



MANLY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

[WWW.MANLYWRITERSFESTIVAL.ORG.AU](http://WWW.MANLYWRITERSFESTIVAL.ORG.AU)

# MANLY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

*Stories Across Manly*

19-22 March 2026

[www.manlywritersfestival.org.au](http://www.manlywritersfestival.org.au)

The Manly Writers' Festival acknowledges and thanks the original storytellers of the lands on which our festival takes place, the Gamaygal and Garigal people of the Eora Nation. We acknowledge and respect their continuing connection and culture, and we pay our respects to ancestors and Elders, past and present, as well as emerging leaders.





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# WELCOME

Welcome to the Manly Writers' Festival 2026 to be held over four days from 19<sup>th</sup>-22<sup>nd</sup> March.

If you care about words, storytelling, ideas, the power and joy of reading and writing, community life and the public good, you're in the right place.

What began as a modest, community-minded idea in 2024 has grown into a festival shaped by conversation and curiosity that brings thoughtful, and sometimes contested, ideas into public discussion and celebrates storytelling in all its forms, including fiction, memoir, poetry, and the simple pleasure of a good yarn well told.

The Manly Writers' Festival is independent, grounded in Manly, and shaped by the community around it.

As an independent festival, we value open inquiry and believe in bringing diverse voices and perspectives into conversation, especially when ideas are complex, unsettled, or contested. We expect respect, generosity, and care in how those conversations are conducted and in how they are listened to.

We're about good writing, good storytelling, and creating opportunities for people to engage with ideas and conversations that inform and broaden how they see the world.

This year, we bring together almost 90 writers, storytellers, thinkers, journalists, historians, and musicians who will explore how stories are created, how people endure, how power operates and can sometimes fail, and how individuals navigate and sometimes re-envisage the world around them.

The program also encourages you to choose your pathway across subject areas, genres, sessions, venues, formats, private stories, and public life.

The festival is supported by dedicated volunteers and a small handful of partners who believe in its purpose. The Festival would not be possible without them, and we are grateful for their contributions.

I hope you find sessions that challenge, inspire, inform, entertain, or surprise you, and that you enjoy the simple and timeless pleasure of being with others, listening, thinking, and sharing stories.

Thank you for being part of the Manly Writers' Festival.

**Bonita Mersiades**

Founder and Festival Director  
January 2026

# VENUES

In 2026, the Manly Writers' Festival will be held in galleries, community spaces, clubs, and performance venues across Manly that many locals already know and love.

You can move from a conversation in a gallery to a debate in a hall and finish the day in a performance space.

Each venue brings its own atmosphere, and together they create a festival that feels connected to everyday life in Manly — open, relaxed, (almost entirely) walkable, and easy to settle into. We hope you enjoy our stories across Manly.

## **Henry G's Wine Parlour**

11 The Corso, Manly

## **Manly Art Gallery and Museum**

West Esplanade, Manly

## **Manly Life Saving Club**

South Steyne, Manly

## **Manly Youth and Community Centre**

Kangaroo Street, Manly

## **Sky Theatre**

(St Andrew's Church Hall)

56 Raglan Street, Manly

## **The Manly Club on Gilbert**

2 West Promenade, Manly

## Special Event Venues

### **Hotel Steyne**

75 The Corso, Manly

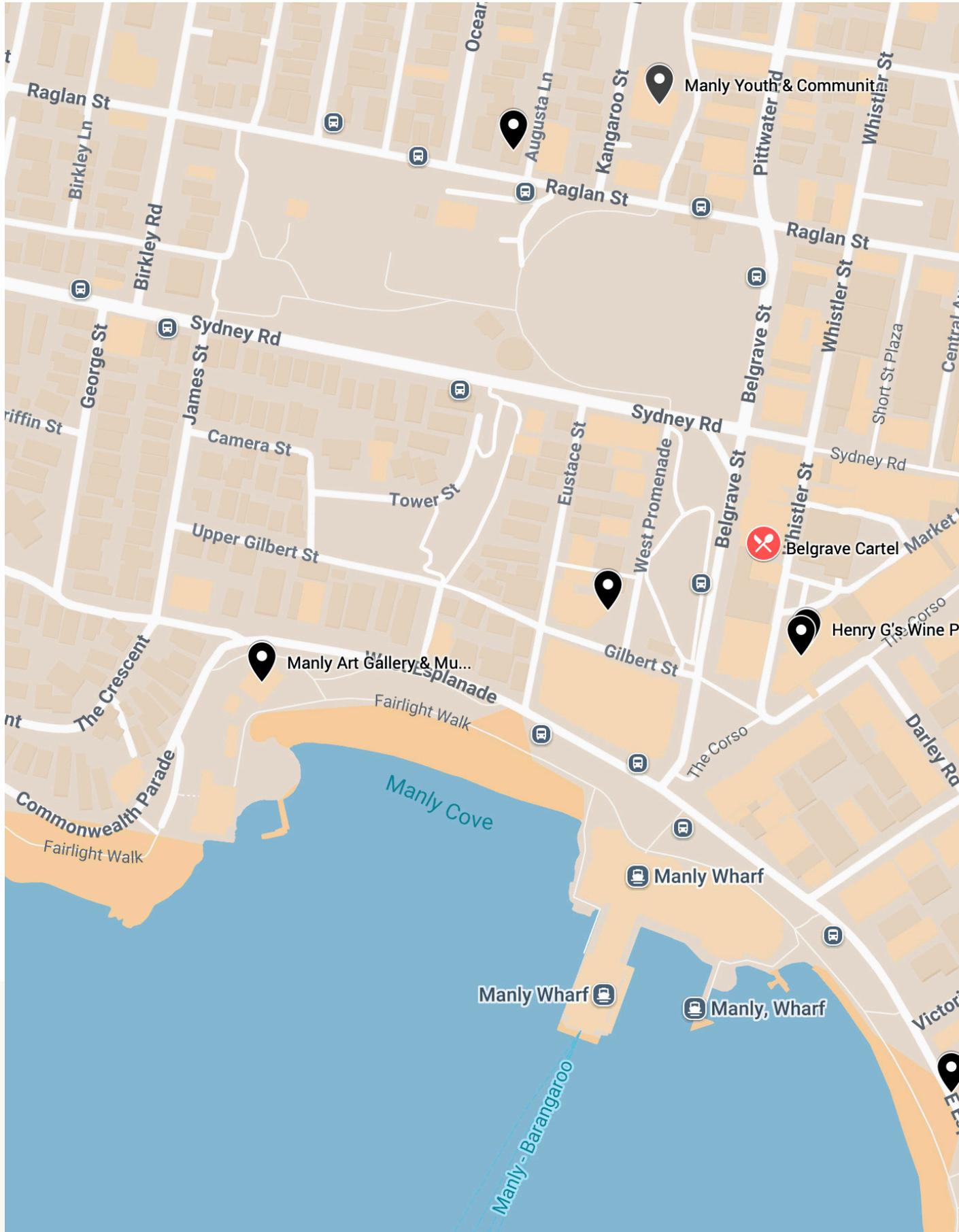
### **Manly Wharf Events**

Upstairs, East Esplanade, Manly

## Schools Program

### **Mackellar Girls' High School**

Campbell Parade, Manly Vale





## Festival Café – Belgrave Cartel

6 Belgrave Street, Manly

Throughout the Festival, Belgrave Cartel is our Festival Café. It's a place to grab a coffee, meet friends, talk about what you've just heard, or plan what to see next. You don't need a ticket to drop in, and you don't need to be heading to a session. It's simply a welcoming space to pause, chat, and be part of the Festival atmosphere.

Be prepared for the special, Festival-themed coffee, and if you want some quiet space, head to their Readers' Room through the courtyard.

You can also purchase coffee at the Festival Coffee Cart at Manly Youth Club. Otherwise, you need to BYO.

## Festival Bookshop

Once again, Gleebooks will create a wonderful pop-up Festival Bookshop in the **Manly Life Saving Club** (Friday) and **Manly Youth Centre** (all days), which also host several Festival sessions.

The Festival Bookshop will offer Festival titles, with chances to browse between sessions, meet authors, and to have books signed. These are active festival spaces rather than conventional bookshop rooms, and they ensure that you can take home books discovered through the weekend's conversations.

Books will also be available at individual sessions.

We thank Gleebooks owner, David Gaunt, and his team for joining us again at Manly.



# TICKETS

## How to Book

All tickets must be booked and paid for online at [www.manlywritersfestival.org.au](http://www.manlywritersfestival.org.au) or directly via the Humanitix website or app. Please download your eTicket on your mobile phone or print it out at home for scanning.

Tickets will be available until the allocation is exhausted. If available, tickets will be on sale at the venues on the day, except for the Special Events.

