SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

YEAR IN REVIEW

ABOUT US

Sydney Writers' Festival brings together a broad and engaged community around the sharing of books, writing and ideas.

Each May, we host brilliant storytellers across all forms in a thoughtful, challenging and enjoyable week-long celebration of writing, books and ideas at our home at Carriageworks in Sydney's Inner West.

Since our first Festival in 1997, the world's best novelists, poets, journalists, public intellectuals, economists, politicians, podcasters and scientists have come together to discuss some of the most pressing issues of our times on our stages. By showcasing a wide range of Australian and International writers, the Festival helps nurture Australia's literary community and culture as a whole. We are proud to present a Festival that through careful curation acts as a barometer of the world around us, and offers an invitation to hear new ideas, stories and voices in our beautiful city.

Our programming speaks – urgently and clearly – to the world as it is today and showcases contemporary and diverse writers including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices, Australia's first storytellers.

We are a not-for-profit organisation and accessibility for audiences is a priority for our Festival. We run a free podcast program, which has had over 4.1 million downloads since it began in 2016. One-third of our events are free, and our Live & Local streaming program beams events from our Festival Hub at Carriageworks to regional libraries and community centres right across the country.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Sydney Writers' Festival acknowledges the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of this nation. They are the first storytellers of our land and we honour their tradition of passing down stories.

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which our events take place. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR CEO BROOKE WEBB

At Sydney Writers' Festival, we are proud to create spaces where readers step beyond their own experiences and, for a time, inhabit the life and thoughts of a writer.

We have long believed that writers' festivals serve as the antidote to the algorithm – where we create a place for the community to experience deep listening, nuance and genuine connection.

Recognised among the world's top five literary festivals, Sydney Writers' Festival reaffirmed its standing in 2025.

Success at Sydney Writers' Festival is measured in many ways: audience reach, financial performance, media impact and artistic excellence. In 2025, we exceeded expectations across every area – program delivery, operations, audience experience, and financial results – thanks to the expertise and commitment of our team and the dedication of more than 280 volunteers.

The 2025 Festival achieved the highest box office revenue in our history – an extraordinary milestone. Equally significant was our deepened engagement with broader and more diverse communities across NSW and beyond, delivering inclusive experiences that celebrated writing and literature in all its forms. Highlights included a first-time partnership with Vivid Sydney, through which we showcased our commitment to First Nations voices, as well as accessibility initiatives such as expanded closed captioning and translation services – removing barriers and enabling more people and communities to engage with stories, ideas and the written word.

This year's Festival welcomed more than 110,000 attendances – a 21% increase on 2024 – with over 7,000 first-time attendees who chose 2025 as the year to be part of something special. Ticket sales rose by 14% compared to the previous year. Through Live & Local, 143 venues across 83 partners – from Darwin to Devonport – tuned in, extending Sydney Writers' Festival's reach nationwide. Internationally, our digital audience continued to expand, with growing engagement from the US, Europe and the UK.

Behind the scenes, we trialled new initiatives in food and beverage and digital engagement to enhance the Festival experience. Artistically, the 2025 program brought acclaimed international writers into conversation with the most important and exciting Australian voices, offering big ideas, deep analysis, moving storytelling – and joy!

Looking ahead, we will continue to build on this momentum – strengthening partnerships, broadening access and nurturing the next generation of writers and readers.

The Festival remains a place to listen to those who wrestle with complexity and transform it into language that helps us all. Thank you for your open minds, ears and hearts. Together with our audiences, authors, publishers, donors, cultural partners, sponsors, supporters and volunteers, we will continue to nurture spaces that are braver, not safer.

A MESSAGE FROM OUR **ARTISTIC DIRECTOR ANN MOSSOP**

In 2025, Sydney Writers' Festival restated our firm commitment to freedom of speech and to including a diversity of voices on contested topics in a climate where freedom of expression in the arts in Australia had been under intense scrutiny.

This commitment was vindicated by the success of the festival and the vibrant discussions we hosted with writers from Australia and around the world. Huge crowds and an amazing cohort of international guests gave the Festival tremendous energy and atmosphere. Audiences turned out in their thousands for sold-out sessions that featured difficult conversations and contentious issues.

