BERRY WRITERS' FESTIVAL 2026

Because Words Matter

The Berry Writers' Festival acknowledges the Dharawal and Dhurga language-speaking groups who are traditional owners of this area.
We acknowledge their customs and culture, which have nourished, and continue to nourish, this land. And we extend our respects to Elders, past, present, and future.

BERRYWRITERSFESTIVAL.COM.AU

TORI HASCHKA
Artistic Director
2026

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR'S STATEMENT

Words are how we make sense of the world, and of each other. They are how we grieve, how we celebrate, how we argue, show love, teach each other what is important and tell the truth. In the books and stories we return to, words are how we ask each other 'this is how the world seems to me. Is it this way for you too?'

Our festival's recurrent theme; **Because Words Matter**, has shaped the choices we made in bringing this year's Berry Writers' Festival to life.

We live in a moment when words can be swiftly flattened into soundbites, manipulated by machines and treated as disposable by insatiable algorithms. And yet words are still what mobilise communities, preserve disappearing languages, hold power to account and reflect who we really are – ugly bits and all.

For this festival we have gathered from across Australia 70 of our most talented authors, poets, journalists and researchers who understand the urgency of protecting storytelling and value of writing as a cornerstone of human craft and creation. Across more than 35 sessions, this year's program tackles ideas that delight and challenge us, issues that vex us and showcases authors at the peak of their abilities. Independent writers' festivals like ours are more important than ever, as places where we can ask difficult questions and make new connections.

Since 2022, Berry Writers' Festival has been a magical time when our small town opens its doors to big ideas. This year is no different. It's thanks to an army of volunteers who believe in the impact of what we do that this weekend is possible. Whether you join a panel that challenges you, hear poetry that unspools you, join a session on why building a lifetime of reading is sacred, witness a conversation that makes you reach for a pen to take notes, or hear a diatribe that makes you laugh until you cry, I hope this weekend leaves you with a renewed sense of hope and appreciation for what words can do when handled with care, courage and conviction.

JAMES ROBINSON
Festival President
2026

PRESIDENT'S STATEMENT

The Berry community makes this beautiful region a special place to live, work and visit. The Berry Writers' Festival has become a key part of that community – allowing ideas, stories and people to come together, and where our village comes alive in a different way.

The Festival gives us the chance to hear from remarkable writers and thinkers, discover new perspectives, and sometimes have our own views challenged. It is also an opportunity to pause, reflect, and be reminded of the richness and diversity of the world beyond our own experience.

The generosity and commitment of many people are essential to the Festival's success. To our patrons, sponsors, volunteers, accommodation donors and commercial partners, thank you. Your support makes it possible to continue to build an ambitious regional festival and bring an exceptional program to Berry.

To all our authors, speakers and moderators, we are delighted to welcome you to Berry. Thank you for sharing your time, ideas and stories with us – we are honoured to host you.

To the 2026 committee, thank you for the enormous amount of work behind the scenes and for your energy, commitment, good humour and belief in the Festival.

Finally, whether you are a long-time supporter or here for the first time – welcome. We hope you enjoy the conversations, stories and company, and leave Berry with something to think about, something to share, and a desire to return.

