

# The Universe is Made of Stories

**A 3-day storytelling spectacular in  
stunning Margaret River featuring top  
international and Australian authors,  
journalists, innovators and big thinkers.**

**2-4 May 2025**  
**[mrrwfestival.com](http://mrrwfestival.com)**

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## HOW TO BOOK

### Before the Festival

**Online:** [www.mrrwfestival.com](http://www.mrrwfestival.com)

**Phone:** **08 9780 5294**

**In Person:** **Arts Margaret River/  
Nala Bardip Mia –  
Margaret River HEART**  
47 Wallcliffe Road,  
Margaret River WA 6285  
Open Monday to Friday,  
10.00am–4.00pm.

### At the Festival

On the festival weekend tickets can be purchased from Nala Bardip Mia – Margaret River HEART Box Office. Pre-purchased passes can be collected at Nala Bardip Mia – Margaret River HEART Box Office on the festival weekend.

### Festival Tickets

#### Day Passes\*\*

FREE Friday Afternoon (Main Stage only)

Saturday: \$115 (Main Stage only)

Sunday: \$95 (Main Stage only)

#### Student Day Passes\*\*

\$90 Full-time students  
(contact Arts Margaret River to book)

#### Session Passes

Main Stage: \$30-\$35/session

Writers Room: see individual events.

#### Special Events

Please see individual events

#### Busselton Book Festival

Please see individual events

## FESTIVAL HUBS

### Nala Bardip Mia – Margaret River HEART

47 Wallcliffe Road, Margaret River WA 6285

#### Food & Drink

Available over the festival weekend.



#### Accessibility

Wheelchair accessible. The Main Stage has Assistive listening devices (ALDs). Phone Arts Margaret River on 08 9780 5294 for assistance.

#### Parking

Walking, cycling and ride-sharing is encouraged. Festival parking will be available in designated areas.

### Shelter Brewing

Foreshore, Busselton WA 6280

#### Food & Drink

Available all day at Shelter Brewing.



#### Accessibility

Wheelchair accessible.

#### Parking

Parking strictly limited. Please walk, cycle, ride-share or scooter.

### Accommodation

See [mrrwfestival.com/accommodationpartners](http://mrrwfestival.com/accommodationpartners) for fabulous festival accommodation options.

## SATELLITE VENUES

- Augusta Centennial Hall, 62 Allnutt Tce, Augusta WA 6290
- Augusta Community Resource Centre, 66 Allnutt Tce, Augusta WA 6290
- Busselton Library, Stanley Pl, Busselton WA 6280
- Discovery Tent, 47 Wallcliffe Rd, Margaret River WA 6285
- Dunsborough Library, Dunsborough Lakes Dr, Dunsborough WA 6281
- ECU Learning Centre, 38 Peel Tce, Busselton WA 6280
- Margaret River Library, 16 Fearn Ave, Margaret River WA 6285
- The Mens Shed, 5 Shepherdson Pl, Margaret River WA 6285
- Wadandi Walks (Rivermouth, Ellensbrook at Mokidup, Wonnerup House)



## SUPPORT THE ARTS

**Arts Margaret River members receive an exclusive discount on Festival ticket prices.**

Margaret River Readers & Writers Festival is created and presented by Arts Margaret River, a not-for-profit community organisation. If you are passionate about the arts, storytelling and the sharing of culture and ideas, become an Arts Margaret River member to enjoy discounts on tickets throughout the year.

Get the feel-good factor with a full-year membership (January to December) – \$50 Full, \$32 Concession (Pensioners and Health Care Card Holders).

**Visit [artsmargaretriver.com](http://artsmargaretriver.com) or call 08 9780 5294 to find out more.**

\* Terms & Conditions apply.

\*\* Day Passes/Student Day Passes exclude Festival Launch, Special Events, Busselton Book Festival

Cover Image: The protostar L1527, shown in this image from the NASA/ESA/CSA James Webb Space Telescope, is embedded within a cloud of material that is feeding its growth. NASA, ESA, CSA and STScI, J. DePasquale (STScI)



# Welcome

## WELCOME TO COUNTRY

Kaya Nalamaat Mooditj Djinnunga Noonda Gulyara Nitja-il Wadandi Boodjara.

Our family welcomes you and it's awesome to see you all together here on Saltwater Country. Here we are in "Wirungaa Wooditjbilya" – beautiful Margaret River in Djeran Season. One of the six seasons in our Wadandi Calendar. It's also time to enjoy the great events at our Readers & Writers Festival. Nala moort nala yungunjarli. Djerapin. Noonda yerunga booja. Ngarlak wongi noonda jenna goonya. Koorling Mia Kaartalonga Kidji Boola Koorda. Boordwah! See you all on Wadandi Boodja.

**Dr Wayne Webb, Wadandi/Pibulmun  
Cultural Custodian Undalup Association**



## WELCOME FROM THE STATE GOVERNMENT OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA

The Western Australian Government is a proud sponsor of the Margaret River Readers and Writers Festival through Tourism Western Australia's Regional Events Scheme (RES).

RES was established to support event holders across the state with the development of events to drive tourism to regional Western Australia. The scheme plays an important role in positioning the State's five tourism regions as exciting destinations by showcasing and promoting the host region's unique and diverse attractions.

A total of 73 regional events across Western Australia have been funded through the 2024-25 RES, which also includes a \$250,000 funding pool for the Regional Aboriginal Events Scheme, which exclusively allocates funding to events delivering Aboriginal activities and experiences.

The Western Australian Government is proud to sponsor all these regional events, which help bring vibrancy to local communities and drive visitor spend, injecting millions into regional economies.

Tourism is a key part of the Western Australian Government's plan to diversify the economy, create jobs and develop business opportunities, especially in regional Western Australia. Events play an important role in this plan and also contribute to the vision for Perth and Western Australia to be the fastest growing events destination in the South East Asian region.

The Western Australian Government sponsors a range of sporting, cultural, arts and culinary events across the state, to attract visitors and encourage them to stay longer, disperse further and spend more while they are here.

We hope everyone enjoys this event and takes the time to explore the South West region.

**Hon Rita Saffioti MLA  
Deputy Premier;  
Minister for Tourism**

**Hon Don Punch MLA  
Minister for  
Regional Development**

## WELCOME TO THE MARGARET RIVER READERS & WRITERS FESTIVAL 2025

In her 1968 book *The Speed of Darkness*, poet and activist Muriel Rukeyser penned the timeless words, "The universe is made of stories, not atoms."

This year's theme—*The Universe is Made of Stories*—pays homage to those words, reminding us that stories are not just entertainment. Stories ground us in uncertain times—they illuminate the past, challenge the present and help us imagine the future. They shape our history, spark our imagination and connect us across time and space.

At a time when censorship is once again rearing its ugly head, voices are being silenced and free expression is under threat, we need stories more than ever to help us find common ground—to encourage us to listen, question and embrace the conversations that push us forward.

Stories are powerful and remain unstoppable and literary festivals are more vital than ever. Here, we celebrate bold ideas, diverse voices and the power of words to connect, transform and inspire.

So, I invite you to come with curiosity. Think, question and explore. Let's embrace the stories that shape our universe—because words, like atoms, are the building blocks of everything and in these uncertain times, stories are our guiding light.

**Sian Baker  
Artistic & Festival Director of  
Margaret River Readers & Writers Festival**

01

**The Thinning****12noon–1.00pm**

Join bestselling author **Inga Simpson** (*Willowman*, *The Last Woman in the World*) as she discusses her powerful new novel, *The Thinning*, longlisted for the prestigious 2025 Stella Prize. Set in a near-future world on the brink of collapse, this timely and urgent story delves into climate change, resilience and humanity's bond with nature—serving as a clarion call for action and reflection in the face of our global climate crisis.

