

BLUE MOUNTAINS WRITERS FESTIVAL

31 Oct — 02 Nov

87 51 14 Workshop

CHRISTOS TSIOLKAS • HANNAH KENT • STAN GRANT • KATE GRENVILLE

MAXINE BENEBA CLARKE • ALI COBBY ECKERMANN • CRAIG SILVEY • BRYAN BROWN

DRUSILLA MODJESKA • DANIEL BROWNING • CHARLOTTE MCCONAGHY

CRAIG REUCASSEL • SOFIE LAGUNA • OSHER GÜNSBERG • DEBRA OSWALD

INGA SIMPSON • JENNIFER WONG • JUMAANA ABDU • GARRY DISHER • PLUS MORE



The Blue Mountains Writers' Festival is proudly presented by Varuna, the National Writers' House.



Based in Katoomba, Varuna is the foremost institution for literature development in Australia. Originally the home of writers Eleanor Dark and Dr Eric Dark, the house and gardens of Varuna were gifted to the Australian public in 1989 by their son, Mick Dark, to be used as a retreat for writers.

Each year, over 350 writers participate in residencies and professional development programs at Varuna, and many hundreds more readers and writers participate in workshop programs and literary events, including the Blue Mountains Writers' Festival.

varuna.com.au/support



Inspiring awe and wonder, the Blue Mountains Writers' Festival immerses readers and writers in an intimate festival of ideas and creativity.

Over three vibrant days, the program showcases Australia's sharpest minds and most expansive thinkers, offering challenging, playful and exhilarating opportunities for connection.

The main program features an impressive line-up across The Carrington Hotel and Katoomba Community Hall, as well as one-of-a-kind special events at Scenic World and the stunning Megalong Valley. For aspiring authors, workshops at the Blue Mountains Cultural Centre provide valuable opportunities to develop skills, while the children's program provides a lively series of family-friendly events at Katoomba Library. In 2025, the Festival is also partnering with Blue Mountains City Council to deliver workshops in four high schools across the region.

Our 2025 theme, *a path to wonder*, invites audiences to engage with literature with an open mind and sense of possibility.

To wonder is to approach the world with curiosity, to question without agenda, to allow for beauty, space and human connection, or to explore new ways of thinking and being in the world.

To wonder is to see beyond the immediate, to imagine a horizon even when the present is fragmented.

To wonder is to imagine a future — and to have the time, safety, and freedom to dream it into being.



THE OLD STABLES AT LOT 101

We are thrilled to present an exclusive series of events in the stunning Megalong Valley

Just 25 minutes from Katoomba down a beautiful winding road, the Megalong Valley is a rural paradise known for spectacular scenery, towering eucalypts and temperate rainforest, as well as sustainable tourism, fine food and wine.









THE BOOKSHELF LIVE with ABC RADIO NATIONAL

Join Kate Evans from ABC Radio National's *The Bookshelf*, with awardwinning authors **Debra Oswald**, **Garry Disher** and **Steve MinOn**, as they discuss the books that fire them up, the latest releases they've loved, as well as their own craft and creative careers.

CHRISTOS TSIOLKAS IN CONVERSATION with KATE EVANS

One of our most beloved writers, Christos Tsiolkas, is the author of eight novels. His work has been published in over 20 languages, and many of his novels and stories adapted for the stage and screen. Warm, witty and endlessly curious, don't miss this exclusive opportunity to listen to Christos discuss his extensive career, with ABC Radio National's Kate Evans.

FRI 31 OCT



6:00PM --- 7:30PM

Grand Dining Room Carrington Hotel

Join four of Australia's greatest minds as they consider their personal paths to wonder.

Set in the art-deco surroundings of The Carrington Hotel and hosted by Festival Director Maeve Marsden, our inaugural opening gala features bestselling authors Hannah Kent, Daniel Browning,

Maxine Beneba Clarke and James Bradley.

Our special guests will inspire you with stories, ideas and discoveries, with each reading followed by a breathtaking musical interpretation by opera singer and cabaret icon **Ali McGregor**.

The Opening Gala is included in our Platinum and Gold Weekend Passes.

15PM — 6

WRITERS IN THE SKY

Suspended far above the Jamison Valley in the Scenic World Skyway, enjoy intimate conversations with some of Australia's most adventurous thinkers.



