

# MARION

ELEVATING WRITERS & THEIR ART

**2022**  
**ANNUAL**  
**REPORT**

## **Annual Report 2022**

ACT Writers Centre Inc.

Trading as MARION

ABN 31 707 029 530

## **MARION**

PO Box 63, Dickson ACT 2602

admin@marion.ink

marion.ink



MARION is supported by the ACT Government through artsACT.

MARION is also supported by the University of Canberra, UNSW Canberra, Eden Road Wines, and Harry Hartog Booksellers ANU.

MARION appreciates its ongoing partnerships with Canberra Contemporary Art Space, FNAWN and The Street Theatre.

---

*MARION acknowledges the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples of the Canberra Region as the traditional custodians of this land. We also acknowledge all Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first inhabitants of the nation and the traditional custodians of the lands where we live, learn and create.*

*Sovereignty has never been ceded. It always was and always will be, Aboriginal land.*

**Annual Report design and layout: Katy Mutton**

## CONTENTS

<b>CEO's Report</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>MARION Staff</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Chair's Report</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>MARION Board of Management</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Meet MARION</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>ACT Notable Book Awards</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Member Achievements</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>MARION Initiatives</b>	<b>22</b>
30 Seconds with, Masterclasses, Focus On	<b>22</b>
Between the Lines	<b>23</b>
HIDDEN NERVE	<b>24</b>
<b>MARION in Numbers</b>	<b>26</b>
<b>Financial Report</b>	<b>28</b>



2022 was a big year for MARION as we ushered in a new name, rebrand and suite of programs. The ongoing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic continued to be felt by the arts sector, with challenges relating to income, exposure, and lack of support. After becoming an exclusively digital organisation, MARION continued its work by being dedicated and available to all writers and their craft.

In 2022 MARION focused on strategic planning where we invested reserves into setting the foundation for the future. This meant building on our organisation's significant legacy, rebranding as MARION and dedicating limited staffing resources to preparedness for the artsACT multi-year funding application.

MARION is incredibly grateful for the continued support of our primary funding partner artsACT, and ongoing support from our sponsors Home by Holly, The Book Cow and Capital Brewing Co. We are also thankful for all the support we receive from our collaborators Harry Hartog ANU, The Australian National University, University of Canberra, and Ladbroken Distilling Co.

After the severe impact felt by the arts sector over the last three years MARION has been actively contributing to the national artistic and cultural landscape, uplifting underrepresented writers, and promoting creative arts as both accessible and essential. Part of this has been achieved through our creative programming and by developing content for writers to gain a deeper understanding of the publishing industry.

2022 saw MARION launch three significant new initiatives including the ACT Notable Awards, Hidden Nerve and Deep Dives. These artistic initiatives are designed to develop writers and their work in all areas of creative practice and to celebrate the achievement and literary excellence of writers in the ACT region. A priority for MARION was ensuring all content and initiatives were readily accessible to all members of our community. We were able to achieve this by offering new digital programs, which included captioning and only running limited physical events, still maintaining COVID-19 safety protocols including requiring attendees to wear masks.

MARION is acutely aware of the fact that many writers are currently experiencing significant financial challenges and that for some those barriers make it difficult to access our offerings and invest in their creative practice. To try to combat this as of 2022, for all initiatives MARION runs there are now two semi-subsided places available (offering a 75% discount from ticket price). To further build on our ability to provide financially accessible places MARION ran its first ever donation drive in 2022 for this purpose. We raised funds to help provide these places as well as subsidized memberships for those who need them. In its inaugural year MARION's donation drive raised over \$4500.

The MARION team have demonstrated their significant and ongoing commitment to the ACT region writing community during 2022. Due to their talents, tenacity, passion and dedication we have been able to achieve and offer dynamic creative programming, new initiatives and support ACT region writers. 2022 also saw some changes in MARION staffing with us farewelling creative producer Nigel Featherstone at the end of the year. Nigel had worked with us for the last nine years and is responsible for the creation, curation and success of many flagship programs, the most notable being HARDCOPY, the ACT Writer in residence and Hidden Nerve. Nigel's work within the ACT arts scene and commitment to the development of writers has been instrumental in our journey and we know that his vision and commitment has directly contributed to many ACT writers' careers. We are so grateful for the work, commitment and passion Nigel has brought to the organisation. It was a sincere honour to work with him and I am so grateful for his contribution and insights. We welcomed incoming creative producer Cham Zhi Yi in November and are so excited to have his passion, understanding and their networks added to MARION.

I am personally, sincerely grateful and humbled to work with a team of incredibly talented arts workers, and my deepest thanks go to Claire Delahunty, Nigel Featherstone, Katy Mutton, Miriam Wicks-Wilson and Cham Zhi Yi.

This immense year was not possible without the support of our board: Emma Batchelor, Alex Sloan, Chris Huet, Katarina Pearson, Thao Lee, Deb Stevens, Jacqueline de Rose-Ahern and Samantha Faulkner. I also am so grateful for the support, consultation, and advice we received from our writers, member and supporters.

Meg Wilson

CEO  
MARION

## MARION STAFF

### **MEG WILSON - CEO** (she/they)

Meg holds a Bachelor of Arts from the University of Canberra where she majored in creative writing and advertising. They are currently undertaking a Diploma of Leadership and Management through YWCA. Meg's passion for story telling traverses multiple mediums, with her two favourites being prose and broadcasting. Meg is a passionate arts advocate and emerging arts leader. She is dedicated to making it easier for local writers, artists and creators to hone their craft and build sustainable, enriching careers. Meg aspires to continue to shape and develop Canberra's creative community.

### **MIRIAM WICKS-WILSON - Operations Manager** (she/her)

Miriam Wicks-Wilson is the MARION Operations Manager. Miriam's role at MARION includes coordinating memberships and facilitating our workshops and events. She also operates as the main point of contact for many of our member interactions. She was previously MARION's Admin and Programming Officer. Miriam holds a Bachelor of Arts (French Language and Culture, and Gender, Sexuality and Culture) from the Australian National University. She is excited to continue using her skills to support Canberra writers and uplift marginalised voices.

