

10.8. Don Bank Writer in Residence 2025

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ATTACHMENTS	1. CONFIDENTIAL - Don Bank Writer in Residence 2025 [10.8.1 - 4 pages]
CSP LINK	4. Our Social Vitality 4.1 North Sydney is connected, inclusive, healthy and safe 4.2 A centre for creativity and learning 4.3 North Sydney's history is preserved and recognised

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to inform Council of the outcome of the application process for the 2025 Don Bank Writer in Residence, and to seek Council approval in offering the 2025 residency to the recommended applicants.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

- Council offers a Writer exclusive use of the Don Bank Museum studio for a fixed term through the Writer in Residence program.
- The successful writer contributes to Stanton Library's schedule of public programs as part of their residency, through the delivery of workshops and talks for the community.
- This year sees the introduction of a one-hour consultation with a publisher from Penguin Random House, giving the successful applicant access to professional advice to help advance their career.
- Expressions of Interest for the 2025 Writer in Residence at the Don Bank Museum Studio have been processed and reviewed by the selection panel. For the 2025 residency there were 18 applications received, five of which were short-listed. Due to the competitive nature of the applicants, the selection panel have decided to award the residency to two writers for six months each.
- The selection panel seeks the support of Council in offering the 2025 residency to the recommended applicants, with details provided in the attached confidential report.
- Should Council wish to discuss this report it is noted that the attached confidential document includes personnel matters that relate to the employment conditions of specific individuals. It is noted that this item does not deal with personnel matters of a group but is specific to individuals and as such should be considered in a closed session.

RECOMMENDATION:

1. THAT Council resolves that the identified attachment to this report is to be treated as confidential in accordance with section 11(3) of the Local Government Act for the following reason under section 10A (2) of the Local Government Act:

(a) personnel matters concerning a particular individual

2. THAT Council supports the selection of Applicants 2 and 4 for a six-month residency commencing 1 August 2025 and 1 March 2026 respectively.

Background

Council offers writers a unique opportunity through the Don Bank Writer in Residence program to pursue their creative work in the tranquil and historic Don Bank Museum, a heritage building in a garden setting located in the heart of North Sydney CBD.

The Residency seeks to serve the writer in their creative development, while enhancing the cultural enrichment and vitality of the North Sydney community. Council invites writers of poetry, fiction, non-fiction, memoir, playwrights, and songwriters to apply for the opportunity to complete a creative project in the writer's studio, whilst contributing to the library's public programs by delivering workshops and other activities to engage the community.

Successful residencies have previously been completed by playwright Justin Fleming, crime writer P.M Newton, and children's author Yvette Poshoglian.

For the first time, Council have introduced a session with a senior publisher as part of the program, adding an additional opportunity for support and professional development for the successful recipient.

Report

In February 2025 applications opened for the Don Bank Writer in Residence program. The program was promoted through the Stanton Library e-newsletter, website, and Council social media channels. Program guidelines were produced and sent to writing organisations and writers in Sydney.

Five applications were assessed by the judging committee, comprising:

- Sophie Groom, CEO Writing NSW
- Vikki Woods, Service Unit Manager, Arts, Library & Events
- Amanda Hudson, Community Development Librarian

Applications were assessed on how the residency might directly benefit the author's writing, as well as how the successful recipient can contribute to enriching the cultural and literary life in North Sydney.

Applicants were invited to present ideas for workshops and activities that will engage and stimulate conversation, prompt action such as joining writing or literature groups and provide the opportunity for creatives to connect.

In June 2025 Denise O'Hagan will complete a successful residency. During her residency she delivered a poetry reading event, 'The Bard & the Harp', for the Senior's Festival at the Don Bank Museum. Denise also worked with the Stanton Library Writers group on a manuscript mentoring program. In May, Denise was invited to read her poetry at the Aleithia Speaker Series of the Western Civilisation Program at the Australian Catholic University.

Five applications for the 2025 program are discussed in detail in the confidential attachment to this report.

Applicant 2 is recommended for the following reasons:

- The programs proposed by the applicant fulfill the library's strategic outcome to deliver adult programs with a strong creative engagement element and to build new audiences.
- By selecting applicant 2, Council will be supporting a local writer in their efforts to create a very powerful piece of theatre.

Applicant 4 is recommended for the following reasons:

- The programs proposed by the applicant fulfill the library's strategic outcome to deliver cultural activities. This would be accomplished by offering a Haiku workshop which would find an engaged audience.
- By selecting applicant 4, Council will be supporting a local writer by giving the applicant the time and space to create and to build a connection with their local community.

Consultation requirements

Community engagement is not required.

Financial/Resource Implications

Utilities are provided under the Don Bank Museum operational budget. A bond of \$500 is paid by the writer and refunded upon exit.

Legislation

A lease agreement between North Sydney Council and the successful applicants is signed for the duration of the residency.