**Hosted by Trevor Paddenburg from Nature Conservation Margaret River Region**  
**In partnership with Nature Conservation Margaret River Region**  
**FREE, registration required (community event)**  
**Included in Weekend Pass**

02

**Voices for the Future****1.15pm–2.15pm**

Margaret River Senior High School students take centre stage in this dynamic panel discussion on democracy, human rights and the state of the world. Hosted by Bianca Breen (YA for WA) and featuring guest authors **Professor A.C. Grayling** (*The Good State, For the Good of The World, Democracy and Its Crisis*) journalist and former war correspondent **Peter Godwin** (*Exit Wounds, The Fear, When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*). Students will share their perspectives, challenge ideas and explore their roles in shaping their future and ours.

**Hosted by Bianca Breen from YA for WA**  
**FREE, registration required (community event)**  
**Included in Weekend Pass**



03

**Getting Back Up Again****2.30pm–3.30pm**

Join **Craig Semple** for an inspiring talk on his book *Getting Back Up Again*, a powerful account of overcoming post-traumatic stress disorder and rebuilding a life of hope and resilience. Drawing on his 25-year police career and personal journey, Craig shares hard-won strategies for navigating stress, trauma and recovery, offering tools to help others find strength in adversity.

**Hosted by Mike Rumble from Mindful Margaret River**  
**In partnership with Mindful Margaret River**  
**FREE, registration required (community event)**  
**Included in Weekend Pass**

04

**Cherrywood****3.45pm–4.45pm**

Join award-winning author and festival favourite **Jock Serong** as he discusses his latest novel, *Cherrywood*. Spanning both 1916 Edinburgh and 1993 Melbourne, the novel combines history, mystery and a touch of magic realism, focusing on a strange pub in Fitzroy and its profound connections across time. Serong will explore themes of legacy, love, grief and reinvention and the process of weaving together such a complex, multi-layered narrative. With echoes of *Cloud Atlas* and *The Overstory*, *Cherrywood* is a darkly imaginative story of dreamers, schemers and the haunting ties that bind us to the past.

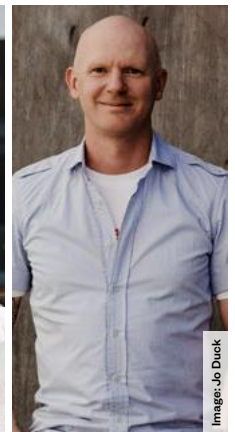
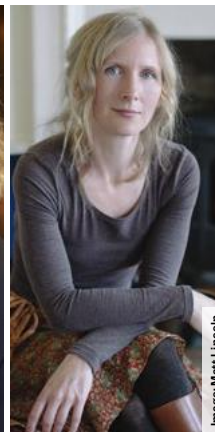
**Hosted by Megan McCracken**  
**FREE, registration required (community event)**  
**Included in Weekend Pass**

05

**Official Festival Launch:  
The Universe is Made of Stories****6.30pm–8.30pm**

Join us for the official launch of the Margaret River Readers & Writers Festival 2025, hosted by **Jane Caro**. Enjoy a selection of Clairault Streicker wines and delicious canapés before a moving Welcome to Country from the Undalup Association. Our esteemed international guests—**Professor A.C. Grayling**, **Samantha Harvey** and **Chris Flynn**—will each deliver a thought-provoking welcome address, offering their unique interpretations of this year's theme. Through philosophy and literature, they will explore the joy and necessity of storytelling—echoing poet Muriel Rukeyser's words: "The universe is made of stories, not atoms."

**Hosted by Jane Caro**  
**6.30pm – Drinks reception in the Nala Bardip Mia foyer**  
**7.30pm – Welcome addresses on Nala Bardip Mia main stage**  
**Tickets: \$50 Adult, \$42.50 ArtsMR Member**  
**Not included in Weekend Pass**







06

Image: Joanne O'Keefe

## Working Up Stream: Adapting Novels for the Screen

9.30am–11.30am

More Australian novels are making their way to the screen through adaptation. This session, aimed at aspiring fiction writers, explores how to identify stories with adaptation potential and how to approach adapting your own work. Join award-winning author **Jock Serong** as he delves into the process of turning a novel into a screenplay. Learn about the key decisions involved in adaptation and gain insights into the unique pleasures and pitfalls of bringing fiction to life on screen.

Hosted by **Jock Serong**

**\$30. Not included in Weekend Pass**



07

Image: Wendy O'Shaughnessy

## Flash Fiction: The art of writing tiny, beautiful stories

12noon–2.00pm

In this exercise-driven workshop, award-winning author **Gillian O'Shaughnessy** takes you through the elements of successful short fiction. With fun prompts and expert guidance, you'll draw on your own observations and memories to create compelling and powerful stories and explore editing techniques to carve away excess and sculpt your own mini masterpieces.

Hosted by **Gillian O'Shaughnessy**

**\$30. Not included in Weekend Pass**



08

Image: Carly Earl

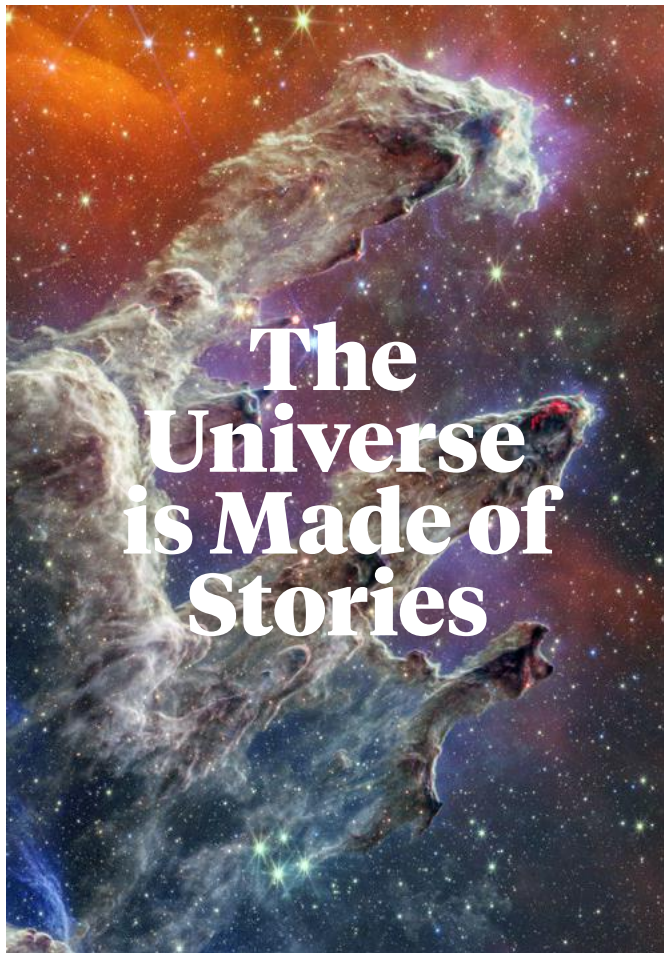
## Masterclass: Writing Fearlessly with Charlotte Wood

2.30pm–4.30pm

Join award-winning Australian author **Charlotte Wood** (winner of the Stella Prize, Prime Minister's Literary Award and shortlisted for the 2024 Booker Prize for *Stone Yard Devotional*) for a masterclass on embracing risk and creative ambition in your writing career. Known for her bold and thought-provoking works, Wood will discuss the importance of pushing boundaries in storytelling and explore themes such as fear, courage and creative growth. The session will include practical activities and group discussions to help writers embrace risk and expand their creative horizons.

Hosted by **Charlotte Wood**

**\$30. Not included in Weekend Pass**



09

Image: Taya Reid

## Weaving Truth, Telling Stories

**Augusta Community Resource Centre**

10.30am–12.30pm

Join **Ana Brawls** for a dynamic 2-hour workshop, *Weaving Truth into Story*, where emerging writers will explore how to transform raw facts into compelling, emotionally resonant narratives. Through engaging discussions and hands-on exercises, participants will learn creative approaches to research, deepen character development and balance factual accuracy with emotional depth. Perfect for those seeking to refine their storytelling craft.