Responding to the Festival theme 'In This Together' we opened with moving performances from Thomas Mayo, Nardi Simpson, Lemn Sissay and Jeanette Winterson. Talking about the past and future of First Nations in Australia and our relationship with the environment and with each other, it was a brilliant introduction to the festival. Anna Funder delivered a closing address that was personal, provocative and timely under the title Bears Out There: Writing in the Age of Bots and Broligarchs.

Our program at Sydney Town Hall was particularly successful this year. A fiction double bill with Liane Moriarty and David Nicholls followed by a conversation with Marian Keyes guided by Holly Wainwright was an evening full of laughter and joyful reflection on the challenges of bringing everyday concerns to life.

Jeanette Winterson's tour de force account of *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit* on its 40th birthday was followed by a rich and rewarding conversation with Booker Prize–winner Samantha Harvey and a powerful evening of poetry from the Bankstown Poetry Slam joined by Palestinian poet Plestia Alaqad.

Taking place within weeks of the Federal Election our headline political discussion with Barrie Cassidy and Friends (Waleed Aly, George Megalogenis, Amy Remeikis and Niki Savva) sold out the Town Hall and generated a discussion that was tough, nuanced and entertaining to illustrate what is still so powerful about live conversation.

Other highlights for me at the Festival were the return of Charlotte Wood to talk about the arc of her career and to think about Making a Writer with the extraordinary and eloquent Colm Tóibín.

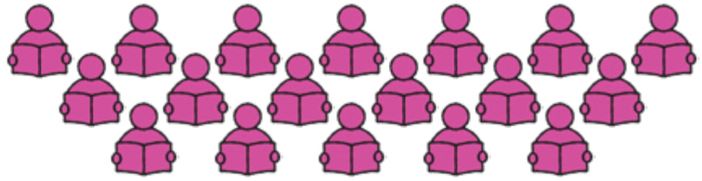
Alan Hollinghurst brought his latest novel *Our Evenings* to life in several beautiful conversations and Philippe Sands came to the Festival to talk about *38 Londres Street: On Impunity, Pinochet in England and a Nazi in Patagonia* with Rosalind Dixon.

New Australian work celebrated at the Festival included books by Robbie Arnott, Melanie Cheng, Markus Zusak, James Bradley, Nardi Simpson, Dylin Hardcastle and Helen Garner. Celebrating some notable Australian anniversaries, Kate Grenville talked about *The Secret River* at twenty and Anne Summers discussed her classic *Dammed Whores and God's Police* on its 50th birthday. Notable debut authors we will not forget included Dominic Amarena, Kaliane Bradley, Hasib Hourani, Ferdia Lennon and Yael van der Wouden.

The Festival theme 'In This Together' was intended to capture the rich narratives of connection and relationships by festival guests as well as broader questions about people and planet, resonating with writing about personal joys and global sorrows. As always, the writers at the Festival brought all of this and so much more to a densely populated week of conversation and discussion, leaving us all refreshed, challenged and enriched.

2025 YEAR IN REVIEW
SNAPSHOT STATS

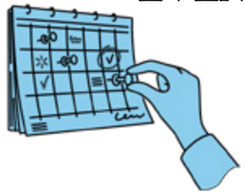
101,038
ATTENDANCES



65,844
TICKETS SOLD

19,009
BOOKS SOLD

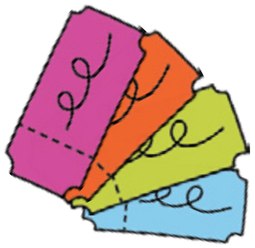
5 DAYS
OF EDUCATION EVENTS



10,779
SCHOOL STUDENTS

1
FULL DAY OF EVENTS FOR FAMILIES

4
AVERAGE TICKETS PURCHASED PER PERSON



167
PAID EVENTS

280
VOLUNTEERS

264
SCHOOLS

64
FREE EVENTS

294
AUSTRALIAN PARTICIPANTS

136
VENUES ACROSS AUSTRALIA LIVE STREAMED EVENTS

1
FULL DAY OF YA EVENTS

36
INTERNATIONAL PARTICIPANTS

FROM OUR AUTHORS

"This is where readers meet each other, where readers meet writers and writers meet their readers."

