

FESTIVAL EXPERIENCES

THE LOLLIPOP LADIES

Saturday 7th June

This year Debra Crossing & Amber Light are on duty to escort you around the Festival. You'll find a roving & spontaneous performance in which you, the audience, transform into the main protagonist - The Pedestrian! Watch a riotous comedy unfold from the Fringe in Maam Gaduying Park to the Main Program in the Memorial Hall, all with you in a starring role.

THE WORD ON THE STREET PUBLIC ART PROJECT

EXHIBITION 'SONNET'

Three contemporary artists, Charlotte Craib, Fiona Minto & Marc Renshaw exploring the mediums of drawing, ceramics & printmaking. Each artist presents new work interpreting the theme & complementing each other's work

The Stables, Bellingen, June 6th-8th
Opening Friday 6th at 6pm

VISUAL POETRY

Find poetry in new places such as pavements, across walls & shop windows. Go on a hunt to find writing prompt words & local students' poems throughout town!

POCKET POETRY PROJECT!

Collect poetry, excerpts, & written quotes with your tea & coffee at participating locations over the weekend.

LOCAL SHOP WINDOW DISPLAY COMPETITION

Supported by Affirmations Publishing House

WRITE YOUR OWN STORY!

Locate one of a series of typewriters around town for all to enjoy & to generate story telling. An Arts project for the people of Bellingen Curated by Marc Renshaw & Julia Ehemann

TICKET INFORMATION

Individual Ticket: \$29.90 (\$26.15 concession)

Early Bird Tickets: 20% discount per ticket from 10-30th April only (no concessions)

Multiple ticket purchase discounts available from 1st May

Poetry Slam Tickets: \$15.00 (no concession/discounts)

The Bellingen Readers & Writers Festival may amend the festival program at any time. Unavoidable program changes will be advised via the BRWF website, BRWF social media/newsletter and/or on-site.

Children under 10 must be accompanied by an adult. Proof of concession must be presented at entry to event.

TICKETS AVAILABLE ONLINE AT:

www.bellingenwritersfestival.com.au/program-2025



- 1 The Memorial Hall
- 2 Ticket Office
- 3 The Studio
- 4 Fringe Events
- 5 The Stables
- 6 The Book Warehouse Festival Book Shop in St Andrews Church

PROUDLY SPONSORED BY:



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BELLINGEN READERS & WRITERS FESTIVAL

JUNE LONG WEEKEND 6TH - 8TH JUNE 2025



SCAN TO BOOK



Artwork by Georgie Paix

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2025

FESTIVAL PROGRAM

WE ARE EXCEEDINGLY GRATEFUL FOR THE GENEROUS SUPPORT & TIME RECEIVED FROM OUR PATRON, BRYAN BROWN.

TIMES FRIDAY

7:15pm – 10:15pm Memorial Hall **THE POETRY SLAM**
It wouldn't be the same festival without our longstanding Slam, so come along to see the most dazzling performance poets our region has to offer. Yes, we will start on time so please be there by 7pm for 7:15pm sharp start.

FRINGE FESTIVAL

A VARIETY OF FREE EVENTS FOR EVERYONE!
AT THE MAAM GADUYING MEETING PLACE PARK (OPPOSITE THE MEMORIAL HALL)

SATURDAY

10am – 10.30am	MORNING WORDS Get an exclusive glimpse behind the scenes with short interviews featuring festival organisers and special guests.
10.30am – 1pm	LOCAL VOICES Enjoy our gifted local authors as they bring their latest works to life through a short reading session.
1pm - 1.30pm	BUDAABANG BARI CULTURAL DANCE PERFORMANCE
1.30pm – 2pm	POETRY SLAM WINNERS SPOTLIGHT Hear Jason John interview the Slam winners with a repeat performance of their winning poems.
2pm – 3pm	POETRY OPEN MIC Be sure to sign up in the morning to be part of the very popular Open Mic session with Jason John as MC.
3pm – 4pm	LIVE MUSIC Sit back and relax with Boo Tiki, the musical project of local artist John Ferguson. Enjoy his blues-inspired melodies, blended with a dynamic mix of looping pedals & his distinctively raspy vocals.

SUNDAY

10am – 10.30am	MORNING WORDS Get an exclusive glimpse behind the scenes with short interviews featuring festival organisers and special guests.
10.30am – 11am	GUMBAYNGIRR STORY TELLING Uncle Micklo takes us on a journey of myth and language.
11am – 12pm	SEAFARING: CANOEING ANCIENT SONGLINES Join Gumbayngirr/Gamilaroi man Victor Briggs for an incredible story of Indigenous exploration across the Pacific Ocean.
12pm – 1pm	LUNCHTIME MUSIC
1pm – 2pm	MILKWOOD SPOTLIGHT Join this engaging discussion with Kirsten Bradley, author of The Milkwood Permaculture Living Handbook. Facilitated by Kevin Evans.
2pm – 3pm	REGIONAL JOURNALISM PANEL A lively discussion featuring a collection of local journalists from the Mid North Coast. Facilitated by Kye Ruigrok.

