

Canberra Writers *Festival*

15–18 OCTOBER 2026



ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

The Canberra Writers Festival acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the Canberra region, the Ngunnawal and Ngambri Peoples, and other First Nations Peoples with connections to Canberra. We acknowledge and pay respects to the continuing cultures and the contributions of First Nations Peoples to the life of this city and region. We proudly celebrate the storytelling traditions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples as the oldest continuing storytelling traditions in the world.

The Canberra Writers Festival is grateful for the support of our partners and sponsors.

GOVERNMENT PARTNERS



This project has been assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body.

MAJOR SPONSOR



FESTIVAL PARTNERS



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CHIEF MINISTER WELCOME

Congratulations to the Canberra Writers Festival on its 10th anniversary. What a fantastic decade it's been, challenging us with bold ideas, entertaining us with great stories and bringing people together for some inspiring conversations.

This year's theme – For the Love of Books – is a simple but powerful expression of what makes this festival so special. And as you'd expect for its birthday year, the festival's 2026 program is perhaps the most exciting yet with something for every book lover.

Conversations on AI, sci-fi, politics and community provoke and prepare us for the big challenges of our times, while this year also boasts the biggest ever line-up for kids and families, sure to light up the imaginations of Canberra's next generation of readers.

With an impressive roster of international,

national and local authors, the festival will reach many corners of the city, including the National Archives of Australia and the National Gallery of Australia for the first time.

The ACT Government is proud of its ongoing support for the festival, and to recognise our region's incredible writing talent in the ACT Book of the Year Awards.

Thank you to Canberra Writers Festival's partners and sponsors, who make this event possible. Thanks also to the volunteers and organisers who share their love of books by generously giving their time and energy. And most importantly, thanks to you, the engaged public, for getting involved and helping make this city such a great place to live and visit. Enjoy the festival.

Andrew Barr MLA
ACT Chief Minister



MESSAGE FROM THE ARTISTIC DIRECTOR AND CEO

You must read... Have you read... I couldn't put it down! – so goes the chorus of delighted booklovers gathering together across our city! Join us for the 10th anniversary of the Canberra Writers Festival with our rallying theme: For the Love of Books.

In a world where books are increasingly under threat, and screens and scrolls dominate – let's celebrate books for offering expansive journeys that explore ideas and contemplate different ways of being. Books that transport us into the lives of others and through time like no other art form. Where we as readers live alongside the characters as we turn the pages, and where we don't just consume, but where our imaginations co-create.

This year's program is packed with stunning literature of the moment; non-fiction grappling with the state of democracy, the speed of AI, tech innovation and climate change; prescient sci-fi and fantasy worlds; comedic contemplations on where we find ourselves; works of family, friendship and intergenerational storytelling; and generous offerings from First Nations authors and migrants and their descendants reflecting the rich tapestry of multicultural Australia.

We have writers from no less than every Australian state and territory represented this year!

And for the first time, programming for kids, teens and adult readers is altogether within the Parliamentary Triangle. You can leave the kids with a member of the family at one event, while you duck off and see another. With free story-times and visiting superstars like Amie Kaufman, R. A. Spratt, First Dog on the Moon, Deadly Science's Corey Tutt OAM, current children's Laureate Andy Griffiths and so many more fabulous authors and illustrators, we're also celebrating the books growing our next generation of readers.

Canberra booklovers, you have built this festival over the last ten years. Our wonderful international, national and local authors who put their hearts and minds on the page are waiting for you.

Andra Putnis
Artistic Director

Travis Green
CEO



FESTIVAL PASSES

HOW TO BOOK

Tickets for events at the National Library of Australia, Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House, National Portrait Gallery, Icon Water Festival Village, National Archives of Australia, National Botanical Gardens, Verity Lane Markets and Smith’s Alternative can be booked directly through Canberra Writers Festival. For tickets to events at other venues please refer to the individual event listing in the program and the event listing on our website.

Booking fees apply to all tickets purchased via our website, excluding free events (when purchased in an order containing only free events).

Book your tickets here

www.canberrawritersfestival.com.au
tickets@canberrawritersfestival.com.au



CONCESSION

Concession prices are available for children under the age of 16, full-time students, Commonwealth Health Care Card holders, Commonwealth Seniors Card Holders and Commonwealth Pensioner Concession Card holders. Please have your eligible card with you at the venue.

Please have your eTicket downloaded on your phone, or a print out of your tickets, for scanning at each session.

TICKET REFUNDS

No ticket refund or exchange will be made unless an event is cancelled.

Program information is correct at the time of printing. Please visit our website for updates or changes to the program.

BUNDLE AND SAVE!

We know the Festival has lots of events to choose from so we’ve bundled up packages that will help you celebrate the genres, types of stories, and events you most love!

Check our website for suggested bundles. We have multipack discounting available so if you book 4 events you’ll get a 5% discount, book 5 events and get 10% off or book 7 or more events and get 15% off.

Book all or some of the events in the event packages to receive your discount. Discount does not apply to events booked via a third party or free events.

Discounts available for all bookings up to 11.59pm on 4 October 2026.

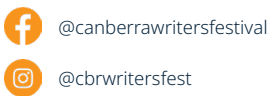
BOARD

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Putri Handrianti
Treasurer
Sunil Badami
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Sally Pryor
Katherine McMahon
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Illustrator — cover
Caitlin Williams
Graphic Designer

JOIN THE
CONVERSATION!
#CBRWritersFest



OPENING NIGHT: FOR THE LOVE OF BOOKS

Join us for a 10th anniversary celebration event to open the festival with a stellar panel of international and national writers who have dedicated their lives to their love of literature - **Andrew O’Hagan, Anna Goldsworthy, Siang Lu and Sophie Gee.**

They will share their reflections on the formative books that shaped them, insights into their writing lives, and hopes and fears for the book at this moment in human history. We invite you to come along and honour the precious books you love - the ones that struck a chord when you were a kid, the ones printed on your heart.



THU 15 OCT – 6.30PM
National Library of Australia

ADULT \$40 | CONC \$35

EVENTS AT OTHER VENUES

17 OCT – 10AM | 18 OCT – 3PM

SHE WRITES HISTORY

Gorman Arts Centre
West Courtyard

She Shapes History is back for a second year in a row with **She Writes History**, a joint partnership with MARION Writers ACT. This walking tour led by local author, **Eleri Harris** traces Canberra's hidden history of fabulous but often forgotten women writers. Where did these women find the inspiration to draft their novels, essays and poems? Discover the writers who helped build this city's cultural life and uncover their fascinating stories. Meet at Gorman House West Courtyard and finish at the King O'Malley's Pub.

Recommended for Ages 13+
In partnership with She Shapes History.

\$60

TWO HOUR WALKING TOUR

17 OCT – 12PM

MEET YOU AT THE BARRICADE: A WORK-IN-PROGRESS

Gorman Arts Centre,
Ralph Wilson Theatre

Last year's Emerging Playwright Commission winner, **Sarah Carroll**, returns with *Meet You At The Barricade* - a passionately quirky, cross-country fangirl road trip celebrating stan culture and the messy magic of finding your people. Developed over the past year with Canberra Youth Theatre artists, this work-in-progress reading offers a rare chance to experience the play while it's still evolving. With scripts in hand and ideas taking shape, your response becomes part of the creative process and helps shape the story's next chapter.

FREE

Bookings required via Canberra Youth Centre.

17 OCT – 4PM

2026 EMERGING PLAYWRIGHT COMMISSION AWARD

Gorman Arts Centre,
Ralph Wilson Theatre

Celebrate the new voices shaping the future of Australian theatre. At this special event, experience excerpts from the three finalists in Canberra Youth Theatre's Emerging Playwright Commission, showcasing bold new stories from emerging writers across the country. The winning playwright will receive a full commission to develop a brand-new work inspired by the stories and voices of young people, continuing Canberra Youth Theatre's commitment to nurturing exceptional theatrical talent. The Emerging Playwright Commission is generously supported by Holding Redlich.

FREE

Bookings required via Canberra Youth Centre.

17 OCT – 11AM

FROCK UP BOOKCLUB!

The Hyatt Canberra
The Tea Lounge



Do you love stories about female friendship, second chances, and the power of a good (pre-loved) outfit? Then this event is for you! The Canberra Writers Festival invites you to come along to **Sophie Green's** Biggest Frock Up Bookclub! Pre-order your copy of *The Frock Shop* from independent seller *The Book Cow* then join Sophie and **Bookish Bron** for a delightful bookclub-style conversation over high tea. No time to read in advance? Been there! Join us and pick up a copy on the day.

In partnership with The Hyatt Canberra.

\$95

HYATT HIGH TEA

Bookings via Hyatt Hotel. Indulge in the famous traditional afternoon tea stands with an array of finger sandwiches, freshly baked scones with jam and cream, and a selection of tempting cakes and slices.



17 OCT – 1PM

BEYOND THESE WALLS: WHY ART NEEDS PUBLISHING

National Gallery of Australia
James Fairfax Theatre

Celebrate the art of art books and uncover how these unique time capsules champion art and artists and help us to make sense of a world beyond gallery walls and in the process teach us about ourselves. Featuring National Gallery of Australia's Director, **Nick Mitzevich** and Head Curator, Australian Art, **Deborah Hart** hosted by *VAULT'S* Editor in Chief, **Alison Kubler**.

FREE

Bookings required via National Gallery of Australia.

18 OCT – 8.30AM WALK | 9.30AM PANEL

BIRD BY BIRD: THE ART OF NOTICING

National Botanic Gardens
Theatrette

Join ornithologist **Jenny Evans** on a bird watching walk followed by a conversation between **Johanna Bell** and **Jennifer Pinkerton**. How does nature writing help species live beyond the page? And what might we do to bolster our collective memory and guard against vanishing birdsong?

In partnership with Canberra Environment Centre.