A.C. GRAYLING

"There's so much energy here and so many people. The crowds are huge!"

ROBBIE ARNOTT

"It's wonderful. Lovely big crowds, very enthusiastic. It's great to have an audience that's really engaged. It's a sign of real cultural vibrancy to have a festival like this."

BEN MACINTYRE

"I love Sydney Writers' Festival, it's great to be on Gadigal land and yarning with mob."

KIRLI SAUNDERS

"The venue is incredible, when I first walked in I was wowed."

KESHE CHOW

"I think the big thing for drag artists is connection. What Sydney Writers' Festival has given us is a new avenue for connection, to share a passion of ours with drag."

ART SIMONE

"Sydney Writers' Festival is one of the great, famous festivals in the literary world. I think it's one of the ones you really want to go to, it has really great audiences. It's like a magnet."

ALAN HOLLINGHURST

"It really is cool to see all these parents who care about instilling a love of literature."

JEFF KINNEY

"I think this is the closest any writer gets to feeling like a rock star."

VIRGINIA GAY

"I love that so many different writers and readers are coming together, it feels like a really energetic space."

KALIANE BRADLEY

TOP 20 BESTSELLERS

1. *Heist 1: The Great Chocolate Caper* by Joel McKerrow
2. *The Girl and the Ghost* by Jacqueline Harvey
3. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* by Jeff Kinney
4. *The Eyes of Gaza: A Diary of Resilience* by Plestia Alaqad
5. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid 19: Hot Mess* by Jeff Kinney
6. *Being Jewish After the Destruction of Gaza* by Peter Beinart
7. *We Are Wolves* by Katrina Nannestad
8. *Orbital* by Samantha Harvey
9. *The Safekeep* by Yael van der Wouden (Paperback edition)
10. *All the Beautiful Things* by Katrina Nannestad
11. *She Speaks!: What Shakespeare's Women Might Have Said* by Harriet Walter
12. *Emmie & Friends 9: Entirely Emmie* by Terri Libenson
13. *Butter* by Asako Yuzuki
14. *You Are Here* by David Nicholls
15. *38 Londres Street: On Impunity, Pinochet in England and a Nazi in Patagonia* by Philippe Sands
16. *Emmie & Friends 1: Invisible Emmie* by Terri Libenson
17. *Urban Legend Hunters: The Dreaded Mr Snipe* by Joel McKerrow
18. *Long Island* by Colm Tóibín
19. *Theory & Practice* by Michelle de Kretser
20. *Waiting for the Storks* by Katrina Nannestad

MARKETING

138,911
SOCIAL MEDIA FOLLOWERS

4.18M
PODCAST DOWNLOADS

50,000
EMAIL SUBSCRIBERS

8M+
IMPRESSIONS ON SOCIAL MEDIA

29
E-NEWSLETTERS SENT

100
RADIO AD PLAYS

40,000
PROGRAM GUIDES

157,790
PODCAST AD LISTENS

413,108
BVOD TRAILER VIEWS

1.26M
WEBSITE VIEWS

4,000
CINEMA AD SCREENINGS

PUBLICITY

3,239
FESTIVAL MENTIONS IN THE MEDIA

197
ARTICLES IN THE NATIONAL AND PRINT MEDIA

614
TV MENTIONS

107.7M
POTENTIAL CUMULATIVE AUDIENCE

1,411
ONLINE ARTICLES

1,017
RADIO MENTIONS

FROM OUR AUDIENCE MEMBERS

"I just found my experience of the Sydney Writers' Festival to be so positive – all of the ushers and staff were lovely."

"'I will definitely be on the look out for more events next year after such a positive experience in 2025."

"Sydney Writers' Festival is my cultural highlight of the year. I am enormously thankful to the SWF."