BERRY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER

WORKSHOPS

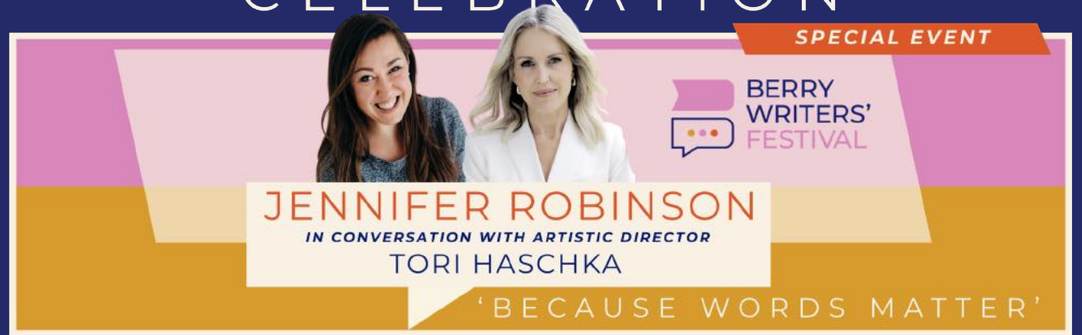
	STUDIO 34	THE ARBOUR
10AM-12.30PM	**Wonder for Writers With Kathryn Heyman** Combines Deep Writing, Craft & Strategy Guidance	**Writing Nature With Inga Simpson** Explores Techniques for Bringing Landscapes, Flora and Fauna to Life
1.30-4PM	**The First Page With Toni Jordan** Suitable for Fiction Writers at All Levels	**Memoir & Creative Non-Fiction Workshop with Natasha Sholl** A Deep Dive into the Art of Writing Memoir

2-3PM

Inga Simpson - A Tree Lover's Guide to Australia
FEATURING Inga Simpson & Kate Mildenhall
WHERE: The Arbour
WHEN: 6 NOV | 2pm-3pm

SPECIAL EVENT AT CINEMA, THE ARBOUR BERRY

OPENING NIGHT
CELEBRATION



BERRY SCHOOL OF ARTS
FRIDAY 6 NOVEMBER 6-9PM

WorkLife LIGHT REFRESHMENTS AND DRINKS WILL BE AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

Join us on Friday at 5.30pm (northern side of the School of Arts) for a Smoking Ceremony by Marring to mark the beginning of our Opening Night Celebration

CLOSING NIGHT
CELEBRATION

BERRY SCHOOL OF ARTS
SUNDAY 8 NOVEMBER 5-6.30PM

WorkLife 1 BEVERAGE INCLUDED IN TICKET PRICE - FURTHER DRINKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

SAT 7 NOVEMBER

BERRY SCHOOL OF ARTS

9-10AM
Advance Australia Where
Exceptionalism, Collectivism & a Looming Lurch to the Right
FEATURING: Amanda Tattersall & Paul Kelly
MODERATED BY: Kate Dezarnaulds

10AM - 11.30AM
Midlife, Money (& Muffins)
FEATURING: Melissa Browne & Sally Hepworth
MODERATED BY: Jessy Wu
SPECIAL EVENT *At the Berry Show Pavilion*
BROUGHT TO YOU BY Shorebreak Finance

10.30-11.30AM
Festivals, Free Speech & the Future of Publishing
FEATURING: Jennifer Robinson, Lex Hirst & Rosemarie Milsom
MODERATED BY: Mark Tredinnick

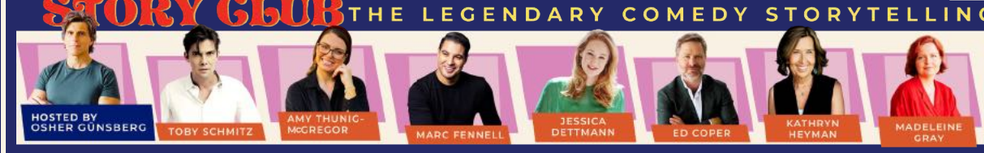
12-1PM
How to Ruin a Child
FEATURING: Richard Glover
IN CONVERSATION WITH Holly Wainwright

2-3PM
Conversations that Count
Stuff the British Stole, Blackbirding & the Things We Don't Talk About
FEATURING: Marc Fennell & Ryan Butta

3-4.30PM
SPARKLING CRIME
FEATURING: Kirsty Manning, Sally Hepworth & Dervla McTiernan
SPECIAL EVENT At Le Bar, Berry
Book signing will take place at Le Bar following this session.
HOSTED BY le bar

3.30-4.30PM
Conscious Angertainment
The Algorithm, the Ugliness & the Antidote
FEATURING: Amanda Tattersall & Ed Coper
MODERATED BY: Matt Jones

