



Annual Report

Financial Year Ending 2021

CENTREforSTORIES

100 Aberdeen Street, Northbridge (Boorloo)
Western Australia 6003

E: info@centreforstories.com
T: + 61 8 9328 1443

www.centreforstories.com

f facebook.com/CentreforStories
t twitter.com/Centre4Stories
i instagram.com/centreforstories
in linkedin.com/company/centre-for-stories

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Welcome

Acknowledgement

We thank the ongoing custodianship of the Whadjuk Noongar people, who continue to guide the spiritual, cultural, economic, political and religious life here.

Our vision

We imagine a future in which this city, state, nation and region are enriched through engagement with multiple diverse narratives and in which those who have previously been under-represented, silenced or vilified have an equal and valued voice. This is a cultural change that radiates towards other aspects of society.

Our purpose

Centre for Stories is a professional, community-led arts organisation that uses storytelling to grow skills and confidence, inspire understanding and community cohesion, and drive social change.

With a focus on inclusion, we create opportunities for storytellers who are under-represented in Western Australia's creative community. In sharing their stories with arts and community audiences, we drive social change.

We do this through public events, conversations and festivals; creative and professional development opportunities; mentorships with targeted initiatives; our public reading room and hot desks; publication platforms; and measuring the impact of our work.

Our values

Our work and approach are underpinned by the following values:

Creativity

We believe in the power of storytelling. We are driven by passion and curiosity.

Authenticity

We support storytellers from diverse communities to tell their stories, in their own voices, and in their own ways. Our community-led initiatives are delivered by industry experts who share the same lived experiences as our participants.

Collaboration

We listen and respond to our communities. We amplify the impact of our work through effective and strategic partnerships.

Inclusion

We are outward looking and supportive. We create a safe space for people to come together, share their stories, and learn from one another

On behalf of the Board of Centre for Stories, I am delighted to present the Centre for Stories' 2021 Annual Report.

Centre for Stories has a compelling story of its own to tell. In a changed world completely overshadowed by the threat of a virulent virus, the ongoing concern of climate change and the great moral issues of poverty, racism and violence, Centre for Stories stood tall, providing a haven of calm, of safety and, central to who we are, a place for ideas and thinking about our collective futures.

Now in its sixth year of existence, it has robustly and stylishly come of age, confident in what it does, but remaining open to ideas and innovation. The impact of the pandemic was absorbed and despite the many restrictions, much has been achieved. In a very busy year, funding to commence a new journal, *Portside Review*, was pleasing as was observing our two festivals Backstories and Side Walks growing in sophistication and popularity. Our two festivals, our growing alumni of storytellers and writers, and our widening reach to audiences across our City and State are vindication of the original purpose of a professional, community-led arts organisation that uses storytelling to grow skills and confidence, inspire understanding and community cohesion, and, above all, to influence and drive social change.

Pleasingly, as part of a continuous improvement value, Centre for Stories activities and events are measured and reviewed. A significant report on Centre for Stories' social impact has provided us with confirmation that we are on the right track, and while we strive to improve every day, we have evidence that what we do is meeting a need and is appreciated. Our excellence has been vindicated with some big wins in the competitive grants arena with funding success: The Ian Potter Foundation and Australia Council for the Arts nationally, and closer to home, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries and Lotterywest have been most generous and interested in our work and progress. We are deeply grateful to George Kailis who has provided funding to support a prestigious writing fellowship to honour his mother, Patricia Kailis, AM, OBE, FTSE, FAICD.

This activity is a positive indicator of confidence in what we do and of our growing maturity and focus. Our staff have also excelled. Our Creative Director Robert Wood was awarded the Westpac Social Change Fellowship and our Lead Story Trainer Sisonke Msimang was shortlisted for The Western Australian Writer's Fellowship.

Fundraising is a core activity for the Board as we work to widen our reach, innovate with new programs, and underpin and improve the core activities of storytelling training and enabling. Consolidation to a more robust and enduring operational financial position that enables planning over a three-year cycle remains an ambition for this next period.

In an excellent year of achievement and growth, on behalf of the Board I congratulate our staff for their trust and belief, and their hard work in enabling the purpose and success of Centre for Stories. Centre for Stories' greatest asset is its people – our Staff, our Benefactors, and our Founders. I thank all of them for their continuing support and their outstanding contributions to Centre for Stories in 2021. They have made a difference to our community, and in a year such as this, that has mattered.



**Professor Jane den Hollander, AO
Chair**

Photo: Simeon Neo



This year is Centre for Stories' sixth anniversary. In that time, there have been ups and downs: from moments when we wondered if we could turn on the lights, to great conversations and new-found respect. 2020–2021 has been no different. But we stand here today with a feeling of great achievement and community pride.

We continue to work towards being a safer, more welcoming, inclusive arts organisation that has a social impact. We work with individuals and communities that face complex barriers to acceptance and recognition. We continue to celebrate the diversity of our city through stories in oral and written forms.

There have been many highlights – we had one truly remarkable week in December 2020 when we received Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries funding to start a new literary journal, *Portside Review*; we received notification that our funding application to Australia Council for the Arts was successful; our Creative Director was awarded the Westpac Social Change Fellowship; and we hosted our second year of Side Walks to sell-out audiences.

In the last year, we have successfully doubled our income, and our donors gave generously, enabling us to deliver a range of programs. We were delighted to receive funding from Australia Council for the Arts and The Ian Potter Foundation, and support from our Founders Circle for our signature three-year program Writing Change, Writing Inclusion. Our schools program, with support from our Story Supporters and Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, has reached over 150 students and produced some great outcomes, particularly for the students in the Intensive English Centre at Aranmore Catholic College.

Our backyard community festival Backstories grew in size and scope. We were invited into fourteen backyards, including two in the regions, and we expanded our offering to include independent musicians. Participants and audiences were surveyed for our first social impact study and the outcomes were very heartwarming.