"'This is seriously my Christmas! It's my favourite time of the year and I've loved this Thursday taking the day away from work to sit and read side by side with strangers and fellow book worms!"

"Carriageworks is a great venue. There was a sense of community and like minded people."

"Keep up the good work!"

"Thank you for all your work on this, especially with the increasing space for queer and culturally diverse voices."

"Sydney Writers' Festival has such a great vibe and is a real tonic at a time of such horrific and frightening global events."

FAMILY PROGRAM

The 2025 Family Program celebrated the joy of storytelling for all ages across a wide range of genres and formats including graphic novels, non-fiction, mystery, fantasy and more.

Held at Carriageworks, Family Day saw hundreds of kids flocking to engage in a jam-packed program that ran across multiple venues and stages, including interactive craft and activity spaces. Book signing queues were huge and the buzz was electric.

Highlights included: Diary of a Wimpy Kid author, Jeff Kinney, with his interactive Hot Mess Show; Jessica Townsend launching the highly awaited fourth volume in the Nevermoor series; everyone's favourite gardener Costa Georgiadis dressed as a gnome; Peter Helliar and Andrew Joyner in conversation with Tanya Hennessy; international cartoonist and graphic novelist Terri Libenson; visiting animals from Taronga Zoo; a live performance of the hit ABC Kids podcast *Story Salad*; and Corey Tutt, creator of the Deadly Science books sharing his knowledge about reptiles. This year's epic illustrator battle saw Kylie Howarth, Jade Goodwin and David Conley pipped at the post by Andrew Joyner.

Kids got crafty with Amanda Lieber, made badges with Cheryl Orsini, contributed to the ever-evolving art wall, hung out in the YOTO listening zones and explored the mobile-library Russ the Story Bus.

RUSS THE STORY BUS

Each year, Russ the Story Bus visits schools to deliver free author talks and free books to students with the aim of sparking a joy for reading. In 2024, Russ completed an eight week tour in Western Sydney, visiting 35 schools and over 9,000 students, with the program giving away over 9,500 books. In 2024, over 13% of participating students identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander and over 73% spoke a language other than English at home.

The impressive line-up of authors travelling with the bus included: Patrick Ness, Andrew McDonald, Ben Wood, Alexa Moses, Dub Leffler, Dani Vee, Jules Faber, Fiona Katauskas, Joel Slack Smith, Kylie Howarth, Louise Park, Marlee Silva, Serena Geddes and a surprise guest visit from footballer Nicho Hynes.

Russ the Story Bus also popped-up in Darling Harbour thanks to a partnership with Place Management NSW for a fun-filled school holiday program featuring Matt Cosgrove, Mo Davey, Mick Elliott, Christopher Cheng, Debra Tidball and Cheryl Orsini.

EDUCATION

The Festival features three unique education programs: Primary School Days; Secondary School Days; and Student Sessions. In 2025, these programs engaged 10,782 young people and were designed to foster the next generation of literature lovers and creative thinkers. Events were held across Sydney, from Sydney Town Hall to the Joan Sutherland Performing Arts Centre in Penrith, to Riverside Theatres in Parramatta.

The incredibly popular Primary School Days sessions were hosted by performance poet and author Joel McKerrow, who not only had everyone on their feet for a series of fun creative breaks, but also nabbed the title of bestselling book at the Festival for *Heist 1: The Great Chocolate Caper*. He was joined on stage by: Katrina Nannestad, who shared the true stories behind her hit historic novels; *New York Times*–bestselling graphic novelist Terri Libenson; and Jared Thomas, a Nukunu man from South Australia who writes at the intersection of First Nations culture and sport. There were also surprise guest appearances each day from the bestselling authors Jeff Kinney and Jacqueline Harvey.

Our Secondary School Days sessions were hosted by Mike Lucas and featured author talks and an insight into the writing process. Students were fortunate enough to hear from bestselling U.S. author Neal Shusterman, alongside local talent Demet Divaroren and Hayley Lawrence.

Thanks to the generous support of the City of Sydney, 2,110 students were able to attend this essential literacy program at no cost to their families or schools.

