Where book lovers and authors unite

SCAN TO BUY FESTIVAL TICKETS

OR GO TO
WWW.TRYBOOKING.COM/EVENTLIST/NBRFPROGRAM

25/9 FRIDAY	AVALON RSL CLUB*
6:30 - 9:00pm	**FESTIVAL OPENING NIGHT** **COCKTAIL PARTY – CELEBRATING AUSTRALIAN FICTION** Join us for an exclusive evening of cocktails, nibbles and rubbing shoulders with some of the festival's authors, facilitators and organisers to celebrate the opening of the 2026 festival. SOLD OUT JOIN WAITLIST Ticket includes finger food and a welcome drink on arrival. The bar will be open for the duration of the cocktail party, should you wish to purchase additional beverages.

*Please note different venue to main program

NORTHERN BEACHES
READERS FESTIVAL
INC

2026 PROGRAM

25 - 27 SEPTEMBER

AVALON RECREATION CENTRE

WWW.NBRF.COM.AU

26/9

SATURDAY

SATURDAY

ARC	MAIN HALL	ACTIVITY ROOM 2	ACTIVITY ROOM 4
9.30-9.45 am	FESTIVAL WELCOME	WWW.NBRF.COM.AU	25 - 27 SEPTEMBER AVALON RECREATION CENTRE

9.45 - 10.45am

LITERATURE & LONGEVITY

Belinda Alexandra, Tara Rae Moss, Tricia Stringer

Each with over two decades of published novels behind them, Belinda Alexandra, Tara Rae Moss and Tricia Stringer are three authors who know what it takes to engage readers and keep them coming back for more. Sit down with these icons of Australian literature as they discuss their latest novels, how they've built such long and successful careers, and the changes they've seen in the publishing world since their first novels were released.

Facilitator: Cassie Hamer - Author

Brought to you by Jane Gamson & Cunninghams Real Estate

UNUSUAL PLACES

Lauren Keegan, Ali Lowe, Tess Woods

From windswept Orkney shores where selkies live, to the decks of a luxury cruise liner or a bridal boutique in the shadow of the pyramids, setting can be crucial to a story. Join Lauren Keegan, Ali Lowe and Tess Woods as they discuss how their evocative locations shape character and drive conflict in their latest novels. Exploring themes of family, identity, power and belonging, these extraordinary places shed light on the most universal human experiences.

Facilitator: Anna Downes - Author

10.45-11:15 am — **BOOK SIGNING - ACTIVITY ROOM 1**

11:15 - 12:15pm

NATASHA LESTER

in conversation with Michelle Barraclough

Natasha Lester has been enchanting readers since 2010 with her stories of trailblazing women from history, weaving together exotic settings, intrigue, danger and fashion, in captivating tales. A New York Times Bestseller, Natasha's latest novel, The Chateau On Sunset, takes us to the Golden Age of Hollywood in a Jane Eyre reimagining. Join Natasha in conversation with writer and podcaster Michelle Barraclough, as they discuss Natasha's latest novel and body of work.

NOT SO SOCIAL MEDIA

Sarah Bailey, Ashley Kalagian Blunt

Venture into the darker side of technology with two crime novels that explore the dangers lurking online, from the relentless 24-hour news cycle to the spread of toxic masculinity pervading teens' social media. Join Sarah Bailey and Ashley Kalagian Blunt as they discuss what happens when online worlds collide with reality, and how the dark web, deepfakes and our obsession with clicks are shaping a compelling new wave of Aussie crime fiction.

Facilitator: Kate Horan - Author

12:15 - 12:45pm — **BOOK SIGNING - ACTIVITY ROOM 1**

WORKSHOP

STORIES WITH HEART: MAKE YOUR READERS CARE WITH PAMELA COOK

9:45 – 1:00pm

Great stories don't just entertain – they make readers feel. In this workshop, you'll learn how to create believable, emotionally rich characters whose hopes, fears, flaws and desires resonate with readers. Through practical exercises and discussion, you'll discover how authentic characterisation creates emotional impact, raises the stakes, and keeps readers invested from the first page to the last. Whether you're writing fiction or memoir, you'll leave with techniques to give your writing greater emotional depth and lasting power.

The workshop is limited to 15 participants, so book early to avoid missing out.

Pamela Cook is an author, podcaster and teacher who writes page-turning contemporary women's fiction, delving deep into the psychology of her characters and the complexity of relationships in all their forms.

She is a sought-after writing teacher and mentor, teaching privately and through Writing NSW.

