

**Title:** AAWP Scoping Report: Access and Equity

**Subtitle:** A Fortress Within a Garret Within an Ivory Tower

Produced for the Australasian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP) by Axel-Nathaniel Rose

Gundungurra

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This work was written on the lands of the Gundungurra, Darug, Bedegal, and Gadigal people. I acknowledge the Traditional Owners of these lands; I acknowledge their ownership, custodianship, and care for these lands, and I acknowledge their storytelling and advocacy. I acknowledge Elders past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who engage with AAWP. The land now called Australia is, was, and always will be Aboriginal land.

*Poetry is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. The farthest external horizons of our hopes and fears are cobbled by our poems, carved from the rock experiences of our daily lives.*

Audre Lorde (2018): 2-3.

*Taking on an intersectional approach means we need to acknowledge and oppose coloniality, racial capitalism, neoliberalism, patriarchy and heteronormativity – systems that simultaneously and complexly compel bodies to capacitate according to dominant logics for survival and debilitate bodies, organisms and environments that fail to do so. It is impossible to write, speak and teach about race, gender, sexuality, inequality and injustice without making loud noises about broader structures that debilitate and oppress human lives at constrictive intersections of colonialism, racial capitalism, neoliberalism, heteronormativity and patriarchy.*

Ee Ling Quah (2025): n.p.

## ***1. Premise***

### ***1.1 Goal***

This scoping report is a preliminary document that defines boundaries and key issues related to Access and Equity deemed relevant to members of the Australasian Association of Writing Programs (AAWP). The report undertakes preliminary mapping for a larger project with a view to a new AAWP Executive Committee of Management (ECoM) Portfolio: Access and Equity, to be discussed and voted upon by the AAWP ECoM, per the constitutional framework upon which our organisation is governed.

As I prepared this report, and undertook a number of preliminary interviews, I arrived at the following

subtitle: 'A Fortress Within a Garret Within an Ivory Tower'.<sup>1</sup> This sentiment captures the breadth and rigour of our disciplinary history and the empathy and passion of AAWP's membership. In this spirit, I prepared the following scoping report.

The report is aimed at increasing the accessibility of participation within AAWP for all members and prospective members and to advocate for principles of access, equity, justice, and diversity within the Association. We are at a tipping point of rising conservatism, rising censorship, rising labour exploitation, and rising erasure of minoritised voices and experiences. This report works to identify what AAWP can do (and do more of and do better) to make active membership within the Association accessible for as many people as possible. It is a starting point, aimed at solidifying and archiving the ethos, values, aspirations, and hopes of our membership.

The report aims to:

- archive the steps AAWP has already taken towards making more accessible, just, inclusive, and equitable modes of participating in the activities of the Association;
- identify and propose action items for next steps;
- consider the ways AAWP can work towards countering the deleterious effects of this encrusted moment for AAWP members;
- support marginalised and minoritised writer-scholars in our sector to find community, support, stability, solidarity, and witness within AAWP;
- work to acknowledge the inequities and injustices upon which the university sector functions and offer pathways for writer-scholars to be witnessed, platformed, and heard within AAWP.

This report was commissioned by AAWP President, Associate Professor Julia Prendergast, together with a quorum of office bearing members of the AAWP Executive Committee of Management (ECoM). The report documents a variety of preliminary views, surveying AAWP's current activities as they relate to Equity and Access – detailing current initiatives and their effects as a means for considering the ways we might improve in serving those we are elected to serve. The report is also aimed at considering opportunities to attract new members through increased engagement and impact in the areas of access and equity.

The commissioned report represents the beginning of a legacy document – one that might be returned to and developed iteratively – with our minds' eyes on succession planning for future executive committee members of the AAWP, elected to serve the diverse needs of our membership community in a relentlessly

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<sup>1</sup> This subtitle refers to the common adage that, as creative writers, we built a garret in the ivory tower, and I see much of the work of AAWP as building a fortress within that garret. While we can not change our sector as a whole, we can build within it.

shifting landscape.

The scoping report is aimed at providing a springboard for the AAWP ECoM to consider a designated ECoM Portfolio, aimed at continuous monitoring and improvement of AAWP's equity and access activities, led by a person who would work closely with all members of the ECoM and in consultation with our membership body.

