

**REPORT OF OUTGOING PRESIDENT, MARA MOUSTAFINE TO THE
ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF SYDNEY PEN
10 JUNE 2008**

On behalf of the Management Committee of Sydney PEN, thank you for attending our AGM this evening and thank you for your ongoing support for Sydney PEN and its activities over the past year. By writing letters in support of Writers in Prison, attending our events, supporting our fundraising efforts and volunteering your time in many different ways, you have helped us advance PEN's goals of promoting literature and defending freedom of expression – freedom to write and freedom to read.

The past year has been a busy and productive one for Sydney PEN.

Strategic Focus

In August the new Management Committee held a day-long Strategic Planning workshop, organised with the help of our Secretary and strategic planning whiz, Clare Waters and kindly facilitated by James Henningham. Our aim was to agree on Sydney PEN's key priorities and to develop a sustainable plan of action for the year. The Committee was conscious that with the revival which Sydney PEN had undergone in recent years, there were growing demands for the organisation to take on more and more issues and activities that were beyond our capacity and limited resources.

The committee agreed that the best way to build on the successes of previous years was to focus our work in a number of key areas: defending freedom of expression in Australia and internationally, with an emphasis on Asia; promoting literature to advance PEN's goals; building the profile of Sydney PEN; improving our communications and expanding our membership and financial support base. We also identified more flexible ways of working, using project teams rather than committees and invited the Sydney PEN Young Writers to become an integral part of our organisation, with a seat at the table at Committee meetings.

Based on discussions at this meeting, we developed a clear statement of what Sydney PEN does, with the help of David Malouf, a member of Sydney PEN's Writers Advisory Panel. This statement now appears on our website and other key Sydney PEN materials.

Defending Freedom of Expression Internationally

PEN's Global campaign for freedom of expression in China

PEN's global campaign for freedom of expression in China has been the major focus of Sydney PEN's work over the past year in the run up to the Olympic Games in Beijing in August 2008. The campaign draws attention to the plight of 41 writers and journalists imprisoned for their work in China, including Tibetan and Uighur writers.

Central to PEN's global campaign has been the PEN Poem Relay, in which the poem "June" by imprisoned Chinese writer Shi Tao has been relaying around the world in tandem with the Olympic torch. It has travelled virtually on

the website www.penpoemrelay.org. As the torch has moved from country to country, the poem has been translated from one language to another. This innovative web-based campaign uses the very medium which many of the imprisoned Chinese writers have used to express their views and highlights the importance of translation in conveying ideas from one language to another.

Sydney PEN is very proud that the concept for this campaign was the brain child of Sydney PEN member and former Vice President Chip Rolley, which he developed in collaboration with Michael Green and his colleagues from Sydney PEN's web sponsor BarNet. Thanks to BarNet, we are able to host the campaign website for International PEN.

When the Olympic torch reached Canberra on 24 April, Shi Tao's poem went live in four Australian Indigenous languages – Darug, Adnyamathanha, Ngarrindjeri and Arrernte. We thank Hugo Bowne Anderson, a member of Sydney PEN Young Writers for arranging the recording of several of these translations and the filming of others for the site.

Chip Rolley also represented Sydney PEN at the One Dream: Free Expression in China event, comprising a two-day seminar and arts fair in Hong Kong in early May to coincide with the arrival of the Olympic torch there.

PEN Empty Chair campaign

Over the past year, Sydney PEN has actively pursued a campaign to have a PEN "empty chair", representing a writer silenced because of their work, prominently displayed at all sessions of major writers' festivals and literary events. The impetus for this came from seeing how effective the empty chairs had been at all sessions of the 2007 Sydney Writers' Festival.

As a result, empty chairs have featured at all Sydney PEN events and PEN panels at festivals. We have also had empty chairs and statements read at all sessions in the key Sydney Theatre venue of the 2008 Sydney Writers' Festival and variously at the Watermark Literary Muster, the Brisbane Writers' Festival, Perth Writers Festival, Adelaide Writers' Week and Wordstorm in Darwin. The empty chairs have also been incorporated in other literary events, such as Ian McEwan's appearance at the Sydney Opera House and Paul Auster and Siri Hustvedt's conversation at the Sydney Theatre in March. Next month, the empty chair will feature for the first time at the Reality Bites writers' festival component of the Noosa Long Weekend and at every session of the Byron Bay Writers' Festival.