THE EMPRESS MURDERS

Everyone is in peril. Everyone is a suspect. Join award-winning playwright and actor **Toby Schmitz** and comedian **Jennifer Wong** as they discuss his mind-bendingly clever whodunnit in a most unconventional way.



ANCESTORS CALLING

To stand on the shoulders of one's ancestors is to carry both responsibility and legacy. Join poet **Anne-Marie Te Whiu**, playwright **S. Shakthidharan**, and authormathematician **JM Field** as they discuss the living relationship they feel with their past.



HEISTS AND HIGH WIRES

From gripping thrillers to madcap adventures, authors have long sought ways to get their readers' eyes wide and heart pumping.

Candice Fox and Walter Marsh both write about risky business, albeit in very different ways. Take a leap into the unknown, skillfully piloted by Beejay Silcox.

Ticket includes a drink on arrival and canapés.







READ THE RAINFOREST

Begin your exhilarating journey on the Scenic World Cableway before descending through eucalypts to the Rainforest Room, an open gazebo nestled among lush ferns and towering turpentines.

Join writers **Inga Simpson**, **Jessica White** and **Jane Rawson** in conversation with Brain on Nature's **Sarah Allely**, as they discuss the many ways they connect with the environment. Don't miss this incredible chance to consider your place in the world, surrounded by birdsong and fellow travellers.

This event is not wheelchair accessible.

7:30PM — 9:00PM



BETTER OFF SAID: EULOGIES FOR THE LIVING AND DEAD

Hosted by Emilie Zoey Baker and Marieke Hardy with Osher Günsberg, Vijay Khurana, Cadance Bell, Ruby Jackson, Tasma Walton and Sara M Saleh.

Celebrating words, stories and human experiences, *Better Off Said* is an evening of words it's time to air; thoughts and reflections for the living and dead. At one time or another, we all discover something we wish we'd shouted aloud, someone out there in the world waiting to hear an important message, a piece of history we feel our voice could have improved. *Better Off Said* offers the opportunity to leave no verbal stone unturned. To find closure. To sing truth from the rooftops before it's too late.



5:00PM — 6:00PM



THE MICK DARK DEBATE FOR THE FUTURE

We're doomed! Or, are we?

Join six big thinkers in a fight for the future, a great debate for our times inspired by the legacy of Blue Mountains environmentalist Mick Dark. Drawing on backgrounds in science, technology, journalism, mathematics and literature, two teams go head-to-head debating the topic, "We're doomed!"

From the pessimistically affirmative to the optimistically negative, watch the sparks fly in this lively verbal sparring featuring journalist Royce Kurmelovs (Slick: Australia's Toxic Relationship with Big Oil), mathematician JM Field (The Eagle and the Crow), author Jane Rawson (Human/Nature: On life in a wild world), comedian and writer Jennifer Wong, science writer Bianca Nogrady and ABC Radio Sydney's inimitable Craig Reucassel.



Breakfast 5.30am - 8am

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8:00PM — 9:00PM



MTNS MADE

WILLO DRUMMOND, MICHAEL DUFFY, ROANNA GONSALVES, ALEJANDRA MARTINEZ AND OLIVIA O'FLYNN

Offering writers the time and space to breathe, think and explore, the Blue Mountains has always been a place where creativity flourishes.

Begin your Festival grounded in this spirit, with readings from five outstanding local authors working across poetry, crime fiction, literary fiction, fantasy and romance.

For visitors, this event provides the perfect opportunity to discover the depth of talent nurtured in the region. For locals, it's a chance to connect with fellow artists and enjoy the creativity of our community.

This is a FREE event sponsored by MTNS MADE, a collective of creative professionals living and working in the Blue Mountains which aims to support, promote and grow the region's creative economy.

MTNS MADE



MA in Literature and Creative Writing

The Writing and Society Research Centre offers a challenging, rigorous coursework and research MA combining criticism and creative work, leading to a Master of Arts in Literature and Creative Writing.

By connecting creative writing practice to ideas and creative work from across the arts and sciences, we offer students the opportunity to think across creative, critical and disciplinary categories and to produce either works of scholarship or creative writing (or related creative work that crosses over into other areas including music, art, performance and film).

Our Centre is unique in Australia in the way it combines scholarship, authorship and expertise in publishing. The Centre includes some of Australia's most celebrated writers and widely published literary scholars and critics with international reputations.

