

MEDIA RELEASE

Monday 27 February 2017

Skywriters writers groups to tell stories of the stars

**Are you a creative writer, or dreamt of becoming one?
Have you gazed at the night sky with wonder, curiosity and awe?
Yes? Then you are ready to become a Skywriter!**

Writers and aspiring writers are invited to join the Big Skies Collaboration Skywriters project to author stories, in any genre, about their own or other people (or beings'?) relationships with celestial phenomena in our Southern Sky.

A Bathurst Skywriters Hub will be launched at Bathurst City Library on Saturday March 11 at 11am.

The *Skywriters Project* is part of a larger initiative, the *Big Skies Collaboration*, a creative coming together of arts practitioners, astronomers and local communities to celebrate millennia of astronomies on the inland plains and share their stories about their own or other people's relationships with the cosmos in rural, inland Australia.

Skywriters Hubs will be launched at participating libraries in Parkes, Condobolin, Canowindra, Cowra, Orange, Grenfell, Narrabri, Coonabarabran, Dubbo and Warren in March and April this year, with workshops and other activities held throughout the year.

The launch of the Bathurst Skywriters Hub will include guest speakers:

- project facilitator Dr Merrill Findlay who will introduce the Skywriters Project
- amateur astronomer Ray Pickard from the Bathurst Observatory Research Facility
- amateur astronomer Niall MacNeill, who is building a new observatory near Bathurst;
- writer Tracy Sorensen whose forthcoming novel, *The Lucky Galah* is set in a small town involved in the Apollo 11 Moon Walk mission.

The Bathurst launch will be a chance for local authors and aspiring authors to learn more about the project, to be inspired by other people's experience of our southern sky, and to meet other like-minded people.

"Bathurst Library is delighted to be involved in the Skywriters project. It offers a wonderful opportunity for writers and would-be writers to explore the craft and the cosmos. The sky is the limit," manager of library services at Bathurst City Library Patou Clerc said.

The Skywriters Project is led by Forbes-based author and scholar Dr Merrill Findlay.

"We have all gazed at the night sky in awe and wonder at some time in our lives, or enjoyed spectacular sun rises and sun sets, or remember the first sputnik, or that first Moon Walk, for example. So everyone has a great sky story to tell," Dr Findlay said.

Throughout 2017-18 Dr Findlay will lead face-to-face workshops at each of the *Skywriters* Hubs, to support local writers as they develop their skills, gain confidence, and complete their own literary works to publishable quality. In addition to these sessions online support will be provided. Other events will also be held so writers from throughout inland NSW and the ACT can get to know one another and possibly establish a supportive rural writers' network.

Participating Skywriters will be invited to create sky stories of up to 3,000 words about their own or other people's (or other beings?) relationships with celestial phenomena. Finished works – fiction, nonfiction, prose or poetry – will be published on the *Big Skies Collaboration* website, and may also be included in a *Skywriters'* anthology to be published in 2019, the 50th anniversary of humanity's first steps on Earth's moon.

Participation in the *Skywriters Project* is FREE. Anyone with an interest in writing or storytelling is invited to take part. Sign up at your participating library or at bigskiescollaboration.wordpress.com/projects/skywriters/

Distributed by:

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Big Skies Collaboration

The project was made possible by the Australian Government's Regional Arts Fund (RAF), which supports sustainable cultural development in regional, rural and remote Australia to give artists and communities better access to opportunities to practice and experience the arts. *Big Skies Collaboration* partner Arts OutWest secured \$24,500 over two years from RAF for two elements of this cultural intervention: the *Skywriters Project* and *Art of Wiradjuri Constellations*.

Other *Big Skies Collaborators* are also developing performance, visual arts, literary, and music events for the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 moon landing in 2019.

More about the *Big Skies Collaboration* project: <https://bigskiescollaboration.wordpress.com>

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Skywriters launch dates:

- Bathurst City Library – Saturday 11 March, 11am
- Condobolin Library – Wednesday 15 March, 12-2pm
- Grenfell Library – Monday 20 March, 12-2pm
- Warren Library – Tuesday 21 March, 12.30
- Parkes Shire Library – Wednesday 22 March, 6pm
- Macquarie Library, Dubbo – Thursday 23 March, 5.30pm
- Coonabarabran Library – Friday 24 March, 12.30
- Gilgandra Library – Saturday 25 March, 1pm
- Narrabri Library – Monday 27 March, 5.30pm
- Forbes Shire Library – Thursday 6 April
- Orange City Library – Friday 7 April, 12.30
- Cowra Library – Saturday 8 April, 11am

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