## Refunds

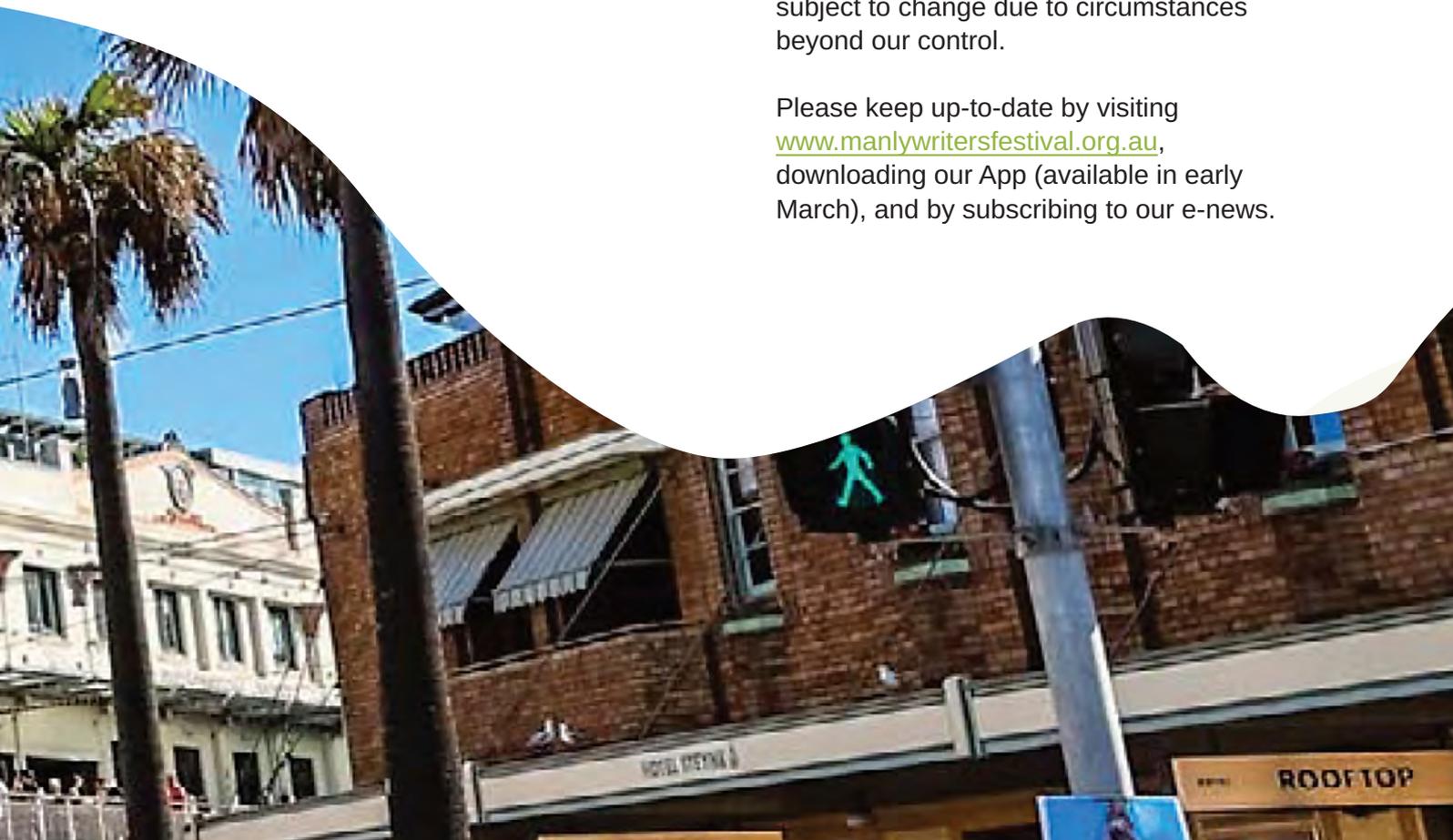
A full refund will be issued for cancellations made by 19<sup>th</sup> February 2026, less the ticket processing fee and merchant costs.

We will refund the full ticket price, less processing fee and merchant costs, for any session cancellation made by us, for example, because of a *force majeure* or author cancellation.

## Program changes

The information in this program is correct at the time of preparation, but may be subject to change due to circumstances beyond our control.

Please keep up-to-date by visiting [www.manlywritersfestival.org.au](http://www.manlywritersfestival.org.au), downloading our App (available in early March), and by subscribing to our e-news.



## Ticket prices

Regular Festival	Schools Program	Special Events
<b>Sessions</b> \$25 full price \$22 concession \$15 Under 25	Free	<b>Thomas Keneally Oration</b> \$75
<b>Free</b> Look for our free events		<b>The Night Shift</b> \$49
<b>Workshops, Poetry Salon</b> \$30		<b>Beyond the Hot Flush            with Michelle Bridges</b> \$55
<b>4-event bundle</b> \$90 (excludes Special Events)		

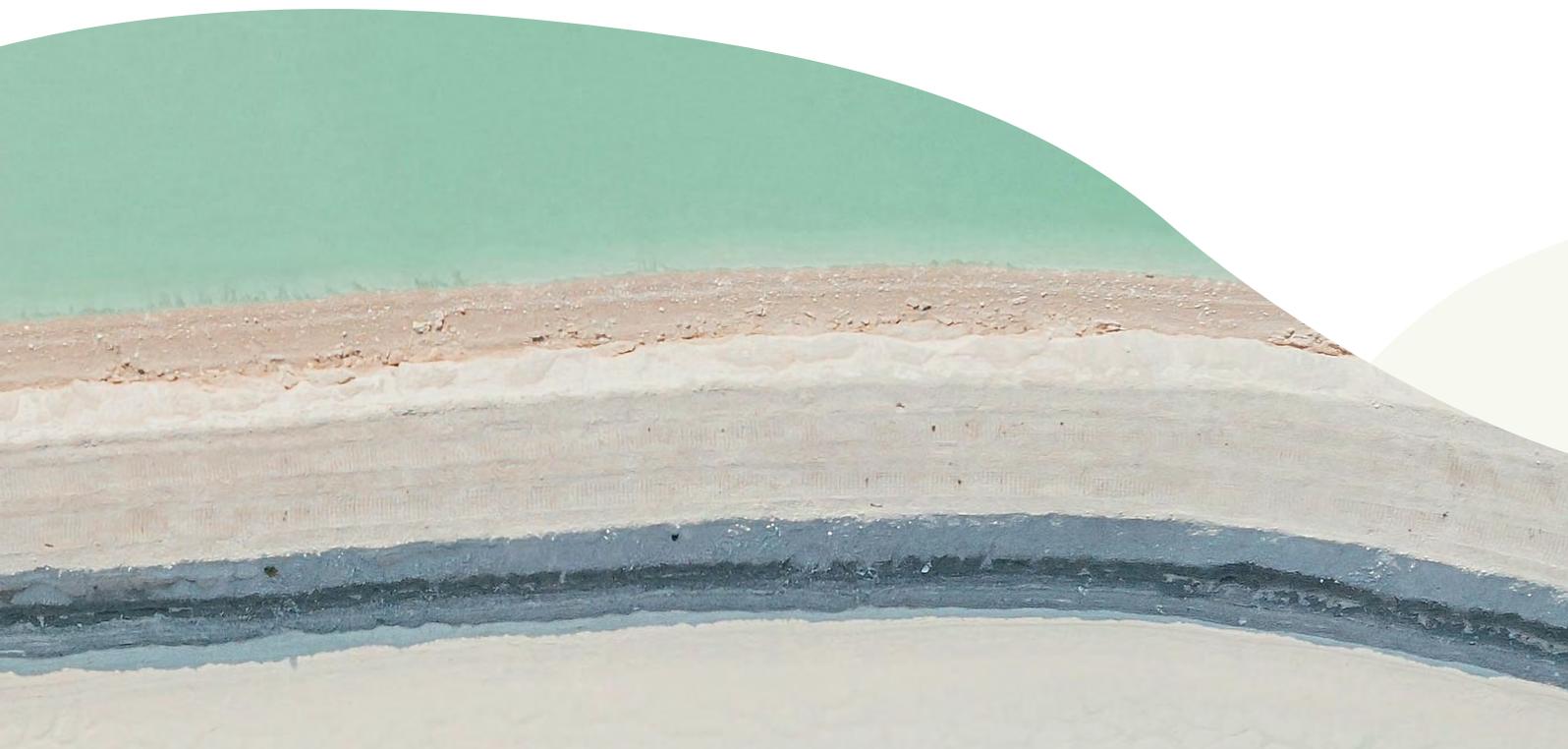


# A NOTE ON CARE AND CONVERSATION

The Manly Writers' Festival includes spaces that may be challenging, but without being confrontational, and rigorous without being reductive.

Some sessions may involve contested ideas, challenging stories, and people with a wide range of opinions. All authors and hosts have committed to respectful disagreement if it arises during a session, and we ask audience members to always maintain respect and civility.

When sessions address complex themes — including abuse, grief, or political conflict — content notes are provided so audiences can make informed decisions about their attendance.





# SPECIAL EVENTS



## Thomas Keneally Oration

Thursday 19 March, 6.30-9.00pm

Manly Wharf Event Space (formerly Saké)

Thomas Keneally AO

Host: Sarah Dingle

The Thomas Keneally Oration is the Manly Writers' Festival's annual keynote address, created to honour one of Australia's most significant literary voices and his enduring contribution to public life.

In 2026, the Oration will be delivered by **Thomas Keneally** himself. Across a career spanning more than six decades, Keneally has written with moral clarity about history, power, injustice, faith and national identity, helping to shape how Australians understand both their past and their place in the world.

