

# SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL ANNOUNCES FULL PROGRAM FOR 17-24 MAY 2026

SYDNEY, NSW, AUSTRALIA, March 11, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- [Press Pack HERE](#)

Interviews Available

The 2026 Sydney Writers' Festival (SWF) officially unveils its program today, delivering 200+ events from 250+ authors to transform Sydney into a week-long celebration of storytelling, 17-24 May. 39 international guests join over 220 Australian writers for vital conversations spanning fiction, non-fiction, poetry, politics, memoir, journalism and children's literature.

Artistic Director Ann Mossop said, "Sydney Writers' Festival is home to the world's best contemporary writing and the open exchange of ideas. With the theme, Show Me the Truth, the 2026 Festival highlights how these brilliant authors explore truth and trust in times of uncertainty across all forms of writing."

"Writers bring the truth to life in many different ways, whether it is in a novel that transports us to another time and place or in rigorous journalism that reflects the current moment. The 2026 Festival brings readers extraordinary international and Australian fiction writers, from Booker Prize winners and bestselling writers of fantasy to a range of stellar debuts.

"We'll explore important questions about the future of democracy and the impact of AI on the arts and culture, but we'll also celebrate a major anniversary for one of Australia's favourite cookbooks and the joys of Dav Pilkey's Captain Underpants. The SWF program opens up a space for writers and readers to explore books, ideas and storytelling in all of their variety and richness," said Mossop.



**SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL**

**17-24 MAY** — **2026**

17-24 May 2026

SWF 2026 Guests & Events

The banner features a blue background with the festival title and dates. Below it is a collage of 15 small images showing various festival activities: a man speaking, a woman reading, a group of people at a table, a woman on a stage, a man speaking, a woman reading, a group of people at a table, a woman on a stage, a man speaking, a woman reading, a group of people at a table, a woman on a stage, a man speaking, and a woman reading. One image shows a book cover titled 'QUEER LOVE AND LONGING'.

## HEADLINE FESTIVAL GUESTS

International bestsellers take centre stage across the week. One of the world's most prominent contemporary fantasy writers, R.F Kuang (*Katabasis*, 2025), takes audiences through her extraordinary career. Mick Herron (*Clown Town*, 2025) takes us behind the success of the *Slow Horses* series and its latest installment. Investigative journalist Patrick Radden Keefe (*London Falling*, 2026) unpacks his new book and his catalogue of bestselling non-fiction and also presents a special session on *Say Nothing* (2018).

Political leaders and innovators bring sharp global insights to the May Festival. Former prime minister of New Zealand, Jacinda Ardern (*A Different Kind of Power*, 2025), shares her path to global leadership in her deeply personal memoir. Wikipedia founder Jimmy Wales (*The Seven Rules of Trust*, 2025) looks at the vital role of trust in all aspects of our lives.

Multiple Booker Prize-winning and shortlisted authors join the Festival from across the globe. David Szalay (*Flesh*, 2025) explores how intimacy can become emotionally damaging in his 2025 Booker Prize winner. Susan Choi (*Flashlight*, 2025) examines family, absence and alienation in her new novel. Author of *Life of Pi*, adapted into an Oscar-winning film, Yann Martel (*Son of Nobody*, 2026) reimagines the Trojan War in his latest work. One of Ireland's most celebrated writers, Booker Prize winner (and 2025 Chair of Judges), Roddy Doyle (*The Women Behind the Door*, 2024), discusses his life's work and latest novel.

Novelist (*Ghost Eye*, 2026) and author of brilliant non-fiction (*The Nutmeg's Curse*, 2021) Amitav Ghosh explores the full range of his work. Master of weird fiction, Bora Chung (*The Midnight Table*, 2025), invites audiences into her modern horror fable. Women's Prize for Fiction winner Tayari Jones (*Kin*, 2026) discusses the bonds of mothers, daughters and sisterhood in her latest novel. New York Times bestselling author, S.A. Cosby (*King of Ashes*, 2025), brings gritty crime fiction and Southern noir to the SWF stage.