### **CLAIRE DELAHUNTY - Communications Manager** (she/her)

From the boardrooms of Melbourne to the cattle yards of Katherine, Claire has loved travelling and reporting on an eclectic range of subjects. She is an experienced journalist and writer who enjoys finding the extraordinary in every-day things. She has covered beats including business, financial markets, agriculture, community and the arts. As a communications consultant based in Australia and South East Asia, she has created content for specialist fields including infrastructure, science, literature, and leadership.

Claire holds a Bachelor of Journalism (hons) from La Trobe University. Her creative writing has been highly commended in the ACT Writers Michael Thwaites Poetry Award and Marjorie Graber-McInnis Short Story Award. She has had works long-listed for the 2016 Caledonia Novel Award and the 2017 Fish Poetry Award. She is also the co-developer and editor of *What We Carry: Poetry on childbearing*, published in 2021 by Recent Work Press.

### **KATY MUTTON - Strategic Design Manager** (she/her)

Katy has extensive experience working in public programs, strategic planning and communications across the not-for-profit sector with a focus on the arts. She has previously worked for *Art Monthly Australia Magazine*, Megalo Print Studio + Gallery, and Ainslie and Gorman Arts Centres. She holds a Bachelor

of Applied Science in Environmental Design from the sector, specialising in sustainable design, University of Canberra, and a Bachelor of Visual Arts from the Australian National University, School of Art and Design. Katy worked for many years in the Architectural sector and as a freelance Graphic Designer. Katy is also a well-respected inter-disciplinary visual arts practitioner who has exhibited widely. She has received many awards for her creative practice including two Canberra Critics Circle awards (2017, 2014), the Rosalie Gascoigne Memorial Award from the Capital Arts Patrons Organisation (2018) and the Michael Hobbs OAM People's Choice Award (2020).

**ZHI YI CHAM - Creative Producer** (he/they)

Zhi is an experimental poet/artist based on Ngunnawal, Ngunawal, Ngambri country. They are the author of the award-winning collection of poetry, *blur by the*; and is one half of the experimental poetry/sound duo known as 莎瑜 (ShaYu). Currently, Zhi is developing a digital practice which stems from his love of Microsoft Excel. They love lo-fi stuff, emotional maximalism and not being perceived.

**ANGELA PURCELL - Accounts** (she/her)

Angela Purcell is a passionate BAS agent and Bookkeeper who specialises in helping individuals, small business and not-for-profits sectors keep their accounts in order and remain compliant, so that they can concentrate on what they do best. Angela helps many different types of industries, including the arts. Having served on several not-for-profit boards herself, Angela has a great understanding of the necessities involved in the management of Boards and Committees and strives to make her role as BAS agent/Bookkeeper an easy relationship where clients can feel that she has their back. Angela has also been an award-winning hairdresser and retail manager, as well as working in office management, however, as a self-confessed numbers nerd, Angela plans to continue helping others in their account management.

---

**OUTGOING STAFF MEMBERS**

NIGEL FEATHERSTONE Creative Producer (December 2022)

## CHAIR'S REPORT



2022 has been both a year of change and success for Canberra region writers with many new manuscripts developed, published and recognised. Congratulations to everyone who has continued to nurture their creative practice and produce such high quality work.

After much consultation with our members, funders, stakeholders and community, ACT Writers has become MARION. It was such a pleasure to launch this next phase of the organisation's history with so many of you at Pulp Book Cafe at the end of last year. In addition to changing our name, we have shifted our focus toward professional development and connection opportunities for Canberra writers allowing us to support a broader cross-section of our region's writers.

2022 saw all arts organisations in the ACT apply for their next round of funding from artsACT. As MARION, we along with 29 other arts organisations, received funding for another four years. Like many organisations, we did not receive our full funding request. This means that increasing and diversifying our income remains a core focus of the organisation and board. Our finance and fundraising sub-committees will be working closely with staff and stakeholders to ensure that MARION is financially sustainable.

Last year we bid farewell to the incomparable Nigel Featherstone who acted as our Creative Producer for nine years. The board thanks Nigel for sharing his valuable insights with our community of writers and we wish him well with his next steps. We are excited to now have poet and interdisciplinary artist Zhi Cham take on the role and welcome the experience and perspective they are bringing to our program and support services.

We have also farewelled our Communications Manager Claire Delahunty following an interstate move. Claire has been with the organisation for four years and will be greatly missed. We are thrilled to welcome Ash Gray who has taken on the role who in addition to her background in communications brings video production capabilities to the organisation. We are looking forward to expanding the way we are able to promote our writers.



The board would also like to acknowledge and thank our wonderful CEO Meg Wilson, Strategic Design Manager Katy Mutton, and Operations Manager Miriam Wicks-Wilson. MARION and our community is fortunate to benefit from their talent and energy and would not be in the position it is without their dedication.

Through regular meetings and the work of sub-committees, the MARION Board contributes to the governance of the organisation and supports our staff in carrying out their work. Thank you to Jacqueline de Rose-Ahern, Chris Huet, Katarina Pearson, and Deb Stevens along with Alex Sloan and Thao Le who have recently stood down. Your contributions are much valued and appreciated.

Our funders, donors and partners remain core to our ability to support our writing communities. Thank you to artsACT, Harry Hartog ANU, the University of Canberra, and the Australian National University, The Street Theatre and Libraries ACT. We also thank our sponsors Home by Holly, The Book Cow and Capital Brewing Co. and Ladbroken Distilling Co.

The arts landscape remains challenging to navigate and MARION continues to play a role in supporting and advocating for Canberra region writers. Our programs are designed to nurture creative practice, foster connections and provide industry insight. We offer two semi-subsidised places in all of our programs so please reach out if this is something that you need.

It is a privilege to be a part of and serve our vibrant literary community.

Emma Batchelor  
Chair  
MARION

## MARION BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

### **EMMA BATCHELOR** - Chair (she/her)

Emma Batchelor is a writer and author from Canberra with extensive experience in financial management, community engagement and operations. In May, 2021 her first novel 'Now that I see you' won the Australian/Vogel Literary Award. From 2016-2019 she edited and wrote for online publication Leiden, and in 2017 published 'Building a Conscious Wardrobe (and other fun things)' a book championing conscious consumerism. Emma holds a Bachelor of Medical Science (Hons) from the Australian National University and has a professional background in corporate responsibility.