In this special address, Keneally reflects on writing as a civic act: the responsibility to bear witness, the role of memory in national storytelling, and the

power of literature to question, challenge, and endure. Drawing on a lifetime of work across fiction, history and memoir, the Oration speaks to the moment we are in now, and to the long view writers must take.

The Thomas Keneally Oration opens the Manly Writers' Festival, setting the tone for the days that follow with stories across Manly.

Included with your ticket: A drink on arrival and canapés.

**Cost: \$75**

## Manly Poetry Salon

Saturday 21 March, 4.00-5.30pm

Sky Theatre

Robbie Coburn, Deborah Conway, Toby Davidson, Cocoa Deep-Amek, Liz Deep-Jones (not pictured) Ruth Larnier, Michele Seminara

Curated by and Host: Michele Seminara

Six voices, six ways of seeing the world. This freestyle poetry showcase brings together an eclectic mix of poets whose work spans the page, the stage, and everything in between. Each poet will share recent work, whether read quietly or performed with all the energy and presence that poetry can demand when it leaves the printed word behind. This is poetry as a living, breathing art—diverse in form, and reflecting the moments we live through.

**Cost: \$30**



## The Night Shift

Saturday 21 March, 8.00-10.00pm

Manly Youth Centre



*A late-night exploration of human voice, meaning and creativity in the age of artificial intelligence.*

**8.00–8.15pm**

### The Algorithmic Age: What AI Is (and Isn't) Doing to Culture

Cory Alpert

Host: Nick Place

What is AI doing to creative work — and what is being exaggerated, misunderstood or ignored? In this concise opening explainer, Cory Alpert sets the scene for the night ahead, unpacking how algorithms shape attention, authorship and culture, and what's really at stake for writers, musicians and audiences.

Short, sharp, and jargon-free.

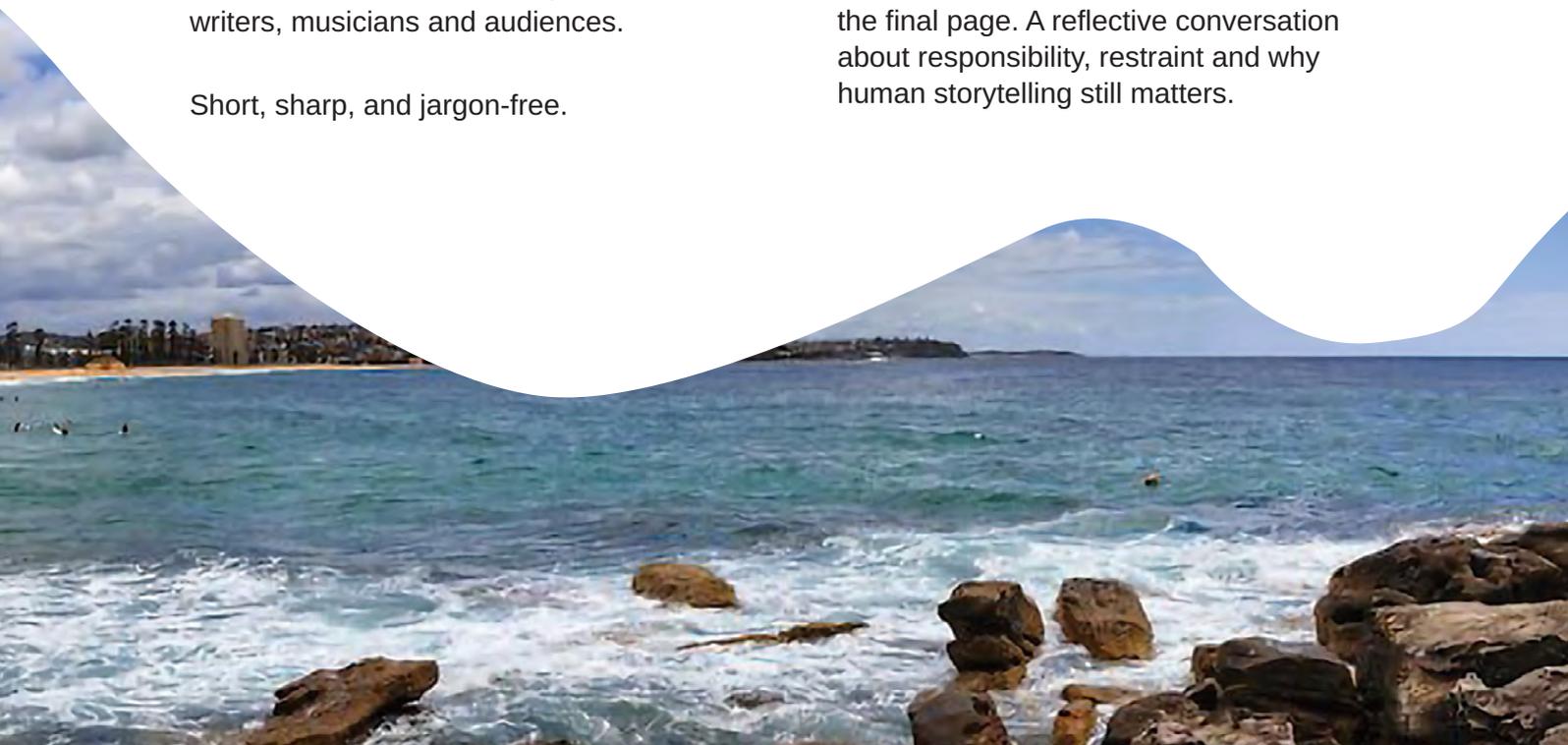
**8.15–8.45pm**

### Writing Empathy: What Stories Can Do That Facts Can't

Heather Morris

Host: Nick Place

What do stories do that facts alone can't? Heather Morris explores the craft choices behind writing emotionally resonant fiction — how writers build empathy, handle sensitive material with care, and shape stories that stay with readers long after the final page. A reflective conversation about responsibility, restraint and why human storytelling still matters.



8.45–9.15pm

**The Human Sentence: Writers vs AI**

Candida Baker, Amy Coomer,  
Cocoa the Conscious, Amy Hutton,  
Daniel Nour

Host: Alice Fraser

One scene. Five writers.  
Radically different voices.

What happens when writers — and AI — are given the same story premise and asked to write it in a specific genre? This fast, funny live experiment reveals how tone, instinct and voice transform the same material in different ways. No commentary. No comparison. Just creativity in action.

9.15–9.45pm

**The Human Sound: Music vs AI**

Con Campbell, Deborah Conway  
and Willy Zygier, Maximilian Holzner

Host: Alice Fraser

If AI can generate music, what does human sound offer? In this closing session, musicians from different traditions respond to the same creative prompt — first as interpreted by AI, then through human instinct, collaboration and craft. Jazz improvisation, classical interpretation and songwriting sit side by side in a live exploration of listening and response.

The night concludes with a final song from Deborah Conway and Willy Zygier — not as a concert, but as a human answer to AI.

**Add-On: A cash bar will be available.  
Cost: \$49**





## Beyond the Hot Flush: Rewriting Midlife with Michelle Bridges

Sunday 22 March, 8.30am-9.45am

Hotel Steyne

Michelle Bridges

Host: Caroline Baum



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[MANLYWRITERSFESTIVAL.COM.AU](http://MANLYWRITERSFESTIVAL.COM.AU)

Forget the clichés — this is not your mother's menopause talk. Join bestselling author and fitness icon **Michelle Bridges** for a candid, empowering conversation about peri- and menopause, ageing well, and embracing the next chapter with strength, humour and self-compassion. Over a relaxed breakfast, Michelle will share her insights on navigating physical and emotional changes, reframing midlife, and finding renewed purpose in life's "second act."

Included in your ticket: Continental breakfast.

**Cost: \$55**



# PATHWAYS

The program is organised into pathways to help you navigate the Festival. Each pathway brings together sessions with shared themes or interests, but they're not meant to be followed from start to finish. They're simply a way to explore what's on offer, mix and match sessions, and create your own Festival experience.

You can also check the 'At A Glance' at the back of this program to see what's on by day or by Pathway.

## FINDING YOUR WAY THROUGH THE FESTIVAL

To help your planning as you follow **Stories Across Manly**, here are indicative walking distances between venues, courtesy of Google Maps.

From		To	Distance, Time
Manly Youth Centre	→	Belgrave Cartel	400m, 6 minutes
Manly Youth Centre	→	Henry G's	650m, 9 minutes
Manly Youth Centre	→	Manly Art Gallery	850m, 13 minutes
Manly Youth Centre	→	Manly Life Saving Club	1km, 15 minutes
Manly Youth Centre	→	Qi Yoga Studio	650m, 9 minutes
Manly Youth Centre	→	Sky Theatre	130m, 2 minutes
Manly Youth Centre	→	The Manly Club	500m, 7 minutes

## POWER, TRUTH and ACCOUNTABILITY

*Sessions that examine how power operates, how truth is contested or concealed, and what accountability looks like when institutions, systems and leaders are tested.*

Who Pays the Price? Gender and Institutional Power

After 'Liberation' and 'Discovery': Power, Aftermath and Human Agency

Speaking the Unspoken

The Australian Wars: Truth, Violence and the Making of a Nation

Festival Conversation: Betrayal

Media, Algorithms and the Fragility of Democracy

Power, Paranoia and Pleasure

**Roundtable: Who Pays the Price?  
Gender and Institutional Power**  
Friday 20 March, 12.30-2.00pm  
Manly Life Saving Club

Ainslie Harvey, Tracey Holmes, Ee Ling Quah, Diana Thorp  
Host: Angela Priestley

major organisations, and why the costs of speaking out so often fall along lines of gender, race and migration. Drawing on journalism, leadership, academic research and lived experience, the panel explores how institutional cultures are built and defended; how silence, loyalty and retaliation are enforced; and how progressive systems can reproduce inequality even as they claim reform. From media and universities to governance and public life, this is a searching conversation about accountability, complicity and what genuine structural change demands.