Created in partnership with the NSW Education Standards Authority, Student Sessions connects students to some of Australia's brightest minds for a thought-provoking program of talks, specially curated to complement the NSW English syllabus in ways that educate and enlighten.

In 2025, we featured two strands that ran simultaneously. The first looked at selected works and authors from the HSC English Prescribed Texts list, these being *Unpolished Gem* with author Alice Pung, and the documentary series *Go Back to Where You Came From* with director Ivan O'Mahoney. We also ran a focus on Shakespeare's women with esteemed actress Dame Harriet Walter. The second stream focused on the craft of writing, with a specific focus on supporting English Extension 2 Major Work projects. Lemn Sissay explored the craft of poetry, while Melanie Cheng and Debra Adelaide tackled the craft of short fiction. All sessions were moderated by expert secondary school educators to ensure a direct link to the syllabus.

As part of our ongoing commitment to provide access to Student Sessions, we continued to live stream sessions to regional NSW and this year we were able to offer 1,072 students from disadvantaged schools access to free tickets to participate live.

YA PROGRAM

Our much-loved All-Day YA program was held at Carriageworks and featured a string of popular panels and launches. Sessions focused on the new wave of horror, the lasting legacy of Judy Blume in contemporary YA, and the rising trend in romantasy. The stellar line-up of bestselling and award-winning authors included Neal Shusterman, Lynette Noni, Amie Kaufman, Meagan Spooner, Tricia Levenseller, Mike Lucas, Margot McGovern, Sophie Clark, Keshe Chow, Steph Tisdell, Ange Crawford and Hayley Lawrence.

RUSS THE STORY BUS

In 2024, Russ the Story Bus, hit the road once again to bring children's authors and storytelling to thousands of children in low socio-economic areas.

Russ is no ordinary bus. With his exterior covered in artwork by leading children's book illustrators, a wrap by Jenny Lovlie designed illustrations, and his award winning interior (Sydney Design Awards 2016) designed by LAVA architects, Russ visits a different primary school every weekday when on tour to conduct an artist talk by a leading Australian children's book writer or illustrator, and students have their choice of book to take home.

Russ the Story Bus provides a creative space where children can browse bookshelves full of the latest children's books, listen to stories, choose a book to take home, hear an author talk about their craft and feel inspired and supported to continue their reading journey.

The 2024 Russ the Story Bus tour consisted of eight weeks in the Greater Sydney Region, and a five day activation at Darling Harbour during the spring school holidays. Russ visited 35 schools and over 9,000 students, over 9,500 books have been given away to students and schools, and signed sets of author's books donated to each visited school's library.

In 2024, over 13% of participating students identified as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander, and over 73% spoke a language other than English at home.

PARTICIPATING AUTHOR FEEDBACK

I just wanted to say what a joy and a privilege it was to be part of Russ the Story Bus. What a brilliant initiative and a really special thing to do for kids who usually wouldn't get these kind of opportunities.

FIONA KATAUSKAS

Russ the Story Bus is a fantastic initiative and I had the best time talking to kids about books, and creativity in general. The entire Russ team ensures the visits go extremely smoothly, and the kids get to enjoy an extremely positive experience with books which can only be a good thing! I had a blast.

JOEL SLACK-SMITH

Visiting schools with Russ the Story Bus was one of the highlights of my year as an author. I met wonderful, engaged kids who were thrilled to talk about writing, and choose a book from the bus. The whole process was well-organised and extremely professional.

ALEXA MOSES

Spending the week on Russ the Bus going from school to school was an absolute joy! We met so many excited kids and supportive librarians, it is the most fun you can have celebrating books and literacy.

I would just say that participating in Russ the Bus was a highlight of my year visiting schools. Author/illustrator visits to schools often energise kids and inspire them to read – but by empowering kids to visit the bus after author/illustrator presentations and choose a free book of their own to keep, the program makes an incredible impact on the lives of hundreds and thousands of children. Children who might never get such an opportunity otherwise. As Ben and I were signing Real Pigeons books, we literally had one kid tell us that they had a bookshelf at home but no books – but that now they own one book, they can put it on their bookshelf. Russ the Bus is the perfect program – it promotes reading, it empowers students, it enriches schools and it provides income opportunities for Australian authors, illustrators, booksellers and the arts professionals. Very impressive.