I thank all our generous donors, in particular our Chair, who initiated Raise the Roof – a program focused on supporting young women; George Kailis, who has sponsored the Patricia Kailis International Writing Fellowship; and Baden Offord, Christopher Macfarlane and John Ryan, who have contributed to the Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli Fellowship for a mid-career writer.

We have delivered two festivals, 115 events, trained 32 storytellers, mentored 18 writers, and reached an audience of over 2000 people. We have been the subject of academic papers internationally and reached new networks of peers, collaborators and donors. None of this would have been possible without the unwavering commitment of the staff at Centre for Stories – Robert Wood, Sisonke Msimang, Logan Griffiths, Claudia Mancini, Jay Anderson and Nina Thethy.



Caroline Wood,
Co-founder and CEO



Photo: Jesse Roberts

	2015–2021	2021
Events	437	115
Festivals	11	2
Publications		
DIGITAL	3	3
PRINT	5	1
Stories Produced	371	56
Mentored		
ORAL STORYTELLERS	224	32
WRITERS	53	18
Number of Creatives Paid	563	240
Audience	20,148	2,148
Media Mentions	77	16



Photo: Simeon Neo

3,953 Instagram (Including Portside Review and Backstories)

1,714 Twitter

4,311 Facebook

387 LinkedIn

10,365 Total followers across four platforms

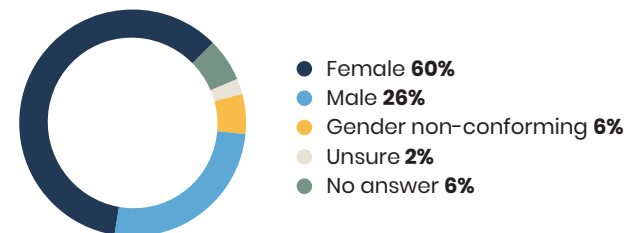
48,328 Website visitors

132,890 Page views

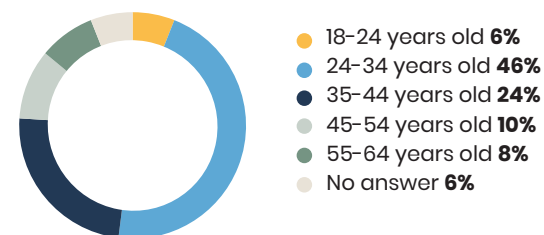
2,754 Newsletter subscribers

The Social Impact Report outlines the findings and insights from research conducted during the 2021 Backstories festival. The report considers the impact of participating storytellers who were undertaking the Centre for Stories' training for the first time and feedback from audience members alongside a data-driven profile of needs that may inform future Backstories festivals and other Centre for Stories programs.

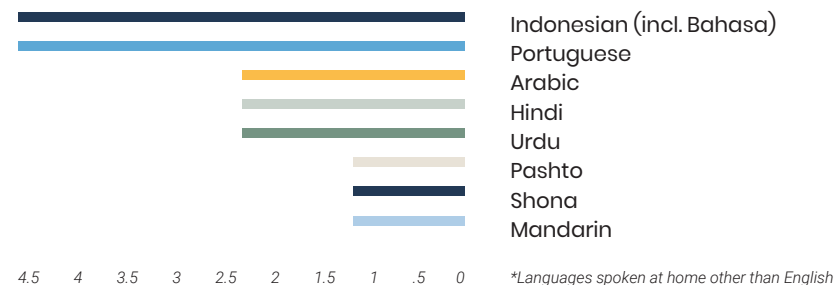
Backstories 2021 storytellers, by gender identity



Backstories 2021 storytellers, by age



Languages spoken at home, by Backstories 2021 storytellers*



Data includes: 20 baseline responses (before participating in Backstories 2021); 20 shift responses (after participating in Backstories 2021). Responses were collected from Perth and regional Western Australia.

Centre for Stories creates a significant positive shift in overall wellbeing for storytellers. The change in self-reported wellbeing for audience members was not statistically significant.

There are a number of key outcomes that contribute to positive change in overall wellbeing, which are unique to storytellers and audience members:

Key outcomes for storytellers

- Connection to family, community and culture
- Problem-solving (resilience)
- Communication skills

Key outcomes for audience

- Connection to culture
- Sense of safety
- Connection to community
- Sense of belonging
- Opportunities to meet new people

While positive outcomes have been achieved, there are priority needs that need to be addressed for some storytellers which will be worked on in the next few years.



Community Connection

+14%

Storytellers feel closer to their community.



Problem Solving

+12%

When confronted with a problem, storytellers can usually find a solution.



Communication Skills*

+12%

Storytellers are able to share their thoughts and feelings with others.



Connection to Culture

+12%

Storytellers feel a closer connection to their culture.



Connection to Family

+10%

After participating in Backstories, storytellers feel closer to family.



Communication Skills*

+9%

Storytellers feel more confident in their ability to express their ideas through story.

Data includes: 20 baseline responses (before participating in Backstories 2021); 20 shift responses (after participating in Backstories 2021). Responses were collected from Perth and regional Western Australia.

**Indicates outcomes shifts that were found to be statistically significant ($p < 0.2$), meaning that observed changes in these outcomes may in part be attributed to program impact and are not due entirely to chance.*

“

You've helped me connect with like minded people. You've helped me connect human to human. You've brought me closer to my community and feel like I belong.

”



Photo: Jesse Roberts

Festivals and Events

Events and festivals hosted by Centre for Stories are dynamic, welcoming and supportive. We invite artists to share their stories in a wide variety of venues that cater to a broad audience. This year our focus has been on outreach, with festivals being a particular highlight.

Feature

Side Walks

Side Walks is an annual pop-up storytelling, literature and ideas festival run by Centre for Stories. In unique venues across Perth and Northbridge, Side Walks is a curated whirlwind of talks, performances and readings with a special emphasis on homegrown talent.

All venues are walking distance from each other in order to facilitate a multi-sited, cohesive experience that is as much about the journey between events as it is the events themselves. Side Walks is about showcasing Perth's creative community and activating non-traditional spaces with arts and cultural programming.