**Included with your ticket:  
Sandwich Lunch**

When institutions fail or protect themselves, the consequences are rarely shared equally. In this extended roundtable, Ainslie Harvey, Tracey Holmes, Ee Ling Quah, and Diana Thorp examine how power operates inside





**After 'Liberation' and 'Discovery':  
Power, Aftermath and Human Agency**  
Friday 20 March, 4.00-5.00pm  
Sky Theatre



Professor Martin Thomas, Nadia Wheatley  
Host: Helen Vatsikopoulos

In very different places and circumstances, *Clever Men* by Martin Thomas and *Strange New World* by Nadia Wheatley begin at moments of supposed benevolence: a grand scientific expedition to Arnhem Land, and the liberation of a Nazi concentration camp. Yet in both cases, what followed was far more complex, marked by disillusionment, control, and the struggle of ordinary people to reclaim agency in the face of overwhelming power.

Together, Thomas and Wheatley explore what happens after power intervenes in the name of progress or rescue. This is a conversation about aftermath rather than event, about the limits of authority, and about the quiet, determined ways people reclaim control over their own lives and stories. Drawing on archives, museums, and hidden histories, the session reflects on how institutions preserve — and sometimes obscure — the truths they claim to protect.



**Speaking the Unspoken**  
Friday 20 March, 5.30-6.15pm  
Sky Theatre

Michael Mohammed Ahmad  
Host: Summer Land

A conversation about writing fiction that confronts abuse, grooming, silence and shame. Mohammed Ahmad reflects on the responsibilities of telling difficult stories, the line between imagination and lived experience, and the capacity of fiction to speak where other forms fail.

*Content note: This session includes discussion related to child abuse.*



## The Australian Wars: Truth, Violence and the Making of a Nation

Friday 20 March, 6.45-7.30pm

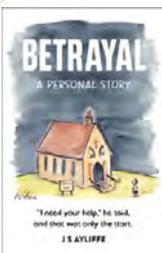
Manly Art Gallery

Dr Stephen Gapps

Host: Professor Martin Thomas

For generations, Australia's frontier wars were minimised, euphemised, or erased from the national story. In *The Australian Wars*, Stephen Gapps and his contributors draw on military records, colonial archives and Aboriginal histories. Gapps reframes the frontier as a series of wars fought across the

continent. This conversation explores what it means to tell this history honestly: the language we use, the silences we inherit, and the responsibilities that come with confronting violence at the heart of nation-building. A vital session on truth-telling, historical method and why the past remains unfinished.



## Festival Conversation and Book Launch: Betrayal

Friday 20 March, 7.30-9.00pm

Sky Theatre

J.S. Ayliffe

Host: Tim Ayliffe

What happens when loyalty to institutions collides with personal conscience?

In this Festival conversation, J.S. Ayliffe reflects on a life shaped by law, ethics and difficult choices. Drawing on his newly released book, *Betrayal*, he explores the costs of speaking up, the price of silence, and the moral grey zones inside influential organisations.

This is a considered, contained book launch event — a conversation about integrity, courage and consequence.

*Content note: This session includes discussion related to child abuse.*

Included in your ticket: Canapés, with drinks available for purchase.

**Cost: \$49**



**Festival Conversation: Democracy Under Pressure**  
**Friday 20 March 8.00-9.00pm**  
**Manly Life Saving Club**

Amy Remeikis  
 Host: Savva Savas

How is democracy being reshaped by the systems that now control how information flows?

In this civic briefing, Amy Remeikis examines how media concentration, social platforms, algorithms and artificial intelligence are altering public debate and democratic

accountability. Drawing on law, journalism and political analysis, they explore how agendas are set, how misinformation spreads, and why trust in institutions is eroding.

This session offers a clear-eyed examination of how democratic systems are coping — and often failing — in a rapidly changing information environment, and what citizens should be paying attention to as these pressures intensify.



**Power, Paranoia and Pleasure**  
**Saturday 21 March, 4.00-4.45pm**  
**Henry G's**

Nick Place  
 Host: Jack Toohey

What can a dictator's wine cellar tell us about power, fear and control? In this session, Nick Place explores the hidden cultural history behind Joseph Stalin's obsession with wine — revealing how luxury, paranoia and politics intertwined at the heart of the Soviet regime. A sharply told historical story that uses food, drink and excess to illuminate the mechanics of authoritarian power.

## AUSTRALIA IN THE WORLD

*Conversations about global conflict, diplomacy and disorder, exploring Australia's place in an unsettled international landscape through policy, lived experience and creative response.*

Frontlines: Conflict, Capture and the Human Cost of State Power

The Diplomat: Inside Australia's Foreign Service

The World on Edge: Australia and the New Global Disorder

The Nightmare Sequence: Art, Witnessing and Fracture



### **The Nightmare Sequence: Art, Witnessing and Fracture**

**Saturday 21 March, 11.30am-12.30pm**

**Manly Youth Centre**

Safdar Ahmed, Omar Sakr

Host: Nick Bogiatzis

This literary session explores form, trauma and the limits of language — asking what art can do in moments of rupture, and how creative work carries memory, anger and hope. Challenging and deeply literary.

*Content note: This session includes discussion related to the war in Gaza that some people may find challenging.*

How do artists respond when the world fractures around them? Safdar Ahmed and Omar Sakr discuss *The Nightmare Sequence*, a collaborative work that blends art, poetry and political witnessing.



## Geopolitics at Manly

Saturday 21 March, 1.00-5.00pm



In an era marked by strategic tension, traditional alliances under pressure and escalating global uncertainty, the Manly Writers' Festival presents a curated three-session program that examines Australia's place in an increasingly volatile world.

**The three sessions are at the Manly Youth Centre.**



### Frontlines: Conflict, Capture and the Human Cost of State Power

Saturday 21 March, 1.00-2.00pm

Mike Amor, Kylie Moore-Gilbert

Host: Mark Corcoran



A gripping, deeply human conversation with two Australians whose lives have been transformed by conflict and state power. Kylie Moore-Gilbert reflects on her 804-day imprisonment in Iran, while journalist Mike Amor shares his experiences reporting from natural and human disasters, war zones and political flashpoints. Together, they shed light on resilience, risk, hostage diplomacy, and what it means to survive geopolitical forces beyond one's control. A compelling centrepiece that brings the global down to the personal.



## The Diplomat: Inside Australia's Foreign Service

Saturday 21 March, 2.30-3.30pm



Bob Bowker, Ian Kemish, Lachlan Strahan

Host: Geraldine Doogue



What does diplomacy really look like behind closed doors? The former Foreign Minister and three former diplomats lift the veil on the pressures, responsibilities and moral complexities of representing Australia abroad. From crisis management to regional relationships and the shifting expectations placed on the foreign service, this session offers a candid insider's view of the work, challenges and changing culture of diplomacy.



## The World on Edge: Australia and the New Global Disorder

Saturday 21 March, 4.00-5.00pm



Bob Carr, Peter Hartcher, Michael Pembroke

Host: Michael Brissenden



As the international order shifts, leading commentators and strategic thinkers debate Australia's future in a rapidly changing world. From US-China competition and increased militarisation to disinformation and the erosion of global norms and weakening of Western liberalism and the emergence of an increasingly multipolar world, this finale brings sharply contrasting views to the major strategic questions facing the nation. A dynamic, thought-provoking close to Saturday's program.

## COUNTRY AND WHO WE ARE

Sessions that explore how place, history, culture and inheritance shape identity, belonging and the stories Australians tell about themselves.

Country and the Stories We Tell

Lloyd Rees and the City He Taught Us to See

Land, Identity and Who Gets to Belong

Inheritance, Survival and Belonging



### Country and the Stories We Tell

Friday 20 March, 2.30-3.30pm

Manly Life Saving Club

William J. Byrne, John Morrissey

Host: Summer Land



How do stories express connection to place and identity? In this thoughtful conversation, Byrne and Morrissey explore belonging and responsibility in Australian fiction. The session focuses on story as a way of holding history, Country and moral obligation across generations.



### Lloyd Rees and the City He Taught Us to See

Friday 20 March, 5.30-6.15pm

Manly Art Gallery

Ross Wilson

Host: Candida Baker

Lloyd Rees is one of Australia's most beloved painters, a master of light, water and landscape whose work shaped the way we see our cities. In *Lloyd Rees and the Architects*, Ross Wilson traces Rees's life from his early years in Brisbane to his decades teaching at the University of Sydney's Faculty of Architecture, where he influenced generations of architects and creative thinkers. In conversation

with Candida Baker, Wilson explores the remarkable relationship between Rees's art and his students' buildings, how drawing and observation became a vital tool for architectural imagination, and how Rees's vision helped shape Sydney — and the idea of Australian place itself. This session is perfect for lovers of cityscapes, creativity and visual storytelling.