ANDREW MCDONALD

I had the incredible opportunity to visit schools with Russ the Story Bus, and what I witnessed during my week on the bus was nothing short of extraordinary, not only in how the program was run but in the profound impact it had on the students. The concept is simple but powerful: have students meet an author, choose a book for free and have it signed. Seeing those faces light up on the bus, during the author presentations and at the signing table was pure gold. It was an experience that fostered a love of reading for students who may not otherwise have access to such opportunities. We all know the power of allowing a child to choose their own book. Couple that with taking one home for free, and magic happens. The logistics were handled precisely, and the team managed my week with professionalism and warmth, making the experience genuinely brilliant—even in a heat wave! Thank you so much for all your excellent work and making a difference in these kids' lives. I want to live on that bus!

LOUISE PARK

SCHOOL PARTICIPATION FEEDBACK

The students gained a rich learning experience. It was a magical celebration of books & authors. Louise had the students enthralled! She captured their attention from the start!

The students were delighted to receive a free book & the joy on their faces during & after visiting the bus was priceless.

Thank you for a wonderful visit.

AUBURN PUBLIC SCHOOL

The best part was the FREE book for every child, as our community may not have many books in their homes. Nor do they visit public libraries. The extra books for the school library will help promote reading.

MERRYLANDS EAST PUBLIC SCHOOL

Kylie was phenomenal at selling the author/illustratorship to the students, and it inspired our students to gravitate and rekindle their love towards reading. The free book was the icing on the cake. It helped our community with access to quality books. For many, it was like a souvenir you buy after a day at Disneyland to keep a piece of the magical day they had.

CANLEY HEIGHTS PUBLIC SCHOOL

I really liked that all students were given a chance to browse through the bus at their own pace, they were never hurried out and the organisers were very accommodating to their needs. Many left the bus in excitement and disbelief at being able to choose their own book which they could keep. I felt that students looked at books in a more positive way, the books were valuable to them.

CONDELL PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL

The author talk and book signing - this got our students really excited about reading! One student who doesn't particularly love reading said "this was the best day ever".

GLENWOOD PUBLIC SCHOOL

LIVE & LOCAL

The 2025 Sydney Writers' Festival Live & Local program continued to reach audiences across all Australian states and territories. A total of 82 regional partners hosted streaming events, expanding access to the festival and strengthening regional engagement and programming nationwide, all for free.

23 sessions were streamed from Carriageworks across four days of the Festival, featuring leading Festival guests; A.C. Grayling, Alan Hollinghurst, Anna Funder, Asako Yukuzi, Barrie Cassidy, Ben Macintyre, Charlotte Wood, Clare Wright, Colm Tóibín, Daniel Nour, David Nicholls, Emma Shortis, Gina Chick, Hasib Hourani, Helen Garner, Ian Rankin, Jack Beaumont, Jaclyn Moriarty, Jeff Kinney, Jennifer Byrne, Kaliane Bradley, Kate McClymont, Kate Reid, Liane Moriarty, Lynette Noni, Markus Zusak, Natalie Paull, Nick Bryant, Nicola Moriarty, Richard Fidler, Richard Glover, Robbie Arnott and Rumaan Alam.

THESE SESSIONS REACHED AUDIENCES IN THE REGIONS OF:

AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

ACT Canberra

NEW SOUTH WALES

NSW Central Coast, NSW Central New England Tablelands, NSW Central West, NSW Eurobodalla, NSW Far West, NSW Hunter, NSW Hunter & Mid North Coast, NSW Illawarra, NSW Mid North Coast, NSW New England, NSW New England & Northern Tablelands, NSW Riverina, NSW South Coast, NSW Southern Highlands, NSW Southern Tablelands

