winning novel *Ghost Cities* is a genre-bending masterpiece of literary hilarity that offers a bold reimagining of Sino-Australian storytelling. In his much-anticipated first appearance at Newcastle Writers Festival, he speaks with **Courtney Collins** about progress, isolation and illusion in the digital age.

**Tickets \$30**  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

72

## Always Home, Always Homesick: Hannah Kent in Conversation



10.00AM-11.00AM

CONSERVATORIUM OF  
MUSIC, CONCERT HALL

'My bones have knitted with this place,' writes **Hannah Kent** in her memoir *Always Home, Always Homesick, a love letter to Iceland*.

In this conversation with **Amy Sambrooke**, Hannah reflects on the transformative power of the country she first experienced as a high school exchange student and how it shaped her creative life.

**Tickets \$35**  
**Under 25 \$26.25**  
**Live stream \$15**

73

## Brilliant, Bonkers and Bloody: Toby Schmitz in Conversation



10.00AM-11.00AM

NUSPACE X321

Set in 1925 aboard an iconic cruise ship, actor **Toby Schmitz's** debut *The Empress Murders* is a lively jazz-age mystery that subverts expectations of a cozy crime novel.

In conversation with **Dan Cox**, Toby sheds light on the ideas behind the book, which is partly narrated by the cruise ship, and the lasting inspiration of the 20th century.

**FREE** - Bookings required

74

## The Books That Saved Me



10.00AM-11.00AM

NUSPACE X320

**Bryan Brown, Cheng Lei,** and **S. Shakthidharan** discuss the books that shaped their imaginations, shifted their thinking and stayed with them through life's turning points. They reflect on the stories that sparked their creativity, challenged their assumptions and opened new worlds, revealing how books continue to guide them.

Hosted by **Ashley Hay**.

**Tickets \$25**  
**Under 25 \$18.75**

75

## Pushing the Boundaries



10.00AM-11.00AM

NUSPACE X301

**Cadance Bell, Yumna Kassab,** and **Nick Milligan** write genre-blending books that refuse neat labels.

From hybrid fiction to experimental form, they speak to **Nina Cullen** about why crossing boundaries matters now, how risk drives storytelling, and what readers gain when literature slips free of expectation.

**FREE** - Bookings required

76

## The Power of Story: Gail Jones in Conversation



10.00AM-11.00AM

NUSPACE X207

**Gail Jones** is renowned for fiction of rare elegance and intellectual depth.

In this wide-ranging conversation with **Michael Williams**, one of Australia's most acclaimed writers discusses her latest novel, *In the Name of the Sister*, and explores how storytelling shapes memory, identity and the way we attend to the past.

**Tickets \$25**  
**Under 25 \$18.75**

**77**

**BOOK LAUNCH**  
Driving For by  
Phillip Aughey



10.00AM-11.00AM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Join us for the launch of local writer **Phillip Aughey's** latest novel *Driving For*.

Phillip will speak with **John Barnes** about the influences on his novels: what inspired them, the throughlines, the acquisition of material and writing techniques involved.

FREE - Bookings required

**78**

**Studio Weekends**  
with Jazz Money



10.00AM-12.00PM

NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY

**Jazz Money** is the special guest at this free inclusive and accessible art-making session for families. Jazz will read from her debut children's book *The Frog's First Song*.

No bookings needed, just drop in and get creative!

FREE - No bookings required

**79**

**The Seeker**  
and the Sage:  
Brigid Delaney  
in Conversation



11.30AM-12.30PM

HUNTER ROOM,  
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

Building on her bestseller *Reasons Not to Worry*, **Brigid Delaney's** unique new novel *The Seeker and the Sage* explores how Stoic wisdom can shape communities and help us build a better world.

Join Brigid as she reflects on the ways in which ancient ideas speak to modern restlessness.

Hosted by **Steph Harmon**.

Tickets \$25  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

**80**

**Worlds of Wonder:**  
Amie Kaufman  
in Conversation



12.00PM-1.00PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF  
MUSIC, CONCERT HALL

International bestselling author **Amie Kaufman** makes her first appearance at the festival and we couldn't be more excited.

