



DANDENONG RANGES

Literary Festival



Oct 9, 10 and 11, 2026

Place in literature

Three days | Thirteen sessions | Three venues | One forest

A Message from the Chair

On behalf of our amazing Organising Committee, enthusiastic sub-committees and our wonderful volunteers, I'm delighted to share the 2026 Dandenong Ranges Literary Festival program.

Buoyed by the success of our inaugural Festival, we've expanded our main program by another day as well as adding some lead-in events. Last year we embarked on our first Festival with hopes high and fingers crossed. It's safe to say that we exceeded our own expectations.

Everyone involved, attendees, speakers and organisers alike, went away satisfied, minds buzzing with ideas and excitement, and with a growing anticipation for our next Festival.

In the past 12 months we've worked hard to bring together another fabulous program that recognises both the unique qualities of the Dandenong Ranges and the wealth of writing talent here in Australia, and especially in our local area.

This year's loose theme is "Place" – a place where stories are created, the role place plays in stories, the place of characters in stories. It's completely open to interpretation and discussion.

I encourage you to find your place in our Festival, come with open minds and experience the beauty of literature in all its forms.

Marian Matta

Chair

Dandenong Ranges Literary Festival



Booking

Book online at dandyrangeslitfest.net or scan the QR code:



Tickets to available sessions can also be purchased at the Book Barn pop-up tables on the day.

Two sessions are booked elsewhere

The artist talk and walk with Tiriki Onus and writing workshop with Marian Spires on Sunday are administered by and booked through ngurrak barring:



Prices include a booking fee.

Concession

Students, seniors and other concession card holders only. Please bring your card and present with your ticket.

Day pass

\$120

Includes: all Saturday sessions except *Sally Hepworth In Conversation with Kerry Mayne* and *Pick Up Your Pen*.

Access

All venues are wheelchair accessible. The walking tour covers uneven ground. If you, a friend or relative have any access requirements, e.g. mobility, AUSLAN, etc. please get in touch via info@dandyrangeslitfest.net

Join the conversation:



@dandyrangeslitfest



@dandyrangeslitfest



@dandenongrangeslitfest

Committee members & volunteers

Organising Committee: Marian Matta, Tamara Protassow Adams, Leanne Margaret, Charisse Ede, Aaron Lamb, Claire Lupica, Matt Lupica, Pauline Hosking, Christine Yunn-Yu Sun, Jenny Brooks, Penni Giuliani, Nichola Thompson and Zita Norton.

Subcommittees: Nyah Seeling-Schattner, Eliza Pereira, Kat Skarbek, Katya Dugec and Donna Mitchell.

Acknowledgment of Country

The Dandenong Ranges Literary Festival acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung people as the Traditional Owners of the land on which the festival takes place, and pays respect to Elders past and present.

7pm-8.30pm

Opening Night

Keynote speaker: *Chris Hammer*

Chris Hammer, one of Australia's leading crime fiction writers who has sold more than 1.5 million books worldwide and had several turned into mini-series, will deliver the opening keynote address.

\$39 / \$33



GET TO KNOW

Chris Hammer is the author of the internationally bestselling Martin Scarsden series: *Scrublands*, *Silver*, *Trust* and *Legacy*. His book *Treasure and Dirt* was recently turned into a mini-series that featured on the ABC.



Chris has also written two non-fiction books *The River* (2010) – winner of the ACT Book of the Year – and *The Coast* (2012).

Scrublands was an instant bestseller upon publication in 2018, topping the Australian fiction charts. In the UK it was named the Sunday Times Crime Novel of the Year 2019 and won the prestigious UK Crime Writers' Association John Creasey New Blood Dagger Award.

Chris's books are well known for their atmospheric Australian settings, a range of colourful characters, intricate plots, descriptive language and emotional depth.

His latest book *Full Circle* was released in September and is his first stand-alone thriller.

Want more Chris?