AUTHOR TALK \$25
OPTIONAL BIRD WALK \$20
BUNDLE \$40

AUTHOR TALK

CAPITAL FILM FESTIVAL 2026

SAVE THE DATE
21-25 OCTOBER

FOR MORE DETAILS VISIT
capitalfilmfestival.com.au

ACT BOOK OF THE YEAR AWARD 2026

National Library of Australia, *Theatre*

The ACT Book of the Year Awards celebrate literary excellence and recognise the outstanding achievements of ACT authors. The afternoon will commence with a panel discussion featuring the shortlisted authors sharing insights into their creative processes and the stories behind their acclaimed works. Following the panel discussion the Minister for Business, Arts and Creative Industries, Michael Pettersson MLA will announce the recipient of the 2026 ACT Book of the Year.

4PM FREE – BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL

THE LIBRARY THAT MADE ME

National Library of Australia, *Level 4*

Many of us have fond memories of formative times in libraries – minds opened by the shelves of treasures, research projects plotted and novels deliciously enjoyed in peace. Let’s traverse the importance of the local libraries in our country towns to the great libraries of the world. This is a conversation between **Chris Hammer, Sophie Gee, Corey Tutt and Phillipa McGuinness** about these special spaces and the mighty works they’ve unleashed, and now house, for all to enjoy.

5PM ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

HYATT COCKTAIL CONVERSATION

WOMEN OF CRIME

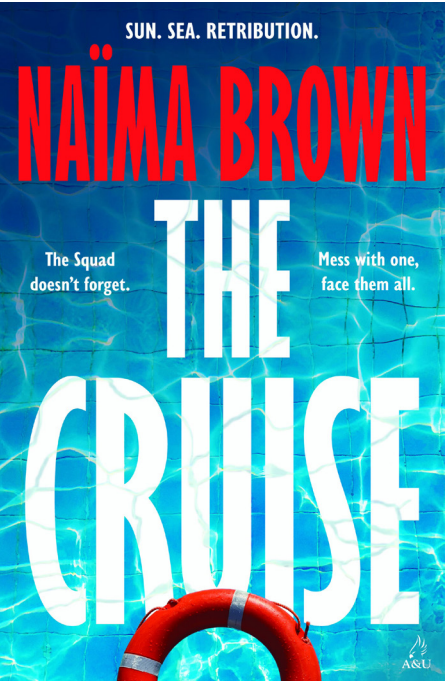
The Hyatt Canberra, *Griffin’s Lounge*

Fiction can tell powerful stories about women standing together to solve crimes against other women. Is there anything more page turning than an everyday hero taking justice into her own hands? What can these fictional stories teach us about the society we really live in? Get behind riveting women-centred fiction and join **Jane Caro, Naïma Brown and Petronella McGovern** for an unmissable conversation.

In partnership with The Hyatt Canberra.

6PM \$50

Includes complimentary glass of wine and charcuterie table. Bookings via Hyatt Hotel.



SHE WHO TASTES, KNOWS: FOOD & STORYTELLING

Café Stepping Stone, Dickson

Women have joined hands to prepare food as an act of love for family, community and culture for millennia. Passing on recipes and cooking together can preserve cultural memory, empower women to share their stories and create sustainable livelihoods. Join **Durkhanai Ayubi, Lucy Ridge and Sita Sargeant** at Stepping Stone Café for a heart-warming journey to celebrate women finding their voices. For those with a love of urban farming, there is an option to join an intimate tour of the Stepping Stone Urban Farm too!

In partnership with Stepping Stone Café and supported by Yellow Edge.

6PM \$90

Including canapés and three course dinner and author talk. Optional Stepping Stone Urban Farm tour starts at 5.30pm, for additional \$15 with proceeds supporting the Stepping Stone social enterprise.

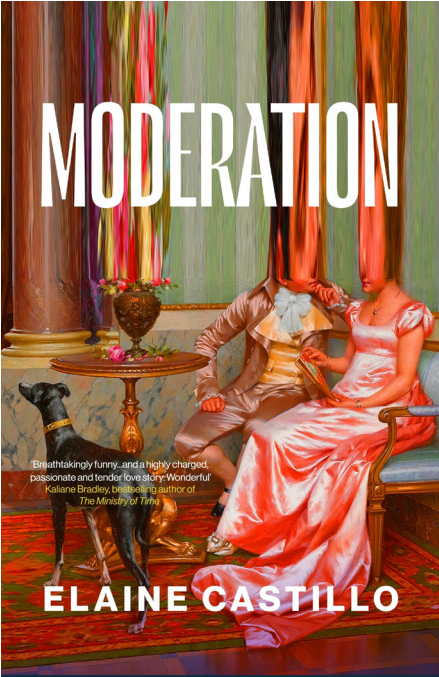


CYBERSPACE OF CASTILLO

Verity Lane Market, *Louie Louie*

Don’t miss the exciting voice of **Elaine Castillo** sharing her literary cyberworld with **Emma Pei Yin**. With great fanfare Castillo is joining us from the San Fran Bay Area with *Girlie* – a thirty-something Filipinx-American who levels-up from her social media job to moderating virtual reality theme parks! Can true love overcome the darkness sitting at the heart of the company’s code?

6PM ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25



FROM PSYCHICS TO PSYCHEDELICS WITH JUDITH LUCY

National Library of Australia, *Theatre*

Judith Lucy is on the mend. This event might make you feel better too! Ever stuck a toe in wellness waters but then realised you’re sick, burnt out and need to dive in headfirst? Judith’s been there! Join her now to hear tales of reiki, sound healing and cryotherapy but more than that – her clear-eyed assessment of what has been so very wrong with how she (and a lot of us) have been living. Don’t miss Judith unplugged, relentlessly honest and devastatingly funny. In conversation with **Chris Ryan**.

6.30PM ADULT \$35 | CONC \$30

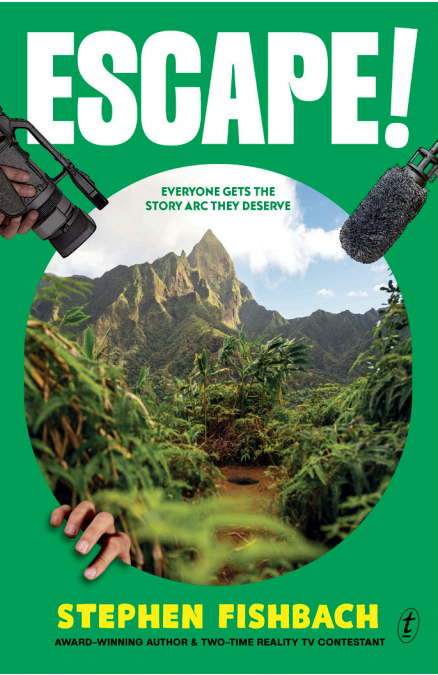


HOW DO YOU SURVIVE REALITY TV?

Verity Lane Market, *Louie Louie*

Stephen Fishbach is a *Survivor* legend. In 2008, he was runner-up on the U.S. TV show, and in 2015, he was voted by fans to return for an all-star season. But you might not know he’s also a prize-winning novelist, speechwriter and podcast star. He joins fellow author and contestant on Australian *Survivor: Brains vs Brawn*, **Wai Chim** to shed light on the entertainment machine of reality TV and its creative triumphs, heartbreaks and devastations.

8PM ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25



MOVIE SCREENING + AUTHOR TALK

ADAPTATION WITH SUSAN ORLEAN

Dendy Cinema, Canberra Centre

Fall in love for the first time or again with *The Orchid Thief* and writing of **Susan Orlean**, inspiration for the critically acclaimed movie *Adaptation*. This is a rare opportunity to watch the film and then hear editor of *The Monthly*, **Michael Williams** ask the muse herself about her writing life, love of stories and the big screen.

7PM BOOKINGS VIA DENDY CINEMAS CANBERRA



10AM

Theatre

WITH A LITTLE HELP FROM MY FRIENDS

When did you last write to a dear friend? Join internationally acclaimed authors **Andrew O’Hagan** and **Debra Adelaide** for an unmissable conversation with **Beejay Silcox** on why friendships matter and the beauty unearthed when we reflect on them. Andrew’s relationships with writers including Colm Tóibín and Edna O’Brien brought both challenge and liberation. Debra’s lifelong friendship with Gabrielle Carey nurtured creativity through ups and downs. Together they will illuminate the very nature of friendship as only writers can.

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

10AM

Level 4

CUTTING EDGE CLI-FI

The facts of climate change and the large-scale loss of animal and plant species are all around us. To truly understand, we need new creative forms that speak to the grief, absurdity and banality of our situation as well as capture the beauty of all we have that is not yet lost. Join **Johanna Bell**, **Michael Winkler** and **Inga Simpson** for a discussion about the vitality and originality of climate fiction.

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

11.45AM

Theatre

SUPERGIRLS VS THE STRONGMEN OF RUSSIA

Literature brings insight to political madness, human monstrosity and what it takes to defy tyranny. **Malcolm Knox** is in conversation with **Jessica Alice**, and they’ll take us to the world of the Soviet Union. In this thrilling sequel to *The First Friend*, we meet heroes of the next generation and follow one young woman’s plot to outsmart the dictators. Learn how to survive autocrats, dodge gangsters and become a razor-sharp hero laughing in the face of horror – there’s no more enjoyable way to do it!

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25



11.45AM

Level 4

THE EXTRAORDINARY POWER OF CHILDHOOD IMAGINATION

In today’s hyper-speed world, it’s easy for kids and young adults to lose their footing. **Brendan James Murray** joins **Gabbie Stroud** to share vital reflections on the power of childhood imagination to transform lives, and the real challenges faced by kids and families that can get in the way. Together they will traverse insights drawn from their own experiences of childhood, parenting and teaching in Australian schools.

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

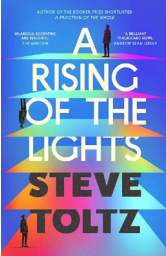
1.30PM

Theatre

AI AND ALL THE LONELY PEOPLE

Join internationally acclaimed authors **Steve Toltz** and **Elaine Castillo** for a conversation with *The Monthly’s* **Michael Williams** about how setting out to explore loneliness led to the creation of two satirical, darkly funny and moving novels about human connection. In a world increasingly dominated by virtual reality and AI, our humanness is also held up to the light. Don’t miss these two master novelists in full flight.

