



TEXT

Journal of writing and writing courses

ISSN: 1327-9556 | <https://textjournal.scholasticahq.com/>

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Creative writing mentorship in Australia: Its history and changing practices

Abstract:

Since the Australian Society of Authors piloted Australia's first mentorships for creative writers in 1995, programs connecting emerging authors with guidance from established industry professionals have become an established part of the nation's literary landscape. Yet over this thirty-year period, only one academic study of Australian writing mentorship practices outside of the academy has been undertaken (Krauth & Baranay, 2002). Using Krauth and Baranay's survey as a comparison point, this paper re-examines the Australian field to map the availability and practices of creative writing mentorship in 2025. It finds that mentorship remains a popular activity, centred on creating pathways to equity for writers who are underrepresented in Australian publishing. However, rather than being offered as a stand-alone, dyadic practice, it is now frequently supplemented by other activities that seek to develop emerging writers and strengthen communities of practice. As hybrid forms for developing and guiding writers evolve, mentoring appears increasingly likely to come from within communities of shared cultural experience and to be only one element among multiple practices that provide support and enrich author networks. The article concludes by suggesting further pathways for research into creative writing mentorship.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander readers are advised that the following content may contain voices or names of people who have died.

Biographical note:

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Keywords:

Mentorship, creative writing, fellowships and awards.

Introduction

Since the Australian Society of Authors (ASA) piloted Australia's first creative writing mentorships in 1995, programs connecting emerging writers with guidance from industry professionals have become an established part of the nation's literary landscape. Yet over this thirty-year period, only one academic study of Australian creative writing mentorships outside of the academy has been undertaken (Krauth & Baranay, 2002). Using Krauth and Baranay's survey as a comparison point, this paper re-examines the Australian writing field to map the availability and practices of creative writing mentorship in 2025.

At the time of Krauth and Baranay's survey, formal mentorship was a relatively new phenomenon in Australia. As the authors recounted, the ASA was the first organisation to offer mentorships, via an informal self-funded pilot program, in 1995 [1]. The Australia Council subsequently developed Australia's first national mentorship scheme in 1996, providing funds to organisations to deliver mentorships based on the merit of each organisation's individual proposal.

Jill Jones, then Australia Council's senior program officer (literature), outlined the history of the Australia Council's model to Krauth and Baranay in 2002, explaining that thirty mentorship programs had run in the previous three to four years, involving around 120 mentorships under its Young and Emerging or Skills and Arts Development categories, as well as "a couple" of editorial mentorships. These were delivered through key bodies such as the ASA, state writers' centres, the Australian National Playwrights Centre, Varuna, The National Writers' House (Varuna), Express Media and the Australian Writers Guild (Jones 2002, as cited in Krauth & Baranay, 2002, p. 2).

Krauth and Baranay (2002) sent a detailed email questionnaire to the writer-representative organisations participating in the Australia Council's scheme and received responses from the ASA, Varuna, and state writers' centres in the Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, New South Wales, Northern Territory, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and Western Australia, noting that some of these programs received additional state arts funding. While observing the existence of a range of program lengths and modes of delivery, Krauth and Baranay noted that the ASA's fellowship structure, where writers received twenty one-on-one contact hours with an established writer over a six-month period to develop a manuscript-in-progress, had already emerged as "a central model" (p. 3). Estimating that around fifty mentorships would be funded in 2002, they described their popularity as "astonishing" (Krauth & Baranay, 2002, p. 2).

To map creative writing mentorships available across the sector in 2025, this author examined online sites and guidelines, crosschecked them against key national and state funding bodies' lists of funded organisations and projects over the last year, and contacted arts administrators and funding bodies for fact-checking and clarification. I further explored the history and context of current mentorships through longer communications with representatives from the ASA, Copyright Agency, and Varuna. I identified 11 mentorship programs offering 35 mentorship places; twenty fellowships, prizes and programs incorporating significant

mentorship for a further 121 writers; and multiple user-pays mentorship services that were not counted in this study [2]. The number of places on offer indicates that mentorship continues to be popular in Australia. The flexibility of mentorship practices that Baranay and Krauth observed in 2002 also continues, with mentorships and development programs incorporating mentorship varying in length from a week to a year, in both dyadic and small-group formats.

