

MELBOURNE  
WRITERS  
FESTIVAL



8-12 May 2024

[mwf.com.au](http://mwf.com.au)

We respectfully acknowledge that Melbourne Writers Festival takes place on the traditional lands of the peoples of the Kulin Nation. We pay our respects to Elders past and present.

We are honoured to contribute to the more than 65,000 years of storytelling that has taken place on the lands and waterways of this Country, of which sovereignty was never ceded.

# FESTIVAL INFORMATION

## MESSAGE FROM ARTISTIC DIRECTOR MICHAELA MCGUIRE

### HOW TO BOOK

**Online:** [mwf.com.au](http://mwf.com.au)

**By phone:** (03) 9999 1199 (Monday–Friday, 10am–4pm)

Melbourne Writers Festival accepts calls via the National Relay Service. Registration is required for this service. Call 133 677 or visit [relayservice.gov.au](http://relayservice.gov.au) for more information.

TTY users can phone 133 677 and ask for (03) 9999 1199. Speak and Listen users can phone 1300 555 727 and ask for (03) 9999 1199.

#### CONCESSION PRICES

Concession prices are available for: children under 16, full-time students, Concession or Pension Card holders, and Seniors Card holders.




### COMMUNITY TICKETS FOR FIRST NATIONS PEOPLES

MWF has an allocation of tickets available for free for First Nations peoples. To access these community tickets, email [ticketing@mwf.com.au](mailto:ticketing@mwf.com.au) or call (03) 9999 1199.

### ACCESS

Visit [mwf.com.au/access](http://mwf.com.au/access) for information about how MWF can assist with access requests and to learn more about accessibility at the festival.

#### Access symbols in guide:

-  Auslan interpretation
-  Accessible venue
-  Hearing loop

Please contact our ticketing team at [ticketing@mwf.com.au](mailto:ticketing@mwf.com.au) or on (03) 9999 1199 to:

- book accessible seats
- book a seat with the best eyeline of an Auslan interpreter
- book a seat with access to the hearing loop at The Capitol
- book a complimentary ticket as a Companion Card holder
- discuss any access enquiries.

#### VENUES

To learn more about festival venues, including public transport options, and accessible entrances and parking, please visit [mwf.com.au/venues](http://mwf.com.au/venues) or contact our ticketing team at [ticketing@mwf.com.au](mailto:ticketing@mwf.com.au) or on (03) 9999 1199.

### YOUR DISCOUNT AWAITS

Buy your MWF tickets before 11.59pm, Thursday 28 March to receive a 10% early-bird discount.\*

\*Some exclusions apply. Full prices are listed in this printed guide. Visit our website to see discounted prices.



### BE PART OF THE STORY



#MWF24  
@MelbWritersFest

For the latest festival news, prizes and rewards, subscribe to our eNewsletter at [mwf.com.au](http://mwf.com.au).



Each of us is haunted. In one way or another. In the dark, our minds turn to the ghosts of past mistakes, past wrongs, perhaps even our past selves. Lost now. (Lost for now?)

This land too is haunted. It has been wronged, injustice raked through it.

Animals leave us. The bush burns to ash.

We're living in a ghost land.

Past wars are still being waged – in our minds, our policies, our world. Political ideas once thought conquered, are lurking, waiting, arriving.

There are ghosts too in the machine. Whirring, downloading, transferring from cloud to cloud. They ask us to prove that we're real.

And yet.

At five o'clock in the morning, the sun's long fingers slip into our room, reaching.

The telltale world of dreams flitters in our mind, we grasp for those glimpses of ideas, snatch at stories, try to take them down. The pen flies, held by a ghost hand. A mind possessed by that creative realm that's fading. Determined to pin those wisps of thought down, encased in a hardcover tomb. This is a sacred time. For creation.

We remember that we have only been riding a ghost train. Through depression, despair and grief. And soon, we will emerge into daylight once more.

We remember that ghosts are just a story we loved as a child. When we were safe and sound. And the only poltergeist that plagues us is procrastination. (And what was that word??)