Dav Pilkey (*Captain Underpants: The First Epic Manga*, 2026), the world-famous creator of *Captain Underpants* and *Dog Man*, draws his beloved characters live in an event filled with hilarious onstage antics.

## 2026 ESSENTIAL FESTIVAL EVENTS

In the aftermath of tragedy, writers Jessica Chapnik Kahn, Lee Kofman, Simon Tedeschi and Michael Visontay reflect on grief, solidarity and resilience with Michaela Kalowski in *After Bondi* (17 May), responding to the 2025 Bondi terrorist attack and exploring how communities reckon with violence.

In *The Story That Changed My Life* (19 May), journalists Lorena Allam, Avani Dias, Lyse Doucet, Anton Enus, Kate McClymont and Patrick Radden Keefe reflect on the moments and stories that transformed them, splitting their careers into the 'before' and the 'after'.

*Brave Conversations: When Words Offend* (21 May) explores how we can talk about difficult

questions, and how having better disagreements can strengthen Australian society and democracy. Drawing on diverse lived experiences and perspectives, panellists Waleed Aly, Cordelia Fine, Antoinette Lattouf, Greg Sheridan and Amy Thunig-McGregor and hosts Daniel Heller and Farid Zaid, explore questions at the heart of democratic life and our relationships with one another.

Festival favourite, the SWF Great Debate (21 May), returns to Sydney Town Hall with the topic We Can't Handle the Truth. Annabel Crabb and writer David Marr lead opposing teams in a saucy and suggestive comedy debate to find out whether the truth is in fact too hot to handle. Matilda Boseley, Reuben Kaye, Rhys Nicholson and Jennifer Wong battle it out under the adjudication of Yumi Stynes.

In Holding Up the Mirror (21 May), hear Jewish writers Lee Kofman, Jon Sopel and Michael Visontay discuss antisemitism in Australia and around the world, with host Avril Alba.

Looking to history to understand the present, Big Histories (22 May) brings together Amitav Ghosh, Luke Kemp (*Goliath's Curse*, 2025) and Clare Wright to re-examine the grand narratives that shape our world. From empire to climate change, they consider how the stories we inherit influence the futures we imagine.

Great Adaptations (22 May) shares behind-the-scenes insight into what happens when compelling stories travel from page and stage to screen with writers Mick Herron (*Slow Horses*) and Suzie Miller (*Prima Facie*) in conversation with Benjamin Law.

State of the Art (22 May) returns with a special Booker Prize-focused edition featuring Susan Choi, Roddy Doyle, Yann Martel, David Szalay and Charlotte Wood, reflecting on their work and its journey to recognition.

Beloved storytelling event Queerstories (22 May) returns to celebrate the culture and creativity of the LGBTQIA+ community one true story at a time. Featuring Raewyn Connell, Victoria Falconer, George Kemp, Steve MinOn, and Sofi Oksanen, with host Maeve Marsden.

Australian political heavyweights Waleed Aly, Sean Kelly, Amy Remeikis and Niki Savva join Barrie Cassidy and Friends: State of the Nation (23 May) to dissect a year of upheaval and policy change. Hosted by Barrie Cassidy, this Festival cornerstone offers sharp analysis of the forces shaping Australia's political future.

Randa Abdel-Fattah, Michael Mohammed Ahmad and Antoinette Lattouf, in conversation with Jan Fran, unpack the hard truths at the core of their latest works in Silenced (23 May).

As misinformation, AI and digital disruption reshape public discourse, hear from Barbara Demick, A.C. Grayling, Jimmy Wales and Toby Walsh in The Future of Truth (24 May) to consider how trust can be rebuilt in an age of manipulation and information overload.

