



Department of
**Local Government, Sport
and Cultural Industries**

WRITING SECTOR REVIEW:

FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS

November 2017

Introduction

This paper has been prepared by the Culture and the Arts (WA) division of the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries (DLGSC) to make final recommendations following a review of the writing sector in Western Australia. These recommendations should be read in conjunction with the consultant's report '*WA Writing Sector Review Final Report and Conclusions*' by Positive Solutions and '*Writing Sector Review Reference Group Recommendations*' released by the Writing Sector Review Reference Group. Both documents are available on request from [DLGSC](#).

The DLGSC is committed to appropriate investment in the Western Australian writing sector that will:

- Improve the employment and publishing activities of Western Australian writers;
- Create further opportunities for the sector to make distinctive and significant contributions to Western Australian culture; the lives of people throughout the State; economic, social and educational development and; national and international perceptions of the State; and
- Increase the return from government investment in new and existing arts and cultural infrastructure and arts-related services from film to multimedia and libraries to literary festivals.

Current Status

The Writing Sector Review examined the challenges, strengths, opportunities, potential strategies and future directions for the writing sector in Western Australia.

The consultant's report '*WA Writing Sector Review Final Report and Conclusions*' and the Writing Sector Review Reference Group paper '*Writing Sector Reference Group Recommendations*' were made available for public comment.

Individuals from the writing sector and the broader community were invited to provide feedback about the proposed recommendations of the Writing Sector Reference Group through an online survey questionnaire that closed on the 14 August 2017. Further detailed consultation was undertaken with four writers' centres with additional information received on 9 October 2017.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: Maintain current levels of State Government funding to the writing sector

The Western Australian State Government per person expenditure on writing is the highest of all major States in Australia. This ranking excludes the Northern Territory and the Australian Capital Territory.¹

DLGSC recommends that current levels of State Government expenditure on writing should be maintained as a basis for building on the success of the writing sector in Western Australia to date.

Recommendation 2: Create a hub for writing and creative thinking at the State Library of Western Australia building

The State Library of Western Australia's (SLWA) role in supporting reading and literacy, and its location in the Perth Cultural Centre precinct, provides a great opportunity for co-location of a writing and creative thinking hub. In partnership with other organisations, the SLWA could become a centre for the promotion and support of writing and literature with a focus on Western Australian writers and their works. Future revitalisation of the SLWA building could incorporate the provision of co-located working spaces for writers and industry; a technology-driven centre for the sourcing and creation of new works; and act as a magnet for the development of creative ideas. This would:

- Create a visible, critical mass of publicly accessible writing-related activity that can help to highlight Western Australia's unique literary talents;
- Integrate writing services, exhibitions, events and activities into the creative hub within a revitalised Perth Cultural Centre precinct;
- Connect the local community and visitors with Western Australian writers and their publications through booksellers and the State library network.

A writing hub would provide an overall focus for creative thinking and expression that helps to connect creators with their local, national and international audiences.

¹ Cultural Funding by Government 2015–16 | Department of Communications and the Arts. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.arts.gov.au/documents/cultural-funding-government-2015-16>

Recommendation 3: Conduct a distinctive annual Western Australian Premier's Book Awards

The Western Australian Premier's Book Awards is recommended to be an annual event. It is also recommended that further consideration is given to how this distinctive award could be positioned to increase its profile and that of Western Australian writers, and differentiate it from other State and national awards.

To this end, it is recommended that the option of delivering the Western Australian Premier's Book Award through the Perth Festival Writers Week be examined.

Recommendation 4: Use investment in the writing sector to achieve synergies with existing Statewide library services to extend and enhance community engagement in the reading of Western Australian writers

Public libraries make a significant contribution to audience development for literature in all its forms. By increasing the focus on writing services and events that promote Western Australian books and writing through libraries throughout the State, as part of general advocacy and support services for writers, it would be possible to leverage existing facilities and engage library visitors in Western Australian writing.