**Land, Identity and Who Gets to Belong**  
**Saturday 21 March, 1.00-2.00pm**  
**Manly Youth Centre**

Tyree Barnette, Joshua Gilbert  
 Host: Jack Toohey

Who gets to belong in Australia, and on whose terms? From very different starting points, Joshua Gilbert and Tyree Barnette reflect on how land, race and power shape ideas of identity and home. Gilbert brings an Indigenous, future-focused perspective grounded in Country, agriculture and cultural continuity. Barnette offers the lens of a Black American migrant learning how race, privilege and belonging shift across national borders.

Together, they examine the stories Australia tells about itself and the tensions between welcome, ownership and sovereignty. This is a conversation about belonging that rejects easy answers and what it might mean to build a shared future without erasing difference or history.



**Inheritance, Survival and Belonging**  
**Saturday 21 March, 2.30-3.30pm**  
**Manly Youth Centre**

Antoun Issa, Daniel Nour  
 Host: Vasiliki Nihias

What do we inherit from the lives our parents lived before us? How do those stories shape who we become? Antoun Issa and Daniel

Nour reflect on family, migration, and the quiet legacies of survival. From humour and masculinity to war, displacement and renewal, both writers explore how identity is formed in the space between generations, cultures and expectations. A humane and intimate discussion about belonging and becoming oneself.

## PERSONAL RECKONINGS

*Intimate conversations about lives shaped by loss, break-up, belief and moral choice, where private experience meets wider questions of meaning, responsibility and resilience.*

Open Book: Writing Lived Experience

Bring Back Yesterday

Just Saying: In Conversation with Hugh Mackay

Ruptured Lives, Resilient Voices

Lives that Don't Follow the Script

Festival Conversation and Book Launch: Home, Forever



**Open Book sessions** centre on the work itself. Writers read from their books and speak briefly about the choices and discoveries that shaped the writing.

### Open Book: Writing Lived Experience Saturday 21 March, 4.00-5.00pm Sky Theatre

Tracy Crisp, Natalie Scott

Host: Liz Deep-Jones

**Pearls** by Tracy Crisp is a memoir that reflects on displacement and survival, tracing how early experiences continue to shape a life over time. **A Secret Grief** by Natalie Scott is a novel centred on a girl growing up in the 1930s and 1940s, grappling with her relationship with her mother—a relationship marked by emotional distance, misunderstanding and the stories we tell ourselves about being loved.

In this Open Book session, Crisp and Scott read from their work and talk about writing lived experience — how personal histories, perceptions and memory are shaped into a story through memoir.



**Bring Back Yesterday:  
In Conversation with Bob Carr  
Saturday 21 March, 5.30-6.15pm  
Manly Youth Centre**

Bob Carr

Host: Sarah Dingle

In this intimate conversation, Bob Carr reflects on love, loss, and the emotional afterlife of a shared life. *Bring Back Yesterday* is his deeply personal account of a 50-year partnership, and of learning how to live in the wake of profound grief following the sudden death of his wife, Helena, in 2023. Rather than offering consolation or easy answers, Carr speaks candidly about absence, memory, and how grief reshapes time, identity, and daily life.

With characteristic clarity and restraint, he explores how love endures beyond loss, and what it means to keep going when the centre of one's world has shifted. This is a quiet, searching conversation about devotion, resilience, and the hard work of remembering; a rare and moving portrait of grief told without sentimentality, and, ultimately, a story of enduring love.

*Content note: This session includes discussion of grief, loss and bereavement.*





## Just Saying: In Conversation with Hugh Mackay

Sunday 22 March, 10.00-11.00am

Manly Youth Centre

Hugh Mackay AO

Host: Helen Vatsikopoulos

In *Just Saying*, one of Australia's most trusted social commentators, Hugh Mackay, turns his sharp but compassionate gaze to the state of our national psyche. From loneliness and social division to kindness, trust and the small acts that shape community life,

Mackay explores what truly matters in unsettled times. In this intimate one-on-one conversation, he reflects on how we live, how we treat one another, and how we rebuild a sense of shared purpose. A thoughtful, uplifting session with a writer who helps us understand ourselves.



## Ruptured Lives, Resilient Voices

Sunday 22 March, 11.30am-12.30pm

Manly Youth Centre

Elana Benjamin, Joanne Fedler, Lee Kofman, Kylie Moore-Gilbert

Host: Suellen Dainty

*Ruptured* brings together the voices of Jewish women in Australia reflecting on life after 7 October 2023—an event that continues to send seismic shockwaves worldwide. Elana Benjamin, Joanne Fedler, Lee Kofman, and Kylie Moore-Gilbert share essays that wrestle with grief, fear, belonging, faith, and the fractures that opened in both public and private life, and, more recently, were highlighted in Australia by the Hanukkah attack in Bondi. They explore what it means to be shaken by history, how to live with rupture, and the fragile, necessary work of repair.

*Content note: This session includes discussion of antisemitism and anti-Zionism that some people may find challenging.*



## Lives That Don't Follow the Script

Sunday 22 March, 1.00-2.00pm

Manly Youth Centre

Lucy Nelson, Kumi Taguchi

Host: Summer Land



Not every life follows the path we're told to expect, and not every choice is freely made.

In this intimate and thoughtful conversation, Kumi Taguchi and Lucy Nelson reflect on identity, womanhood, expectation and silence. From choosing — or being unable — to have children, to navigating lives shaped by loss, constraint and self-definition, this session shares stories that are often overlooked.



## Festival Conversation and Book Launch: Home, Forever

Sunday 22 March, 4.00-5.00pm

Manly Youth Centre

Anna Dombkins, with a personal introduction  
by Saul Eslake

Host: Caroline Baum

*Home, Forever* is the story of a family shaped by love, commitment and an extraordinary sense of responsibility which extends beyond borders.

In this Festival Conversation and Book Launch (via Saul Eslake), Anna Dombkins speaks with Caroline Baum about her family's adoption journey and the life-changing work they undertook in Tanzania. What began as a values-based, personal decision grew into long-term engagement with communities facing profound disadvantage, leading to the creation of a charity focused on care, education and dignity.

This conversation explores what it means to build family in unexpected ways, to confront ethical complexity with humility, and to translate compassion into sustained action. It is a story of belonging — not just within a household, but across cultures and continents — and of choosing to stay engaged long after the hardest decisions have been made.

A thoughtful and generous Festival Conversation marking the launch of *Home, Forever*.

*Note: This is a FREE Festival event.  
Donations to Forever Projects are welcome.*

## LIVING TODAY

*Sessions that grapple with the pressures, choices and contradictions of contemporary life, from money, housing and masculinity to faith, family and sport as lived culture.*

Money, Confidence and Choice

Boys, Masculinity and the Online World

The Stories that Sport Forgot

How Christians Can Succeed Today

The Housing Crunch

Father and Son: Legacy, Pressure and the Big Games



**Money, Confidence and Choice**  
**Friday 20 March, 5.15-6.00pm**  
**Manly Life Saving Club**

Melissa Browne

Host: Jill Valentine

Money is rarely just about money. In this practical and empowering session, Melissa Browne explores the relationship between finances, confidence and autonomy. With clarity and warmth, she challenges the myths that keep people, particularly women, from feeling capable and

informed, and offers concrete strategies for making financial decisions with confidence and purpose—from everyday budgeting to long-term planning, investing, and building financial independence.





**Boys, Masculinity and the Online World**  
**Friday 20 March, 6.30-7.30pm**  
**Manly Life Saving Club**

Ashley Kalagian Blunt, Sarah James,  
 Jack Toohey

Host: Savva Savas

Educational outcomes for boys are declining, while online culture increasingly shapes how young men understand power, success, gender and identity. This session brings together a crime writer exploring violence and alienation (Blunt), a researcher examining boys' education (James) and a journalist/writer navigating these pressures first-hand (Toohey).

From influencers and algorithms to fiction that explores violence, alienation and belonging, the panel examines how digital spaces are reshaping masculinity, how schools and families are struggling to keep up, and what more honest conversations with boys might look like. A challenging yet grounded conversation.



**The Stories That Sport Forgot**  
**Sunday 22 March, 11.30am-12.30pm**  
**Henry G's**

Paul Nicholls, Trevor Thompson

Host: Ian Cockerill

Sport is often celebrated as a shared national language, but some stories never make the highlight reel. In this engaging session, Paul Nicholls and Trevor Thompson uncover lesser-known episodes, scandals, and sidelined figures that have shaped the history of sport, particularly the most global game of all, soccer. They explore what happens when sport's myths collide with reality, and why some history takes decades to surface. A conversation about the hidden histories of the games we think we know.



In Conversation with Greg Sheridan

Sunday 22 March, 1.00-2.00pm

Manly Youth Centre

**CANCELLED**  
 Greg Sheridan  
 Host: Dr Constantine Campbell



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What place does faith have in a world that moves faster and feels more complicated than ever? In *How Christians Can Succeed Today*, Greg Sheridan explores why Christianity still matters for individuals, for communities and for society. In conversation with Dr Constantine Campbell, a New Testament scholar and expert on St Paul, Sheridan reflects on how people of faith can live confidently and compassionately in modern Australia. An engaging discussion about belief, doubt and the search for meaning in contemporary life.