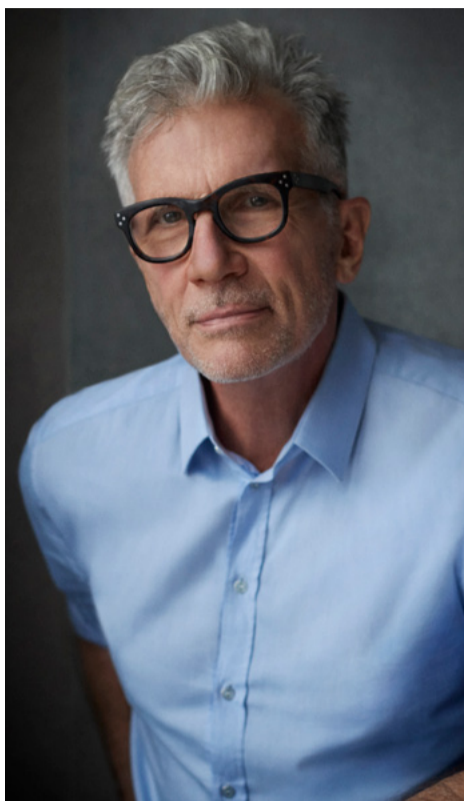
We remember that dream we had of a different kind of future. The ghost we longed to make real.

We remember we have unfinished business.

Thank you to our Government Partners



# WELCOME TO THE FESTIVAL



## An Evening with Michael Cunningham

Wed 8 May, 6pm | Melbourne Town Hall

Pulitzer Prize-winning author of *The Hours* Michael Cunningham introduces his newest masterwork and first novel in nearly ten years, *Day*, in conversation with Ailsa Piper. *The Age* Book of the Year Awards will also be presented.

Supported by ARA

\$60 premium / \$35 full / \$30 conc.



## Lauren Groff and Charlotte Wood: Silence is Golden

Sat 11 May, 12pm | The Capitol

A special meeting of literary minds, bestselling American author Lauren Groff (*The Vaster Wilds*) and acclaimed Australian writer Charlotte Wood (*Stone Yard Devotional*) join Ailsa Piper to discuss their stories of solitude.

Supported by ARA

\$35 full / \$30 conc.



## Leslie Jamison and Nam Le: Forms of Life

Sat 11 May, 3pm | The Capitol

Acclaimed authors and close friends Leslie Jamison (*Splinters*) and Nam Le (*36 Ways of Writing a Vietnamese Poem*) compare their genre-switching bodies of work, in conversation with Sophie Black.

\$35 full / \$30 conc.



## Rosie Batty: Hope

Sun 12 May, 3pm | Athenaeum Theatre

The 2015 Australian of the Year Rosie Batty shares insight into *Hope*, her memoir of finding healing and peace in the presence of grief.

\$35 full / \$30 conc.

## An Afternoon with Andrew O'Hagan

Sun 12 May, 4.30pm | Athenaeum Theatre

Three-time Booker nominee Andrew O'Hagan talks about *Caledonian Road*, his brilliant and biting novel of British class, politics and money, in conversation with Michael Williams.

Supported by ARA

\$40 full / \$35 conc.



## Paul Murray: The Bee Sting

Fri 10 May, 6pm | Athenaeum Theatre

Irish novelist Paul Murray (*Skippy Dies*) appears in Melbourne to introduce his tragicomic, Booker Prize-shortlisted tour de force *The Bee Sting* to Australia, in conversation with Michael Williams.

\$40 full / \$35 conc.

## A. C. Grayling: Philosophy and Life

Sat 11 May, 3pm | Athenaeum Theatre

Eminent philosopher A. C. Grayling delivers an address that draws on a lifetime of thinking and writing about the biggest question of all: how should I live my life?

Supported by the Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne

\$40 full / \$35 conc.



## Viet Thanh Nguyen: A Man of Two Faces

Sat 11 May, 12pm | Athenaeum Theatre

Pulitzer Prize-winning author Viet Thanh Nguyen (*The Sympathizer*) introduces his highly original and savagely funny memoir *A Man of Two Faces*, in conversation with André Dao.

Supported by ARA

\$40 full / \$35 conc.