I'd like to give special thanks to Committee member Ashley Hay for driving this project with passion and determination and to our Young Writers for their ongoing work in preparing the background materials on persecuted writers to distribute at various festivals and events. We also thank the many participating writers at festivals who helped make this possible, including Sydney PEN advisory panel members Helen Garner, David Malouf and Geraldine Brooks; Nicholas Jose, Victoria Glendenning, Lian Hearn, Anita Heiss, Gideon Haigh, Alice Garner, Gail Jones, Ursula Dubosarsky, Dorothy Porter, Maureen Freely and Virginia Lloyd.

Writers in Prison Committee work

Sydney PEN's Writers in Prison Committee continued its letter writing campaigns in support of writers imprisoned and persecuted for their work. Jeff Errington, former Chair of the Sydney PEN Young Writers, who recently took over from Jack Durack as Chair of the WIP Committee, will report separately on this very important work.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jack, formerly a Vice President of Sydney PEN, for his passion and tireless work as Chair of this committee over many years, as well as his dedication and hard work on behalf of Sydney PEN.

Day of the Imprisoned Writer

To commemorate PEN's Day of the Imprisoned Writer, Sydney PEN Writers Panel member David Williamson AO paid public tribute to Chinese writer Zhang Jianhong at the start of our final Sydney PEN Voices lecture on 14 November. The event was also the occasion of the presentation of the annual Sydney PEN Award (see below).

Other international activities

Sydney PEN also worked with other organisations to draw attention to the plight of writers persecuted for their work. A reading of the work of persecuted Zimbabwe poets was held at Gleebooks in collaboration with the Zimbabwe Information Centre as part of a World Wide Reading. Presented by Sydney PEN Vice President Sally Blakeney, the event in July 2007 attracted over 70 people in spite of the APEC Summit.

PEN also joined a Burma Rally at the height of the military crackdown last October, where Caroline Lurie, a member of Sydney PEN's Writers in Prison Committee spoke about Burmese writers in prison.

International PEN Congress

Sydney PEN Committee member Dr Denise Leith and Young Writers member Hugo Bowne Anderson represented Sydney PEN at the International PEN Congress in Senegal in July 2007.

Freedom of expression in Australia

Sydney PEN continued to voice its concerns about proposed censorship legislation and its potential impact on freedom of expression. In late May and July 2007, Committee member Dr Ben Saul made submissions to the Attorney General's Department and Senate Committee on Legal and Constitutional Affairs on a proposed law to ban publications and films which "advocate" or "praise" terrorism.

Sydney PEN also made a submission to the 2020 Summit held in April 2008. Drafted by Ben Saul, it provided ideas on how Australia can promote the freedom of expression of writers in Australia and overseas. We thank Ben for all his work in this key area of Sydney PEN's work.

Promoting literature to advance PEN's goals

Sydney PEN Voices: 3 Writers Project

The Sydney PEN Voices: 3 Writers Project has been the major focus of our work to promote literature and highlight the important role writers play in our society by ensuring that issues of importance are given voice and public exposure.

The project was brilliantly conceived and developed by the previous PEN President, Angela Bowne and her committee and realised in 2007 with the support of the Copyright agency Limited (CAL).

It involved Sydney PEN commissioning three talented writers to each write a 10,000 word essay on a big issue facing contemporary Australia, present a public lecture on the subject and discuss it with a prominent commentator: Alexis Wright on Fear, Gideon Haigh on Prejudice and Christos Tsiolkas on Tolerance. The lectures held at the historic Australia Hall in July, September and November, were followed by engaging "in conversation" sessions with, respectively, Kerry O'Brien, Ramona Koval and David Marr. All were very well attended. They got additional exposure on the ABC's Book Show. The collection of essays has just been published by Allen & Unwin, with an introduction by Sydney PEN Writers Advisory Panel member, J.M. Coetzee.

Thanks to everyone who helped to make it happen, especially Kathy Bail who coordinated the many and various elements of the project and Jane Palfreyman who oversaw the editing and publication of the collected essays into a very striking volume by Allen & Unwin.