### **ALEX SLOAN** - Deputy Chair (she/her)

Alex Sloan is a former ABC broadcaster and has great connection to the Canberra writing community, including moderating author conversations at both the National Library of Australia and the Australian National University. Recent conversations include Helen Ennis and Karen Viggers. Alex was named 2017 Canberra Citizen of the Year for her radio, charity work.

### **CHRIS HUET** - Secretary (he/him)

Chris Huet is a communications coach, working through his company Understood to help people become better communicators. He served twenty years in the Air Force as a fighter instructor, leader and project manager. After leaving the Air Force, Chris worked as a consultant and business development manager for Defence, other government agencies and private companies. Chris is also a spoken word poet, performing as CJ Bowerbird on stages across Australia and around the world. He is the 2012 Australian Poetry Slam Champion and a two-time TEDx speaker. Chris has extensive experience working with not-for-profit boards and committees, particularly in partnership and sponsorship management.

### **JACQUELINE DE ROSE-AHERN** (she/her)

Jacqueline regularly contributes to a variety of online platforms and has appeared at many literary events. She is the founder of the Story Creators Community, assisting aspiring creatives, and has been a mentor to adults and children alike encouraging them to pursue their creative goals. She holds a Masters in International Development and works in international affairs. Through her writing, Jacqueline endeavours to encourage her readers to learn more about the world, supporting an empathetic and inclusive community.

### **THAO LE** (she/her)

Thao is a financial management expert with a strong background in the public sector. She has extensive experience providing strategic leadership and management as a senior finance executive in a range of organisational settings. Thao works at the Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate as the Chief Financial Officer and Chief Information Officer. She had a pivotal role in leading her workplace's response to COVID-19. Thao is passionate about implementing improvements to business, governance and risk-mitigation strategies to ensure the sound financial management of organisations. Thao is a committed advocate for diversity in the workplace.

**KATARINA PEARSON** (she/her)

After studying English literature, phonetics and linguistics at the Belgrade University of Philology, Katarina moved to Australia in the early 90's with a well-established interest and passion for Literature. Having come from a bookselling background with her grandfather establishing bookshops in Belgrade in the 1930's, she has been an active member of the Canberra literary community since her arrival to the Capital in the early 90's. Having helped develop and subsequently owned Electric Shadows Bookshop over a period of twenty-five years she has been a strong advocate in supporting the Arts in Canberra with a focus on local authors and independent publishers. Since March 2019, Katarina has been appointed Literary Events Coordinator for Harry Hartog Bookshop at the Australian National University.

**SAMANTHA FAULKNER** (she/her)

Samantha is a Torres Strait Islander and Aboriginal woman, from Badu and Moa Islands in the Torres Strait and the Yadhagana and Wuthathi peoples of Cape York Peninsula, Queensland. She is an emerging writer having published a book on her grandfather's life, and poetry in national and international publications. Samantha has represented women and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander interests on local, state and national boards. She is Treasurer of the First Nations Australian Writers Network (FNAWN), Us Mob Writing Group and ACT Torres Strait Islanders Corporation.

**DEB STEVENS** (she/her)

As an isolated rural child doing correspondence school, reading was an entree into the world for Deb. A part time job with the former Mary Martin's chain seduced her into the book trade. Work in various book shops including owning one lead lead to work as an independent sales agent representing Allen & unwin and other publishers in the ACT and SE NSW. Over the 18 years working with publishers, booksellers, authors and readers she developed a deep passion for Australian writing and publishing. Her primary focus being support of local writers and encouraging connection between them, booksellers and readers.

---

**OUTGOING BOARD MEMBERS**

SOPHIE MANNIX Chair, ANN POOLE (2022)

**PATRON****MARION HALLIGAN AM** (she/her)

Marion Halligan was born in Newcastle NSW, by the sea, and has lived most of her adult life in Canberra, with periods in Paris. She has written twenty-three books, including six works of nonfiction and five short story collections, and one play. She believes fiction illuminates our lives, and for this reason she loves to read it as well as write it. One of Australia's most important writers, she was appointed Member of the Order of Australia (AM) in 2006 for services to literature and for her work in promoting Australian writing.

## MEET MARION

2022 saw the formal re-launch of The ACT Writers Centre as **MARION**.

On Friday 18 November 2022 we held a special member only event to celebrate and launch the future of this organisation. We have seen great change in the needs of writers as artists. Our region and our writers are not static. In representing ourselves anew we turn toward language that reflects our liberated vision for the next quarter-century. MARION now differs from other state and territory Writers' Centres in its strategic ambitions and development opportunities. Our organisation acknowledges that we have embraced a changed mindset that differs from some of these once comparable organisations. Chiefly, while honouring our origins, we value new strategic aims that reflect the current environment writers and associated industries operate in.

The name MARION connects us to a tradition of uniquely, memorably named arts organisations that have carved out powerful roles in the ACT region. Changing the name and branding of our organisation is an important step in this transformation. It marks our independence and commitment to quality in our field beyond any customary comparison with other state and territory Writers Centres. Implementing a name change is one of several actions which redefine and assert the organisation's integrity into the future. This decision has not been made lightly, the team and board were in consultation regarding a name change for more than 18 months. The change will:

- support and enhance our strategic direction
- cement a higher standard of professionalism and assert greater recognition of writing as an artform
- distance us from common, recurring confusion around the delivery of literary events

MARION celebrates and supports literary expression and creativity across the ACT Region and surrounds. MARION is a carefully considered name that transcends former expectation that we must plainly name ourselves as our regional base, or for the act of writing. While not specifically named after any one person, MARION is a tipped hat to two creative forces that have influenced our region and demonstrated particular fortitude, creativity and determination, Marion Halligan and Marion Mahony Griffin.

During the COVID shutdown periods we took time to evaluate the role that we play in the literary landscape of our region and beyond. We wanted to contemplate and then actuate a transformation that would offer more to the city, our region, to writers and readers. We challenged ourselves to push past the traditional model that we have been operating under. It is our ambition that MARION will transcend as a name and match our organisational strategic vision and mission: elevating writers and their art.