The preliminary report was completed between June and November 2025. It builds upon the principles laid out in the AAWP Code of Ethics, the AAWP Diversity and Inclusion Statement, and the AAWP Statement Regarding Insecure Work in Higher Education. For the purposes and imperatives of the scoping report, secondary research is deemphasised in favour of centering the voices of members.

## ***1.2 Method***

This report was written with the guidance and insight of sixteen AAWP members through semi-structured interviews. Following the interviews, a draft report was tabled for consideration by the AAWP ECoM at the End-of-Year Executive Committee Meeting (November 2025). The longer-term aim is to finalise this preliminary report, in response to feedback from the AAWP ECoM and interviewees, with a view to disseminating the report to the AAWP community and inviting feedback from all members. The broader aim is to have an increased number of voices respond to the priorities and vision outlined in the preliminary report through the activities of a designated AAWP Portfolio Lead: Access and Equity.

Through semi-structured interviews, I asked sixteen members to speak to:

- what AAWP already does well in supporting and uplifting minoritised and marginalised members;
- what AAWP could improve upon and any specific concerns or experiences that and Equity and Access Portfolio might address;
- any demographics or axes of marginalisation that they feel are particularly disadvantaged within AAWP, writing programs, or academia more broadly.

I invited interviewees to share openly and as formally or informally as they wished, based on their own experiences, and/or their witness of others' experiences, and/or their research. Many stressed that they could only speak from their own experience, expressing views such as 'I think AAWP is doing well with regards to [this kind of marginalisation], but I am not sure that someone who is both [this kind of marginalised] and experiences [another kind of marginalisation] would say the same'. I assured interviewees that their own experience was all we were seeking. However, I have marked in text where caveats and contradictions of this sort arose, and anonymised all interviewees. These discussions provided the architecture for this scoping report. I express my deepest thanks to all those who gave their time, their

knowledge, their compassion, and their experience.

This report begins with general principles, moves to the context of writing, then to the duties and specific initiatives that an AAWP Access and Equity Portfolio might address. The two appendices, on issues of access and equity within our industries not elsewhere addressed, as well as information outlining what interviewees identified as AAWP's successes in access and equity, give greater context to the proposed initiatives; however they are not vital to understand the document.

### *1.3 Values*

Many members highlighted that AAWP is an association of radical empathy: one of the Association's core goals seems to be to bear witness, to listen deeply, and to understand the humanity of its members. Most interviewees noted that AAWP already works to make participation more possible for minoritised members. However, interviewees noted that most instances of empathy and increased access are enabled by individuals – AAWP ECoM and co-opted members of the executive committee, as well as active members – of their own volition, contrary to being built into the ongoing function and governance of the Association. More broadly, the university sector does not facilitate or reward empathy on a structural basis, which demands individual workers take on the duty of care.

AAWP has worked to structure increased accessibility and equity into the Association's function, through such measures as:

- The ratified commitment to providing equitable remuneration for precariously employed ECoM members, co-optees, and those undertaking designated project work;
- the 2019 Statement on Insecure Work in Higher Education;
- the 2021 Diversity and Inclusion Statement;
- implementation of free or subsidised conference attendance for First Nations attendees and those facing financial hardship;
- the development of *cinder* as an HDR/ECR-focused publication, and now mentorship program;
- the development of the AAWP Prizes and Partnerships portfolio, as a mechanism of uplifting and rewarding work that represents AAWP's identity as the *Australasian* Association of Writing Programs;<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> The Portfolio builds both local and global writing communities from within our broad geographical region, celebrates the work of emerging and established writers and translators, and in turn facilitates expansive reach to AAWP members and friends as well as industry bodies and writers. It thereby promotes the work of under-represented writers to a broader English-using audience.

- the implementation of video-based HDR/ECR monthly hangs, facilitating opportunities for participants to be seen and heard by their peers and mentors, ameliorating feelings of isolation for those based overseas, living rurally or regionally, or otherwise unable to attend Association events in person;
- the implementation of hybrid mode HDR/ECR development days as a part of each conference.

Interviewees stressed the transformative nature of these actions. Several highlighted, however, that these initiatives, largely spearheaded by individual members with the support of others, are not assured to persevere into AAWP's future. A designated Access and Equity Portfolio would work to support ECoM portfolio leads, and the general membership, in sustaining these preexisting programs of increased access and equity and building upon them.

