



## BALLARAT WRITERS INC.

### Chairperson's report for the 2020 AGM

26 January, 2021

I can only hope that 2020 is a year we won't soon see repeated. The impact of COVID-19 took over the year early, and continued to significantly disrupt events throughout the world, not just Ballarat Writers. Our February members' night (just after our last AGM) was our last in-person meeting for 2020. Our March meeting was cancelled with relatively short notice, and a national lockdown followed in relatively short order. As you may imagine, this threw a number of planned events and presentations into disarray.

Since April, we have been hosting our members' nights online, and while we have faced some challenges, we have had consistent monthly meetings from April through to our final members' night in November. And while we met many new faces through Zoom, it's clear that we are a group that thrive on meeting face-to-face. For those of you who have been waiting at home during 2020 to be able to come along and see what we're all about, we can't wait to see you.

We have also managed to maintain our regular offerings where possible: the Martha Richardson Memorial Poetry Prize and the Pamela Miller Memorial Prize both ran this year, and were successful. In a year of uncertainty and fear, it has been empowering to see that creativity has not been completely stymied. Write Club has also survived moving mostly online, with a weekly Discord voice chat seeing them through the months of lockdown. As a result, we now have a small but very active text chat for Ballarat Writers in Discord, as well as the usual weekly Write Club meet-ups at Racers Bar and Café on the Lake.

While this has been a year of involuntary quietude for Ballarat Writers, rest assured that we have a fantastic slate of activities planned for 2021. At the last AGM I reflected that our activities for 2019 had focused on building community as well as encouraging writers who wanted to improve or hone their writing skills. I believe that 2021 will be a year that will not only continue this tradition, but also be a year where we expand our offerings into more literary and immersive writing discussions, broadening our offerings without losing our focus on supporting new writers.

I would like to extend an incredibly sincere and heartfelt thank you to everyone who has stayed in touch with us during 2020, and to those who are coming back to us in 2021. Ballarat Writers exists to support and encourage its community of writers, and knowing that the work we do is appreciated and missed is wonderful. I promise you, the committee has missed you all as well!

And speaking of the committee, I would like to extend my sincerest thank yous to the 2020 Ballarat Writers Incorporated committee: Laura Wilson as secretary/public officer, Kirstyn McDermott as treasurer, Jason Nahrung as publicity, Megan Riedl as competitions chair, and Phil Green, David Mellows, Brooke Vogt and Zoe Werner as general committee members. You all gave above and beyond what your roles asked of you this year, in times of great uncertainty, and your commitment to your roles and BWI is a credit to you all.

BWI is ready to emerge from its 2020 COVID-19 chrysalis and, after sanitising its hands and checking in, hit 2021 with renewed vigour and purpose. I hope you'll all join us.

Rebecca Fletcher

BWI Chairperson, 2020