

WORD WORD WORD WORD WORD

WORD CHRISTCHURCH FESTIVAL

31 AUGUST - 4 SEPTEMBER 2022

FESTIVAL REPORT

"Thank you for the most fabulous weekend. WORD is the festival where EVERYTHING is good. I loved every single moment." – Rachel, Audience member

157 SPEAKERS

74 EVENTS

7,731 ATTENDEES

**9,889 SOCIAL
MEDIA FOLLOWS**

18 VENUES

57 VOLUNTEERS,

519 HOURS



INTRODUCTION

*The first highlight of the festival was our opening event, **Te Piki o Tāwhaki**, which brought to life the Ngāi Tahu story that cloaks Tūranga, created by **Juanita Hepi** and **Joseph Hullen**.*

In 2022 we celebrated 25 years of books, storytelling and ideas. From Books and Beyond to The Christchurch Writers' Festival and now to WORD Christchurch, the festival has grown in size and breadth, but always with a clear vision: to bring communities together through a love of words in all their forms.

After two years of COVID disruption, what a privilege it was to feel the buzz of audiences in venues once more, albeit behind masks. Our home venues of The Piano and Tūranga were as flexible and supportive as ever as shifting pandemic restrictions saw us plan and re-plan, and our audience's cautiousness waxed and waned; in the end, however, we were able to bring life and energy to the Ōtautahi Christchurch CBD across five memorable days.

We hosted a handful of international guests,

and a whole load of the best of Aotearoa. **Liane Moriarty**, **Clementine Ford**, **J.P. Pomare** and **Michael Robothom** flew in from Australia to regale us with stories of love and death in their own distinctive styles. The Queen of Tartan Noir, **Val McDermid** returned to WORD and is surely one of the best raconteurs we've had. Other international guests like **Emily St John Mandel**, **David Mitchell** and **Rebecca Solnit** zoomed in to the dining tables and lounge set up in The Faraway Near, our intimate digital hybrid venue that pioneers a new way to connect around the world. **Guyon Espiner** interviewing both **Patrick Radden Keefe** and **Luke Harding** showed there's a strong local audience for brilliant writers unpacking current affairs around the globe.

"As a presenter The Faraway Experience was easily the best, most innovative and effective style of remote interviewing I have done – not only as a festival moderator but in my years of broadcasting. Having a live audience in a well curated room gave it real atmosphere which lifted the performance of presenter and talent. The technical staff were also excellent which put me at ease. It was a thoroughly enjoyable experience and a million miles from a sterile Zoom call!" - Guyon Espiner

“A zillion thanks to you and the WORD team. The whole experience has been expansive for me. And heartening. A verification and a challenge. Who knew there was so much to celebrate? Words and words and words. Delicious.”

- Bernadette Hall



We harnessed our livestream technology to reach audiences nationwide, including beaming our secondary schools session into classrooms around the country in partnership with the University of Canterbury.

Our workshops and masterclasses on a wide range of writing skills continue to be widely successful, as was our day of wānanga for Indigenous writers, *He Waiata Hou*, generously hosted by Ngāi Tahu.

Our 25th year has been a year of change for the festival team. Our new solo Programme Director **Nic Low** brought the manaakitanga for Māori creativity up a level. Much beloved **Marianne Hargeaves** (now a Member of the New Zealand Order of Merit (MNZM)) left WORD after over a decade of service in April, and while retirement is supposed to slow her down she has been quietly handing institutional knowledge to our new Executive Director, **Steph Walker**. We welcomed one of the most connected book people in Aotearoa to the team, with **Kiran Dass** taking the role of Programme and Engagement Manager. As they say, the only constant is change, so we look forward to what the future holds for the next 25 years.

FESTIVAL HIGHLIGHTS

WORD Christchurch Festival placed te ao Māori and Ngāi Tahu programming at its heart in 2022. We presented 12 events with a specific Māori focus, and wove 41 Māori speakers throughout the rest of the programme, who presented on everything from the craft of poetry to Matariki traditions to novels that reimagine the past.