Every AAWP ECoM member engages with and promotes diversity and inclusion in their work. Several interviewees made statements along the lines of, 'Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) should be everyone's job, all the time.' An Access and Equity Portfolio, if enacted, is not designed to undermine the work of portfolio leads. On the contrary, the proposed portfolio is designed to be a point of reference for issues of access and equity within AAWP and to support individual portfolio leads in giving voice to and uplifting marginalised writer-academics.

Many interviewees stressed that the only means of ensuring the values that we now take for granted are continued is to have them written into policy, with a portfolio lead advocating for the ongoing maintenance of activities that are the result of decades of preparation and labour. The role of advocacy in support of the ongoing maintenance and expansion of access and equity initiatives would be the primary remit of an Access and Equity Portfolio Lead.

#### ***1.4 What's in a name: why 'Access and Equity' rather than 'Equity, Diversity and Inclusion'?***

This report avoids the standard framework and terminology of EDI employed by Australian universities in favour of an approach that makes clear AAWP's modus operandi: action-based and empathetic approaches to access and equity, broadly conceived. Through consultation with members about what an AAWP Access and Equity Portfolio would ideally look like – in service of minoritised AAWP members and a forward-thinking approach to the prospective growth of our community – the most important point of emphasis was that we move beyond the symbolic use of 'diversity' as a term, instead considering what AAWP can do to make the activities of the organisation more accessible to those who may be referred to as 'diverse.' We have no power over the diversity of our membership; we have power over the mechanisms of work that make being an active member of AAWP possible for our marginalised members and,

therefore, a potential means of broadening the diversity of our membership. This is an issue of access. We have control over the values that we platform and foreground, within the context of our acknowledgment of the inequities within our industries. This is a matter of equity.

Shifting emphasis from the language of equity, diversity, and inclusion also reflects the disquiet that several interviewees expressed with regards to preexisting EDI bodies, in some cases informed by their experiences of being further marginalised and/or traumatised by organisations and initiatives purportedly dedicated to EDI initiatives and action. One member expressed dis-ease with the idea of AAWP beginning an EDI program, programs which they reflected often act as an exercise of organisations self-reinforcing and self-congratulating on violent hierarchies, instead of enacting what is needed to support marginalised people: real change. This interlocutor introduced me to Ee Ling Quah's (2025) *Fire Dragon Feminism: Asian Migrant Women's Tales of Migration, Coloniality, and Racial Capitalism*. As Quah argues, EDI bodies serve to reinforce 'the rules of the game' (n.p.), flattening difference into a model that ultimately manifests in 'training [white, cisgender, heterosexual women] in white masculine leadership so that they can perform like their white, cisgender, heterosexual men counterparts to boost the company's business' (n.p.). Quah invites us to look beyond a model of justice structured around identity politics to 'mak[e] loud noises about broader structures that debilitate and oppress human lives at constrictive intersections of colonialism, racial capitalism, neoliberalism, heteronormativity and patriarchy' (n.p.).

This scoping report is intended to meet Quah's call for action as a comprehensive, deeply invested, and honest mode of understanding and responding to marginalised and minoritised experience, rather than the core aim of effecting change in broader societal and university structures, which falls beyond the purview of the AAWP. With this rationale, the report provides the basis for the ECoM's consideration of a designated Access and Equity Portfolio.

Some interviewees rejected the concept of 'inclusion' as a useful principle and practice within the workplace – both within academe and publishing – suggesting this often leads to tokenisation and demands for more labour as related to the marginalisation of aspects of selfhood. Some interviewees similarly stressed that 'inclusion' is distinct from 'integration', which often translates simply to 'assimilation', further noting that the 'inclusion' imperatives of many EDI departments are essentially requests for assimilation.

In contrast, interviewees suggested that real inclusion involves the acknowledgement of difference, the acceptance of difference, and the welcoming of difference. This is reflected in AAWP's Statement on Diversity and Inclusion: 'our approach to perceiving and treating difference comprises deep respect, a commitment to listen and the equal valuation of a plurality of experiences and identities' (2021: n.p.). One interviewee offered the following quote by Kurt Vonnegut: 'Love may fail, courtesy will prevail' – i.e., we cannot assume the power of emotion, volatile and individual, so much as the power of respect for the

dignity of others, which can be encouraged and enacted upon through organisational leadership.

