

A Short History of the Literature Board

1986–2000

Irene Stevens



Australian Government



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Irene Stevens PSM, BA (Macquarie), MA (Sydney), Diploma Children's Literature (Macquarie), has worked as an arts administrator since 1974 when she was employed by the Australia Council in the Community Arts Section. She transferred to the Literature Board in 1976, where she served as project officer, senior program officer, acting director and manager until she retired in 1996. In recent years, Irene has been employed part-time by the NSW Ministry of the Arts to assist with its literature and history program, as well as the NSW Premier's Literary and History Awards. In 1997 Irene was awarded the Public Service Medal for her contribution to Australian literature.

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I was commissioned by the Literature Board of the Australia Council in May 2001 to write the Board's history for the years 1986 to 2000. This history is a continuation of the far more detailed history of the Board 1973–85, written by Tom Shapcott when he was the director of the Board, and published by the University of Queensland Press.

I have had a close association with the Australia Council since 1974, working with the Literature Board from 1976–96 in a variety of positions, and thus was able to observe closely the workings of the Board practically from its beginning in 1973. I had the privilege of working with three directors during this time: Dr Michael Costigan (the Board's first director, 1973–82), Tom Shapcott (1982–90) and Sandra Forbes (1990–95).

In addition, over the years I was extremely fortunate to be associated with many leading figures in the Australian literary world: with Board chairs—Nancy Keesing, Bob Brissenden, Rosemary Wighton, Brian Matthews, Marion Halligan and Edmund Campion—and with the outstanding writers, publishers, critics and academics who served the Literature Board as members so untiringly and selflessly. A list of Board members for the years 1986–2003 is on page 33.

It was a difficult task to attempt to cover the Board's many activities in the years under review in such a brief history, and to select a few examples of the valuable and often ground-breaking initiatives funded by the Board during that time. I trust that I have managed to give some idea of the good work undertaken by so many people in their work for the Literature Board on behalf of Australian writers and writing.

Many thanks are due to those who helped me in this task, notably present and past staff of the Literature Unit of the Australia Council and, in particular, Nicola Evans, who provided valuable editorial advice.

I dedicate this history to the memory of Nancy Keesing, Bob Brissenden, Rosemary Wighton, Thea Astley, Nick Enright, Richard Hall, John Iremonger, Julie Lewis and Vivien Chu, who all served the Literature Board with devotion and love.

Irene Stevens

FOREWORD

The Literature Board commissioned Irene Stevens to write a brief history of the Board covering the period 1986 – 2000 as a timely sequel to Thomas Shapcott's invaluable book, *The Literature Board: A Brief History*. Published in 1988 by the University of Queensland Press, Shapcott's *History* offered a survey of Board policies and funding decisions for the period 1973–86.

In the 15 years following the period covered by Shapcott's *History*, the Australia Council has undergone some significant changes, most notably the organisational restructure of the mid-90s. In *A Short History of the Literature Board: 1986–2000*, Irene Stevens provides an overview of the changes that have affected the decision-making processes and funding priorities of the Board and looks briefly at the response of the Australian writing community to the rationalisation of funding programs.

Irene looks at the evolution of grant programs over the 15-year period—the demise of those that had fulfilled their purpose and the development of new programs and initiatives that benefited previously under-recognised members of the writing community, like regional and emerging writers.

She provides interesting examples of partnerships forged between the Board and public, commercial and educational sectors which have been of tremendous benefit to editors, translators and picture-book illustrators. Irene charts the development of the Board's core funding activities particularly in the areas of publishing, promotions and skills development. Comprehensive funding tables allow the reader to track the Board's support of key literary activities.

The Board has always and will always have its fair share of critics. In the period covered by Irene's *History*, one of the issues that generated most public criticism was the perceived commercialisation of the Council's interests following the major restructure of the mid-90s. Individual artists felt that their needs were being overshadowed by the Council-wide emphasis on audience and market development.

In fact, as Irene points out several times, the Literature Board's commitment to individual writers never waned despite significant budget constraints and new policy directions. It is worth noting that in the period covered by the *History*, the Board consistently devoted over 50 per cent of its budget to the funding of individual writers through Fellowships and writers' grants.

Often the briefest histories are the hardest to prepare—from a mountain of research material one must deftly extract the most salient points. Irene has written a lucid and engaging overview of a challenging period in the history of the Literature Board. Her long and distinguished association with the Literature Board together with her deep knowledge of the Australian literary community certainly made her the most qualified person for the job and we thank her for taking it on with such enthusiasm.

I hope that the online publication of *A Short History of the Literature Board: 1986 – 2000* will ensure that it reaches a wide audience.

Peter Goldsworthy

Chair, Literature Board (2001–04)

INTRODUCTION

'Australia is as good as its words!'

This slogan, used in 1992 Literature Board promotional material, illustrates the Literature Board's belief that Australian writers and their work are important—to the Board, to their readers and to their country.

Through the Literature Board's grant programs and other initiatives, it has been the Board's intention that talented writers should be encouraged and assisted to develop their craft, to achieve publication or performance of their works and to gain both national and international recognition and appreciation; and that Australians should be encouraged to read the works of their own writers so that they may learn more about their identity and place in the world.

To achieve these aims, the Literature Board in the 14 years 1986–2000 has continually reviewed and reshaped its programs of assistance, as well as contributing opinions and ideas to Australia Council-wide reviews and restructures. Board members from all over Australia, together with staff, participated in weekend retreats, policy meetings and forums to develop strategic plans, marketing initiatives, new programs and 'visions for the future' discussions. These gatherings were in addition to and supported the normal Board load of assessment meetings.

To take on all this work, the representatives of the Australian literary community who accepted appointments as Board members over these 14 years displayed commitment, enthusiasm and generosity of spirit. They sought to devise the best possible ways of helping their fellow writers, editors, publishers, administrators and other literary workers achieve excellence in whatever area of literary endeavour that engaged them. Whether they agreed wholeheartedly or not with restructures, new programs and other changes wrought within the Australia Council itself, once these were implemented the Board members worked vigorously to serve the literary world to the best of their ability.

There was plenty of criticism of the Literature Board's efforts during the period under review—from individuals, organisations, and the media. Changes to long-established funding patterns were not always appreciated; applicants challenged the validity and impartiality of decisions; some critics questioned whether a body such as the Literature Board produced a culture which could be seen as elitist; some queried what they saw as excessive emphasis on marketing and commercialism; and a few cultural commentators accused the Literature Board of imposing a 'Big Brother' or 'Ministry of Culture' uniformity on creativity.

Criticism is brought to the attention of the Literature Board in various ways—by writers and other members of the literary community, by the media, the Australia Council, the Literature chair, individual members and staff. It is usually examined and discussed at meetings. Sometimes it is rejected as being unjustified; other times it has been taken seriously and, where necessary, acted on. On occasion, critics of the system have been invited to take part in the assessment process as peers, so that they may experience the workings of the Board and see whether their criticism is justified; usually they have changed their minds about the process, but at times have suggested valuable adjustments to it.

Dr Brian Matthews (Literature Board chair 1990–92), in reflecting on some past reactions to the Literature Board's decisions, commented that it always amazed him 'at the bad end of things, with what ease and panache otherwise highly educated and civilised people would accuse me of chicanery, fraud, lying, double-dealing, underhand tactics, etc., and yet when I replied to them by first summarising exactly what they had accused me of, they would be appalled and deny having actually penned or at least intended such horrors!'

On the other hand, Dr Matthews said of his time as chair of the Board that his ‘overwhelming memories are good ones: the cut and thrust of a tremendously friendly, hard-working group of Board members and staff; the excitement of framing, planning and producing some of our innovations and ideas’ gave him great satisfaction and convinced him that this work was of value to Australian writing.

In looking back on her time as chair (1992–95), Marion Halligan also remembered what she saw as inaccurate and biased attacks on the Board’s integrity being made by some individuals and how at times ‘it seemed impossible to convince the media how baseless they were’. Despite this, however, she recalled that being chair of the Board ‘was a great experience, both of fine colleagues on the one hand, and the bureaucracy on the other—the latter something I had little experience of, and this was probably as pleasant a one as you could hope to find’. She found the Board itself to possess integrity and honesty and that it had ‘an informed and scrupulous concern for Australian writing’.

Ms Halligan commented further: ‘I was impressed by the fairness and the care with which the Board, and its extension to include peers, made its judgments. I didn’t always agree with every one of them, nobody did, but everybody passionately supported the right of the committee to make those judgments, and the skill, attention and integrity that had gone into the decisions’.

