

MEDIA RELEASE

Thursday 22 June 2017

Writers and astronomers gather in Parkes for the first Skywriters 'Big Gig'

Creative writers and astronomers from across inland NSW will gather in Parkes on **Saturday 8 July and Sunday 9 July** to share their stories about celestial bodies and the wonder of our big inland sky, at the first *Skywriters 'Big Gig'*.

The event will be held in two venues, Parkes Shire Council's Coventry Room near the Parkes Library, in Bogan Street, Parkes, and The Dish Café at the Parkes Observatory, Telescope Road, Parkes. It will be co-hosted by the Big Skies Collaboration, Parkes Shire Council, and Arts OutWest, with in-kind support from other sponsors, and run from 1 pm Saturday 8 July to 1 pm Sunday 9 July, 2017.

This first *Skywriters Big Gig* will be an opportunity for Skywriters, many of whom live hundreds of kilometres apart, to meet one another face-to-face for the first time, to workshop ideas and to read from their latest prose or poetry. They will also be able to participate in panel discussions on literary themes, and be inspired by four guest astronomers, Trevor Leaman from Orange, Donna Burton from Coonabarabran, Peter Starr from Dubbo, and Les Dalrymple from Billimari, near Canowindra.

The astronomers will also discuss the contributions astronomers and creative writers can make to developing the cultural tourism sector in inland communities, to encourage more city visitors to share the wonder of our inland night sky. All those working in the tourism field are invited to participate in these discussions.

The 'Big Gig' will also highlight Wiradjuri and Gomeri (Gamilaraay) astronomy, with the opening of *Wiradjuri Murriyang (Wiradjuri Skyworld)*, a weekend exhibition of Wiradjuri constellation art by Scott 'Sauce' Towney, a Wiradjuri artist from Peak, for Trevor Leaman's Wiradjuri Astronomy Project, and a feature documentary, *Sky Stories of the Dreaming*, by Ellie Gilbert. Both Scott Towney and Ellie Gilbert will be discussing their artworks at this event.

Other panel discussions will focus on writing practice, editing, blogging and social media, publishing, country newspapers, and rural writers' groups. Skywriters from Parkes, Orange, Grenfell, Condobolin, Gilgandra, Forbes and Dubbo will talk about their local writing groups, and the importance of being able to share their work with peers.

On Saturday night the 'Big Gig' will move to The Dish Café, at Parkes Observatory, for some live stargazing with three astronomers and their telescopes, accompanied by some great astro-storytelling over dinner.

"Skywriters from three regional cities – Dubbo, Orange and Bathurst – and from many small country towns, villages and rural localities, and even a couple of Sydney-based writers, will be attending this event," project coordinator and author Dr Merrill Findlay said. "There will be a lot of sharing of ideas and networking."

"We have lots of hopes and plans for the future, including publishing an anthology of Skywriters works, and building a strong and supportive network of inland writers to sustain the art of creative writing in inland communities long into the future."

Distributed by:

Arts OutWest | regional arts development organisation for Central West NSW

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Big Skies Collaboration

The Skywriters Project is already delivering outcomes for creative writers. A dozen Skywriters Hubs have been established in inland libraries between Narrabri and Bathurst, with the support of local librarians and regional arts development organisations, and three new writers' groups have emerged through the project.

Daytime events at this first 'Big Gig' are free for all registered Skywriters, and \$5 per day (at the door) for non-Skywriters. But registering as a Skywriter is easy: just download the form from our web site, fill it in, and return it by email or at the 'Big Gig'.

Dinner at The Dish Cafe is \$30 which must be prepaid.

See www.facebook.com/skywritersproject for more information, or visit the website, bigskiescollaboration.wordpress.com/projects/skywriters/

Contact: Dr Merrill Findlay, 0404 057 162, or Arts OutWest on 6338 4657

This event is an initiative of Big Skies Collaboration and project partner Arts Outwest, with support from the Regional Arts Fund and Parkes Shire Council.

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