Hosted by **Ana Brawls**

In partnership with **Shire of Augusta Margaret River Libraries**

Supported by **Augusta Community Resource Centre**

**Free. Registration required. Not included in Weekend Pass**

Left: The Pillars of Creation, shown in this image from the NASA/ESA/CSA James Webb Space Telescope. NASA, ESA, CSA, STScI. J. DePasquale (STScI), A. M. Koekemoer (STScI), A. Pagan (STScI)

10



Image: Matt Lincoln

**Orbital****9.00am–10.15am**

Join **Samantha Harvey** as she discusses her 2024 Booker Prize winning novel, *Orbital*. In this session, Harvey takes us into the imaginative world of her characters, exploring themes of time, memory and the human experience. *Orbital* weaves complex narratives around science, personal connection and the mysteries of the universe, offering a thought-provoking journey into both the physical and emotional landscapes of its characters. With her signature lyrical prose and profound insight, Harvey presents a novel that challenges our perceptions of reality and our place within it.

**Hosted by Claire Nichols. Proudly supported by ABC Radio National. \$35. Included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**

11



Image: Sarah Wilson

**Rapture****10.30am–11.45am**

Join **Emily Maguire** in conversation about *Rapture*, an audacious tale of identity, love, and self-discovery. In ninth-century Mainz, brilliant and rebellious Agnes disguises herself as a man to pursue a life of study. As John the Englishman, she rises in the Church, caught in political intrigue and struggling with her true identity. Longlisted for the 2025 Stella Prize, *Rapture* explores the cost of deception, the complexity of relationships, and the search for belonging in a conformist world.

**Hosted by Gillian O'Shaughnessy. \$30. Included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**

12

WA Book Launch



Image: Jonathan van der Knaap

**Always Home, Always Homesick****12noon–1.00pm**

Join award-winning author **Hannah Kent** (*Burial Rites*, *The Good People*, *Devotion*) as she explores themes of belonging, displacement and the search for home in her evocative new literary memoir, *Always Home, Always Homesick*. A love letter to her muse, Iceland, Kent reflects on how its culture and storytelling shaped her and unravels the emotional complexities of feeling both anchored and adrift from home—whether it's the one we leave, seek, or never find.

**Hosted by Julia Baird \$30. Included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**

**1.00pm – 1.45pm****Lunch at The Kiosk, Little Sip, The Courtyard Brew or head into Margaret River**

13



Image: Kathy Luu

**Murriyang, Song of Time****1.45pm–2.45pm**

Join award winning journalist and author, **Stan Grant** as he discusses his powerful new book, *Murriyang: Song of Time*. In this poetic and profound work, Grant moves beyond politics to explore love, peace and forgiveness through the Wiradjuri practice of Yindymarra. Drawing from history, art and spirituality, he reflects on time, memory and the sacred, offering a deeply personal journey of healing, connection and transcendence.

**Hosted by Dr Anita Heiss. \$30. Included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**

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WA Book Launch

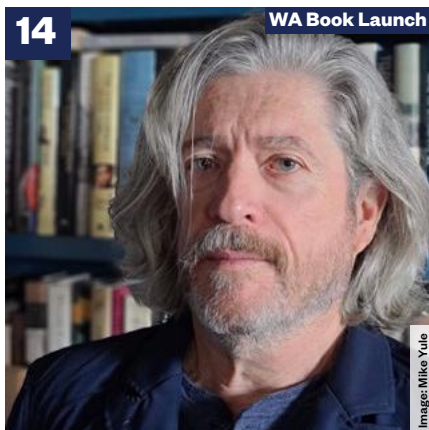


Image: Mike Yule

**Exit Wounds****3.00pm–4.00pm**

Join award winning author and journalist, **Peter Godwin** for an intimate conversation about his memoir, *Exit Wounds – A story of love, loss and occasional wars*, where he explores the profound and lasting impact of his mother's death. This deeply personal session touches on themes of family, loss and the emotional scars of a life marked by exile, war and trauma. Godwin reflects on his journey from Rhodesia to New York, offering a poignant narrative that balances grief with dark humour and unexpected moments of joy. A moving discussion of how we navigate the complex process of healing and memory in the face of life's wounds.

**Hosted by Jane Sullivan. \$30. Included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**

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Image: Dean Chalkley

**My Favourite Mistake****4.15pm–5.30pm**

Join award-winning and beloved author **Marian Keyes** as she returns to the Walsh family in *My Favourite Mistake*. Anna Walsh, a 48-year-old PR expert, is jobless, homeless and navigating perimenopause after a personal tragedy. While helping a friend's business, she faces complicated relationships—including a former lover. With her signature wit and warmth, Keyes delivers a heartfelt tale of second chances and midlife reinvention.

**Hosted by Claire Nichols. Proudly supported by ABC Radio National. There will not be a book signing after this event \$35. Included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**



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## Stories in Nature

9.00am–11.00am

Learn how to bring your experiences in the natural world to life on the page with **Dr Inga Simpson** (*Willowman, The Last Woman in the World, The Thinning*). Using a combination of tuition, examples, practical writing exercises and discussion, you'll focus on the importance of imagery, detail and story to capture a sense of wonder and empathy in your writing whether it be fiction, non-fiction – or something in between.

Hosted by Inga Simpson

\$30. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass

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## Writing identity and the self

11.30am–1.30pm

Writer Arabelle Sicardi asked, "what part of yourself did you have to destroy in order to survive in the world? But most importantly, what have you found to be unkillable?" Facilitated by 2024 Dorothy Hewett Award award-winning queer Filipino poet **Kaya Ortiz**, this poetry workshop is a space to remember past, present and parallel selves. All are welcome to explore identity, memory and experience through poetry prompts, exercises and readings. This is poetry as a gateway of possibility and a portal to the self.

Hosted by Kaya Ortiz

\$30. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass

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## The Philosophy of Life with Professor A.C. Grayling

2.00pm–3.30pm

Get ready for a lively, no-holds-barred philosophical showdown! In this interactive session, you the audience ask the questions and rockstar philosopher **Professor A.C. Grayling** challenges assumptions, unpacks big ideas and turns deep thinking into an art form. Drawing inspiration from *The Socratic Method*—an approach to inquiry that encourages critical thinking through dialogue and questioning—no philosophical topic is off-limits in this intellectual adventure. No toga required, just an open mind!

Hosted by Professor A.C. Grayling

\$30. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass

**Clairault** | **STREICKER**  
WINE ESTATES OF MARGARET RIVER

**PROUD SUPPORTERS OF MARGARET RIVER READERS & WRITERS FESTIVAL**

VISIT OUR CELLAR DOOR & VINEYARD KITCHEN  
LUNCH - WINE TASTING - WINE BLENDING - PICNICS  
OPEN WEDNESDAY - SUNDAY | 3277 CAVES ROAD, WILYABRUP

19



## Walk The Woodijup Bilya Margaret River Rivermouth 9.00am–10.00am

Join **Wadandi Cultural Custodians** for a walk along The Woodijup Bilya (Rivermouth, Margaret River), as they describe Wadandi knowledge and culture of the river, known as The Woodijup Bilya. The area is steeped in history and cultural stories which make our Margaret River region so unique. Explore the water, fauna and flora and hear first-hand some of the beautiful cultural stories from our region.

Meet at Rivermouth car park at 8.30am, walk departs promptly at 9.00am and concludes at 9.45am followed by 15 minutes for questions.

**Proudly presented by Undalup Association**  
**\$35. Not included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**

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## I'm Not A Nurse Margaret River Library 10.30am–11.30am

**Jessica Bailey** shares the powerful journey behind her memoir, *I'm Not a Nurse*. From childhood storytelling in Nigeria to overcoming displacement, racism and violence, she found healing through writing and creativity. Now a filmmaker, speaker and life coach, Jessica reveals how she transformed pain into purpose—and how her story can inspire yours.