Edmund Campion (chair, Literature Board 1995–98) likewise commented on the ‘strain and frustration for those taking part in the [assessment] process, strain in seeking pluralism and fairness, and frustration in that, as always seems to be the case, there are the borderline cases of good writers who will end up being excluded. There is, however, only so much money to split up’ (*Australian Author*, 1999). Father Campion, however, saw ‘the peer group assessment as it was called from the establishment of the Australia Council [as] central to the arms-length concept of independence from politicians and their hangers-on’.

This short history follows on the invaluable and comprehensive work, *The Literature Board: a Brief History* (UQP, 1988), compiled by Thomas Shapcott and covering the years 1973–86. It summarises how the Literature Board in the years 1986–2000 continued to build on its work for the literary community, which commenced with the Board’s inception in 1973 and, before that, with the work of the Commonwealth Literary Fund, founded in 1908. It is worth remembering that Henry Lawson, through the Commonwealth Literary Fund, was one of the first Australian writers to receive government assistance, so there is a long history of government-funded assistance to Australian writers which is continuing to this day.

RESTRUCTURES

As an organisation, the Australia Council has experienced numerous inquiries and reviews, both internal and external. Deborah Stevenson in her book *Art and Organisation: Making Australian Cultural Policy* (page 57) quotes former Australia Council divisional director Andrea Hull as writing that ‘the Australia Council in particular, and federal public funding of the arts in general, were the subject of “approximately a dozen different inquiries” throughout the 1970s and 1980s’. This situation continued through into the 1990s, the last major review taking place in 1995–96.

The Literature Board chairs for the years 1986–2000 were members of the Australia Council and, therefore, able to take part in discussions on restructures of the Council. In addition, Board members and staff were given the opportunity to participate in the consultation processes for the 1995–96 restructure. While some Board discussion at the time indicated a belief that Literature’s existing programs were more suited to the artform’s requirements than the ones being introduced, once the new cross-Council programs were introduced, Board members committed themselves to implementing them with dedication and energy.

The Literature Board was affected by two restructures during the period 1986–2000. In 1986, Council chair Professor Donald Horne expressed his concern at certain aspects of the McLeay Report, *Patronage, Power and the Muse*, presented to the Commonwealth Parliament in that year—for example, that ‘the Australia Council had become inflexible and “captive, in part to its clients”’ (*Art and Organisation*, page 62)—and was instrumental in having the Council restructured. Part of this restructure was the reduction of the number of Boards from eight to five and the renaming of the Literature Board in 1987–88 as the Literary Arts Board with a membership of five instead of the previous eight members. Following representations by the literary community and members of the Board, the name was changed back to the Literature Board and the number of members increased to seven.

In 1994–95, with Hilary McPhee as Council chair, reviews of peer assessment and the Council’s organisation were undertaken and, as a result, the Australia Council underwent a major structural reorganisation in 1995–96. The Council replaced its three-tiered decision-making structure (Council, boards and committees) with a two-tiered system (Council and artform funds). An exception was made, however, in the case of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Board: it was retained as a board because it was undergoing a major strategic and policy developmental process. A Register of Peers was introduced to enable the various artforms to select extra peers to help fund members in assessing applications and developing policy.

In addition, seven generic grant categories were introduced across all artform sections of the Australia Council to replace the boards’ previous artform specific programs. Three of the grant categories (Fellowships, Partnerships and Commissions) were designated as being ‘tied’—that is, the board and funds were required to spend the budgets assigned to them by the Council for these three categories wholly on them. Permission was required to move the money, when considered necessary, to other categories.

Overall, the Council believed that the changes to the Council’s structure and grant programs would result in a more transparent, streamlined and flexible assessment process. Public forums and meetings were held around the country to inform the artistic community of these changes and to invite feedback. In terms of Literature, the changes were generally not well received and there was much criticism. Two points of contention were that, in changing the Council and management structure as well as the nomenclature of boards to funds, the status of the artforms was reduced, while the interests of individual artists were being overlooked as the Council focused on marketing and support of major organisations.

It is worth noting, however, that one of the stated aims of the restructure and new programs was to increase support for individual artists, and the Australia Council countered criticism concerning the perceived disadvantaging of individual artists by pointing out that, as from 1996–97, additional funds were to be directed by the Commonwealth Government to new schemes (to be administered by the Australia Council) which would benefit individual artists. For example, the Emerging Artists Initiative and the Regional Arts Development program (the majority of the latter program's funds being devolved to state/territory government arts authorities for use in regional projects approved by the Council) proved to be of considerable assistance to writers.

As part of the restructure, the Australia Council took a new approach to the granting of fellowships to individual artists. These fellowships, consisting of once-in-a-lifetime grants valued at \$40,000 per year for two years, became part of the new suite of generic programs offered by the Council across all artforms. The fellowship program was adapted by the different boards to suit their specific artforms. For example, the Literature Board decided that fellowships would be offered to established writers who had achieved publication or performance of at least four major works. As an alternative, however, established writers would also have the opportunity to apply for New Work Grants, valued at either \$15,000 or \$25,000 per year for up to two years.

Dissatisfaction was also expressed by many in the literature community regarding the rationalisation of programs. It was considered that the Literature Board's previous programs had been shaped and refined to suit the specific needs of the artform and that the new suite of grant categories was too general and made assessment difficult. This perception was shared to some degree by other artforms and a discussion paper, *Grants Category Evaluation* (2000), prepared by Ben Strout, director of Arts Development at the Australia Council, raised pertinent questions on the implementation of the categories from the perspective of three years' experience. As a result some changes were made by the Council as from 2001 to three programs (see further details under program headings).

Another area of concern was the division of the Council's budget, which resulted in the reduction of the artform funds' budgets in real terms. One reason for this reduction was the creation of the Council-wide 'tied' grant categories. Another reason was the introduction of a new Audience Development and Advocacy Division (ADA) by the Council, which was established (to quote from the Australia Council's *Annual Report 1995–96*) 'to support and develop strategies to increase participation in and appreciation of the arts and to increase opportunities for Australian artists to promote their work, nationally and internationally'. These strategies were intended to complement the various funds' initiatives in this area, but it also meant that the funding of the new Division resulted in a reduction in the size of artform budgets. In this regard, it was argued that ADA would take on some of the marketing and promotional initiatives previously funded by the artforms.

Literary projects undertaken by ADA, which became the Audience and Market Development Division in 1999, have included the funding of *The Australian's Review of Books* for the first three years of its existence (1996–99) with the aim of increasing national and international readership for Australian writers. Other projects were assistance for Australian publishers and writers to attend overseas book fairs and other literary events; and visits by leading overseas publishers, magazine editors and agents to Australia for the purpose of engendering international interest in Australian writers and their works and increasing overseas publication of Australian writing.

Literature Board (1986–96)

Over these 10 years, the Literature Board further refined a coherent range of programs intended to assist writers from the first stage of creation through to access to readers and audiences by means of publication/performance, promotion of their work, and participation in writers' festivals and other literary events, both within Australia and overseas.

The Board consistently devoted over 50 per cent of its budget from the Australia Council to the funding of individual writers—to buy time for them to create new works—and the remaining portion was directed to magazine and publishing subsidies, promotion of Australian work both in Australia and on the international scene (tours, writers' festivals, etc.), and community access, principally through the establishment of writers' centres and employment of state and territory literature officers, residency and workshop programs.

Literary Arts Board (1987–88)

For a brief period, because of a restructure of the Australia Council, the Literature Board's name was changed to the Literary Arts Board, as explained above.

Literature Fund (1996–2000)

Because of the new structure instituted in 1995–96, the Literature Fund was required to rethink previous literature programs. It continued to concentrate primarily on the funding of individual writers, albeit in differently named grant categories (over 50 per cent of its budget was still devoted to this cause), but it also affirmed the importance of developmental and promotional initiatives, including project funding of literary organisations; the fostering of co-funded projects with other bodies within the public, commercial and educational sectors; and cooperation with the Council's Audience and Market Development Division on special activities.

Over the years under review, the Literature Board introduced new initiatives and programs, as well as discontinuing some older ones which had either fulfilled their purposes or needed to make way for new ideas. Some of these decisions caused controversy and will be examined later on in the context of reviewing different programs.