However, as this paper will explore, there have been significant changes in the funding, delivery and practices of mentorship in Australia. Most obviously, new providers have entered the sector, offering mentorship on a user-pays basis. At the same time, award programs offering mentorship have refined and differentiated their target cohort from the simple category of “emerging writers”, and most are now focused on providing pathways for underrepresented groups of authors. This evolution has occurred in the context of challenges within global and local publishing industries to address biases in representation and opportunity, and efforts to diversify and decolonise their practices. Increasingly, mentorship of writers appears to be understood as only one path to equity, which needs to be scaffolded by other initiatives to mentor diverse candidates in gatekeeping roles, such as editing, publishing, and festival curation.

The most notable finding of this mapping exercise is that the stand-alone, dyadic mentorship model is in decline across the sector. As I will discuss, among programs offering mentorship to emerging writers, manuscript-based mentoring is increasingly only one element among other practices such as peer-to-peer support, facilitated networking with key industry figures or communities of practice, internship, performance or publishing opportunities, or even masterclasses. Mentorship practices have also migrated into new areas of the publishing ecology, such as literary prizes and residencies that offer formalised access to mentors. An emphasis on creating communities of practice appears to be as much of a priority as inducting mentees into hierarchical publishing structures. Mentees can now expect to be matched with mentors who share their cultural knowledge or experiences and provide a sense of cultural safety.

These shifts in mentorship practice have presented this study with definitional challenges, to the extent of raising the question of whether *mentorship* is the most meaningful term for the range of practices incorporating mentors that now support pathways to industry. However, I will adopt the broadest possible definition of mentorship, with two aims: to capture the range and vitality of the Australian writing industry’s current mentorship practices and to invite further industry exploration and discussion. I will conclude by considering further avenues for research raised by my findings.

Contextualising and defining Australian mentorship practices

In their 2002 survey, Krauth and Baranay observed a lack of continuity across the Australian sector in defining the parameters and objectives of mentorship: “Is it teaching, editing, counselling?” wondered Varuna Writing Program Manager Inez Brewer (Krauth & Baranay, 2002, p. 8). Krauth and Baranay also noted that a “flexibility of objectives and processes had

informed the granting of funds from the start” (p. 2). Duration, rates of pay for mentors, frequency of contact, provision of guidelines, and procedures for evaluation and acquittal, all varied. For example, while the ASA pilot program had introduced a model of one-on-one manuscript development over six months, Varuna [3], with the most mentorships on offer, was bringing together “forums” of four-to-five writers of like interests for week-long on-site residencies with a “similarly-oriented” mentor (p. 3).

The origins of creative writing mentorship in Australia have a specific, unique history which is important to consider for this mapping exercise. The development of the first mentorships by the ASA was broadly instrumental in intent, pairing mentors and mentees with the aim of developing manuscripts towards publication and enriching the nation’s literary production. Then ASA Executive Director Lynn Spender said that its mentorships aimed to “‘professionalise’ the quality of the writing of less-experienced ASA members and to build an Australian publishing industry in which the knowledge and skills of the more experienced can be shared more widely” (Rose, 1996, p. 20). Mentors took an advisory or quasi-editorial role in the refinement of a manuscript, and these pragmatic origins continue to distinguish the character of Australian mentorship practice from the American model, which is generated from within the creative writing discipline in academia and in which mentorship still “stands as the paradigmatic interpersonal creative writing relationship in the program era” (Surkan & McGill, 2018, p. 1). Since the post-WWII boom in mass higher education facilitated the rise of creative writing programs (McGurl, 2009), mentorship has been a high-status activity in America, either as part of the informal dynamics between faculty and anointed students or as a formalised process in which students are paired with high-profile senior mentors. Surkan and McGill observe that these practices gave rise to a “body of lore” (2018, p. 1), which, rehearsed repeatedly, has enshrined the cultural dominance of a hierarchical “Telemachan model” (p. 7) [4]. In this model, a lone (usually male) mentor stands in *loco patris* to the mentee, granting the mentee cachet and lineage while excluding “more egalitarian, less atomistic models form[s] of relationality [that] promise to develop writers’ understanding of what nurturing literary relationships can entail” (p. 18). An American literary tradition of writing about mentorship replicates and celebrates this dynamic (see, for example, Lontas & Parker, 2015).

