



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

## **NSW risks being the only Australian state without a dedicated writers' organisation as Writing NSW loses its funding**

**Sydney 10 August:** The future of Writing NSW is at risk, leaving thousands of writers without financial support or access to an extensive range of online courses, events and networking opportunities in the midst of a global pandemic.

As one of the largest employers of writers in Australia, Writing NSW currently pays out close to \$200,000 each year in fees for teaching, curating, writing, speaking and judging. It offers paid employment to around 300 writers each year, as well as 10 staff.

“All this is at risk with the decision by Create NSW to end the current state funding of \$175,000 per year in December,” said **Writing NSW CEO Jane McCredie**.

“This was despite us being recommended for ongoing funding by the state’s Literature Board, the group that advises the Minister for the Arts on applications.”

**Writing NSW Chair Joel Naoum** said: “It’s devastating to see the state’s main support organisation for writers and the literature sector defunded. It is truly unconscionable at a time when a significant proportion of our population is confined to home, exploring reading and literature, learning and finding ways to alleviate their COVID-19 anxiety.

“Organisations across the arts are already stretched to breaking point, so we are incredibly disappointed to see the literature sector only receive 5% of the total long-term arts funding awarded to organisations by Create NSW. This appears to be a new low for literature.”

As the state’s main support organisation for the literature sector, Writing NSW serves a community of nearly 10,000 writers, providing the physical and digital spaces where writers from a diverse range of backgrounds can meet to develop their skills, find paths to publication or performance, and to build successful careers.

The organisation is committed to supporting and representing the full diversity of the writing community, with dedicated programs for Indigenous, culturally diverse and regional writers. More than 1000 writers participate in its courses each year, and more than 1000 people attended its events last year.

**McCredie said:** “To date we have maintained our support for writers throughout the pandemic, rolling out an extensive range of online courses, events and networking opportunities to keep writers working and connected.

“Now all this is at risk.”

Funding from federal and state governments accounts for one-third of Writing NSW’s turnover. **CEO Jane McCredie** said: “We currently generate around two-thirds of our

### **MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

**Sarah Mott at Writing NSW:** [smott@writingnsw.org.au](mailto:smott@writingnsw.org.au)



turnover from our own activities, which is a really impressive result for an organisation like ours. But state government funding is the foundation that underlies everything we are able to do. Without an alternative source of funding, we will not be able to continue in our current form beyond the end of this year.”

**McCredie** added that Writing NSW will continue to do everything it can to support writers and the literature sector in coming months: “These are difficult times for writers, and we will not relax our efforts to help them meet the challenges of a disrupted world.”

**More commentary:**

**Benjamin Law, writer and broadcaster:** “Right now, we are facing a reckoning in the arts and media about whose stories are told, and who gets to tell them. To deny a world-class organisation like Writing NSW the resources to do the work they’ve done for decades – in developing diverse and marginalised voices; in bringing those voices to the centre – is disappointingly short-sighted at best, and catastrophic to the arts at worst.”

**Kate Forsyth, bestselling author:** “I am stunned and appalled to hear our state’s most important organisation for writers has been defunded during these incredibly challenging times. I may never have achieved my lifelong dream of being a published writer without Writing NSW. As a young unpublished author, I attended courses, publishing seminars, and literary festivals in its beautiful grounds, and was encouraged, inspired and taught my craft. I have now published more than 40 books in 20 countries, but I will never forget what an important influence Writing NSW had upon my career. The services it offers are vital for creating and fostering a lively literary community, not just for aspiring authors but also for published authors who must find some way to earn an income if they are to survive in an increasingly difficult economic environment. Writing NSW works tirelessly to bring readers and writers together, to celebrate the importance of books in all their many diverse forms, and to support writers at all stages of their careers.”

**Cathy Craigie, writer and cofounder of the First Nations Australia Writers’ Network:** “It’s devastating to hear that the state government is defunding Writing NSW. I have been involved with this vital organisation for over 25 years and have worked on many events and programs during that time. The organisation has always been committed to supporting Indigenous writing and has employed many Aboriginal writers as well as helping to identify and mentor exciting new Indigenous voices. I acknowledge Writing NSW as national leaders in providing platforms for Indigenous writers.”

**Emily Maguire, Stella Prize and Miles Franklin Award-shortlisted author:** “I am heartbroken by the news that Create NSW will be discontinuing Writing NSW’s multi-year funding at the end of this year. As a member for 17 years and a workshop facilitator, tutor and writing mentor for the last decade, I have seen again and again the difference that the organisation makes to the creative and professional development of NSW writers. Writing NSW prioritises the nurturing and growth of a diverse, inclusive, vibrant and supportive writing community in NSW. The defunding of such a vital not-for-profit organisation represents an almost unfathomable loss both to individual writers and to the NSW and Australian literary landscape.”

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**

Sarah Mott at Writing NSW: [smott@writingnsw.org.au](mailto:smott@writingnsw.org.au)



**Sophie Masson AM, writer and New England Writers' Centre Chair:** "Writing NSW may be based in Sydney, but it is definitely not Sydney-centric, reaching out well beyond the cities into the regions. Writing NSW has been a collegial, dynamic and crucial linchpin for regional writers' centres such as ours. The New England Writers' Centre recognises the central importance of Writing NSW as the peak State-based arts organisation dedicated to literature, and as a true engine-room of literary creativity and diversity. We warmly urge Create NSW to reconsider this recent decision and to find a way to maintain funding of this important and very dynamic organisation."

**Meredith Curnow, Publisher, Penguin Random House:** "I was shocked and incredibly disappointed – for future writers of NSW and the entire literary industry – to hear that Create NSW has not committed ongoing funding to Writing NSW. It is the first port of call I recommend to the emerging writers, young and old, who ask where they can go for advice and support, to practise and learn their craft, to mix with like-minded people. Writing NSW ensures we have an audience ready to take the next steps into the literary world educated and prepared. I very much hope new sources of funding can be found to keep this valued organisation flourishing."

**MEDIA ENQUIRIES:**Sarah Mott at Writing NSW: [smott@writingnsw.org.au](mailto:smott@writingnsw.org.au)