Amie speaks to **Erin Pascall** about the thrilling worlds of her imagination and her new novel *Red Star Rebels*. Discover how she crafts high-stakes adventure, unforgettable characters, and heart-pounding plots.

Tickets \$35  
Under 25 \$26.25  
Live stream \$15

**81**

**The Lost Women**  
of Australian  
Literature



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X321

Join **Jacqueline Kent** and **Susan Wyndham** as they celebrate remarkable Australian women writers whose political convictions and literary ambitions challenged the status quo.

In conversation with **Magdalena Ball**, they uncover the stories, struggles, and lasting impact of these often overlooked literary trailblazers.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

**82**

**Choice and Circumstance:**  
Bri Lee and  
Lucy Nelson



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X320

For the women in **Lucy Nelson's** debut book *Wait Here*, childlessness is a joy, a conundrum, a wound.

The male protagonist in **Bri Lee's** novel *Seed* grapples with the ethical dilemma of parenthood amid the climate emergency. Lucy and Bri speak to **Maddison Connaughton** about the ways fiction creates space for the most intimate questions about the futures we imagine.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

**83**

**TikTok: Helping or Harming the Book Industry?**



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X301

From BookTok bestsellers to algorithm-driven hype, TikTok has reshaped how books are discovered, marketed, and read. But is it democratising literature or narrowing taste?

**Danielle Binks, Lily Crozier, and Melanie Saward** unpack the platform's pitfalls and possibilities.

Hosted by **Clare Stephens**.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

**84**

**The Thrill of It: Samuel Elliott, Zeynab Gamieldien, and Kate Mildenhall**



11.30AM-12.30PM

NUSPACE X207

What's the difference between crime and thriller, mystery and suspense?

**Samuel Elliott, Zeynab Gamieldien** and **Kate Mildenhall** unite for a gripping discussion about the art of psychological tension and crafting books that keep readers hooked.

Hosted by **Zohra Aly**.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

**85**

**BOOK LAUNCH Songs of the Thorn Birds by Beth Elliott**



11.30AM-12.30PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Join us for the launch of local poet **Beth Elliott's** latest collection, *Songs of the Thorn Birds*. Beth takes us from the deeply personal to the global, each poem holding a mirror to the world.

Beth will discuss the themes of the work, her love of nature and the reaffirmation of life itself with host **Bonnie Anne**.

FREE - Bookings required

**86**

**Our Fathers: Adam Courtenay, Mandy Sayer, and S. Shakthidharan**



1.00PM-2.00PM

HUNTER ROOM, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

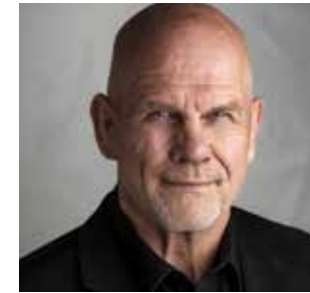
With emotional precision, **Adam Courtenay, Mandy Sayer,** and **S Shakthidharan** have written evocative accounts of their fathers, all of whom left complicated legacies.

They speak to **Magdalena Ball** about absence, responsibility, and the careful choices involved in turning a complicated parental relationship into literature.

Tickets \$25  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

**87**

**The Courageous Life of Weary Dunlop: Peter FitzSimons in Conversation**



1.30PM-2.30PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC, CONCERT HALL

In his latest biography, **Peter FitzSimons** brings to life the gripping true story of Australian surgeon and POW Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop.

Fitzzy will share how Dunlop inspired fellow soldiers in the face of unimaginable hardship and forged a legacy that continues to inspire.

Hosted by **Corrie Perkin**.

Tickets \$35  
Under 25 \$26.25  
Live stream \$15

**88**

**Survival and Control in Closed Communities**



1.00PM-2.00PM

NUSPACE X321

What does it take to survive a closed community from the inside? Drawing on personal experience, **Liz Cameron, Tim Pocock,** and **Martina Zangger** speak candidly about the mechanisms of control and abuse of power at the core of tightly controlled groups, and the difficult, often costly journey toward reclaiming autonomy.