Although they acknowledged a variation among activities described as mentorships, Krauth and Baranay did not attempt to define the term. However, it is important to do so in this paper because it will track the further hybridisation of Australian practices. I therefore adopt Anderson and Shannon’s (1988) definition, which is contemporaneous with early Australian literary mentorship but still cited frequently within the large body of mentorship scholarship that has emerged from the disciplines of management, psychology, coaching and education. In this definition, mentorship can be understood as: “a nurturing process in which a more skilled or more experienced person, serving as a role model, teaches, sponsors, encourages, counsels, and befriends a less skilled or less experienced person for the purpose of promoting the latter’s professional and/or personal development” and is “carried out with an ongoing, caring relationship between the mentor and protégé” (p. 40).

Yet this definition requires further parsing within the Australian context. As Taylor and

Luckman (2024) observe, much of the large body of mentorship theory “has considered mentoring programs in the contexts of corporate or government sectors, not the more precarious and less formalised world of creative careers” (p. 253). When corporate or social benefit mentorships are analysed, they tend to be situated within institutional and organisational structures where mentorship is considered as a pro-bono aspect of the mentor’s employment or offered in an entirely voluntary context. Similarly, while a body of mentoring literature has developed in the educational context – see, for example, Batty and Sinclair (2014) and Bacon (2016) – mentorship in higher degree supervision or classroom teaching is usually included in the academic mentor’s workload. By contrast, writing mentors in sector-led programs in Australia have almost always been paid as freelancers for their services – by grant funding bodies or, more recently, by mentees themselves.

Studies of the Australian arts context are sparse, and academic literature about sector-led creative writing mentorship almost nonexistent. However, Forbes’s (2014) distinction between creative writing mentorship, with its focus on the mentee’s work, and coaching for creative writers, is potentially useful. Forbes defines coaching as a Socratic future-focused dialogue characterised by open questions, active listening, and reflection, with the coach as a “travelling companion” (2014, p. 18) who stimulates participants’ self-awareness and personal responsibility. However, Forbes’s definition is at odds with many author-mentors’ descriptions of mentorship as a dynamic process that is highly likely to range beyond responding to a manuscript-in-progress to encompass the activities it classifies as “coaching”. For example, a mentor may act as a “cheerleader, calling [the writer] on to the glorious end that [the mentor] can see” (Heyman, 2010), or address “all the associated business of a writer’s life,” which may include helping the mentee to “feel like A Writer” (Pausacker & Baranay, 2002). Although focused on the visual arts, craft, performance and design field in Australia, Taylor and Luckman (2014) can be adapted usefully to the publishing context and provide further nuance. The authors note that arts mentorship is a particularly complex “affective practice” (p. 4) because artists’ career trajectories are so uncertain, particularly in a rapidly changing post-pandemic industry. Its benefits, therefore, may be better understood as going “beyond the purely instrumental or practical” (p. 2) work of skills guidance or gate opening, to act as an important practice for reinforcing “feeling experiences”(p. 1) and perpetuating artistic survival.

