

RED
ROOM
POETRY

2023 ANNUAL REPORT



cool undercurrent off the high winds
brings the smell of rain
watch the storm move across the sky
high enough to grasp the stars

~ Barrina South from 'Shifting', commissioned for
Poetry Month, #30in30

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Layne Brown, Yuin Custodian. Image by Tawfik Elgazzar

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF COUNTRY

Red Room Poetry acknowledges the Elders and Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters, skies and languages where we live, work, write and share poetry. We are grateful to collaborate with First Nations people, and respect their continuing cultures as we move across Country.

OUR STORY

The ocean is a pulse
stuttering, a beat
bleating, a wave fractured and flat lining
(I know, my love, I know)

~ Helena Fox, from 'Elegy for a living sea', commissioned for POEM FOREST

Red Room Poetry is Australia's leading organisation for commissioning, creating, publishing, performing and promoting contemporary poetry in all its forms. We aim to make poetry vibrant, relevant and accessible for all.

We amplify First Nations voices, foster emerging and developing poets, and collaborate with communities to make positive change through educational, environmental, mental health and refugee programs.

We present live poetry events in every state and territory and offer events and workshops online, mostly for free.

Over twenty years we have produced hundreds of poetry events, published over thirty-five thousand

poems, launched the careers of a generation of writers, commissioned and paid well over a thousand poets, engaged over two hundred thousand students, and developed the world's largest library of contemporary Australian poetry.

You can meet our poets and read their poems any time at redroompoetry.org

Australia's poetic landscape is experiencing a vibrant renaissance, and at the heart of this cultural awakening stands Red Room Poetry, the nation's leading platform for commissioning poets.

~ Tammy Moir, *Happy Mag*,
22 July 2023



FROM OUR CHAIR

What an incredible showcase and celebration of the diversity and scope of Australian poetry. What Red Room Poetry delivered with the Poetry Month Gala was nothing short of life-affirming.

~ Benjamin Law, Poetry Month Gala Host



Over 2023, Red Room Poetry continued to grow its signature projects – Poetry Month, POEM FOREST and Poetry in First Languages. We also furthered our commitment to poetic education, sustainable careers and under-represented voices through the Red Room Fellowships, Emerging Poets Residency, Fair Trade, MAD Poetry and Writing in Resistance. The financials are robust and sustainable, thanks to the prudence of the team and the generous support of all our benefactors.

We also celebrated our 20th birthday, which we marked with the publication of *A Line in the Sand: 20 Years of Red Room Poetry* (Pantera Press). Some of the eighty poets represented took part in the National Poetry Month Gala in August.

Full of verve and brimming with talent, the Gala was Australian poetry at its

best – and a moment of deep joy for all of us at Red Room. Minister Burke, who spoke at the event, summed up the power of poetry perfectly. When we read or hear a poem, he said, we're not only inhabiting the world of its maker, 'we're also understanding our own experience at a deeper level than we might have done previously.' Empathy and depth. Poetry wrings more out of life and language.

The year ended with the departure of our Artistic Director Tamryn Bennett, after over a decade of inspired leadership. Her legacy is immense, and we are fortunate that she will continue to provide strategic guidance both as a board director and project producer. Jonty Claypole MBE – a British-Australian, who was Director of Arts at the BBC for many years – has joined as CEO, while David Stavanger and Nicole

Smede – fine poets as well as producers – have taken up post as joint Artistic Directors.

Finally, 2023 was John B. Fairfax AO's final year as Patron. His generosity and wisdom have been invaluable to the organisation. On behalf of the board, I thank him deeply. Red Room simply wouldn't be here without his support. He nurtured it from its early days and he should feel as proud as anyone for what it has achieved.

As we enter 2024, we look forward to the next two decades supporting Australia's most vibrant and inclusive art-form: poetry. There are always challenges, but we now have legacy, as well as our trademark spirit of innovation, to drive us forwards.

Hon. MA Pembroke

FROM OUR CEO

Australian poetry has never been more vibrant, diverse and inclusive than it is today. It gives voice to the silenced and agency to all. It is practiced by the old and the young, the wealthy and the poor. There are few barriers to participation, except time to think, the confidence to create and a community with which to share.

Here at Red Room Poetry we are committed to providing these things. We are proud to have played a role in the success story of Australian poetry over the last twenty years, being one part of a delicate ecology of support. Our mission remains what it has always been: to make poetry highly visible, relevant and accessible, especially to those who face the greatest barriers to creative opportunities.

2023 was a triumphant year in which Poetry Month, POEM FOREST and Poetry in

First Languages continued to expand, acquiring new audiences and participants. We also found time to look back over the last twenty years to celebrate everything we – and the poets we support – have achieved in that time. We finished the year with a modest surplus, which provides resilience and security for us to plan long ahead.

These achievements are reflected in the data collected by Culture Counts, which runs through this report. Of 586 survey respondents, 95% reported having a good or excellent experience with Red Room in 2023. 100% indicated that they would attend or engage with Red Room again as a result of those experiences.

I want to join Michael in thanking the precious community of supporters who enable Red Room to continue this work:

Creative Australia, Create NSW, Oranges & Sardines, John B. Fairfax AO, Bret Walker AO, and the host of partners and donors who understand that when you invest in poetry, you invest in the creative enrichment of Australia as a whole. I also want to thank the Red Room board and the Wisdom Circle for their time and guidance, our dedicated team, and of course the poets we work with and the audiences who listen and share.