At Side Walks 2020, the program covered a range of topics, including women in politics, self-criticism and the billion-dollar matchmaking industry. This event grew in size from the initial offering in 2019 and ended with a celebratory after party at Alex Hotel.

Photo: Jesse Roberts





Backstories

Our second Backstories festival was held on each Saturday in March 2021 and saw people come together in suburbs from Quinns Rocks to Margaret River. Fourteen backyards in fourteen suburbs opened up their space to the local community, to listen to local musicians and storytellers. The stories shared covered a range of themes and experiences, and generous hosts put on food and drink for guests. Building on the success of the first Backstories in 2020, this festival has become part of the summer cultural landscape with an audience of over 500 people and the involvement of over 80 creatives.

Backstories is an opportunity to showcase the storytellers trained by Centre for Stories during the year. Stories are simple and yet they change lives for storytellers and listeners, opening up our hearts to share in feelings with others and to look at the world in a new way. Backstories offers an opportunity to foster community mindedness and respect for our neighbours, and allows new experiences that are shared, intimate and local.

Held at the end of summer, Backstories takes place in a moment of transition, from the hot weather to cooler evenings, when people are back at work and school. It is a space for people to connect with each other, to spend time in their home suburbs, and to enjoy a small gathering with friendly locals from diverse walks of life. It is a truly unique experience, giving people all over metropolitan and regional WA an opportunity to enjoy the arts in their local area.

“

The impact on me has been significant. Story training has helped me to develop as an emerging artist, writer and poet. It has been a supportive, caring, kind environment fostering positive practical skills, knowledge, mentoring, feedback and help. It has built up my self-esteem and provided personal development.

— Storyteller

”

Funding: Lotterywest, Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, City of Mandurah, City of Bayswater, Founders Circle.



Photo: Liam Moore

Breaking the Glass Slipper

Breaking the Glass Slipper featured readings and performances by participants from our Inclusion Matters mentoring project. The two sold-out events looked at disrupting common narratives centred around whiteness and privilege by hearing from those who don't normally get a platform. Proceeds from ticket sales were donated to Kaatdjin Youth Centre and Autism WA.

Funding: Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Founders Circle. Partner: Alex Hotel.

Future of Black Lives Matter

At the height of the Bla(c)k Lives Matter movement in August 2020, we partnered with Beaufort Rotary Club and hosted a sold-out event at Claisebrook Design Community. With participants from the Black diaspora and local First Nations communities, people spoke about violence, racism, protest, action, and what comes next from a political and cultural perspective. The money raised was donated to Aboriginal Legal Service.

Funding: Beaufort Rotary Club.



Perth Festival

Working with Centre for Stories' lead story-telling trainer and Perth Festival Literature & Ideas curator Sisonke Msimang, emerging writers were invited to speak at an event at His Majesty's Theatre in March 2021. Karen Escobar, Rafael Gonzalez, Nisha D'cruz and Kim Lateef spoke on panels that examined issues such as craft, regionalism and nostalgia.

Margaret River Readers and Writers Festival

In May 2021, Margaret River hosted its annual writers' festival with a program of national and international guests. Participants from our mentoring and hot desk program, including Elham Mohammednejad, Alexander Te Pohe and Kaya Ortiz, were invited to share their thoughts on resistance, beauty and publishing. Emily Sun was also featured in celebration of her debut poetry collection, *Vociferate* / 詠 (Fremantle Press).



Photo: Hannah Uren



Photo: Sophie Minissale

One Helluva Story

One Helluva Story was a live storytelling event held at The Dutch Trading Co as part of the Vic Park Arts Season 2021. It featured Colin Archibald, Nadia Heisler and Arozak Salam sharing stories of love, grief and isolation. The event was hosted by story trainer and artist Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa.

Nadia Heisler moved to Australia ten years ago. In that time she worked extremely hard to make a life for herself. And then she met a boy. Her story *I Did It For Love* is a story of heartbreak, sacrifice and love.

“

I came here with many dreams, but with one goal. And that was to succeed. I promised myself that no matter what, I wouldn't fail.

I managed to get a job that I really wanted: a job in an office doing HR. And that was my biggest, like my first, accomplishment here in the country and I knew that my life was about to get better and I was right because a few weeks into this job I met this beautiful guy ...

I was so happy and I thought that my mission in Australia was accomplished because I finally had a good job and I had just met a really special person ... after we kissed and we started dating I found out that I was pregnant with this beautiful boy's baby and that's when my life stopped.

”

Funding: Town of Victoria Park.



Mentoring and Residencies

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Feature

Mentoring and residencies provide opportunities for artists to make excellent new work. They offer professional direction in order to build confidence and quality in a collaborative environment. In 2020–2021, we have nurtured and sustained our existing cohort while expanding at the same time.

Writing Change, Writing Inclusion

Writing Change, Writing Inclusion is our three-year flagship writing program running from 2021 to 2023. Over this period, Centre for Stories will mentor twelve writers and host twenty hot desk fellows. Our aim is to nourish, cultivate and celebrate diverse writing talent while attending to artistic excellence. The three-year development program includes hot desk opportunities, workshops, events, craft conversations, peer coaching and leadership. The first cohort in the mentoring program consists of Edie Mitsuda, Saadia Ahmed, Nadia Heisler, Mara Papavassiliou, Haweya Ismail, Ana Brawls, Vuma Phiri, Kamal Thuraiajah, Luisa Mitchell, Jade Bradford, Colin Archibald and Jess Nyanda Moyle. Hot desk participants include Rafael Gonzalez, Daley Rangi, Luoyang Chen, Shenali Perera, Tiffany Ko, Dureshawar Khan and Baran Rostamian, with more to come in the latter part of 2021.

Funding: The Ian Potter Foundation, Australia Council for the Arts, Founders Circle.

Feature

Schools Program

In 2021 we expanded our schools program to three schools, including the performance and writing program at Cecil Andrews College for a second year. We commenced a new program at the Intensive English Centre at Aranmore Catholic College. The program involved small group training and one-on-one mentoring to support students to craft and share an oral story of their choosing. Subiaco Primary School has fully funded a storytelling program. Creatives who participated in these programs were Sisonke Msimang, Jay Anderson, Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa, Annabel Smith and Shenali Perera.

