



# WRITERS ASSEMBLE!

20, 21, 22  
SEPTEMBER 2025

HETZEL LECTURE THEATRE  
STATE LIBRARY OF SOUTH  
AUSTRALIA

# WRITERS ASSEMBLE!

Writers Assemble! is South Australia's new writers' festival. Across three days and seven events, this FREE festival brings together some of Australia's best writers for discussions on craft, careers, and creativity.

The panels deliberately jumble writers from different genres and age groups—spicy romance meets children's literature, horror crashes into YA fantasy—to uncover the universal themes and techniques that power all stories. Each session will spotlight one of the five story senses—Humour, Justice, Belonging, Danger, Wonder—and explore how writers bring these senses to life in the books you love.

The festival concludes with a star-studded conversation on what it takes—and what it feels like—to be a bestselling author. We hope you can join our guests and celebrate the best in reading and writing.



## ADAM CECE

Adam Cece is an award-winning author of children's books, including Wesley Booth Super Sleuth, Twin Spin, and the hilarious Huggabie Falls series, which has been published worldwide. He is co-coordinator of the South Australian branch of the Society of Children's Book Authors and Illustrators, a South Australian Premier's Reading Challenge Ambassador, a mentor, workshop facilitator and manuscript assessor, and visits schools and libraries delivering fun, interactive talks focused on being an author, the craft of writing, getting published, solving mysteries, and how to write a cracking shopping list. The unputdownable, puzzled-filled thriller, *The Locked Room*, is his first book for young adults.

You can follow Adam on Twitter and Instagram @ceceadam on Facebook @adamceceauthor or find him online at [www.adamcece.com](http://www.adamcece.com).



## PATRICK LENTON

Patrick Lenton is a writer and author living in Melbourne. His debut novel, a queer rom-com called *'In Spite of You'* was published in August 2025. He also edits the queer culture newsletter *'Nonsense'*.



## ALLAYNE WEBSTER

Allayne L. Webster grew up in rural South Australia and now lives in Adelaide. Her books include *Sensitive*, an IBBY (International Board of Books for Young People) Outstanding Book for Young People with Disabilities, Children's Book Council of Australia Notables *A Cardboard Palace and Paper Planes*, the Adelaide Festival Awards shortlisted *The Centre of My Everything*, and *Our Little Secret, That Thing I Did*, and *Selfie*, which was shortlisted in the 2024 NSW Premier's Literary Awards. Her new novel, *Maisy Hayes Is Not For Sale* was shortlisted for the 2024 Max Fatchen Fellowship. Allayne has been listed for other awards including the Davitt Crime Awards, Australian Speech Pathology Awards and the Children's Peace Prize for Literature. A multiple arts grant winner, Allayne's work has been published in Sweden and Russia. When not writing, Allayne paints and plays guitar.



## BRYDIE LEE-KENNEDY

Brydie Lee-Kennedy is a novelist and screenwriter. She has written for TV for a wide range of studios including Netflix, Apple TV, Disney and the BBC. Her first novel, *Go Lightly*, was published by Bloomsbury and Harper Collins in 2024.



## TRISH MOREY

Award-winning Adelaide author, Trish Morey, somehow became a Chartered Accountant before an epiphany reminded her of what she'd always wanted to do - write. Since then, Trish has written forty-five titles for the likes of Harlequin Australia, Mills & Boon, Pan Macmillan Australia and Tule Publishing (along with some Indie titles), with global sales in excess of eight million.

Whether Trish is writing classic romance, romantic comedy, or women's fiction, one thing is guaranteed - a happy ending. Trish reckons there's enough bad news in the world as it is.



## OLIVIA DE ZILVA

Olivia De Zilva is a writer based in Kurna Yerta (Adelaide). Her novel *Plastic Budge* was released in July 2025 by Pink Shorts Press. Her novella *Eggshell* will be released by Spineless Wonders in November 2025. Her fiction and essays have appeared in *The Guardian*, SBS, *The Saturday Paper*, *Mascara Literary Review* and many other publications. Olivia's writing has been shortlisted by the Richell Prize, The Kat Muscat Fellowship, The Deborah Cass award and recently, was the inaugural winner of the AAWP Novella Prize.