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25



1.30PM

Level 4

IF WE COULD TURN BACK TIME...

The strong pull to go back in time and set things ‘right’ is the basis for these page-turning novels. Join **Emma Grey**, **Petronella McGovern** and **Jaclyn Moriarty** as they reveal why they set their characters up to ask themselves burning questions: What might they have done differently to prevent disaster? Can they go back in time? If they could, would they?

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

3.15PM

Theatre

CRIME AND CONFRONTATION WITH MICHAEL ROBOTHAM

Michael Robotham’s Australian novel has been 40 years in the making. After decades unearthing incredible historical records including the letters and diaries of Czar Nicholas II and Stalin’s Hitler files, ghost-writing for politicians and pop stars, and penning international thrillers, he has returned to his roots with an epic about family, brotherly love and coming-of-age in an Australian town. This will be an unmissable conversation with **Jane Caro** on the thrill of penning remarkable stories, and writing crime, confrontation and forgiveness.

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25



3.15PM

Level 4

FOR THE LOVE OF LETTERS

There is nothing like reading a beautiful letter. *Postscript* showcases treasures from the National Library of Australia collection: love letters; impassioned pleas; and words bearing witness to history. Our panellists **Amy Remeikis**, **Kate Forsyth** and **Michael Winkler** will read fascinating extracts from selected letters and speak to **Lauren Smith** about their experience responding to these treasures with missives of their own.

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

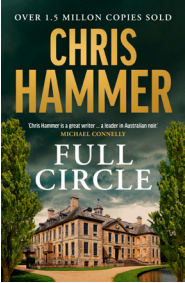
5PM

Theatre

LIFE AND CRIMES OF CHRIS HAMMER

Former journalist turned bestselling author **Chris Hammer** has made a career out of curiosity. Now back on the scene with his first standalone thriller, Chris will talk to **Alex Sloan** about his new obsession – the way uber-wealthy modern day robber barons trade money and truth to maintain riches and wield power. That is until families implode and ruthless dynastic rivalries get out of hand...

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25



5PM

Level 4

THE ART OF EROTIC TRANSFORMATION

If a fusion of windswept coastline, the primordial ocean and erotic transformation sounds appealing, then this conversation with **Kris Kneen** and **Beejay Silcox** is for you. *Rite of Spring* is one of the most exciting books of 2026. On the surface, we have the story of a couple attempting to repair their relationship by becoming caretakers of a lighthouse. Down in the deep, we have nothing less than revelatory eroticism, ocean magic and a ground-breaking illumination of gender transition.

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

6.30PM

Theatre

SUSAN ORLEAN'S JOYRIDE

Susan Orlean is a master at finding the heart of the story. This is a rare event with one of the great non-fiction writers of our time. Susan joins **Nicole Abadee** to reflect on a bygone era of U.S journalism, a career of working along icons and film stars, and the joy she’s always found in discovering the fascinating stories of everyday people. With her most personal writing to date, she will reveal more of her own story than ever before.

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25



9.30AM

Marquee

OPENING EVENT: SING A SONG OF READING

Singing is a joyous thing to do at any age! With its rhythm and repetition, it's also a way to supercharge early literacy development. Singing helps children to hear, identify and manipulate the individual sounds that make up spoken words - building a fabulous foundation for reading. Come hear the Woden Valley Youth Choir sing the Canberra Writers Festival's Kids and YA Program open. And best of all you can join in the singing too!

FREE

Recommended ages: All Ages

10.30AM

KIDS EVENT

Marquee

LET'S PLAY WITH BOOKS!

Reading a book is a delightful experience for lots of young children. But what if your child won't sit still for a traditional story time? How can you use play as the foundation for creating enjoyable and fun connections that will foster a love of books and reading? Come along for bookish play guaranteed to give you lots of great ideas for making books and reading part of your child's wildly fantastic play and learning.

FREE – BOOKINGS REQUIRED

Recommended ages: 6 and under

12PM

KIDS EVENT

Marquee

FEARLESS GIRLS WHO MAKE THEIR OWN ADVENTURES

Books are filled with brave, curious and unforgettable girls. Acclaimed bestselling authors **Sue Whiting** and **Danielle Binks** discuss the memorable girl characters they loved growing up and how these amazing heroines shaped the writers they've become. Join in as Danielle and Sue consider what makes a remarkable heroine you meet in childhood stay with you for a lifetime. Expect laughter, inspiration, favourite books, and plenty of storytelling magic.



ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10

Recommended ages: 7-12

1.30PM

KIDS EVENT

Marquee

DEADLY SCIENCE, DEADLY STORYTELLING

First Nations children's authors play a vital role in creating books that reflect and celebrate Indigenous cultures, families and communities. This literature serves to nurture First Nations children's cultural identities and pride and shares this with wider audiences as well. Join **Corey Tutt** and **Marly Wells** in conversation with fellow First Nations author **Lisa Fuller** as they explore the importance of sharing the resilience and enduring strength of First Nations cultures through fabulous stories and histories that simply deserve to be told and celebrated with readers everywhere!



Recommended ages: 12+

ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10

3PM

YA EVENT

Marquee

THE FUTURE OF FICTION IS FAN!

The original Star Trek television series was cancelled in 1969, but dedicated fans wanted the adventures of the Enterprise to continue and began printing their own stories. These early 'zines' - many spearheaded by women - created story tropes still used today, as well as pioneering 'crowdfunding' and self-publishing. Join two of Australia's leading speculative fiction writers - **Amie Kaufman** and **Garth Nix** - in a conversation with **Charlie Jane Anders** about the power and importance of fan fiction, where it might go next and how it just might save us from AI.



ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10

Recommended ages: Young Adult

STORY ADVENTURES FOR LITTLE READERS

11.30AM

KIDS EVENT

NLA Forecourt

TINY BUT MIGHTY HEROES TO THE RESCUE!

Step into a fun-filled story time with authors **Sue Whiting**, **Krys Saclier** and **Nicole Godwin** as they share their delightful picture books *Sidney of Sydney*, *Super Nova* and *Swoop!* Meet three tiny heroes who show how kindness, courage and helping others makes a mighty difference. Free and perfect for little reading heroes and their grown-ups!



FREE – BOOKINGS REQUIRED

Recommended ages: 3+

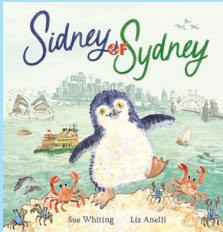
1PM

KIDS EVENT

NLA Forecourt

STUFFAPALOOZA! TREASURES GONE WILD!

Join a delightful story time with **Jemima Parker**, **Maura Pierlot** and **Sue Whiting** as they share *Poppy Makes Pockets*, *Clutterbugs* and *The Wheelbarrow Express*. Discover playful tales full of curious collections, clever ideas and the very special treasures to be found in everyday things. Free and perfect for tiny treasure hunters aged 3 - 6 and their grown-ups!



FREE – BOOKINGS REQUIRED

Recommended ages: 3+

2.30PM

KIDS EVENT

NLA Forecourt

ARE YOU READY TO JOIN THE GREAT FROG CHOIR?

Do you know the difference between the calls of the pobblebonk, the spotted marsh frog, the green and golden bell frog and other local frogs? Join **Anke Maria Hoefer** - Canberra's frog caller extraordinaire and author of *The Great Frog Choir* to discover all about our amazing frogs, where to find them and how to protect them. Learn how to make frog calls and then perform with the wildest wetland show of all!

FREE – BOOKINGS REQUIRED

Recommended ages: 4-9

SATURDAY 17 OCTOBER

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House

10AM

Senate Chamber

CLIMATE, CHAOS & COP31

With geopolitical earthquakes shaking our world – what can we expect at COP31 in November? **Thom Woodroffe, Clive Hamilton and Miki Perkins** explore the underlying philosophies driving world powers and ask how Australia can position itself. At a time when everyday Australians feel their environment, homes, reliable fuel and economic prosperity are at risk, what opportunities can Australia seize on the international stage to better set us up for our uncertain future?

Supported by The Conversation.

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

10AM

Representatives Chamber

ANGERTAINMENT

New media has given voice to many who never had one. Join **Ed Coper and Amy Remeikis** as they delve into how social media outrage has become contested ground with Editor of *The Monthly*, **Michael Williams**. Posts of protest? Avenues for community building? Soundbites of truth to power? Social media provides valuable spaces. But is it also a more dangerous media vehicle for amassing divisive political power and cultural capital?



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

11.45AM

Senate Chamber

POLITICAL RUPTURE: IDENTITY, EQUALITY AND OPPORTUNITY

How are debates over free speech, identity and equality of opportunity transforming our politics? It seems our media and political systems are hardening social divisions not bridging divides. Come and hear **Waleed Aly, Niki Savva and Jordan McSwiney** lift the lid on the rise of illiberal democracy and the raging culture wars around us.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

11.45AM

Representatives Chamber

UPHILL BATTLE: FUTURE OF EDUCATION

For decades, public education has struggled under increasing pressure and inadequate funding. The problem is getting worse and feeding growing inequality between public and private education. Add university fees, rising cost of living for students and cuts to courses and campus life and we have an uphill battle on our hands to improve the future of education right through from childhood to young adulthood. Join **Jane Caro, George Williams and Bill Shorten** for a conversation we need to have.



Supported by The Australia Institute.

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

This stream of the Canberra Writers Festival is warmly supported and sponsored by the Vice-Chancellor's Centre of Public Ideas at the University of Canberra. It extends the work of the Centre, and of the University of Canberra generally, by promoting civil, evidence-based and historically informed discussion of some of the most challenging questions and problems facing Australia and the world today.

