

Writers in Libraries Participants Announced

Five local writers have been selected to take part in a one-month residency program across four South Gippsland libraries.

The successful writers, who were selected from a very competitive field, are: Jenny Taylor, Jillian Durance, CS Hughes, John Tebbutt and the Loch Writers Group. The writers will each complete either a poem, short story, an essay or song that responds to the themes of *isolation*, *emergence* and *connection*. The writers will develop their works while based at Korumburra, Mirboo North, Leongatha or Foster libraries.

Once the residency is complete the works will be published as a collection online. Excerpts of the works will also be printed onto large posters and installed in streetscapes throughout the shire for the community to enjoy.

The residency program is a feature of South Gippsland Shire Council's \$2M COVID-19 Community Support Package which aims to assist with regional recovery. As part of the package \$252,000 has been allocated to ten creative projects that aim at raising the profile of arts and culture in South Gippsland through a diverse range of events, workshops and activities.

For more information on Writers in Libraries, including the times and locations when the writers will be onsite in each library, please visit: www.southgippsland.vic.gov.au/writersinlibraries

Quote attributable to South Gippsland Shire Council Arts Development Officer, Mary Sullivan

"The selected writers are all very talented and will undoubtedly each will offer a very different perspective on the *isolation*, *emergence* and *connection* theme. The selection process for this project was extremely difficult as we were lucky to receive so many excellent applications. We would like to thank everyone who took an interest in this new and exciting project for South Gippsland. We can't wait to see the end result."

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About the Writers:

Jenny Taylor

Jenny started her writing life as a poet before taking up song writing. With a 30-year career as a singing/performance teacher and a choir director, she is well versed in producing written technical and procedural documents related to music and is a published song writer. The subjects she writes about are diverse, with the moods ranging from gentle and joyful to quite confronting. During COVID, Jenny chose to focus on writing uplifting songs as she felt her audiences needed that.

Jillian Durance

Jillian enjoys writing local community history in book and essay form. For the past few years, she was been working on a memoir of the historic house in which she lives. The memoir weaves together the stories of past inhabitants with an account of her own contemporary experience of restoring the place as a beloved home. In 2007 Jillian won the Victorian Community History Prize for her work 'Still Going Strong: The Story of the Moyarra Honor Roll' and was again short-listed in 2017 for her publication 'The Shrine on the Mountain: The Story of St. Peter's Memorial Church, Kinglake.'

CS Hughes

CS Hughes is a local children's poet but he has also written short stories, articles and essays. He has produced several poetry collections including 'The Book of Whimsies', 'The Little Book of Funerals', 'The Book of Bird & Bear' as well as the illustrated children's verse, 'Sweet Christmas'. At the start of last year, CS edited a poetry collection called 'From the Ashes' which featured some of Australia's most renowned poets – as well as those just starting out – to provide a unified response to the 2019/20 bushfires crisis and to raise funds for charities that were working to rescue injured animals. A member and organiser for Burra Poets, CS was busy during COVID, releasing a speculative poetry narrative which featured a hand printed Lino print artwork.

John Tebbutt

John is a factual writer – an essayist, journalist, audio documentarian with an interest in historical and contemporary practices in media and cultural performance. As part of this writing project, John will be seeking interviews with a range of local creatives to document their experiences of isolation. How did they deal with it? What emerged creatively? And how has there been a reconnection with the local community?

John has had a career in teaching at a university level and publishing academic essays and also producing radio programs as a freelancer for ABC Radio National (Hindsight, Media Report). He looks forward to writing about the life of local artists under lockdown, in the time of pandemic.

The Loch Writers Group

The Loch Writers Group consists of five members: Anne Taib, Allana Young, Heather McCloy, Melissa Austwick and Joel Evans. They have different backgrounds but are unified as residents of Loch Village. The group meet weekly for two hours and share texts that are produced around a common theme or prompt. They recently displayed examples of their work at an Exhibition of Local Artists at the Artspace at Loch.

The Loch Writers Group explore a wide writing forms including short story, personal narrative, poetry and short articles. Due to the regular nature of their meetings they favour a genre known as Flash Fiction which sets a word limit on each written piece - often 500 words or less. The group have become adept at producing very tight, engaging pieces exploring prompt or theme, which often relates to their lives in Loch, particularly during the COVID experience, or to our life experience more generally.