Red Room is an arts organisation run by artists. Nearly all of our team are published or emerging poets. They live and breathe the art-form they support. That care is evident in all of our program and I look forward to playing my part in building the organisation over the coming years.

Jonty Claypole MBE



Poetry is beyond time. It's a way of bringing together the countless generations of humanity. It's a means of connecting past and present. It's a way of imagining the future.

~ L-Fresh the Lion, Poetry Month Ambassador

FROM OUR ARTISTIC DIRECTORS

past relations are sour but united
we have more power

together we can walk that mile

~ Sean Choolburra from 'Together We Can Walk That Mile',
Poetry Month Ambassador

Change - and responding to its challenges and possibilities - is often at the heart of the arts. Following on from the visionary leadership of Tamryn Bennett, we are both honoured and humbled to have stepped up as Artistic Directors, having both previously produced a number of key projects across Red Room Poetry.

Looking to the future we are excited to further shape and refine Red Room's programs, building on a year that saw the consolidation of our world-class initiatives as well as cultivating new growth within these spaces to ensure poetry always has the opportunity to take hold in unusual places, especially where it is not always expected to thrive. Led by Poetry Month, we received our strongest survey results yet in relation to Red Room's remit to increase the profile of Australian poetry, broaden pathways to poetry in

this country, and to make the artform visible and accessible to all. Guided by the core values of care, collaboration, invention, authenticity, representation, participation, accessibility, creation, quality, and play we look forward to continuing to platform poetry in all its forms.

Amplifying the stories and voices of First Nations and marginalised people remains at the forefront of our work, and we want to acknowledge the importance and responsibility of this position in a climate where cultures across the world continue to face oppression and occupation, and in many cases censorship. As Artistic Directors we are united in our commitment to standing by our poets, as well as raising awareness and advocating through our programming. As Andy Jackson, one of our 2023 Poetry Month commissioned artists,

says in his reflection on our artform, "the poetry community – the mycelium between poets and readers – is a very potent fuel for solidarity and change".

We are guided in this work by the Wisdom Circle - Red Room's First Nations advisory group that was re-established in 2023 - alongside a whole team commitment to centering First Nations voices and perspectives via our Truth and Reconciliation pledge, a set of guiding principles created with care and consideration to challenge and push us towards greater solidarity and decolonisation in our work.

Our whole creative team invites you to spend some time with one of last year's 116 commissioned poems as an ember to create a spark, and we look forward to seeing you in person or online within the glowing lights of 2024's program.

**Nicole Smede &
David Stavanger**

Poem library > redroompoetry.org/poems/



2023 KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

I am all yours
Please, my lovely last-chance girl,
read between my lines.

~ Dorothy Porter from 'Reading Between My Lines', Poetry Month, #30in30

116

116 new poems
created and
published

148

148 poets and
artists paid

52

52 activities and
events delivered
live and digitally

4,700+

4,700+ downloads of
learning resources

14,645

14,645 participants in
online and live workshops,
events and competitions

30

30 creative
learning
workshops
delivered

33

33 partner
collaborations

6400

6400 student
poems from 840
schools for POEM
FOREST

95%

95% of survey
respondents (poets,
participants and
audience) reported
a good or excellent
experience with
Red Room

100%

100% of survey
respondents (poets,
participants and
audience) indicated
that they would
attend or engage
with Red Room again

80

80 commissioned
poems republished
in *A Line in the Sand:
20 Years of Red
Room Poetry*

10%

10% growth
in audience
and digital
engagement
from 2022

5M

5M digital and
media engagements

OUR POETS

Juran Adams
 Claire Albrecht
 Susie Anderson
 Manisha Anjali
 Evelyn Araluen
 Ghazal Asgari
 Kryton Assheton
 Mohammad Awad
 Bebe Backhouse
 Emilie Zoey Baker
 Magdalena Ball
 Spencer Barberis
 Alinta Barlow
 Stuart Barnes
 Cassandra Barnett
 Sophia Barone
 Ethan Bell
 Maxine Beneba Clarke
 Leanne Betasamosake
 Simpson
 Blakboi
 Kim Cheng Boey
 Jarad Bruinstroop
 Pascale Burton
 Paul Capsis
 Rhyann Clapham
 Ali Cobby Eckermann
 Andrew Cox
 Anwen Crawford
 Freya Daly Sadgrove
 Joel Davison
 Sarah Day
 Shastra Deo
 Blackman Dreaming
 Kristen Dunphy
 Robin Eames

Anne Elvey
 Chloe Escott
 Heidi Everett
 Dakota Feirer
 Toby Fitch
 Es Foong
 Helena Fox
 Declan Fry
 Brian Fuata
 Juan Garrido Salgado
 Aries Gaucutan
 Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes
 Sahar Gh
 Anahera Gildea
 Madison Godfrey
 Andrea Goldsmith
 Eloise Grills
 Patrick Gunasekera
 Lajos Hamers
 Marieke Hardy
 Joy Harjo
 Natalie Harkin
 Golestan Hatami
 Sean Healy
 Julie-Ann Henninger
 Jenny Hickingbotham
 Ruby Hillsmith
 Maya Hodge
 Sarah Holland-Batt
 Kevin Jared Hosein
 Penny Hoswell
 Darby Hudson
 Jackie Huggins
 Damion Hunter
 Nadine Anne Hura
 Chika Ikogwe