## OPENING AND CLOSING NIGHTS

The 29th Sydney Writers' Festival opens on 19 May with a joyful evening of performance and reflection in the Show Me the Truth Gala. The event stars dynamic Irish-Indian poet, Nikita Gill, bestselling American novelist, Lily King, award-winning Scottish poet, Michael Pedersen, Gunai multidisciplinary artist, Kirli Saunders, with her band Coeee, and beloved fiction-writer Robbie Arnott, reflecting on the power of language, truth and fiction.

The Festival closes on 24 May with an exploration of A Braver Australia and the courage needed to make change. Hear from writer and activist Tony Birch, novelist Shankari Chandran, artist Ben Quilty, Chief Political Analyst at The Australia Institute Amy Remeikis, researcher and writer Amy Thunig-McGregor, alongside activist and author of Better Things Are Possible Jack Toohey.

## OTHER INTERNATIONAL GUESTS – FICTION

Novelists who took the world by storm with their bestselling 2025 releases join the program. Lily King (*Heart the Lover*, 2025) shares her unforgettable story of love, desire, friendship and loss. Florence Knapp (*The Names*, 2025) explores family and the life-defining decisions that make her debut resonate so strongly with readers.

International cultures are explored in distinct and profound ways. Maria Reva (*Endling*, 2025) examines extinction, nationalism and cultural inheritance in Ukraine. Michael Bennett (*Carved in Blood*, 2025) discusses writing crime novels from a Māori perspective. Scottish poet Michael Pedersen's fiction debut (*Muckle Flugga*, 2025) explores identity, belonging and emotional resilience. Much-beloved Irish writer Niall Williams (*Time of the Child*, 2024) reflects on his writing life, career and the country home that inspired his acclaimed novels.

Fantasy writing envelops SWF with vampires, dragons and folktales. International bestseller Lev Grossman (*The Bright Sword*, 2024) discusses all things myths and magic alongside R.F Kuang and Garth Nix. Rising star Tigest Girma (*Eternal Ruin*, 2025) shares how she merges real and imagined worlds in her writing.

Poetry lovers can look forward to Nikita Gill (*Hekate*, 2025) performing readings of her bestselling body of work. Pulitzer Prize winner Mosab Abu Toha (*Forest of Noise*, 2024) speaks to the land and culture that influence his writing.

Tony Tulathimutte (*Rejection*, 2024) captures the modern millennial malaise of anxiety, rejection, resentment and delusion. Josh Silver (*Fruit Fly*, 2026) shares how digital media and internet culture inform his adult debut.

## OTHER INTERNATIONAL GUESTS – NON-FICTION

The 2026 Festival's international non-fiction lineup explores the future of democracy, important political trends and events and global conflicts, as well as rich personal accounts of culture and heritage

Pulitzer Prize finalist Deborah Baker (*Charlottesville: An American Story*, 2025) illuminates America's history of political radicalisation. Award-winning foreign correspondent Barbara Demick (*Daughters of the Bamboo Grove*, 2025) shares the true story of twins separated by China's one-child policy. Finnish Estonian author Sofi Oksanen (*Same River, Twice*, 2026) examines Vladimir Putin's war on women, and award-winning BBC correspondent Lyse Doucet (*The Finest Hotel in Kabul*, 2025) talks about Afghanistan and brings frontline reporting from global conflict zones.

Jon Sopel (*Strangeland*, 2024) reflects on democracy, antisemitism and Trump's America. A.C. Grayling (*For the People*, 2026) outlines the fragility of contemporary society in the face of authoritarianism. Luke Kemp (*Goliath's Curse*, 2025) draws on centuries of historical evidence to examine why complex societies collapse. David Moscrop (*Too Dumb for Democracy*, 2019) takes a look under the hood of 21st century nationalism.

Hiroko Yoda (*Eight Million Ways to Happiness*, 2025) inspires audiences with the ancient spiritual wisdom of Japan. Translator and Shakespeare scholar Daniel Hahn (*If This Be Magic*, 2026) explores how the legendary playwright has been translated into different languages around the world. Matt Alt (*Pure Invention*, 2020) uncovers how Japan's culture influences the rest of the world.