## Familiar Haunts

Sun 12 May, 10.30am | Athenaeum Theatre

Irish writer Paul Murray (*The Bee Sting*) and American author Bryan Washington (*Family Meal*) discuss their newest novels' shared interest in real and figurative ghosts, with Toni Jordan.

\$35 full / \$30 conc.



## Bruce Pascoe and Lyn Harwood: Black Duck

Sat 11 May, 4.30pm | Athenaeum Theatre

Bestselling *Dark Emu* author Bruce Pascoe and his partner Lyn Harwood talk about their poignant new memoir *Black Duck* and the consequences of trying to change Australian history, with Paul Barolay.

Supported by ARA

\$35 full / \$30 conc.



## Toshikazu Kawaguchi: Before the Coffee Gets Cold

Sun 12 May, 12pm | Athenaeum Theatre

Japanese writer and global literary star Toshikazu Kawaguchi chats about his bestselling *Before the Coffee Gets Cold* series and forthcoming TV adaptation, with Daniel Hahn.

This event will be translated live.

\$35 full / \$30 conc.



## Ann Patchett: Spectres at the Feast

Sun 12 May, 6.30pm | Athenaeum Theatre

Internationally bestselling author Ann Patchett (*Tom Lake*) appears with her friend and fellow acclaimed author Meg Mason (*Sorrow and Bliss*) to lift the veil on the untold stories of their writing lives.

Supported by ARA

\$40 full / \$35 conc.

# THE CURATORS

Be captivated by these curious and critical events brought together with care and consideration by MWF Curators, Wik and Solomon Islander rapper, Ziggy Ramo and Koori/Goori and Lebanese writer, Mykaela Saunders.



## Ziggy Ramo: Human?

Fri 10 May, 8.30pm  
Athenaeum Theatre

Wik and Solomon Islander rapper Ziggy Ramo speaks with Jan Fran about his electrifying debut memoir and historical reckoning, *Human?*, and delivers a live musical performance.

\$35 full / \$30 conc. (3) (7) (8)



## Who Gets to Be Human?

Sat 11 May, 10.30am  
Conversation Quarter,  
State Library Victoria

After 235 years of colonisation, who truly gets to be human in so-called Australia? Join Ziggy Ramo, Chelsea Watego, Lamisse Hamouda and Mo'Ju together in conversation, with host Osman Faruqi.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7) (8)



## Let It Bring Hope

Sat 11 May, 1.30pm  
Conversation Quarter,  
State Library Victoria

Aboriginal and Palestinian poets read original works in affirmation of commitment and solidarity. Featuring Tony Birch, Samah Sabawi, Jeanine Leane, Micaela Sahhar, Nayuka Gorrie and Sara Saleh, with host Mykaela Saunders.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7) (8)



## Mykaela Saunders: Always Will Be

Sun 12 May, 10.30am  
State Library Theatrette

Mykaela Saunders talks about her collection of speculative fiction *Always Will Be*, which imagines a future of sovereignty and self-determination for Goori people, with Daniel Browning.

Free, no bookings required.  
Entry is subject to capacity.

(3) (7)



## Alexis Wright: Sovereignty of the Imagination

Sun 12 May, 3pm  
State Library Theatrette

Globally acclaimed, Miles Franklin-winning novelist Alexis Wright (*Carpentaria*, *The Swan Book*) discusses her influential body of work and newest masterwork, *Praiseworthy*, with Mykaela Saunders.

Supported by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)



## Year in Review: Australian Politics

Sat 11 May, 10.30am  
Athenaeum Theatre

David Marr, Laura Tingle and Sean Kelly review the year in Australian politics and consider what lies ahead, in conversation with Michael Williams.

\$40 full / \$35 conc. (3)



## Melissa Lucashenko: Edenglassie

Sat 11 May, 10.30am  
Queen Victoria Women's Centre

Miles Franklin-winning Goorie author Melissa Lucashenko discusses her epic, heartrending and wryly humorous work of historical fiction *Edenglassie*, in conversation with Kate Evans.