We are ranked above world standard in the study of literature and creative arts practice.

The Centre houses the highly decorated literary press Giramondo Publishing, and the pre-eminent literary review site in Australia, the Sydney Review of Books. With all this we are able to offer a multifaceted understanding of literature and writing. In short, we think this is one of the best places in Australia either to become a writer or to think in a critical and scholarly way about writing.

For more information contact: writing@westernsydney.edu.au

MAIN PROGRAM







9:15AM ----- 9.45AM

10:00AM ----- 11:00AM

11:30AM ---- 12:30PM

12:45PM -1:45PM



ART WE HATE Christos Tsiolkas. Vivian Blaxell and James Jiang in conversation with Beejay Silcox

WHY WE NEED

CROSS-CULTURE **CONNECTIONS: FIRST** PEOPLES INDIA-**AUSTRALIA EXCHANGE**

Ali Cobby Eckermann, Merinda Dutton, Beni Yanthan and Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar in conversation with Roanna Gonsalves



THE BALLROOM

Welcome to **Country**

HOW TO SURVIVE 1985 Tegan Bennett

Daylight in conversation with Amy Sambrooke

DEFINING MOTHERHOOD

Kylie Ladd. **Ingrid Horrocks** and Natasha Rai



GRAND DINING ROOM

TIBBI WHALAN HAL

DEBRA OSWALD

in conversation with Alyx Gorman RISING TIDES, FACT AND FICTION

Charlotte McConaghy and James Bradley in conversation with Bianca Nogrady



WHAT IS A HUMAN?

Toby Walsh, Inga Simpson and Cadance Bell in conversation with Rae Johnston

Presented in partnership with Theo Poulos Real Estate

KATE GRENVILLE

in conversation with Nicole Abadee Presented in partnership with Lot 101

BLUE MOUNTAINS ABORIGINAL ELDERS: STORIES FROM OUR **HEARTS**

Uncle Brian Bell. Aunty Marie Clegg, Aunty Carol Cooper, Uncle Colin Locke & Uncle Ed Walker. with Charmaine Ledden-Lewis

FREE EVENT

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2:00PM 3:00PM	3:30PM 4:30PM	5:00PM 6:00PM	
HOW TO STAY AFLOAT Osher Günsberg and David Stavanger in conversation with Jennifer Wong	THE FUTURE OF TRANSLATION Hansda Sowvendra Shekhar, Tiffany Tsao and Chris Andrews Presented in partnership with Western Sydney University FREE EVENT	REAL MEN WRITE POETRY Dominic Hoey, Hasib Hourani, Chris Andrews, David Stavanger and Sean Wai Keung	
A BODY OF WORK Ali Cobby Eckermann and Daniel Browning	ROMANTASY Olivia O'Flynn and Jasmin McGaughey	COUNTER NARRATIVES Julie Janson and Tasma Walton in conversation with Merinda Dutton	
YEARNING AND BELONGING Jumaana Abdu and Charlotte McConaghy in conversation with Anne-Marie Te Whiu	AFTER ZIONISM Randa Abdel-Fattah and Antony Loewenstein	WHAT'S NEXT IN LOVE, WAR AND TECH? Sam Roggeveen, Toby Walsh and Alyx Gorman	
BRYAN BROWN in conversation with Toby Schmitz Presented in partnership with Out of the Blue	STAN GRANT in conversation with Rae Johnston Presented in partnership with Hotel Mountain Heritage	SPINNING AROUND: THE KYLIE PLAYLIST Christos Tsiolkas, Jessica White, Patrick Marlborough and Ali McGregor	

MAIN PROGRAM





10:00AM ----- 11:00AM

11:30AM -- 12:30PM 12:45PM -— 1:45PM



WORDS TO SING THE **WORLD ALIVE** Daniel Browning, Merinda Dutton and Jasmin McGaughey

MODERN ODYSSEYS Sofie Laguna, Vijay Khurana and Dominic Hoey in conversation with Marieke Hardy



THE BALLROOM

GRAND DINING ROOM



OUR GHOSTS Steve MinOn and Natasha Rai

IN OUR MILLIONS

Jumaana Abdu

in conversation

Randa Abdel-Fattah

and Hasib Hourani

with Sara M Saleh

EAT THE RICH Antony Loewenstein and Carl Rhodes in conversation with Walter Marsh