We are delighted that, following the success of the first series, CAL has agreed to provide support for another two years of the 3 Writers Project in 2008 and 2009 and that Allen & Unwin will again publish the collected essays. With CAL's support, we will also be extending the lecture series to Canberra, in association with Manning Clark House. Thanks to Committee members Denise Leith and Carol Dettman for their hard work in preparing our funding submissions; to Carol for liaising with Manning Clark House about Canberra arrangements and securing our excellent new Sydney venue; and to Kathy Bail, Jane Palfreyman and Angela Bowne for their involvement in developing the 2008 project.

In 2008, the 3 Writers Project will feature Christopher Kremmer on Greed, Melissa Lucashenko on Survival and Anna Funder on Courage.

The schedule for the lecture series is:

Christopher Kremmer on Greed

Wed 30 July - Sydney Grammar School Theatre – followed by a conversation with award winning ABC journalist, Monica Attard.

Thur 31 July 31 – National Library in Canberra – followed by a conversation with ABC presenter, Alex Sloan.

Melissa Lucashenko on Survival

Wed 24 September - Sydney Grammar School Theatre – followed by a conversation with ABC presenter Fran Kelly.

Thur 25 September – National Library in Canberra – followed by a conversation with Canberra Times editor, Jack Waterford.

Anna Funder on Courage

Wed 12 November - Sydney Grammar School Theatre – followed by a conversation with Tom Keneally AO

Thur 13 November – National Library in Canberra – followed by a conversation with ANU Professor Hillary Charlesworth

Customs House Readings

Our Customs House lunch time readings have continued with the support of the City of Sydney. In the past twelve months, our readers have included Elizabeth Stead, Tom Keneally, Anita Heiss, Ashley Hay, Meg Stewart, Di Morrissey, Emily Maguire, Susan Wyndham, Virginia Lloyd and Debra Adelaide. Audiences packed the hall for an “in conversation” with Geraldine Brooks conducted by Committee member Ashley Hay in March. Later this year, we will feature readings by Arnold Zable, Garth Nix, Anna Funder, Robert Dessaix and Helen Garner.

We thank the writers for their participation in these popular readings. Thanks also to Sydney PEN Vice President Kathy Bail and Committee member Ashley Hay for organising the program of writers and to Caroline Lurie for her continued assistance, including introducing the writers at the readings.

Writers Festivals

Sydney PEN was represented at a number of writers’ festivals over the past year, including the 2007 Byron Bay Writers Festival, where we sponsored a session - *Freely Speaking*, featuring journalists David Marr and David Leser and the 2007 Ubud Writers Festival, where Nicholas Jose facilitated a discussion with two Chinese writers. The Sydney PEN session at the recent 2008 Sydney Writers Festival focused on the Sydney PEN Voices: 3 Writers Project and featured two of the writers from the 2007 series, Christos Tsiolkas and Gideon Haigh.

Sydney PEN Young Writers organised a panel discussion – Shooting the Messenger - chaired by Hugo Bowne Anderson at the 2007 National Young Writers Festival in Newcastle and have been invited to organise another panel this year.

Other literary events

Other important literary events which Sydney PEN was involved in organising over the last year were:

- a session on Translation, featuring Brian Nelson, translator of Emile Zola and James Grieve, translator of Marcel Proust at the State Library of NSW in June 2007.
- the "World Without Books" Forum on the occasion of Indigenous Literacy Day at the State Library of NSW in September 2007, with a conversation about the

importance of reading between David Malouf, Tara June Winch, Catherine Jinks and Tommy Murphy chaired by Sydney Writers' Festival director, Wendy Were.

- a special Valentine's Day panel at Gleebooks to celebrate the launch of "How We Met", including Margaret Fink, Elizabeth Stead and Jessica Adams, chaired by Sydney PEN Vice President Kathy Bail.
- a fundraiser at Gleebooks featuring Canadian writer and translator Maureen Freely in conversation with Sydney PEN Vice President Sally Blakeney.

Sydney PEN books

We are delighted with the publication of several PEN books over the past year.

The Macquarie PEN Anthology of Aboriginal Literature, edited by Anita Heiss and Peter Minter. Published by Allen & Unwin as part of the Macquarie PEN Anthology of Australian Literature project, it brings together Aboriginal writing in English over 200 years of Aboriginal culture, history and life.

Tolerance, Prejudice and Fear, the collection of essays by Christos Tsiolkas, Gideon Haigh and Alexis Wright from the 2007 Sydney PEN Voices: 3 Writers Project, published by Allen & Unwin.