In partnership with Queen Victoria Women's Centre

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

## First Knowledges: Innovation

Sat 11 May, 12pm  
Conversation Quarter,  
State Library Victoria

Ian J McNiven and Lynette Russell (*First Knowledges: Innovation*) share insight into the millennia-spanning ingenuity and innovations of First Nations peoples, in conversation with Larissa Behrendt.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

## The Ghost in the Machines

Sat 11 May, 12pm  
State Library Theatrette

Can AI generate great art? Philosophy professor Margaret Cameron and AI experts Marek Kowalkiewicz (*The Economy of Algorithms*) and Toby Walsh (*Machines Behaving Badly*) chat with Paul Barclay.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)



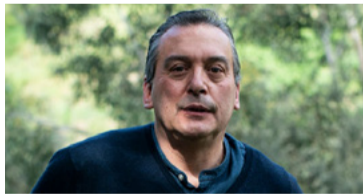
## Shankari Chandran: Safe Haven

Sat 11 May, 12pm  
Queen Victoria Women's Centre

Miles Franklin-winning novelist Shankari Chandran (*Chai Time at Cinnamon Gardens*) introduces her eagerly awaited follow-up story of displacement, refuge and love, *Safe Haven*, with Elizabeth McCarthy.

In partnership with Queen Victoria Women's Centre

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)



## Ghosted

Sat 11 May, 1.30pm  
The Capitol

Award-winning storytellers Christos Tsiolkas (*The In-Between*) and Bryan Washington (*Family Meal*) share the stage to discuss their acclaimed new novels that tenderly depict the triumphs and obstacles of love, with Maeve Marsden.

Supported by the Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne

\$35 full / \$30 conc. (3)



## Aqua Profunda

Sat 11 May, 1.30pm  
Queen Victoria Women's Centre

Katherine Brabon (*Body Friend*), Nadine J. Cohen (*Everyone and Everything*) and Myfanwy Jones (*Cool Water*) discuss shimmering new novels in which water helps heal the griefs and ghosts of the past, with Nadia Bailey.

In partnership with Queen Victoria Women's Centre

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)



## Ghost Cities and Ghost Futures

Sat 11 May, 1.30pm  
State Library Theatrette

Prize-winning writers Siang Lu (*Ghost Cities*) and Laura Jean McKay (*Gunflower*) discuss their daring and surreal new works about a different kind of world, with Sofija Stefanovic.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)



## Steve Mushin: Ultrawild

Sat 11 May, 3pm  
Conversation Quarter,  
State Library Victoria

How can rewilding projects restore the health of our planet faster than we thought possible? Maverick inventor and *Ultrawild* author Steve Mushin shares his optimistic vision, with Jes Harris.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

## Tony Birch: Women and Children

Sat 11 May, 3pm  
State Library Theatrette

The Boisbouvier Chair in Australian Literature Tony Birch discusses his tender and forthright new novel, *Women and Children*, with Jaclyn Booton, Creative Director, Melbourne Public Humanities Initiative.

Supported by the Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

## John Button Oration: Off-course Discourse

Sat 11 May, 4.30pm  
The Capitol

Esteemed journalist Laura Tingle examines why the quality of our national debate has deteriorated and what, if anything, we can do about it.

Supported by the Melbourne School of Government and the Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne

\$35 full / \$30 conc. (3) (7)



## Real Pieces of Work

Sat 11 May, 10.30am  
State Library Theatrette

Bri Lee (*The Work*) and Liam Pieper (*Appreciation*) discuss their scathingly funny new novels that reveal the tensions of money, power and love in the arts, with Sarah L'Estrange.

Supported by the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund and in partnership with ABC RN

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

## PROGRAM

**The Stella Prize:  
Meet the Winner**

Sat 11 May, 4.30pm  
State Library Theatre

Be among the first to hear from the 2024 winner of The Stella Prize announced 2 May, as they sit down in conversation about their work with 2024 judge Cheryl Leavy.

In partnership with The Stella Prize

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

**Lauren Groff:  
The Vaster Wilds**

Sun 12 May, 10.30am  
Conversation Quarter,  
State Library Victoria

An electrifying voice in modern fiction, American novelist Lauren Groff (*The Vaster Wilds*, *Fates and Furies*) appears in conversation with Kate Evans about her craft and career.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

**Ghosts: An Evening of Storytelling**

Sat 11 May, 6.30pm  
The Capitol

What haunts your favourite writers? Do they wake in the night plagued by regrets? Do they see the past spilling into our present? Gather round to hear original ghost stories and moving reflections from a brilliant line-up of some of the best writers in the world. Featuring Daniel Browning, Viet Thanh Nguyen, Louise Milligan, Sinéad Gleeson and Leslie Jamison.