Andie Isalie
 Holly Isemonger
 Andy Jackson
 Anna Jacobson
 Aunty Thelma James
 Ghazaleh Jamshidpour
 Erik Jensen
 James Jiang
 Jill Jones
 Anthony Joseph
 Sukhjit Kaur Khalsa
 Raelee Lancaster
 Benjamin Law
 Cheryl Leavy
 Tegan Leigh
 Rozanna Lilley
 Lulu Littler
 Miriam Wei Wei Lo
 Yleia Mariano
 Warren Mason
 Laurie May
 McKisko
 Rachael Mead
 Scott-Patrick Mitchell
 Jazz Money
 Kerry Moran
 Mark Mordue
 Evelyn Ida Morris
 Jacob Morris
 Andrew Moss
 Tara Moss
 David Motamed
 Lorna Munro
 Melanie Mununggurr
 Harper Murray
 Indira Naidoo

Nat's What I Reckon
 Anna Naupa
 Khatareh Nazari
 Lucy Norton
 Kaya Ortiz
 Laura Panopoulos
 Charmaine Papertalk Green
 Luke Patterson
 Renee Pettitt-Schipp
 Jodi Phillis
 Felicity Plunkett
 Dorothy Porter
 David Quirk
 Rhonda Radley
 Essa May Ranapiri
 Teela Reid
 Harry Reid
 Lorin Reid
 Lillian Rodrigues Pang
 Candy Royalle
 Rebecca Rushbrook
 Theresa Sainty
 Sara Saleh
 Craig Santos Perez
 Kirli Saunders
 Joseph Schwarzkopf
 Brooke Scobie
 Berndt Sellheim
 Lucinda Shannon
 Rebecca Shaw
 Nathan Shepherdson
 Elfie Shiosaki
 Beejay Silcox
 Peter Sipeli
 Sigbjørn Skåden
 Barrina South

Jonathan Sriranganathan
 Shane Strange
 Jacqueline Suskin
 Andrew Sutherland
 Heather Taylor Johnston
 Sarah Temporal
 L-Fresh The Lion
 Sandra Thibodeaux
 Mark Tredinnick
 Chris Tse
 Linda Tuhiwai Smith
 Nils Utsi
 Ellen van Neerven
 Saba Vasefi
 Sam Wagan Watson
 Chelsea Watego
 Sam Wagan Watson
 Emma Wehipeihana
 Lore White
 Ali Whitelock
 Alison Whittaker
 Megan Wilding
 Jennifer Wong
 Karen Wyld
 Joanna Yang

Poets and poems > redroompoetry.org/poets

POETRY MONTH



National Poetry Month Gala. Image by Tawfik Elgazzar

Red Room Poetry created Poetry Month (1-31 August) to celebrate and elevate Australian poetry in all of its forms. Our third Poetry Month consolidated and expanded upon a world class program, including new poem commissions, public competitions, a raft of live and online events - all amplified by widespread media support and campaigning by our eight Poetry Ambassadors (including Jennifer Wong, L-Fresh the Lion, Tara Moss, and Marieke Hardy).

Poetry showcases were held across all Australian states. Host partners included The Wheeler Centre, National Gallery of Australia, MONA, Queensland State Library,

Darwin Festival, Byron Writers Festival and City of Fremantle. The National Poetry Month Gala was staged at the Australian Chamber Orchestra's home in Sydney, and featured Benjamin Law, Sarah Holland-Batt, Minister Tony Burke, and some of Australia's leading poets.

There were many ways for the public to get involved, including the #30in30 Writing Competition (with the three winning poets to be published in early 2024), online workshops and panels, livestreamed events, an Accessible Open Mic for Disabled Creatives in partnership with Queensland Poetry.



Jazz Money, National Poetry Month Gala. Image by Tawfik Elgazzar

Poems and partners > redroompoetry.org/projects/poetry-month/2023



Performers, National Poetry Month Gala. Image by Tawfik Elgazzar

The opportunity Red Room gave me was incredible: a unique opportunity to show my work to an audience who truly GETS poetry (and wouldn't normally find it); enough money to pay the rent with poetry (a small miracle these days!); and a brightly coloured feather in the cap (Red Room are an institution)! Thank you so much!

~ Darby Hudson, #30in30 Commissioned poet



Jonathan Sriranganathan, QLD Poetry Month Showcase. Image by Josie Huang

OUTCOMES

- **35 poets** commissioned and published
- **102 artists** professionally employed
- **25 events** delivered
- **8 showcases** across every Australian state
- **1 sold-out** National Poetry Gala
- **9 Poetry Month Ambassadors** engaged
- **4000+ participants** in live and online events/workshops
- **10,731 people** viewed *Rise! Voices and Hands!* Circular Quay installation
- **1.78m+** reach across radio, digital and live platforms
- **32 media** features, including ABC RN, NITV Radio, Sydney Morning Herald, The Saturday Paper
- **98% of respondents** agreed that Poetry Month increased the profile of Australian poetry and made poetry visible and accessible to all

POEM FOREST

OUTCOMES

- **6,400+ student and teacher poems** created and published
- **6,400+ trees** planted with Wollongong City Council
- **10,000+ schools** received learning resources
- **15 workshops and events** delivered
- **209,800+ engagements** with learning resources and content
- **23 media features**
- **82% of participants** believed POEM FOREST 'made me feel connected to nature'

POEM FOREST is Red Room Poetry's nature-writing poetry prize. It invites students and teachers from around the country to use their words to take collective climate action. For every nature poem submitted, a tree is planted to help heal endangered habitats.

Red Room Poetry recognises that languages, literature and story are inextricably linked to Country. We work closely with communities to deliver POEM FOREST, centring First Nations voices and knowledges in caring for Country.

