

The Wheeler Centre
ANNUAL REPORT 2010



**The
Wheeler
Centre**

**Books
Writing
Ideas**

The Wheeler Centre exists to drive the development and celebration of literature in Melbourne and beyond and to foster broad public engagement in books, writing and ideas. It aspires to be nationally and internationally renowned as a leading institution for the discussion, debate and practice of writing and ideas and the key contributor to Melbourne's City of Literature status.

The Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas was launched by the Victorian Premier, John Brumby on 12 February 2010 and on 13 February 2010 the Centre presented its first event at Melbourne Town Hall. A capacity crowd of 2,000 people attended 'A Gala Night of Storytelling' in which twelve Australian authors told stories handed down to them from previous generations.

With three performance seasons over the year, the Wheeler Centre presented an average of five events per week in 2010, mostly free of charge in the performance space at the Centre. The message promulgated at its inception was, "Join the Conversation" and Melbourne embraced the new Centre with immediate enthusiasm, in terms of both media attention and audience response. Over thirty thousand people attended the events programmed by the Wheeler Centre in its first year of operation.

The Wheeler Centre website was launched in January 2010 and all events presented by the Centre have been filmed to provide content for the website and to make our events accessible beyond Melbourne.

In addition to presenting new programming, as envisaged by the Victorian Government in launching this new cultural institution, the Centre is home to a range of literary organisations that have all brought their own programming to the Centre. The Centre also hosted a large number of events by literary organisations that are not resident at the Centre.

In providing serviced offices and shared public spaces, the Centre has increased the amenity and effectiveness of the literary organisations inhabiting this hub. The Centre has also encouraged and facilitated an expanding programme of events presented by the resident organisations in order to capitalise on the synergies between these bodies, help build audiences and make the Centre the focal point for literary activity in Victoria.

Significant funding for the Wheeler Centre's public programme was provided by an endowment to the Centre from the Planet Wheeler Foundation, which was established by Maureen and Tony Wheeler of the hugely successful, Melbourne-based Lonely Planet publishing house. Income from the endowment is mandated to be spent on high quality additional programming.

In its first year of operation the Wheeler Centre took its programme beyond the confines of the Centre, to a number of venues in central Melbourne and to five regional Victorian towns with the support of the Department of Premier and Cabinet (DPC). The Centre has also taken a lunch time programme of literary talks into the offices of a major Melbourne law firm, creating a template that we will seek to expand upon.

In 2010 the Wheeler Centre organised and delivered the Victorian Premier's Literary Awards in partnership with Arts Victoria, recognising the achievements of Australian writers with some of the richest literary awards in Australia. The Centre led a review of the Awards structure and recommended changes pending government approval in 2011.

The Centre also programmed and presented the Deakin Lecture Series in 2010 on behalf of the Department for Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD). Thirty-two speakers over six days on the subject of climate change, the 2010 Deakin Lectures were a weighty undertaking for a small, new organisation. The 2010 Deakin Lectures delivered increased audiences and, through a well-targeted marketing campaign, significantly higher profile for this prestigious biennial lecture series.

The Wheeler Centre is ambitious to maintain the momentum it has speedily established, and to increase its programming and the scope and content of its website. We believe it will succeed in continuing to raise the profile of writers and literature within the Victorian community and, through its website, to wider Australian and international audiences.

Eric Beecher
Chairman

Chrissy Sharp
Director

Achievements in 2010

The Wheeler Centre presented 177 events and 35 co-presentations in 2010.
In all, 212 events to an audience of 33,324 people.

Number of paid attendees: 17,162
Number of unpaid attendees: 16,162

All Wheeler Centre presentations or co-presentations at the Wheeler Centre were presented free of charge to the public.

Additionally, there were 63 outside hirers who presented events at the Wheeler Centre to an audience of 2,377.

All Wheeler Centre presentations or co-presentations were filmed for broadcast on the Wheeler Centre website; and 36 events were broadcast on ABC television and/or radio.

Staff of the Wheeler Centre - 2010

Chrissy Sharp	Director
Katherine Lynch	Executive Assistant
Michael Williams	Head of Programming
Claire Smiddy	Programming Coordinator
Sarah Reynolds	Project Officer
Pauline O'Brien	Head of Marketing and Communications
Fleur Michael	Marketing Coordinator
Anna Lensky	Publicist
Gabrielle Procter	Online Content Manager (part year)
George Dunford	Online Content Manager (part year)
Jon Tjhia	Video Editor
Fiona Menzies	Development Manager
Sarah Masters	Operations Manager
Michelle Dorian	Events Coordinator
Jacqui Hagen	Reception
Cameron Swann	Reception

Corporate Governance Report

The Wheeler Centre is a not-for-profit company limited by guarantee, registered under the Corporations Act 2001. It currently has one member, the Minister for the Arts for the State of Victoria. The Centre is a public entity and subject to reporting requirements and codes of ethics as appropriate and the directions of the Minister where necessary. Governing this entity is a Board with seven Board members.

The Board directors were chosen for a broad range of skills covering financial, legal, marketing, media and literature in accordance with the Centre's constitution. A Board of six members was put in place in late 2008 to oversee the establishment of the Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas, including the appointment of its inaugural Director (CEO). There has since been one addition to the Board in August 2010 – Mr Tony Hudson who was previously Company Secretary.

The Board has input into, and final approval of, the Centre's corporate strategy which was articulated in the 2010 – 2012 Business Plan. The Business Plan includes a Risk Management Plan.

The Board has established a Finance Committee as a sub-committee of the Board and it meets with management in the week before Board meetings to examine the Centre's accounts in detail. The Centre's accounts are audited annually by an external auditor and the Director is required to attest in writing that the Centre's financial reports present a true and fair view of the Centre's financial condition.

The Board is regularly provided with the information it needs to efficiently discharge its responsibilities, including artistic, financial, audience and market information.

Board of the Wheeler Centre

Mr Eric Beecher - Chairman

Mr Peter Biggs

Ms Gabrielle Coyne

Mr Andrew Hagger

Mr Tony Hudson

Ms Joanna Murray-Smith

Mr Mark Rubbo