Several interviewees expressed the related view that EDI bodies are primarily symbolic and aspirational rather than practical. While I believe in the power of symbols – particularly as a transgender man witnessing the widespread and increasing erasure of transgender people from the public eye – I agree. An Access and Equity portfolio should be as practical as any other, its symbols a starting point, not an end.

The action items for Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion are not self-evident in such a title; the very title may shroud our work in the legacy of a problematic organisational framework. In contrast, Access and Equity are imperatives: action-based and explicit.

As several interviewees suggested: the best way to expand the diversity of our membership is to ‘make access possible.’ The goal of an AAWP Access and Equity Portfolio would be to use AAWP’s iconically welcoming, empathetic, and inquisitive culture to welcome as many people as possible, and to make participation in AAWP as accessible as possible.

Due to the framework established above, which rejects an identity politics-based model of equity, diversity, and inclusion, the categories of selfhood and identity that might mean one needs support entering and finding community, solidarity, work, and value within creative writing academe are not listed in this report – i.e., the report does not include a list of whom might be the ‘target’ of this portfolio.<sup>3</sup> Instead, the report is prepared alongside the acknowledgement that some people will have greater ease joining and staying in our sector/s and our Association, while others, due to inherent aspects of selfhood, are more likely to be excluded from making a sustainable career and path forward as writer-scholars.

An AAWP Access and Equity Portfolio would operate with the purview of supporting the Association’s ECoM, and membership in striving to mitigate the impacts on writer-scholars of what Quah (2025) refers to as ‘broader structures that debilitate and oppress human lives at constrictive intersections of colonialism, racial capitalism, neoliberalism, heteronormativity and patriarchy’ (n.p.). A framework focused on interconnected systems of discrimination and exploitation, on access, and on possibility, means we do not artificially limit the purview of the portfolio; we do not exclude based on label; we do not implement a box that can be checked. This is a matter of equity.

As our sector extends sometimes extractive and punishing models of business, AAWP, as the peak body representing the discipline of writing in academe, has the capacity to facilitate an alternative space of

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<sup>3</sup> With that said, I want to disclose my own positionality – though many of my interlocutors stressed they did not expect it, and that it is an injustice that leads to minoritised people feeling a need to disclose their positionality in a way the non-minoritised do not. I want to acknowledge my own privileges and propensities to kinds of ignorance, and I want to acknowledge my own embodiment. I am a white Australian; I am a transgender man; I am working class; I am disabled, through both physical and mental illness, and neurodivergent; I am queer; I am an atheist; I am a carer. I do not live ‘rurally’ but to make my wage a living one, I live three hours from my university – like many, my days are structured around travel.

professional and interpersonal community. As one interviewee stressed, resilience is built not in adversarial spaces but in safe ones.

This report acknowledges that while there is need within the Association as it stands, the Association's membership also reflects broader issues of access and injustice with regards to both the creative arts and to academe – particularly that AAWP's membership and Creative Writing and Literary Studies academe (and Arts and Humanities more broadly) are 'overwhelmingly white', a phrase used by multiple interviewees. This acknowledgement pre-empts one of a number of action-based imperatives, whereby AAWP might make more outward-facing efforts to invite a broader range of writer-scholars (and writers, scholars, and prospective writer-scholars) to join AAWP, as discussed in section 3.3. The proposed Equity and Access Portfolio lead would support the ECoM, and annual conference directors, in delivering upon such imperatives.

### *1.5 The Crisis of Now: The Anthropocene and the boom of generative AI*

Interviewees noted that many of our members are dealing with the Anthropocene in profound and embodied ways – something that is exacerbated for creative practitioners and educators alike. The work of writing is embodied; it is inordinately emotional and can be traumatising; it requires invested, encompassing care. This recognition provides a premise from which an AAWP Access and Equity Portfolio would function.

Most AAWP members work across more than one field. At the least, we are working writers and we are academics. While these are not axes of marginalisation, they are axes impacted by disempowerment, invalidation, and defunding. Many of us, then, live with an exacerbated experience of precarity. Many AAWP members are split across far more axes; they work as journalists, as office workers, as administrators, as assistants, as waiters, as performers, cleaners, bartenders, etc.