In 2023, 840 schools across Australia took part. We received over 6,400 poems - all published in our digital library - and planted more than 6,400 trees in partnership with

Wollongong City Council. Students and teachers had access to online workshops and resources to support their poetic explorations.

POEM FOREST empowers school aged children to connect with Country through observation and respect, nurturing the next generation of earth custodians. Not only does it help breathe new life into our natural world but also instills in participants the importance of positive climate action, reciprocity and right relationship with the land. These are inherent tenets to First Nations cultures all around the globe which will allow us to continue caring for Country for many generations to come.

~ Lucy Norton, POEM FOREST Workshop Facilitator

The ocean whispers to the whale,
Her calling answer rings out into the vast waters.

~ Marley D, Year 6, from A Whale's Wings', POEM FOREST Winner - Upper Primary (Y4-6)

This poem was inspired by climate change and human nature. I find climate change truly terrifying, but I have noticed that most people view it as background noise, as something for future generations to deal with. I wanted to raise awareness about this issue.

~ Audrey C, Year 8, Rosehill Secondary College (VIC)



POEM FOREST workshops. Images by Tawfik Elgazzar and Nina Kourea

Poems and partners > redroompoetry.org/projects/poem-forest/2023

FIRST NATIONS



Baraya Barry - Whale Song Pilot Workshop

Red Room Poetry's First Nations programs celebrate, share and conserve knowledge by supporting First Nations artists and Custodians of language and culture to work with communities in the practice of poetry, music, dance, and art. We are guided by our Wisdom Circle, connecting Elders, Custodians and young people. Our programs are delivered in close collaboration with many partners and communities.

In assessing the program, Culture Counts found that poets, Elders and participants 'strongly agreed that Red Room achieved their strategic objective of... supporting and celebrating First Nations poets and sharing new work for and with community, and celebrating and preserving language and culture on country.'

There is a real thirst and hunger to be taught and to learn in this way and it's a treat to be able to run a program like this and get our kids out and connected to Country, learning about language and carrying the stories and songlines forward... Across the day you see a kind of pride that starts to bubble in them, they stand a bit taller and they speak a bit louder and more confidently.

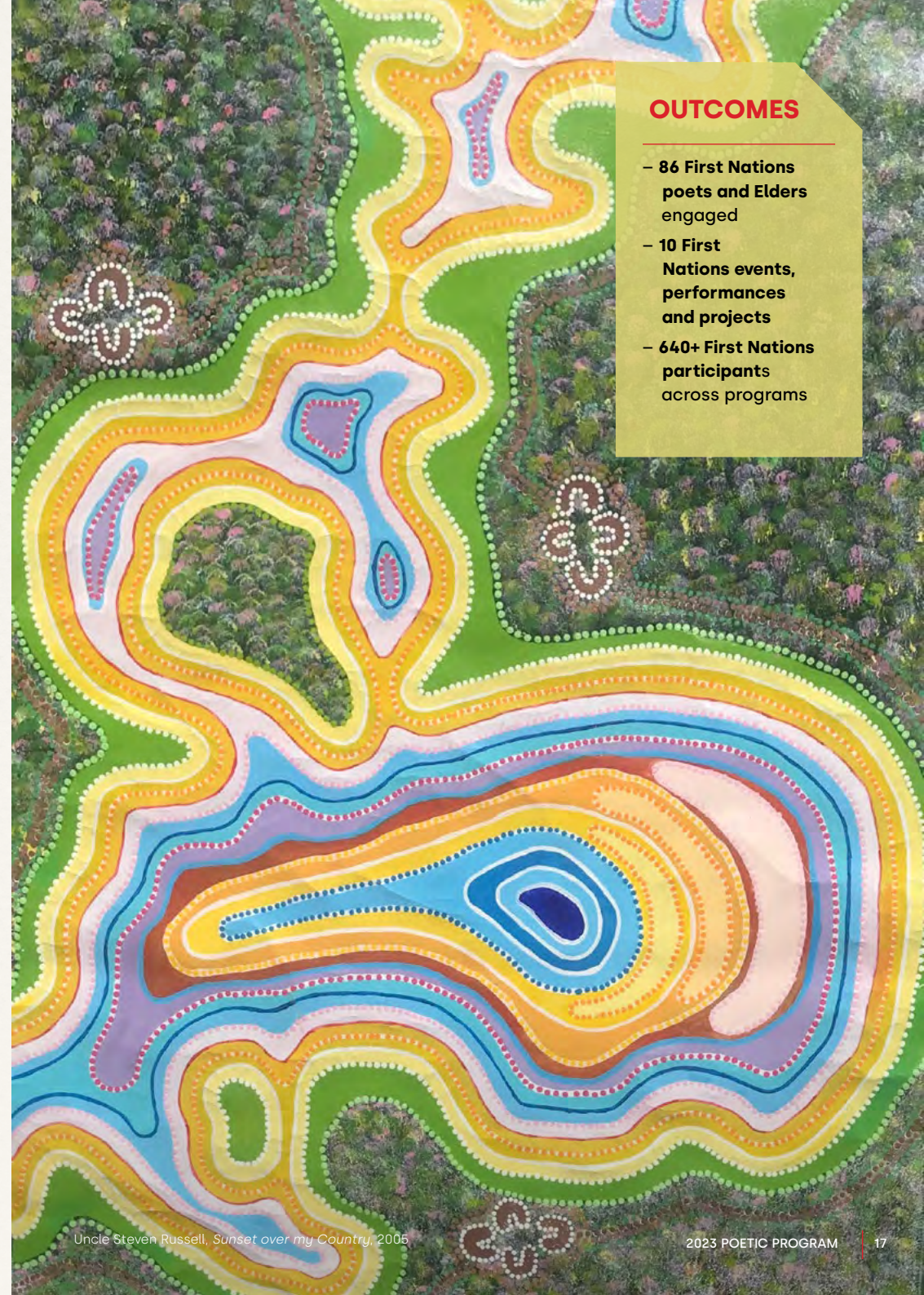
~ Kirli Saunders, OAM, Baraya Barry Pilot workshop facilitator, poet and First Nations Wisdom Circle member