TIMES SATURDAY - Memorial Hall

9am – 10am Main Hall	Rooted In Resilience: DAVID HOLMGREN, KIRSTEN BRADLEY, LINDA WOODROW Explore regenerative living through insights from three of the country's leading permaculture voices as they discuss conservation, diversification, community, and practical insights into how to build a more sustainable future.
9am – 10am Studio	In Conversation TARA JUNE WINCH with DEBRA OSWALD From her debut novel 'Swallow the Air' to her Miles Franklin-winning 'The Yield', Tara has established herself as one of our most distinctive and powerful authors. Join Debra Oswald as they discuss craft, inspiration, and the passage of time.
10.30am – 11.30am Main Hall	In Conversation DAVID MARR Journalist, author, political commentator – and in his unforgettable #1 Indie Book of the Year, 'Killing for Country', a man exploring his own family history of frontier brutality. Join us for the conversation with one of the country's most celebrated social commentators.
10.30am – 11.30am Studio	Morality & Mercy: MARKUS ZUSAK, COURTNEY COLLINS, ADAM NORRIS Very different novels, very different narrators: one who speaks from beyond the grave, one who is split across time, and yet another who is Death itself. Join unique storytellers Markus and Courtney in this exploration of life, compassion, and the power of storytelling.
12pm – 1pm Main Hall	Always Was: MARCIA LANGTON, SHIREEN MORRIS, TARA JUNE WINCH Join these incredible speakers for a powerful exploration of resilience, sovereignty, and the richness of First Nations culture. Share in a powerful conversation that traces constitutional recognition, Indigenous storytelling, and what the future holds following the result of the Voice referendum.
12pm – 1pm Studio	Pushing Boundaries: NIKKI GEMMELL, NARDI SIMPSON, CANDICE FOX Three of our favourite storytellers unravel the mysteries that run parallel to ordinary life. Sometimes enigmatic, sometimes violent, but always hinting at a story just out of reach, their novels explore truths, trauma, and the haunting power of the unknown.
1.30pm – 2.30pm Main Hall	In Conversation PETER GRESTE with DAVID MARR Uncover the realities of international reporting in this keenly anticipated session. Peter Greste and David Marr lay bare the urgency of press freedom, the reach of political power, and the human cost of seeking truth.
1.30pm – 2.30pm Studio	In Conversation DEBRA OSWALD with AMY LOVAT Join Amy as she dives into Debra's latest engrossing novel, '100 Years of Betty'. From bestseller 'The Family Doctor', to the massive success of television staple Offspring, this session is a must-see for all those who love a story that lingers.
3pm – 4pm Main Hall	Past Pretending: JOCK SERONG, EMILY MAGUIRE, HANNAH KENT, COURTNEY COLLINS Fiction is obliged to stick to possibilities, said Mark Twain. 'Truth isn't'. But what unfolds when the real and the imagined combine? Explore the best historical fiction in this unmissable conversation on the enduring power of the past.
3pm – 4pm Studio	Death In The Afternoon: ALISON GOODMAN, JANE CARO, JAMES BRADLEY Why do we find such pleasure in the unknown? What compels us to crave a good mystery? The answer is right here on this panel. Join Alison, Jane, and James to explore what secrets are lurking just beneath the surface.
4.30pm – 5.30pm Main Hall	Democracy In Darkness: VIRGINIA TRIOLI, PETER GRESTE, KUMI TAGUCHI Explore the precarious landscape of modern journalism. Eroding press freedoms, the rise of misinformation, the evolving demands of audiences; join this timely discussion on ethics, censorship, and the quest for truth in a fractured world.
4.30pm – 5.30pm Studio	In Conversation CHARLOTTE McCONAGHY with ADAM NORRIS International bestseller Charlotte is, quite simply, simply one of the most exciting contemporary Australian novelists. Join Adam to discuss her latest release, 'Wild Dark Shore', in this engaging conversation of secrets, salvation, and the call of the wild.
6pm – 7pm Main Hall	In Conversation MARCIA LANGTON with SETH JORDAN Professor Langton has dedicated her career to advocating for Indigenous rights. Her work has had a profound impact on First Nations conversations, and she has played a crucial role working to secure constitutional recognition for the oldest continuous culture on earth.
6pm – 7pm Studio	Shaping Truths: EMILY MAGUIRE, MALCOLM KNOX, SANTILLA CHINGAIBE From investigative journalism, to cultural histories and lived experience; discover how the world imprints on personal narrative as these incredible authors discuss the craft of weaving reality onto the page.
7:30pm – 8:30pm Main Hall	Weights of Words: DAVID MARR, GINA CHICK, KUMI TAGUCHI, WENDY HARMER Explore the power of truth, memory, history and heartbreak in this festival highlight as Wendy Harmer leads an extraordinary conversation on the voices behind the story.
8.55pm - 9.55pm Main Hall	Sea of Stories: RICHARD FLANAGAN A haunting tapestry of history, love, and loss, Richard Flanagan's novels thum with deep wisdom and breathtaking prose. Explore his celebrated works, his writing process, and the questions that shape our world.