Across the 2020s and into the future the mainstreaming of generative AI will be increasingly impactful. As with all things, marginalised and minoritised people will be particularly vulnerable to job losses, to worsened conditions, and vilification due to this new field of technobureaucratic minimisation of human labour. Many consider the impacts upon marginalised and minoritised people especially cruel given that AI cannot experience embodiment or consequence, and cannot be anchored to any-body in terms of writerly responsibility and ethics, as a human writer, thinker, or editor might. Interviewees stressed this particular injustice, emphasising that many of us are minoritised or marginalised in our bodies, in various complex and intersecting ways, and AI cannot 'know' such embodied marginalisation. Simultaneously, the common language of AI (the cloud, 'generative artificial intelligence') is disembodied, but it is in itself physical, anchored in the exploitation of human bodies in the global south, the exploitation of the planet and its resources, and the exploitation of the works that it was trained on, grounded in turn in authors'

bodies. An AAWP Access and Equity Portfolio lead would work to centre the idea of embodiment in discussions of how generative AI impacts our discipline.

Many interviewees expressed that the normalisation of generative AI will exacerbate preexisting inequalities. Some, myself included, noted the strange and dehumanising experience of assessing AI-generated work – noting both the academic integrity issues that require hypervigilance in our assessment of that work, which often goes unpaid, but also the more abstract, emotional (and de-emotionalised) experience of a defunct imperative: the thwarted attempt to communicate and connect through writing is necessarily unmet because it is rendered impossible.

### *1.6 The Crisis of Now: Precarity*

Initially, I intended to exclude precarity as a specific concern of this portfolio. Precarity is not a useful term to include in axes of marginalisation, because while precarity does discriminate, it is also increasingly a baseline state. As a state of affairs that has been deepening for decades, when a student begins a higher degree research program, they are often warned against becoming attached to a career within academia because: jobs are limited, academe is over-crowded, and only the very best workers with the very best luck in timing and circumstance will ever attain the stability that an ongoing position promises. Many people I have spoken to within the AAWP community recognise these statements mask deep-seated issues which are not necessarily openly dissected, examined, or discussed.

If job scarcity is a primary issue, many have questioned why so many ongoing staff work twelve-hour days. Others have asked why, when casual staffing is cut, change is effected without consultation with teaching academics who are working in classrooms on a regular basis. How is it, some queried, that ‘decasualisation’ in many cases effectually means ‘the critical overloading of enduring and fixed term staff’, rather than its purported intent of converting casual staff to ongoing part- and full-time roles, in respect for the labour they have performed in precarity, sometimes for decades, without relief?

Other interviewees reflected upon the climate of relentless change – cuts and revisioning of existing programs – which often means increased work opportunities for sessional and fixed-term academics, in the immediate short term, coupled with little or less opportunity for remunerated employment thereafter. Further reflections included the view that we continue to see strong student enrolments in Arts degrees and creative disciplines, despite fee hikes and messages disincentivising study in the arts, outside of systems of value such as the ‘Job Ready Graduates’ scheme.<sup>4</sup> Interviewees reflected that universities are

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<sup>4</sup> AAWP, led by Associate Professor Julia Prendergast and Distinguished Professor Jen Webb, wrote to then-Minister Dan Tehan MP outlining AAWP’s concerns around the implementation of the Job Ready Graduates scheme: [https://www.education.gov.au/system/files/documents/document-file/2020-12/australasian\\_association\\_of\\_writing\\_programs.pdf](https://www.education.gov.au/system/files/documents/document-file/2020-12/australasian_association_of_writing_programs.pdf) In it, they discuss the empirical value of creative arts degrees

inevitably struggling to deliver espoused ‘student-centred’ imperatives when ‘cost-cutting’ and ‘restructuring’ so often translate to teaching staff cuts, while students consistently report that time and engagement with their instructors is the most impactful factor in their learning experience.

According to every AAWP member I consulted in the writing of this report, AAWP already outperforms universities and other professional and scholarly associations in its support for precariously employed members and in its fluency in discussing precarity, particularly in addressing discrimination against those already marginalised. Including precarity in the framework of Access and Inclusion is vital because so many of our institutions seem to be deepening class barriers between executive staff and academics. Even those staff in ongoing positions work in an increasingly neoliberal and adversarial work environment, with precarity looming as a threat throughout their professional lives. Precarity is increasingly the state of our profession, and precarity is an embodied state, written into our tension, our overwhelm, our anxiety, our fatigue, our depression, and the physical strains that deepen through labour.