It is certainly the case for Australian writers in 2025 that, even if they achieve publication or career recognition, the precarious nature of the industry may create barriers to flourishing. The average annual author income from practice is \$18,200, most authors typically only spend half their time producing original work, and more than a quarter have reported they have had their copyright infringed (Crosby et al., 2022). COVID-19 also intensified a sense of precarity in the sector, impacting on the mental health of creative workers, especially First Nations and CALD practitioners (Australia Council, 2022, p. 26). While it is important to note that precarity has spurred dynamic new authorial practices outside of traditional industry pathways and hierarchies (Wilkins, 2014), the past decade has also seen widespread activism protesting authors’ insecure incomes. This includes the Media Entertainment & Arts Alliance’s (MEAA’s) Fair Go for Freelancers Report (2024) and #paythewriters media campaign, and author and industry submissions to the 2022 National Cultural Policy consultation process.

This increased exposure of entrenched inequity has prompted the deputy chair of the ASA, author Jennifer Mills (2021), to note that “the discourse has shifted”.

This dynamic context of precarity and a heightened awareness within the sector of industrial and sociopolitical barriers to writers’ flourishing suggests that they are likely to require more complex mentorship practices, beyond help perfecting manuscripts or professionalising their practice. It is therefore unsurprising to find that many providers are offering mentorship within programs that offer a range of further supports for authors, ranging from intern-like payment and travel support to scaffolded networking and industry training. However, these ongoing changes are also blurring practice and nomenclature in ways that present challenges to this study. Although mentorship continues to be a popular designation for user-pays services and is still used to name some programs, formalised relationships of guidance and care from senior industry figures, including significant iterative manuscript development, are now often incorporated into programs that call themselves *fellowships* or *awards*. The emergence of private *masterclasses*, in which high-profile writers guide selected groups of emerging authors, further confuses definitional boundaries, while the ongoing popularity of shorter forums that connect mentors with mentees confounds the assumption of longevity in Anderson and Shannon’s understanding of mentorship (1988).

Therefore, in order to capture the range and vigour of current mentorship practices, this study will consider in its scope any program for writers that self-designates as a mentorship; which offers formalised access to sessions with a mentor; or which brings less skilled or experienced persons together with a(n) industry role model(s) with the intention of providing both professional and personal development centred on the refinement of work in progress. Academic mentorship of creative writing within secondary and tertiary education and private mentorship arrangements between writers that have developed organically are not in the scope of this study.

Organisations offering funded mentorships and mentorship funding partners

Some programs recorded in the 2002 survey are still recognisable in 2025. The ASA continues to offer its dyadic, twenty-hour mentorships. Varuna continues to deliver short, small-group residential forums for emerging writers that incorporate elements of mentorship (although these are now included without differentiation among its 47 Residential Fellowships and other fellowship weeks). A handful of state and regional bodies continue to offer mentorships for emerging writers, such as Arts Tasmania’s new Tasmanian Writers and Illustrators Mentorship Program (delivered by the ASA) and Writing NSW’s Cultivate Mentorship Program for Emerging Writers from Diverse Backgrounds. However, some, like Marion (formerly ACT Writers Centre), now only offer mentorship on a user-pays basis. Other state and regional organisations, like Arts NT, the Queensland Writers Centre and Writers SA, no longer offer auspiced mentorships but instead sponsor residential fellowships at Varuna, which may offer no mentorship activities beyond the one-hour session with a consultant that Varuna now provides to every fellowship holder. Although Creative Australia no longer directly funds mentorships, it supports Varuna with multi-year funding (as does Create NSW) and continues

to partner with programs that incorporate mentorship, such as black&write! and The First Chapter.

In addition to the ASA and Writing NSW, a range of other organisations currently offer mentorships. These include: Allen & Unwin (First Nations Picture Book Mentorship), the Byron Writers Festival, the Children's Book Council of Australia NSW Branch, Little Book Press (for South Australian children's writers), Text Publishing (Indigenous Writer's Mentorship in partnership with Writing NSW) and Think+DO Tank (Mirror Mentorship).