Hosted by **Jackie Dent**.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

89

## From the Margins to the Mainstream



1.00PM-2.00PM

NUSPACE X320

After a long and difficult path, diverse voices and characters are finding their place in Australian literature.

**Natalia Figueroa Barroso**, **Zeynab Gamielien**, and **Alejandra Martinez** speak with **Zohra Aly** about the complexities and limitations of authenticity and representation in their recent novels.

FREE - Bookings required

90

## The Art of Loving: Joseph Earp, Madeleine Gray & Andrew Pippos



1.00PM-2.00PM

NUSPACE X301

**Joseph Earp**, **Madeleine Gray** and **Andrew Pippos** explore how love shapes art and the stories we tell. From yearning and heartbreak to devotion and repair, they delve into the emotional landscapes that inform their work and how writing can illuminate love's tender, messy and often surprising realities.

Hosted by **Amy Sambrooke**.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

91

## Poetry and Publics



1.00PM-2.00PM

NUSPACE X207

How does poetry speak to, for and with its publics? The role of the poet has always been entangled with community, politics and platforms and this conversation will trace the many ways poetry circulates, connects, and unsettles. With **Evelyn Araluen**, **Maxine Beneba Clarke**, and **David Stavanger**.

Hosted by **Keri Glastonbury**.

Tickets \$20  
Under 25 \$15

92

## BOOK LAUNCH Fig: Narratives of the Hunter by Dael Allison



1.00PM-2.00PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Join us for the launch of local writer **Dael Allison's** Newcastle-based fiction cycle, *Fig*. For her PhD in creative writing, Dael researched how writers have responded narratively to Muloobinba, or Newcastle, and its region from pre-colonial time to the present.

Dael will read excerpts from *Fig*, and **Joanna Atherfold Finn** will host a discussion.

FREE - Bookings required

93

## BOOK LAUNCH Rocking the Boat by Ruth Boydell



1.30PM-2.30PM

THE PRESS BOOK HOUSE

Join us for the launch of local writer **Ruth Boydell's** memoir *Rocking the Boat*.

Ruth will be in conversation with **Katherine McLean** about her adventurous life on the sea and navigating the challenges of second-wave feminism.

FREE - Bookings required

94

## Bring Back Yesterday: Bob Carr in Conversation



2.00PM-3.00PM

CONCERT HALL,  
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

Helena Carr stood beside **Bob Carr** for 50 years – described as his 'CEO, CFO, chief strategist and financial planner'. Her sudden death in 2023 shattered his world.

The former NSW premier speaks to **Jane Caro** about his candid new memoir and the fragile, hard-won process of finding solace amid crushing grief.

Tickets \$35  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

95

## Friendship and a Fight for Justice: Kathleen Folbigg



3.30PM-4.30PM

CONCERT HALL,  
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

When **Kathleen Folbigg** and co-author Tracy Chapman met at Kotara Public School, they didn't know how vital their connection would become. Kathleen speaks to **Kylie Morris** about the long and arduous challenge to overturn Kathleen's conviction for murdering her four children, the failures of the legal system, and the power of love.

Tickets \$30  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

96

## Philosopher's Cafe with Russell Blackford and AC Grayling



2.30PM-3.45PM

CUMMINGS ROOM,  
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

Join philosophers **Russell Blackford** and **AC Grayling** 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 and Anthony providing input from philosophers past and present.

Come along with an open mind and willingness to listen.

Tickets \$35  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

97

## Care and Feeding: Laurie Woolever in Conversation



2.30PM-3.30PM

HUNTER ROOM,  
NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

'This is my story of being a (relatively) high-functioning addict in a world of irresistible temptations,' writes **Laurie Woolever** in her bestselling memoir *Care and Feeding*. The New York cook, food writer, and personal assistant to the late chef Anthony Bourdain joins festival director **Rosemarie Milsom** for a candid conversation about finding her own voice.