BOARD/FUND MEMBERS AND PARTICIPATING PEERS

Since 1986 there have been five chairs of the Board/Fund: Rosemary Wighton (SA, deceased, 1985–90), Brian Matthews (SA/Vic., 1990–92), Marion Halligan (ACT, 1992–95), Edmund Campion (NSW, 1995–98) and Nicholas Hasluck (WA, 1998–2001). In carrying out their duties, these chairs brought exceptional dedication, flair and imagination to their task and a knowledge of all facets of literature. They also were often required to uphold the Literature Board's/Fund's interests, both within and outside the Australia Council, which they did with energy and determination.

Looking back on his three-year term as Literature Board chair, Dr Brian Matthews recalled that at Board meetings, apart from 'becoming addicted to bad coffee and very good sandwiches as day after day was devoted to wading through a *War and Peace*-sized agenda', he experienced 'the great satisfaction of being able, materially and substantially, to assist and encourage Australian writing, to see it visibly flourishing as a result, in part, of our efforts—despite all the controversy, tough talking, long committee hours and budget jockeying'.

Board/Fund members (now totalling seven) are appointed by the Federal Minister for the Arts from all around Australia, usually for periods of three years. To assess applications in a fully informed manner, there needs to be included in Board/Fund membership acknowledged peers of repute in all writing genres (fiction, non-fiction, poetry, writing for performance, children's and young people's literature), as well as members with publishing, promotional and community expertise. The list of members who served on the Literature Board/Fund during the period under review reveals an impressive range of experience and expertise (their names are given as an appendix to this history).

In addition, it was always the Literature Board's (and then the Literature Fund's) practice to invite peers from across Australia to assist the members and to provide additional knowledge and support in the assessment of the different grant categories. For example, a particularly heavy workload is experienced assessing the several hundred individual writers' applications received each year and usually seven or eight extra peers are called on to assist in this exercise.

A formal Register of Peers was established by the Australia Council in 1996 to augment the expertise of Board members. Peers were defined by the Council as 'anyone who, by virtue of their knowledge or experience, is equipped to make a fair and informed assessment of artistic work and grant applications'. Consequently, peers are invited to join the Literature Board members at all meetings to help with the consideration of applications received under the various grant categories.

The Literature Board has been fortunate in that over the years it has experienced exceptional stability in its staff; for example, it has had only five directors/executive officers/managers over the 27 years of its existence. Following on from the first director Dr Michael Costigan (1973-82), who played an important role in establishing the Literature Board on a very sound footing, subsequent directors/managers have been Tom Shapcott (1982–90), Sandra Forbes (1990–95), Irene Stevens (1995–96), Lesley McFadzean (1997–2000) and Gail Cork (2000–). Other members of staff have also provided many years of service to the Board/Fund, placing their expertise, experience and corporate memory at the service of constantly changing Board members.

LITERATURE BOARD/FUND PROGRAMS OF ASSISTANCE 1986–2000

Assistance to individual writers

In its section of the Australia Council's *Annual Report 1985–86*, the Literature Board stated that it was at a turning point in its activities: 'its long-term policies of support for individual writers and residency schemes are closely related to the dramatic upsurge in current Australian literature which is attracting growing regional and international interest' (page 39). The success of many of the writers so far supported under its various programs convinced the Board that it should continue to spend over half of its budget on direct assistance to writers in the form of Fellowships and Writers/New Writers Assistance Grants. It was, however, the last year in which the Special Purpose Grants program, in place since 1973 and devoted specifically to research and travel assistance for nominated projects, was offered. Henceforth such assistance was to be applied for under the General Writing Grant program, so as to reduce administrative workload.

In the following years (until 1996), the programs of assistance for individual writers remained much the same, the linchpin of these programs being fellowships which bought time for writers (from one year to up to four years, depending on the publishing/performance status of applicants) to enable them to concentrate fully on nominated writing programs. Smaller grants (General Writing Grants, later renamed Writers Assistance Grants, then Writers Project Grants) were also awarded for travel, research and writing involved in particular projects. Names may change as shown above—for example, Senior Writers Fellowships became Category A Fellowships, and New/Developing Writers Fellowships were renamed Category B Fellowships in 1987–88—but the purpose remained constant. This was support for writers at all stages of their development in order that they may have the opportunity to create literary works of quality.

In 1987 the Literature Board introduced a new category, Community Writers Fellowships, to enable recognised writers to submit a year's program of community-based writing projects, which were to be hosted by either organisations or theatre companies. This was part of the Board's community access policy whereby strategies designed to increase community participation and access to literature were pursued with vigour.

The projects funded under the Community Writers Fellowships were usually completed successfully to the benefit of both the writers and the communities involved. Notable examples were the projects undertaken by poets Komninos Zervos, who was remarkably effective with children and adolescents, and Geoffrey Goodfellow, who specialised in initiating projects with trade and labour groups, often in the building industry. Playwright Paul Brown, well-known for his plays *Coaltown* and *Aftershock*, was also a recipient. The category was discontinued in 1992 as the Board considered that its purpose had been served and other initiatives had greater priority.

Each year eligibility provisions for applicants have been reviewed and revised, partly to cut back on the number of applications received and so make the assessment task less arduous, as well as to avoid unreal expectations for many applicants because of the comparatively few grants the Literature Board has been able to award with its limited budgets.

The following figures illustrate how the number of applications were reduced, the success rate of those applications increased, and the budgets spent on *individual writers' programs* varied over several years. In looking at these figures, it should be noted that assistance to individual writers rose from \$1.7 million in 1987 to \$2.01 million in 2000.

Year	Number of applications	Success rate	Budget
1987	994	91 grants (9.1%)	\$1,718,000
1988	514*	85 grants (16.5%)	\$1,743,785
1991	585	100 grants (17.1%)	\$1,649,809
1997	438	65 grants (14.8%)	\$1,720,000
1998	471	53 grants (11.3%)	\$1,340,000
1999	456	74 grants (16.2%)	\$1,500,000
2000	439	83 grants (18.9%)	\$2,012,500
Total	3897	551 grants	\$11,684,094

* The number of applications received in 1988 decreased because the eligibility requirements for Category B Fellowships were tightened considerably.

Over the past 14 years as in previous years, the allocation of grants generated controversy, with disappointed writers raising the spectres of bias, prejudice, corruption and unfair assessment practices. To counter these charges, the Board constantly explained and publicised its assessment procedures, emphasising their transparency and fairness, as well as underlining the knowledge, reputation and expertise of assessors together with the frequent turnover of these assessors (outside assessors are appointed for only one meeting, while Board membership constantly changes). In addition, buffer periods were introduced whereby successful applicants were not permitted to reapply for a specified period; this was to combat the untrue charge that the same people receive the grants each year.

Since 1986 there has been one actual legal action and several threatened by unsuccessful applicants for individual writers' grants. In the cases where actions resulted in court or review hearings, the impartiality of assessors and their adherence to published selection criteria and assessment procedures of the Literature Board were affirmed, and no improper practices were seen to have occurred.

The Literature Board regularly commissioned reviews of its individual writers' grants programs in order to ascertain the effectiveness of grants awarded to writers, and also to see whether any alterations should be made or whether programs should be discontinued.

The results of such reviews were invariably positive. For example, the one carried out in 1995 by Dr Elaine Lindsay on grants awarded from 1990–93 showed that 48 per cent of these grant recipients had achieved publication/performance by mid-1995; 17 per cent had received part publication or staged readings; 25 per cent were under contract; and 21 per cent of funded projects had received literary awards or were shortlisted for these awards. Another interesting fact emerged in this review: only 43 of the 307 writers who had received grants during the period 1990–93 were recipients of more than one grant each during these years, thus undermining the claim that grants favoured only a small enclave of writers.

The 1995 review was the last one on individual writers' grants carried out by the Literature Board, principally because the suite of seven cross-Council grant categories was implemented in 1996 by the Australia Council; in future, the Council would institute grant category reviews. The grant programs for individual writers previously offered by the Literature Board—that is, Category A Fellowships, 4 Years (\$20,000 p.a.); Category A Fellowships, 1 year (\$30,000); Category B

Fellowships (\$24,000 for 1 year); and Writers Project Grants (maximum \$10,000)—were subsumed in 1995–96 by the Literature Board into two new grant categories which still operate as follows:

- **New Work Grant Category**, with the following divisions:
 - **Emerging Writers** (\$5000, \$10,000 or \$15,000) for writers who have not yet had a full-length work published or performed, but a specified number of stories, essays, poems, articles, playscripts or radio scripts published, workshopped or performed/broadcast.
 - **Developing Writers** (\$10,000, \$15,000 or \$25,000) for applicants who have had at least one and not more than two full-length literary works published or performed.
 - **Established Writers** (\$15,000 or \$25,000 per year for up to two years) for applicants who have had three or more full-length works published or performed.
- **Fellowships**, for applicants who have had four or more major works published or performed and have achieved substantial critical recognition may apply for a fellowship worth \$40,000 per year for two years. These fellowships are granted only once in a writer's lifetime.