Chris Hammer will be joining the Dirt & Drama panel on Saturday 10 to discuss all things crime, including his newest book *Full Circle*.



9am
1 hr

Life Without Limits

Donna Urquhart In Conversation with Charisse Ede

Join ultra-marathon runner and pain scientist, Donna Urquhart, and author and journalist, Charisse Ede as they discuss what 1402km on the Antarctic ice taught Donna about overcoming pain and adversity.

\$25 / \$22 **DAY PASS**

11.30am
1hr

Dirt and Drama

*Chris Hammer, Vikki Petraitis and Sarah Bailey,
with moderator Kirstie Bedford*

Sit down for an hour with our crime fiction specialists; Chris Hammer, Vikki Petraitis, Sarah Bailey and moderator Kirstie Bedford, as they examine and investigate the nitty gritty of crime fiction.

\$25 / \$22 **DAY PASS**

2pm
1hr

Sally Hepworth

In conversation with Kerryn Mayne

Spend an hour with best-selling author Sally Hepworth and crime fiction author, Kerryn Mayne as they discuss Sally's writing, books (including newest release, *Mad Mabel*) and more.

\$30 / \$25 **NEW LOCATION: CAMEO CINEMAS**

4.30pm
1hr

From Page to Screen: the Art of Storytelling

Kelly Lefever and Shaun Grant, with moderator Tadj Ulrich

Join Kelly Lefever, Shaun Grant and moderator Tadj Ulrich as they dive deep into the world of screenwriting.

\$25 / \$22 **DAY PASS**

Stay for the film. A screening of Penguin Bloom follows the panel. Free to session ticket holders, opt in on the night.

10.15am

1 hr

What Makes a Good Read?

*Kate Mildenhall, Claire Thomas and Kirsty Manning,
with moderator Jaclyn Crupi*

Hear Kate Mildenhall, Claire Thomas, Kirsty Manning plus author and moderator Jaclyn Crupi discuss exactly what makes a good read and all that goes into writing it.

\$25 / \$22 **DAY PASS**

12pm

1.5 hrs

Pick Up Your Pen

A graphic novel workshop for adults, with Bilvy J Lee

Join author, illustrator and freelance artist Bilvy J Lee for a 90 minute workshop on everything graphic novels, from digital drawing to writing the story to publishing.

\$25 / \$22

12.45pm

1hr

A Woman's Place is in the Book!

Anne Freeman, Ilsa Evans and Kylie Ladd, with moderator Kylie Orr

Join the brilliant authors & panellists Anne Freeman, Ilsa Evans, Kylie Ladd and moderator Kylie Orr for a fun, refreshing, tongue-in-cheek dive into women in modern fiction.

\$25 / \$22 **DAY PASS**

3.15pm

1hr

Hypothetically Speaking...

*Karen Comer, Jane Rawson and Garth Nix,
with moderator Rose Michael*

This speculative fiction panel is brought to you by best-selling authors Karen Comer, Jane Rawson, Garth Nix and moderator Rose Michael. It's sure to be a fun one (and that's not hypothetical).

\$25 / \$22 **DAY PASS**

10am

1 hr

Writing ngurrak barring

An artist talk with Tiriki Onus

Join Yorta Yorta and Dja Dja Wurrung artist, academic and filmmaker Tiriki Onus for a presentation on *Thrivance: Then Now Next* and *Generational Guests*, two works that weave together four generations of Onus family history, activism and creative expression in goranwarrabil (the Dandenong Ranges).

\$16.50 / \$11 plus booking fee

 Pound Creek Track, Sherbrooke Forest

Booked via ngurrak barring

10.15am

1hr

Not Your Grandma's Romance

Sandra Carmel, Destiny Davin and Fleur Blüm, with moderator Sarah Lemcke

We've come a long way from Mills & Boon books with bodice-ripper covers – come along to hear authors Sandra Carmel, Fleur Blüm, Destiny Davin and moderator Sarah Lemcke discuss how romance novels have changed, and why.