“

Through the youth storytelling workshops, students at Cecil Andrews College have been empowered to craft high-quality creative pieces, including slam poems and short stories. In doing so, they have formed close bonds with like-minded students and mentors, transcended limiting beliefs around their capabilities as writers, and developed an even greater passion for writing.

— Ryan Steed, English Teacher

Centre for Stories Oral Story Telling program has offered an opportunity like no other to some of our most vulnerable students. Through the Centre, our refugee and immigrant students have been able to not only learn to tell their own oral stories, but better understand their own experiences, connect in new ways to their community, and undergo a special type of mentoring that has allowed them to start thinking about their future. We are incredibly grateful to the team for the work, compassion and understanding when working with our Aranmore students.

— Kelsey Fink, Pathways Coordinator

”

Funding: Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Subiaco Primary School, Story Supporters.

Café Residencies

In June 2020, shortly after the end of Western Australia's COVID-19 lockdown, we began to support writers in a series of residencies. Our Inner City Residency, funded by City of Perth, saw emerging and established writers create new work over a ten-week period, including Kim Balfour, Luisa Mitchell, Yohann Devezy, Tyrown Waigana, Rashida Murphy, Saadia Ahmed, Chemutai Glasheen and Frances An. In 2021, we ran another residency in partnership with City of Bayswater, which supported Franchesca Walker and Zarah Burgess. Writers were able to focus on creating prose, poetry, graphic novels, short stories and essays. They participated in lunches, internal and public events, and were provided with space, time and stipends whilst they worked on their craft.

Funding: City of Perth, City of Bayswater.

Inclusion Matters

Our mentoring and hot desk project Inclusion Matters started in 2019 and was completed in 2020. In addition to the information shared in the 2020 Annual Report, mentors and mentees continue to make an important contribution to the life and community of Centre for Stories.

Funding: Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Copyright Agency and Founders Circle.



Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli Fellowship for Writers

The Maria Pallotta-Chiarolli Fellowship for Writers will be awarded to a mid-career writer in recognition of their literary achievements and commitment to humanity demonstrated through their active participation and engagement in social justice issues. This fellowship has been made possible with the generous support of donors Baden Offord, John Ryan, Christopher Macfarlane and Centre for Stories Founders John and Caroline Wood. The successful applicant will take up the fellowship before May 2022.



Photo: Hannah Uren



Photo: Hannah Uren

Workshops

A series of workshops were delivered by award-winning writers covering research, writing for audiences, decolonised narratives, science writing, memoir writing and editing. The workshops were designed to benefit both emerging and established writers.

Life Writing with Rosemary Stevens

Life Writing a popular six-week course offers an intimate, safe and relaxed environment in which to begin, or reinvigorate, individual life stories. Rosemary shares insightful guidelines to writing with the five senses, scene, character and structure development.

Write, Resist, Revise with Rashida Murphy

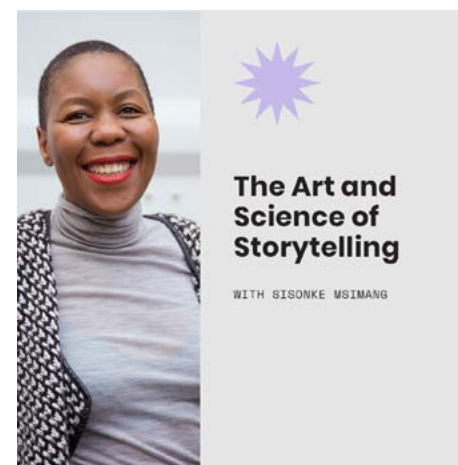
Write, Resist, Revise was a three-hour workshop discussing classic and contemporary texts with a view to understanding how privilege and colonialism operate and how to critique those ideas in your own writing.

Masterclasses

Six award-winning writers donated their time to offer a series of Masterclasses. The classes delved deep into the heart of story and world-building, fiction and non-fiction, imagination and identity, research and writing, narrating and editing. Thank you to Amanda Curtin, Portland Jones, Vivienne Glance, Susan Midalia and Annamaria Weldon; and Rashida Murphy for conceptualising and organising this series.

Writing Authentic YA Fiction with Holden Sheppard:

Writing Authentic YA Fiction explored the nuances of writing full-length works of fiction in the YA category.



The Art and Science of Storytelling with Sisonke Msimang

We launched our first ever online storytelling course. The Art and Science of Storytelling with Sisonke Msimang, is a fully online, self-paced course that covers the basics of oral storytelling. The course enables participants to learn to tell stories in ways that are authentic to them, and suited to their personality and style. Each module focuses on a different aspect of thinking about, practising and then telling your own story.

Funding: Lotterywest.

Over the past twelve months, we have collected stories that are diverse, engaging, original, high quality and reflect who we are.



Forbidden Love

With workshops hosted in October 2020 by Sukhjot Kaur Khalsa, Forbidden Love was a storytelling project that culminated in a high-energy interactive performance on Valentine's Day. Storytellers shared true stories about relationships in all their forms: unlikely friendships, heartbreak, passion and self-love.

Funding: Centre for Stories Community Fund.



Out of Touch

Funded by the State Library of Western Australia, Out of Touch featured fifteen stories about resilience, isolation and hope during the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic. This collection explores the pandemic's impact on the wellbeing of essential workers, family members, Olympians and Paralympians, academics, policymakers, young people and migrants, and contributes a record of this remarkable time in history. The stories were collected by Sisonke Msimang, Rita Saggat and Kristen Marano.

Funding: State Library of Western Australia.