**Hosted by Ana Brawls**  
**In partnership with Shire of Augusta**  
**Margaret River Libraries**  
**FREE, registration required. Not included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**

21



## Strength in Vulnerability: An Open Conversation for Men The Margaret River Men's Shed 2.00pm–3.30pm

Join author and mental health advocate **Craig Semple** (*Getting Back Up Again*, *The Cop That Fell To Earth*) for an open and interactive session in partnership with Mindful Margaret River. Craig will share his personal journey, offering insights into suicide, body image and the challenges men face in acknowledging personal struggles. Facilitated by **Colin Fox**, this session includes a Q&A and discussion on help-seeking as a sign of strength, the importance of early intervention and breaking the stigma around mental health for men of all ages, including fathers and sons.

**Hosted by Colin Fox from Mindful Margaret River PWYC. Registration required**  
**Not included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**

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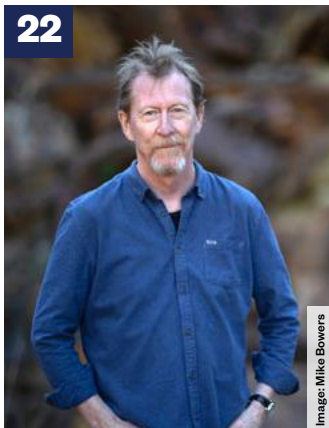


Image: Mike Bowers



Image: Joanne O'Keefe

## The Making of Silver Augusta Centennial Hall 2.30pm–4.00pm

Join bestselling author **Chris Hammer** (*Scrublands*, *Silver*) and screenwriter **Jock Serong** (co-writer of the *Scrublands* TV adaptation) for an insightful conversation about the television adaptation of *Silver*. Filmed in the stunning town of Augusta (standing in for Port Silver), *Silver* continues the gripping story of journalist Martin Scarsden from *Scrublands*. In this session, Hammer and Serong will discuss the journey of adapting a bestselling novel into a TV series, the challenges of capturing the essence of an Australian coastal town on screen and the process of bringing beloved characters to life in a new medium.

**Hosted by Jock Serong**  
**Includes welcome drink**  
**\$25. Not included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**

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Image: Sarah Hyland & Ryoga Abe

## Three Minutes with Spirit – An Evening with Cael O'Donnell Nala Bardip Mia – Writers Room 6.30pm–7.45pm

Step into an evening of insight, connection, and soulful conversation with Australia's #1 TikTok medium, **Cael O'Donnell**. Based on his transformative book *Three Minutes with Spirit*, this intimate live event offers practical spiritual tools to help you find clarity, calm, and a deeper sense of purpose—no matter how full your schedule may be.

Cael will share powerful reflections on how to connect with Spirit, Source, and Self, followed by live audience readings and a heartfelt Q&A.

Uplifting. Accessible. Unforgettable. This is your chance to experience Cael's signature energy—LIVE and in person.

**Includes a welcome drink of Clairault Streicker Wine or Beer Farm Beer**  
**\$20. Not included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**





## Making Peace in the Culture Wars with A.C. Grayling

9.30am–10.45am

Join renowned philosopher **Professor A.C. Grayling** as he delves into the complexities of cancel culture, a divisive issue challenging freedom of expression and societal values. Drawing on insights from his new book, *Discriminations*, Grayling advocates from a 'woke' perspective, highlighting the need to address conflicts between rights and interests, foster respect and embrace 'convivencia'—mutual tolerance. This compelling keynote offers a vision for ending discrimination and building a more inclusive, harmonious society.

**\$35. Included in Weekend or Sunday Day Pass**



## Stone Yard Devotional

11.00am–12noon

Join acclaimed Australian author **Charlotte Wood** (*The Natural Way of Things*, *The Weekend*) as she discusses *Stone Yard Devotional*, her 2024 Booker Prize shortlisted novel. This deeply moving work explores themes of grief, memory and the quest for meaning in life's most challenging moments. Wood will delve into the inspiration behind the novel, her writing process and how she crafts characters with emotional depth that resonates with readers. Don't miss this opportunity to hear from one of Australia's most celebrated writers.

**Hosted by Claire Nichols. Proudly supported by ABC Radio National.**  
**\$30. Included in Weekend or Sunday Day Pass**



## Lyrebird

12.15pm–1.15pm

What if the only witness to a murder was a bird? In *Lyrebird*, award-winning author **Jane Caro** delivers a gripping thriller where an ornithology student and a detective fight to prove that a lyrebird's eerie mimicry holds the key to an unsolved crime. Join us for the launch of this riveting novel—a tale of buried secrets, relentless determination and echoes of a past that won't stay silent.

**Hosted by Jane Sullivan**  
**\$30. Included in Weekend or Sunday Day Pass**

1.15pm – 2.00pm

Lunch at The Kiosk, Little Sip, The Courtyard Brew or head into Margaret River



## Three Wild Dogs (and the Truth)

2.00pm–3.00pm

Join bestselling author **Markus Zusak** (*The Book Thief*, *Bridge of Clay*) as he discusses *Three Wild Dogs (and the truth)*, his new heartfelt memoir of chaos, comedy and love. With three wild rescue dogs upending his family's life, Zusak reflects on connection, disorder and the profound ways animals teach us about loyalty, identity and belonging.

**Hosted by Gillian O'Shaughnessy**  
**\$30. Included in Weekend or Sunday Day Pass**



## Stories of Strength and Connection

3.15pm–4.30pm

Join **Dr Anita Heiss** (*Dirrayawadha*) and award-winning actress **Tasma Walton** for the launch of Anita's new imprint, Bundy Publishing (Simon & Schuster Australia), which debuts Tasma's new novel *Am Nannertgarrook*. Together, they will discuss their new historical fiction novels, exploring themes of truth-telling through First Nations eyes, ancestral connection, family stories and illuminating personal journeys within a broader cultural history—highlighting resilience, cultural identity and connection to Country. Don't miss this inspiring dialogue on history, love and strength.

**\$30. Included in Weekend or Sunday Day Pass**



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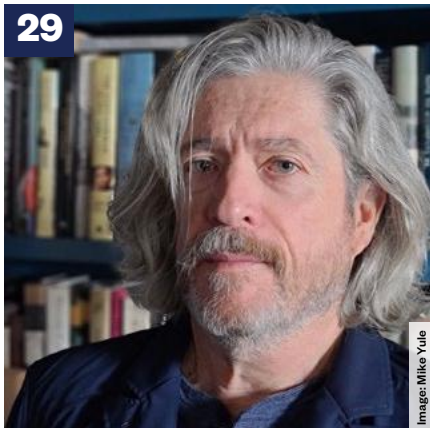


Image: Mike Yule

## Memoir Masterclass with Peter Godwin

9.00am–11.00am

Join author **Peter Godwin** (*Exit Wounds*, *The Fear*, *When a Crocodile Eats the Sun*) for an insightful creative writing workshop on crafting memoir. Learn essential techniques for researching your story and structuring your narrative effectively, including valuable tips from Godwin's experience to transform your personal experiences into compelling prose.

Hosted by Peter Godwin

**\$30. Not included in Weekend or Sunday Day Pass**

30



Image: Joshua Booth

## Life story and non-linear storytelling

11.30am–1.30pm

Join award-winning author **Molly Schmidt** (*Salt River Road*) for a dynamic workshop on creative non-fiction writing. Embrace the messy, non-linear nature of real-life stories as Molly shares her writing toolkit, blending poetry and experimental techniques to bring colour and heart to non-fiction life story. Perfect for writers looking to hone their non-fiction life writing skills and craft engaging narratives about real people and events.