“Word has been awesome for showcasing kaupapa Māori events this year and last year! It’s a big drawcard for me.” - audience member.

Keri Hulme: He Kōtuku Rereka Tahi celebrated Keri Hulme’s life, work and legacy. The show was programmed in close collaboration with Keri’s whānau, and featured performances from **Rānui Ngārimu**, **Patricia Grace**, **Tina Makereti**, **Whiti Hereaka** and **Marian Evans**, as well as Keri’s nephew **Matt Salmons** and niece **Anna Hulme**. **Stacey Morrison** hosted, with the night generating buzzing feedback from audiences and the whānau alike. It was restaged at Pukapuka Talks in the Nelson Arts Festival in October.

War and Peace, built around a new biography of Te Rauparaha, explored the shared history between Ngāi Tahu and Ngāti Toa, from fighting to peace marriages. **Ross Calman**, **Te Maire Tau**, **Michael Stevens** and **Ariana Tikao** kept the at-capacity crowd in thrall; we clearly needed a bigger venue to meet demand.

“Thank you [to] the team at WORD who are unrivalled programmers. It’s the best literary festival in New Zealand.” - Morgan Godfery



FICTION HIGHLIGHTS

The world of novels and short fiction are perennially appreciated at WORD, though, with the exception of the fabulous **Liane Moriarty**, tended to pull smaller audiences than our topical non-fiction events.

Novelists **Rebecca K Reilly**, **Sue Orr** and **Chloe Lane** gave audiences wide-ranging insights into our interior lives, and the forces that shape them, in **Humans of New Zealand**. An incidentally all-Māori panel of **Whiti Hereaka**, **Sascha Stronach** and **Cassie Hart** dived into the fantastical and speculative on **Remembering the Future, Reimagining the Past**, while international fiction superstars **Emily St John Mandel**, **David Mitchell** and **Pip Williams** were among crowd favourites in **The Faraway Near**.



SPECIAL EVENT HIGHLIGHTS

Our blockbuster collaboration between Kiwi singer songwriter **Tiny Ruins** and the UK's **David Mitchell**, *IF I WERE A STORY AND YOU WERE A SONG*, was a creative exchange devised during lockdown on opposite sides of the world. Seeing Holly on stage with David behind her on screen, filmed in a beautiful old pub in Ireland, was a gripping example of how technology can disappear, leaving just the emotions and stories visible on the stage.

"Loved the Tiny Ruins David Mitchell session - a unique idea which succeeded beautifully." - audience member

Adventurous Women is now firmly cemented in the Ōtautahi Arts Calendar, with another sell-out session in 2022, featuring tales of solo yachting around the Pacific, climbing New Zealand's highest peaks, or becoming a leader in the music world.

The Museum of Unruly Desires was also a hit, bringing new audiences to poetry, and bringing poetry into the Canterbury Museum for a unique after-hours literary tour, while **Indelible: Tattoo Tales** at Absolution Tattoo in the Arts Centre packed the studio with audience keen to hear the stories behind our storyteller's tattoos.

NON-FICTION

Whose Life Is It, Anyway? brought together different generations of memoirists—**Clementine Ford**, **Megan Dunn** and **Ruth Shaw**—for an electrifying conversation with **Victor Rodger**, who set the tone from the outset by declaring that he was quite comfortable crying on stage.

Noelle McCarthy kept audiences entertained with a candid and generous session on writing about her difficult relationship with her mother, and with alcohol, while sparks flew between **Chris Finlayson** and **Kim Hill** in a hugely entertaining conversation about Finlayson's long and storied political career. In a similar vein, **Melani Anae** and **Rev Alec Toleafoa** looked back on *Fifty Years of the Polynesian Panthers*, sharing the experiences that galvanised them to action in the face of the Dawn Raids, and how the apology to Pacific Peoples was received.