How We Met, a collection of stories published by Penguin, all royalties from which have been donated to Sydney PEN.

We are also grateful to Caroline Hamilton and her co-editors of ***The Politics and Aesthetics of Refusal*** published by Cambridge Scholars Publishing for directing royalties from the book to Sydney PEN.

Sydney PEN people

2007 Sydney PEN Award

The 2007 Sydney PEN Award, acknowledging outstanding work by a Sydney PEN member in support of PEN's aims, was made to writer Nicholas Jose, who has been a driving force in Sydney PEN for over a decade and served as president from 2002 - 2005.

The award, presented at the commemoration of PEN's Day of the Imprisoned Writer on 14 November 2007, is made possible by the generosity of Sydney PEN member Jane Morgan and Charles Wolf of The Pen Shop in Sydney. Sydney PEN's tribute to Nick can be read on the Sydney PEN website.

Life Membership

In the past year, life membership of Sydney PEN was awarded to the former president of Sydney PEN Angela Bowne and former Vice President Chip Rolley in recognition of their wonderful work for Sydney PEN.

Sydney PEN Writers Panel

We are grateful for the continuing support of the Sydney PEN Writers Panel who have assisted us in many ways over the past year. Tom Keneally, David

Malouf and David Williamson participated in the 2007 Three Writers Project by introducing the lectures and JM Coetzee wrote a very fine introduction to the collected essays, *Tolerance, Prejudice and Fear*, published by Allen & Unwin last month. Geraldine Brooks and Tom Keneally took part in Customs House Readings. David Malouf helped us develop the Sydney PEN mission statement and participated in various events on our behalf. Tom Keneally will participate in our November 2008 Three Writers Project event in Sydney, conducting a conversation with Anna Funder on Courage and our Day of the Imprisoned Writer commemoration that evening.

We are honoured that Alexis Wright, winner of the 2007 Miles Franklin award, joined the Panel last year.

Sydney PEN Young Writers

Over the last twelve months, the Sydney PEN Young Writers have actively participated in major projects of Sydney PEN and focused their efforts to build PEN's profile among Sydney's community of younger readers and writers. Their work has included representing Sydney PEN at two Sydney Mechanics School of Arts events – the Civil Liberties & Freedom of Speech seminar and their How Words Transform the World panel; the City of Sydney/Pine Street Centre Creative Industries talks, the Pine Street Centre smARTS Festival and the 2007 Newcastle Young Writers' Festival. They have also taken opportunities to distribute PEN materials at various university O-week gatherings and to build awareness of PEN at the Sydney Writers' Festival and Tom Collins House writers' residence.

They have established the 'Friends of Sydney PEN' Facebook profile and are currently expanding the Young Writers group to include interstate members, including an enthusiastic nexus in Brisbane that has already begun profile-raising activities there. In the second half of 2008, the group will be extending its links with other member-based student societies and cultural or community groups who share PEN's values and can work as PEN Young Writers in Australia.

Special thanks to Young Writers Chair Bonny Cassidy who has made valuable contribution to the work of the management committee, bringing a fresh perspective and useful insights to our work and to all members of the Young Writers for their support and enthusiasm for PEN's work.

Communication

Sydney PEN e-news

Our key means of communicating with members has been our monthly Sydney PEN e-news, providing information about Sydney PEN's campaigns, events and work, news from Melbourne PEN and international PEN. We continue to receive positive comments about the e-news, including from other International PEN Centres. I thank Denise Leith and Kathryn McKenzie, for their work on the e-news.

Sydney PEN Magazine

This month we are launching the new Sydney PEN Magazine. Thanks to the support of the Copyright Agency Limited (CAL), this online magazine has a dedicated editor, a new design and features some guest writers. It will be published twice yearly. It replaces our previous publication, the PEN Quarterly, which was produced entirely by volunteer contributors and editors, with support from the University of Technology Sydney. We thank former Committee member Sandy Symons for her work with the PEN Quarterly.

Sydney PEN Website

In a web-driven world, an effective online presence is critical for organisations like Sydney PEN. The development of our website to incorporate new technological advances that will better facilitate online community-building and communication with members and stakeholders, and enhance our campaign impact, remains a key priority for Sydney PEN. We are actively seeking donors to make this vision a reality as soon as possible.