Poet Kirli Saunders.
Image by Tawfik Elgazzar

OUTCOMES

- 86 First Nations poets and Elders engaged
- 10 First Nations events, performances and projects
- 640+ First Nations participants across programs



Uncle Steven Russell, *Sunset over my Country*, 2005

FAIR TRADE

In 2023, Fair Trade, led by Maori-Australian Anne-Marie (Ani) Te Whiu, continued to enable groundbreaking, cross-border collaborative commissions. Five Australian First Nations poets were paired with five international First Nations poets to create a suite of poems, and present at partnered events. A book of the commissions will be published in early 2024.

FOR OUR ELDERS - NAIDOC 2023

Celebrating the 2023 NAIDOC theme 'For our Elders', we paid tribute to our Elders and their wisdom through new poem commissions and a learning resource. The 2023 NAIDOC For our Elders program invited us to listen to the wisdom of knowledge holders to better understand the past and present, and how we may shape the future together.

The project commissioned new poetic works across three languages from emerging poets Auntie Theresa Sainty, Auntie

Rhonda Radley, and Auntie Kerry Moran, and an artwork from Uncle Steven Russell.

The curriculum-aligned resource, created in collaboration with Erin's Learning Channel (a Gamilaroi First Nations Education Consultant), invites students and teachers to think, reflect and yarn about the importance of our Elders and what the NAIDOC theme means. The resource was downloaded 304 times, and excerpts and activities from the resource were shared across socials during 2023 NAIDOC week.

I love the idea of offering Elders from different communities the opportunity to participate in this fantastic project. It speaks to the reality of our Peoples - that is we are many, with different languages and cultures, but we all come from the same set of life values that are articulated in many ways.

~ Elder participant in
For our Elders



Poets Lorna Munro and Luke Patterson,
Rise! Voices and Hands! Image by Tawfik Elgazzar

BARAYA BARRAY - WHALE SONG

During 2023, Red Room Poetry developed and piloted *Baraya Barray - Whale Song* - a cultural immersion project celebrating language through the creation of poetry, song and dance, listening and learning from our original language holders - the Whales. Over three years (2024 to 2026) the project will connect Saltwater communities up the east coast from

Lutruwita (TAS) to Bundajung and Yugambeh Coast (QLD), exploring the intersection of language, culture, poetry, art, science and conservation.

The success of the pilot program, and the feedback received from custodians and community, has assisted the development and shaping of the series of face-to-face workshops. They will commence in May 2024, beginning a journey of language and culture embodiment

through intergenerational connection for students with Elders, kin and Country.

In August, a film of the pilot workshop was screened at the PULiIMA Indigenous Language and Technology Conference in Darwin. Over a hundred First Nations people from different language groups learnt about the project vision, and connected by writing and sharing their personal whale songline poems in language and movement.



Baraya Barray - Whale Song Pilot Workshop

Projects & partners > redroompoetry.org/projects/poetry-in-first-languages

RED ROOM POETRY FELLOWSHIP



Poet Charmaine Papertalk Green; Image by Tad Souden

The Red Room Poetry Fellowship was established to foster creative and professional development of an individual within the wider poetic community.

The 2023 Red Room Poetry Fellow was Yamaji poet Charmaine Papertalk Green. Her project *Jugarnu Wangga Migamanmanha* (*Older woman making talk*) brought to life her concept of storytelling through literature, enabling Charmaine to extend her poetic practice by examining, engaging and decolonising two forms of poetry - cento and cinquain.

Charmaine undertook a two-week residency at Bundanon, and during that time gave a public reading in the Bundanon Art Museum, a workshop with local high school students from Bomaderry highschool and an online workshop for Poetry Month, as well as featuring at the Poetry Month Gala in Sydney.

Red Room also commissioned the nine shortlisted poets to create new poems, which were published on the website and our social channels.

The session gave me a respectful opportunity to simply listen to Charmaine's voice and the cultural values embedded in her project...there is an urgency in her work that she spoke about profoundly and deeply.

~ Workshop Participant, Poetry Month Digital Workshop

OUTCOMES

- 10 poets commissioned and published
- 1 Poetry Fellow engaged
- 4 public events, performances and workshops
- 4463 Digital audience
- 129 Participants

Walgajunmanha Walgajunmanha
My faith is in our Ancestors

We carried it forward
For the nyarlu black woman

~ Charmaine Papertalk Green, from 'Etched in My Mind', Red Room Poetry Fellowship

Poems and partners > redroompoetry.org/projects/fellowship/2023

EMERGING POETS RESIDENCY



Moonrise on the River

In 2023, Red Room Poetry launched the Emerging Poets Residency to encourage the creative trajectory of emerging Australian poets.

The one-week Residency was hosted at Moonrise on the River, on Yuin country (Bermagui). It provided 2 emerging poets with a creative space and paid stipend to support an intensive period of creative development.