## The Great Australian Dream, or Great Australian Obsession?

Sunday 22 March, 2.30-3.30pm,  
Manly Youth Centre

Saul Eslake

Host: Michael Brissenden

Housing affordability dominates Australian conversation, yet much of what we think we know is incomplete or contested.

In this masterclass-style conversation, leading independent economist Saul Eslake breaks down the forces driving housing prices in Australia today, separating short-term pressures

from structural factors and clarifying where assumptions go astray. The session examines capital gains tax, the real impact of migration, intergenerational inequality, and whether rising prices genuinely make Australia wealthier. Clear, measured and grounded in evidence.



**Jumping Jack:  
In Conversation with Garry Jack**  
Saturday 21 March, 2.30-3.15pm  
Henry G's

Garry Jack

Host: Adam Hawse

# CANCELLED

Garry Jack — Balmain Tigers legend, State of Origin star and Australian representative — tells the story of his life and career in his new autobiography, *Jumping Jack*. In this relaxed, fast-moving conversation, he reflects on the pressure moments, fierce rivalries, dressing-room characters and turning points that shaped his journey at the top level of rugby league. Candid, entertaining and full of behind-the-scenes insight, this is a drink-in-hand session for sports fans and anyone curious about what elite competition really demands.

## STORIES AND STORYTELLERS

*Conversations about how stories are told, shaped and received across contemporary, literary, historical, romance, spy thrillers and crime fiction, exploring voice, genre, memory and imagination.*

Truth, Voice, and Who Is Believed

A Speed Date with Love

Open Book: Becoming Yourself Under Pressure

Open Book: What the Writing Reveals

The Murder Next Door

Inside the General Hospital

Age of Extremes

History's Long Shadow: Writing the Past



### Truth, Voice, and Who Is Believed

Friday 20 March, 2.30-3.30pm

Sky Theatre

Debra Adelaide, Sue Woolfe

Host: Candida Baker

Whose stories are heard, and whose are doubted? In this conversation, Sue Woolfe and Debra Adelaide reflect on truth-telling, credibility, and the fragile mechanics of belief in literature, in institutions, and in private lives. Drawing on fiction and lived experience, they consider how voice is shaped by power, gender, memory, and circumstance, and how easily truth can be questioned, deferred, or dismissed. At its heart, this session asks what it means to speak honestly when people are not always prepared to listen.



**A Speed Date with Love**  
**Friday 20 March, 3.45-5.00pm**  
**Manly Life Saving Club**

Holly Cardamone, Karen Farrell, Amy Hutton,  
 Eleanor Kirk, Joanna Nell, Courtney Peppernell  
 Host: Alice Fraser

Looking for your next great love story? In this lively, fast-paced Friday afternoon session, love and romance fiction writers each take the mic for a few short minutes to introduce their books — from first love and fierce attraction to grief, companionship, longing, and late-life connection.

Hosted by Alice Fraser, this is a fun, informal way to meet a roomful of writers, discover stories that explore love in all its forms, and maybe even find your next read.

**Open Book: Becoming Yourself Under Pressure**  
**Saturday 21 March, 11.30am-12.30pm**  
**Henry G's**

Robbie Coburn, Amy Coomer, Matilda Meikle  
 Host: Dr Lee Kofman

Becoming yourself is rarely a smooth or linear process. In this Open Book session, Robbie Coburn, Amy Coomer and Matilda Meikle discuss how they approached writing young protagonists at moments of emotional intensity, grappling with grief, uncertainty, scrutiny and the pull of belonging.

Through readings from their novels, the authors reflect on the choices that shaped their stories: how voice is found under pressure, how characters respond when expectations close in, and how writing for young readers demands honesty and restraint. Together, they consider what emerges in the act of writing itself; when identity is still forming and the ground beneath the characters, and sometimes the author, is not yet settled.



## Open Book: What the Writing Reveals

Saturday 21 March, 1.00–2.00pm

Henry G's

James Dunbar, Jack Heath, Matthew Spencer, Dave Warner

Host: Suellen Dainty

**Open Book sessions** centre on the work itself. Writers read from their books and speak briefly about the choices and discoveries that shaped the writing.

**Twisted River** by James Dunbar is a crime novel set in regional Australia, centred on a dangerous river, a tight-knit community, and the consequences of secrets that refuse to stay buried.

**Kill Your Boss** by Jack Heath is a sharp, fast-paced thriller that turns work place resentment into something far darker driven by the dangerous appeal of an unthinkable idea. **Broke Road** by Matthew Spencer follows a series of crimes linked by a single stretch of road, exposing corruption, desperation and lives pushed to breaking point. **Sound Mind, Dead Body** by Dave Warner blends a compelling investigation with social insight, probing motive, consequence and moral uncertainty.

In this Open Book session, Dunbar, Heath, Spencer, and Warner read from their work and reflect on what emerges in the act of writing — how setting, character and plot begin to carry meanings the author may not have fully anticipated, and how crime fiction can reveal as much about the world it observes as the stories it tells.



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## The Murder Next Door Saturday

21 March, 2.30-3.30pm

Sky Theatre

Kate Horan, Troy Hunter, Ali Lowe,  
Nikki-Lee Taylor

Host: Amy Hutton

Suburban streets, domestic routines and familiar relationships are the setting for some of today's most unsettling crime fiction. In *The Murder Next Door*, four thriller writers explore psychological suspense, domestic noir and the menace that lurks in ordinary lives — the neighbours you wave to, the houses you pass every day, the secrets hidden in plain sight.

Kate Horan, Troy Hunter, Ali Lowe, and Nikki-Lee Taylor discuss why stories set so close to home exert such a powerful pull on readers, how tension is built through intimacy and misdirection, and what these novels reveal about trust, fear and the fragile boundaries of safety. This is a conversation about crime fiction as entertainment, obsession and social mirror — and why the most disturbing stories often unfold where we feel safest.



## Inside the General Hospital

Sunday 22 March, 11.30am-12.30pm

Manly Youth Centre

Anne Buist, Graeme Simsion

Host: Nick Place

Drawing on Anne Buist's experience as a psychiatrist and Graeme Simsion's gift for humane storytelling, *The General Hospital* explores care, crisis and connection inside a pressured institution. In this conversation, Simsion and Buist discuss writing about institutional life with empathy, the emotional labour of care, and how fiction can illuminate the systems we depend on at moments of vulnerability.

*Content note: This session includes discussion of issues affecting mental health.*



### **Age of Extremes: Spies, Lies and Power Games in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century**

**Sunday 22 March, 1.00-2.00pm**

**Henry G's**

Tim Ayliffe, Jack Beaumont, Michael Brissenden

Host: Michael Brissenden

Three writers of contemporary political and espionage fiction explore a world shaped by surveillance, disinformation and global instability. Drawing on backgrounds in journalism, diplomacy and intelligence, they discuss how power operates in the shadows, and why fiction is often the most revealing way to understand it.



### **History's Long Shadow: Writing the Past**

**Sunday 22 March, 2.30-3.30pm**

**Manly Youth Centre**

Candida Baker, Susan Francis

Host: Professor Martin Thomas

From overlooked lives to quiet acts of endurance, Baker and Francis explore how fiction engages with history, memory and recovery. This session examines the moral responsibility of writing about the past, the role of imagination in historical storytelling, and why unresolved histories continue to shape the present

## SO, YOU WANT TO BE A WRITER?

*Practical sessions and workshops for aspiring and emerging writers, focused on craft, process, publishing and the realities of turning writing into a finished work.*

Ask Us Anything: From Manuscript to Bookstore—What Really Gets You Published

### Workshops

- Edit Like an Expert
- Beyond the Postcard
- Building a Professional Name
- From Page to Stage



### Ask Us Anything: From Manuscript to Bookstore—What Really Gets You Published Saturday 21 March, 10.00-11.00am The Manly Club

Ben Aitchison, John Coomer, Jeanne Ryckmans

Host: Tim Ayliffe

What happens between finishing a manuscript and seeing a book in the world? This session brings together key players across the publishing process to demystify how books are selected, shaped, produced and released. The discussion will unpack common misconceptions about agents, editors, design and publishing, and offer a realistic picture of how decisions are made. This is a rare opportunity to ask the experts anything you want to know about what it takes to be published.

*Note: Pitching manuscripts from the floor is not part of this session.*



**Workshop: Edit Like An Expert**  
**Friday 20 March, 11.00am-12.00pm**  
**Manly Youth Centre (The Writers' Room)**

Presented by: Zena Shapter

Good editing is not about fixing commas. It is about clarity, structure, voice and knowing what matters. In this practical workshop, editor Zena Shapter introduces participants to the way professional editors approach a manuscript, from big-picture assessment to line-level

decision-making. Through examples and guided discussion, participants will learn to review their own work more effectively and recognise when a piece needs further work. This session is designed to help writers become stronger self-editors, regardless of genre.