For fans of memoir, Tareq Baconi (*Fire in Every Direction*, 2026) delves into his queer coming-of-age story set against the backdrop of his middle eastern heritage. Mariana Enriquez (*Somebody is Walking on Your Grave*, 2025) takes audiences to cemeteries across the globe to explore local histories of violence, religion and social class.

## FREE EVENTS

SWF offers audiences over 55 FREE events across Sydney. Here are a few:

The beloved Family Day returns on Sunday, 24 May, with a stacked program of talks, interactive workshops, performances, and of course, Russ the Story Bus. Families can join much-loved author and illustrator Cheryl Orsini for badgemaking. Story time events are hosted by Sue Whiting, Gabriel Evans, plus brother and sister team Victor and Sandra Steffensen. Australian illustrators battle it out to see who reigns supreme, families bust 42 common myths with Dan Marshall, and audiences choose how a story unfolds with Nathan Luff and Andrew Cranna.

Jennifer Wong brings her Festival favourite event back for FEAST: Food Fights (23 May), with Durkhanai Ayubi, Natalia Figueroa Barroso, Shirley Le, Debra Oswald, Michael Shaikh and others sharing mouth-watering tales of dinner disasters and festive frivolities.

Secrets of the Lodge (21 May) sees Troy Bramston, Sean Kelly, Amy Remeikis and Niki Savva share their expert insights into Australian democracy and some of our larger-than-life prime ministers.

Fireside takes over the Blacksmith's Workshop at Carriageworks for two stellar events. Writer Bruce Pascoe and Professor of Astrophysics Ray Norris share stories about the stars above and secrets of the universe in Fireside: Sky Stories (23 May). Meanwhile, Shaun Micallef, Bora Chung, Mariana Enriquez and Maeve Marsden gather round the campfire for an evening of horrors and delights in Fireside: Spooky Stories (23 May).

Osher Günsberg, Ahona Guha and Josh Silver, with host Sana Qadar, share strategies and insights on how to navigate life's roadblocks in Stop Being Stuck (22 May).

The full Sydney Writers' Festival 2026 program can be found online at [swf.org.au](https://swf.org.au).

Sydney Writers' Festival runs from 17–24 May 2026. Tickets are on sale from 10am Saturday 14 March. Please call 02 9256 4200 or visit [swf.org.au](https://swf.org.au) for more information or to book.

#### MEDIA ENQUIRIES

Lachlan Camilleri, Publicity Lead

E: [lachlan@originalspin.com.au](mailto:lachlan@originalspin.com.au) M: 0426 744 063

Amber Forrest-Bisley, Senior Publicity Advisor

E: [amber@originalspin.com.au](mailto:amber@originalspin.com.au) M: 0405 363 817

[\\*\\*\\*Sydney Writers' Festival Press Pack and Images Available HERE](#)

#### EDITOR'S NOTES

##### ABOUT SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

From Sunday 17 to Sunday 24 May 2026, the 29th Sydney Writers' Festival brings together some of the world's most exciting literary voices for a week of insightful discussions, thought-provoking ideas, and unforgettable storytelling. The Festival features a dynamic program of in-person and livestreamed events, including author talks, panel discussions, workshops, and special events across Sydney.

Lachlan Camilleri

Original Spin

[email us here](#)

Visit us on social media:

[Instagram](#)

[Facebook](#)

[TikTok](#)

---

This press release can be viewed online at: <https://www.einpresswire.com/article/898628103>

EIN Presswire's priority is source transparency. We do not allow opaque clients, and our editors try to be careful about weeding out false and misleading content. As a user, if you see something

we have missed, please do bring it to our attention. Your help is welcome. EIN Presswire, Everyone's Internet News Presswire™, tries to define some of the boundaries that are reasonable in today's world. Please see our Editorial Guidelines for more information.

© 1995-2026 Newsmatics Inc. All Right Reserved.