An Access and Equity Portfolio would not be structured around reaching those in precarity or under a precarious ideology: that is all our members. However, precarity must be a key consideration in the function of an Access and Equity Portfolio. Indeed, Julia stated in her goals for this portfolio that the portfolio lead will be involved in processes of policy consultation, enabling the portfolio lead to bring an awareness of the precarious structures we work in and how they will more deeply impact those who are already marginalised, and provide input into official AAWP responses to proposed updates to impacting policy and legislation.

## *2. Core Duties of the proposed Access and Equity Portfolio*

- Work with initiating members of the ECoM, and the Website Portfolio Lead, as well as general members and friends of AAWP, to create a portal on the AAWP website to showcase the work of First Nations writers and scholars, as utmost priority, together with other culturally marginalised writers and scholars.
- Work to enact the Diversity and Inclusion Statement throughout AAWP.
- Be available to the ECoM and general members for consultation on matters of access, equity, diversity, and inclusion.
- Draft a Code of Access for AAWP Conference Hosts, to be incorporated into the Conference Handbook.
- Provide support to other ECoM members and co-optees in addressing issues of access, equity,

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and the vital and voracious scope of creative writing research.

diversity, justice, and inclusion that impact their portfolios.

- When requested, support the President and any ECoM members invited to advise on policy and legislation from the perspective of access and equity, based on ongoing consultation with the general membership.
- Work to reach writer-scholars working in isolation, due to regionality, rurality, disability, financial limitations, carer duties, or other reasons.
- Pursue resources (including training days and research hubs) for member use around teaching practices that expand the accessibility of pedagogy, such as Universal Design Learning and trauma-informed practice.
- Initiate outward-reaching communication to prospective members, including welcoming new people/organisations to join our mailing list, as an action-based imperative toward meeting the goal that 'the diversity of our membership [...] reflect the multiplicity of the Australasian community' (AAWP 2019: n.p.)

### *3. Initiatives that the Portfolio of Access and Equity might pursue*

The following initiatives arose through discussion with interviewees. They are organised based around three main categories: conference-oriented, otherwise inward facing, and outward facing. These initiatives are presented with two acknowledgements:

- Some of these measures may be prohibitively costly and are, thus, goals to strive for, or to develop alternatives to, where possible;
- Many of the suggested initiatives will require significant discussion and planning if they are to be enacted.

#### *3.1. Conferences*

- Establish an accessibility working group within each conference organising team. They would:
  - document hearing loops, accessible travel paths, the wheelchair accessibility of each room, and presence and locations of accessible bathrooms and gender-neutral bathrooms. This information would then be made available with the draft conference program.
  - Connect with any on-campus accessibility groups and make use of any resources therein.
  - Ensure that the conference schedule is accessible per WCAG guidelines.
  - Support the organising team in accommodating for dietary requirements, whether of cultural, values-based, or health-related origin.
    - Interviewees note catering at recent conferences has been good, in providing a

broad range of dietary restricted offerings, without it being visibly 'othering' catering (i.e. a special bowl for each person with a specific dietary restriction).

- Interviewees noted some conferences moving towards entirely Vegan and Gluten Free catering, as part of a pursuit of net zero emissions; this automatically gives options to not just vegan and gluten free, but vegetarian, halal, and kosher eaters.
- Build partnerships with universities and schools teaching AUSLAN translation accreditation, to offer AUSLAN translations for some conference proceedings.
- Continue pursuit of the long-held wish for childcare facilities at conferences.
- Aim for one First Nations keynote speaker each year.
- Sustain hybrid presentation of conferences wherever possible, and if a hybrid conference is not possible for financial reasons, provide alternative online offerings throughout the year.
  - Interviewees note that having no online option cuts off many marginalised and minoritised writer-scholars. Online access is increasingly vital, on various grounds:
    - Chronic illness and disability
    - Rural and regional life, and the additional costs of travel attached to it
    - Travelling with young children
    - Concerns around the climate impact of air travel
    - Financial reasons (including universities decreasing their funding of scholars' and students' conference attendance)
- Move towards running a pedagogy day or half-day within each conference, in recognition of AAWP's roots; in recognition of the limited respect for pedagogical research on hiring committee; and in opposition to the dehumanising norms of unmanageable staff/student ratios and the devaluing of teaching amidst the boom of AI.
  - This builds from AAWP's battle to have creative practice recognised as research on the national level; pedagogy as research extends that impetus.
- Wherever possible, sustain free conference attendance for First Nations attendees.