It is recommended that this can be achieved by:

- Funding assistance to libraries for writers' talks, reading events and micro-festivals;
- Creating an online information and booking platform on which writers, libraries and writing organisations can promote their activities; and
- The development of Western Australian content provisions in the procurement of books and digitally published materials.

Recommendation 5: Foster professional development for writers to enable them to navigate the increasingly complex areas of rights and multimedia opportunities

Increasingly, the opportunities for further employment growth for writers are linked to the complex interactions between the different converging and emerging aspects of cultural production; from film, TV and radio production, to playwriting, performing arts and literature.

Navigating this mix of converging and emerging opportunities to enable writers to increase their incomes, improve employment opportunities, and participate in the creation of new artistic and cultural outputs, will require ongoing professional development support.

It is recommended that professional support services are developed within the sector to enable writers to understand, negotiate, and protect their rights in this new environment in order to create new employment and income opportunities. Such services could be developed in partnership with other art forms to help facilitate dialogue across the arts and creative industries.

Recommendation 6: Foster an environment to maximise the potential of Western Australian writers to be published

It is recommended that incentive grants be offered for local publishers to support Western Australian writers to gain access to national and international markets, including specific support for translation services. Western Australian publishers and authors that continually produce award-winning and best-selling materials should be prioritised to maximise the visibility of the sector among consumers of writing. This will build on the existing reputation of Western Australia as a State that produces some of the nation's foremost writing talent.

It is recommended that a pilot emerging writers' publishing program is scoped with Fremantle Press working in partnership with the four writers' centres — the Katherine Susannah Pritchard Writers' Centre; the Fellowship of Australian Writers WA, Peter Cowan Writers' Centre and WA Poets Inc.— that will complement the T.A.G. Hungerford awards. The pilot program should aim to create an environment where more members of the writers' centres are published.

In order to ensure that young writers are developing the skills required to eventually be published, it is recommended that funding be provided to the Fremantle Literature Centre to continue to expand its current programs.

Recommendation 7: Enhance data collection about Western Australian writing to provide benchmarks and evidence for policy development

DLGSC has access to a wide range of data about arts and cultural activities in Western Australia. As a corollary of the implementation of any recommendations, and without duplicating current research by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, it is recommended that DLGSC investigates data sets that may be released through the Western Australian Whole of Government Open Data Policy to inform sector policy development.

Recommendation 8: Provide support for screen writing and playwriting

It is recommended that Screenwest continue to support the development of Western Australian screenwriting and facilitate inclusion of resources for screenwriter development within the new screen hub, Fielder St Creative, at the ABC studios in East Perth.

For playwriting, it is recommended that DLGSC establish a playwriting development fund accessible by Western Australian theatre companies to grow opportunities for playwrights' work to be commissioned for the stage. The fund should be competitive and established to leverage dollar-for-dollar matched funding from the Western Australian theatre companies.

Recommendation 9: Establish writer-in-residence opportunities at National Trust properties

A partnership between DLGSC and the National Trust of Western Australia should be explored in order to establish a writer-in-residence program at National Trust properties and promote the value of heritage to the community.

This new initiative should aim to enhance people's understanding of why heritage is important, how it enables us to explore our identity and our place in the world, and ultimately contribute to a sense of wellbeing in society. A focus area which will enable this ambition is to activate the National Trust's assets through storytelling, engagement, participation and interpretation.

Having a writer respond to a heritage place will provide substantial benefits in illuminating the value of heritage and will assist people to see the stories of place through a new and creative lens. National Trust places are richly layered with Aboriginal and post-settlement stories, as well as representing the rare remains of the beginnings of modern community in our State.

Conclusion

There are other suggestions for concepts and activities in the consultant's review which would further stimulate the Western Australian writing sector and which ought to be explored further. However, the emphasis in this DLGSC response is on targeted, readily implementable and cost-effective recommendations that provide a foundation for future policy initiatives.