**Workshop: Beyond the Postcard: Writing Place with Authority**  
**Friday 20 March, 2.30-3.30pm**  
**Manly Youth Centre (The Writers' Room)**

Presented by: Helen Hayes

Travel writing is about far more than describing where you've been. In this workshop, Helen Hayes explores how writers can capture a sense of place with depth, accuracy and ethical awareness. Participants will consider how to move beyond surface description to write about places that feel lived-in and credible.





**Workshop: Building a Professional Name.  
Reputation and Resilience at Work**  
**Friday 20 March, 4.00-5.00pm**  
**Manly Youth Centre (The Writers' Room)**

Presented by: Tony Frost

What does it mean to conduct yourself as a professional in a rapidly changing world of work? Drawing on his book *The Professional*, Tony Frost explores how reputations are built and sustained, why curiosity and lifelong learning matter more than ever, and how individuals can remain

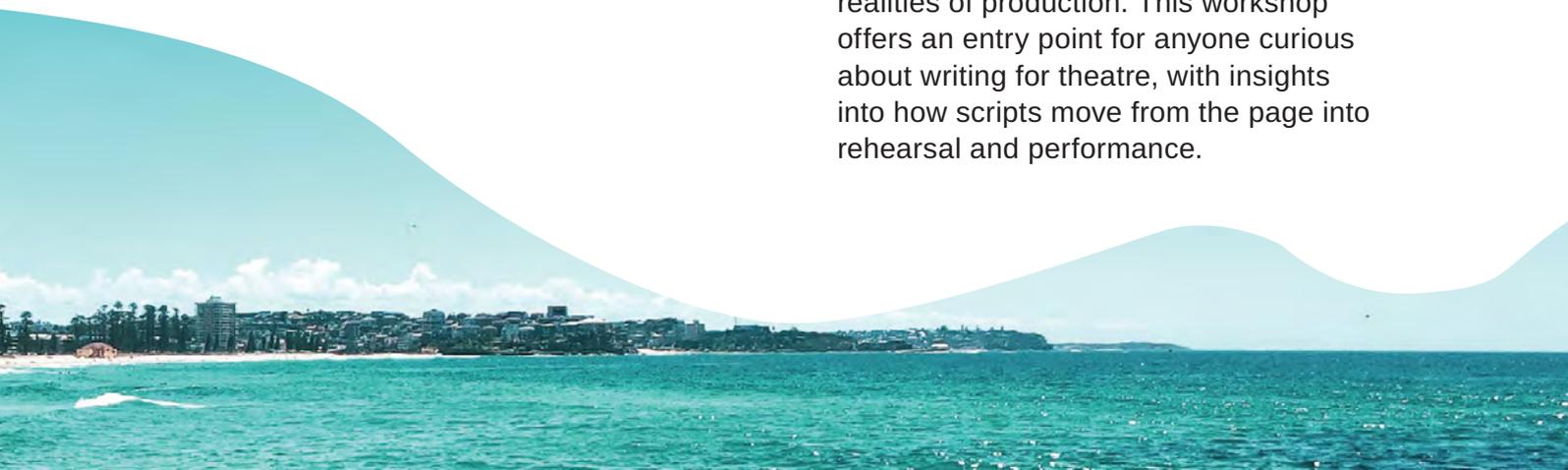
purposeful and resilient over long careers. This practical session focuses on values, behaviour, and decision-making rather than technical skills, offering participants a framework for navigating work with confidence, integrity and adaptability.



**Workshop: From Page to Stage:  
Writing for the Theatre**  
**Saturday 21 March, 2.30-3.30pm**  
**Sky Theatre (The Studio)**

Presented by: Kathleen Walker, Artistic Director, Manly Theatre Group

Writing for the stage requires a different way of thinking about story, dialogue and character. Members of the Manly Theatre Group introduce the fundamentals of playwriting, including structure, voice, pacing and the practical realities of production. This workshop offers an entry point for anyone curious about writing for theatre, with insights into how scripts move from the page into rehearsal and performance.



# SCHOOLS PROGRAM

## **Power and Voice: Whose Story Is It to Tell?**

Exploring truth, storytelling, journalism, and authorship in a noisy world

**Friday 20 March 2026, 9:15am – 3:00pm**

**Registration from 9:00am**

**Performance Space, Mackellar Girls' High School**

**Audience: Years 9–10 students**

**Free to students and teachers**

Host: Jack Toohey

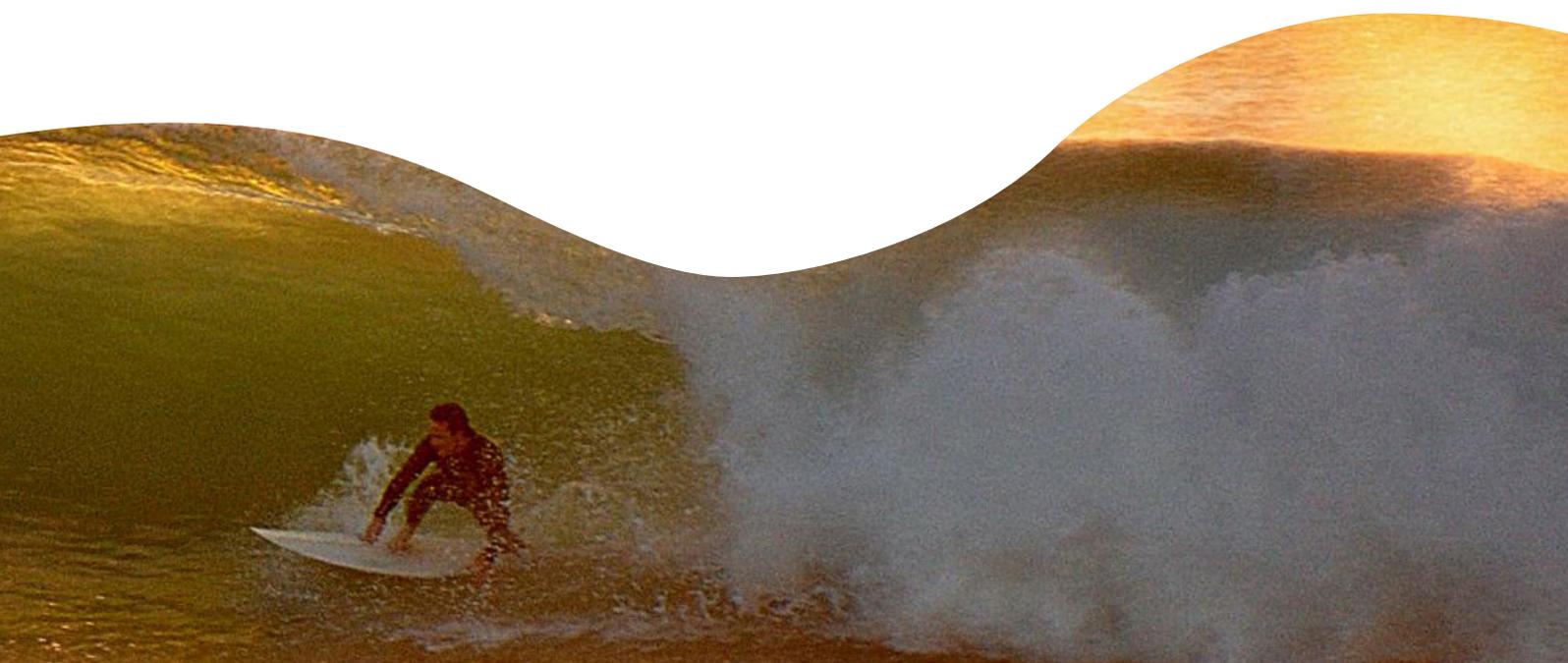
### **Core Goals**

- Understand how storytelling gives power to individuals and communities
- Examine ethical dimensions of truth, memory, journalism, and representation
- Learn how to distinguish real vs fake narratives
- Use writing, either journalistic, creative, or reflective, as a way to speak up and be heard.

## Program

9.00-9.15am	Registration
9.15-9.30am	Welcome from host, Jack Toohey
9.30-10.00am	Keynote: Heather Morris—Truth, Fiction and Memory
10.00-10.45am	The Sydney Morning Herald—Truth, Fact and Evidence  Alexandra Smith, State Political Editor; Anthony Seguert, Parramatta Bureau Chief; Sam Sellinger Morris, Host of Morning Edition.
10.45-11.00am	<i>Morning Tea</i>
11.00am-12.15pm	Discursive Writing Workshop: What Do You Believe?
12.15-12.45pm	Author Panel: Whose Voice Is Heard?  Robbie Coburn and Amy Coomer
12.45-1.30pm	<i>Lunch</i>
1.30-2.30pm	Speaking Up Today—Interactive Discussion with Jack Toohey
2.30-3.00pm	Student Sharing and Wrap-Up

All schools in the Northern Beaches with Years 9 and 10 students have been invited to attend this free program presented by the Manly Writers' Festival.



# SPONSORS

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Thank you to the following people who have joined our Donors Circle for 2026.