1.30PM

Senate Chamber

OUTLAWED: THE RISE OF SOVEREIGN CITIZEN IDEOLOGY

Pseudolaw, sovereign citizens and conspiracy movements have migrated from the fringes into mainstream discourse spreading alongside populist discontent. Bringing the stories and characters of these movements to life after years of research and study, **Harry Hobbs, Stephen Young and Royce Kurlmelovs** will help us understand these trends and the responses we need to maintain our legal, democratic and social compacts.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

1.30PM

Representatives Chamber

AUSTRALIA IN THE WORLD: GEORGE MEGALOGENIS AND MATT BEVAN

For decades our politics has failed to keep up with a changing Australia and world. For too long both major parties have operated on outdated assumptions about the make-up of our nation and the reliability of our key allies and trading partners. Join **George Megalogenis and Matt Bevan** for a conversation about the shocks that must change how we think about Australia in the 21st Century. Are we heeding the wake-up calls? Are we listening? Can we catch up?

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

3.15PM

Senate Chamber

GOD AI

Deep fakes, curated companions and killer drones... could AI become so intelligent it is game over for humanity? What are the benefits and pitfalls of AI? What might it do to our sense of self, our creativity and what it means to be human? Join researchers, journalists and writers **Toby Walsh, Ange Lavoipierre and Waleed Aly** for a conversation we need to have.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

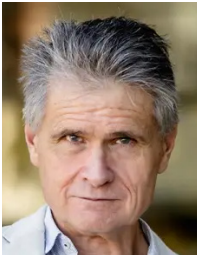
3.15PM

Representatives Chamber

BIG PROBLEM, BRAVE REFORM

At the quarter-mark of the century, Australia faces big challenges at home and abroad. Growing budget pressures, some companies not contributing their fair share and a serious need for Australia to chart the right course in our national interest. **Lucinda Holdforth, Richard Denniss, Bernard Keane and Alice Grundy** are calling for us to face up to the problems we are passing on to future generations, plan for the future and remember instances of bold reform in our nation's history. Bring your ideas, intellectual rigour and courage to the conversation!

Supported by The Australia Institute.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

SATURDAY 17 OCTOBER

National Portrait Gallery

10AM

Terrace Room

FORBIDDEN LOVE IN WAR: PIP WILLIAMS IN CONVERSATION

The bestselling author of *The Dictionary of Lost Words* and *The Bookbinder of Jericho* is back with a fascinating tale of desire during the darkness of war. **Pip Williams** will join **Karen Viggers** to share her story of an English nurse and a German doctor – enemies behind the lines of WW1 – and the Australian artist who captures their secret love.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

10AM

Liangis Theatre

TESTING THE BODY

Writing about how bodies are tested – through terrible abrupt accident, gruelling ultra-marathon and the simple reality of ageing – can open profound questions about what matters in life. Join **Saskia Beudel, Olivia Ong and Cynthia Banham** for a conversation about words of endurance, acceptance, love and family.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

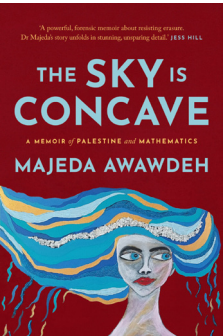
In partnership with GINSIGHTS.

11.45AM

Terrace Room

THE INTIMACY OF THE WORLD

Jane Messer and Majeda Awawdeh have written beautiful memoirs that illuminate the intimacy of history and the personal within larger stories of our world. They come together with **Sally Pryor** to share their life stories and retrace family steps. Traversing Berlin, Israel and Palestine they reveal why understanding individual and family stories can bring us all closer together.



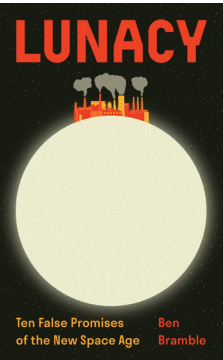
ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

11.45AM

Liangis Theatre

LUNACY: THE CASE AGAINST THE NEW SPACE AGE

Billionaires are racing to colonise Mars and mine the Moon, and we're told it's humanity's destiny. Philosopher **Ben Bramble** thinks it's something closer to madness. In this provocative session, he dismantles the promises of the new space age - backing up humanity, saving the Earth, securing our future - and argues the most extraordinary world available to us is the one beneath our feet. In conversation with science and technology historian **David Munns**.



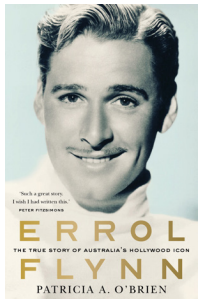
ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

1.30PM

Terrace Room

SEX AND SKELETONS OF ERROL FLYNN

Errol Flynn was one of the first screen idols of the Golden Age of Hollywood. He mesmerised millions with his swordsmanship and smouldering sexuality. But behind all this is a life story of an unusual childhood in Tasmania, damaging family secrets and terrible treatment of women in the dark heart of Hollywood. Join **Patricia O'Brien** in conversation with **Marc Fennell** as she shares what it was like to write her groundbreaking biography and they uncover the real story behind the well-cultivated Hollywood myth.



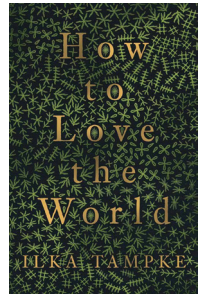
ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

1.30PM

Liangis Theatre

MOTHER RAGE

Finally, more of us are talking about mum rage, the stigma that keeps mums quiet and the social change we need to stop so many from suffering (or simmering) in silence. There is very real physical, psychological and societal pressures that contribute to maternal rage, and mothering is in many ways getting harder, especially as we deal with our own fears and traumas. Join **Lauren Novak, Ilka Tampke and Karen Viggers** as they explore how smart non-fiction and fiction stories help us feel seen and offer hope, reassurance and paths forward.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

3.15PM

Liangis Theatre

MY MOTHER'S LEBANON

What do we learn when we ask our parents for their stories? This special conversation between **Antoun Issa and Theodore Eli** will take us to 1970s Lebanon, and the story of Antoun's mother coming of age during the Lebanese Civil War. Join us as we reflect on resilience, community, and the strength that comes from understanding the past.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

3.15PM

KIDS EVENT

Terrace Room

LET'S DO THE DRAW OFF AGAIN!

Following last year's wildly popular Draw Off - CWF is doing it again! See three incredible illustrators in an interactive drawing showdown! Wrangled by **Yen Eriksen** and featuring a whirlwind of live, and potentially zany, doodles from wildly clever and provocative artists and cartoonists **First Dog on the Moon, Eleri Harris and David Conley**. Guaranteed to ignite imaginations with audience suggestions part of the fun, and a reminder that art is for all.



ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10

Recommended ages: 7-12

SATURDAY 17 OCTOBER

National Archives of Australia

10AM

Function Room

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

CHALLENGING ANZAC & THE FUTURE OF MILITARY SERVICE

As Australia seeks to bolster its defence forces in an increasingly volatile world, what do service personnel who challenged militarism and the Anzac legend have to teach us? **Mia Martin Hobbs, Joan Beaumont and Carolyn Holbrook** argue we need to hear these voices as we think about the future of Australian military service, the AUKUS pact and the new world of drone warfare.

10AM

Activity Room

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

ART OF BIOGRAPHY: STARTLES AND SCANDALS

Do you love brilliant biographies? Come hear acclaimed biographers **Patricia O’Brien, Raelene Frances and Bruce Scates** tell all with **Michelle Staff**. What drives their passion for revealing the human stories behind public figures? What happens when a reinterpretation of a life is required? What does it take to navigate the startles and scandals?

11.45AM

Activity Room

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

THE LEGEND OF REG SAUNDERS

This is a rare chance to hear about the remarkable life of Captain Reg Saunders, Australia’s first Indigenous commissioned officer, from his nephew **James Saunders** and eldest daughter **Aunty Glenda Humes**. In 1940, a 19-year-old Reg Saunders walked into an enlistment office in Victoria. It was the beginning of an extraordinary journey that took Reg across three continents and two wars - WW2 and Korea. They will join **Craig Cormick** in a conversation that not only spans Reg’s military career but also speaks of his family and people - the Gunditjmara of Western Victoria - and the power of his legacy.



11.45AM

Function Room

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

FIRST RESPONDERS: STORIES FROM THE FRONT LINE

We’re fascinated by the lives of first responders: paramedics, firefighters and police officers. What draws people to these intense professions? How does what they see reshape them? **Martin McKenzie-Murray** has had three life stories entrusted to him by experienced first responders. He joins **Nigel Featherstone** in conversation and together they’ll traverse danger, camaraderie, trauma and its aftermath.

1.30PM

Activity Room

ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10

YA EVENT

THERE IS NO WAY TO KINDNESS – KINDNESS IS THE WAY

The world is very shouty these days. Snap judgements, division and unkindness are everywhere, so how can books and art help young adult readers (14-ish+) navigate complexity, build meaningful relationships and imagine a kinder future? Join award-winning YA author **Rebecca Higgie** and celebrated cartoonist **First Dog on the Moon** in conversation with *ABC Canberra’s* **Alice Matthews**, for a thoughtful and inspiring conversation about empathy, compassion and the power of everyday kindness. And with some bonus marsupials and turtles thrown in for good measure!

Recommended ages: 14 +



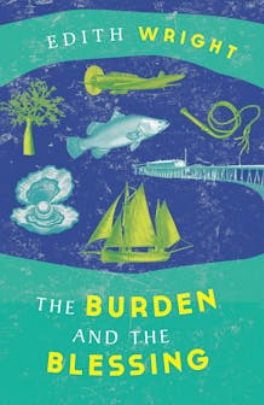
1.30PM

Function Room

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

BURDEN AND BLESSING IN BROOME

Edith Wright of the Bardi Jawi people grew up listening to stories about her great-grandfathers, two white men from Europe who changed the face of the Kimberley forever. Using eyewitness accounts and archival records, Edith shares rare insights into the cosmopolitan hub of Broome during the heyday of the pearling and boat-building industries, its bombing during World War II and the rapid development of the infrastructure of the north from the perspective of a descendant carrying a complex legacy. Join Edith in conversation with **Barrina South** about the challenging history of her family and the broader truths it reveals about colonisation and its effects on First Nations people across the Kimberley.