*"I am highly supportive of MARION in the organisation's efforts to better focus its support for local writers. This is a critical organisation for the support, coordination, collaboration, promotion and advancement of authors and poets in the Canberra region. I am encouraged by the plan developed by the executive and board to professionalise its services, with a greater emphasis on taking writers who have begun to establish themselves to the next level. I support the name change to MARION to better reflect this change in emphasis."* - CHRIS HAMMER



*"Undertaking a corporate refresh is a clear statement of new directions and new energies for supporting writers in Canberra."*  
- Dr. Craig Cormick OAM





The ACT Notable Book Awards highlight the excellence and talent of the literary sector in the ACT region. The winners from each category have produced an exceptional published work. Notable is defined as “worthy of attention or notice; remarkable”, and judges kept this definition in mind when judging the entries in the ACT Notable Book Awards. This definition is the basis for the ACT Notable Awards. Across all categories we asked judges to consider which entries stand out in their brilliance and demonstrate literary excellence, powerful narrative structure and considered and impactful use of language.

On Friday 29 July we held our first in-person awards event in more than two years at Canberra Contemporary Art Space. Together we celebrated the immense talent of ACT region writers. The Categories spanned SMALL and BIG Press publishing in 2020/2021 combined. There were thirty-nine awards distributed, a testament to the talent and capability of the ACT region sector.

## FICTION

### 2020 – SMALL PRESS

Winner - TR Napper, *Neon Leviathan* (Grimdark Magazine)

*Neon Leviathan* is a crackling collection of all too possible futures. Napper never talks down to the reader, trusting them to keep up with richly creative and complicated layers of technology, personal choices, addiction and human connections. - Judges' comments

Highly commended - Alison Booth, *The Philosopher's Daughters* (RedDoor Press, UK)

### 2020 – BIG PRESS

Winner - Felicity Volk, *Desire Lines* (Hachette Australia)

*Desire Lines* gripped the judges from the first pages. Volk is a beautiful writer who brings to life a variety of troubled and troubling characters, and explores a dark period in Australia's history. Readers are taken through locations as disparate as 1950s London and the modern day Svalbard Global Seed Vault. Scenes in Canberra, while not given any weight in the judging, are always lovely to see. - Judges' comments

Highly commended - Irma Gold, *The Breaking* (MidnightSun Publishing)

## NONFICTION

### 2020 – SMALL PRESS

Winner - Ian W. Shaw, *Pandemic: The Spanish Flu in Australia* (Woodslane Press)

This accessible, syncretic history of Australia's experience with the early twentieth-century flu epidemic is a very timely offering. It presents a considered and detailed nation-wide account, with an international comparative dimension and a focus on the contributions of individuals, health services and government, which also outlines Australian involvement in developing the Coryza vaccine. - Judges' comments

#### 2020 – BIG PRESS

Winner - David Dufty, *Radio Girl: The Story of the Extraordinary Mrs Mac, Pioneering Engineer and Wartime Legend* (Allen & Unwin)

This lively and informative biography introduces readers to the revealing story of a pioneering radio engineer whose enabling contribution to Australia's war effort and to the participation of women in engineering careers has been little understood. Offering rich character and incident, Mrs Mac's story is a reminder of what can be possible. - Judges' comments

### CHILDREN

#### 2020 – SMALL PRESS

Winner - Krys Saclier and Cathy Wilcox, *Vote for Me* (Wild Dog)

Highly commended - Karen Hendriks and Kim Fleming, *Feathers* (Empowering Resources)

Highly commended - Amy Laurens, *A fox of storms and starlight* (Inkprint Press)

#### 2020 – BIG PRESS

Winner - Gina Newton and Rachel Tribout, *Hold On! Saving the Spotted Handfish* (CSIRO)

*Hold On! Saving The Spotted Handfish* is an informative narrative with stunning illustrations and an engaging design. The language suits young readers while integrating inclusive scientific language with a glossary to support new language acquisition. - Judges' comments

Highly commended - Stephanie Owen Reeder and Tania McCartney, *Australia's Wild Weird Wonderful Weather* (NLA Publishing)

Highly commended - Stephanie Owen Reeder, *Will the Wonderkid* (NLA Publishing)

### POETRY

#### 2020 – SMALL PRESS

Winner - Penelope Layland, *Nigh* (Recent Work Press)

An outstanding collection that stares deeply into 'the fracturing' of the modern world. - Judges' comments

Highly commended - PS Cottier, *Utterly* (Ginninderra Press)

#### 2020 – BIG PRESS N/A

### SPECIAL BOOK AWARD 2020

Winner - Craig Cormick and Harold Ludwick, *On a Barbarous Coast* (Allen & Unwin)

*On A Barbarous Coast* is well researched and bravely imaginative. In lively and distinctive voices, the alternating perspectives of an English sailor on the Endeavour and a young Guru Yimidhurr boy provide a clever commentary on what white exploration might have been — and, in the process, sheds light on the blindness and brutality of the colonial enterprise.

## FICTION

### 2021 – SMALL PRESS

Winner - Jenny Bond, *Everything I Am* (The Hard Word)

*Everything I Am* is a beautiful and heartbreaking story of loss, betrayal, and loyalty. Wonderfully crafted at a sentence level, Bond also shows a high level of mastery with structure, offering well paced reveals that feel inevitable but never dull. Even the most briefly appearing character feels real and fully formed. - Judges' comments

Highly commended - Kate Liston-Mills, *Dear Ibis* (Spineless Wonders)

### 2021 – BIG PRESS

Winner - Dylan van den Berg, *Milk* (Currency Press/The Street Theatre)

*Milk* is a stunning story of intergenerational trauma and the damage inflicted by invasion and ongoing colonisation. Van den Berg weaves song, story, biography and fiction to moving effect. The judges noted the challenge presented by reading a play as a work of writing, without what would be communicated on the stage by costume, lighting, sound cues and acting choices, but still found *Milk* to be a standout. - Judges' comments

## POETRY

### 2021 – SMALL PRESS

Winner - Sandra Renew, *It's the Sugar, Sugar* (Recent Work Press)

This collection hits the reader with a rush of sweet energy swirling through the landscape of melting sugar towns, hot people, timescapes where the personal intersects with the political, always at a new wry angle. The reader is in the hands of an expert, form exercised to play with expectations, each poem dancing at the edges of the unseen placing that tension defiantly/ joyfully front and centre.- Judges' comments

Highly commended - Sarah Rice, *Text/ure* (Recent Work Press)

Highly commended - Sarah St Vincent Welch, *chalk borders* (Flying Island Books)

### 2021 – BIG PRESS

Winner - Lizz Murphy, *The Wear of My Face* (Spinifex Press)

A breath-thieving collection that rips into the ordinary - expertly leveraging at the self/other in the act of witnessing/being implicated. The complexity of life is exposed and wrestled into memorable lyrical form. Murphy's attention rests on the fragility of the world /the poem/the human mind's experience, revealing that place where 'the world falls/apart of its own avail'.