Although not badged as mentorships, many fellowships and prizes also offer writers significant mentorship opportunities. The Wheeler Centre's Next Chapter Fellowships [5], initiated in 2018 to develop emerging writers whose voices are not getting heard through conventional publishing channels, provide a year's mentorship to ten writers working on manuscripts-in-progress. Another of the more sustained mentorship opportunities currently available in the sector is The State Library of Queensland's black&write! Writing Fellowships for First Nations authors, which will be discussed later in this paper and provide two fellows with editorial development. [6] The Australian publishers Affirm, Hachette, Penguin Random House, Simon & Schuster and University of Queensland Press offer mentorship and manuscript development as part of the writing prizes they sponsor, often retaining the first right to consider the selected authors' manuscripts for publication. Within this expanded field of funded programs incorporating mentorship, more intern-like models are also emerging, such as western-Sydney-based Sweatshop's Fresh Off the Books: The Pasifika Australian Literary Initiative, in which mentees are paid to create commissioned texts for an anthology published by NewSouth with the guidance of established editors or writers, and Varuna's Red Room Poetry Fellowship (in partnership with Red Room Poetry), which offers six poets a \$1000 stipend to undertake a week of intensive poetic and professional development and publish a poem as part of Poetry Month, with an additional publication fee.

One significant change since Krauth and Baranay's study is the emergence of the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund as a major funding partner in the sector. Since 2010, it has been a key funder of mentorships, and programs and prizes that incorporate mentorship [7]. Programs the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund currently supports include the Copyright Agency First Nations Fellowships at Varuna and black&write!. Over the past decade, the private Malcolm Robertson Foundation, which supports a fellowship for a poet in the Wheeler Centre's Next Chapter program, has also emerged as a partner of more intern-like development opportunities for emerging writers, particularly in scriptwriting for performance, which are not included in this study [8].

However, it is important to note that recent changes in the priorities and organisation of Australia's key funding bodies may impact the future of mentorship programs. In 2024, the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund made the decision to shift its focus from supporting individual professional development programs (such as one-on-one mentorships, workshops, and masterclasses) to sector development (such as leadership opportunities, information sharing, and networking) (N. Evans, head of the Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund and

Reading Australia, personal communication, 27 November, 2024). As a result of this decision, it chose not to continue its 17-year support of the ASA's Award mentorships, which resulted in the ASA self-funding and scaling down its 2025 offering from twelve to eight fellowship places (ASA website). As part of its creation under Revive, Creative Australia is also prioritising building local and global markets (2024–2028 strategy: Creative Australia website). The formation in mid-2025 of the Writing Australia Council within Creative Australia, with a separate \$26 million budget over three years, is another significant change, with many in the sector hoping that its dedicated funds and national framework for Australian publishing may improve the “vast iniquity” of literature sector funding (Charlotte Wood, submission to the national cultural policy, quoted in Burke, 2022). Burke reported that the literary sector received the least monetary support from the Australia Council of any art form, with a decline of 40% over the last decade. However, the Writing Australia Council board was only announced in July 2025, with a brief to “provide direct support to the literature sector to grow local and international audiences for Australian books, planning for new investments and providing strategic advice” (Creative Australia website). It is unknown, at present, where funding mentorships might fit into its priorities.

User-pays mentorship

Although Krauth and Baranay reported in 2002 that the NSW Writers' Centre had already moved entirely to mentee-pays services, there has been a very noticeable growth since their study of user-pays mentorship, particularly over the last fifteen years.