26/9

SATURDAY

ARC	MAIN HALL	ACTIVITY ROOM 2	ACTIVITY ROOM 4
12:45 - 1:30pm	LUNCH		

1:30 - 2:30pm

TRUE ENOUGH

Rebecca Armitage, Karen Brooks, Natasha Lester

Come with us as we reimagine the familiar with new perspectives on people and stories we know and love: a glimpse behind the scenes of a British royal family, life as Bram Stoker's wife, and Jane Eyre set in the glamour of mid-century Hollywood. Rebecca Armitage, Karen Brooks and Natasha Lester discuss whether it matters when fiction tampers with the truth, how much of a story needs to be retained, and why these stories endure.

Facilitator: Valerie Khoo - Director, Australian Writers' Centre

Brought to you by Avalon Law

OTHER WORLDLY ROMANCE

Ruby Jean Cottle, Pip Drysdale (Knight), Shailee Thompson

Once relegated to the fringes of literary spaces, stories of the dark and the supernatural have surged onto the mainstream stage. From a YA fantasy/sci-fi/romance series to paranormal romance and a romance-slasher mash-up, these alternatives to traditional romance novels are captivating readers around the country. Sit down with Ruby Jean Cottle, Pip Drysdale (Knight) and Shailee Thompson as they discuss crafting unconventional love stories in other worldly settings.

Facilitator: Karina May - Author

ASK US ANYTHING

Lindsay Bartels, Sandie Docker, Kate Horan

Anything at all. From the publishing journey, to creating an online author platform, to whether writers actually make a living from their work. How do authors write 'those' scenes, and what do they do when a reader tells them they hate their book? Authors Lindsay Bartels, Sandie Docker and Kate Horan are on hand to answer the questions you've been too afraid to ask, until now.

Attendees can submit questions anonymously prior to the panel.

Festival Fiver Session

2:30 - 3:00pm — **BOOK SIGNING - ACTIVITY ROOM 1**

SATURDAY

3:00 - 4:00pm

CHRIS HAMMER

in conversation with Tim Ayliffe

Since his first crime novel, Scrublands, hit the shelves in 2018, the literary star of former journalist Chris Hammer has continued to rise. He is the winner of multiple literary accolades and both his crime series have been adapted for television. Full Circle is the first standalone novel from Chris, and introduces us to new characters in an unforgettable story of intrigue and revenge, love and redemption. Join Chris as he sits down with author Tim Ayliffe to discuss his epic new novel and stellar career.

SIBLING RIVALRY

Anna Johnston, Dinuka McKenzie, Sophie Stern

No one knows us as well, or has the power to wound us, quite like a sibling. In their recent novels, Anna Johnston, Dinuka McKenzie and Sophie Stern explore the sibling relationship and what happens when these bonds are threatened by lies, betrayal and competing versions of the truth. Can we ever truly know those we think are closest to us? And once fractured, can these bonds ever be restored?

Facilitator: Claudine Tinellis - Author and Podcaster

Brought to you by Australian Writers' Centre

BOOK CLUB : *BIG LITTLE TRUTHS*

Lindsay Bartels, Phillip Boote, Meg Dunn

Big Little Truths, the long-awaited sequel to the global phenomenon Big Little Lies, has finally arrived (August 2026). What's it like to revisit characters so familiar to us, did this continuation go where you thought it would, and does the next instalment stack up to the original? Join author Lindsay Bartels, book reviewer Phillip Boote (Happy Valley Books Read) and Avalon Community Library's Meg Dunn for this lively discussion of an Australian publishing juggernaut. *Spoiler: twists and the ending will be discussed.*