Words to Live By

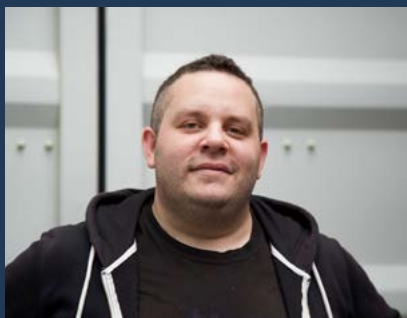
This project highlighted four inspirational elders in our community and was produced for Act, Belong, Commit. Participants shared stories of their daily lives and what they do to stay mentally healthy, connected, active, and engaged. This project was about highlighting lifelong learning and the importance of respecting the experience of others.

Produced for Act, Belong, Commit and funded by Healthway.

Untold Stories of Perth

Produced for City of Perth's podcast series Untold Stories of Perth, we invited people to remember and understand places close to the heart. With stories exploring the punk music scene, St Catherine's College and the Perth Mosque, this podcast was a way to celebrate the little known histories of our city.

Funding: City of Perth.



The first family night we had since lockdown, Matthew, my youngest nephew, just gave us all hugs. It was so sweet because we really needed that. For him, it was because he missed all of us. He really wanted that too, but he didn't understand what was going on. We all needed that serotonin level, we really did. It was, just sort of, soothing and healing. What I've learned since the pandemic is to be grateful to have the people who you are close to. Be grateful that you still have a connection.

Rafael Gonzalez

Publications

We strive to support writers from all walks of life and in all stages of their writing journey. In 2020–2021, we published over 150 individual pieces of writing both online and in print. As lockdown loomed in Perth, we announced *Journal*, an online platform featuring writing in response to the pandemic. After *Journal's* success, we launched *Portside Review*, a subscriber-based digital journal published four times a year. And, finally, we are proud to share our latest anthology, *To Hold the Clouds*.

Portside Review

Launched in March 2021, *Portside Review* is an ongoing literary project that features writers and writing from the Indian Ocean region. Our talented editorial committee leads with voices from Perth, Singapore, Mumbai, Kolkata and Melbourne. The journal features poetry, essays, reviews, interviews, short stories and fiction. Seeking to connect archipelagoes beyond the nation, it continues Centre for Stories' international engagement and helps diaspora and migrant communities feel a sense of connection to home. It introduces writers and readers from disparate cities to one another while also moving towards a regional understanding of what good writing can be in a new literary journalistic format. *Portside Review* publishes over thirty pieces of new writing in each issue and is available to read online via subscription at portsidereview.com

“

Just when you turn your back on it and give it up for lost, it starts to come back, tides sweeping in from the lost horizon, or maybe it is rising in you, the sea returning with its waves of remembering, its lilting cadences and lapping folds on the mossy, weedy sea-wall ...

The Sea Remembers, Kim Cheng Boey



This is how a man protects his family, Paul said as he swiped the car keys off the kitchen counter, and maybe you should have seen it coming. And what if there was a universe in which it was easy for you to do what Paul did, what all those others have done – drop everything, fashion a harpoon from a broomstick and an electric knife, clip Jaime into the car seat, speed to the city – though whether you'd charge into the mist or stand with your back to it, whether you'd point your homemade harpoon at the giants or the crowd, you don't know.

Squeeze Edges to Make a Diamond, Elizabeth Tan

”

Feature

Photo: Leah JingMcIntosh

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To Hold the Clouds

To Hold the Clouds is an anthology of poetry, essays and short stories published in November 2020 featuring brave new work from emerging writers. It features stories of love, loss, growth, hope, resilience, sexuality, identity, place and more. With over twenty contributors, the collection is a testament to the skills learned by participants in the Inclusion Matters mentoring and project.

Journal

Over a period of twenty weeks from June to November 2020, 63 pieces of writing were published in *Journal*. With a nod to life during the peak of the pandemic in Perth, the stories featured creative non-fiction that emphasised personal experiences and small triumphs in hard times. With truthful reflections, writers thought deeply about how the world has changed and where we are headed. There were contributors from Australia, New Zealand, Singapore, India and Indonesia. Of these, 75 per cent of stories were produced by writers of colour, including 17 per cent of writers who identify as First Nations (Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and Māori); 72 per cent of writers were women, 25 per cent were men, and 3 per cent were non-binary.

Funding: Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries, Copyright Agency, Founders Circle.

Photo: Chris Gurney



“

There's no single perfect path to 'success'. You can start wherever you need to start, whether that's writing poetry on Tumblr or Instagram, in a classroom, performing at an open mic, or honing your craft for years until one day you get published in a print journal. Every path is valid. I believe the most important thing is to keep learning, reading, writing, experimenting.

– Kaya Ortiz

”



Photo: Jesse Roberts

Collaborating with other organisations has been central to Centre for Stories' purpose for many years. This connects us to new networks and new artistic expressions and allows us to speak with new people. In 2020–2021, we have been fortunate to teach and learn with local, national and international peers.

Pulch Magazine

With funding from Propel Youth Arts, Centre for Stories auspiced *Pulch Magazine*, a new digital literary journal for young Western Australians. *Pulch* was launched in July 2020 and is edited by Jay Anderson, Luisa Mitchell and Chris Leopardi. They publish fiction, non-fiction and poetry, and emphasise graphic design alongside writing.

Avareh and Found

Auspiced by Centre for Stories, Avareh and Found is a story-training, collecting and exhibiting project run by Second Generation Collective through Community Arts Network funded by Lotterywest's Dream, Plan, Do. In March 2021, stories of home, reflection and healing around the 1979 Iranian Revolution were shared to diaspora communities and their descendants.

AFTRS

In collaboration with the Australian Film Television and Radio School and My Place, this was a story-training project for young people living with disability. It emphasised own voices as a way to think about new and historically under-represented stories that could make it on to screens in Australia.

Liminal

Emerging from our successful collaboration in 2019, *Liminal* published an additional six articles and five interviews with community members in February 2021. The interviews were conducted with Iris Fan Xing, Elham Mohammednejad, Kim Lateef, Rushil D'cruz, and Kaya Ortiz, all photographed by Chris Gurney. The interviews were part of *Liminal's* broader project of documenting and celebrating Asian Australian excellence.