Hosted by Molly Schmidt

**\$30. Not included in Weekend or Sunday Day Pass**

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Image: Jo Duck

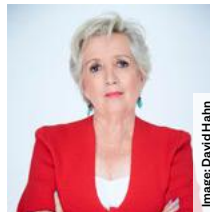


Image: David Hahn



Image: Mike Yule



## Manuscript Speed Dating

2.00pm–4.00pm

Is your manuscript begging to be finished, or are you stuck on a plot twist or character development? Join our Manuscript Speed Dating session to gain expert insight, valuable feedback and the chance to share ideas with fellow writers in a safe and nurturing environment. Bring your burning questions, workshop fresh ideas and find new inspiration!

Refine plot and narrative with published authors **Chris Flynn**, **Jane Caro** and **Peter Godwin**, explore technique and craft with ECU Creative Writing Associate Professor **Donna Mazza** and discover what publishers are looking for when a manuscript hits their desk. Take your writing to the next level!

**\$30. Registration required. Not included in Weekend or Sunday Day Pass**

**ECU**  
EDITH COWAN  
UNIVERSITY

## See you at your book launch.

ECU has helped launch many creative writing careers. In our undergraduate and postgraduate course offerings, you can delve into everything from literary and genre fiction, to poetry, drama, and creative non-fiction, as well as editing, publishing and more.

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## Walk at Mokidup

Ellensbrook

9.00am–10.00am

Join **Wadandi Cultural Custodians** for a Guided Walk at Mokidup and discover the cultural and historical significance of Mokidup, a registered Aboriginal heritage site. Explore the stories of the water, fauna and flora along the track to Meekadarabee Falls, which holds special cultural significance to Wadandi women. Learn why Mokidup has been a summer camping spot for tens of thousands of years and hear captivating stories about the area's cultural importance.

Meet at Ellensbrook car park at 8.30am, walk departs promptly at 9.00am and concludes at 9.45am followed by 15 minutes for questions.

Proudly presented by Undalup Association

\$35. Not included in Weekend or Sunday Day Pass



## 65,000 Years A Short History of Australian Art

Holmes à Court Gallery @ Vasse Felix

11.00am–12.30pm

Co-editors **Marcia Langton AO** and **Judith Ryan AM** invite you to explore 65,000 Years: A Short History of Australian Art, a journey through the world's oldest continuous artistic traditions. This session examines Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander art, from ancient practices to contemporary prominence, featuring twenty-five new writings by leading thinkers across generations and disciplines. It confronts colonialism's legacy while celebrating the resilience and creativity of First Peoples' art.

Hosted by Ann Barblett

In partnership with Janet Holmes à Court AC and Vasse Felix

\$30. Includes a Vasse Felix welcome drink

Not included in Weekend or Sunday Day Pass



## Welcome to Wadandi Boodja - Margaret River

We're proud to support the Margaret River Readers & Writers Festival and welcome locals, visitors and special guests to Nala Bardip Mia - Margaret River HEART and Nala Kaatajin Mia - Our Knowledge House, Margaret River and Augusta Libraries.



## Visit our libraries!

Our Margaret River and Augusta libraries are vibrant community hubs, offering spaces to relax, study and connect. They host events year-round including workshops, author talks, festivals and school holiday activities for all ages to enjoy and learn.

[www.amrshire.wa.gov.au/libraries](http://www.amrshire.wa.gov.au/libraries)

# Busselton Book Festival

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Thursday

## The Romantasy Realm

Shelter Brewing

Thursday 1 May, 6.30pm–8.30pm

Romantasy and fantasy are hot right now, but why? Join romantasy and fantasy authors **Madeline Te Whiu** (*The Queen Thief*) and **Nattie Kate Mason** (*The Goddess of Blood and Bone*, *The Gods of War and Darkness*) for an enchanting conversation as they delve into the art of blending romance and fantasy. Discover their unique creative processes, world-building secrets and how they craft captivating love stories within magical realms, all from two of WA's rising voices in the genre.

Hosted by Emily Denhoedt

Includes a welcome drink on arrival

Proudly supported by Busselton & Dunsborough Libraries. Free. Registration required. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass

35



Image: Margaret River Wine Association and Ovis Creative

## Walk at Wonnerup

Wonnerup House

Saturday 3 May, 9.00am–10.00am

Join **Wadandi Cultural Custodians** for a walk around Wonnerup. During the walk there will be the opportunity to immerse yourselves in local Wadandi knowledge and cultural history. Learn the meaning of the area, explore the local flora and fauna and learn about the traditional significance that Wonnerup holds for the region.

Meet at Wonnerup House car park at 8.30am, walk departs promptly at 9.00am and concludes at 9.45am followed by 15 minutes for questions.

Proudly presented by Undalup Association  
\$35. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass

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## The art of historical fiction with Jane Sullivan

Busselton Library

Saturday 3 May, 9.30am–11.30am

Step into the past and craft compelling historical fiction! Whether you're a beginner or an experienced writer, this immersive workshop will help you blend fact and fiction to create rich, authentic stories. Join historical fiction writer and literary journalist **Jane Sullivan** (*Little People* and *Murder in Punch Lane*) as she explores historical fiction's diverse genres, research techniques, common pitfalls, crafting dialogue and weaving real events into your narrative. Expect interactive discussions, hands-on exercises and plenty of inspiration to ignite your storytelling!

Hosted by Jane Sullivan

Proudly supported by Busselton & Dunsborough Libraries. FREE, registration required. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass

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Image: David Hahn

## Lyrebird

Shelter Brewing

Saturday 3 May, 9.30am–10.30am

Could a bird solve a murder? In *Lyrebird*, award-winning and best-selling author **Jane Caro** delivers a gripping thriller where nature and mystery collide. When an ornithology student suspects a lyrebird's uncanny song reveals more than mimicry, a cold case is cracked open. With a determined detective and secrets long buried, this electrifying novel explores persistence, trauma, and the unexpected ways truth finds a voice. Join us for the launch of a story that will keep you guessing—and listening—until the very end.

Hosted by Megan McCracken

\$20. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass

38



Image: JJ Gately



## Epic Realms

ECU Learning Centre Busselton

Saturday 3 May, 11.00am–1.00pm

Unlock the art of romantasy writing and unleash your imagination in this exciting, hands-on workshop! Discover how to craft immersive worlds, compelling characters and rich lore with host **Bianca Breen** (*Made of Steam and Stardust*) and guest fantasy authors **Madeline Te Whiu** (*The Queen Thief*) and **Nattie Kate Mason** (*The Goddess of Blood and Bone*, *The Gods of War and Darkness*). Plus, put your creativity to the test in our micro-fiction competition and win \$100 cash prize.

Hosted by Bianca Breen from YA for WA.  
Open to young adults (under 25). Refreshments provided. In Partnership with Edith Cowan University School of Arts & Humanities \$10.  
Not included in Weekend or Day Pass

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WA Book Launch



Image: Jo Duck

## Orpheus Nine

Shelter Brewing

Saturday 3 May, 11.00am–12noon

Join bestselling author **Chris Flynn** (*Mammoth*) for the launch of *Orpheus Nine*, a spine-chilling supernatural thriller set in rural Australia. A mysterious global event claims millions of lives, repeating every time a child turns nine. As the world spirals into chaos, three friends in the town of Gattan face grief, survival and an impossible choice. Is this the end of days—or the start of something new?

Hosted by Megan McCracken

\$20. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass





## 40 Youth Mural Project – Live Art in Action!

**Busselton Bypass at Fairway Drive**  
**Saturday 3 May, 12noon–4.00pm**

Head down to Busselton Bypass at Fairway Drive roundabout and watch young artists (14-18) from Busselton create a powerful mural in real-time. Using paint and spray, they'll bring to life the voices of City of Busselton youth, who shared their feelings on the climate crisis in a single sentence. See creativity unfold and connect with their hopes and fears.

**In partnership with City of Busselton Youth Services**  
**FREE, no registration required**



## 41 The Book Thief at 20

**Shelter Brewing**  
**Saturday 3 May, 12.30pm–1.30pm**

In 2025, **Markus Zusak's** *The Book Thief* marks its 20th anniversary. With 17 million copies sold, translated into over 63 languages and adapted into a feature film, it has become a global phenomenon. Join Markus as he reflects on the incredible journey of this beloved novel, his creative process and why it continues to touch hearts around the world.