5-6PM
Women Who Win
FEATURING: Antoinette Lattouf & Jennifer Robinson
MODERATED BY: Nicole Abadee

6.30-9.30PM
SPECIAL EVENT
STORY CLUB THE LEGENDARY COMEDY STORYTELLING SHOW


AT THE BERRY SCHOOL OF ARTS
WorkLife BERRY
Guests will be able to purchase delicious light dinner options from Blue Nami and a range of drinks at the WorkLife bar

STUDIO 34

9-10AM
Fraught Friendships
FEATURING: Holly Wainwright, Kate Mildenhall & Frances Whiting
MODERATED BY: Meredith Jaffe

10.30-11.30AM
Miles High / People, Place & Perspective
Two Authors at the Peak of Their Craft
FEATURING: Siang Lu & Toni Jordan
MODERATED BY: Kate Mildenhall

12-1PM
Leading From the Dreaming
FEATURING: Paul Callaghan & Evelyn Araluen
MODERATED BY: Amy Thunig-McGregor

2-3PM
Voices of the South Coast
Paths to Publications
FREE EVENT
SCWC SOUTH COAST WRITERS CENTRE
FEATURING: Seana Smith, Alyssa J. Montgomery, Gwen Wilson
MODERATED BY: Allison Tait

3.30-4.30PM
The Burning Blue
Stories from the Australian Navy's Warriors in the Skies
FEATURING: Mike Carlton
IN CONVERSATION WITH Richard Glover

5-6PM
Theatrical Nature
Pages, Stages & the Craft of Both
FEATURING: George Kemp, Debra Oswald & Toby Schmitz
MODERATED BY: Christine Dunstan

BERRY SHOW PAVILION

9-10AM
The Joy of Reading
& Why Children Deserve It
FREE EVENT
FEATURING: Sally Rippin
IN CONVERSATION WITH Nathan Luff

10.30-11.30AM
THE SHED, BERRY GENERAL STORE
FREE EVENT
The Art of Suspense
A Special Session for our Younger Readers and Their Families
FEATURING: A.L. Tait
IN CONVERSATION WITH Nathan Luff

12-1PM
BERRY SHOW PAVILION
Voices of the South Coast
FREE EVENT
SCWC SOUTH COAST WRITERS CENTRE
FEATURING: Helena Fox & Lauren Keegan
MODERATED BY: Meredith Jaffe

3-4.30PM
FREE EVENTS
Truth Telling Excavating the Past to Find a Path Forward
FEATURING: Paul Daley, Julie Janson & Lenora Thaker
MODERATED BY: Jackie Bailey

6.30-9.30PM
Poetry as Witness & Resistance
FEATURING: Mark Tredinnick, Julie Janson & Evelyn Araluen
MODERATED BY: Rachel Kent

LUNCH

SUN 8 NOVEMBER

BERRY SCHOOL OF ARTS

9-10AM
Bring Back Yesterday
FEATURING: Bob Carr
IN CONVERSATION WITH Jacqueline Maley

10.30-11.30AM
The Dark & Twisty
FEATURING: Dervla McTiernan, Fleur McDonald & Sally Hepworth
MODERATED BY: Anna Downes

12-1PM
Old Truths, New Worlds
Political Ideas for an Uncertain Time
FEATURING: Bob Carr, Antoinette Lattouf & Gregory Melleuish
MODERATED BY: Ryan Butta

2-3PM
The Titanic Story of Evelyn
FEATURING: Lisa Wilkinson
MODERATED BY: Lisa Davies

3.30-4.30PM
The Race to the Top of the World
FEATURING: Peter FitzSimons
IN CONVERSATION WITH Richard Glover

STUDIO 34

9-10AM
Living Out Loud
Visibility, Wonder & the Art of Being Seen
FEATURING: Meredith Jaffe, Paula McLean & Kathryn Heyman
MODERATED BY: Louise Walsh

10.30-11.30AM
Masculinity & the Manosphere
FEATURING: Marc Fennell, Ed Coper & George Kemp
MODERATED BY: Osher Günsberg