“

My process is fluid. It depends on my current mood because my writing always starts off as a reflection on certain recurring thoughts of mine. I gain ideas for my writing from unpacking these thoughts, and I also gain ideas from my favourite novels, films, encounters with people, and my childhood memories.

— Kim Lateef

”



Photo: Chris Gurney

PEN Perth

In collaboration with resident organisation PEN Perth, twenty-five portraits of imprisoned writers created by Kelly Fliedner have been displayed in our Northbridge building. This was a lasting contribution to our relationship and complemented ongoing events with PEN, including a sold-out lecture by acclaimed ABC Foreign Correspondent Sophie McNeill at the State Library of Western Australia in October 2020.

Feature

Nayimbi Cultural Pathways

Co-designed with Tiwa Olowoyo, Nayimbi Cultural Pathways was a story-sharing program that spoke with African youth at weekend basketball programs. It ran between April and August 2021 and featured elders in the community speaking on issues such as heritage, identity, belonging, migration and place. The aim was to build resilience, pride and awareness.



Photo: Lawrence Hillary

Disrupted Festival of Ideas

The Right to Die was a panel discussion held at the State Library of Western Australia for Disrupted Festival 2021. Facilitated by Rita Saggart, it featured Cathy Henkel, Samar Aoun, Scott Blackwell and Belinda Teh. The conversation unpacked the changes to voluntary assisted dying legislation in Western Australia which were implemented in mid-2021. Panellists shared both professional and personal experiences. This included Scott's experience as chair of the implementation Leadership Team for Voluntary Assisted Dying in WA; Samar's work in developing the capacity of communities to support people coping with the end-of-life journey; and Cathy's experience co-producing the film *Laura's Choice*, a documentary capturing her mother's decision to end her life on her own terms, and her family's journey towards voluntary assisted dying. Belinda spoke about how her mother's agonising death motivated her to campaign for voluntary assisted laws.

Community means welcoming people to our premises so they can find a safer space in which to meet, talk and make. This contributes to the culture of our organisation on a daily basis as we open our doors and our hearts to those near us.

Fem Book Club

Fem Book Club is a monthly introduction to a diverse range of texts by female-identifying authors. Through informal conversations about fiction, essays and poetry, this book club focuses on experiences at different moments in time.

AfroHeritage Book Club

AfroHeritage Book Club is a way to connect Africans living here with writing created by Africans. It engages with a number of different issues all aimed at understanding Africanity. Hosted by Vuma Phiri and Gisele Ishimwe.

Write Night

Write Night meets once a fortnight and hosts two writing blocks. It is a space where people can write without distraction and allows writers at any stage of their career to use the space to create new work in a community atmosphere. Hosted by Christopher Karsten.

Poetry Workshop

Poetry Workshop meets every month to make space for poets to share their writing with others. It is a safe way to encourage people to enjoy poetry and emphasises a workshop where all voices and styles are heard and respected. Hosted by Siobhan Hodge.

The Library

John McCann continues to devote countless hours to cataloguing and carefully arranging the books in our library. Our library catalogue can now be searched online via LibraryThing. There are approximately 3000 titles in the collection with strengths in the Indian Ocean, Australian poetry and literary fiction, as well as many national journals. All books at Centre for Stories have been generously donated.

Internship program

Over the last twelve months, Centre for Stories has hosted several interns. Our interns work on a number of story-collecting, events and literary projects, all with the aim of learning about the craft of storytelling, and how to work in a community arts and social impact organisation. We thank Sachini Poogoda, Lauren Pratt, Baran Rostamian, Henry Farnan, Lucas Riddle (high school student), Vianca Martinselvaraja (high school student) and Sutida Thodmoon for their valuable contribution to the work of Centre for Stories.



Photo: Jesse Roberts

Photo: Luke Riley Creative, courtesy of Magabala Books

Launches

Centre for Stories has hosted a number of important and exciting launches in 2020–2021. In partnership with Magabala Books, we hosted the launch of Alf Taylor's memoir *God, the Devil, and Me*, a chronicle of his life growing up in the infamous New Norcia Mission, north of Perth, in the fifties and sixties. Additionally, a new community publication *Balcony*, a Bengali diaspora publication, was launched at Centre for Stories and live-streamed to the Bengali community globally.