## LISA L. HANNETT

Lisa L. Hannett has had over 80 short stories published in venues including *Clarkesworld*, *Fantasy*, *Weird Tales*, *Apex*, *The Dark and Year's Best* anthologies in Australia, Canada and the US. She has won four Aurealis Awards, an Australian National Science Fiction Award, an Australian Shadows Award, and has twice been nominated for a World Fantasy Award. Her latest books are *The Fortunate Isles* and *Viking Women: Life and Lore*. You can find her online on Instagram @LisaLHannett.



## SEAN WILLIAMS

Sean Williams is a #1 New York Times-bestselling, multi-award-winning writer for readers of all ages. He is the author of over sixty books and one hundred and twenty shorter publications for readers of all ages. His original works include series, novels, stories and poems that have been translated into multiple languages for readers around the world, including collaborations with other authors, stories in the Star Wars and Doctor Who universes, and works for the stage and screen. He lives and works in Kurna Country, South Australia, and is Discipline Lead of Creative Writing at Flinders University.



## KATHLEEN JENNINGS

Kathleen Jennings is a British Fantasy Award-winning author of Australian Gothic and folk- and fairy-tale-inspired fiction, and a World Fantasy Award-winning illustrator of fantasy and fairy tales, based in Brisbane. Her latest book is the subtropical suburban gothic *Honeyeater* (September 2025). Her debut short story collection *Kindling*, published by Small Beer Press in 2024 has been shortlisted for the World Fantasy, Ditmar, Locus and Aurealis Awards. It followed her 2020 novel *Flyaway* (British Fantasy Award winner and shortlisted for the World Fantasy Award) and poetry collection *Travelogues: Vignettes from Trains in Motion*. She holds an MPhil and PhD in Creative Writing (on Australian Gothic literature and methods of creative observation, respectively) from the University of Queensland.



## KAARON WARREN

Shirley Jackson award-winner Kaaron Warren published her first short story in 1993 and has had fiction in print every year since.

She has published six multi-award winning novels: *Slights*, *Walking the Tree*, *Mistification*, *The Grief Hole*, *Tide of Stone* and *The Underhistory* and seven short story collections, her most recent being *Spirit Level*, an artbook with Monica Carroll. Her stories have been shortlisted for the World Fantasy Award and the Stoker, and appeared in both Ellen Datlow's and Paula Guran's Year's Best anthologies.

She is shortlisted a record five times in the current Ditmar Awards.



## MIKE LUCAS

Mike Lucas was born in Plymouth, England and moved to Australia with his family in 2010. He is the author of several picture books, Young Adult novels and poetry anthologies. His first novel, *What We All Saw*, published by Penguin Australia, and shortlisted for the Readings Book Prize, CBCA Book of the Year Award and the Prime Minister's Literary Award. His latest picture book, *The Bookshop on Lemon Tree Lane*, is published by Hardie Grant Australia and his third novel will be published in May 2026. Mike is an Ambassador for the Premier's Reading Challenge and an Honorary Member of the CBCA (SA). He presents writing and poetry workshops at schools, owns a bookshop in Blackwood and works as a full-time engineer. He doesn't sleep much.



## JENNIFER MILLS

Jennifer Mills is an author, editor and critic based on Kaurua Yarta (Adelaide). Known for imaginative climate fiction and bold experimentation, her books include *The Airways* and *Dyschronia*, which was shortlisted for the Miles Franklin Award. Mills is a widely published essayist, an advocate for the rights of writers and artists, a MEAA freelance delegate, Deputy Chair of the Australian Society of Authors, and a current SA Literary Fellow. Her latest novel, *Salvage*, is published by Picador.



## KIMBERLEY FREEMAN

Kim Wilkins is an Australian fantasy and historical fiction author. She holds a PhD from the University of Queensland, where she currently serves as Professor of Writing and Associate Dean of Humanities Research. She made her literary debut in 1997 with *The Infernal*, which won Aurelius Awards for both horror and fantasy. She has since published more than 30 novels across multiple genres, with her work translated into over 20 languages.

She also writes contemporary women's fiction under the pseudonym Kimberley Freeman. Her most acclaimed work is the *Blood and Gold* fantasy trilogy, beginning with *Daughters of the Storm* (2014), which features five royal sisters in a Viking-inspired world. Beyond fiction, she has authored scholarly works on creative writing and popular literature, establishing herself as both a successful novelist and respected academic in Australian speculative fiction.