## NONFICTION

### 2021 – SMALL PRESS

Winner - Dianne Lucas, *Coolamon Girl* (Ginninderra Press)

### 2021 – BIG PRESS

Winner - Danielle Celermajer, *Summertime* (Penguin Australia)

An extraordinarily compelling response to the 2019-2020 bushfires, *Summertime* combines personal reflection and memoir with philosophy to explore our collective environmental grief, fear and loss, in the face of overwhelming destruction. Built around her richly considered relationships with the animals both in her life and in her care, as well as the great forests of the Southeast, Celermajer's account courageously confronts collective loss, looking for ways to make our shared experience meaningful and enabling, as she seeks an inhabitable future. - Judges' comments

## CHILDREN

### 2021 – SMALL PRESS

Winner - Krys Saclier and Cathy Wilcox, *Vote for Me* (Wild Dog)

Highly commended - Karen Hendriks and Kim Fleming, *Feathers* (Empowering Resources)

Highly commended - Amy Laurens, *A fox of storms and starlight* (Inkprint Press)

## SPECIAL BOOK AWARD 2021

Winner - Omar Musa, *Killernova* (Penguin Books Australia)

*This eloquent, soulful, music riddled, image enriched book takes us on a journey to Borneo, but also through Musa's mind. Running at a high temperature Musa places himself in ancestral locations that have changed and that are changing him: his world shape shifts, but he follows, busting rhythm and lines (both lyric and woodcut) of crafted emotion and soul searching.*

## The Anne Edgeworth Emerging Writer's Fellowship

The Anne Edgeworth Emerging Writer's Fellowship is provided to an emerging writer in the Canberra Region. The Fellowship is worth up to \$5,000 and will be used to advance the recipients' development in the craft of writing. The Anne Edgeworth fellowship for 2022 was awarded to **Julia Faragher** and **Samantha Tidy**. The Fellowship is provided annually by the Anne Edgeworth Trust and administered by MARION.

## The June Shenfield National Poetry Awards

First Place Rosa O'Kane (ACT) for *If I Put It In A Poem*

Second Place Andrew Spiker (VIC) for *In the Oxford book of ballads*

Third Place Claire Miranda Roberts (VIC) for *Armillaris*

## MEMBER ACHIEVEMENTS

In November 32nd annual Canberra Critics Circle Awards took place. We were particularly delighted to see **MARION** members, and staff awarded for their achievements. Held at the Canberra Museum and Gallery, the annual awards celebrate originality, excellence, energy and creativity in our region. The 2022 awards for literature and literary arts were given as follows:

**Nigel Featherstone** for *My Heart is a Little Wild Thing*

Ultimo Press, May 2022

- a beautifully told story, set in the magically-realised Monaro region, of love, duty and personal restoration.

**Marion Halligan** for *Words for Lucy*

Thames & Hudson March, 2022

- for a profoundly moving memoir celebrating the life of the writer's late daughter, in which she weaves together everyday details and treasured events.

**Tabitha Carvan** for *This is Not a Book About Benedict Cumberbatch*

HarperCollins AU, March 2022

- a book about what happens to women's passions after they leave adolescence, where the author depicts herself unexpectedly falling for the British actor Benedict Cumberbatch while stuck at home with two young children.

**Sarah St Vincent Welch** for *Chalk Borders*

Flying Islands Pocketbooks, December 2021

- for her work chalk borders where she transformed her ephemeral chalk-poems, enjoyed by hundreds on the footpaths at art festivals Contour 556 and Noted, into beautiful permanent meditations on art and life.

**Kimberly K. Williams** for *Still Lives*

Gazebo Books, September 2022

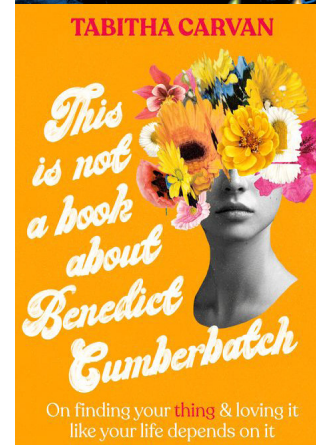
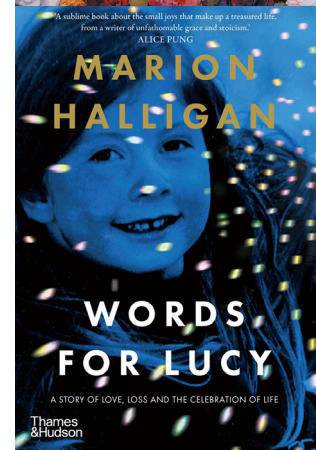
- for her collection of poems written about departing a place and then living in a very new one, Canberra, and forging a relationship with it. She was also acknowledged for stepping in to manage Poetry at Manning Clark House; she is a driving force behind Canberra's poetry scene.

There were also awards for **MARION** members Dylan van den berg and Judith Nangala Crispin:

**Dylan van den berg** for *Whitefella Yella Tree*

Currency Press, August 2022

- for his script *Whitefella Yella Tree* which explored the effects of colonisation on two young indigenous boys in a love story.



**Judith Nangala Crispin** for *Nox*

Grainger Gallery in January/February 2022

- for paying respect to our non-human brothers and sisters by creating a lyric poem of mourning using her own alternative process to make extraordinarily beautiful artistic images of roadkill. A record of things passing by night.