While offering flexibility of length and cost, user-pays mentorship services tend to adhere to a dyadic model of text-based feedback. Some organisations, such as the ASA, which first offered what the ASA's professional development and events manager refers to as “service mentorships” in 2009, offer them to extend professional development opportunities for their members (K. Adams, personal communication, April 3, 2025). State and regional writers' centres with memberships, such as Writing Queensland, also often offer user-paid mentorships as part of their range of services, with substantial discounts for members. A diverse range of other providers deliver user-pays mentoring as an income stream. In 2010, British publisher Faber & Faber launched its writing school Faber Academy in Australia, in partnership with publisher Allen & Unwin, later developing “campuses” in Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, and Hobart and incorporating mentorships with high-profile authors into its suite of offerings in 2011. Other organisations offering user-pays mentorships include Westwords, *Kill Your Darlings* journal, and the Byron Writers Festival. In 1991, Sydney-based Patti Miller was one of the first Australian authors to offer private mentorship, through her Life Stories Workshop. She has been joined in the space by Sydney-based Kathryn Heyman, who established the Australian Writers Mentoring Program in 2010, and authors such as Mark Tredinnick, Lee Kofman and Bri Lee. These are only a few of the many providers within this dynamic space.

However, while it is the most common form of user-pays service, one-on-one manuscript-based advice based on the foundational ASA model is not the only type available. Varuna initially developed its year-long masterclasses with industry experts [9] as an income stream that would

occupy a unique niche and price point between shorter half-to-one-day courses and tertiary coursework. However, Executive Director Veechi Stuart now recognises them as “another mentorship model,” which furthers the organisation’s role as a funded organisation to make writing more accessible, because masterclasses often act as a gateway for attendees into the organisation’s award programs (personal communication, February 27, 2025). From 2013 to 2024, psychologist Alison Manning provided writers with individual therapy and coaching to engage with the writing process through A Mind of One’s Own, which now operates as The Writermind Project, delivering online classes designed to help writers develop the mind management skills necessary for a sustainable writing practice (writerpsych.com).

The pivot online during COVID-19 also opened the door to international providers, such as in-demand American author and “story whisperer” Sarah Sentilles. Sentilles’s one-day coaching sessions and facilitated virtual writing retreats, which provide “accountability and community while [writers] work toward a writing goal” (Sentilles author website), are attended by Australian writers at varying stages of development. Vogel Award-winning author Christine Piper has also documented using the flexibility provided by the post-COVID online environment to engage American freelance editor Lisa Poisso as a “writing coach” to offer feedback on fortnightly instalments of work in progress (Piper, 2021).

In contrast to award mentorships, private mentorships offer more flexibility, often operating on a sliding scale of times and costs, with a significant variation in the length of work that mentors will consider. The ASA, for example, offers mentorships from five to thirty hours across fiction, non-fiction, poetry, young adult, children’s, illustration, and book industry skills (such as media training, momentum and accountability, and pitching strategies). Writing NSW offers its members user-pays mentorships to work with an experienced writer or editor with the option of face-to-face, email, Zoom, or phone attendance. Prices also vary across the sector. At the time of writing, the ASA’s mentorships range from \$625 for five hours (members’ rate), to \$3030 for thirty-hour mentorships (members’ rate). Writing NSW members’ rates range from \$1050 for ten hours, to \$1975 for twenty hours, for manuscripts of 60,000 words and over, with the mentor’s reading time included in these hours. The Australian Writers Mentoring Program run by author-director Kathryn Heyman offers packages ranging from \$4800 (plus GST) for five meetings over six months to \$7700 for eight hours of meetings for manuscripts up to 80,000 words, over a period from three months to a year. A bespoke option starts at \$9800 (plus GST) [10]. *Kill Your Darlings*, a literary magazine dedicated to supporting new and emerging writers, offers a “comprehensive and structured editorial mentorship program” to develop longform work. Mentors will read 10,000–12,000 words at a time, up to a total of 60,000 words, at a cost of \$3899, with a \$50 discount for ASA members (Kill Your Darlings website).

The cost of some user-pays mentorships outstrips the book advances most first-time authors might anticipate, with an ASA survey in 2021 indicating that 58% of respondents received no advance for their work; 80.6% received advances under \$5000; and only 13% reported an advance over \$10,000 (ASA website, 2022). However, private mentorship services are so established as a professional milestone that it is now routine for project-based writers’ grants,

such as those provided by Creative Australia, to encourage writers to include mentoring costs in their budgets. This is also the case with fellowships, including Express Media's Kat Muscat Fellowship and the new Frank Moorhouse Fellowship for Young Writers.

