

Chairperson's report for the 2020 AGM

6 February, 2020

Despite a reduced committee for 2019, Ballarat Writers Incorporated (BWI) have had a very successful year. We had 11 members' nights in 2019, where people were welcome to turn up from 6pm onwards for meals (as many did), or from 7pm for minimal proceedings and socialisation. Attendance at these meetings has been very strong. BWI also supported regular meetings with Write Club (many thanks to Stephen Brown for ensuring these meetings go ahead) and our two critique groups (one of which is based between Creswick and Ballarat, and the other exclusively in Ballarat). While we failed to secure funding from Writers Victoria this year, we have been self-sustaining as an organisation, and our financial position is strong. This year we ran the Southern Cross Short Story Competition (SCSSC), with great thanks to Irene Warfe for her assistance for all her help with this year's competition, as well as monthly flash fiction competitions. The winners of the SCSSC and the Pamela Miller Prize were announced in our November meeting, the final members' meeting for the year.

BWI have also been constant supporters of Words Out Loud, a monthly spoken word event run by Jason Nahrung and Kirstyn McDermott that provides an excellent platform for sharing work. We have tried to transition readings at our monthly meetings to Words Out Loud, which feels like a better performance venue with an incredibly supportive audience. Jason and Kirstyn do great work supporting writing in Ballarat with their own projects, and they have been key in helping build the community that BWI support.

We had four guest presenters at our 2019 members' nights: Kirstyn McDermott, who presented on critiquing; Megan Riedl, who presented on dialogue; Karen Sparnon, who presented on editing, and Janice Simpson, who shared her experience and expertise. All of our 2019 presenters were informative and very well received by the BWI community. We also hosted a workshop run by Lee Kofman, our 2020 Southern Cross Short Story Competition judge, on developing characters and dialogue. We aim to continue hosting guest speakers for our member meetings in 2020.

While I was a nomination on the floor of our 2019 AGM, I still believe strongly in the importance and great work of BWI as a community organisation. I have now served two years as publicity chair and one as chairperson, and I believe that we do good work and support a diverse group of writers in various stages of development by creating a positive, communicative community. This year's committee has focused heavily on facilitating not only community, but also opportunities for all writers to develop and hone their skills.

With that, I would like to acknowledge the work of our committee: Phil Green, wearing two hats as Treasurer/Membership Office and Competitions Officer, as well as Laura Wilson as our secretary. I would also like to extend my thanks to Zoe Werner and David Mellows for stepping up as general committee members. Their input has been crucial to what otherwise would have been a very small committee indeed. Having spoken to a great many people during my time as chair, and I am confident that BWI will continue to grow in 2020.

Rebecca Fletcher

BWI Chairperson, 2019