## GARTH NIX

Garth Nix OAM has been a full-time writer since 2001, but has also worked as a literary agent, marketing consultant, book editor, book publicist, book sales representative, bookseller, and as a part-time soldier in the Australian Army Reserve.

His most recent books are *Sir Hereward and Mister Fitz: Stories of the Witch Knight and the Puppet Sorcerer*, which collects all nine stories of the godslaying duo; and the children's novel *We Do Not Welcome Our Ten-Year-Old Overlord*.



## RACHAEL MEAD

Rachael Mead is a South Australian novelist and poet. She's the author of the novels *The Application of Pressure* (Affirm Press 2020) and *The Art of Breaking Ice* (Affirm Press 2023) as well as four collections of poetry, the most recent being *Weathered* (Recent Work Press 2024). She holds a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Adelaide, and she was the recipient of the Barbara Hanrahan Fellowship at the Adelaide Festival Awards for Literature in 2022.



## JARED THOMAS

Dr Jared Thomas is a Nukunu person of the Southern Flinders Ranges, and the Adelaide University Coordinator, Indigenous Collections and Archives. He has worked as an arts administrator, academic, curator and novelist. His novel *Calypso Summer* joined the 2015 International Youth Library White Raven list of books that deserve worldwide attention because of their universal themes and exceptional artistic and literary style. His works of fiction include *Songs That Sound Like Blood*, and the *Game Day* series, which was co-authored with NBA player and Olympian Patty Mills, *My Spare Heart* and the *Uncle Xbox* series.



## THOMAS VOWLES

As a screenwriter, Thomas has worked with production companies based in Los Angeles, London and Australia. His original feature film script, *Birth*, is currently in pre-production in LA. Thomas released a collection of short stories as an episodic zine, and is a graduate of Central Film School, London, and the Faber Academy. *Our New Gods* is his debut novel.

WRITERS ASSEMBLE!

# SESSIONS

## SESSION 1: WRITING HUMOUR

Nothing binds a reader to a book more than humour. It's a powerful way to reveal character, offer fresh perspectives, or just give someone a moment of joy. Join Patrick Lenton, Allayne Webster, and Adam Cece as they explore the craft of humour on the page: how to land a joke, shape a funny voice, and keep readers smiling from start to finish.

## SESSION 2: WRITING BELONGING

Stories of belonging draw on our human need to feel seen, connected, and at home in the world. From the passionate pull of romantic love to the confusion of coming-of-age, stories capture the ache, comfort, and joy of finding your place. Join Olivia De Zilva, Trish Morey and Brydie Lee-Kennedy to explore the techniques writers use to build these stories of connection.

## SESSION 3: WRITING WONDER

Stories of wonder push us beyond the ordinary, into landscapes vast, mysterious and unknown. In these new vistas, readers can be delighted by moments of beauty and enchantment or unsettled by the darker awe of horror. Join Kathleen Jennings, Kaaron Warren, and Lisa L. Hannett for craft tips on how mere words can instil a sense of wonder in readers.

## SESSION 4: WRITING JUSTICE

We all want to see wrongs righted, truths revealed, and power held to account. Stories of justice satisfy this desire, whether it be through small moments of kindness or sweeping crime and punishment. Join Jennifer Mills, Garth Nix, and Mike Lucas as they discuss how stories can grapple with questions of morality, accountability, and justice.

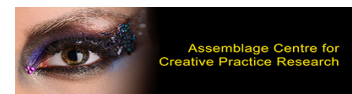
## SESSION 5: WRITING DANGER

Stories of danger are a visceral experience: the quickening pulse, the cold prickle of dread, the knot of fear in the chest. Whether speculative or grounded in real-world dangers, these stories pull readers into worlds where every choice matters and safety is never certain. Join Thomas Vowles, Rachael Mead, and Jared Thomas to learn how they turn the benign object of the book into a sweat-soaked thrill ride.

## SESSION 6: MEET SA'S PUBLISHERS

Ever wondered what goes on behind the scenes in publishing? To find out, come meet South Australia's publishers: Pink Shorts Press, Wakefield Press, and Splinter. They'll share what they love to publish, how they work with writers, and answer your questions about the journey from manuscript to book.

SUPPORTED BY:



# 07. Gala Evening Event: Meet the Bestsellers



With Kimberley Freeman, Sean Williams and Garth Nix