3.15PM

Function Room

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

THIS IS MY STORY: MIGRATION NARRATIVES

Migration stories of people leaving their homelands can be some of the most moving you’ll ever read – and this is the case for the books written by **Durkhanai Ayubi, Majeda Awawdeh and Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes**. Fleeing oppression, reclaiming identity and finding new forms of belonging – these are challenges that go to the heart of the human story. Our panel will share their stories with **Genevieve Jacobs**.



In partnership with Migrant and Refugee Settlement Services Canberra.

3.15PM

Activity Room

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

FAMILY HISTORY QUEST: MOTHERS, MYTHS AND IDENTITIES

What happens when you embark on an epic quest to unravel family secrets? **Jane Messer and Cynthia Banham** did so when they began to research and write about their misunderstood grandmothers, great grandmothers and beyond. Join **Irma Gold** as she asks these wonderful writers and researchers about maternal inheritance across time and they all delve into the worlds of old Bologna and pre-second world war Berlin and Mandate Palestine.

In partnership with Family History ACT.

UNCOVER AUSTRALIA’S STORY

Open daily | Free entry | Parkes, ACT







SATURDAY 17 OCTOBER

Verity Lane Market

1PM

Louie Louie

LOVE, CAREER...SADNESS: CUE QUARTER-LIFE CRISIS!

Join **Georgie Tunny, Josh Hortinela and Emma Pei Yin** and celebrate quarter-life, a time of figuring out adulthood while bagging a dazzling career and finding true love...or not! Georgie brings us a tale of friendship in the cut-throat world of TV news as only she could tell it. Josh gives us a book tour from hell and homage to romantic comedy. Can the characters please admit they're miserable and find their true selves?



In partnership with HerCanberra.

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

3.30PM

Louie Louie

MILLENNIAL DESPAIR: WHEN YOU JUST CAN'T EVEN...

Feel like the party is over? You've tried fashion design, yoga, saving endangered species and you're running out of options? It's time to head to Mars! It will be a bender of an adventure and why don't we swing by a Canberra school reunion before we leave? Novelist and screenwriter **Jordan Prosser** will read from, and reflect on, his savagely funny and tender work about millennial ennui. BYO space suit. Hosted by **Erin Cross**.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

6PM

Louie Louie

HOT HISTORY: MARC FENNELL AND MATT BEVAN IN CONVERSATION

Marc Fennell and Matt Bevan are fascinated by the remarkable tales, people and objects of history. The times we're living in have more of us than ever asking tricky questions. How can we learn from what has come before us? Can we identify the people, events and innovations that will change the course of time? Who do the objects of history belong to? Come listen to these two heroes of history trade their favourite twisty tales!



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

8.30PM

Louie Louie

CANBERRA TIMES LITERARY TRIVIA

Trivia is intense! Can you name who won the Prime Minister's Literary Prize for Fiction in 2025? Which Australian won the Booker Prize twice? What year did *The Canberra Times* first publish? Gather your bookish friends and put your literary smarts to the test. Great prizes to be won including bundles of new books and more. Hosted by comedian **Chris Ryan**.



\$25 PER PERSON

SATURDAY 17 OCTOBER

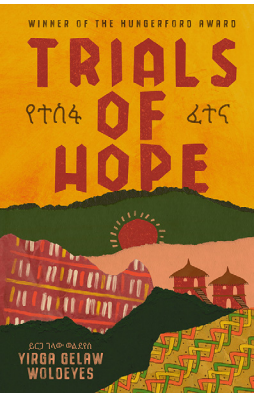
Smith's Alternative

2.30PM

Smith's Alternative

EARTH, NATURE, COUNTRY

Poetry speaks to us like no other written form. This is an afternoon of words – a chance to hear local poets – **Jennifer Kemarre Martiniello, Lizz Murphy, Paul Collis and Andrew Geoffrey Kwabena Moss** – ripple and flow alongside artists from interstate – **Johanna Bell and Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes**. Expect hymns to the elements, discordant notes of rhythms askew, laments for all we've lost and fierce expression of love for nature. Hosted by **Martin Dolan**.



TICKETS: \$15

In partnership with That Poetry Thing at Smith's Alternative.

6.30PM

Smith's Alternative

WELCOME TO THE FUTURE!

Do you have what it takes to survive? This powerhouse trio of writers will help you decide, as they discuss what the future might look like, from space travel, sentient beings, and distant planets to life on Earth but re-imagined by these gifted futurists. **Charlie Jane Anders, Garth Nix and Barbara Truelove** hosted by **Kaaron Warren** will have you soaring through the stars in search of a better life somewhere out there...



Afterwards, stay on with members of The Canberra Speculative Fiction Guild to talk about all things speculative, and to learn about the strong writing community here in Canberra.

ADULT \$25 | CONC \$20

In partnership with The Canberra Speculative Fiction Guild.

8.30PM

Smith's Alternative

MY DIRTY AWKWARD ROM COM!

Love is messy. Attraction is mysterious. Grand gestures go spectacularly wrong. A great romantic comedy has it all: heart-fluttering moments, laugh-out-loud disasters, a little raunch, and those unforgettable "How on earth are they going to get out of this?" twists. Join **Briony Winchester** and a brave team of local and interstate authors including **Alyx Gorman and Josh Hortinela**, as they create an entirely improvised rom-com live on stage. Every character, every kiss, every catastrophe, and every happily-ever-after is made up in the moment.



ADULT \$25 | CONC \$20

10AM

KIDS EVENT

LET'S CHAT WITH R.A. SPRATT!

Theatre

Join the bestselling and beloved author R. A. Spratt and discover where the most brilliant ideas come from and why the funniest moments are often the most unexpected! An unmissable event for kids and their families.

Recommended ages: 7-12

ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10



10AM

KIDS EVENT

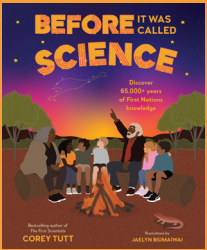
BOOK LAUNCH: BEFORE IT WAS CALLED SCIENCE

Level 4

Did you know that the First Scientists invented sustainable ways of carrying food and water, unlike the single-use plastics and packaging we see today? Or that the First Scientists could remove salt from seawater? Bestselling author **Corey Tutt** is back to share more incredible stories of how Australia's First Peoples practised science long before it carried that name. Join Corey in conversation with Questacon's Director **Jo White** and Mind in Residence **Hans Bachor**, for the release of Corey's new book *Before It Was Called Science*, which follows his groundbreaking children's book *The First Scientists*.

Recommended ages: 7-12

FREE – BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL



11.45AM

KIDS EVENT

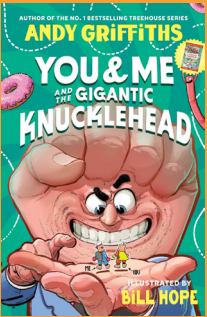
ANDY GRIFFITHS, BILL HOPE AND THE GIGANTIC KNUCKLEHEAD

Theatre

THEY'RE BACK! Strap in for the funniest, wildest and most outrageous family event of the festival! Join legendary author **Andy Griffiths** and superstar illustrator **Bill Hope** as they return with the third laugh-out-loud adventure in their bestselling You & Me series: *You & Me and the Gigantic Knucklehead*. Whether you're new to Andy and Bill or a diehard fan - don't miss this one!

Recommended ages: 7-12

ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10



11.45AM

KIDS EVENT

YA EVENT

ART FIGHTS THE DOOMSCROLL!

Level 4

Join two of Australia's most talented visual storytellers – manga creator **Queenie Chan** and comics writer **Christof Bojacs** - in conversation with **Yen Eriksen**, as they talk about comics and manga as the ultimate weapon to fight the doomscroll. Dive into why the visual storytelling of comics and manga demands a completely different kind of brain power and how turning an actual page triggers empathy and deep focus - leading to borderless human connection. Christof and Queenie will explore how manga and comics are a vital part of the literary landscape, along with the unique and powerful role graphic narratives play in how we tell and experience stories today. Come join the revolution against the infinite scroll!

Recommended ages: Young Adult

ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10



1.30PM

YA EVENT

WELCOME TO THE MULTIVERSE OF AMIE KAUFMAN

Theatre

Buckle up and join internationally bestselling author **Amie Kaufman**, in conversation with **Kaaron Warren** for a wild ride through Amie's ever-expanding multiverse of stories. Discover the secrets behind pulse-racing adventures, jaw-dropping plot twists and epic world-building and characters you'll think about long after the final page. Whether you're a lifelong book lover, a budding writer, or simply curious about how whole universes are built from scratch, this is one adventure you won't want to miss!

Recommended ages: Young Adult

ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10



1.30PM

KIDS EVENT

AMAZING JOURNEYS AND EXTRAORDINARY HISTORIES

Level 4

Join celebrated authors **Stephanie Owen Reeder** and **Danielle Binks** for a lively conversation with **Rebecca Higgie**, as they explore how a book begins in endless curiosity, is marinated in careful research and becomes a way to challenge assumptions and foster empathy and new understandings.

Recommended ages: 7-12

ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10



3.15PM

CLIMATE WARS & POLITICAL INTRIGUE

Level 4

Declining ecosystems, economic survival and larger than life characters who want to keep the places and people they love safe. **Chris Hammer**, **Rebecca Higgie** and **Michael Brissenden** will traverse non-fiction and fiction exploring the politics and human drama of climate change in our national capital and surrounding region. What do we see when we project into the future? How do we define our leaders on the page as they grapple with choices that will shape future generations?

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

3.15PM

Theatre

TOP 100 AUSTRALIAN BOOKS

ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

Join **Debra Adelaide**, **Mirandi Riwoe**, **John Morrissey** and **Julianne Lamond** for a celebration of Australian literature. What has been running up the charts in *ABC Radio National's Top 100 Books* over the festival weekend? What can we learn from the results? Which books lie close to the hearts of our panel? Get your summer reading list sorted!

