



## Chairperson's report for the 2022 AGM

18 January, 2023

It's been a bumpy ride, but we're all still holding on. You don't need me to remind you that we are now in our third year of COVID-19. While we're not out of the woods yet, it's clear that some sense of normality is beginning to return. If I wanted to tempt fate, I would say that perhaps this is the first year that we will be able to organise events without the risk of cancellations or rescheduling, but I don't want to tempt fate, so I won't.

We had another year of Zoom committee meetings, with one in-person meeting, which we hadn't done in years. The energy when you get people together fuels the brainstorming process, and some exciting ideas came from that planning meeting. Hopefully you'll see some in the coming year.

This year we had Nicolas Brasch and our very own Kirstyn McDermott present at our social nights, which was an amazing effort given that last minute changes affected both events. However, I'll take last minute scrambling over running an online BWI social night again! Write Club and our critique groups are also still going strong. It's good to see people meeting up in-person to share their work. That sense of community is what groups like Ballarat Writers are all about, and I'm thrilled that we've all made something that people want to connect with.

This has been a year of slowly growing and trying to find a new sense of where we are. We restarted paid memberships after a fee amnesty in 2021, and our membership report shows that while our numbers may be lower than pre-Covid, our membership numbers are still strong. We ran our Pamela Miller Prize and the Martha Richardson competition this year, and while the latter posted a loss, I'm still amazed at the energy of committee to coordinate and execute these projects after so many exhausting years of uncertainty.

This year's committee was a wonderful blend of old and new. Laura, our publicity officer, has been on the committee since 2018, and Phil and Nicole returned this year as general committee members. This year we also saw some fresh blood on committee with Rachel Mitchell as our competitions co-ordinator, Darren Rout as treasurer/membership officer and Pam Swanborough as our publicity officer. This blend of old and new people is crucial to an organisation's longevity. New members bring fresh ideas, perspectives and energy, whereas returning members bring their experience and ensure that institutional knowledge is not lost in the changing of the guard. I would like to personally thank the committee for their excellent work in 2022. Your commitment and generosity are greatly appreciated.

I became chairperson of Ballarat Writers in 2019. We were a committee of three that year, Laura, Phil and me, and it's wonderful to see that we have had all positions filled for two years in a row. However, after four years as chairperson, I believe it's time for me to move aside and let someone else have a go. While I have enjoyed running the member nights and seeing how much talking I could avoid, I would like to enjoy the ride for a while rather than being the one driving. To the members who keep BWI alive, thank you so much again for another wonderful year. I know that if people are willing to put their hands up and help out in 2023 that we will start seeing some big things happening.

Gone, but not really,

Rebecca Fletcher, outgoing chairperson of Ballarat Writers