Presented in partnership with Renetatos White



DRUSILLA MODJESKA

in conversation with Nicole Abadee HANNAH KENT

in conversation with Amy Sambrooke

Presented in partnership with Megalong Valley Tea Rooms

LITERARY FUTURES

Jumaana Abdu, Bill Hope, Jasmin McGaughey and Nevo Zisin

Presented in partnership with Blue Mountains City Council

FREE EVENT

RIVERS FLOW: THE SONGS OF ARCHIE ROACH AND RUBY HUNTER

2:00PM ---- 3:00PM

Ali Cobby Eckermann, Julie Janson, Graham Akhurst and Zipporah Corser-Anu 3:30PM —— 4:30PM

OUEERSTORIES
Hannah Kent,
Vivian Blaxell,
JM Field,
Patrick Marlborough
and Maeve Marsden

5:00PM ---- 6:00PM

HOW TO READ A POEM

Willo Drummond, Hasib Hourani and James Jiang

Presented in partnership with Sydney Review of Books ALL WOMEN WANT

Alyx Gorman in conversation with Marieke Hardy INTIMATE EPICS

Christos Tsiolkas and Steve MinOn in conversation with Beejay Silcox

HOW TO WRITE A LIFE

Maxine Beneba Clarke, Ingrid Horrocks, S. Shakthidharan and Jessica White IS DEMOCRACY
DISINTEGRATING?

Melissa Phillips, Carl Rhodes and Sam Roggeveen in conversation with Beejay Silcox

Presented in partnership with The Whitlam Institute REPEAT OFFENDERS

Garry Disher and Candice Fox

TRUE CRIME OR NOT TRUE CRIME

Walter Marsh and Royce Kurmelovs in conversation with Craig Reucassel

Presented in partnership with Discover the Blue Mountains Magazine FROM JASPER JONES TO HONEY BEE

Craig Silvey in conversation with Nicole Abadee

Presented in partnership with The Fairmont Resort Blue Mountains THE MICK DARK DEBATE FOR THE FUTURE

Royce Kurmelovs, Jennifer Wong, JM Field, Jane Rawson, Craig Reucassel and Bianca Nogrady

Presented in partnership with Blue Mountains Conservation Society

WORKSHOPS

BLUE MOUNTAINS CULTURAL CENTRE

10:00AM --- 1:00PN



FIND YOUR STORY, FIND YOUR VOICE with EMILY MAGUIRE

Practice tried-and-true techniques for generating new ideas, get words on the page fast, and (re)discover your writing voice with Stella Prize-nominated author **Emily Maguire.**



MAKE YOUR HISTORICAL FICTION WEIRD with JANE RAWSON

A playful and thought-provoking workshop with **Jane Rawson** inviting you to break with tradition and bend the rules of historical fiction.





THE POETICS OF PLACE with SARA M SALEH

A generative writing workshop with celebrated author, poet and human rights lawyer **Sara M Saleh** that takes shared exercises and experiments to stretch our craft toward the unexpected.





WRITING AWARD-WINNING BOOKS with Julie Janson

Explore fresh techniques for sparking new ideas with Miles Franklin-shortlisted writer **Julie Janson**. Find inspiration, explore new perspectives, consider genre and form, and avoid tired tropes.





LEARN TO WRITE GOOD: DIALOGUE AND PROSE INTENSIVE with DOMINIC HOEY

With ten years' experience running these writing classes, **Dominic Hoey** can help you sharpen your dialogue, explore poetic prose, or inject a little humour into your work.



2:00PM --- 3:30PM



10:00AM --- 1:00



0:30AM --- 1:30P



CREATING COMPELLING CHARACTERS with SOFIE LAGUNA

Using her award-winning books as a springboard, **Sofie Laguna** leads this in-depth workshop examining how strong characters can form the foundation of storytelling.

PATHWAYS TO PUBLICATION

How do you find a publisher for your work? What does an agent actually do? Can self-publishing lead to success? And how do literary journals contribute to the industry, and provide pathways for emerging writers? Join five titans of literature and publishing in this lively 90-minute roundtable. Supported by *Sydney Review of Books*.

KILLER INSTINCTS: CRIME WRITING with CANDICE FOX

Join international sensation **Candice Fox** for a dynamic and practical workshop designed for aspiring crime writers. Generate fresh ideas from real-world cases while sharpening your narrative skills.