Over 80 poets applied from around Australia. The 2023 Residencies were offered to Gamilaraay/ Gomeroi poet Lulu Houdini,

I speak an endangered language
when stories were taught in sand
it too, has been displaced
but the grains
remember the lessons
from that sand classroom

~ Lulu Houdini from 'sand classroom', Emerging Poets Residency 2023

from Queensland, and West Australian poet, Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes, originally from Lalibela, Ethiopia. Two poems were commissioned from each, and published in Red Room Poetry's digital library.

Having space to sit in nature for a whole week allowed me to connect to that nature-based poetry practice of my childhood. It was a very spiritual experience, going for long walks through the bush and reflecting on my place in Australia and the spirits that live in this land. I made significant progress

on my first major poetry collection/memoir, and feel like the experience has changed how I end the collection as a whole. Thank you so much for this incredible opportunity.

~ Yirga Gelaw Woldeyes, Emerging Poets Residency 2023

OUTCOMES

- 2 emerging poets commissioned and engaged
- 4 poems published

Poems and partners > redroompoetry.org/projects/emerging-poets-residency

A LINE IN THE SAND 20 YEARS OF RED ROOM POETRY



For twenty years, since our foundation in 2003, Red Room Poetry has supported and commissioned Australian poets, nurturing new and emerging talent and providing a platform for established voices. To mark this anniversary, we partnered with Pantera Press on *A Line in the Sand: 20 Years of Red Room Poetry*.

Published on 1 August 2023, with a foreword by Ali Cobby Eckermann, *A Line in the Sand* collects over eighty stand-out poems commissioned by Red Room over the last two decades from many of Australia's (now) leading poets.

To promote the book, we presented events across Australia as part of Poetry Month. *A Line in the Sand* was also the focus of the National Poetry Month Gala.

And the last bristles from your face
that are not ash

blown by the wind in autumn
in the park on sunset.

The murmur of blood through the heart,
this was mine.

~ Evie Wyld from 'Floorboards', *A Line in the Sand: 20 Years of Red Room Poetry*

OUTCOMES

- 80 poets published
- 3 live/online launch events
- 3 reviews in print



Tamryn Bennett & Lorin Reid, National Poetry Month Gala.
Image by Tawfik Elgazzar



For two decades, Red Room Poetry has commissioned and published poetry from a swathe of writers (new, student, emerging, established), supporting them on page and stage. *A Line in the Sand* is a veritable who's who compendium of Australian poets who have been nurtured by this organisation, and a celebratory showcase of their wares.

~ ARTSHUB, Review of *A Line in the Sand*, 3 August 2023

Partners and poets > redroompoetry.org/projects/a-line-in-the-sand/

MAD POETRY

I am still trying to convince
My lungs,
Oxygen has not left the room

~ Mohammad Awad from 'Episode(s)',
Admissions: Voices within Mental Health

Red Room Poetry's MAD Poetry creates a safe writing space for experienced and emerging voices with a lived experience of mental health issues and illness to express how they see the world.

In 2022, Red Room published the groundbreaking anthology *Admissions: Voices Within Mental Health*. During 2023 we presented a series of live *Admissions* events and MAD Poetry sessions at bookshops and festivals, including

the Sydney, Brisbane and Byron Writers Festivals. We also delivered a national series of online workshops in a new partnership with Wellways. This resulted in booked out workshops and strong attendance across October as part of Mental Health Month.

In October, Red Room Poetry (and lead producer David Stavanger) received the Wayahead Mental Health Matters Media and the Arts Award for MAD Poetry + Admissions.

OUTCOMES

- 5 poets commissioned
- 10 workshops and events
- 180+ participants in workshops

The MAD Poetry workshops were free, flexible, supportive, non-judgemental, and run by experienced writers who also had lived experience of mental health issues. Half of the poems in the Admissions anthology are a result of these workshops and a call-out for 30 emerging voices which also appear in the anthology. The result of these programs benefits everyone.

~ Compulsive Reader, 2023 review of *Admissions*



Admissions panel at Sydney Writers Festival. Image by Tawfik Elgazzar

Poems and partners > redroompoetry.org/projects/mad-poetry/

WRITING IN RESISTANCE



Saba Vasefi with Writing in Resistance participants, Art Gallery of NSW. Image Tawfik Elgazzar

Writing in Resistance is led by journalist, scholar and poet Dr Saba Vasefi in collaboration with Red Room Poetry. The project works with women and non-binaries who have experienced Australia's offshore detention regime, to develop and publish their poetry.

In 2023 we commissioned, translated, and published a series of poems from Iranian women who experienced gendered

violence, systematic oppression and life in detention on Nauru. In honour of the anniversary of the Woman, Life, Freedom movement in Iran. A culminating performance of the poems was held in partnership with the Art Gallery of NSW, resulting in news coverage by SBS.

Additional Writing in Resistance workshops were also held at Villawood Detention Centre with refugee communities.

Like a shell
that waves pound to the cliffs,
-fatigue and fracture-
fled from the mountains of death
I landed on the Island of terror.

~ Golestan Hatami, from 'Miscarriage of Injustice', Writing in Resistance. Translated by Saba Vasefi.

Partners and poets > redroompoetry.org/projects/writing-in-resistance

OUTCOMES

- 5 poets commissioned
- 3 workshops
- 1 event
- 2 media pieces

I've endured loneliness and grief for a long time, and my suffering has often been overlooked, not just by the governments of Iran and Australia but also by many human rights organizations and self-proclaimed refugee advocates. It seems that they select who they support, and their assistance appears conditional. However, having the opportunity to share my feelings, pain, and grief has revitalized me and boosted my self-esteem and sense of belonging. It reminds me that humanity is not entirely lost.