NORTHERN TERRITORY

NT Central Australia, NT East Kimberley

QUEENSLAND

QLD Brisbane, QLD Darling Downs, QLD Far North, QLD Fraser Coast, QLD Mackay, Isaac & Whitsunday, QLD Moreton Bay, QLD North, QLD Scenic Rim, QLD South East, QLD Wide-Bay Burnett

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

SA Adelaide, SA Adelaide Hills, SA Eastern Adelaide, SA Eyre Peninsula, SA Eyre Western, SA Kangaroo Island, SA Fleurieu Peninsula, SA Flinders Ranges, SA Greater Adelaide, SA Limestone Coast, SA Southern Adelaide, SA Yorke Peninsula

TASMANIA

TAS Midlands, TAS North West Coast, TAS South Central

VICTORIA

VIC Barwon South West, VIC Gippsland, VIC Hume, VIC Loddon Mallee, VIC Melbourne, VIC North East - Ovens Murray

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

WA Goldfields–Esperance, WA Great Southern, WA Kimberley, WA Peel, WA Perth Metropolitan, WA Pilbara, WA South West, WA Southern Metropolitan Perth, WA Wheatbelt

I love it! Stimulating for me, who loves reading, want to be kept informed about world affairs, politics etc, and good fiction too. A rare opportunity to see and hear from many great authors.

Glasshouse Port Macquarie, NSW

It's a great opportunity to bring urban-based cultural offerings into regional areas via the technology that now exists.

Rural City of Wangaratta, VIC

It was great to be able to sit and watch a presentation from a Writers' Festival without all the associated costs/time involved.

Latrobe Libraries, VIC

Thank you - I loved being able to access this.

Broome Public Library, WA

Thank you once again for offering this to Western Australian metro libraries. These are authors we could never get ourselves - we are a smaller library.

Subiaco Library, WA

We love being a Live & Local partner. The livestream is always extremely popular, and people really appreciate the opportunity to take part in the festival when they might not otherwise be able to attend in Sydney. Thank you for providing this invaluable service to regional communities.

Kiama Libraries, NSW

We are so lucky as a regional area to be able to access these programs.

Gympie Regional Library, QLD

I felt very present in the session despite being so far away, so amazing that the wonderful and open-minded events in Sydney can be participated in here in the Regions, you have made my day!

CTC Robertson, NSW

DIGITAL OUTREACH

ACCESS AND DIGITAL OUTREACH

Inclusion

We are committed to ensuring Sydney Writers' Festival is accessible to and inclusive of all members of the community, and are constantly working to remove physical, financial and other barriers to attendance.

All Festival events are held in accessible venues. During the 2025 Festival, 58 events were Open Captioned in venues and 23 were Closed Captioned via streamed sessions, 15 events were Auslan interpreted and four main venues had Assisted Listening available. More than 100 events are made available online free of charge after each Festival as part of our podcast program.

In 2025, we provided a livestream from one of our largest venues, offering audiences day passes to stream the Festival from home. We streamed 23 sessions across four days from Carriageworks, offering those who are unable to attend in person an option to participate. These audience members could join the live venue audience in submitting questions to the speakers via an online app.

The Festival strives to maintain high satisfaction levels with all partners and audience members, delivering a high-quality program and service, 95% responding an overall satisfaction with the program.

To ensure the Festival is available to people of all income brackets, we deliver an extensive program of free and lower-cost events.

Our much-loved Curiosity Lecture Series offers three days of free programming at Carriageworks.

The Family Day program presents a full day of free programming on the Family Stage and in the Family Area for children of all ages. Our program for young adults, All-Day YA comprises of $25 events. In 2025, the Festival presented 64 free events. The Festival also works with a number of community organisations to offer free access tickets to a broad range of events.

Thanks to our Live & Local program, 23 sessions were streamed live to 136 Venues consisting of Libraries, arts centres and independent venues across regional Australia, at no cost to the venue partner. A reported 8,410 people watched events through the program.

Through our Education access program, 3,352 students were able to attend either Primary School days, Secondary school Days and Secondary Sessions for free. Education access tickets are available to schools with an ICSEA value of under 1,000.