DUMPLING POETRY with SEAN WAI KEUNG

Learn to make your own dumplings from scratch with poet **Sean Wai Keung**, then share a communal meal during which you'll use those dumplings as a spark for new writing.

MEGALONG VALLEY





NATURE WRITING with INGA SIMPSON

In the picturesque surrounds of the Megalong Valley, don't miss the chance to learn from one of Australia's best nature writers, **Inga Simpson**. Ideal for fiction and non-fiction writers at all levels.

SUN O2 NOV

FREE ARTS LAW WORSHOPS BLUE MOUNTAINS CULTURAL CENTRE

1:30PM --- 2:30PM

LEGAL ISSUES 101 FOR WRITERS

A workshop with the Arts Law Centre of Australia focused on tips for writers wishing to avoid scandals and other legal pitfalls.

3:00PM --- 4:00PM

DEFAMATION LAW FOR WRITERS

An overview of Australian defamation law and recent cases, as well as tips on how to balance defamation risk and expression as a writer in Australia.

KIDS PROGRAM



KATOOMBA LIBRARY

10:00AM --- 10:45AN



STORYTIME with SOFIE LAGUNA AGES 2+

Author **Sofie Laguna** brings a treasure trove of her picture books to life with animated retellings that will transport young audiences (and their accompanying grown-ups) from one glorious adventure to the next.

11:00AM --- 11:45AM



RUNT AND THE DIABOLICAL DOGNAPPING with CRAIG SILVEY

AGES 8+

Join author **Craig Silvey** for a chat about his bestselling children's book, *Runt*, and what lies in store for its beloved protagonists in their second adventure.

12:15PM --- 1:00PM



DRAW YOUR OWN FOOD MONSTER with BILL HOPE AGES 5+

Adventure fans, budding artists or creative geniuses are invited to a special event with illustrator **Bill Hope**, as he spills the beans on how he draws wicked cool characters and how you can master them too.

1:30PM --- 2:15PM



POETRY STUFF with MAXINE BENEBA CLARKE AGES 8+

Come and get your poetry on—learn how to write a great haiku, acrostic poem, poem in rhyming couplets and more with poet Maxine Beneba Clarke.

2:45PM --- 3:30PN



NAYNAY AND THE MERMAID with TASMA WALTON and CHARMAINE LEDDEN-LEWIS

AGES 4+

Author and actor **Tasma Walton** and illustrator **Charmaine Ledden-Lewis** bring the ocean to the mountains for this magical event that draws on the stories of the Boonwurrung people of coastal Melbourne.

BLUE MOUNTAINS CULTURAL CENTRE

0:00AM --- 12:00PN



THE BIG BANG THEORY OF STORY BEGINNINGS with VIVIAN PHAM

AGES 13-18

Have you always wanted to write but weren't sure where to start? Good news: every writer begins somewhere – and often, they begin again and again. This hands-on workshop offers guidance for starting your writing journey.

12:30PM --- 3:30PN



SLAM POETRY WORKSHOP with EMILIE ZOEY BAKER AGES 13-18

A high-energy interactive workshop where young people explore the art of slam poetry and learn how to transform raw ideas into powerful spoken word pieces.

TIBBI WHALAN HALL

12:45PM --- 1:45PM



LITERARY FUTURES with JUMAANA ABDU, BILL HOPE, JASMIN MCGAUGHEY and NEVO ZISIN ALL AGES

What does it really take to break into the creative industries when you're still finding your voice? How can writing build connection, community and change in a world that feels like it's shifting every day? Four successful young creatives share how they got started — and what they've learned along the way.







VENUES

The majority of events will be held in Katoomba at **The Carrington Hotel** at 15-47 Katoomba Street or the **Tibbi Whalan Hall** (formerly known as the Katoomba Community Hall, at 81-83 Katoomba Street. **The Baroque Room** is part of The Carrington complex and is accessed via the circular driveway rather than the hotel itself.

Workshops and the Children's Program will be held at the **Blue Mountains Cultural**

Centre and **Blue Mountains Library**, Katoomba Branch at 30 Parke Street.

Writers in the Sky and Read the Rainforest will be held at Scenic World, on the corner of Violet Street and Cliff Drive, Katoomba. The Skyway is wheelchair accessible, but please note that the Rainforest Room is not wheelchair accessible.