TIMES SUNDAY - Memorial Hall

9am – 10am Main Hall	In Conversation HANNAH KENT with AMY LOVAT From the phenomenal global success of her debut 'Burial Rites', to her latest release of belonging and displacement 'Always Home, Always Homesick', Hannah Kent has carved a place as one of Australia's favourite writers. Follow this search for identity across Hannah's dazzling storytelling.
9am – 10am Studio	Undercurrents: JOCK SERONG, MALCOLM KNOX, CANDICE FOX, ADAM NORRIS Let the current take you as these celebrated authors dissect the dark heart of their latest work. Explore the tangled webs of history in Jock's 'Cherrywood', the political machinations of Malcolm's 'The First Friend', and the adrenaline-fueled suspense of Candice's 'High Wire'.
10.30am – 11.30am Main Hall	In Conversation MARKUS ZUSAK with TARA JUNE WINCH Experience an intimate conversation between bestsellers as they discuss the raw truths of family, the quiet revelations found in everyday moments, and the profound impact of animals on our lives as showcased in Markus's latest release, 'Three Wild Dogs & the Truth'.
10.30am – 11.30am Studio	In Conversation DAVID HOLMGREN with JASON JOHN Join us as permaculture pioneer David Holmgren shares his insights on creating a sustainable future. Learn about the principles of permaculture, how to apply them to your own life, and the potential for a more resilient and equitable world.
12pm – 1pm Main Hall	Reality, Roughly: RICHARD FLANAGAN, NARDI SIMPSON, JOCK SERONG, ALISON GOODMAN Alison leads this vivid conversation on magical realism, exploring how these novels blend history and myth, transforming landscape into character and reinventing the ways in which we perceive both place, time and story. Unearth the mysteries of the everyday.
12pm – 1pm Studio	In Conversation AUNTY BEA BALLANGARRY with ARLIE ALIZZI Join Aunty Bea in this intimate conversation about her incredible life and writing. Share in her stories of community, culture and justice in this powerful session on intergenerational wisdom, and experience her insights on celebrating the importance of connection to Country, and each other.
1.30pm – 2.30pm Main Hall	In Conversation GINA CHICK with JANE CARO Join us for the transformative story of 'We Are the Stars'. Gina's experiences - from her wild childhood to wilderness survival and spiritual healing - are brought to life in conversation with Jane Caro, showcasing the resilience born from both nature, and from loss.
1.30pm – 2.30pm Studio	Ecofiction: CHARLOTTE McCONAGHY, JAMES BRADLEY Facing the wild right there on the page; from visceral connections to the animal world, to the haunting beauty of threatened landscapes, join this timely discussion of the urgency - and beauty - of books that confront our changing world.
3pm – 4pm Main Hall	In Conversation VIRGINIA TRIOLI with WENDY HARMER Wendy Harmer sits down with the inimitable Virginia Trioli to discuss her acclaimed journalism and the personal insights of her latest book, 'A Bit on the Side'. Prepare for a session of engaging wit, revealing stories, and a deep dive into Virginia's multifaceted career.
3pm – 4pm Studio	The Bark Petitions: CLARE WRIGHT, SHIREEN MORRIS Uncover the hidden history of women's suffrage with Clare Wright's 'Naku Dhanuk'. In conversation with Shireen Morris, explore the lives and impact of these forgotten women, whose fight reshaped Australian democracy. A truly powerful discussion, where the echoes of their struggle continue to resonate today.
4.30pm – 5.30pm Main Hall	Women Are Write: DEBRA OSWALD, JANE CARO, NIKKI GEMMELL, ERNA WALRAVEN These extraordinary women invite you to a crucial conversation. Find fierce honesty, sharp wit, and deep reflections on power, identity, and equality's future. Join them as they delve into the personal and political, and consider how we can shape a more equitable world.
4.30pm – 5.30pm Studio	Slavery In Australia: SANTILLA CHINGAIBE Challenge your assumptions about the past in this exploration of Santilla Chingaipe's powerful 'Black Convicts', a groundbreaking work that redefines our understanding of Australian history. Unearth the erased stories of those transported and enslaved, and Australia's hidden slavery connections in this vital conversation.
6.15pm – 7.15pm Main Hall	State Of Play: PETER GRESTE, KUMI TAGUCHI, JANE CARO, MALCOLM KNOX Media, power, and truth collide in this timely exploration of contemporary Australia. One month after the Federal election, join Peter, Kumi, Jane and Malcolm as they dissect current events and illuminate our evolving story on the world's stage, and at home.
6.15pm – 7.15pm Studio	In Conversation WENDY HARMER with SETH JORDAN Experience the power of Wendy's no-holds-barred storytelling as she shares insights from 'Lies My Mirror Told Me'. From adversity to triumph, hear her reflections on a remarkable life filled with resilience, humour, and unflinching honesty. Join Seth for a frank (and very funny) conversation.
7:45pm – 8:45pm Main Hall	In Conversation TRENT DALTON with VIRGINIA TRIOLI Join one of Australia's favourite novelists in this highlight festival event. Virginia engages the bestselling author in a conversation about life, family, and hope. Discover the tales of ordinary lives made extraordinary, and the heart of his captivating storytelling.

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