PODCAST STATS

By mid-2025, the Sydney Writers' Festival podcast had been downloaded over 4.18 million times since the launch of the Festival's podcast channel in 2016. Nationally, our subscribers extend from Sydney and regional NSW to Tasmania and the Northern Territory. Our podcasts have been played over 190 countries and have notable followings in the United States and the United Kingdom.

The 2024 podcast program was downloaded over 186,000 times. The top five podcast episodes were:

1. Ann Patchett on Ordinary Joys
2. Bonnie Garmus: *Lessons in Chemistry*
3. Closing Address: Kate Manne on the Future of Misogyny
4. Richard Flanagan and Anna Funder on Writing
5. Charlotte Wood: *Stone Yard Devotional*

PHILANTHROPY

Sydney Writers' Festival is a not-for-profit organisation, **25%** funded by state and local government, **40%** ticket sales and **35%** through private giving and philanthropy. We could not do the Festival without you.

For over 28 years, Sydney Writers' Festival has been at the heart of storytelling in Sydney, across NSW and around the country. It is through the amazing support of our community of beloved Patrons that we can present the world's best literary conversations and talks during our annual Festival each May as well as our out of season events.

The mission of Sydney Writers' Festival is to connect writers with readers and create a community for everybody to experience the transformative power of storytelling, words and ideas.

Our Patrons make it possible for us to program over 60 free events at the Festival each year, stream our Festival events to audiences in regional centres across the country through our popular Live & Local program as well as run our cherished Russ the Story Bus; the mobile children's library who visits over 10,000 primary school students in Western Sydney each year, giving many of them their very first book.

In recognition of their generous support, our Patrons enjoy unique and exclusive opportunities to engage with the Festival. These include an advance booking window; a special Festival concierge; invitations to private events from our annual Patron Launch to intimate private dinners featuring celebrated authors; and access to our fully catered Patron Lounge during the Festival.

In 2024/25, Patrons were treated to several special opportunities including an exclusive drinks event prior to Helen Garner at City Recital Hall, an end of year celebration featuring Nick Bryant in conversation with Sydney Writers' Festival Artistic Director Ann Mossop at the ACO as well as an intimate lunch with British historian Simon Schama.

One key group of Patrons are our Salon members, a collective of women who come together throughout the year and during the Festival to champion a strong female voice in literature. In 2025, they chose to support literary icon Jeanette Winterson to attend the Festival to talk about her pioneering debut novel, *Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit*, 40 years after its publication. Jeanette was a Festival highlight and Salonistas enjoyed a special book club event and exclusive drinks with Jeanette prior to her Festival session.

Our programs would not be possible without private support. We encourage those who are passionate about ideas, storytelling and debate to join our inspiring group of supporters and keep us connecting audiences of all ages to literature, creativity, knowledge and ideas.

To find out more about Sydney Writers' Festival's Patron Program or The Salon, and the difference your support can make, please visit swf.org.au/support

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Patrons June 2025

PARTNERSHIPS

Sydney Writers' Festival is proud to be one of the best literary events in the world.

With the commitment of our Festival Partners, we can create a forward-thinking and exciting Festival that lifts the intellectual climate of our city, brings the joy of books to new audiences and presents a public forum for groundbreaking ideas for generations to come.

In 2025, we were thrilled to have so many returning partners including Principal Partner, ARA and our Premier Partner, UNSW. The long-time support demonstrated by so many organisations and cultural institutions highlights the wonderful relationship the Festival has with its sponsors.

Festival partnerships come in all shapes and sizes but ultimately, we share a belief in the power of literature and ideas on an individual and societal level. Through careful consideration and consultation, Sydney Writers' Festival creates bespoke partnerships to suit each organisation's objectives.

Partnership benefits in 2025 involved major event branding and programming alignments, client entertainment and VIP ticketing, private functions and events during the Festival, as well as digital customer rewards and acquisition campaigns.

Sydney Writers' Festival would like to thank our Partners for their commitment to the Festival and we look forward to sharing the Festival's continued success with our Partners for years to come.

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NEXT SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

18–24 May 2026
Program announced March 2026
swf.org.au