Festival Fiver Session

Brought to you by LJ Hooker Palm Beach Avalon Beach

4:00 - 4:30pm — **BOOK SIGNING - ACTIVITY ROOM 1**

26/9	ARC	MAIN HALL	ACTIVITY ROOM 2	ACTIVITY ROOM 4
SATURDAY	4:30 - 5:30pm	**THE SHAPE OF STORIES** **Emma Grey, Petronella McGovern, Jennifer Ross** We all know a story has a beginning, a middle, and an end, but when talented writers like Emma Grey, Petronella McGovern and Jennifer Ross play with convention, magic happens. What does it take to successfully pull off a sliding-door women's fiction story, a groundhog-day crime novel, or a time-slip historical tale? Find out how these authors play with structural convention to enhance the reader's experience and add richness to their writing. **Facilitator**: Pamela Cook - Author, Podcaster, Writing Mentor	**ON THE FRINGES** **Tim Ayliffe, Michael Brissenden, Samuel Elliott** Cults, sovereign citizen movements and deep- state conspiracies. Join Tim Ayliffe, Michael Brissenden and Samuel Elliott as they explore what makes these shadowy communities so fascinating – and such rich material for crime novels. From a jaded cop trying to save her twin, to a haunted detective and abandoned son, and a former cult member searching for a missing child, their stories reveal what happens when ordinary lives collide with those living on society's fringes. **Facilitator**: Anna Downes - Author	**BEGIN AGAIN** **Jessica Dettmann, Rachel Fox McLeod, Sophie Green** Life doesn't always go according to plan and sometimes it takes a reminder from beyond the grave, or a f**k-it list after a break-up, or a group of female friends and a dress shop, to get back on track. Jessica Dettmann, Rachel Fox McLeod and Sophie Green explore the transformative power of second chances with humour, irreverence and poignancy, showing just what it takes to become who you were always meant to be. **Facilitator**: Penelope Janu - Author
	5:30 - 6:00pm	**BOOK SIGNING - ACTIVITY ROOM 1**		
	6:00pm	**CLOSE OF DAY 1**		

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27/9	ARC	MAIN HALL	ACTIVITY ROOM 2	ACTIVITY ROOM 4
SUNDAY	10:00 - 11:00am	**HOME IS WHERE THE CRIME IS** **Emma Babbington, Kate Horan, Michael Robotham** Some homecomings can reopen old wounds. Whether it's the discovery of a missing sister's body, the lingering mystery of a best friend's murder, or a return to a town that doesn't want you back, the past is impossible to escape. Join Emma Babbington, Kate Horan and Michael Robotham as they discuss their latest crime novels, thrilling stories of secrets and redemption where the search for truth comes at a cost. **Facilitator**: Hayley Scrivenor - Author	**PICTURE IMPERFECT** **Katie Hoskins, Eleanor Limprecht, Gabbie Stroud** Society has very high expectations of women – and even more so of wives and mothers – so what happens when they fail to meet them? Through a mother whose toddler swallows an illicit drug, a woman who abducts her own children, and three wives who turn on their husbands, Katie Hoskins, Eleanor Limprecht and Gabbie Stroud explore what happens when women go against expectations and whether there's redemption on the other side of picture perfect. **Facilitator**: Emma Pei Yin - Author	**HOW TO BIRTH A BOOK** **Sandie Docker, Jo MacKay, Daniel Pilkington** What goes into getting a book from the ideas in your head to a novel on the shelves? When should you submit your work to an agent or publisher, and what is it they look for when signing an author? What's the process once you've been picked up? And is that the end of the story? Join author Sandie Docker, publisher Jo MacKay (HQ Fiction) and literary agent Daniel Pilkington (Pilkington Agency), as they demystify the publishing process. *Attendees can submit questions prior to the panel.* ***Festival Fiver Session***
	11:00 - 11:30am	**BOOK SIGNING - ACTIVITY ROOM 1**		
SUNDAY	11:30 - 12:30pm	**LIFTING THE VEIL** **Michael Mohammed Ahmad, Kathryn Heyman, Louise Milligan** Whether it's facing one's own mortality, dealing with buried trauma, or having your childhood stolen, there are some issues society prefers to keep in the shadows. But fiction can be a powerful force to bring them to light, leading to a better understanding of ourselves. Michael Mohammed Ahmad, Kathryn Heyman and Louise Milligan discuss their powerful novels, how they write about sensitive issues, and how healing can be found between the pages when we lift the veil. **Facilitator**: Michael Brissenden - Author	**FAMILY LOST, FAMILY FOUND** **Ayesha Inoon, Cassie Stroud, Dianne Yarwood** Join us for a powerful session on the bonds between parents and children, siblings and those we choose for our family. Three beautiful novels from Ayesha Inoon, Cassie Stroud and Dianne Yarwood centre on characters who are searching for lost relatives. Through their eyes, we'll look at identity and belonging, what happens when we lose those we love, and how finding family – in whatever form it takes – can help us reclaim our own stories. **Facilitator**: Pamela Cook - Author, Podcaster, Writing Mentor	**ROMANCING THE NEW WAVE** **Amanda Hewitt, Joshua Hortinela, Amy Hutton** Love has always been a storytelling staple, and today's readers can't get enough of authors who give these 'tales as old as time' a fresh new twist. From protagonists in their forties breaking office rules, to queer exes forced to work together, to ghost-busting investigators, the new wave of romance has most definitely arrived. Amanda Hewitt, Joshua Hortinela and Amy Hutton discuss what it takes to write love for contemporary readers. **Facilitator**: Lindsay Bartels - Author
	12:30 - 1:00pm	**BOOK SIGNING - ACTIVITY ROOM 1**		