Sydney PEN has been extremely fortunate to have the support of our sponsor BarNet, who host our website, provide our broadcast email service and other support, including providing the platform for the PEN Poem Relay. Thanks to Kathryn McKenzie, Denise Leith and Chip Rolley for their work on the website and also to Carol Dettman, Jan Forrester and Virginia Lloyd for their efforts in preparing grant applications.

Expanding our membership and financial support base

Growth in our membership and financial support base is essential to ensure Sydney PEN's long-term sustainability and contribution to International PEN.

As part of our growth strategy, a new membership brochure was developed by our Vice President Sally Blakeney, with the design and marketing support of our sponsor Travel Notions. Launched at our final Sydney PEN Voices lecture in November and in time for our 2008 Membership drive, it has been widely distributed at key PEN events, at the Sydney Writers' Festival and through various bookshop outlets. An increase in membership fees to \$75 for Ordinary members and \$35 for Concessions took account of a rise in our levy to International PEN and CPI increases after several years at the same level. We are pleased that we have doubled the number of current financial members over the year but need to keep growing. We thank Sally Blakeney for coordinating the membership project with support from Kathryn McKenzie.

A new strategy for engaging corporate members and sponsors has been developed and will be rolled out in the coming months. Thanks to our Treasurer John Beale and Committee members, Jane Palfreyman and Virginia Lloyd for their work in this important area.

Sponsors

Support from our sponsors and donors enables Sydney PEN to continue its work promoting literature and defending freedom of expression.

We thank our sponsors - the Copyright Agency Limited (CAL), BarNet, Gleebooks, Allen & Unwin, HarperCollins, the City of Sydney & Customs

House Library, UTS, Peachy Print, the Sydney Writers' Festival, NFP Accounting, the Pen Shop and the Sydney Mechanics School of Arts.

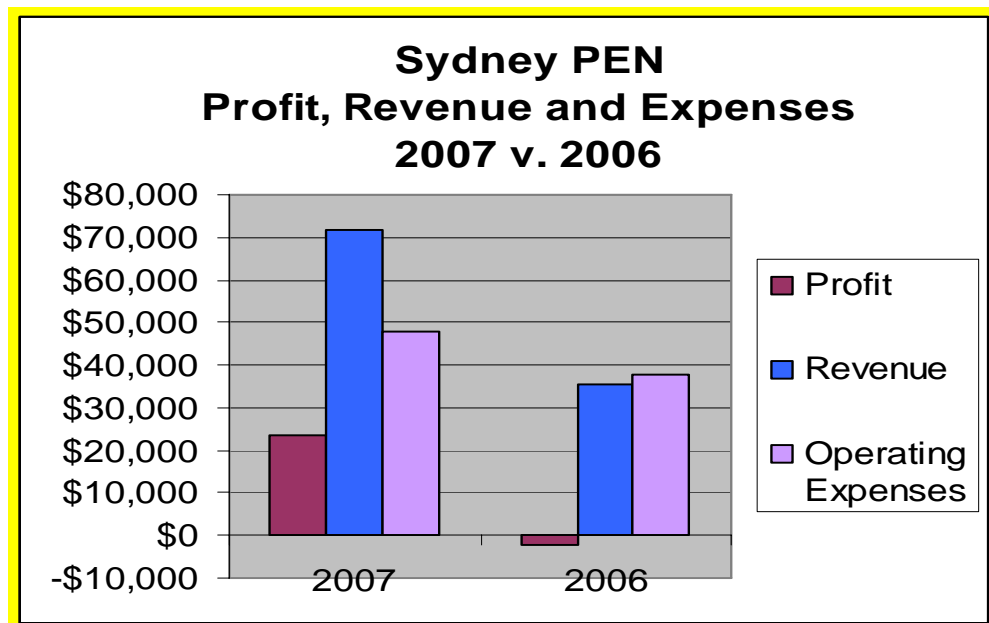
Thanks also to all our generous donors, in particular Dr Gene Sherman and Brian Sherman AM.

Operations

Administration

Thanks to the diligence of our part time executive officer, Kathryn McKenzie, Sydney PEN's heavy administrative load has been efficiently and effectively managed. Kathryn has also assisted with the organisation of many events for Sydney PEN.