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Vasiliki Nihias

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## Book Lovers

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If you would like to be a member of our Donors Circle, you can sign-up at our website:

[www.manlywritersfestival.org.au/donations](http://www.manlywritersfestival.org.au/donations)

# FESTIVAL TEAM

Founder and Artistic Director:	Bonita Mersiades
Production Assistant:	Nina Cockerill
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Social Media:	Brianna Giannis
Design and Branding:	Ana Nedeljković, Maggie Grant, Hannah Grant
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# SOCIAL MEDIA

Facebook: [facebook.com/manlywritersfestival](https://facebook.com/manlywritersfestival)

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Email: [hello@manlywritersfestival.org.au](mailto:hello@manlywritersfestival.org.au)

Join the conversation: **#ManlyWF26**



# FESTIVAL AT A GLANCE BY DAY

## THURSDAY 19 MARCH

### MANLY WHARF EVENTS

- 6:30-9:00pm | Thomas Keneally Oration (Thomas Keneally)

## FRIDAY 20 MARCH

### MANLY ART GALLERY

- 5:30-6:15pm | Lloyd Rees and the City He Taught Us to See (Ross Wilson) — *Country and Who We Are*
- 6:30-7:30pm | The Australian Wars (Stephen Gapps) — *Power, Truth and Accountability*

### MANLY LIFE SAVING CLUB

- 12:30-2:00pm | Roundtable: Who Pays the Price? Gender and Institutional Power (Ainslie Harvey, Tracey Holmes, Ee Ling Quah, Diana Thorp) — *Power, Truth and Accountability*
- 2:30-3:30pm | Country and the Stories We Tell (William J. Byrne, John Morrissey) — *Country and Who We Are*
- 3:45-5:00pm | A Speed Date with Love (Holly Cardamone, Karen Farrell, Amy Hutton, Eleanor Kirk, Joanna Nell, Courtney Peppernell) — *Stories and Storytellers*
- 5:15-6:00pm | Money, Confidence and Choice (Melissa Browne) — *Living Today*
- 6:30-7:30pm | Boys, Masculinity and the Online World (Ashley Kalagian Blunt, Sarah James, Jack Toohey) — *Living Today*
- 8:00-9:00pm | Festival Conversation: Democracy Under Pressure (Amy Remeikis) — *Power, Truth and Accountability*

## MANLY YOUTH CENTRE

- 11:00am-12:00pm | Workshop: Edit Like an Expert (Zena Shapter) — *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*
- 2:30-3:30pm | Workshop: Beyond the Postcard (Helen Hayes) — *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*
- 4:00-5:00pm | Workshop: Building a Professional Name (Tony Frost) — *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

## SKY THEATRE

- 2:30-3:30pm | Truth, Voice and Who Is Believed (Debra Adelaide, Sue Woolfe) — *Stories and Storytellers*
- 4:00-5:00pm | After Liberation and Discovery (Martin Thomas, Nadia Wheatley) — *Power, Truth and Accountability*
- 5:30-6:15pm | Speaking the Unspoken (Michael Mohammed Ahmad) — *Power, Truth and Accountability*
- 7:30pm | Festival Conversation and Book Launch: Betrayal (J.S. Ayliffe) — *Power, Truth and Accountability*



## SATURDAY 21 MARCH

### MANLY CLUB

- 10:00-11:00am | From Manuscript to Bookstore (Ben Aitchison, John Coomer, Jane Curry, Jeanne Ryckmans) — *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*

### MANLY YOUTH CENTRE

- 11:30am-12:30pm | The Nightmare Sequence (Safdar Ahmed, Omar Sakr) — *Power, Truth and Accountability*
- 1:00-2:00pm | Frontlines (Mike Amor, Kylie Moore-Gilbert) — *Australia in the World*
- 1:00-2:00pm | Land, Identity and Who Gets to Belong (Tyree Barnette, Joshua Gilbert) — *Country and Who We Are*
- 2:30-3:30pm | The Diplomat (Bob Bowker, Ian Kemish, Lachlan Strahan) — *Australia in the World*
- 2:30-3:30pm | Inheritance, Survival and Belonging (Antoun Issa, Daniel Nour) — *Country and Who We Are*
- 4:00-5:00pm | The World on Edge (Bob Carr, Peter Hartcher, Michael Pembroke) — *Australia in the World*
- 5:30-6:15pm | Bring Back Yesterday (Bob Carr) — *Personal Reckonings*
- 8:00-10:00pm | The Night Shift: Human Creativity vs AI (Cory Alpert, Heather Morris, Candida Baker, Amy Coomer, Cocoa the Conscious, Amy Hutton, Daniel Nour, Con Campbell, Deborah Conway and Willy Zygier, Max Holzner)

### HENRY G'S

- 11:30am-12:30pm | Open Book: Becoming Yourself Under Pressure (Robbie Coburn, Amy Coomer, Matilda Meikle) — *Stories and Storytellers*
- 1:00-2:00pm | Open Book: What the Writing Reveals (James Dunbar, Jack Heath, Matthew Spencer, Dave Warner) — *Stories and Storytellers*
- 4:00-4:45pm | Power, Paranoia and Pleasure (Nick Place) — *Power, Truth and Accountability*

### SKY THEATRE

- 2:30-3:30pm | The Murder Next Door (Kate Horan, Troy Hunter, Ali Lowe, Nikki Lee Taylor) — *Stories and Storytellers*
- 2:30-3:30pm | Workshop: Writing for the Theatre (Manly Theatre Group) — *So, You Want to Be a Writer?*
- 4:00-5:00pm | Open Book: Writing Lived Experience (Tracy Crisp, Natalie Scott) — *Personal Reckonings*
- 4:00-5:30pm | Manly Poetry Salon

## SUNDAY 22 MARCH

### HOTEL STEYNE

- 8:30-9:45am | Beyond the Hot Flush (Michelle Bridges)

### MANLY YOUTH CENTRE

- 10:00-11:00am | In Conversation with Hugh Mackay — *Personal Reckonings*
- 11:30am-12:30pm | Ruptured Lives, Resilient Voices (Elana Benjamin, Joanne Fedler, Lee Kofman, Kylie Moore-Gilbert) — *Personal Reckonings*
- 11:30am-12:30pm | Inside the General Hospital (Anne Buist, Graeme Simson) — *Stories and Storytellers*
- 1:00-2:00pm | Lives that Don't Follow the Script (Lucy Nelson, Kumi Taguchi) — *Personal Reckonings*
- 2:30-3:15pm | Great Australian Dream or Great Australian Obsession? (Saul Eslake) — *Living Today*
- 2:30-3:30pm | History's Long Shadow (Candida Baker, Susan Francis) — *Stories and Storytellers*
- 4:00-5:00pm | Festival Conversation and Book Launch: Home, Forever (Anna Dombkins) — *Personal Reckonings*

### HENRY G'S

- 11:30am-12:30pm | The Stories that Sport Forgot (Paul Nicholls, Trevor Thompson) — *Living Today*
- 1:00-2:00pm | Age of Extremes (Tim Ayliffe, Jack Beaumont, Michael Brissenden) — *Stories and Storytellers*

# FESTIVAL AT A GLANCE BY PATHWAY

*Pathways group sessions by theme to help you navigate the Festival. They are a guide, not a schedule.*

## Power, Truth and Accountability

- Friday: Gender and Institutional Power (12:30pm), After Liberation and Discovery (4.00pm), Speaking the Unspoken (5.30pm), The Australian Wars (6.45pm), Festival Conversation and Book Launch: Betrayal (7:30pm), Democracy Under Pressure (8:00pm)
- Saturday: Power, Paranoia and Pleasure (4:00pm)

## Australia in the World

- Saturday: The Nightmare Sequence (11.30am), Frontlines (1:00pm), The Diplomat (2:30pm), The World on Edge (4:00pm)

## Country and Who We Are

- Friday: Country and the Stories We Tell (2:30pm), Lloyd Rees and the City He Taught Us to See (5.30pm)
- Saturday: Land, Identity and Who Gets to Belong (1:00pm), Inheritance, Survival and Belonging (2:30pm)

## Personal Reckonings

- Saturday: Open Book: Writing Lived Experience (4:00pm), Bring Back Yesterday (5:30pm)
- Sunday: Hugh Mackay (10:00am), Ruptured Lives, Resilient Voices (11:30am), Lives that Don't Follow the Script (1:00pm), Festival Conversation and Book Launch: Home, Forever (4:00pm)

## Living Today

- Friday: Money, Confidence and Choice (5:15pm), Boys, Masculinity and the Online World (6:30pm)
- Sunday: Beyond the Hot Flush (8:30am), The Stories that Sport Forgot (11:30am), The Great Australian Dream or Great Australian Obsession? (2:30pm)

## Stories and Storytellers

- Friday: Truth and Who Is Believed (2:30pm), A Speed Date with Love (3:45pm)
- Saturday: Open Book: Becoming Yourself Under Pressure (11:30am), Open Book: What the Writing Reveals (1:00pm), The Murder Next Door (2:30pm)
- Sunday: Inside the General Hospital (11:30am), Age of Extremes (1:00pm), History's Long Shadow (2:30pm)

## So, You Want to Be a Writer?

- Friday: Edit Like an Expert (11:00am), Beyond the Postcard (2:30pm), Building a Professional Name (4:00pm)
  - Saturday: From Manuscript to Bookstore (10:00am), Writing for the Theatre (2:30pm)
- 



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*Damian Collins OBE and Julie Inman-Grant discussing digital tech with Steve Cannane at the 2025 Manly Writers' Festival.*



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