Tickets \$30  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

98

## We Used to Be Journos: Live Podcast Recording



3.30PM-4.30PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF  
MUSIC, CONCERT HALL

Join **Jan Fran** and **Antoinette Lattouf** for a live recording of their popular weekly podcast in which the media insiders (and even longer-suffering friends) break down broken news.

Sharp, funny, and fearless, they'll unpack sketchy editorial decisions, suspect sources and thinly veiled bigotry to show you how the media sausage is made – and how to avoid indigestion.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

99

## Writing Fiction From Life



2.30PM-3.30PM

NUSPACE X321

Recent novels by **Susan Francis**, **Toni Jordan**, and **Paula McLean** have drawn on lived experience to create compelling fiction.

From memory and research to imagination and craft, they'll speak to **Maeve Marsden** about transforming real lives into resonant stories – balancing truth and invention, ethics and emotion – on the page.

FREE - Bookings required

100

## Speaking Truth to Power: Madison Griffiths & Sonia Orchard



2.30PM-3.30PM

NUSPACE X320

Join **Madison Griffiths** and **Sonia Orchard** for a fearless conversation about power, control, and the urgent act of reclaiming your voice.

Drawing on memoir, research, social commentary, and storytelling, they examine the realities of gendered power and explore the silences that shape – and too often constrain – women's lives.

Hosted by **Magdalena Ball**.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

101

**Ways of Knowing:  
JM Field and  
Jazz Money**



2.30PM-3.30PM

NUSPACE X301

Through their writing, which includes many forms, **JM Field** and **Jazz Money** illuminate First Nations ways of knowing. Their work honours the deep relationship between community and Country, drawing us into stories where identity, memory, and knowledge are intricately entwined.

Hosted by **Monica McKenzie**.

FREE - Bookings required

102

**A Queer  
Reimagining:  
Zoe Terakes in  
Conversation**



2.30PM-3.30PM

NUSPACE X207

In their debut literary work, actor and writer **Zoe Terakes** reimagines five ancient Greek myths through a queer and trans perspective, inspired by their own Cretan heritage. In conversation with **Kaya Wilson**, Zoe speaks about blending myth and modernity to uncover intimacy, rage, and queer longing in the stories we know so well.

Tickets \$20  
Under 25 \$15

103

**The Travelling  
Soul: Chinese  
Poetry in  
Australia**



2.30PM-3.30PM

WATT SPACE GALLERY

Join editors and translators **Lap Lam** and **Josh Stenberg** for a conversation about Chinese poetry in Australia, celebrating the launch of a landmark anthology that brings to light the overlooked tradition of Chinese-language poetry written by migrants in the early 20th century.

FREE - Bookings required

104

**Poetry Salon  
@ The Press**



3.00PM-4.15PM

THE PRESS BOOK HOUSE

Join us for an afternoon of poetry performance, featuring festival guests **Eunice Andrada**, **Maxine Beneba Clarke**, **Jennifer Compton**, **Keri Glastonbury**, **Omar Musa**, **Lamisa Siddique**, the 2026 Newcastle Poetry Prize winner, and **David Stavanger** (who will also host).

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$18.75

105

**BOOK LAUNCH Meet the Mob**



4.00PM-5.00PM

HUNTER ROOM, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

*Meet the Mob* brings together stories first shared in conversation with the beloved late broadcaster Jill Emberson on the ABC Newcastle program of the same name. Recorded more than a decade ago, these stories of humour, struggle, pride, and ambition capture a moment in time in the lives of First Nations people whose work, creativity and leadership have shaped the Hunter.

Presented by Hunter Writers' Centre.

FREE - Bookings required  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

106

## Hearing Art, Seeing Music



4.00PM-5.00PM

NUSPACE X321

What does it mean when we say that Palestrina and Raphael belong to the Renaissance, or that Bach and Caravaggio represent the Baroque? Can we hear Debussy's music in the art of Monet? In this special presentation, **David Banney** explores the links between art and music.

FREE - Bookings required

107

## Rich Kid, Poor Kid: The Battle For Public Education



4.00PM-5.00PM

NUSPACE X320

How did Australia end up with one of the most segregated education systems in the OECD? How did we become a global leader in generational inequality? What does it mean for us now and in the future? **Jane Caro** grapples with these questions and provides some startling answers.