We are so proud to have our members and friends recognised for their incredible work. In addition we were utterly delighted to see our beloved colleague Nigel Featherstone awarded the overall prize for :

## **ARTIST OF THE YEAR**

Nigel Featherstone

**Nigel Featherstone was named ACT Artist of the Year for 2022 for his “eloquent writing and as a constant champion for his fellow Canberra writers and lovers of the written word”.**

Featherstone, whose novel *My Heart is a Little Wild Thing* was published by Ultimo Press in May this year, has been lavished with praise by critics around Australia for taking a remarkable look at Australian masculinity, for the complexity and contradiction of the work and for its lyrical evocation of the “magnificent” Monaro, in which the novel is set. The lyricism of “his novel inspired British artist and composer BPMoore to release a composition called “Monaro” in June this year.

Quiet and erudite, Featherstone is a self-described “natural hermit.” A former officer at artsACT, he abandoned the public service in 2010 to become a full-time writer and has since published three novels, three novellas, a play, a libretto, at least 50 short stories, and around 120 non-fiction articles and essays, including stories about being an artist in regional Australia.

In 2021 he joined Canberra-region poets Melinda Smith and CJ Bowerbird to found the spoken-word/music collective “Hell Herons,” which fuses lyrical language with songs. In 2022 he has worked at The Street Theatre as a dramaturg on CJ Bowerbird’s *Coward Punch* and as forum host for “Twenty Minutes With The Devil”. His first full-length play, “The Story of the Oars,” was read in December 2021 as part of The Street’s “First Seen” program.

Although he has lived in Goulburn for the past 12 years, he identifies as a Canberra artist, is an active arts advocate and commentator in the ACT and has worked at MARION (formerly ACT Writers) since 2013, supporting and mentoring emerging writers, also connecting artists and community.

# MARION INITIATIVES

## MASTERCLASSES

Our Masterclass initiative consisted of 2 multi-session programs, each delivered over a 3-month period. These Masterclasses offered the opportunity for writers to develop their skills with ongoing access to a master in the field. Each Masterclass provides the opportunity for writers to receive feedback on set writing activities completed between sessions. These are digital programs designed for the convenience and ease-of-accessibility for participants. The ACT Masterclass facilitators for 2022 were Nadine Davidoff and Melinda Smith.

## 30 SECONDS WITH ...

In 2022 we continued to develop our short-burst profile series '30 seconds with' featuring Melissa Manning and Peter Papathanisou. This initiative is now a regular feature of our profile collection.



**MELISSA MANNING**



*'I'd welcome broader recognition and acceptance of the value artists bring to our society.'*

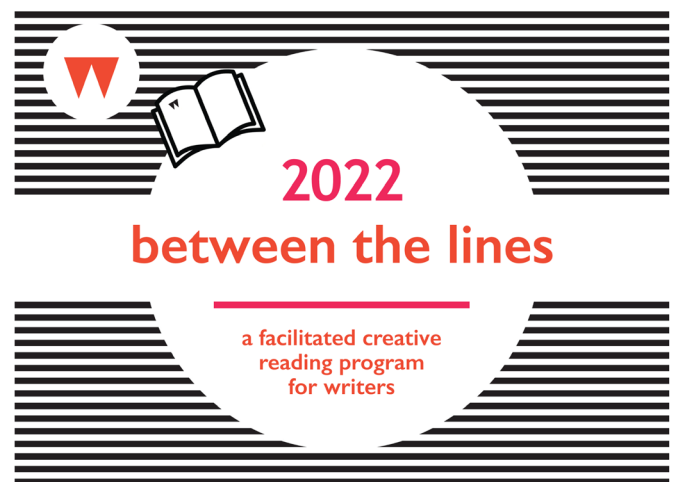
## FOCUS ON

MARION Focus On is an initiative that highlights ACT region writers and their work. Each month we highlight five works by ACT region authors across social media. The Focus On archive is maintained on our website and serves as a fantastic reference for anyone looking to hunt down writing by the authors in and around the ACT. This initiative allows us to further understand the scope and size of our sector, and reiterate the immense forte that comes from our region. It also enables us to celebrate, diversity in writing across genres.

In addition to highlighting works specifically written by ACT region writers, we also share a monthly archive of what our staff are reading. Sharing our team reads enables us to feature local, national and international writers, across genres. It highlights the uniqueness of our individual reads and encourages us to keep reading. We encourage our audience to read widely and purchase reads through ACT region based bookstores wherever possible.

During 2022 MARION proudly highlighted more than sixty ACT Region authors through our Focus On initiative, and shared over sixty staff reads which spanned local, national and international publications. In 2022 we introduced an additional Focus On website menu devoted to Children's Books.

2022 saw another successful edition of Between the Lines, our facilitated online book group for writers with an active practice. Over the course of six (6), monthly sessions running from July to December 2022, experienced facilitators led participants through a series of conversations about books on a carefully curated list. The focus of this program lies in authorial technique, achievement and literary context, rather than subjective opinions on whether or not the book is ‘good’ or ‘bad’. In 2022, our sixth year of the program, there was a combined fiction/nonfiction stream.



## FACILITATORS 2022

### Kathryn Hind (fiction)

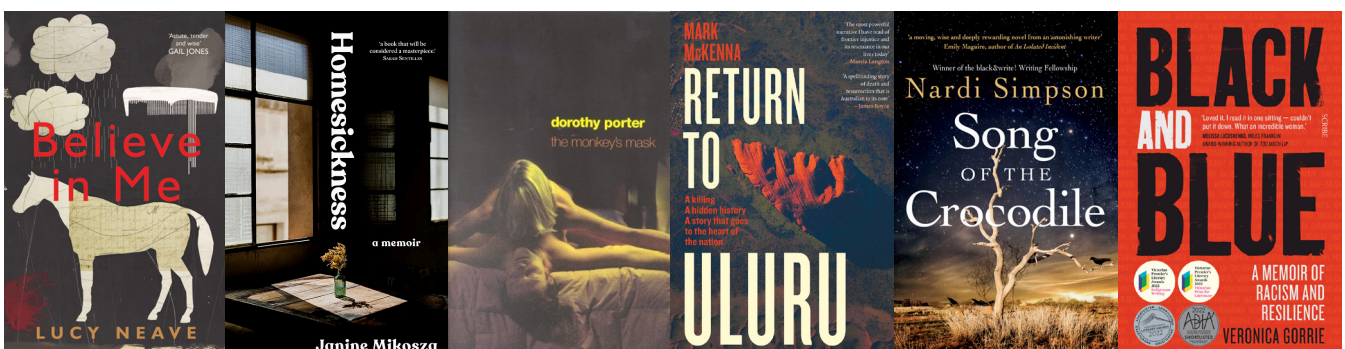
Kathryn Hind was born in Canberra and has now returned there after living for five years in the UK. In 2018 she was awarded the inaugural Penguin Literary Prize for the manuscript of Hitch, and the manuscript was published by Penguin Random House in 2019. The novel went on to win a Canberra Critics Circle Award and the 2020 Betty Trask Award. She is currently working on her second novel as part of a PhD at Australian National University.