~ Ghazal Asgari, commissioned poet and participant

CREATIVE EDUCATION

Quicken your pace, soften your stride
Peer through the foliage and witness a treasure
Are you close? Can you hear?

~ Bridgette, Year 7 from 'The Last Astrolasia Seed', winner of the POEM FOREST Threatened Species Prize, 2023

The ability to read and write poetry is a precious skill, proven to increase empathy, life chances and wellbeing. From POEM FOREST to MAD Poetry, our digital workshops and Emerging Poets Fellowships, Red Room Poetry is committed to supporting lifelong creative learning for everyone.

In 2023, we delivered 30 poetry workshops across the breadth of our projects. Each was conducted by a poet using methodology

developed by Red Room over the last twenty years, as well as their own insights, expertise and - of course - talent.

Alongside our 148 commissioned poets, over 6,500 students and adults wrote poems after participating in our workshops, or responding to our open calls, prompts and competitions. For many, it was the first time they had ever done so.

Our digital learning resources were downloaded

over 4,700 times, and more than 11,000 school students joined us in poetry workshops.

Culture Counts, our independent evaluators, found that students strongly agreed that Red Room contributed to the development of their arts practice (93%), opened up new work opportunities (80%), improved their financial situation (74%), and made them feel positive about the community's future (100%).

SOCIAL IMPACT

I transcend gloom,
beyond punishment, pain and expulsion
resolute, unswayed, unafraid
I treasure resistance.

~ Ghazaleh Jamshidpour, from 'Humanity's Rays',
Writing in Resistance. Translated by Saba Vasefi



Poets, MAD Poetry: Kirli Saunders, David Stavanger, Mohammad Awad, Nat's What I Reckon & Kirsten Dunphy. Image by Tawfik Elgazzar

Red Room Poetry strives to ensure that Australian poetry represents the breadth of our peoples and culture, because we look to poetry - both through history and today - to hear the voice of a nation.

Our signature projects - Poetry Month, Poetry in First Languages and POEM FOREST - are designed to increase creative participation for all Australians, while also celebrating First Nations languages and diaspora voices. In addition, we run projects like Writing in Resistance and MAD

Poetry, which provide safe and structured support for refugees and those with lived experience of mental illness to share their experiences through poetry.

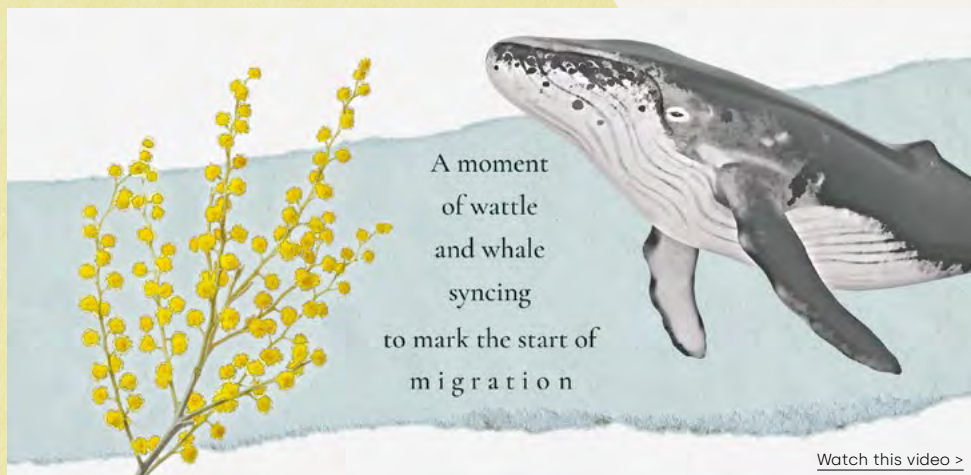
Through Culture Counts and Google Analytics, we have developed an understanding of our audience, which reflects this commitment to social impact. Our largest segment, by far, is under 25s, of whom over two-thirds identify as women. Over 20% of survey respondents live with a disability, or are born overseas, or are LGBTQ+.

Red Room's audiences, participants and poets were most likely to agree that the programs they took part in celebrated their cultural heritage, strengthened their cultural pride, and made them feel that their contribution mattered.

~ Culture Counts

POEM FOREST Workshop.
Image by Tawfik Elgazzar





DIGITAL FIRST

‘electrify everything’ said on salaries of six figures
in nations not submerged, in a future stolen
from brown bodies beneath the sea.

~ @kootie75, Winner, Poetry Month daily #30in30 competition, 7 August 2023

Red Room Poetry is a sector leader in the use of digital technology to increase access to poetry. Most of our events and workshops are online, allowing for participation by Australians in every state, including those who face the greatest barriers to creative opportunities.

Inspired by the Poetry Foundation in America, we have built the largest digital archive of Australian poetry, consisting of more than 20,000 contemporary Australian poems - all

searchable by title, author and key words, and visited by over 160,000 people a year.

Identifying a gap in the market, we have prioritised the development of digital learning resources and made them available through the Poetic Learning page of our website. These resources were downloaded thousands of times in 2023, predominantly by school teachers and students, proving the need for poetry-based learning materials in schools.

In 2023, we also launched our first podcast - Line Break - to gather together content created during Poetry Month.

In all, we are pleased to report that our online reach grew significantly, with a 9% increase in website sessions and 34% increase in social media reach, ensuring that people throughout Australia can participate in our work.