Hosted by **John Fischetti**.

FREE - Bookings required

108

## Revelation Beach: Susan Francis in Conversation



4.00PM-5.00PM

NUSPACE X301

Newcastle writer **Susan Francis'** gripping new novel *Revelation Beach* delves into the legacy of the Balibo Five and a decades-old conspiracy surrounding Indonesia's invasion of East Timor. Susan speaks with **Abby Millerd** about the personal experiences that inspired the book, and the enduring impact of historical events.

FREE - Bookings required

109

## Breaking Out: Student Readings



4.00PM-5.00PM

NUSPACE X207

Science fiction and fantasy are increasingly popular genres, and the University of Newcastle is producing the next generation of awesome speculative writers. Come for the robots, stay for the dazzling visions of imagined pasts and speculative futures. **Teia Bradbury, Isabelle Ward, Isabel Warby,** and **Lorena Dionigi** will read their work.

Hosted by **Michael Sala**.

FREE - Bookings required

110

## If You're Listening: Declassified



5.00PM-6.00PM

CONCERT HALL, NEWCASTLE CITY HALL

Each week, **Matt Bevan** and his team at the ABC's top-rating news analysis show *If You're Listening* find incredible stories that they can't squeeze into the news cycle. Now, they're returning to the Newcastle Writers Festival to finally air those stories in an exclusive live show, which will be recorded for the podcast.

Tickets \$15  
Ticketed by Civic Theatre

111

## A Great Act of Love: Heather Rose in Conversation



5.00PM-6.00PM

CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC, CONCERT HALL

**Heather Rose** never thought she would write about her ancestor's violent crime, but as with all her novels the author wanted to stretch her literary limits. *A Great Act of Love* is the result: an artfully woven historical tapestry, drawing on true stories spanning Tasmania, London and Norfolk Island. Heather speaks with **Jacinta Parsons**.

Tickets \$25  
Under 25 \$15  
Life stream \$15

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**ANDREW MCDONALD**



**ABBY MILLERD**



**ALEJANDRA MARTINEZ**



**ANDY GRIFFITHS**



**THOMAS MAYO**

Full speaker bios are available on our website at [newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](http://newcastlewritersfestival.org.au)