While the New Work grant category appears to have worked well, the Fellowships category has been more problematical. The Grants Category Evaluation discussion paper (Strout) revealed that there was concern expressed in Literature that applicants to the New Work category faced more competition than those applying under the Fellowships category. This was thought to be caused in part by the Literature Board offering two-year New Work grants of \$25,000 per year with no 'once in a lifetime' limit as exists with Fellowships. Established writers appear to prefer to apply for the New Work grants and perhaps reserve the once-only Fellowships for later in their careers.

It was considered by several artforms including Literature that 'the level of competition in Fellowships was not consistently high, sometimes leaving a distinct gap between the highly rated applicants and the next more lowly rated' (Strout). As Boards were 'tied' by Council to spend the designated Fellowship budget on that category only, 'it was feared that artforms might have to support a solid but not great Fellowship application rather than leave the money unspent, while extraordinary applicants could not be supported in other categories due to lack of funds' (Strout). The paper suggested that this category should be reviewed by Council and that Literature might 'be able to provide Fellowships to the three highest applicants within their New Work grants for established writers'. In fact, in the 2000 assessment of Fellowship applications, only one Fellowship was awarded (value \$80,000) and the Board was permitted to direct the remaining Fellowship budget in part to the Established Writers component of the New Work grant category, and partly to the Fund's strategic initiatives.

In this regard, in an interview for *Australian Author* (1999) at the conclusion of his three-year appointment as chair of the Literature Board, Edmund Campion mentioned that before taking up his appointment he sought and received 'an assurance that as well as once-in-a-lifetime fellowships, the Literature Board would be able to continue other kinds of individual grants'. He went on to say that some years on 'experience has shown that exclusive once-in-a-lifetime-grants siphon off too much money to a small group. Grants should be based on the "buying time" criterion ... the grants are out there to help writers, not act as a kind of super prize'.

The Literature Board is still holding fast to allocating approximately half its budget towards grants for writers and, in 2000, 82 New Work grants, including 16 two-year Established Writers grants valued at \$50,000 each, and one two-year Fellowship worth \$80,000 were awarded to writers out of a total of 440 applications: total value of grants being \$2,012,500. The chair, Nicholas Hasluck, commented in the Assessment Report that while generally 'the Fund was impressed with the

standard of New Work applications, particularly in the Established Writers division ... it was noted that a number of applicants in this division could have been strong contenders in the Fellowships category which this year attracted a disappointingly small field of only six applications’.

It is interesting to note that, in the light of the pluralist nature of contemporary Australian society, Literature Board practice has always been to accept applications with support material in languages other than English (LOTE). In 2000, the Fund received 26 LOTE applications covering 12 languages, and four New Work grants were consequently awarded for LOTE projects. In assessing the LOTE applications, the Fund is assisted by highly qualified assessors (two for each application) who have expertise in the relevant languages.

The following table provides statistics in relation to LOTE applications 1995–2000:

Year	Number of applications received	Success rate (with related % to total writers' grants approved)
1995	37	4 (4.2%)
1996	30	1 (2.6%)
1997	31	1 (3.1%)
1998	27	3 (3.6%)
1999	29	3 (4%)
2000	26	4 (4.8%)

Indigenous writers were also assisted in their writing projects. For example, Herb Wharton received a New Work–Established Writers grant of \$25,000 in 2000, and other writers such as Archie Weller, Kim Scott, Ruby Langford Ginibi and Sam Watson received Fellowships and New Work grants.

The Board has been justified in continuing its practice of concentrating on grants to individual writers when one looks at the ever-growing list of prominent and prize-winning authors who were helped at crucial points in their careers by the Literature Board. Acclaimed writers such as Tim Winton, Helen Garner, Robert Adamson, Tom Keneally, Rodney Hall, Dorothy Hewett, David Williamson, Peter Carey, Les Murray, Drusilla Modjeska, John Tranter, Eric Rolls, David Marr, Libby Hathorn, Gillian Rubinstein, Victor Kelleher, Alma de Groen and Robert Drewe have all acknowledged that this assistance has been an important factor in the development of their writing talents.

Two writers who have received funding from the Literature Board at significant points in their careers are Kate Grenville and Luke Davies. Both believe that the grants they have been given—not just for the writing of their works but also for promotional purposes, both within Australia and overseas—have been of great benefit to their careers as writers.

Kate Grenville, who received her first Literature Board fellowship in 1985 and since then has been awarded a number of writing grants as well as being funded to participate in national and overseas literary events, says ‘The inexorable mathematics of Australia's population means it’s almost impossible for writers—even established ones—to earn a living from our books. Literature Board support means being able to go on writing, rather than becoming a full-time teacher of writing’.

Luke Davies, prize-winning poet, novelist and screenwriter, received his first fellowship in 1995 and consequently wrote two novels (*Candy* and *Isabelle the Navigator*), as well as two books of poetry. The fellowship was followed by another fellowship, grants for residencies in Ireland and

Northern Thailand, and a two-year New Work Established Writers grant to work on fiction and poetry. In commenting on what the grants have meant to him, Luke says 'Apart from the obvious boost in confidence that arises from the sense of being validated by peers and other professionals, these grants and residencies quite simply gave me the breathing space and the focus to concentrate fully on my work in its journey from conception to publication ... I can only view the grants as being utterly invaluable. My first grant was the great leap forward ... in addition, the residencies not only furthered this process, but led on to the kinds of connections one makes with other artists that gives one a sense of a broader artistic community, global and boundary-less.'

Emeritus Awards

Since 1908 the Commonwealth Literary Fund, the predecessor of the Literature Board, awarded Literary Pensions to prominent authors in need. The Literature Board has continued this practice, with some writers still continuing to receive income supplements under the Emeritus Fellowship scheme. One-off awards called Emeritus Awards, worth up to \$40,000 each, are now granted to eminent literary writers over the age of 65 who are perceived to be in some financial need and who have made outstanding and lifelong contributions to Australian literature. Their achievements are acknowledged through their being nominated by fellow writers and other literary figures for these awards.

Usually two Emeritus Awards are presented annually by the Literature Board; the awards in 2000 went to Bruce Dawe and John Hooker. Writers who have received either Emeritus Fellowships or Emeritus Awards include Judith Wright, Geoffrey Dutton, Eric Rolls, Ray Lawler, Dorothy Hewett, David Ireland, Jessica Anderson, Ivan Southall, Rosemary Dobson, David Rowbotham, Bruce Beaver, Eleanor Spence, Peter Porter and Eleanor Witcombe.

It is a persistent problem for the Literature Board that so many of Australia's eminent writers face straitened circumstances in their older years. Factors which militate against their achieving financial security include Australia's small population, with resulting limited book runs and sales, and competition with overseas English-language writers. In this regard, an article in *The Sydney Morning Herald* (27.11.2000) concerning the Literature Board's 2000 grants to individual writers, quoted Gail Cork, manager of the Literature Board, as saying: 'We see elderly eminent writers die in poverty and it's shocking that this country can't sustain writers of this calibre.'

OTHER GRANT CATEGORIES

Because of the 1995–96 Council restructure, many of the Literature Board's programs were integrated into the new grant categories implemented across the Council. In documenting the years 1986–2000, it is simpler to use the new program names as headings and describe how the previous programs were slotted into them.

Presentation and Promotion

This grant category, limited to application by organisations only, is concerned with promoting Australian creative writers and the publication and appreciation of their work, both within Australia or overseas. Formerly, there were several programs with their own budgets serving applicants in this area: Book Publishing Subsidies, International Publishing, Literary Magazines, International Promotions and National Promotions. Now, applications for all these activities come in under the Presentation and Promotion grant category.