Finances



The operating profit for 2007 was \$23,489, a significant improvement compared to an operating deficit last year of \$2,232

The result was achieved on substantially increased revenues which more than doubled by \$36,159 from \$35,415 last year to \$71,574 in 2007.

The main increases were: \$21,657 Sponsorship; \$10,789 net revenue from the Sydney PEN Voices Three Writers Project; \$3,235 Membership and \$2,155 Interest.

Operating Expenses increased by \$10,438 from \$37,647 to \$48,085 with the major increase of \$7,991 in the cost of Sydney PEN's International and Local Programs.

Cash flow generated for 2007 was \$48,878 increasing cash reserves at year end to \$102,652. Total Members' Equity at year end was \$39,202 compared with \$15,713 at the end of the previous year.

I'd like to take this opportunity to thank our Treasurer John Beale and our honorary accountant, Peter Walford for all their work to ensure that Sydney PEN's finances have been kept in order over the past year.

Committee Members

Finally, I would like to thank the members of the Management Committee who have worked together as a strong cohesive team over the past year. Their commitment to PEN, their robust engagement in debates on policies and priorities, their team spirit and willingness to pitch in and get things done have been critical to Sydney PEN's achievements. I have already mentioned many of their contributions earlier in this report but let me emphasise that one could not ask for a more dedicated team. Many have burnt the midnight oil on more than one occasion and they've answered the call to help with events or to stuff membership brochures into Gleebooks' bags at the Sydney Writers' Festival. It has been a great privilege to work with this fantastic team.

I'd like to give special thanks to my two vice presidents, Kathy Bail and Sally Blakeney for their support, sound judgment and helpful advice on many issues over the past year, as well as for their energy in coordinating specific projects. In addition to those I've mentioned already, I want to highlight a couple more. Sally is a very strong believer in the important role translation plays in allowing literature to transcend linguistic and national boundaries. She has ensured that we kept this firmly in our sights and has developed some important new partnerships for Sydney PEN in this regard. In 2007 Sally chaired the Judges panel for the NSW Premier's Translation Prize and PEN Medallion. Kathy, in bringing together the various elements of the first 3 Writers' project, has left us a fine prototype for the next series. She has also got off the ground the new PEN Magazine which should be hitting your inboxes this week, commissioning an editor and driving its production. Kathy and Sally have both served two years on the management committee and are standing down in order to pursue other projects. Both have indicated a willingness to stay involved with Sydney PEN's projects, for which we thank them.

Sadly, our longest serving Committee member, Denise Leith is also standing down after 5 years. Denise's contribution to Sydney PEN and the Committee's work over many years has been extensive and broad-ranging and her dedication and energy legendary. In spite of extensive travel over the past year, Denise has been instrumental in preparing several successful funding applications, helped to edit our e-news and keep our website up to date. She has also maintained liaison with International PEN on a range of issues on Sydney PEN's behalf, represented us at the 2007 PEN Congress and worked closely with Writers in Prison Committee. Previously Denise served as Chair of the Writers in Detention Committee, now thankfully defunct. Thank you Denise for all your work and we trust that you will stay involved.

Unfortunately, Ashley Hay, a newer member of our Committee, but one who has already left a lasting impact with her work, especially in organising the Empty Chair project and the Custom House readings, is also leaving us because of her recent relocation to Brisbane. We thank Ashley for all her

work in these projects and are confident that she will help spread the word for Sydney PEN in the Sunshine state.

Our thanks also to Sandy Symons and Jan Forrester, who withdrew from the committee last year.

Now for the incoming committee. I am pleased to advise that our wonderful Secretary Clare Waters and Treasurer John Beale are standing for re-election to these positions. Carol Dettmann, Virginia Lloyd, Jane Palfreyman and Ben Saul are standing for re-election to the Committee. As I have detailed elsewhere in my report, all of them have made outstanding contributions to the Committee's work over the past year. We are delighted that Virginia Lloyd is standing for President. Apart from being a talented writer with a background in publishing, corporate communications and marketing, Virginia brings experience in fundraising and philanthropy from her work in the United States, as well as Australia. Since joining the Management Committee six months ago, she has already made a significant contribution to the Committee's work, especially with regard to our growth strategy. Virginia will be an outstanding President. Incoming committee members Rhyll McMaster, Gaby Naher, Jane Owen, Charlotte Wood and Susan Wyndham also bring rich and diverse experience. I look forward to working with them as a Committee member.