# SATURDAY FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

Pull Out Schedule

CONCERT HALL CITY HALL	CUMMINGS ROOM CITY HALL	CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC	NUSPACE X321	NUSPACE X320	NUSPACE X301	NUSPACE X207	OTHER VENUES	OTHER VENUES	OTHER VENUES
10.00AM-11.00AM Bold Women: Natasha Lester and Tara Moss in Conversation	10.00AM-11.00AM Hawke PM: The Making of a Legend	10.00AM-11.00AM This Writing Life	10.00AM-11.00AM Dusk: Robbie Arnott in Conversation	10.00AM-11.00AM Slippery Truths: Gail Jones and Toni Jordan	10.00AM-11.00AM Surviving the Surviving: Jane Messer in Conversation	10.00AM-11.00AM The Question of Identity: Alli Parker and Emma Pei Yin	10.00AM-12.00PM NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY Studio Weekends with Jazz Money		
11.30AM-12.30PM Defending Democracy: A Lecture by AC Grayling	11.30AM-12.30PM Discipline: Randa Abdel-Fattah in Conversation	11.30AM-12.30PM Talking Footy: Brandon Jack and Helen Garner	11.30AM-12.30PM On Stolen Land: Tyree Barnette and Thomas Mayo	11.30AM-12.30PM This Modern Life: Siang Lu, Katharine Pollock, Clare Stephens	11.30AM-12.30PM BOOK LAUNCH Living with Illness and Disability	11.30AM-12.30PM The Art of Growing Older	11.30AM-12.30PM WATT SPACE GALLERY BOOK LAUNCH Flying Islands Poetry	1.00PM-2.00PM NEWCASTLE LIBRARY, GF From Beauty to Beast	1.30PM-2.30PM WATT SPACE GALLERY BOOK LAUNCH In Early Light by Kit Kelen
1.00PM-2.00PM Truth, Food and Memory: Kate Reid and Laurie Woolever	1.00PM-2.00PM The Truth Will Set You Free: Tim Pockock in Conversation	1.00PM-2.00PM A Vanishing World: Charlotte McConaghy in Conversation	1.00PM-2.00PM Secrets Between Friends: Kate Mildenhall and Holly Wainwright	1.00PM-2.00PM My Father Bryce: Adam Courtenay in Conversation	1.00PM-2.00PM The Rot: Evelyn Araluen in Conversation	1.00PM-2.00PM Date with a Debut		2.00PM-3.00PM NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY BOOK LAUNCH Iconic Loved Unexpected	2.00PM-3.00PM THE PRESS BOOKHOUSE BOOK LAUNCH Wildling Road by Nikki Lee Taylor
2.30PM-3.30PM Censorship and its Consequences	2.30PM-3.30PM Murder, They Wrote	2.30PM-3.30PM Seed: Bri Lee in Conversation	2.30PM-3.30PM Democracy, But Make it Downloadable	2.30PM-3.30PM Writing Romance Across Genre	2.30PM-3.30PM Masculinity and Mental Health	2.30PM-3.30PM Love, Loss and Writing	3.00PM-4.15PM WATT SPACE GALLERY Lineage and Legacy	2.30PM-3.30PM NEWCASTLE LIBRARY, LVL 2 Drawn From Life	2.30PM-3.30PM NEWCASTLE LIBRARY, GF The Library That Made Me
4.00PM-5.00PM Celebrating 30 Years of The Cook's Companion	4.00PM-5.00PM An Unfree World: Randa Abdel-Fattah, Evelyn Araluen, and Cheng Lei		4.00PM-5.00PM Conspiracy Nation: Ariel Bogle and Cam Wilson in Conversation	4.00PM-5.00PM Resilience and Vulnerability	4.00PM-5.00PM The Way We Write	4.00PM-5.00PM The Vanishing Reader	4.30PM-5.30PM WATT SPACE GALLERY BOOK LAUNCH A Glimpse by Debbie Robson	4.30PM FOR 5.00PM BARTHOLOMEW'S The Best Bar None: Michael and Zara Madrusan	
6.00PM-7.00PM The Hidden: Bryan Brown in Conversation	6.00PM-7.00PM Guardian Australia's Are You Game Show	5.30PM-7.00PM Words & Music. Curated by Nick Milligan	5.30PM-7.00PM Newcastle Poetry Prize Presentation	5.30PM-6.30PM Arborescence: Rhett Davis in Conversation	5.30PM-6.30PM Writing Queer Lit	5.30PM-6.30PM AI and the Writer	6.30PM-7.30PM CESSNOCK PACC An Evening with Peter FitzSimons	6.30PM-8.30PM THE PRESS BOOKHOUSE Poetry Slam: Speak Your Truth	
7.30PM-8.30PM The Mushroom Tapes: Conversations about a Triple Murder Trial									