### ***3.2. Inward facing***

- Establish a database of Australian discrimination law relevant to the university sector, and of special considerations and EDI-related policy of Australasian universities.
  - As stands, it's often up to individual instructors to find loopholes in policy to support their students by finding paths forward re. extensions, attendance leniency, and hardship accommodations. Many instructors cannot or choose not to take that work on; some do

not want to skirt the bounds of policy due to fear of losing their employment.

- Similarly, the policy that allows for self-advocacy is often obscure and not made easily accessible to staff, especially casuals. Looking for the required policy to, e.g., apply for time off as a casual when already in a time of crisis, is unmanageable for many.
- Pursue resources, training days, or research hubs around teaching practices that expand the accessibility of Creative Writing pedagogy, including Universal Design Learning and trauma-informed practice.
- Liaise with senior editors at *TEXT* with a proposal for considering the creation of a blog accompaniment to the journal, akin to that of *space and culture* – facilitating the publication of shorter and less rigorous publications still attached to *TEXT*'s stellar reputation.
- Where possible, implement tiered membership fees based on member needs.

### ***3.3. Outward facing***

Many of these initiatives respond to interviewees' repeated comment that AAWP is dominantly white, which several interviewees attributed to the fact that English and Creative Writing academe is dominantly white.

- Implement membership partnerships with First Nations' writers and arts groups, for example, offering free membership to AAWP with membership to First Nations Australia Writers Network.
- Extend recruitment and affiliation with technical writing programs, in acknowledgement that 'writing' has largely come to mean 'creative writing' within Australian writing programs.
- Extend further recruitment efforts to:
  - TAFE staff (per the previous ECoM role of the TAFE representative);
  - Senior high school students, by invitation to conferences (per Out of the Ordinary: Poetry and the World 2022) – thereby exposing them to and inviting them to participate in a community of creative writing practitioners and theorists in Higher Education;
  - Undergraduate students (through, e.g., through the dissemination of flyers and subsidised conference attendance);
  - New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, and other Australasian communities.

### ***4. Interviewees (alphabetised by surname):***

1. Anne Brady-Clark
2. Mel Clark

3. Chloe Cannell
4. Dante De Bono
5. Sarah Giles
6. Roanna Gonsalves
7. Sue Joseph
8. Natalie Kon-Yu
9. Lee McGowan
10. Julia Prendergast
11. Kendrea Rhodes
12. Stef Rozitis
13. Thisability
14. Jessie Seymour
15. Ariella Van Luyn
16. Amelia Walker
17. Jen Webb

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## *Appendix: Issues of access and equity within our institutions otherwise not addressed*

### *Universities:*

#### *Universities: Culture, language, and communication:*

- **Culturally damaging administrative procedures:** Administrative language and protocol as enacted by universities can be retraumatising for those who have been harmed by similar colonial and neoliberal institutions. The abundance of administrative communique – its language, and its formality – can be reminders of violent institutions, and disincentivise people staying on within universities. AAWP is not prone to this issue, but our larger institutions are.
- **Complaints procedures limit the possibility of complaint:** Complaints procedures can be convoluted, embedded with flattening and culturally stigmatising language and practices, and thereby deepen discrimination by making complaint nigh impossible.
- **Small pool of ongoing First Nations staff:** This represents universities' failures to support First Nations scholars, but also leads to inadequate support for First Nations students, especially postgraduate students.
- **Lack of diversity in the kinds of voices represented in academe:** Impenetrable language alienates many marginalised students and scholars. The pomp and circumstance of academic communication is intimidating and othering. AAWP does not support this kind of academic culture, and more informal language, 'bogan' language, and language inflected with other languages and cultures, is welcomed.
- **Many syllabi do not reflect staff and student diversity:** The range of English and Creative Writing teaching is highly variable. The diversity of authors on our reading lists gives a sign to our students of whether life as an author might be possible for them.
- **Accessibility, particularly re. vision and hearing impairment, is not a cornerstone of how most universities run:** Individual staff members are generally left to decide whether to turn on e.g. subtitles and transcripts, even when the tech is in-built or otherwise readily available. University websites and learning management systems are inconsistent in their implementation of Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.
- **Expectation of cultural/marginalised performance of identity:** Marginalised people, especially First Nations people, are expected to platform their identity and culture, their selfhood becoming a paratext of their publications. This can lead to issues of tokenisation and objectification, and often leads to demands for additional unpaid labour.