**Hosted by Megan McCracken**  
**\$30. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass**



## 42 The Story You Were Born to Tell

**Dunsborough Library**  
**Saturday 3 May, 2.00pm–4.00pm**

There are no coincidence—every struggle, every heartbreak, every loss and moment of doubt has been shaping you for a reason. Before you were born, your story was already written in the stars. In this workshop, **Jessica Bailey**, author of *I'm Not a Nurse*, will guide you back to the truth of who you are. Through deep reflection and writing, you'll find healing, forgiveness and the purpose hidden in your journey.

**Hosted by Jessica Bailey**  
**FREE, registration required**  
**Not included in Weekend or Day Pass**



## 43 Immersive Writing Workshop (Without Getting Your Paper Wet!)

**ECU Learning Centre Busselton**  
**Saturday 3 May, 2.00pm–4.00pm**

In a world full of fakes, it's vital for writers to keep it real. Join us for an immersive writing workshop—step away from your desk and dive into the art of immersive writing, where you live, breathe and feel your story before putting pen to paper. Take inspiration from the rich flora, fauna and history of Buayanyup (Vasse River) in Busselton, getting your hands and feet dirty with the stuff of life by the river. Stroll along the riverbank, engage your senses and capture the raw, authentic details of life outdoors. Leave with fresh inspiration, practical techniques and a revitalised literary world. Bring your writing tools, sensible shoes and an open mind—your next story starts here!

**Hosted by Donna Mazza, Associate Professor of Creative Writing and Tiffany Hastie. In Partnership with Edith Cowan University School of Arts & Humanities**  
**FREE, registration required. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass**



## 44 Three Minutes with Spirit – Live with Cael O'Donnell

**Shelter Brewing**  
**Saturday 3 May, 2.30pm–3.30pm**

Australia's #1 TikTok medium is coming to you IRL!

Join **Cael O'Donnell** for a high-vibe, heart-opening session all about his book *Three Minutes with Spirit*. If you're into spiritual tools that actually fit into your busy life, this is for you.

We're talking quick, powerful ways to connect with your intuition, your purpose, and that something bigger. Cael will drop gems on *Spirit*, *Source & Self*—and yes, there'll be live audience readings and a Q&A!

Whether you're deep into your spiritual era or just curious, this event is real, raw, and full of love. Come feel the energy.

**Includes a welcome drink of Clairault Streicker Wine or Beer Farm Beer**  
**\$20. Not included in Weekend or Saturday Day Pass**



45



Image: Carly Earl

## Dinner with Charlotte Wood

**Shelter Brewing**

**Saturday 3 May, 6.30pm–10pm**

Enjoy an intimate dinner with award-winning Australian author **Charlotte Wood** as she discusses her acclaimed body of work, including *The Natural Way of Things*, *The Weekend* and her Booker Prize-shortlisted novel *Stone Yard Devotional*. Winner of the Stella Prize and many other accolades, Wood will share insights into her writing process, the inspiration behind her stories and how she crafts characters with profound emotional depth. Don't miss this unique opportunity to engage with one of Australia's most celebrated writers.

**Hosted by Gillian O'Shaughnessy**

**\$120. Includes 3-course dinner and welcome drink. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass**

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Image: Mike Bowers



Image: Joanne O'Keefe

## Breakfast with Chris Hammer

**Shelter Brewing**

**Sunday 4 May, 9.00am–10.45am**

Join bestselling author **Chris Hammer** (*Scrublands*, *Silver*, *Trust*) and fellow author and screenwriter **Jock Serong** (*Cherrywood*) for a captivating conversation about Hammer's acclaimed body of work, including his latest crime novel, *The Valley*. From the complexities of crafting gripping narratives to the challenges of developing layered, returning characters, Hammer will share insights about his creative process and how Australia's remote landscapes influence his stories. Don't miss this opportunity to hear from one of Australia's leading crime writers.

**Hosted by Jock Serong**

**Book sales and signings before and after breakfast**

**\$60. Includes breakfast, tea & coffee and a Shelter Brewing welcome mimosa. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass**

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Image: Dean Chalkley

## My Favourite Mistake

**Shelter Brewing**

**Sunday 4 May, 12.30pm–1.45pm**

Join award-winning and beloved author **Marian Keyes** as she returns to the Walsh family in *My Favourite Mistake*. Anna Walsh, a 48-year-old PR expert, is jobless, homeless and navigating perimenopause after a personal tragedy. While helping a friend's business, she faces complicated relationships—including a former lover. With her signature wit and warmth, Keyes delivers a heartfelt tale of second chances and midlife reinvention.

**Hosted by Gillian O'Shaughnessy**

**There will not be a book signing after this event. \$35. Not included in Weekend or Day Pass**

**Below:** Wolf-Rayet 124 (WR 124), shown in this image from the NASA/ESA/CSA James Webb Space Telescope. NASA, ESA, CSA, STScI, Webb ERO Production Team.







Book a table online  
@shelterbrewingco



## City of Busselton

Where environment, lifestyle and opportunity thrive.

Welcome to this beautiful part of the world. The City and its Busselton and Dunsborough libraries are proud to support the Margaret River Readers and Writers Festival - a valuable literary event for our region.

The city is a flourishing coastal destination that plays host to a diverse calendar of events all year round - food, film and wine festivals, adventure races, arts and culture and everything in between. We hope you enjoy this year's festival, sparking creativity and joy of reading and writing.

## Busselton & Dunsborough Libraries

Discover. Engage. Imagine.



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busseltonlibraries.com.au



# Discovery Tent



This year, we unveil an exciting new space at Nala Bardip Mia – Margaret River HEART, **The Discovery Tent**. This dynamic hub features a curated programme of free activities for children and families, including interactive storytelling sessions, writers' workshops, and engaging talks.

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## Wild Words & Wonder – Children's Nature Writing Workshop Saturday 3 May, 11.00am–1.00pm

A fun, interactive 2-hour workshop where young minds will connect with nature through science and storytelling. Inspired by their surroundings and led by their senses and curiosity, children will create a piece of imaginative writing that explores the interconnectedness of the natural world. The workshop will encourage young people to care for the environment and express their hopes for a better world through the power of words, poetry and stories.

Created and hosted Ellie Ward and Kathi Meister  
Open to children from 6-12 years living in the Margaret River region  
Free. Registration required

50



## Caution! This Book Contains Deadly Reptiles Saturday 3 May, 1.30pm–3.00pm

Did you know a bearded dragon's beard changes colour for protection? Or that a turtle's nest temperature decides if the babies are boys or girls? Corey Tutt's *Caution! This Book Contains Deadly Reptiles* dives into amazing reptile facts, First Nations knowledge and deadly (in a good way!) creatures from 20 Nations—names, diets, babies, predators and more!

Join Aboriginal STEM Educator **Corey Tutt** for this fun and interactive session and learn all about deadly reptiles plus get hands-on with the Discover Deadly petting tub and meet special guests Persia the Stimsons Python, Magna and Clementine the Bobtail lizards and Crumpet and Muffin the bearded dragons.

Hosted by Corey Tutt. Suitable for children and family members of all ages  
Free. Registration required

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## Crafting New Worlds: A Worldbuilding Writers' Workshop Saturday 3 May, 3.30pm–5.00pm

Step into the art of worldbuilding in YA and adult fiction! Hosted by **Bianca Breen** (*Made of Steam and Stardust*) and guest authors **Inga Simpson** (*The Thinning*) and **Chris Flynn** (*Orpheus Nine*), this interactive workshop dives into how authors craft immersive worlds, blending fantasy, worldbuilding and dystopia with technology. Engage in discussions, brainstorm unique settings and refine your ideas. Then, put your creativity to the test in our micro-fiction competition—imagine a fantasy world with a technological twist for a chance to win a cash prizes (\$150 First prize, \$100 second prize).