This conflated the assessment of applications—comparison of applications for writers’ festivals, publishing programs, foundation and annual grants for magazines and international tours by writers in the one category was very difficult. With this in mind, the *Grants Category Evaluation* discussion paper (Strout) canvassed the possibility of future support for some of the annual activities (presently assisted by various artforms under the Presentation and Promotion category) being directed through an ‘annual program’ category. Subsequently the Australia Council agreed to introduce from 2001 a Special Program Grants division under a Key Organisations grant category.

This change could help the Literature Board solve the problem of assessing so many diverse activities in the one grant category. For example, under the ‘Special Program Grants’ division, literary magazines will in future submit applications for their annual publishing program (as they did under the previous Literature Board Magazine Program), and be judged in context with each other.

An example of the type of activity the Literature Board assists under the Presentation and Promotion category is writers’ festivals. There has been a proliferation of these events throughout Australia and the Literature Board has provided assistance for the participation of Australian writers in many of them. Where in the 1970s and early ’80s there were only three major writers’ festivals (Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane), now there are many, including the very successful Melbourne, Sydney and Hobart Writers’ Festivals, as well as thriving regional ones located, for example, in Byron Bay and Mildura, and smaller genre-based and multicultural writers’ festivals. Australian writers and their work receive exposure at these festivals: they also allow local writers to make contacts with international writers, agents and publishers attending the larger festivals and thus create opportunities for overseas publication and reading tours.

Furthermore, the Literature Board has assisted the participation of Australian writers of the calibre of Kate Grenville, Frank Moorhouse, Robert Drewe, Judith Beveridge, Dorothy Porter, John Kinsella, Les Murray, John Tranter, Nicholas Jose, Brian Castro, Roberta Sykes, Robert Gray and Carmel Bird in literary events in Europe, Asia, New Zealand and North and South America. One such event was a successful 1988 International Bicentennial project, initiated by the Literature Board: a series of readings featuring Peter Carey, Elizabeth Jolley, Rodney Hall, Glenda Adams, Thomas Keneally, Chris Wallace-Crabbe, David Malouf, Shirley Hazzard and Robert Hughes, held at the prestigious 92nd Street ‘Y’ in New York. These readings attracted large enthusiastic audiences.

There have also been many international literary conferences involving Australian writers organised by institutions and organisations, such as Barcelona University (Spain), the European Association for Commonwealth Language and Literature Studies, and the Australia Asia Association for Australian Literature. The last organisation, a comparatively new one, has held conferences in Colombo (Sri Lanka) and Trivandrum and Mysore (India) with Australian writers Chandani Lokugé, Adib Khan and Jennifer Strauss participating.

For many years, the Literature Board, frequently in partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs’ Cultural Section, funded familiarisation visits to this country by overseas academics teaching Australian literature. It was a worthwhile investment for a relatively small amount of money as these academics, having gained a first-hand knowledge of the Australian landscape and culture, encouraged interest in Australian literature in many countries and continents. This initiative was discontinued some years ago.

Ever since its inception the Literature Board has provided subsidies to encourage publishers to publish Australian writers and thus build a national readership for their work. This strategy has been successful—one has only to look into bookshops now to see how prominently Australian books are featured where once they were practically invisible.

Titles which have received assistance in recent years include Brian Castro's *Looking for Estrelita* (UQP), Gail Jones's *Fetish Lives* (FACP), Inga Clendinnen's *Reading the Holocaust* and *Tiger's Eye* (Text Publishing), Judith Wright's autobiography *Half a Lifetime* (Text Publishing), Nick Enright's play *Blackrock* (Currency Press), Dimitris Tsaloumas's *The Harbour* (UQP), Robert Adamson's *Black Water* and Bruce Beaver's *Poets and Others* (Brandl & Schlesinger).

A good example of successful promotional initiatives to help sell Australian books was the Literature Board's collaboration in 1994–96 with the national book chain Dymocks on a series of one-month programs to promote Australian literature in over 54 bookshops throughout the country. The shops were decorated with specially designed posters, banners, point-of-sale crowns and special book displays, and many Australian authors took part in readings and book signing. Another initiative with bookshops was the funding of Readings Bookshop in Melbourne on behalf of several bookshops to produce *The Independent Booksellers' Readers' Guide* intended to encourage Christmas shoppers to buy Australian books.

The Literature Board has always maintained funding to literary journals because of their importance to the Australian literary scene, and the fact that they are usually the first publishing outlets for new writers. At the same time, it has been a difficult area with many questions continually facing the Board: for example, 'How can the low circulation figures of magazines be improved?'; 'Should only a few long-established journals be funded instead of the available money being spread thinly across a larger number?'; 'Should the Literature Board assist with the salaries of literary journals' editors and other core costs instead of directing their grants solely to the payment of contributors?'; 'Should new journals receive foundation grants?' and 'How can the distribution of literary magazines be improved?'.

The Literature Board's persistent grappling with these sorts of questions led to it commissioning consultant Bev Roberts to undertake a review of the 'Magazines Problem' for the years 1989–93. Out of this review came the Board's decision to rethink its magazine policy. To explain its proposed new policies and guidelines, the Board held an open forum with magazine editors (both funded and unfunded) and other interested parties in 1995 in Melbourne, which engendered vigorous discussion between Board members and magazine editors. However, despite some opposition, the Literature Board decided to persist with its new policies, which are still represented in the criteria set down by the Literature Board in its present funding of literary magazines.

Under the 1996 restructure, magazines were to apply principally to the Presentation and Promotion program. They were required to be either established literary magazines with a minimum circulation of 1000 subscribers/copies per issue and devoted primarily to creative writing, or new literary magazines applying for foundation grants for up to two years. Funding for long-established magazines such as *Australian Book Review*, *Meanjin*, *Overland*, *Southerly* and *Westerly* continued under this program, while new journals—for example *Heat* and *Cordite*—received foundation grants when these grants were introduced in 1996. This practice changed in 2001 under Council grant category amendments as mentioned earlier. Magazines had also previously been able to apply under the Commissions grant category, as explained later.

The Literature Board has assisted literary magazines published overseas as well as in Australia. One example is *Antipodes*, a magazine published by the American Association for the Study of Australian Literature, which features writing by Australians and has received consistent funding over the years. Another overseas literary magazine funded for many years was *Kunapipi*, published by Professor Anna Rutherford in Denmark and mentioned later in this history.

The Board continues its longstanding program of assisting Australian writers break into the international market by various means. One way is to fund overseas book and magazine publishers to bring out publications featuring Australian writers in a variety of languages other

than English. Established writers such as Peter Carey, David Malouf, Janette Turner Hospital, Murray Bail and Jessica Anderson have had overseas editions of their books published with Board/Fund assistance, as also have newer writers such as Beth Yahp, Daniel Keene and Isobelle Carmody.

Development

This program, which subsumed previous programs such as Professional Training and Development, Professional Writers' Workshops and Conferences, and International Studios, focuses on supporting applications which enhance the opportunities of Australian writers to develop their professional capacities through projects involving mentorships, masterclasses, workshops and overseas residencies either at the Board's/Fund's studios in Rome and Paris or at Yaddo Artists' Colony (USA), the Tyrone Guthrie Centre (Ireland) and Banff playRites Colony, Banff Centre for the Arts (Alberta, Canada).

The Banff residency is one of the Literature Board's most recent overseas residency initiatives. It was introduced by the Board in 2000 to provide one playwright and one dramaturge each year with a three week residency at the Banff Colony, and thus give them the opportunity for professional development and script/text-based relationships through access to a company of professional actors/readers. The Literature Board and the Banff Centre jointly select the successful applicants; the recipients of the Banff residency for 2000 were Saffron Benner (Qld) and Stephen House (SA).

Writers such as Tim Winton and Amirah Inglis (Keesing Studio, Paris), Diane Fahey, Luke Davies and Linda Jaivin (Tyrone Guthrie, Ireland), poets Andrew Sant, Gig Ryan and Philip Salom (Rome), Martin Harrison, Katherine Thomson and Suneeta Peres Da Costa (Yaddo), have found their writing and professional development benefited from up to six month residencies at overseas studios. What has been interesting to note is how often their post-residency work demonstrates the influence of having lived in another country for some time. A number of these writers also took part in international literary events while overseas, thus maximising their opportunities for exposure in the wider literary world.

Notable successful initiatives consistently funded under the Development Program are the Australian National Playwrights' Conference and the International Young Playwrights' Conference which have helped many playwrights develop and achieve performance success. Other funded organisations are Varuna-The Writers' House (Katoomba, NSW) and Playworks, which have national annual programs aimed at the professional development of writers through a range of projects designed to help them at various stages of their careers; and the Australian Society of Authors and the Australian Writers Guild for various initiatives, including mentorship programs for writers. This category was re-named Skills and Arts Development in 2001.