12-1PM
Work / Life Strife
FEATURING: Jessy Wu & Madeleine Gray
MODERATED BY: Amelia Lester

2-3PM
Cities, Countries, Climate & Change
FEATURING: George Kemp, Siang Lu & Inga Simpson
MODERATED BY: Kaya Wilson

3.30-4.30PM
Past Perspective
Bringing History to Life
FEATURING: Emma Pei Yin, Lenora Thaker & Kate Forsyth
MODERATED BY: Suzanne Burdon

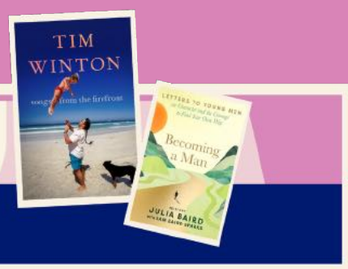
SPECIAL EVENTS

MORNING TEA
10-11.30AM AT THE BERRY SHOW PAVILION, BERRY SHOWGROUNDS
Tea, Hope and Sustainability
FEATURING: Hannah Moloney, Vanessa Fuchs, Natalie Kyriacou
MODERATED BY: Fiona Weir
INCLUDES A TEA & A TREAT FROM THE BERRY TEA SHOP
FINE TEA MERCHANTS est. 2010

AFTERNOON SPRITZ
2-3.30PM AT THE BERRY SHOW PAVILION, BERRY SHOWGROUNDS
Why We Garden Afternoon Spritz
FEATURING: Hannah Moloney & Holly Wainwright
INCLUDES A TEA & A SPRITZ FROM THE BERRY TEA SHOP
FINE TEA MERCHANTS est. 2010

LUNCH

CLOSING NIGHT CELEBRATION

NEW SPECIAL EVENT
TIM WINTON
IN CONVERSATION WITH
JULIA BAIRD


BERRY SCHOOL OF ARTS | SUNDAY 8 NOVEMBER 5-6.30PM
WorkLife 1 BEVERAGE INCLUDED IN TICKET PRICE - FURTHER DRINKS AVAILABLE FOR PURCHASE

Book Signings
Following each session there will be a book signing at the Berry School of Arts – apart from Sparkling Crime which will take place at the venue. Following the Saturday 5-6pm sessions, the book signings will also be held at their respective venues. Those sessions are **Women Who Win** (Berry School of Arts), **Theatrical Nature** (Studio 34) and **Truth Telling** (Berry Show Pavilion). Please purchase your books for signing prior to attending these sessions.

BERRY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

SPECIAL EVENTS

For 2026 the festival has embraced the wider community. Expanding beyond the Festival precinct at the School of Arts and introducing new satellite events ...

BERRY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

SUPPORTING LOCAL YOUNG WRITERS & STUDENTS

As part of our commitment to giving back to the community, the festival committee is delighted to have been able to provide a special program, offered without charge, to a number of local primary schools. We could not have done this without the generosity of our patrons and founding donors, to whom we offer our heartfelt thanks. During our Schools Program, six authors visted eight schools across the Shoalhaven over three days. They shared their stories, experiences and love of writing with students from Kindergarten through to Year 12. We were also pleased to welcome Advanced HSC English students from Bomaderry High School to a free creative writing workshop expertly led by Kathryn Heyman.

FESTIVAL MAP

VENUES

1. **Festival Precinct**
   Berry School of Arts
   19 Alexandra St
2. **Studio 34**
   34 Alexandra St
3. **Berry Show Pavilion**
   Inside the Showground, near the Albany St entrance gates
4. **The Shed, The Berry General Store**
   23 Prince Alfred St
5. **Le Bar**
   98 Queen St
6. **The Arbour**
   Dianella Lane, about 1 km west of the Festival Hub