Judges will reward originality and innovation.

Hosted by Bianca Breen from YA for WA  
Proudly supported by Shire of Augusta Margaret River  
Suitable from 12 years upwards  
Free. Registration required





## Discover Deadly Saturday 3 May, 1.00pm–3.00pm

Join us from 1.00pm to 1.30 pm for a fun-filled session for the whole family! We'll start with myth-busting snake facts. Kids can create paper snake finger puppets at our activity table (with adult help for cutting). Then, stick around for *Caution! This Book Contains Deadly Reptiles* with Aboriginal STEM Educator **Corey Tutt** and get hands-on with the Discover Deadly petting tub. Meet special guests: Persia the Stimson's Python, Magna and Clementine the Bobtail lizards, Alice the Carpet Python and Crumpet and Muffin the bearded dragons.

**Hosted by Discover Deadly**  
**Suitable for children and family members of all ages**  
**Free. Drop in**



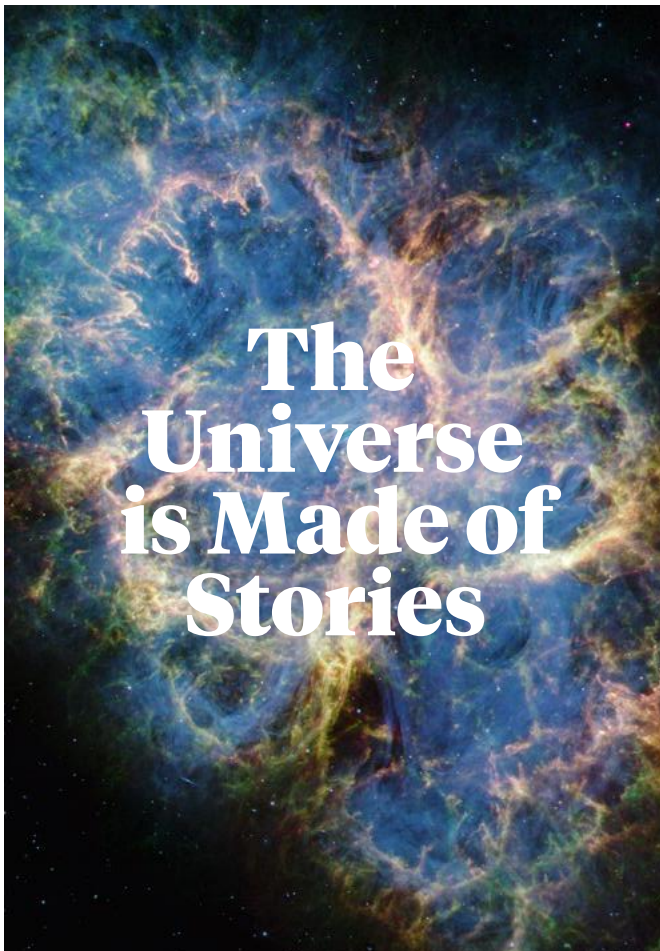
## What ADHD Really Feels Like: How to Support Your ADHD Loved One Sunday 4 May, 9.30am–10.30am

Why is ADHD so misunderstood and what can we do about it?

ADHD is more than distraction—it's a different way of experiencing the world. Join **Grace Koelma**, author of *The ADHD Focus Friend* and podcast co-host **Tara Breuso** for a warm, insightful and humorous conversation about ADHD, late diagnosis, emotional regulation and how to support neurodivergent loved ones. With science-backed insights and lived experience, they'll explore why ADHD is so misunderstood—and what truly helps partners, parents and friends create a more supportive and validating environment.

This is a welcoming, neuro-affirming space. Families, kids and fidget toys are encouraged!

**Free. Registration required**



## Caring for Country Sunday 4 May, 1.30pm–3.00pm

Join the **Undalup Rangers** for this fun and family-friendly session. Learn about Wadandi lands cultural activities and engaging storytelling. Discover traditional Noongar knowledge, 60,000-year-old cultural practices and the significance of the Woodjup Bilya (Margaret River). Gain practical insights into how to care for Country and connect with the unique natural and cultural heritage of this special region.

**Hosted by Undalup Association**  
**Suitable for children and family members of all ages**  
**Free. Registration required**

Left: Orion Nebula, shown in this image from the NASA/ESA/CSA James Webb Space Telescope. NASA, ESA, CSA, STScI, T. Temim (Princeton University)



# Storytelling Snug

Come and meet our children's authors and take part in our free storytelling and creative sessions for all the family. The Storytelling Snug is located in the Nala Bardip Mia Courtyard – Margaret River HEART.



**58**

**Saturday 3 May,  
10.00am–  
11.00am**

**62**

**Sunday 4 May,  
10.00am–  
11.00am**

## **My Soul Treasure with Kate Searle**

Join us for a magical adventure of creativity, discovery and self-belief! Hosted by children's author **Kate Searle**, this hands-on workshop is perfect for kids aged 5-12yrs. With a captivating book reading, treasure chest painting, an exciting treasure dig and affirmation card creation, each child will leave with a heart full of joy and their very own hand-painted wooden treasure chest.

**Free. Registration required**

**48**



## **How to Save the Whole Blinkin' Planet with Lee Constable** **Saturday 3 May, 12.00pm–1.00pm**

Join author and host of TV show *Scope*, **Lee Constable**, for an electrifying mission exploring the future of energy, inspired by her latest book, *How to Save the Whole Blinkin' Planet: A Renewable Energy Adventure!* Discover more about everyday energy, our fossil-fuel climate culprits—coal, oil and gas—and the exciting world of renewables.

Power up your brains as an imagineer and eco-superhero, level up your energy know-how through quick quizzes and learn shocking facts about the science behind power. You can be a bright spark just like our superhero, Captain Kilowatt.

It's going to be a tonne of blinkin' fun!

**Hosted by Lee Constable. Suitable for children and family members of all ages. Free. Registration required**



# Partners

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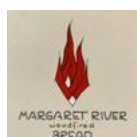
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Your support is vital in helping us to continue to encourage, support and celebrate the Margaret River Readers and Writers Festival!