Triennial grants

Introduced as part of the 1996 restructure, this program was intended to fund literary organisations with a track record of running successful programs for the development, training and promotion of Australian writers. These organisations are eligible to apply for three-year grants, contingent on their submitting a high-quality and well-developed program of activities together with a management plan. The Literature Board originally restricted application under this program to Writers' Centres or literature officers (one per state or territory) where the Board's assistance is at least matched by the relevant state or territory government.

It should be noted, in referring to the Writers' Centres and state/territory literature officers, that

their establishment was an initiative of the Literature Board. Starting in 1987, the Board approached the state and territory arts authorities and sought their assistance in co-funding one Writers' Centre or literature officer in each state and territory. This partnership of federal/state/territory government arts authorities has proved very successful and has resulted in substantially more funding being directed to literature by state and territory arts bodies than had formerly been the case.

In light of the Strout paper, the Council agreed to alter the Triennial Grants category; from 2001 it is now called Key Organisations and is divided into Triennial Grants (for Literature, applications in this division are confined to Writers' Centres/literature officers and national writers' organisations) and, as mentioned above, Program Grants under which literary magazines and writers' organisations may apply for assistance with an annual program of activities.

In 2002, the Board extended triennial funding to the Australian Society of Authors, the Australian Writers' Guild and the Eleanor Dark Foundation (Varuna-The Writers' House).

Partnerships

This program was introduced in 1996 and was intended to encourage public and private sector organisations to provide new opportunities and resources for Australian writers and writing, particularly by giving access to resources which may not normally be available. In 1999–2000, the program changed—it is no longer a 'standard' grant category with set closing dates. Instead, because of the need to discuss thoroughly all aspects of cooperative funding projects, the Australia Council has agreed that all Funds 'will offer Partnerships only after such discussion takes place between the applicant and Council staff' (Strout). This category changed its name to Strategic Partnerships in 2001 and was later abolished completely in 2002.

The Literature Board's residency programs, which were co-funded with institutions, theatre companies and organisations, were subsumed into this program. Under the Partnerships Program, the Literature Board has continued to fund tertiary institution residencies for writers (both within Australia and overseas) and writers' organisations, as well as innovative projects such as Flightpaths which was developed in conjunction with Next Wave Festival. This project initially placed writers in residence at five Australian airports such as Broome and Cairns as well as metropolitan airports, and was subsequently extended on an international level.

Another interesting project was the Peninsula Audiovisual Enterprises in Tasmania. Well-known poet and prose writer, Margaret Scott, was funded to work as mentor with residents of the Tasmanian Peninsula community in 10 adult and 10 children's workshops in their creation of stories, oral histories, scripts and educational videos, some of which contained participants' reflections on the Port Arthur Massacre in 1996.

Commissions

Initiated in 1996, the Commissions category's purpose was to encourage public and private sector organisations to commission creative writers to produce new work, particularly in the CD-ROM, multimedia and other digital and electronic delivery systems. While the Literature Board did previously have a Commissions Program, it was principally confined to performing arts companies and dealt with applications for the commissioning of playwrights and librettists jointly with the Performing Arts Board. Responsibility for this area has been transferred to the Theatre and Music Boards.

Under the cross-Council Commissions category, Literature applications primarily come from

publishers and magazines for the commissioning of work for publication either in book form or in magazines.

The Council's aim of encouraging 'new funding partners and funding arrangements through this category' (Strout) did not necessarily bear fruit in Literature. At the same time, awarding commission grants to recurring applicants such as publishers and magazines gave many writers a boost in income. This tied in with the Literature Board's primary purpose of helping Australian writers develop an income from their writing.

The Australia Council commissioned a review of the Commissions category (along with the Partnerships category) in 1998 and this revealed that, while it broadened 'the funding base for the arts' (Strout), the Commissions category was not attracting a great number of applications. One problem was that some boards found that there was 'difficulty in making a clear distinction between the existing Commissions program and other categories (particularly New Work and Partnerships)' (*Partnerships and Commissions Evaluation*, Christine Sammers, 1998). This was not the case with the Literature Board, principally because of the different criteria it applied to each of the three programs, but also because it redirected the program to support recurring applicants.

After discussing the problems boards experienced with this category, the Council agreed that the Commissions grant category was to be discontinued as from 2001 and boards were to advise previous Commission applicants under which grant categories they might apply in future.

OTHER INITIATIVES

Picture book illustrators grants

Representations were made over several years by the Australian Society of Authors to the Literature and Visual Arts/Craft Boards, requesting assistance for illustrators. The argument was that, while writers for young people received considerable assistance from the Literature Board, no grants were available for illustrators of their books. Although the Visual Arts/Craft Board still declined to offer illustrators any assistance, the Literature Board made a ground-breaking decision in 1995 and agreed to set aside \$35,000 for grants to illustrators. The Australia Society of Authors was asked to administer the project. This initiative continued until 1999–2000 when the Literature Board decided to cease funding the devolved program.

There was considerable controversy over this decision, with children's writers and illustrators making public protests through the media and sending written objections to the Board concerning the program's demise. The decision by the Literature Board to change its eligibility criteria so as to allow, as from 2001, picture book writers and illustrators to apply jointly to the Board under its New Work category has alleviated some of this criticism.

Translations

In 1994–95, after a sub-committee comprising Board members and staff investigated the possibility of offering translation grants, the Literature Board made a policy decision to recognise translators as creative artists and introduced a program of grants designed to provide direct assistance to Australian translators. The program was administered by the National Book Council and, after that organisation's closure, by the Australian Society of Authors. Until 2000, grants were made to publishers and translators for the translation of both Australian works into foreign languages and overseas writers' works into English.

The decision to cease assisting this initiative as from 2000 was made because it was considered there were not enough applications of sufficient quality to justify funding, particularly when there were strong competing claims on the Literature Board's restricted budget. The Board was concerned with the relatively high success rate of applications under the program compared with the success rate of applications under other grant categories, particularly New Work. In considering the portioning out of its limited funds in this area, the Board came to the conclusion that it was better to assist overseas publishers who had definitely agreed to publish Australian works in translation.

Over the period covered by this history, the Literature Board initiated several projects connected with overseas translation. These included funding the visits of outstanding French translators to Australia, as well as introducing two projects in cooperation with overseas government arts bodies. These were the France Australia Award for Literary Translation (1993) and the Australia Germany Award for Literary Translation (1996), whereby in alternate years the prizes would be awarded to translators from the participating countries. The two translation prizes existed for some years but were discontinued by 2000 because, while there was no lack of Australian books being translated into French or German, there was not a similar number of French or German works being translated by Australian translators.

Australia Council–Cambridge University Residency

From 1999, one established Australian writer who had been awarded a Fellowship or New Work category grant was selected for a six-month residency by one of the five participating colleges at Cambridge University, England. The college paid the writer's travel and accommodation expenses, with the Board's grant covering living expenses. Frank Moorhouse undertook the inaugural residency at King's College, Alison Croggon was in residence at Pembroke College during 2000, and John Tranter in 2001. The writers-in-residence continued with their own writing while undertaking some teaching, and they found the residencies to be very worthwhile. This residency is currently not being offered but may be reinstated in the future.

Earnback initiatives

In 1992–93 under the chairmanship of Rodney Hall, the Australia Council introduced an Earnback Scheme whereby artists and organisations could apply for project funding which would be returned to the Council in a specified time and 'recycled' for other users. The Literature Board participated in this scheme by giving four grants—two to writers and two to publishers—but the initiative was not successful and the scheme lapsed after two or three years, due to lack of interest from writers and publishers.

Regional arts development and emerging writers initiatives

In recent years, the Australian Government allocated several million dollars for the development of the arts in regional, rural and remote communities and to provide for the professional development and presentation needs of young and emerging artists. In making the best strategic use of the extra funds provided through these initiatives for the development of writers, the Literature Board has used writers' centres and other literary organisations, such as Varuna–The Writers' House, to develop and organise residential projects, mentorship programs (including 'e-mentorships') and other training/development initiatives.

To date, there have been very enthusiastic reports from writers about the effects of these

initiatives. The Australian Government is continuing to make funds available for emerging artists initiatives (\$1.25 million for 2003) to be shared by the boards. Funding for regional arts activities is now allocated directly to the individual states and territories.

Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellowship

To mark the considerable contribution that editor Beatrice Davis made over many years to Australian writing and publishing, the Literature Board in 1992 in conjunction with the then Australian Book Publishers Association (ABPA) set up a fellowship in her memory. Under this fellowship, Australian editors with at least five years' experience either as an in-house or freelance editor, were given the opportunity to be attached to American publishing houses in New York for three months. Funding was supplied both by the Literature Board and individual publishers, and the fellowship was administered by the ABPA (now Australian Publishers Association). Editors of the calibre of Rosanne Fitzgibbon, Jacqueline Kent, Susan Hines, Bernadette Foley, Bryony Cosgrove, Erica Irving, Jo Jarrah and Rowena Lennox have been awarded the Fellowship. The recipients agree they have benefited greatly from their exposure to American editing and publishing expertise.

Editorial training

For a number of years the Literature Board had expressed concern over the gradual disappearance of in-house training and reduced employment of editors in publishing firms and the increased use of freelance editors in their place. Initiatives such as the Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellowship and an editor-in-residence at tertiary institutions program were instituted by the Board to raise the status of editors, and in 1997 the Literature Board commissioned prominent editor Jane Arms to prepare a report on the training of editors.

Among other things Jane Arms recommended a residential course for a number of mid-career editors, to be funded by the Literature Board and the Australian Publishers Association. An intensive week-long residential training course for experienced editors took place in March 1999 under the mentorship of leading editors Bruce Sims, Meredith Rose and Jacqueline Kent. Coordinated by an industry committee and chaired by Sophie Cunningham, the program was managed by Robyn Sheahan-Bright. The course also included a component on editing Indigenous writing, led by Indigenous writer Melissa Lucashenko and editor Mary Graham. Feedback was immensely positive and so, following the success of this course, the Literature Board agreed to fund the 2002 Residential Editorial Program.

Funding was also given in 1999 under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Arts Policy Initiative for the professional training and development of Indigenous editors through training courses organised by publishers in Alice Springs, Broome and Perth.

Screenwriting attachments (Australian Film, Television and Radio School)

Back in the 1970s, Australian expatriate writer Rowena Farre bequeathed to the Literature Board the overseas television royalties from her book *Seal Morning*. The Board decided that these royalties should be used for an annual three-month attachment of selected writers (usually three) from a variety of literary genres to the Australian Film Television and Radio School (AFTRS), so as to develop their scriptwriting abilities and thus possibly improve their income-generating opportunities. This scheme persisted until 1999 and many writers took part, including prose writers Gerard Windsor, Susan Geason, Venero Armanno, Tony Maniaty and playwright Julie Jansen.

Board/Fund promotions

The Literature Board has been involved in several trade promotions, notably the Australian Publishers Association Book Fair at which the Board occupied a stand for some years. Other projects included advertising programs for Board-subsidised books (booksellers were assisted with special advertisements) as well as one to advertise literary magazines. The Board also assisted with the two editions of the report *Books: Who Reads Them?* commissioned by the Australia Council, which detailed the reading habits of Australians; the 1990 edition was the Board's contribution to the national literacy promotion Reading 1990.

The Board employed a national promotions officer for approximately two years in the mid-nineties to develop media kits and liaise with publishers and the media in order to promote Australian writers and their work. On an international level, the Board engaged New York book publicist Selma Shapiro for a number of years to promote those Australian writers whose books were being published in the US. Selma's work was very important and beneficial for Australian writers and their works. She assisted with promotional publishers' tours of the US for writers such as Tim Winton and played an important role in negotiating with US publishers for attachments by editors taking up the Beatrice Davis Editorial Fellowship in New York, providing the editors with valuable advice and contacts.

Promotions officers, such as Michelle Field and Carol Spedding (UK) and Jean-Paul Delamotte were also employed at different times to promote Australian writers in the UK and Europe, by facilitating an Australian presence at important literary events, book fairs and exhibitions.

Two Australian academics who served as important advocates of Australian literature overseas for a number of years and who received funding from the Literature Board for their promotional efforts should not be overlooked. They are the late Professor Anna Rutherford, who for many years was Professor of Commonwealth Literature at Aarhus University, Denmark, and Professor Bernard Hickey, formerly at the University of Venice and Lecce University, Italy. Between them they covered the globe and served as ambassadors-at-large in the cause of Australian writing by organising literary conferences and events featuring Australian writers throughout Europe, Africa and Asia.

In addition, Professor Rutherford founded the first regional association of the European Association for Commonwealth Language and Literature Study, and was also the publisher of *Kunapipi*, an international literary magazine which featured Australian and Commonwealth writers, and Dangaroo Press, which give many Australian writers their first international publication. Both *Kunapipi* and Dangaroo Press were funded consistently by the Literature Board.

The Board has taken part in many overseas promotional events; for example, in 1993 it initiated the first major exhibition of Australian books in the Philippines, the exhibition being held at the Australian Embassy in Manila. Two writers—the bestselling children's book writer/illustrator Pamela Allen and well-known fiction writer Rosie Scott—accompanied the exhibition to help promote Australian writing.

During a major trade promotion, Australia Today Indonesia 94, held in Jakarta in 1994, the Board arranged a large exhibition of Australian children's books with Indigenous storyteller Maureen Watson participating in sessions with schoolchildren. In 1995, in association with the Australia-Korea Foundation, the Board organised a book exhibition, Read Australia, to coincide with an Austrade promotion in Korea, the books being donated to Korean libraries at the conclusion of the exhibition.

Another important overseas event took place in 1996. The Literature Board, in conjunction with the Council's Audience and Market Development Division and the International Cultural Relations branch of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, participated in the Australia-India New Horizons cultural program. It funded Penguin India to publish two books each by Libby Hathorn, Gillian Mears and David Malouf, and also arranged related tours by a number of Australian writers.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

Centenary of Federation

For some time, the Literature Board in conjunction with the National Council for the Centenary of Federation had examined the possibility of undertaking literary projects to mark this anniversary. In the end it decided to undertake a joint initiative with the National Council to fund publishers to reprint out-of-print titles of classic Australian work. Several publishers have taken advantage of this opportunity and 22 classics have been reprinted to date.

Books Alive

A unique role for the Literature Board in 2000–01 was its auspicing of the formative first year of the promotional campaign known as Books Alive, on behalf of the Commonwealth Department of Communications, Information Technology and the Arts (DCITA). The purpose of the four year, \$8 million campaign was 'to promote the intrinsic value of books, reading and literacy (particularly for children) and the books of Australian writers'.

The Literature Section of the Australia Council was given responsibility for setting up an administrative and consultative framework within which this major national campaign for the promotion of reading for pleasure could be developed and implemented. To initiate consultation with relevant stakeholders and develop the campaign's objectives, a reference group was established in January 2000, comprising representatives from publishing, bookselling, libraries, writers, children's literature advocates, DCITA and the Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs. A fulltime coordinator was appointed in October 2000.

Justice Nicholas Hasluck (chair of the Literature Board and member of the Australia Council) chaired the initial reference group. The project was subsequently chaired by former Australia Council deputy chair, Dr Helen Nugent, and coordinated by specialist staff with both Arts Development Executive and Literature Section support. The reference group commissioned extensive market research and developed a cooperative model for a national campaign to foster the appreciation and enjoyment of reading.

Sandra Yates succeeded Dr Nugent as chair of the reference group in November 2002. The first of what is hoped will become an annual Books Alive national promotion took place from 2–15 August 2003.

Planning for the Future

In August 2000, as part of the Australia Council's project Planning for the Future: Issues, Trends and Opportunities for the Arts in Australia, the Literature Board held a vision day in Melbourne to which a representative group of writers, editors, publishers, booksellers, festival organisers and writers' centre directors, as well as Fund members and staff, was invited. The participants were asked to stand back and look at possible future directions in the Australian literary scene.

The participants noted that, in an era of changing technology and increasing globalisation, the role of the creative writer as a critic and commentator is often misunderstood. They proposed various strategies aimed at addressing the tenuous position of the Australian writer and reader. These included proposals directed at preserving a distinctive Australian voice; exploiting the new technology more effectively; opening up opportunities in international markets; and the fostering of diversity and innovation in Australian literature.