There was a huge appetite for access to compelling thinkers tackling contemporary issues, from **Luke Harding** and **Guyon Espiner's** sell-out session on Ukraine and Russia to **Mohamed Hassan's** at-capacity talk on *How to Be a (Bad) Muslim* or **Miriama Kamo** and **Nicky Pellegrino's** witty *Don't Sweat It: Menopause*.

"congratulations on a powerhouse of a festival"
- Mike Moroney, the unlikely librarian

VENUES A PLENTY

74 events across 18 locations, with over 22 event spaces across the city - our venues were as broad as our programme.



It's hard when great shows are happening at the same time! I don't know how to fix this but I'd love to be in two places at once.. - Survey response

Our home hub, **The Piano**, played host to our larger events in the 320-seat auditorium, plus a selection of some of the hottest tickets in town in the 90-seat Chamber space. It was humming in there!

The whole of **Tūranga**, the central Christchurch City Library, became a stage for our special opening event, **Te Piki o Tāwhaki**, a highlight of our partnership with the library, and an extraordinary way to highlight Ngāi Tahu stories with nearly 500 public in attendance. **The Great WORD Story** hunt took children around the library too, while the innovative Faraway Near came back to **TSB Place**, with retro dinner party vibes suiting these intimate conversations with international guests zooming in from their own living rooms around the world. Our workshops were a huge success on the ground floor, along with our magazine-in-residence, **takahē**.

Foundation Cafe hosted our pop-up literary marathon event for the second year, working as a casual drop-in spot for so many writers and audience alike. Ten of our **New Regent Street neighbours** displayed framed poems from the Out Here anthology for several weeks, with hundreds of their

customers pausing to read new work by Aotearoa's LGBTQIA+ community.

We expanded the WORD experience further across the city with walks in the **red zone** and in **Pūtaringamotu/ Riccarton Bush**; a night of tattoo tales at **Absolution tattoo studio** within the Arts Centre; and an idiosyncratic guided tour of the **Canterbury Museum** presented by our favourite poets. We were welcomed back by the Charles Luney Auditorium at **St Margaret's College**, **Little Andromeda**, the **Christchurch Art Gallery Te Puna o Waiwhetū**, and **Space Academy**, where wine, words and sound were likely matched by their excellent pizza! **Scorpio Books** hosted an excellent launch with Canterbury University Press.

Our Indigenous writers hui was held with great manaaki at **Te Whare o te Waipounamu**, Ngāi Tahu HQ, in the indigenous design space of Tokona Te Raki / Māori Futures Collective.

Our new friends at **St Paul's Trinity Pacific Presbyterian Church** on Fitzgerald Avenue hosted an important discussion with Polynesian Panthers **Dr Melani Anae** and **Rev Alec Toleafoa**, followed by kai.

Our thanks also to **Kaiapoi and Rangiora Libraries** for vibrant events that helped us get further afield.



OUR AUDIENCE

WORD Christchurch Festival 2022 had just under 8,000 people in attendance at our events; an excellent outcome given the uncertainties of the pandemic.

19% first time WORD attendees 10% outside of Canterbury (in survey); 23% of tickets were sold to postcodes outside of Canterbury

So many people I know come to the WORD Festival from out of town - they spend money (hotels, food, shopping etc) and have a great impression of Ōtautahi. When the WORD Festival is on I don't want to be anywhere else other than Ōtautahi. It also helps offer up how much Te Ao Māori and Kāi Tahu are part of who we are here and that not everyone in Christchurch is racist. - Survey response

97% DEFINITELY OR LIKELY TO ATTEND WORD TAGAIN

96% DEFINITELY OR LIKELY TO RECOMMEND WORD TO OTHERS

82% RATED QUALITY OF SPEAKERS AS VERY GOOD OR SUPERB



"[It's] the flow and buzz of it all. The stimulation and enlightenment provided by excellent speakers, panels and hosts discussing interesting and important issues. The engagement of the audience and the chance conversations with whoever happens to be sitting next to you." - Survey response

MARKETING

25 years of WORD deserved reflection on how far we've come. Our WORD > KUPU image incorporated our beloved WORD logo, but reflected the growing importance of te ao Māori, Pacifica and multi-cultural representation and audiences at the festival. The response to this has been overwhelmingly positive.