\$35 full / \$30 conc. (3) (7)

**A. C. Grayling:  
Who Owns the Moon?**

Sun 12 May, 1.30pm  
Conversation Quarter,  
State Library Victoria

Eminent British philosopher A. C. Grayling discusses his book *Who Owns the Moon?*, calling for a global consensus to protect the resources of our solar system, with Jonathan Green.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

**Leslie Jamison:  
Splinters**

Sun 12 May, 3pm  
Conversation Quarter,  
State Library Victoria

Bestselling American author Leslie Jamison (*The Empathy Exams*, *The Recovering*) discusses *Splinters*, her blazing memoir of divorce, motherhood, art and new love, in conversation with Rebecca Harkins-Cross.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

**Rachelle Unreich:  
A Brilliant Life**

Sun 12 May, 4.30pm  
Conversation Quarter,  
State Library Victoria

Rachelle Unreich talks about her book *A Brilliant Life*, the story of her mother's survival of the Holocaust and what it reveals about the resilience of the soul, with Jane Rocca.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

**The Sands of Time**

Sun 12 May, 4.30pm  
State Library Theatre

Prize-winning Gudanji/Wakaja writer Debra Dank (*We Come With This Place*) and bestselling *Tracks* author Robyn Davidson (*Unfinished Woman*) discuss their new memoirs about memory, land and family, with Kate Evans.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

**David Marr:  
Killing for Country**

Sun 12 May, 12pm  
Conversation Quarter,  
State Library Victoria

David Marr shares insight into *Killing for Country*, his gripping reckoning with the brutal history of Australia's unresolved frontier wars, in conversation with Sally Warhaft.

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

**Peter Steele  
Conversation:  
Grace Yee**

Sun 12 May, 12pm  
State Library Theatre

Grace Yee discusses *Chinese Fish*, her 2024 Victorian Prize for Literature-winning verse novel about migration, patriarchy and racism, with Maxine Beneba Clarke.

Supported by the Faculty of Arts,  
University of Melbourne

\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

**Who's Afraid of  
Reading Anyway?**

Sun 12 May, 1.30pm  
Athenaeum Theatre

Beloved novelists Tony Birch, Lauren Groff and Ann Patchett discuss the importance of reading freely and the formative subversive texts of their early reading lives, with Chris Gordon.

\$35 full / \$30 conc. (3)

**Conversations with  
Richard Fidler:  
Andrew O'Hagan**

Sun 12 May, 1.30pm  
State Library Theatre

A three-time Booker nominee and Editor-At-Large of *London Review of Books*, Andrew O'Hagan discusses his storied life and times with Richard Fidler.

In partnership with ABC RN

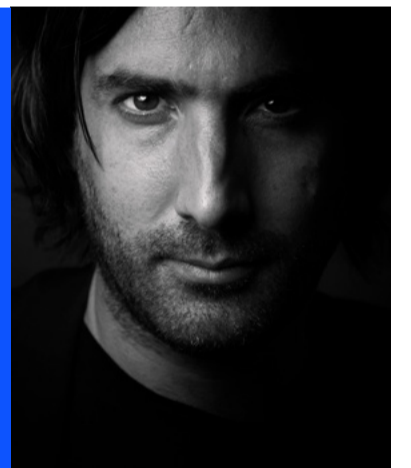
\$25 full / \$20 conc. (3) (7)

**Paul Lynch:  
Prophet Song**

Mon 20 May, 6.30pm  
Athenaeum Theatre

Fresh from being awarded the Booker Prize, Irish novelist Paul Lynch talks about *Prophet Song*, his cautionary fable of society on the brink.