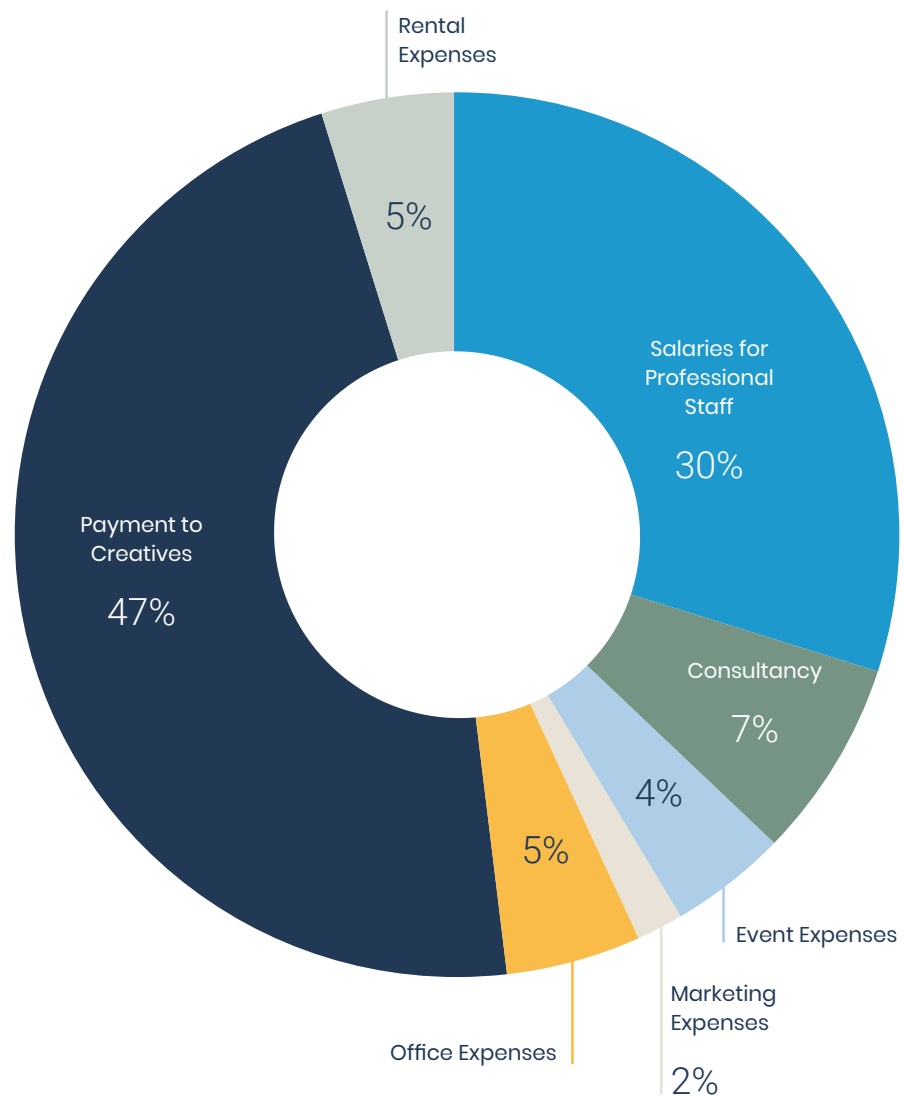


Coffee, bagels and scones

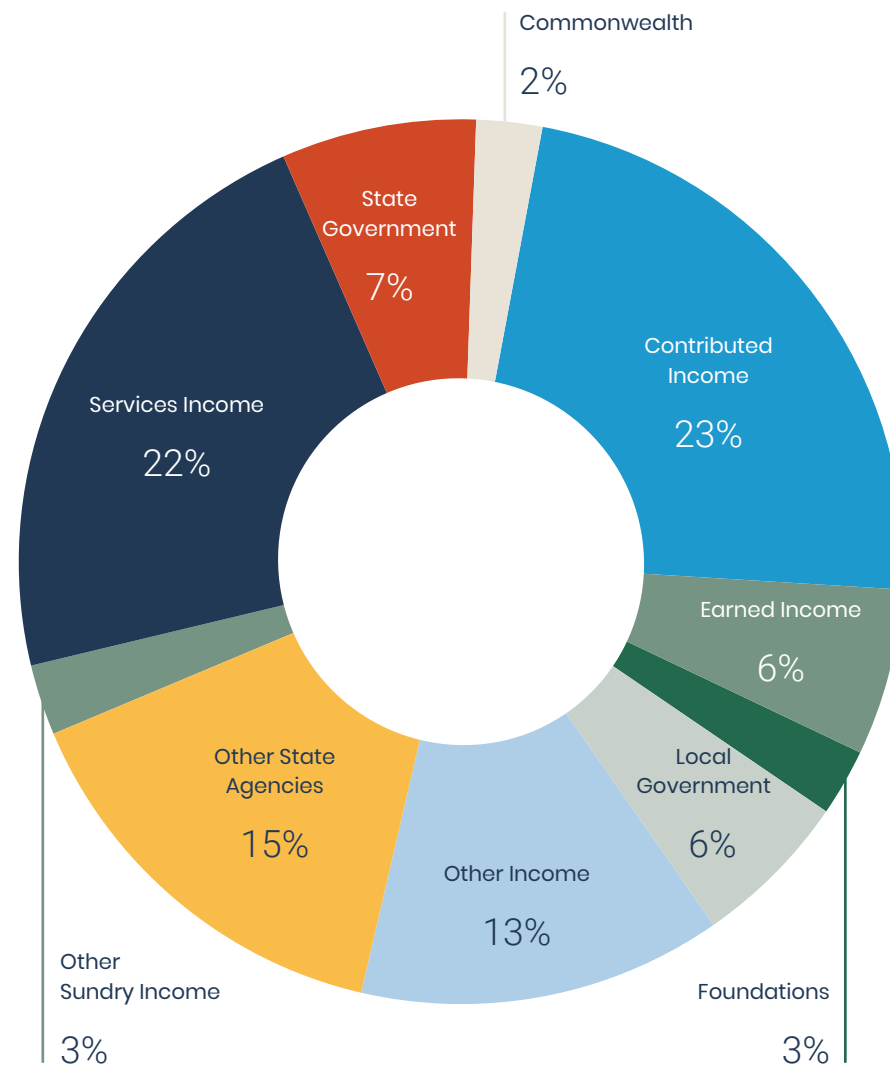
In February, our previously vacant cafe space became occupied by Lulu Lala Coffee. Owned and operated by Yeojin Kim and Seulgi Leem, Lulu Lala has fast become a vibrant Northbridge business, and an important part of the Centre for Stories' community. Baking treats in-house and serving great coffee, fresh bagels, and a variety of other hot and cold beverages, Lulu Lala is a favourite spot for Centre for Stories' meetings, morning caffeine fixes and easy lunches.



Expenses 2020 — 2021



Income 2020 — 2021





Our Team

Centre for Stories has a collaborative and open team at its heart. We cultivate ideas on the direction, operation and future of the organisation while being inspired by every story we share. These are the people that work here.



Caroline Wood, Chief Executive Officer

Caroline Wood is passionate about human rights, family and connection that comes from bringing people together with stories. She is responsible for advancing the vision and direction of the Centre, leading and managing people, fundraising and sponsorship development, and cementing the Centre's reputation as a leading creative organisation nationally. Her favourite story for the year was Camha Pham's story 'All Love Begins and Ends There' in *Journal*.



Robert Wood, Creative Director

Robert Wood has five published books and five degrees. He completed a post-doctorate at Columbia University's Writing Program in 2018, and is a Westpac Social Change Fellow in 2021. Robert is responsible for developing the creative profile of the Centre as a whole. One story he loved this year was Elizabeth Tan's 'Squeeze Edges to Make Diamond' in *Portside Review*.