### Patrick Mullins (nonfiction)

Patrick Mullins is a Canberra-based writer and author of three books: Tiberius with a Telephone (2018), which won the 2020 National Biography Award and 2020 NSW Premier’s Literary Award for Non-Fiction; The Trials of Portnoy (2020), which was shortlisted for the 2021 NSW Premier’s Literary Award for Non-Fiction; and, with Matthew Ricketson, Who needs the ABC?: Why taking it for granted is no longer an option (2022).

This is Patrick’s third year facilitating Between the Lines.

## READING LIST



# HIDDEN

the art of writing prose

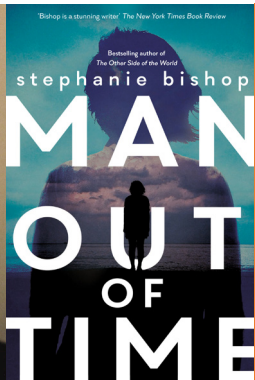
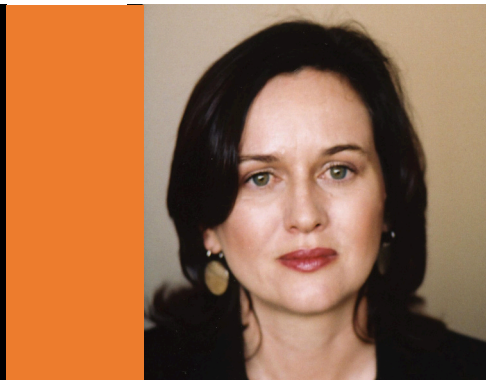
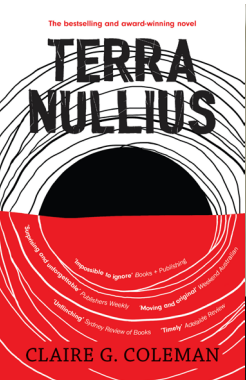
# NERVE 2022

HIDDEN NERVE is a year-long online program exploring all facets of the art of writing prose led by some of Australia's most prominent writers and arts practitioners.

This initiative is designed to be of most benefit to writers who are actively working on a prose project and are committed to developing their practice. Presenters for the inaugural 2022 program were:

Mirandi Riwoe  
 Claire G Coleman  
 Stephanie Bishop  
 Alice Pung  
 Sophie Cunningham

Belinda Castles  
 Delia Falconer  
 Amanda Lohrey  
 Peter Polites  
 Christos Tsiolkos



*“Thank you for bringing us such an astonishingly talented and diverse group of writers. These Hidden Nerve sessions are inspiring and invigorating.”* - **HIDDEN NERVE participant**

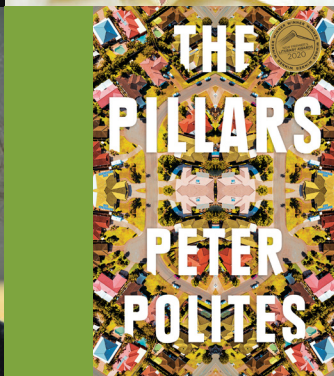
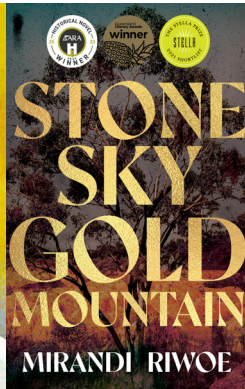
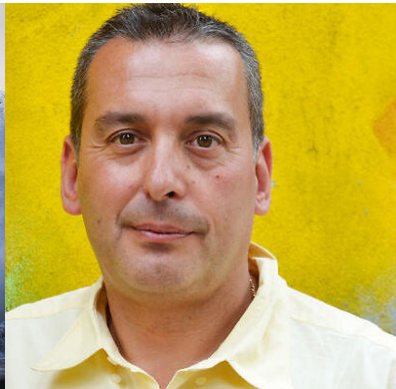
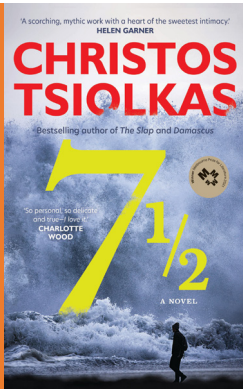
*“That was a really fabulous session with Claire Coleman. Lots to think about and lots of helpful comments and suggestions. I’ve never heard her speak before and I was really impressed. Now I am going to have to read her books. Thanks so much for lining up such an inspiring and interesting speaker!”*

- **HIDDEN NERVE participant on Claire G. Coleman**

*“I was part of the Hidden Nerve cohort in 2022. In the year my debut novel was released, it felt so empowering to connect with a community of other emerging writers. The monthly online lectures from inspirational Australian authors were wonderfully accessible, inspiring and fed my practice. I’m very grateful to have had the opportunity to be part of this program and I believe MARION initiatives like this are essential for writers.”*

- **Clare Fletcher NSW**

*“That was such a wonderful, generous session. Thank you, and please pass on my thanks to Claire”*  
- **HIDDEN NERVE participant on Claire G. Coleman**





# HIDDEN NERVE DEEP DIVES ONLINE

Through this online course comprising three (3) fortnightly sessions, participants learnt from Nadine Davidoff, one of Australia's most revered freelance editors.