ACCESSIBILITY

The Blue Mountains Writers' Festival strives to make every event as accessible as possible. To find more information about access for each venue, please go to the Festival website.

All events except Read the Rainforest at Scenic World are wheelchair accessible.

The Festival will have **Auslan interpreters** available for the weekend and will schedule them into sessions on request. **T-loops** will be available in both the Grand Dining Room and Tibbi Whalan Hall stages.

All events in the Grand Dining Room at The Carrington and Tibbi Whalan Hall will have **real-time captions**.

Registered/accredited assistance animals are welcome at all Festival events and venues.

The Blue Mountains Writers' Festival is a member of the **Companion Card scheme**.

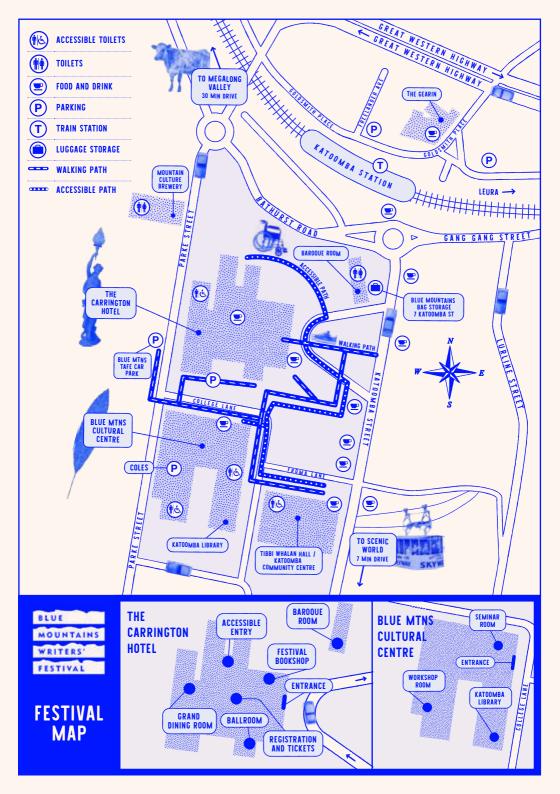
We have received funding this year to offer a **50 per cent discount on a limited number of Festival passes and tickets.**

This ticket is available for patrons on a Disability Support Pension, or for those whose income is severely impacted by their disability or a lack of access. Please note that these tickets are limited and subject to availability.

Accessible toilets are located at the Carrington Hotel, Katoomba Community Hall, Blue Mountains Cultural Centre, as well as Scenic World.

If you have individual access requirements that aren't covered by the above, please contact us at

hello@bluemountainswritersfestival.com.au and let us know how we can help you.



WEEKEND PASSES



Megalong Valley Program

- + Special Events Program
- + Main Program

ADULT \$299 | CONCESSION \$275



Special Events Program + Main Program

ADULT \$269 | CONCESSION \$245



Main Program
ADULT \$199 | CONCESSION \$184

DAY PASSES



BRONZE SATURDAY PASS

Saturday Main Program

ADULT \$120 | CONCESSION \$110



BRONZE SUNDAY PASS

Sunday Main Program

ADULT \$120 | CONCESSION \$110



WORKSHOP PASSES

Redeem 3 workshops

WORKSHOPS

ADULT \$259 | CONCESSION \$235



BRONZE SATURDAY
SLEEP-IN PASS

Saturday Main Program (from 11:30am) + Better Off Said

ADULT \$120 | CONCESSION \$110



BRONZE SUNDAY LOCALS PASS

Sunday Main Program

ADULT \$110 | CONCESSION \$100



INDIVIDUAL WORKSHOP TICKETS

Prices vary

THANK YOU

The Blue Mountains Writers' Festival and Varuna the National Writers' House are grateful to our donors, sponsors and funding bodies for their generous support. We couldn't do it without you!



BRONZE PARTNERS

































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DAVID HAMMON

EVENT PARTNERS & GOLD PARTNERS







































SILVER PARTNERS



















Festival branding and program by Green Peas for Breakfast

"The festival had a huge vibe that spanned the whole of Katoomba. Beautiful venues, eye-opening events and wonderfully friendly volunteers."

2024 FESTIVAL ATTENDEE

bluemountainswritersfestival.com.au

VARUNA