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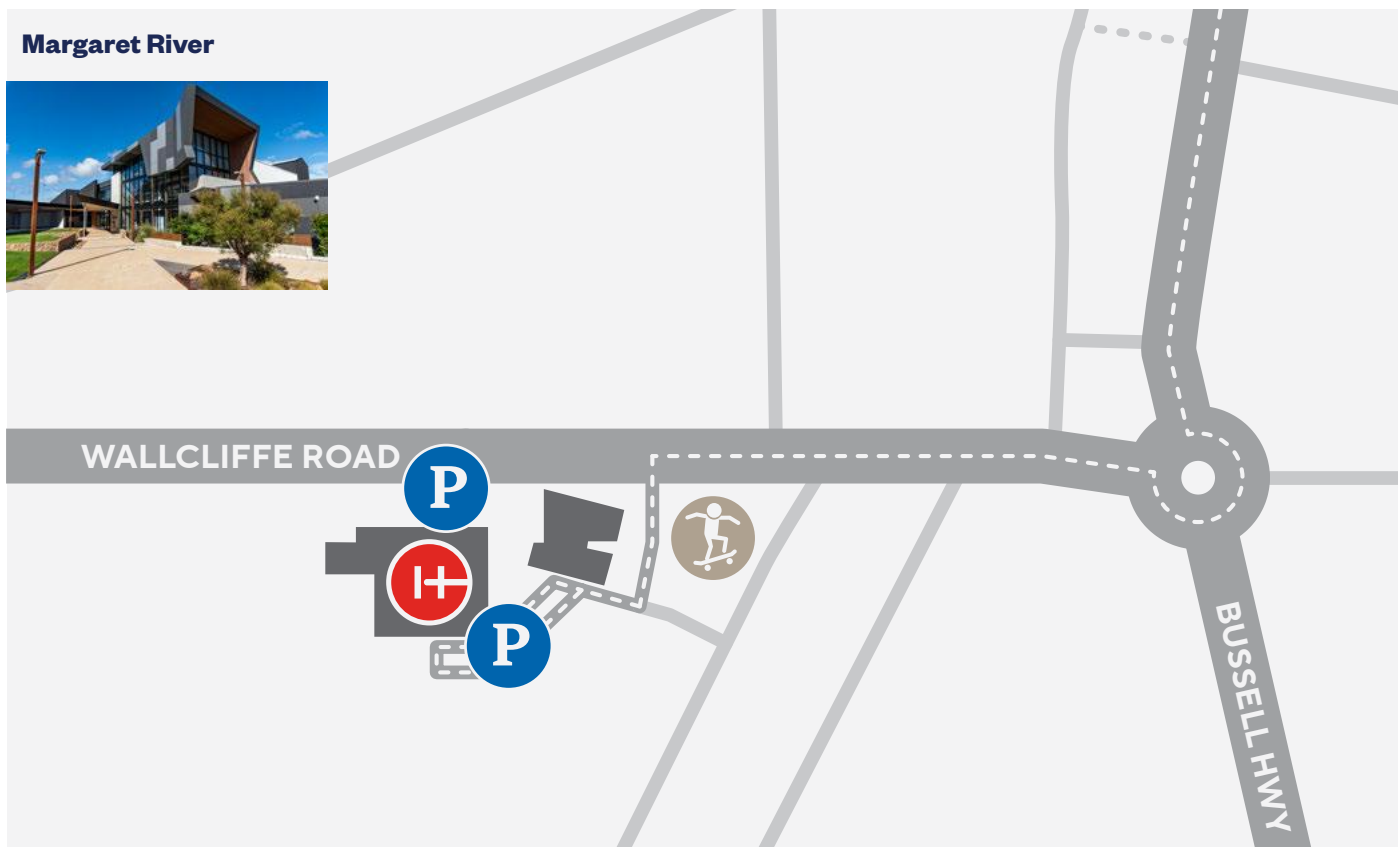
[artsmargaretriver.com](http://artsmargaretriver.com)



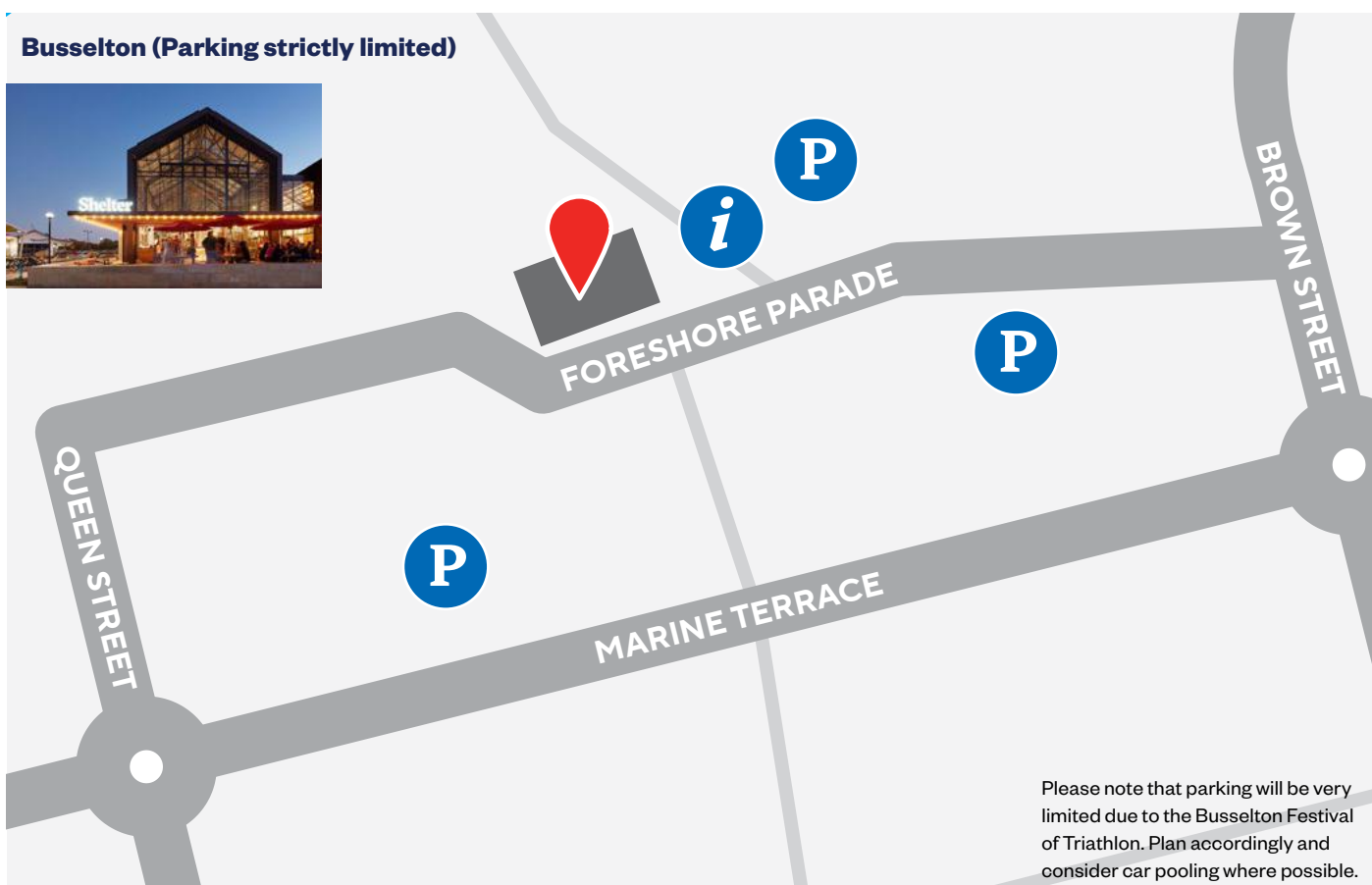
# Festival Hubs

Please note that parking is limited at some venues. Plan accordingly and consider car pooling where possible.

## Margaret River



## Busselton (Parking strictly limited)





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## Books to Inspire



BOOKSHOP  
Margaret River

1/109 Bussell Hwy  
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margaretriverbookshop.com.au

Photo: Liam Moore

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Paul O'Neill, Opera in Margaret River  
West Australian Opera  
Image: Ovis Creative





# WHERE DREAM EVENTS HAPPEN

Step into a dreamscape of wondrous events and embark on unforgettable adventures. Experience the Margaret River Region, Australia's most premium wine region nestled among pristine beaches, ancient caves and tall-timber forests.

- Taste the region's finest drops on a winery, distillery or brewery tour.
- Picnic or camp among the karri trees in Boranup Forest.
- Immerse yourself in Wardandi Noongar culture on an Aboriginal tour and taste the flavours and learn the stories of this region.
- Walk a section of the 135km-long Cape to Cape Track (or all of it, if you're game!), and spot sea creatures, beautiful wildflowers and magnificent coast along the way.
- Wander further and experience where the Southern and Indian Ocean meet at Cape Leeuwin Lighthouse, Australia's tallest mainland lighthouse.
- Go on an underground tour to explore the magical awe of the region's four ancient limestone caves – Jewel, Lake, Mammoth and Ngilgi.
- Recharge your spirit and try coasteering, stand up paddle boarding or horse riding.
- Hit the road less travelled and head out on one of the region's many mountain biking and cycling trails in Nannup and Pemberton, including the world-famous Munda Biddi.
- Catch world class waves with over 135 km of coastline and 75 breaks to choose from – there's a wave here for everyone.

Follow us at @WesternAustralia | #WAtheDreamState



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