**CHAIRPERSON’S 2018 REPORT** for ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 13 February 2019

Ballarat Writers Inc (BWI) committee and members have again had a busy and fruitful year. Our regular activities continued with much enthusiasm, including the Martha Richardson Memorial Poetry Prize (MRMPP), the Pamela Miller Prize and monthly Flash Fiction competitions. Award-winning Nathan Curnow was our MRMPP judge who also conducted a poetry writing workshop in May. Again this year, we received a grant from Writers Victoria (funded by the Grace Marion Wilson Trust) to contribute to the costs of running this workshop. Many thanks to Johanna for organising and managing these events. (See the competitions co-ordinator’s report for details.) The Martha Richardson and Pamela Miller prize-winners were announced at our end-of-year event in November. Write Club was held weekly at Racers (Lake Wendouree) for those wanting time just to sit and write (thanks, Brooke and Stephen). Thanks, too, to Craig Coulson for lugging the book swap boxes to members’ nights. As well, several critique groups are going strong, and the blog has yielded some terrific ideas from contributors around writing generally.

BWI continues to support Words Out Loud, held monthly to enable members of the Ballarat and district writing community to present their work in a comfortable, encouraging environment at The Printers’ Room. Thanks for Kirstyn and Jason for their ongoing commitment.

Eleven Members’ Nights were held (January – November) at the Bunch of Grapes Hotel on the final Wednesday of each month. Average attendance was 20 – 25, a mix of existing and new members, and visitors. (See the Membership report for details.) Attendees came early for a meal if they wished or joined us later for the more formal parts of the evening. The main aim of these nights is to get people together to network and discuss writing-related issues in a convivial environment. A number of people from the writing community were invited to impart their knowledge of various aspects of writing – Emma Hall, from Ingram Spark, on self-publishing; local children’s author, Sandra Simmonds on *Boots*; and, the highlight, local bookshop representatives, Tracey (Collins Books) and Dianne (Ballarat Books) were ably interviewed by Heather Roche about how to get self-published items into their stores.

As you can see, there are many people, both from within Ballarat Writers Inc and beyond, who have contributed to making this another eventful and successful year for the organisation. There are way too many to mention by name so I apologise if I have missed you. I do however wish to acknowledge the hard work of our committee – Phil Green (treasurer/membership); Rebecca Fletcher (publicity); Laura Wilson (secretary/public officer); and Johanna Botman (competitions). These people generously give their time and expertise to ensure BWI’s future.

After three years on the BWI committee, two of these as chair, this is my final chairperson’s report as I am not renominating for the position in 2019. As many of us, I have other things I want to move on to, including some writing – a booklet on one branch of my family tree which includes lots of links with Ballarat and surrounds.

I will be around, however, to provide support to the incoming committee when needed and possibly help out with some BWI ventures in 2019.

I wish all of you well for the coming year and with your writing journeys!

Irene Warfe, chairperson, 2018.