PROGRAMME AND POSTERS

15,000 copies of the programme were printed and distributed across the city via Phantom Billstickers, the libraries, the Council Service Centre, and our own staff.

Posters were distributed by Phantom Billstickers throughout the city and into the Canterbury region.

Media coverage was down on previous years, likely due to the Auckland Writers Festival being on at a similar time just this one year, which gave us a disadvantage when it came to airtime. That will definitely be on the increase next year.

Our media partner Latitude ran advertisements, we also invested in print and digital advertising with Stuff, advertorial with The Star, and radio advertising with RDU.

WEBSITE

Publica are our website legends, as per usual. This year we've improved on how we use our site in and out of festival time, and continued to play with the look and feel.

ENEWSLETTERS

Our newsletters buck the trend! We have a 50% open rate on our regular communications to our 8,700 subscribers. Our surveying shows that our newsletter is one of the top ways people know what's happening in WORD and we're keen to keep utilising this medium for us and our sponsors.

SOCIAL MEDIA

FACEBOOK FOLLOWERS 107% INCREASE

2021	2022
4,402	4,752

INSTAGRAM FOLLOWERS 116% INCREASE

2021	2022
1,630	1,902

TWITTER FOLLOWERS 103% INCREASE

2021	2022
3,144	3,235



PARTNERSHIPS

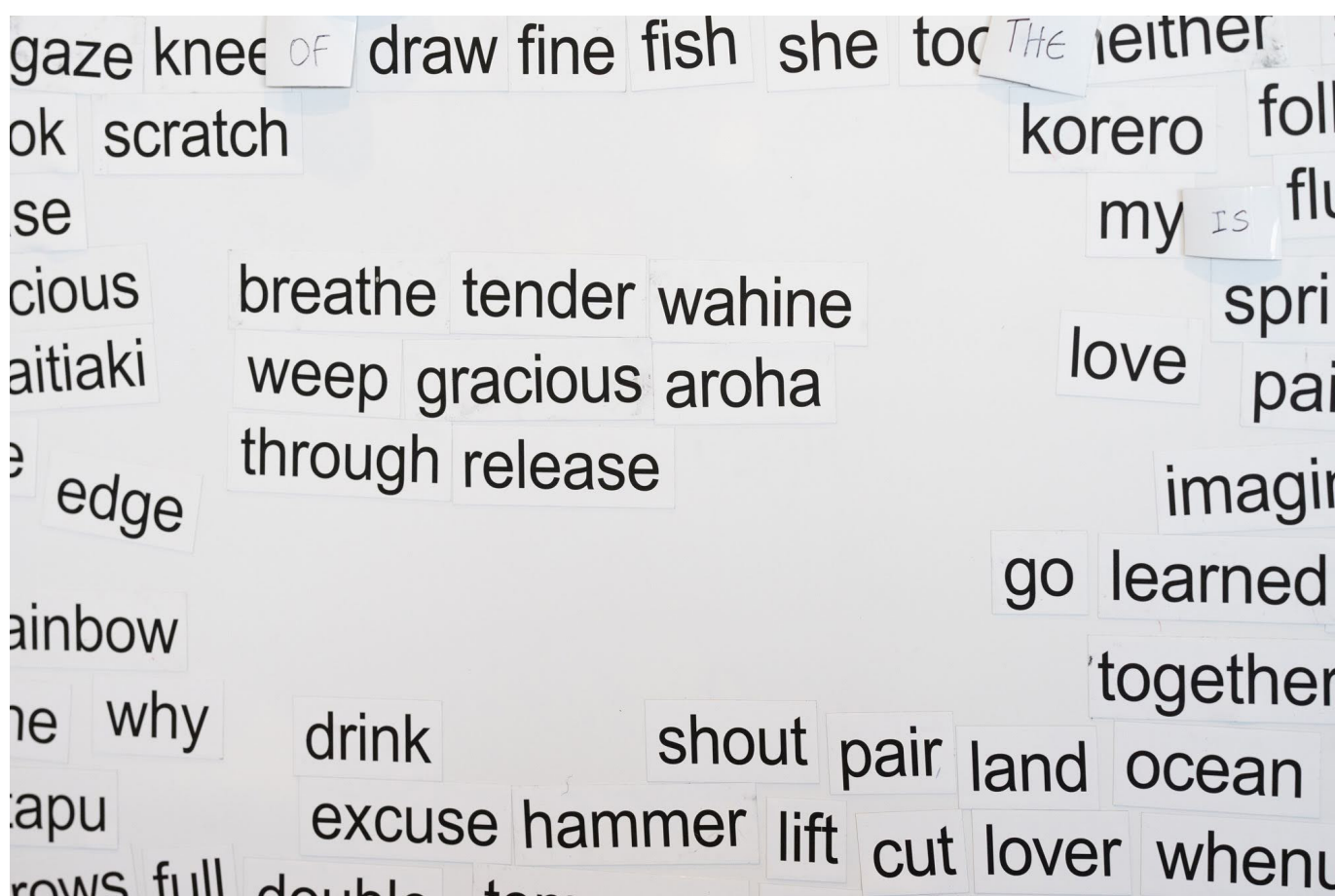
Put simply, WORD Christchurch can't exist without our partners. We cannot thank them enough for valuing what we do and being behind us to bring the buzz back to the city. Like us, so many of them relish books, storytelling and ideas.

