



**MEDIA RELEASE: EMBARGOED UNTIL 4 FEBRUARY 2025**

## **CLUNES BOOKTOWN FESTIVAL 2025 TO WELCOME LITERARY ICONS HELEN GARNER AND KATE GRENVILLE, GARDENING EXPERT COSTA GEORGIADIS, BACK ROADS' HEATHER EWART AND MORE!**

The Clunes Booktown Festival will return for 2025 on the 22 and 23 March, marking its 19<sup>th</sup> year as one of Australia's most cherished regional literary events.

The festival will transform the picturesque main street of Clunes – 36km north of Ballarat - into a bustling haven of activity, promising a rich and immersive experience for book lovers and rookie readers of all ages.

Festival Director Suzi Cordell says this year's vibrant program explores the art of storytelling in all its diverse forms, with author talks on the power of the media, writing about music, sustainability and the breakout genres of cosy crime and romantasy.

"Along with author talks and workshops, more than 100 book stalls will offer up tens of thousands of second hand, new and collectible books," Suzi says.

"The jam-packed weekend will also feature an Historical Walking Tour of Clunes, a Poetry Slam, an immersive Kids Village, and the return of Clunes' legendary Hay Bale Maze. Film buffs will be in for a special treat too, with a screening of the dystopian classic *Mad Max* in Clunes' historic central garage, now known as The Tin Shed, where part of the film was actually shot."

Tickets are on sale from 4 February. Get in quick to enjoy all that Booktown has to offer, with unmissable events including:

- Literary icon **Helen Garner** talking about her latest book, *The Season*, in which she follows her grandson's under-16's footy team. Garner's sharp observations on ageing, family, masculinity, and the epic theatre of Australian football will be drawn out by her biographer, **Sean O'Beirne**.
- **Kate Grenville**, critically acclaimed author of *The Secret River* and *The Idea of Perfection*, discussing her new memoir *Unsettled: A Journey Through Time and Place* with **Jason Steger**
- **Sustainability in a Changing Climate:** Gardening Australia's **Costa Georgiadis**, co-founder of Milkwood **Kirsten Bradley**, and co-founder of permaculture **David Holmgren** on the challenges of our rapidly changing climate and how we can adapt our gardens and our lifestyles in a more uncertain world.
- **Aussie Road Trips:** **Heather Ewart** spilling the dirt on her travels around Australia hosting ABC TV's *Back Roads* and writing her new book, *The Great Aussie Road Trip*, with travel writer **Tim Richards**.
- **Truth Telling: New Perspectives on Australian History.** Authors **Kate Grenville** and **Jane Harrison** (*The Visitors*), and historians **Clare Wright** (*Näku Dhäruk The Bark Petitions*) and **Amanda Laugesen** (*Australia in 100 Words*), exploring the reality behind Australia's colonial myths with **Barry Golding**.

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- **Epic Fail: Media and Big Business.** Media owner and journalist **Eric Beecher** (*The Men Who Killed the News*), employment lawyer **Josh Bornstein** (*Working for the Brand*), *Overland* co-editor **Evelyn Araluen** and journalist **Nicole Chvastek** discussing abuses of power by media moguls, repressive control over our personal lives, the threat of AI, and the erosion of democracy.
- **Unmasking Neurodiversity:** Autism, ADHD and dyslexia diagnoses are increasing, but society is still slow in supporting neurodiversity at home, school and work. Unpack the stereotypes and learn more about living with neurodiversity from **Clem Bastow** (*Late Bloomer* and *Someone Like Me*), **Sarah Hayden** (*Parenting Different*), **Jess Ho** (*Someone Like Me*) and chair **Kim Percy**.
- First Nations poets **Jeanine Leane** (*Gawimarra: Gathering*) and Stella Award-winner **Evelyn Araluen** (*Dropbear*) discuss their favourite words in First Nations languages from the collection *Words to Sing the World Alive* with artist **Vicki Couzens**.
- **Writing Romantasy: Tropes and Hopes.** Romantasy is the biggest book trend in the world. Is it a new idea or a new name for something that's been around forever? **Alexandra Almond** (*Thoroughly Disenchanted*), **Keshe Chow** (*The Girl with No Reflection*) and **Lili Wilkinson** (*Unhallowed Halls*), discuss the genre with agent **Alex Adsett**.
- **Cosy Crime:** What makes us turn away from blood and gore and crave small towns, mysterious bookshops, and seaside resorts with eccentric characters? Join Sisters in Crime's **Jacqui Horwood** as she discusses the joys of cosy mysteries with **Amanda Hampson** (*The Tea Ladies* series) and **Aoife Clifford** (*It Takes a Town*).
- **Spinning Discs:** Music is both universal and deeply personal. So how can you effectively write about this intimate aural experience? **Kirsten Krauth** (*Almost a Mirror & The Kylie Playlist*), **Thuy On** (*The Kylie Playlist*) and **Jordan Prosser** (*Big Time*) share musical musings, expertly mixed by RRR Breakfaster **Daniel Burt**.
- Legendary Australian poet, **TT.O.** (*The Tour*) and author **Brian Castro** (*Chinese Postman*), winners of the prestigious Patrick White Award, will reflect on their 50 years of publishing with Readings legend, **Mark Rubbo**.

Festival entry is \$10 (which includes entry for both Saturday and Sunday) for those aged 16 and over, and free for locals and children. This includes all day music, street performances, Kids Village activities and the Hay Bale Maze.

Author talks are \$25 and workshops are \$30, with new festival ticket packages providing discounts for multiple events.

For more information, including ticket details and the festival's full program, please visit <https://clunesbooktown.org.au/>

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