Sisonke Msimang, Lead Story Trainer

Sisonke Msimang is interested in belonging, memory and human rights and is the author of two books and many articles with *The Guardian*, *New York Times*, *Washington Post* and elsewhere. She is a contributing editor at *Africa Is A Country*, a popular culture and commentary website on Africa and its many diasporas, and has been a regular contributor to The Moth, TED, Q&A, The Drum, and writers festivals including Sydney and Melbourne. Sisonke has served as the Literature and Ideas curator for Perth Festival. One story she loved this year was Stevie Lane's story told at Backstories.



Nina Thethy, Finance Officer

Nina is a CPA-certified accountant with extensive experience across a broad range of industries. She completed a Bachelor of Business in 2006, majoring in accounting, and has since worked in finance in the government, legal, and oil and gas sectors. Nina is responsible for preparing budgets, financial statements and reports. Nina enjoyed reading 'Cosmic Dance' by Priyadarshini Chidambaranathan.



Logan Griffiths, *Program Coordinator*

Logan Griffiths manages projects primarily focused on storytelling through writing. She works closely on the Centre for Stories' digital journal *Portside Review* and the ongoing writing program, Writing Change, Writing Inclusion. Recently, she worked on the State Library of Western Australia's Out of Touch project and the Forbidden Love project. She is interested in supporting emerging writers and establishing connections to writers across the Indian Ocean. One of her favourite stories this year was Nadia Heisler's story 'I Did It for Love' in *Forbidden Love*.



Claudia Mancini, *Producer and Events Coordinator*

Claudia Mancini manages projects and events primarily focused on oral storytelling. This includes live storytelling events, the Centre's online storytelling course, and an emerging storytelling program for high school students. Having recently completed a Master of Counselling, Claudia is interested in the benefit of storytelling for mental health and wellbeing, as well as developing best-practice and trauma-informed approaches for collecting and sharing stories. Her favourite story this year was Segun Olowoyo's story in *Words to Live By*.



Jay Anderson, *Social Media Coordinator*

Jay Anderson has worked in the publishing industry and the arts sector in various roles, and his writing has been published in a number of online journals and print anthologies. Jay managed *Bright Lights, No City* – a storytelling project for LGBTIQ+ youth from rural and regional areas of Western Australia – and now manages the Centre's social media. Jay is currently completing a Masters of Social Work at Curtin University and he's interested in how storytelling can be used as a tool for social justice. One of the stories he loved this year was Ron Bradfield's for Backstories.



Jane den Hollander, *Chair*

Professor Jane den Hollander, AO, was Vice-Chancellor of Deakin University from 2010 to 2019, and Interim Vice-Chancellor of the University of Western Australia in 2020. In 2019 she received an Order of Australia for distinguished service to tertiary education and was named in the Victorian Honour Roll for Women. Jane has done significant work to ensure equal opportunity for learners and working women as well as working to better enable the arts in regional communities. In Geelong this involved establishing the Geelong Symphony and becoming its inaugural patron. Alongside this she was a member, Deputy Chair, and then Chair of the Geelong Performing Arts Council (GPAC) over a ten-year period.



Neil Fernandes, *Deputy Chair*

Neil Fernandes has held a number of senior positions in the vocational education and training sector over 30 years. He was the Managing Director of the former Central Institute of Technology between 2005 and 2016, and served as the Deputy Director-General (Training) in the Department of Education and Training. Since leaving government, Neil consults and advises on education and training, and is a member of the Training Accreditation Council of Western Australia, and other boards.



Leo Gallop, *Secretary*

Leo Gallop is Senior Legal Counsel at Woodside Energy, providing legal advice and assistance across the full array of Woodside's oil and gas exploration and production activities in Western Australia and overseas. Leo was educated at Rossmoyne Senior High School and the University of Western Australia and was a board member of the inaugural Rossmoyne Senior High School Board.



Raj Thethy, *Treasurer*

Raj Thethy is the Chief Financial Officer at Youth Focus. Raj has had over 23 years of experience in the not-for-profit, public and private education sectors. His responsibilities have covered financial accounting, strategic planning, market and competitor analysis, and business improvement and development. In his current role Raj manages all administrative functions including finance, IT&T, facilities management, risk management and human resources.



Rachel Bin Salleh, Board Member

Rachel Bin Salleh is the Publisher of Magabala Books. She won the inaugural Literary Lions Medal from Writing WA in 2020. Based in Rubibi/Broome, Rachel is descended from the Nimunburr and Yawuru peoples of the Kimberley region, and has worked in publishing for over 20 years. She has worked with internationally recognised authors to present First Nations stories by, from and for First Nations audiences. This includes Bruce Pascoe, Kirli Saunders, Alf Taylor, and others.



Raihanaty A Jalil, Board Member

Raihanaty A Jalil works as an entrepreneur and educator, running her own ecommerce ventures and providing software training to businesses. She has been Vice President of The Muslim Women's Support Centre (WA); on the WA Public Employment CALD Strategy Reference Group with the Public Sector Commission (WA); and has facilitated poetry workshops at the Australian Islamic College for Propel Youth Arts WA.



Kanaga Dharmananda, Board Member

Kanaga Dharmananda is a barrister with a commercial litigation and arbitration legal practice. He has worked with law firms in Australia, Sri Lanka and Singapore, and as Counsel with Mitsubishi Corporation in Tokyo, and with the United Nations in Geneva. Kanaga teaches at the UWA Law School and is on the editorial board for some law journals and reports.



Jade Bradford, Board Member

Jade Bradford is a proud Ballardong Noongar woman specialising in Stakeholder Engagement at Golder, a member of WSP. She has previous experience working as a freelance journalist, writing stories based on First Nations health, culture and community, and was a Research Fellow of the First Nations Messaging and Narrative Shifting Project.



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- George Kailis
- John and Caroline Wood

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- Joe Longo and Mary-Eileen Scanlan
- John and Caroline Wood

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- Erica Smyth
- Caroline Wood

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Photo: Jessica Wyld

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