Put simply, WORD Christchurch can't exist without our partners. We cannot thank them enough for valuing what we do and being behind us to bring the buzz back to the city. Like us, so many of them relish books, storytelling and ideas.

Our Principal Partners Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and the University of Canterbury continue to be instrumental, not only financially but by leveraging our partnership to really get their communities involved in a range of sessions and events throughout the programme.

We welcomed Te Puni Kōkiri as a new festival partner this year, an acknowledgement of the great work WORD is doing to develop and celebrate Māori excellence.

2022 has not been easy, which makes our gratitude to all of our partners, patrons and supporters even more heartfelt. We know that 2023 will bring an excellent, vibrant festival to the city and we can't wait to bring you all with us next year.



PARTNERSHIPS

MAJOR FUNDERS



PRINCIPAL PARTNERS



MEDIA PARTNER

FESTIVAL PARTNERS



PARTNERS



CORPORATE PATRONS

UBS

Hawkesby & Co

Avenues Magazine

Main Divide

OUR PEOPLE

WORD Christchurch was programmed by Nic Low as Programme Director and Kiran Dass as Programme & Engagement Manager (from May). The organisation was led by Marianne Hargreaves (until April) and Steph Walker (from April) as Executive Director.



FESTIVAL TEAM

Steph Walker

Executive Director

Marianne Hargreaves

Executive Director (until April 2022)

Nic Low

Programme Director

Kiran Dass

Programme & Engagement Manager

Magda Lorenzo

Festival Administrator & Volunteer Manager

Paula Granger

Partnerships Manager (until April 2022)

Bex de Prosopo

Production Manager

Bernie Gruschow

Technical Manager

Richard Bell

Livestream Advisor

Claudia Jardine

Artist Liaison & Schools Coordinator

Audrey Baldwin

Community Projects Coordinator

Annie de Senna

Ticketing Manager

WORD CHRISTCHURCH TRUST

Vicki Blyth, Chair

Marcus Elliott

Erin Harrington

Daisy Lavea-Timo

Donna Robertson

Morrin Rout

Te Maire Tau (from October)

Paula Taylor

WORD
CHRISTCHURCH

FESTIVAL & EVENTS