27/9

SUNDAY

ARC	MAIN HALL	ACTIVITY ROOM 2	ACTIVITY ROOM 4

1:00 - 1:45pm — **LUNCH**

1:45 -2:45pm

MONICA McINERNEY

in conversation with Sandie Docker

Monica McInerney, one of Australia's most beloved authors, has been charming readers for over two decades with her endearing stories of family and friendship. With her new book, When Sullivan Met Lola, she brings together two of her most adored characters in a story of their own. Join Monica as she chats with author and Festival Director Sandie Docker about her amazing career and what it's like to revisit characters her readers love.

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SECRETS OF THE PAST

Sarah Clutton, Joan Sauers, Sue Williams

How do we uncover the stories that are buried in history? From piecing together clues hidden in antiquarian books, to using an historian's investigative skills and researching family legend, this fascinating conversation looks at the many ways we can uncover the secrets of the past. Find out how Sarah Clutton, Joan Sauers and Sue Williams bring history to life – and why revealing long-hidden mysteries continues to resonate so powerfully with readers today.

Facilitator: Helen Signy - Author

2:45 - 3:15pm — **BOOK SIGNING - ACTIVITY ROOM 1**

3:15 - 4:15pm

THE GRITTY UNDERBELLY

Jane Caro, Matt Nable, Glenn Orgias

From exposing trafficking networks to becoming entangled with loan sharks and striking deals with the mafia, what happens when the past comes calling and pulls you into the dangerous worlds lurking beneath the surface? Join Jane Caro, Matt Nable and Glenn Orgias as they delve into the appeal of crime fiction's underworld, examining the stories, characters and hidden threats that keep readers hooked and questioning just how close the gritty underbelly really is.

Facilitator: Valerie Khoo - Director, Australian Writers' Centre

RECLAIMING WOMEN'S HISTORIES

Madeleine Cleary, Emma Pei Yin, Victoria Purman

From women's resistance in occupied Hong Kong during WWII, fighting for access to the contraceptive pill in the 1960s, or struggling for a better life in the red-light district of 1860s Melbourne, women's stories of rebellion and the struggle for freedom are often erased by history. Madeleine Cleary, Emma Pei Yin and Victoria Purman discuss how they are shining a light on these hidden histories and why these stories are so important to tell, especially now.

Facilitator: Michelle Barraclough - Writer and Podcaster

4:15 - 4:45pm — **BOOK SIGNING - ACTIVITY ROOM 1**

WORKSHOP

TAKE YOUR CRIME NOVEL TO THE NEXT LEVEL WITH HAYLEY SCRIVENOR

1:15- 4:30pm

Do you want to write a crime novel that stays with your reader long after the last page? This workshop aims to equip you to write character-driven crime fiction with a strong voice (the elusive 'know it when you see it' that's the hallmark of a story well told). With readings and discussion, as well as exercises to help you hone your crime novel, this course is open to anyone no matter the stage of their work-in-progress.

The workshop is limited to 15 participants, so book early to avoid missing out.

Hayley Scrivenor is a former festival director and the internationally bestselling author of Dirt Town. A multiple award winner, Hayley has years of experience teaching writing and enjoys mentoring emerging writers.

Hayley holds a PhD in Creative Writing from the University of Wollongong.

27/9

SUNDAY

AVALON REC CENTRE — **MAIN HALL**

4:45 - 5:30pm

FESTIVAL GREAT DEBATE

Free Session

The hero gets the glory, but it's often the villain who steals the show.
For our free festival finale, six of our fearless authors go head-to-head in a battle of wits, bookish smarts, and persuasion, to debate whether:

The Villain Is More Interesting Than The Hero.

Join us for a session packed with stimulating arguments, unexpected t[illegible] twists and [illegible] of literary fun.
Hosted by the festival's incomparable patron, Michael Robotha[illegible], our tw[illegible] will fight for dominance and bragging rights in this session not to be missed.

SOLD OUT

Team Villain	Debate Host	Team Hero
Sarah Bailey	Michael	Jane Caro
Michael Brissenden	Robotham	Joshua Hortinela
Petronella McGovern		Sue Williams

5:30pm — **FESTIVAL CLOSE**

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