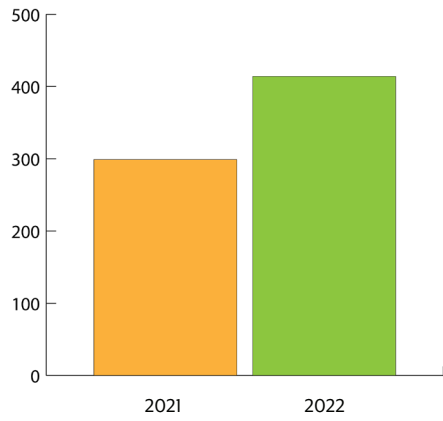
Each session focused on a particular area of technique: (1) Point of view, (2) Sub-text, and (3) Echoes. Those attending the year-long HIDDEN NERVE program are especially encouraged to participate.

Nadine Davidoff is a freelance book editor and writing/editing teacher with extensive trade publishing experience. She has worked as a Senior Editor at Random House and a Commissioning Editor at Black Inc. Nadine has taught in RMIT's Professional Writing and Editing course and she teaches the annual Fiction Editing Masterclass in Melbourne University's Masters of Publishing program. From 2015 to 2019 Nadine delivered the manuscript-development component of HARDCOPY, the ACT Writers Centre's highly regarded national emerging writers development program funded by the Australia Council for the Arts.

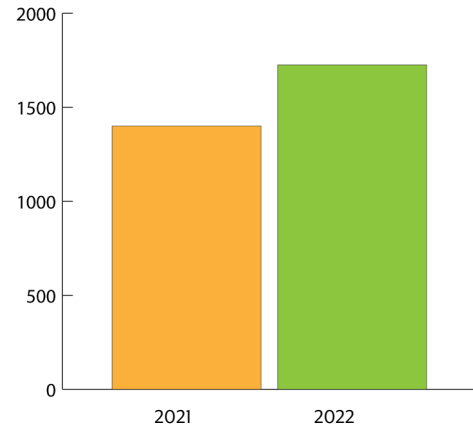


# MARION IN NUMBERS

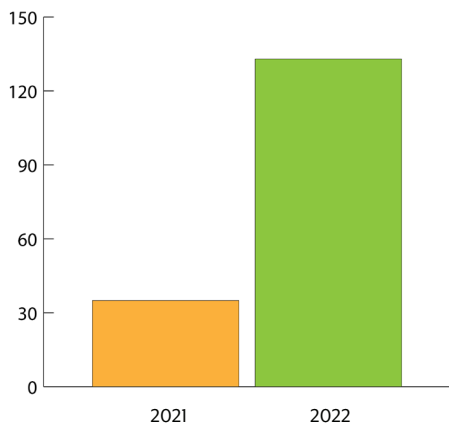
## MARION Membership



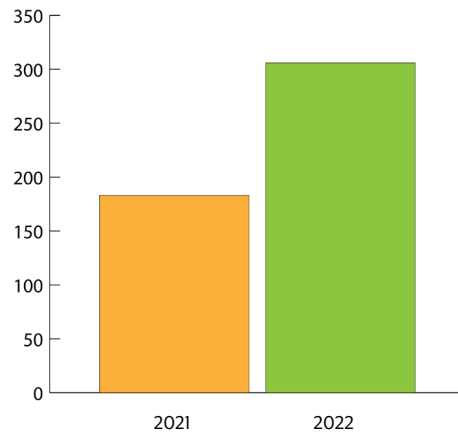
## Instagram followers



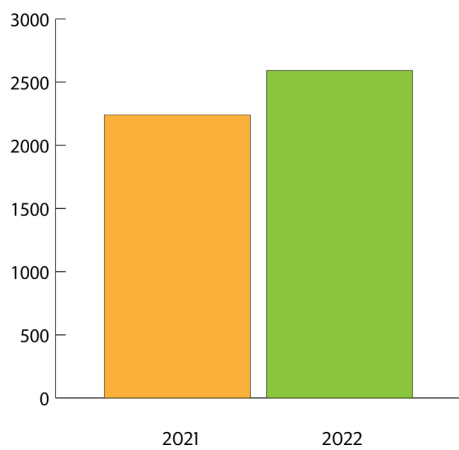
## MARION Annual Award entries



## Program participants



## MARION Subscribers



# FINANCIAL REPORT

MARION entered 2022 with a decision to repurpose reserves from fiscal stability gained in 2020 and 2021 to reinvest in the organisation through strategic planning ahead of a multi-year funding application. A priority for MARION in 2022 was diversifying incomes and gaining sponsorship from commercial businesses, something we are pleased to report we achieved. We obtained financial sponsorship from Home by Holly, The Book Cow and Capital Brewing Co. for our inaugural year of the ACT Notable Awards.

Managing financial stability has been a key focus for MARION, resulting in changes to how our budgets are devised. We have redesigned our artistic programming so that all programs are financially viable and have relevant profit margins and must meet certain KPI's before going ahead. This is to ensure that we are running no initiatives at a loss. Part of the rationale behind our new strategic direction and rebrand is to allow us to be more desirable to commercial and philanthropic sponsorship, an avenue we will be pursuing in 2023.

## SUMMARY

- Reported operating deficit of \$40,290
- Total income for the year of \$275,881 represented a 2.13% decrease compared to the 2021 year of \$281,889. Note that the reduction in income can also be attributed to many of our community financially struggling.
- Total expenditure for the year of \$316,171 represented a 5.62% increase as compared to the 2021 year total of \$299,346. – this increase is attributed to the overlap of the creative producer role during handover.
- MARION received \$ 22,564.14 in membership, \$ 4,685.00 in donations \$30,309.46 in program participation and \$11,711.82 in award entry fees.
- MARION retained earnings sit at \$ 60,671– a decrease from \$100,961 in 2021.
- In 2022, MARION employed five part-time employees. The priority for 2022 was to continue stabilising MARION's financial position and invest in the organisation's future.

### **Some of the most significant changes made in 2022 included:**

- Rebranding and renaming from ACT Writers Centre to MARION
- Hiring a new creative producer
- Establishing an annual membership drive; the inaugural year saw an increase in membership by 138%.
- Establishing an annual donation drive; the inaugural year saw an increase of 84% from donations received in 2021.

### **Our continued areas of focus are:**

- Ensuring we have at least a minimum 45% of all paid professionals coming from diverse or marginalised backgrounds.
- Ensuring all programs generate a minimum 25% profit
- Making our programs as accessible as possible by creating digital offerings and providing semi-subsided places
- Seeking partnership and sponsorship opportunities to diversify our income streams and source in-kind support