4.30PM

National Library of Australia

JOIN THE COUNTDOWN: ABC RADIO NATIONAL'S TOP 100 BOOKS

FREE

Join us for a free listening party as we celebrate the final moments of the festival and count down to the number one book in *ABC Radio National's Top 100 Australian Books*. Gather with fellow book lovers, enjoy the excitement of the live countdown, and see if your favourite takes the top spot. Radio National will cross live to the event, giving us a chance to share our passion for Australian stories. Together we can make some noise as the winner is revealed. To help mark our 10th anniversary year, Paperplate Café will be serving drinks so we can raise a glass together and toast a decade of the festival.

22

CANBERRA WRITERS FESTIVAL

15 - 18 OCTOBER 2026

23



Canberra Writers Festival congratulates the Children’s Book Council of Australia on 80 years of the **Book of the Year Awards!**

Happy Birthday! Thank you for celebrating books for young readers - you’ve grown us up as a reading nation!

10AM
Marquee

CANBERRA’S OWN SHINING STARS: THE 2026 CHILDREN’S BOOK COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA AWARDS

The Children’s Book Council of Australia Book of the Year Awards are the most influential and highly respected literary award for children in Australia. Meet Canberra’s very own shining stars of the 2026 awards **Sandy Bigna, Eleri Harris and Stephanie Owen Reeder.**

Recommended ages: Young Adult/Adult



FREE – BOOKINGS REQUIRED

11.45AM
Marquee



MORRIS GLEITZMAN: DANGEROUSLY GREAT STORYTELLING

Warning: this session contains dangerous levels of laughter and wildly unnecessary detours. Morris Gleitzman takes us behind the scenes of his writing life. Discover improbable adventures, surprising twists and more than a few skeletons. In conversation with **Lauren Smith**, Morris shares where his best ideas really come from, why research rarely goes to plan and how even the most ordinary moments can become unforgettable stories. So buckle up for a thrilling and hilarious ride through the wonderfully unpredictable world of storytelling.



ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10

Recommended ages: 7-12

1.30PM
Marquee



FEARLESS BOYS WHO MAKE THEIR OWN ADVENTURES

Books are filled with brave, curious and unforgettable boys. Celebrated authors **Corey Tutt and Jack Heath**, in conversation with **Scott Woodard**, discuss the memorable boy characters they loved growing up and how these adventurous heroes shaped the storytellers and creators they’ve become. Join in as Jack and Corey explore what makes the remarkable boys you meet in childhood stories stay with you for a lifetime. Expect laughter, inspiration, favourite books, and plenty of storytelling magic.

ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10

Recommended ages: 7-12

3.15PM
Marquee



THE FUTURE OF READING IS THE FUTURE OF US!

It’s official: young Australians aged 15-24 are reading more than ever. And reading isn’t just a hobby - it is the key to greater empathy, lower rates of loneliness and developing the critical thinking skills needed to navigate the age of AI misinformation that is upon us. Join three of Australia’s most beloved storytellers - current Australian Children’s Laureate **Andy Griffiths**, former Children’s Laureate **Morris Gleitzman** and **R.A. Spratt**, in conversation with **Sue Whiting** - as they dive into why the future of humanity and shaping a future we can look forward to starts with losing ourselves in books! Come expecting laughter, ideas, and affirmation of the importance of imagination and humour - and leave with your reading list to save the world!

Recommended All Ages



ADULTS \$15 | 17 AND UNDER \$10

STORY ADVENTURES FOR LITTLE READERS

11AM
NLA Forecourt



WILDLY WONDERFUL WILDLIFE

Roar, stomp, totter and explore the amazing world of wildlife with authors **Sophie Gillies, Bronwyn Saunders and Amelia Tonta**. From *Wombat Poos Are Square* to *Diprotodon* to *Jeff Giraffe*, this story time is packed with fascinating animal facts, lots of laughs and larger-than-life adventures. Free and perfect for budding nature enthusiasts age 3 to 6 and their grown-ups!

FREE – BOOKINGS REQUIRED

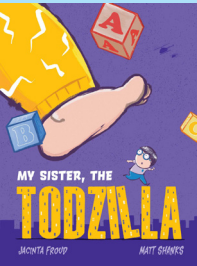
Recommended Ages 3+

12.45PM
NLA Forecourt



MISCHIEF, MAYHEM AND MARVELLOUS ADVENTURES

Dragons, daring adventures and monstrously silly fun await with authors **Sandra Bennett, Jacqueline De Rose-Ahern and Jacinta Froud**. Dive into *Dragons Drumming*, *Charlie’s Adventures... in Hawaii* and *My Sister, the Todzilla* as these lively stories whisk little imaginations away on exciting journeys filled with laughter, surprises and unforgettable characters. Free and perfect for little explorers.



FREE – BOOKINGS REQUIRED

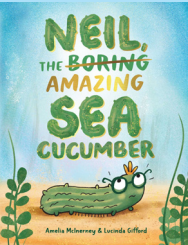
aged 3 - 6 and their grown-ups!

2.30PM
NLA Forecourt



SERIOUSLY SILLY STORIES

Join **Maura Pierlot, Catherine Meatheringham and Amelia Tonta** for a laugh-out-loud story time as they read their books *Our Family Zoo*, *Goose on the Loose* and *Neil the Amazing Sea Cucumber*. Full of seriously silly adventures these three fabulously funny tales will have everyone giggling from start to finish. Free and perfect for little ones who love to laugh aged 3 - 6 and their grown-ups!



FREE – BOOKINGS REQUIRED

Recommended Ages 3+

SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER

Museum of Australian Democracy at Old Parliament House

10AM

Senate Chamber

ADULT \$30 | CONG \$25

WAVE OF ONE NATION

With an eye on Donald Trump and Nigel Farage, Pauline Hanson is riding an orange wave, this time with the political clout of Barnaby Joyce and Gina Rinehart’s money. **Ashlynn McGhee, Karen Middleton and Royce Kurlmelovs** look at One Nation’s power play and explore how fear of the future and nostalgia for the past explain much of what is going on. The implosion of the Coalition and fracturing of Australian politics has created an opening... what might happen next?

10AM

Representatives Chamber

ADULT \$30 | CONG \$25

THE LAST BEST PLACE ON THE INTERNET

Wikipedia is one of humanity’s most underappreciated triumphs - a standout in the cesspool that is much of the internet - and it has been achieved by unpaid, amateur and mostly anonymous volunteers. Join **Richard Cooke and Bernard Keane** to foray into the Wonderful World of Wikipedia, its controversies and characters.



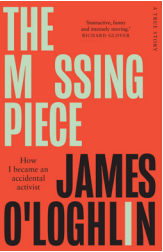
11.45AM

Senate Chamber

ADULT \$30 | CONG \$25

MR FLUFFY AND ACCIDENTAL ACTIVISM

Mr Fluffy houses have had a huge impact on the Canberra community. Jum Wallner grew up in one of them and at age 54 was diagnosed with mesothelioma. This is the story of how he, his brother and his friend James O’Loughlin campaigned to get two governments to co-operate to take care of Mr Fluffy victims. It’s also a broader story about the power of optimism, friendship and learning how to become an accidental activist. As we face other community challenges, join **James O’Loughlin** for a timely conversation about how to galvanise action and influence government while retaining humour and a sense of what matters most in life. Hosted by **Frank Bongiorno**.



11.45AM

Representatives Chamber

ADULT \$30 | CONG \$25

THE BIG STEAL WITH PAUL BARRY

Entrepreneur Sanjeev Gupta was going to rescue the Australian, UK, European and US steel industries - and save the planet with green steel. He did none of these things, but he did get very rich. Hear the extraordinary story, told by former Media Watch host and Walkley Award-winning journalist **Paul Barry** in a live *Follow the Money* podcast recording with **Ebony Bennett**. We’ll ask: why do we buy into ‘corporate saviour’ myths? And what does it mean for communities left to pick-up the pieces?



Supported by The Australia Institute.

This stream of the Canberra Writers Festival is warmly supported and sponsored by the Vice-Chancellor’s Centre of Public Ideas at the University of Canberra. It extends the work of the Centre, and of the University of Canberra generally, by promoting civil, evidence-based and historically informed discussion of some of the most challenging questions and problems facing Australia and the world today.

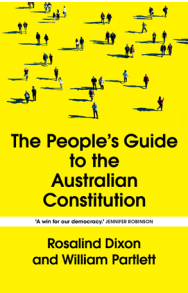
1.30PM

Representatives Chamber

ADULT \$30 | CONG \$25

DECIDING OUR DEMOCRACY

As we look around the globe and see growing threats to democracy, more of us are asking ourselves – do we have effective electoral, legislative and legal systems and social norms here in Australia to guide and protect us? Is the Australian Constitution up to the task? Join this expert panel of legal and political scholars **Rosalind Dixon, William Partlett and Kim Rubenstein** in conversation with **Adele Webb** to discuss how we can best take part in our democracy as active citizens.



1.30PM

Senate Chamber

ADULT \$30 | CONG \$25

TURBULENCE & TIMIDITY

What can we learn looking back on Australian political leadership over the last 25 years? Seven Prime Ministers, global and national tumult, dwindling support for established parties and declining public trust. Join political researchers and commentators **Paul Kelly, Michelle Grattan and Paul Strangio** in conversation with **Ashlynn McGhee** to distil key lessons needed to navigate the rocky path ahead.

Supported by The Conversation.

3.15PM

Senate Chamber

ADULT \$30 | CONG \$25

SECRETS OF THE PRESS GALLERY: 125 YEARS OF FEDERAL POLITICAL REPORTING

What really happens behind the headlines? For 125 years, the Federal Parliamentary Press Gallery has had a front-row seat to Australia’s biggest political dramas, from leadership spills to budgets and elections. Join **David Speers, Katina Curtis, Natassia Chrysanthos and Dennis Shanahan** as they reveal the biggest scoops, untold stories, and high-stakes moments from inside Parliament House, and explore what the future holds for political journalism.