### *Universities: Labour rights*

- **Overwork and sick leave:** Interviewees spoke about universities hosting a cultural norm of overwork, including working nights and weekends, which is deleterious for all, but impossible for some – particularly those with disabilities and those with carer duties. Our sector is not unique in this, but it does have particular shortcomings in light of sick leave. In most industries, if you take a sick day, a replacement is hired for the day. If you take sick leave in academe, for most duties, you are simply expected to complete tasks associated with your role, in less time, upon your return.
- **MCRs are often vulnerable, with limited internal and external support.**
  - Interviewees noted that the best chance for employment in an Australian university is to be a graduate of that uni, as this allows universities to internally manage their graduates' employment records, thus boosting their own rankings.
- **KPIs and research requirements are structured punishingly for carers, especially mothers emerging from maternity leave.**
  - Interviewees reported attempting to support carers by setting up collaborative projects and, as relevant, timing them to align with mothers' return from maternity leave, with publications pre-loaded.

### *Publishing:*

- **Expectation of cultural/marginalised performance of identity:** Marginalised people are expected to platform their identity and culture, their selfhood becoming a paratext of their publications. This can lead to issues of tokenisation and objectification.
- **The Australian book industry is small and risk-averse, which disincentivises the publication of some kinds of marginalised stories.**

### *Appendix: What AAWP is doing well*

#### **Culture:**

- Sustaining a warm and welcoming culture.
- Established and practical goodwill and desire to support one another.
- Seeing potential in a person rather than their marginalisation.
- Culturally accepting of Mad people (noting some interviewees suggested our sector and our Association do not work well with neurodiversity, madness, and developmental disability – things

that make a person 'difficult').

- Accepting of 'atypical' embodiment, e.g. needing to sit on floor throughout panels (for, e.g. pain or sensory reasons).
- Accepting and welcoming of LGBTQ+ people (with the repeated caveat from white interviewees that this may be different for people of colour).
- Supportive conference and publication culture, in which writers understand that utterances are drafts, processes, or works in progress. This is reflected in *TEXT's* peer review.
- Queer, bogan, and EALD modes of language use are welcomed as part of creative expression.

#### **Addressing precarity and supporting casuals:**

- Very good at talking about precarity and looking after casuals.
- AAWP allows casuals to speak openly, and pays its precarious workers.

#### **Supporting HDRs and ECRs:**

- The HDR/ECR Hangs have been transformative for participants.
- Affordances of online learning/participation has allowed for greater access, and in turn greater participant diversity.
- The HDR prizes are invigorating, validating, and motivating.

#### **Association structure:**

- Prizes work well to emphasise unique voices and works. This enriches the Association's culture and supports authors, publishers, and industry organisations. It counters some of the barriers to publishing in place, and increasing structural barriers to publication (noting multiple interviewees highlighted AAWP's partnership with Ubud Writers and Readers Festival – now a suite of three prizes for prose, poetry, and translation – is 'fantastic').
- The system of co-optees as a mentorship program for executive presence works well. This gives prospective executive members insight into the organisational function of AAWP, with the support of portfolio leads and without needing to take on a full ECoM role from the outset. This gives marginalised members more opportunities to become part of AAWP's leadership.

#### **Research practice:**

- Showcasing and celebrating research, both creative and critical, that uplifts values of access, equity, diversity, and inclusion.

- Several interviewees discussed their various efforts of 'smuggling in' values of equity, accessibility, diversity, and inclusion into their work, even when not supported by their university, and appreciating others who do the same.
  - This includes: assigning work by minoritised and marginalised writers in their classes; embedding postcolonial, feminist, queer, and mad approaches in their research projects; and looking for and welcoming more diverse reading experiences into their scholarly and artistic identity, beyond Western, anglophone, and culturally Christian models of literary appreciation.