\$40 full / \$35 conc. (3)

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# WORKSHOPS

From crafting a sense of place to taking creative risks (like writing with your family), let these award-winning writers help you become the writer you want to be. **The Wheeler Centre | \$140 full / \$120 conc.** ③

*MWF Workshops are presented in partnership with Writers Victoria*



## Masterclass: Aiming Higher – Risk and Creative Ambition

Fri 10 May, 10am–12.30pm

Join Charlotte Wood (*Stone Yard Devotional*, *The Natural Way of Things*) for a masterclass on the importance of risk and creative ambition in a writing life.

*(For published authors only)*



## Laura Jean McKay: Talking Shorts

Sun 12 May, 10am–12.30pm

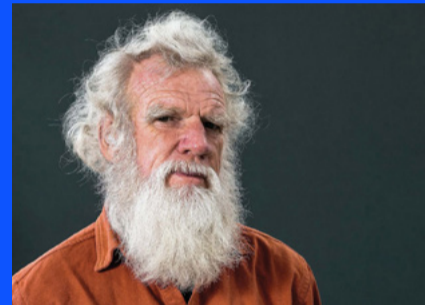
Acclaimed short story writer Laura Jean McKay (*Gunflower*, *Holiday in Cambodia*) shows you how to craft characters and dialogue to make your short stories sing.



## Lamisse Hamouda: Writing with Family

Fri 10 May, 2.30–5pm

The acclaimed author of the memoir *The Shape of Dust*, Lamisse Hamouda, teaches how to bring your family into the creative process of writing about your shared history.



## Bruce Pascoe: Writing Place and Season

Sun 12 May, 10am–12.30pm

Join *Black Duck* and *Dark Emu* author Bruce Pascoe to learn how to capture a sense of place and the rhythms of the seasons in your writing.



## Mark Dapin: How to Write True Crime

Sat 11 May, 10am–12.30pm

Join award-winning historian, journalist, screenwriter and author Mark Dapin (*Carnage*) for a workshop that answers the practical questions faced by first-time true crime authors.



## Leslie Jamison: Writing from Personal Archives

Mon 13 May, 2.30–5pm

*New York Times*–bestselling author Leslie Jamison (*Splinters*, *The Recovering*) leads a craft session on using personal archives to grant nuance, texture and emotional dimension to your writing.

## IN THE SUBURBS



## Toby Walsh: Machines Behaving Badly

Fri 10 May, 6pm | Vision Australia Library

Join world-leading artificial intelligence expert Toby Walsh (*Machines Behaving Badly*) as he examines the possibilities and perils of emerging AI technologies, from ChatGPT to facial recognition and self-driving cars, with Elizabeth McCarthy.

*In partnership with Vision Australia Library*

*Free (to secure your seat, please visit [visionaustralia.org/library](http://visionaustralia.org/library))*

③ ⑦



## Louise Milligan: Pheasants Nest

Fri 10 May, 8pm | Vision Australia Library

Award-winning writer and journalist Louise Milligan discusses *Pheasants Nest*, her stunning debut literary thriller about an abducted reporter, in conversation with Mark Dapin.

*In partnership with Vision Australia Library*

*Free (to secure your seat, please visit [visionaustralia.org/library](http://visionaustralia.org/library))*

③ ⑦



## Spooky Stories with Joel McKerrow

Sun 12 May, 10.30am

Join celebrated children's author Joel McKerrow (*Urban Legend Hunters*) as he takes you on a spooky adventure. This rollicking event will inspire kids to create their own soary and silly stories!

Rec. 5+ ③ ⑦

## MWF FAMILIES



Bring the whole family along for a fun-filled time at Pauline Gandel Children's Quarter, State Library Victoria.

**Both events are free, no bookings required.**

**Entry is subject to capacity.**



## Sofie Laguna and Marc McBride: A Friend for Ruby

Sun 12 May, 12pm

Writer Sofie Laguna and illustrator Marc McBride walk kids through the creative process of developing their gorgeous new story about kindness, family and friendship, *A Friend for Ruby*.

Rec. 5+ ③ ⑦

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Current as at 29 February 2024



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We believe celebrating writing, sharing ideas and telling stories is more important than ever. That's why we are the Principal Partner of the Melbourne Writers Festival.

At ARA, our story is about more than just delivering essential building and infrastructure services. We're always thinking about how we can create value for our customers, support our community and enrich the lives of Australians through the arts.

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