# SUNDAY FESTIVAL SCHEDULE

## Pull Out Schedule

CONCERT HALL CITY HALL	CUMMINGS ROOM CITY HALL	HUNTER ROOM CITY HALL	CONSERVATORIUM OF MUSIC	NUSPACE X321	NUSPACE X320	NUSPACE X301	NUSPACE X207	OTHER VENUES	OTHER VENUES
9.30AM-1.00PM <b>FAMILY FUN DAY</b>	9.30AM-11.45AM <b>FAMILY FUN DAY</b>	10.00AM-11.00AM Ghost Cities: Siang Lu in Conversation	10.00AM-11.00AM Always Home, Always Homesick: Hannah Kent in Conversation	10.00AM-11.00AM Brilliant, Bonkers and Bloody: Toby Schmitz in Conversation	10.00AM-11.00AM The Books That Saved Me	10.00AM-11.00AM Pushing the Boundaries	10.00AM-11.00AM The Power of Story: Gail Jones in Conversation	10.00AM-11.00AM <b>WATT SPACE GALLERY</b> BOOK LAUNCH Driving For by Phillip Aughey	10.00AM-12.00PM <b>NEWCASTLE ART GALLERY</b> Studio Weekends with Jazz Money
9.30AM-1.00PM <b>FAMILY FUN DAY</b>	9.30AM-11.45AM <b>FAMILY FUN DAY</b>	11.30AM-12.30PM The Seeker and the Sage: Brigid Delaney in Conversation	12.00PM-1.00PM Worlds of Wonder: Amie Kaufman in Conversation	11.30AM-12.30PM The Lost Women of Australian Literature	11.30AM-12.30PM Choice and Circumstance: Bri Lee and Lucy Nelson	11.30AM-12.30PM TikTok: Helping or Harming the Book Industry?	11.30AM-12.30PM The Thrill of It: Samuel Elliott, Zeynab Gamielien, Kate Mildenhall	11.30AM-12.30PM <b>WATT SPACE GALLERY</b> BOOK LAUNCH Songs of the Thorn Birds by Beth Elliott	
		1.00PM-2.00PM Our Fathers: Adam Courtenay, Mandy Sayer, and S. Shakthidharan	1.30PM-2.30PM The Courageous Life of Weary Dunlop: Peter FitzSimons in Conversation	1.00PM-2.00PM Survival and Control in Closed Communities	1.00PM-2.00PM From the Margins to the Mainstream	1.00PM-2.00PM The Art of Loving: Joseph Earp, Madeleine Gray, Andrew Pippas	1.00PM-2.00PM Poetry and Publics	1.00PM-2.00PM <b>WATT SPACE GALLERY</b> BOOK LAUNCH Fig: Narratives of the Hunter by Dael Allison	1.30PM-2.30PM <b>THE PRESS BOOKHOUSE</b> BOOK LAUNCH Rocking the Boat by Ruth Boydell
2.00PM-3.00PM Bring Back Yesterday: Bob Carr in Conversation	2.30PM-3.45PM Philosopher's Cafe with Russell Blackford and AC Grayling	2.30PM-3.30PM Care and Feeding: Laurie Woolever in Conversation	3.30PM-4.30PM We Used to Be Journos – Live Podcast Recording	2.30PM-3.30PM Writing Fiction From Life	2.30PM-3.30PM Speaking Truth to Power	2.30PM-3.30PM Ways of Knowing: JM Field and Jazz Money	2.30PM-3.30PM A Queer Reimagining: Zoe Terakes in Conversation	2.30PM-3.30PM <b>WATT SPACE GALLERY</b> The Travelling Soul: Chinese Poetry in Australia	3.00PM-4.15PM <b>THE PRESS BOOKHOUSE</b> Poetry Salon @ The Press
3.30PM-4.30PM Friendship and a Fight for Justice: Kathleen Folbigg		4.00PM-5.00PM BOOK LAUNCH Meet the Mob	5.00PM-6.00PM A Great Act of Love: Heather Rose in Conversation	4.00PM-5.00PM Hearing Art, Seeing Music with David Banney	4.00PM-5.00PM Rich Kid, Poor Kid: The Battle For Public Education	4.00PM-5.00PM Revelation Beach: Susan Francis in Conversation	4.00PM-5.00PM Breaking Out: Student Readings		
5.00PM-6.00PM If You're Listening: Declassified									

Program information is subject to change. Please check the website for the most current information. Visit [newcastlewritersfestival.org.au](http://newcastlewritersfestival.org.au)

# TELL US WHAT YOU THINK



Newcastle Writers Festival will celebrate its 15th anniversary in 2027 and your valuable feedback will help us plan.

Please take five minutes to complete the survey, which has been devised with researchers at the University of Newcastle. Thank you!



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WRITERS  
FESTIVAL



## SUPPORT US

Newcastle Writers Festival is a celebration of ideas, imagination, and community. Each year, we bring together some of Australia's most compelling writers to share stories that inspire, challenge, and connect us. But we can't do it alone.

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