

[ This article is a sample of writing only – for more up -to-date information about what Ballarat Writers are up to visit <https://ballaratwriters.com/> ]

## BALLARAT WRITERS INCORPORATED 2017 IN REVIEW

Literature goes on and so must we!

The committee of Ballarat Writers: Irene Warfe (chairperson) Philip Green and Rebecca Spark (who shared competitions officer this year) Joy Merritt, Rebecca Fletcher, and Danielle O'Donnell were involved in promoting membership, running membership evenings once a month, planning workshops, running the Southern Cross Short Story Competition, a fundraising Trivia night, and planning for 2018. The local business community showed good support of our fundraising efforts.

Members nights included readings from members, and special talks from Melbourne poet Peter Bakowski's, and members Lynette McClenaghan, and Neville Hiatt. Attendees enjoyed fun, conversation, and raffles.

The members projects continued to provide interesting and encouraging activities for writers in 2017.

*Words Out Loud*, the local opportunity for members to share poetry and short pieces of writing with an enthusiastic audience, while enjoying a drink, a door prize, a laugh, and sometimes a tear, was held throughout 2017 on the third Thursday of each month. The venue throughout 2017 was the Babushka Lounge which unfortunately has closed. (Thanks, and a fond farewell). Congratulations to Kirsten McDermott, and Jason Nahrung for being organisers and stalwarts. The nights are well attended, and a commitment was made to find a home for 2018. A special mention belongs to Kirsten who during the year discovered she was the winner of the **best horror novella** in the 2016 Aurealis Awards for *Burnt Sugar*.

We are pleased to announce the 2018 *Words Out Loud* will be held in the **The Printer's Room** beneath Sebastian's in Lydiard Street (accessed from Camp Street) on the third Thursday of each month. The inaugural 2018 night was Thursday 18<sup>th</sup> of January, and the next one will be the 15<sup>th</sup> of February commencing at 7 pm.

Write Club was held at Racer's Café on most Sunday afternoons throughout 2017. From 2pm to 5pm aficionados of coffee and scribbling (no lack of seriousness intended), wrote together and shared occasional conversation. Congratulations to Stephen Brown for continuing to host this, and for encouraging attendees. In 2018, Write Club will continue each Sunday afternoon between 2pm and 5pm at Racers Café on Lake Wendouree, corner of Webster Street and Lake Parade, just look for the quiet people with laptops and notebooks.

Critique groups were promoted by the committee of Ballarat Writers in 2017, resulting in one being formed which commenced in September. It consists of seven regular members who meet to give feedback on the structure and quality of each other's writing, and to discuss and share knowledge about anything relevant to writing and the writers' life.

In 2018, the first critique group which meets at Creswick at the Bean and Barrow on Saturdays at 11.30 am, each fortnight (the next will be on January 20<sup>th</sup>) will continue.

A second critique group will commence in February. There are currently five members who have expressed a firm interest in attending the second group which leaves room for around five to seven

more. This second group will be held on a Tuesday evening between 6 pm and 8 pm commencing on the 20<sup>th</sup> of February 2018. The first meeting of this second group will be held in the function room at the Bunch of Grapes Hotel.

This year a workshop was held in July with Maurilla Meehan: *Writing Superb Short Stories*. Eight members and friends attended this workshop held at MADE in Eureka Street Ballarat. Members reported an interesting and fruitful time under the tutelage of Maurilla and the encouragement of other workshop attendees.

This workshop was held in the lead up to the biennial Southern Cross Literary Short Story Competition, as Maurilla was the judge of the 2018 competition. Congratulations to the winner Suzannah Churchman, and runners up Maryann Ross (a local and a member – Congrats) and Kathryn George. Many thanks to our readers who gave their full attention to our 119 entries. Thanks to Susan Coleridge, Karen Sparnon, Delia Thornton, and Cate Whitehead.

The Pamela Miller Prize was held in November, to finish off a year of Flash Fiction competitions held each month for Ballarat Writers members. The winner of the 2017 Pamela Miller Prize was Jennifer Pont.

Finally, but certainly not least a wonderful job was done by **The Ballarat Writers' Festival Committee** [you can contact Ballarat Writers' Festival on Facebook] with the support of the Ballarat Writers Incorporated Committee. David Twomey, Amber Wells, Irene Warfe, Mary Debrett, and Heather Roche worked hard to put together a wonderful festival. The festival was held on October 20-22, and was well reviewed on social media. The challenge was funding and we received marvellous support in both cash and kind from the Ballarat City Council, Federation University (with special thanks to Bryce Ives) Collins Books, ABC 107.9 FM, **Museum of Australian Democracy** at Eureka, Revolution Print, and Writers' Victoria. Special thanks to Angela Savage from Writers' Victoria. Local volunteers assisted on the day along with other volunteers from as far away as Melbourne.

We were overwhelmed by the good will shown by presenters from all over Australia, and especially our local and Victorian state writers. There are too many to mention here, but the committee has passed their personal thanks to them all. All presenters gave great talks to, and held effective workshops for Festival attendees. You may read some of those wonderful authors' writing in this blog as we move towards another great festival. Ballarat will be hosting future writing festivals, and we hope they will have local flavour, while supporting great Australian and overseas writing.

If you would like to become a member of Ballarat Writers, or find out about upcoming events log onto [ballaratwriters.com](http://ballaratwriters.com), like us on Facebook, or drop into the Bunch of Grapes on the last Wednesday of each month from January to November. The next night will be held in the function room at the Bunch of Grapes, Pleasant Street South, Ballarat, from 6pm on 31<sup>st</sup> of January.

We like to think our local writers' community is a treasure of skills and encouragement that can help you enjoy and reach your writing dreams. We need you as much as you need us (we like to think). Come along and join in or create what captures your interest soon.

Happy Writing!