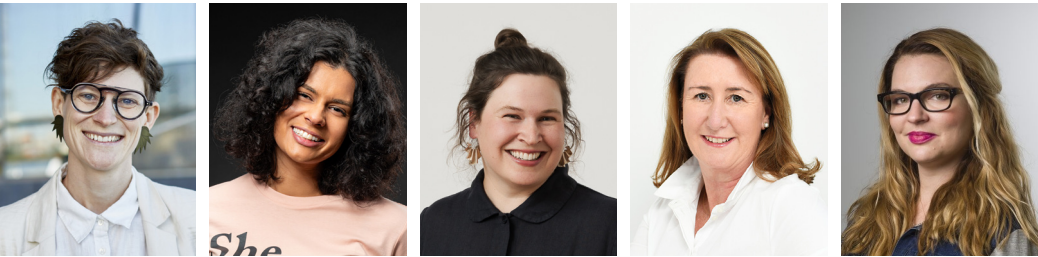
3.15PM

Representatives Chamber

ADULT \$30 | CONG \$25

WAY WOMEN LEAD

Want to be inspired by the stories of brilliant women? Join us to celebrate books that speak boldly about the vital role of women in leadership roles across the media, economics, history and space and technology sectors. At a time when the brologarchy of tech and space entrepreneurship looms large, the fields of economics and history are still dominated by men and we need voices in our media sector holding those in power to account, it’s time to cheer and rally around our panel of **Elise Stephenson, Sita Sargeant, Catie Bradbear, Melissa Bray and Amy Remeikis** for a conversation about the way women lead and why it matters more than ever.



SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER

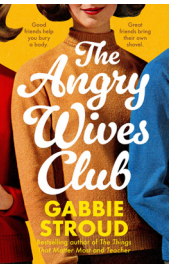
National Portrait Gallery

10AM

Terrace Room

FAITHFUL AND FURIOUS SISTERS

Angry wives, furious femmes and searching sisters let's unite around fiction centred on women asking questions about the relationships they're in, rules they've obeyed and what they truly want from their lives. In these books we explore women of all ages who want to create something else for themselves. What happens when sisters find each other and female friendship becomes the most radical act of all? Join **Gabbie Stroud, Ayesha Inoon and Sophie Green** for a morning of hard-truths and hilarity!



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

10AM

Liangis Theatre

THE ELDERS

Dan Bouchier has been on a journey to listen and learn from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander leaders from across Australia. Join **Dan Bouchier, Ian Hamm and Dana Morse** as they reflect and honour Elders' stories. This will be a special conversation of truth-telling and celebration of First Nations' knowledge and leadership.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

11.45AM

Terrace Room

CURIOSITY AND PHILOSOPHY OF CHEF JOSH NILAND

Chef Josh Niland grew up in East Maitland and, due to a childhood illness, spent many weeks at home watching daytime TV cooking shows and reading cookbooks. He entered the world of restaurants, never looked back and is now an international award-winning chef, restaurateur and author. Join **Josh Niland and Amanda Whitley** for a conversation about how as a young kid Josh followed his curiosity and instincts all the way to becoming a global superstar - 'the fish butcher' - revolutionising how we cook, transport, age and store fish. What does it really take to follow your dreams, respect ingredients and achieve brilliance on the plate?



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

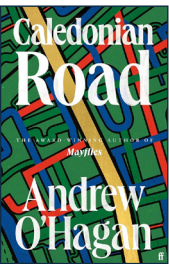
In partnership with HerCanberra.

11.45AM

Liangis Theatre

EMPIRE AND DECLINE WITH ANDREW O'HAGAN

Internationally acclaimed Scottish writer **Andrew O'Hagan** has a reputation for his searing insights into contemporary Britain. He joins **Malcolm Knox** for a conversation about his mighty work *Caledonian Road*. Together they'll join the dots between one man, his city of London and the inherited privilege of empire, all tumbling down.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

1.30PM

Terrace Room

WITCH, HATE, LOVE

Being a witch has always been a brave move. From history to the present day, join **Charlie Jane Anders and Kate Forsyth** for stories of women embracing their magic, defying those that seek to tear them down and unveiling their almighty true selves. Be a part of this live Secrets from the Green Room podcast event hosted by **Karen Viggers and Irma Gold** for epic tales of love, treachery and destruction.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

1.30PM

Liangis Theatre

INDIGENOUS FUTURISMS

First Nations speculative fiction takes us to other realms and distant planets while tackling home truths. This panel will talk celebrating diverse worldviews, surviving and thriving beyond apocalypse, reframing timelines (and time) and much more. An event for those that revel in the art of world building across science fiction, fantasy and mystery. Join First Nations panellists **John Morrissey, Jacob K Gallagher and Lisa Fuller** as they fly us to amazing places and ask big questions about the future.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

In partnership with AIATSIS.

3.15PM

Terrace Room

HOW TO READ FOR JOY

With the brilliant book under threat, it's time to raise the stakes - by reading in a way that brings us more joy and satisfaction! We get more from books when we think deeply about the questions they unleash. Join **Elaine Castillo and Beejay Silcox** as they invite us to approach our books with a critic's eye. It's time for a more exciting relationship between us and our bookshelves.



ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

3.15PM

Liangis Theatre

AUTHORITARIANISM AND ME

Some of us are wondering whether we need to better understand how countries descend into violence, authoritarianism and revolution...in case we need to know in our lifetimes. Some of us are remembering the histories that already flow through ourselves, our families and our communities. Join **Marika Sosnowski and Nicole Abadee** for a discussion about checkpoints and camps spanning 1930s Europe to the modern-day Levant, and from the Syrian resistance against the Assad regime all the way to Australia.

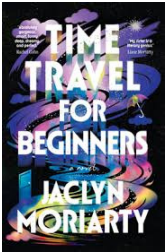


ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

CANBERRA LAUNCH

JACLYN MORIARTY:
TIME TRAVEL FOR
BEGINNERS

Function Room



Jaclyn Moriarty comes from a very bookish family. She did her English thesis on Roald Dahl, has written a swag of acclaimed books and is in Canberra to sprinkle her fairy dust combo of magic, heartache and warmth. Roll up speculative fiction fans! Would you sign up to The Agency around the corner to travel back in time? Join us for this special conversation between Jaclyn and **Garth Nix** about the sheer delight of books as portals to other worlds.

10AM ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

CANBERRA LAUNCH

MIRANDI RIWOE:
A SHORT HISTORY
OF LONGANS

Activity Room

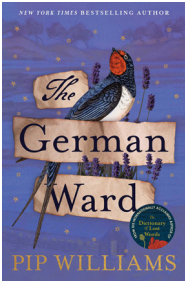


Join **Mirandi Riwoe** and **Qin Qin** for the Canberra launch of *A Short History of Longans* and to share a love of beautifully written family sagas. This story is inspired by Mirandi's great-great-great grandmother, Maria, who arrived in Australia as part of the Mayo Orphan Scheme during the Irish Famine, and a Chinese bushranger based in the Queanbeyan area. Cue stunning prose bearing tales of intrigue and heartache down generations.

10AM ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

WHY WE LOVE
HISTORICAL NOVELS

Function Room



Join **Kate Forsyth**, **Pip Williams** and **Alex Sloan** for a discussion with about why they love writing historical fiction and the fascination the past holds for us all. How do they navigate research rabbit-holes, while daring to deploy their passion for plot and express true love on the page?

11.45AM ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

THE FIRST
INVENTORS

Activity Room



Join us for an adventure into deep history to discover how Indigenous knowledge shaped the Australian continent. We'll journey through astronomy, firestick farming, international trade and open-sea navigation. Our expert panel of **Lynette Russell**, **Billy Griffiths**, **Sean Ulm** and **Craig Cormick** will distil what they've learnt by honouring old ways of knowing and working together on cutting-edge collaborative research.

In partnership with AIATSIS.

11.45AM ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

WRITING THE BUSH,
WRITING THE OCEAN

Function Room



Nature can reveal character. It can be the life force behind tender and unflinching writing about relationships with each other and ourselves. Join **Inga Simpson**, **Lulu Houdini** and **Ilka Tampke** as they surround us with words of nature and help us see our world and place within it. Let's find the through lines, rivers that remember and the bush that hums with life to restore both land and ourselves.

1.30PM ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

THE ART OF
GOOD SPEECH

Activity Room



Do you have a favourite stirring speech? Speechwriting comes with great responsibility, and we need words that reveal truth, inspire and offer opportunity for people to move closer together (not further apart) now more than ever! This expert panel of writers from the U.S and Australia **Stephen Fishbach**, **Lucinda Holdforth** and **Joshua Black** will share their experiences across policy, business and community campaign speechwriting - the heart soaring highs and difficult lessons learnt!

1.30PM ADULT \$30 | CONC \$25

17 OCT – 10.00-11.30AM

ASK MICHAEL ROBOTHAM

National Library of Australia,
Ferguson Room

What does it really take to discover your own secret sauce and deploy it to write bestselling psychological thrillers and crime? Join international bestselling author **Michael Robotham** as he shares an insider's view of the writing life. This Q&A format will allow you to find out what you really need to know about how to tell a fantastic story and tread the path towards publication. Come along with the questions you want to ask to make this most of this rare opportunity. This session will be facilitated by crime writer and memoirist, **Peter Papathanasiou**.

ADULT \$70 | CONC \$55

17 OCT – 12.30-2.00PM

COMICS AND ZINE WORKSHOP
WITH CHRISTOF BOGACS

National Library of Australia,
Ferguson Room

Discover the exciting world of comics and zines in this hands-on workshop for young artists aged 7 to 12 with celebrated illustrator and comic artist **Christof Bogacs**. Young creators will learn how to turn their ideas into stories using words, pictures and plenty of imagination. Through simple drawing techniques, comic storytelling and DIY zine-making, participants will create their own mini publication to take home. Whether you love to draw, write or invent characters, this fun workshop celebrates the joy of making and sharing original stories.

Recommended ages: 7-15
In partnership with Impact Comics

TICKETS: \$30

17 OCT – 3.00-4.30PM

DEMYSTIFYING PUBLISHING
WITH SOPHIE HAMLEY

National Library of Australia,
Ferguson Room

There is an air of mystery surrounding the publishing industry and it can be hard to work out whether you have a book idea and/or manuscript that might catch the eye of a publisher and the steps you might take to have it considered. Experienced author and publisher **Sophie Hamley** (who writes as Sophie Green) will ask questions that help reveal: the type of publishing outcome you might be after and why; what different publishers are looking for; and how to start thinking about pitching your work. This session will be facilitated by writer and memoirist, **Qin Qin**.