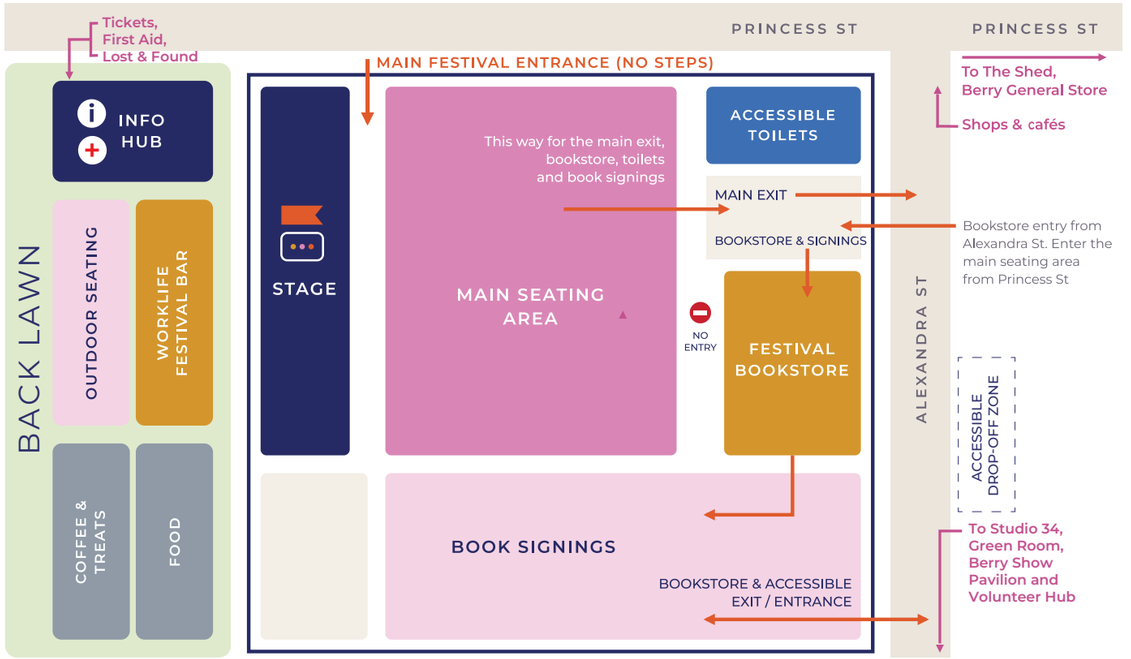
- A **Green Room (CWA)**
  82 Victoria St
- B **Volunteer Hub**
  Old Council Bldgs, Berry Showground

- Toilets
- Parking
- Showground entry
- Shops & cafés

Map data © OpenStreetMap contributors

1 FESTIVAL PRECINCT BERRY SCHOOL OF ARTS

Floor plan: indicative only, not to scale



Berry Writers' Festival is proud to be supported by:

PLATINUM SPONSORS

The Arbour Berry

le bar

Shorebreak Finance

SARA DINING

LINNAEUS COLLECTION

web Design SOLUTIONS NSW

GOLD SPONSORS

Raine&Horne. Berry

RayWhite. BERRY

Bond Lifestyle PROPERTIES

PRINCIPAL DONOR

NEILSON FOUNDATION

Special thanks to our 6 Festival Patrons & 32 Founding Donors.
See **berrywritersfestival.com.au** for a full list

FESTIVAL PARTNERS

Bangalay SHOALHAVEN HEADS

BERRY GENERAL STORE 23 PRINCE ALFRED ST BERRY NSW

The Bookshop Bowral & Kiama

chameleon TOURING SYSTEMS

CUPITTS

Mandala SIGNATURE Berry

RR productions

SILOS ESTATE

SOUTH COAST COOPERATIVE LIBRARIES

SCWC SOUTH COAST WRITERS CENTRE

South Coast PROPERTY STYLING

shady fig FLORAL • BOTANICAL STYLING

THE BERRY TEA SHOP FINE TEA MERCHANTS est. 2010

TRAVEL FOCUS GERRINGONG

WorkLife BERRY

Heartfelt thanks to everyone who supports, volunteers & helps the Festival in any way, big or small – it couldn't happen without you.

BERRY WRITERS' FESTIVAL