OUR TEAM

Board

Chair

Hon. Michael Pembroke

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(from Nov 2023)

Member

Andrew FitzSimons

Member

Judy Foster

Member

Martin Green

Member

Emma Maple-Brown
(from Nov 2023)

Member

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First Nations Wisdom Circle

Language Mentor

Daryn McKenny

Language Mentor

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Cultural Mentor

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Staff

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Claire Albrecht

Artistic Director

Dr Tamryn Bennett (to Dec 2023)

Digital & Administrative Coordinator

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Jonty Claypole MBE

Development Director

Rebecca Cuschieri

Marketing & Communications Manager

Rani Ghazzaoui

General Manager

Lorin Reid (to Dec 2023)

Creative Producer

Izzy Roberts-Orr

Artistic Director - First Nations

Nicole Smede

Artistic Director

David Stavanger

Marketing & Communications Coordinator

Annie Yoshida (to Dec 2023)

and our dedicated interns and volunteers

Our team > redroompoetry.org/about

OUR SUPPORTERS

Thank you to the supporters, communities and partners who helped us publish thousands of poems in 2023.

Government Supporters



Red Room Poetry is assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts investment and advisory body, and proudly funded by the NSW Government in association with Create NSW and Multicultural NSW. In 2023 we were supported by Creative Partnerships Australia (now Creative Australia) through Plus 1.

Principal Supporters

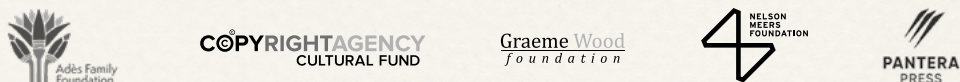
John B. Fairfax AO

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Major Supporters



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Alexandra Mason & Richard
Harris
Paul Ruiz
Annalise Fairfax
David & Jenny Turner
and other generous friends

OUR PARTNERS AND COLLABORATORS

Red Room Poetry works with poetic partners and collaborators across the country to make poetry vibrant, relevant and accessible. We thank you for inspiring and encouraging us.

107 Projects
Australian Chamber Orchestra
Australian Poetry
Asia Pacific Writers & Translators Inc.
Art Gallery of NSW
Australian Botanic Garden Mount Annan
Baker McKenzie
Bramble
Byron Writers Festival
Bundanon
Carla Zampatti
City of Fremantle
Clickview
Corban & Blair
Community Radio Network
DART Learning
Darwin Festival
Enough Said Books
Landcom
Magabala Books
Miromaa Language and Technology Centre
MONA
Moonrise on the River
Murdoch Books
National Gallery of Australia

New Zealand Book Awards
Pan Macmillan
Pantera Press
Queensland Poetry
Readings
State Library of QLD
Storybox
South Coast Writers Centre
Survivors Of Suicide and Friends
Sydney Writers' Festival
The Kennedy Centre - Turnaround Arts
The Wheeler Centre
Upswell Publishing
Wellways
Wollongong Botanic Garden
Wollongong City Council
Wollongong Writers Festival
Wonderground Journal
Writers SA

The Red Room Company Ltd is listed on the Register of Cultural Organisations, is a registered charity with the ACNC, and has Deductible Gift Recipient (DGR) status. Donations of \$2 or more to Red Room Company Ltd are tax-deductible for Australian tax-payers.

Donate to Red Room > redroompoetry.org/donate

FINANCIALS

STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME

For the year ended 31 December 2023

	Year ended 31 December 2023 \$	Year ended 31 December 2022 \$
Donations and non-government grants	624,002	520,902
Government grants	605,106	531,860
Other revenue	79,928	53,798
Total revenue	1,309,036	1,106,560
Employee expenses	(369,018)	(297,647)
Business development expenses	(82,798)	(80,214)
Artswoker expenses	(232,542)	(192,137)
Poetry commissions and appearance fees	(114,900)	(125,372)
Production costs	(83,888)	(81,354)
Contractor expenses	(97,616)	(47,464)
Consumables and office expenses	(16,895)	(24,786)
Publicity and promotion	(29,093)	(45,658)
Accounting and audit	(18,715)	(17,732)
Insurances	(16,205)	(15,295)
Travel costs	(29,658)	(16,270)
Repairs and maintenance	-	(255)
Depreciation expenses	(3,989)	(2,335)
Other expenses	(19,573)	(21,758)
Results from operating activities	194,146	138,283
Finance income	35,296	4,178
Surplus before income tax expense	229,442	142,461
Income tax expense	-	-
Surplus after income tax expense	229,442	142,461
Total comprehensive income for the year	229,442	142,461

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION

As at 31 December 2023

	As at 31 December 2023 \$	As at 31 December 2022 \$
Assets Current		
Cash and cash equivalents	652,856	682,768
Trade and other receivables	33,341	21,748
Other financial assets	850,004	800,000
Total current assets	1,536,201	1,504,516
Assets Non-Current		
Plant and equipment	12,347	5,970
Total non-current assets	12,347	5,970
Total assets	1,548,548	1,510,486
Liabilities Current		
Trade and other payables	76,870	80,437
Deferred revenue	238,507	400,289
Employee entitlements	27,463	29,731
Total current liabilities	342,840	510,457
Liabilities Non-Current		
Employee entitlements	-	23,763
Total non-current liabilities	-	23,763
Total liabilities	342,840	534,220
Net assets	1,205,708	976,266
Equity		
Accumulated surplus	1,205,708	976,266
Total equity	1,205,708	976,266

Full financial report available on request, including notes which should be read in conjunction with these statements.



Red Room Poetry

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