ADULT \$70 | CONC \$55

18 OCT – 10.00-11.30AM

THE ART OF DIALOGUE
WITH JORDAN PROSSER

National Library of Australia,
Ferguson Room

Want to write dialogue that zings and sings on the page or screen? Join novelist and screenwriter, **Jordan Prosser**, as he shares his Top 10 Tips for writing killer dialogue that reveals your characters and builds the world of your story. In this session, participants will get a chance to hear from Jordan about his practice before analysing some standout scenes and discussing the golden rules of dialogue writing (including when to break them). Come with an existing dialogue scene you want to work on or be prepared to write something on the fly in the room.

ADULT \$70 | CONC \$55

18 OCT – 12.30-2.00PM

SENSE, MEMORY AND MEMOIR
WITH KRIS KNEEN

National Library of Australia,
Ferguson Room

Our senses and memories are precious keys to opening the doors of memoir. This workshop offers participants a unique opportunity to enhance their writing skills under the guidance of award-winning memoirist **Kris Kneen**. It will focus on using sensual writing to transform everyday experiences into immersive narratives. Attendees will engage in various exercises, readings and discussions aimed at enriching their descriptive writing and accessing long forgotten memories using the triggers of sensual detail.

ADULT \$70 | CONC \$55

18 OCT – 3.00-4.30PM

MANGA WORKSHOP
WITH QUEENIE CHAN

National Library of Australia,
Ferguson Room

Celebrate your creativity at this exciting manga workshop with acclaimed creator **Queenie Chan**, designed especially for young adults. This hands-on session invites you to explore the art of manga through character design, expressive drawing and storytelling. Unleash your imagination, while discovering professional techniques and connecting with other aspiring artist. This fun and welcoming workshop is suitable if you're picking up a pencil for the first time or already creating your own comics and manga. An inspiring opportunity to learn from one of Australia's leading manga artists.

Recommended ages: Young Adult
In Partnership with Impact Comics

TICKETS: \$30



FESTIVAL HQ



FRIDAY 16 OCTOBER

	National Library of Australia		Verity Lane	Other venues	
	Theatre	Level 4	Louie Louie		
3.45PM					
4PM	ACT Book of the Year Award				
4.15PM					
4.45PM					
5PM		The Library That Made Me			
5.15PM					
5.30PM					
5.45PM					
6PM			Cyberspace of Castillo	She Who Tastes, Knows: Food & Storytelling Café Stepping Stone, Dickson	Women of Crime The Hyatt Canberra, Griffin's Lounge
6.15PM					
6.30PM	From Psychics to Psychedelics with Judith Lucy				Adaptation with Susan Orlean Dendy Cinemas, Canberra Centre
6.45PM					
7PM					
7.15PM					
7.30PM					
7.45PM					
8PM			How Do You Survive Reality TV?		
8.15PM					
8.30PM					
8.45PM					

SUNDAY 18 OCTOBER

	National Library of Australia			Icon Water Festival Lawn		MOAD		
	Theatre	Level 4	Ferguson Room	Marquee	Forecourt	Sen Chambers	Rep Chambers	
8.30AM								
9.30AM								
10AM	Let's chat with R.A. Spratt!	Book Launch: Before It Was Called Science	The Art of Dialogue with Jordan Prosser	Canberra's Own Shining Stars: The 2026 Children's Book Council of Australia Awards		Wave of One Nation	The Last Best Place on the Internet	
10.15AM								
10.30AM								
10.45AM								
11AM					Wildly Wonderful Wildlife			
11.15AM								
11.30AM								
11.45AM	Andy Griffiths, Bill Hope and The Gigantic Knucklehead	Art Fights the Doomscroll!		Morris Gleitzman: Dangerously Great Storytelling		Mr Fluffy & Accidental Activism	The Big Steal with Paul Barry	
12PM								
12.15PM								
12.30PM								
12.45PM			Sense, Memory and Memoir with Kris Kneen		Mischief, Mayhem and Marvellous Adventures			
1PM								
1.15PM								
1.30PM	Welcome to The Multiverse of Amie Kaufman	Amazing Journeys & Extraordinary Histories			Fearless Boys Who Make Their Own Adventures		Turbulence and Timidity	Deciding our Democracy
1.45PM								
2PM								
2.15PM								
2.30PM					Seriously Silly Stories			
2.45PM								
3PM			Manga Workshop with Queenie Chan					
3.15PM	Top 100 Books Australian Books	Climate Wars and Political Intrigue		The Future of Reading is the Future of Us!		Secrets of the Press Gallery: 125 Years of Federal Political Reporting	Way Women Lead	
3.30PM								
3.45PM								
4PM								
4.15PM	Join the Countdown: ABC Radio National's Top 100 Books							
5PM								
5.15PM								
5.30PM								
5.45PM								

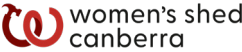
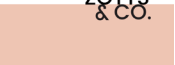
National Portrait Gallery		National Archives of Australia		Other venues
Terrace	Theatre	Function	Activity	
				Bird by Bird: The Art of Noticing Botanic Gardens
Faithful & Furious Sisters	The Elders	Jaclyn Moriarty: Time Travel for Beginners	Mirandi Riwoe: A Short History of Longans	
Curiosity and Philosophy of Chef Josh Niland	Empire & Decline with Andrew O'Hagan	Why We Love Historical Novels	The First Inventors	
Witch, Hate, Love	Indigenous Futurisms	Writing the Bush, Writing the Ocean	The Art of Good Speech	
How To Read For Joy	Authoritarianism and Me			She Writes History Walk Gorman Arts Centre

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS

The Canberra Writers Festival would not be possible without the support of our volunteers, local business and community partners.







MEDIA PARTNERS

We also acknowledge and thank our media partners, who continue to support storytelling across the Canberra region.





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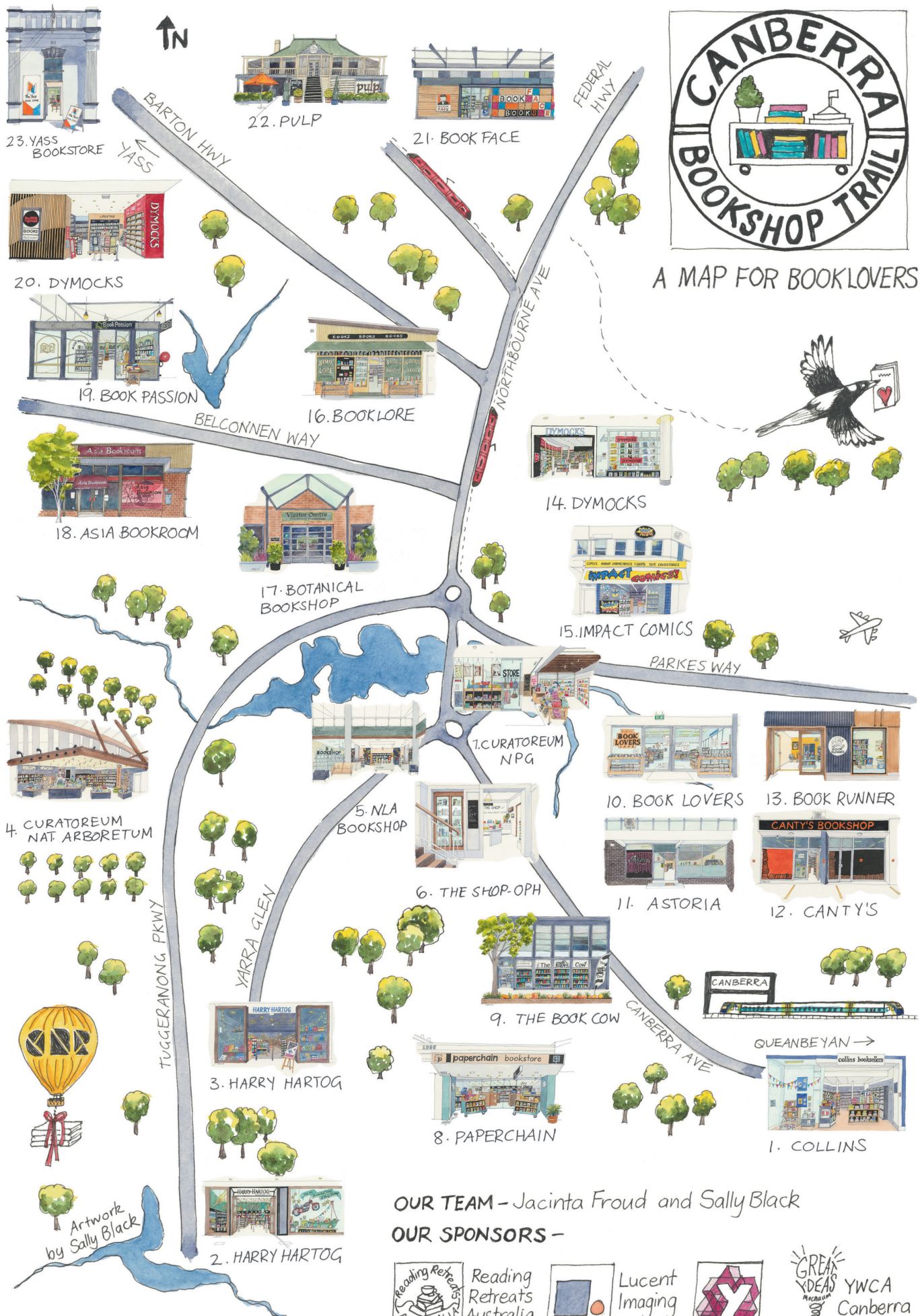
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PROGRAM &
TICKETS
WWW.CSFF.COM.AU



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OUR TEAM - Jacinta Froud and Sally Black
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