SUMMARY

This short history 1986–2000 has necessarily been a broad sweep through the Literature Board’s activities over these years and many worthwhile projects and initiatives have not been mentioned. Nevertheless, it should be evident that, despite severely restricted funding and sometimes ‘unwelcome’ interruptions to the Board’s vision of what should be done to assist Australian writers and writing, the Board has done its utmost to stimulate and assist the development of quality Australian works.

Due to the 1996 restructure when so many changes were made to the previous Literature Board programs, it has been impossible to make a meaningful comparison in this history between Literature Board and Fund expenditures in the various grant programs/categories between 1986–2000. Instead, the totals spent each year on programs/categories by both the Literature Board and the Literature Fund for this period are given as a guide.

Literature Board 1986–96

Year	Writers’ Grants	Emeritus	Residencies & Devt.	Publishing & Mags	Promotions Nat. & Intl.	Total
1985–86	\$1,306,000	\$153,000	\$400,000	\$432,000	\$595,000	\$2,886,000
1986–87	\$1,392,900	\$176,000	\$476,000	\$577,000	\$539,000	\$3,160,999
1987–88	\$1,538,000	\$197,000	\$459,000	\$597,000	\$774,000	\$3,565,000
1988–89	\$1,611,000	\$220,000	\$539,000	\$669,000	\$728,000	\$3,767,000
1989–90	\$1,772,000	\$280,000	\$443,000	\$672,000	\$593,000	\$3,760,000
1990–91	\$2,579,500	\$271,540	\$222,000	\$663,000	\$782,000	\$4,518,040
1991–92	\$2,116,430	\$327,570	\$583,000	\$592,000	\$742,000	\$4,361,000
1992–93	\$1,955,202	\$309,772	\$850,820	\$668,210	\$662,183	\$4,446,187
1993–94	\$1,809,675	\$320,802	\$915,384	\$705,580	\$799,565	\$4,551,006
1994–95	\$1,272,350	\$264,373	\$774,112	\$646,144	\$642,794	\$3,599,773
1995–96	\$2,216,464	\$227,324	\$916,936	\$747,396	\$777,890	\$4,886,010

Literature Fund 1996–2000

Year	New Work	Emerging	Comm.	Devt	Pres. Promo. & Partner-ships	Program	Triennial	Total
1996–97	\$2,057,700	\$236,454	\$176,800	\$222,032	\$419,072	\$182,470	\$851,159*	\$4,145,687
1997–98	\$1,857,536	\$206,919	\$156,250	\$296,739	\$1,016,861^	\$138,506	\$270,500§	\$3,943,311
1998–99	\$1,792,495	\$218,000	\$112,500	\$296,518	\$975,830	\$126,532	\$295,310	\$3,817,185
1999–2000	\$1,862,500	\$247,895	\$132,000	\$298,625	\$1,232,282	\$43,641	\$290,500	\$4,107,443

* The Program Category existed for 1996–97 only.

^ As from 1997-98, book publishing and literary magazine subsidies were included in the Presentation & Promotion Programs, which also covered writers’ festivals and promotional activities, both within Australia and overseas.

§ The Triennial Program commenced in 1997-98 and, for Literature, is restricted to the funding of State/Territory Writers’ Centres and Literature Officers.

In order to be able to come to a comparison of the money spent by the Board on income support and promotional/publishing grants in the years 1986–2000, the headings used in the above analysis have been broadly based. This is primarily due to the Australia Council's restructure and the resulting change in grant programs in 1996. To achieve this comparison, separate programs have been subsumed under one heading: for example 'Writers' Grants' includes all individual writers' grants (Fellowships, etc.) as well as other grants directed at individuals (e.g. Picture Book Illustrators and Translators' grants). It should also be noted that the category totals for each financial year do not add up to the total Literature Board's budget for that year. This is because some Board initiated projects did not fit into (and, therefore, have not been included under) the given headings.

Overall, it appears that the Literature Board has remained fairly steady in its budget divisions, even when amounts for writers' grants are lower. This was usually due to large commitments being carried forward from the previous year (the effect of long-term fellowships); this made it necessary to reduce the amount spent on individual writers' grants in the next year in order to balance the budget.

THE FUTURE

The future for literature can be seen as rather daunting. For example, a major challenge is the rapid changes being wrought by information technology (e.g. Internet, CD-ROMs, computer games) which affect the place of the book in the marketplace. The Literature Board will be faced with many pressures, some of which were mentioned above in the **Planning for the Future** section. There are also worrying literacy and educational trends, particularly at the tertiary level.

On the other hand there are some encouraging signs concerning reading. An Australia Council survey, *Australians and the Arts*, conducted by Saatchi & Saatchi Australia, showed that 39 per cent of a sample group had read a novel in the past two weeks, 11 per cent had read biographies/autobiographies, and 8 per cent short stories. Overall, 56 per cent of those surveyed said they got a lot of enjoyment out of reading books; it is not clear, however, whether a substantial proportion of those surveyed read what could be classed as 'literary' works.

Attendance at plays was disappointingly low in this report—out of the 44% who said that they had been part of an audience immediately prior to the survey (films, bands, plays, popular and classical concerts, galleries), only 6 per cent had attended a play. Australian theatres and playwrights (with a couple of notable exceptions) are struggling to attract audiences. It is clear that strategies for helping to improve the quality of writing and the overall reception of Australian scripts will need to be a priority with the Literature Board, if the writing for performance genre is to generate more attention and critical acclaim.

There is no doubt that the Literature Board, in helping to sustain the literary and cultural life of the nation, must keep concentrating on the provision of financial assistance for writers to help both their development and their opportunities to create quality works; on the publication, performance and marketing of their works, both within Australia and overseas; and on encouraging Australians to keep reading or attending performances of Australian works, despite the competing demands of other activities on their increasingly limited leisure time.

In providing the Australia Council at its meeting of 9 November 2000 with an overview of the Literature Board's work in recent years, the chair, Nicholas Hasluck, drew attention to some of the principal points set out in a report on the Board's Vision Day (mentioned above). Furthermore, he reminded the Council of the following:

Literature reflects the cultural life of the nation in all its diversity and, for that reason, the creation of literary works should not be regarded as an industry. Literature speaks to the contemplative side of human nature and its true value does not lend itself to statistical measurement. Respect for language should be regarded as an important cultural artefact. The role of literature in whatever form it takes is to celebrate language as the keystone of human communication.

Nicholas Hasluck concluded by affirming the importance of the work being done by the Literature Board 'in encouraging and enabling Australian writers to create innovative works that give a meaning to this credo'.

POSTSCRIPT

In April 2001, the Australia Council made the decision to revert to naming artform 'funds' as 'boards', so the Literature Fund will again be called the Literature Board.

LIST OF LITERATURE BOARD/FUND MEMBERS 1986–2003

Philip Ayres (Vic.)	1999–2002
Janis Balodis (NSW)	1989–92
Edmund Champion (NSW)	1982–86
Brian Castro (NSW/Vic.)	1992–95
John Collins (Qld/Tas.)	1995–99
Sarah Day (Tas.)	1998–2001
Frank Devine (NSW)	1997–2000
Robert Drewe (NSW)	1989–92
John Emery (SA/NSW)	2000–04
Nicholas Enright (NSW)	1986–89
Sandra Forbes (NSW)	1986–89
Helen Garner (Vic.)	1985–88
Kerryn Goldsworthy (Vic.)	1988–91
Sue Gough (Qld)	1997–2000
Connie Gregory (Vic.)	1999–2002
Kate Grenville (NSW)	2002–04
Kevin Hart (Vic.)	1995
John Iremonger (NSW)	1990–94
Wendy Jenkins (WA)	1984–87
Thomas Keneally, AO (NSW)	1985–88
Susan Lever (ACT)	1991–94
Julie Lewis (WA)	1991–94
Joan London (WA)	1994–97
Angelo Loukakis (NSW)	1985–88
Susan Mitchell (SA)	1992–95
Drusilla Modjeska (NSW)	1994–97
Patrick Morgan (Vic.)	1996–99
Sally Morgan (WA)	1989–90
Philip Neilsen (Qld)	1992–95
Heather Nimmo (WA)	1998–2001
Louis Nowra (NSW)	1996–98
Elizabeth Perkins (Qld)	1987–89
Hannie Rayson (Vic.)	1992–95
Gillian Rubinstein (SA)	1995–98
Andrew Sant (Tas.)	1988–91
Robyn Sheahan-Bright	2000–03
Michael Webster (Vic)	1983–86

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