\$25 / \$22

12pm

1hr

Garth Nix

In Conversation with Declan Fry

Best-selling author and fantasy fiction legend Garth Nix joins contemporary writer and poet Declan Fry for a conversation you definitely don't want to miss.

\$30 / \$25

2pm

1.5 hrs

Ekphrastic writing workshop

Writing ngurrak barring, with Marian Spires

Drawing from artworks featured in ngurrak barring, Hills-based poet and educator Marian Spires will guide you in the art of ekphrastic poetry, a form of writing that responds to artworks. This workshop will suit writers of all levels and no previous experience is required.

\$33 / \$27.50 plus booking fee

 Belgrave Library

Booked via ngurrak barring

Writers & guests



Chris Hammer

- Keynote speaker
- Dirt & Drama



Destiny Davin

- Not Your Grandma's Romance



Anne Freeman

- A Woman's Place is In the Book!



Bilvy J Lee

- Pick Up Your Pen: A Graphic Novel Workshop



Charisse Ede

- Life Without Limits



Claire Thomas

- What Makes a Good Read?



Declan Fry

- Garth Nix In Conversation



Donna Urquhart

- Life Without Limits



Fleur Blüm

- Not Your Grandma's Romance



Garth Nix

- In conversation
- Hypothetically Speaking



Ilsa Evans

- A Woman's Place is In the Book!



Jaclyn Crupi

- Program launch speaker
- What Makes a Good Read?



Jane Rawson

- Hypothetically Speaking



Karen Comer

- Hypothetically Speaking



Kate Mildenhall

- What Makes a Good Read?



Kelly Lefevre

- From Page to Screen: the Art of Storytelling

Writers & guests



Kerry Mayne

- Sally Hepworth In Conversation



Kirstie Bedford

- Dirt & Drama



Kirsty Manning

- What Makes a Good Read?



Kylie Ladd

- A Woman's Place is In the Book!



Kylie Orr

- A Woman's Place is In the Book!



Marian Spires

- Ekphrastic writing workshop



Rose Michael

- Hypothetically Speaking



Sally Hepworth

- In Conversation



Sandra Carmel

- Not Your Grandma's Romance



Sarah Bailey

- Dirt & Drama



Sarah Lemcke

- Not Your Grandma's Romance



Shaun Grant

- From Page to Screen: the Art of Storytelling



Tadj Ulrich

- From Page to Screen: the Art of Storytelling



Tiriki Onus

- Writing ngarrak barrang artist talk



Vikki Petraitis

- Dirt & Drama

Getting here

Public Transport

Belgrave line to Belgrave. The Community Hub, Library and the Cameo Cinemas are all within walking distance of the station.

Sherbrooke Forest

The Sunday artist talk meets at the base of Pound Creek Track. Park at Grant's Picnic Ground. Wear appropriate clothing and shoes for the outdoors/uneven ground.

Parking

Parking is available at numerous car parks around Belgrave. Please ensure you observe all parking requirements and use available pedestrian crossings.

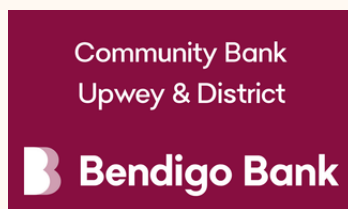
Food & Drinks

There are many wonderful cafes and restaurants in Belgrave and across the hills. Check the website for special deals for Festival ticket holders.



Partners

The Festival is run by volunteers and made possible by these major funders and sponsors:



TAGLOGISTICS



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To see the full list of supporters head to:
dandyrangeslitfest.net/sponsors-supporters/

DANDENONG RANGES
**Literary
Festival**

**See you
in the hills.**

dandyrangeslitfest.net

info@dandyrangeslitfest.net

Program correct at time of printing. Sessions and guests may change.

Check the website for updates.