Types of mentorship

When surveyed by Krauth and Baranay in 2002 about perceived issues in mentorship practice, sector stakeholders identified the focus on young writers and the neglect of some genres. In 2025, it is rare for mentorships to impose age limits on authors, while places may be set aside for a wide range of specific genres. However, the "emerging" category is now more segmented, with most mentorships and development programs offering mentorship focusing on creating pathways to equity for underrepresented writers. A similar shift to greater inclusivity and widening participation in creative industries mentorships has also been observed in the UK (Cateridge et al., 2024).

The ASA's award mentorships are now unusual in being offered without demographic segmentation to a national cohort of writers at any stage of their careers, to help develop their work to "a publishable standard" (ASA website). However, they are segmented by genre, with only two open to "any genre," while the rest are divided into separate categories for adult fiction, non-fiction, poetry, young adult or children's, with two places reserved for creators of illustrated works. Other mentorships and programs incorporating significant mentorship may also specify genre, such as fiction, non-fiction, poetry, children's books, or memoir, while others reserve places for genres such as poetry or comedy.

In 2025, three programs incorporate extended periods of mentorship for First Nations writers. These are the State Library of Queensland's black&write! Writing Fellowships for two First Nations writers; the Text Publishing Indigenous Writer's Mentorship; and the new Hage Award for First Nations writers. In addition to the Wheeler Centre's Next Chapter program, three programs provide mentored pathways within industry for culturally diverse writers: Writing NSW's online Cultivate Mentorship Program for Emerging Writers from Diverse Backgrounds; Affirm Press mentorships in partnership with Sweatshop, for two diverse writers to develop debut novels; and Penguin Random House's Write It Fellowship. Offered to un-agented writers in all genres, the Penguin Random House fellowship is the most intersectional, with a focus on under-represented sections of the writing community, such as writers from socio-economically marginalised backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ writers, First Nations, CALD writers and writers with a disability.

As the examples that follow indicate, programs aimed at increasing equity of access for underrepresented authors appear to be the most likely to adopt hybrid practices, embedding mentoring with a range of other supports and opportunities. These might include classes, Q&A sessions with writers and publishers, guided networking opportunities with peers and senior industry figures, or more practical material enhancements.

Writers Victoria has led the sector in providing mentorship for writers with disability through

its Writeability program. With an ethos based on the importance of self-told stories, the program reported supporting 333 writers with disability in 2024 through free programs and mentorships, employment opportunities and paid publication pathways (@writersvictoria Instagram post, 13 June 2024). However, its Writeability Fellowships, which connected five writers with disability each year to professional development support such as manuscript assessment, curated programs and/or mentoring, are currently in hiatus. Varuna's Writer's Space Online Fellowship for Writers with Disability was established in 2021, alongside its residential Writer's Space Fellowships in its accessible studio [11]. Writers with disability or who are D/deaf receive two hours of one-on-one mentoring over three weeks, in addition to programmed development activities, such as online Q&As, a platform for peer-to-peer work sharing, and a workshop with Accessible Arts.

With six online fellowship places in its Roderick Centre Online Fellowship for Remote and Regional Writers, the Colin Roderick Centre for Australian Literature and Writing offers the only development opportunity specifically for remote writers, particularly those living within government-designated Category 3 Regional Centres. Also operating on a hybrid model, it incorporates two one-hour mentorship sessions with Varuna consultants, two online Q&A sessions with leading authors, and facilitated professional networking sessions, including the sharing of work and peer-to-peer feedback. New mentoring and development opportunities for queer and/or trans and gender diverse authors have emerged quite recently. In 2025, Varuna inaugurated the Varuna Trans and Gender Diverse Fellowship, for six writers in any genre, which incorporates a one-hour session with a mentor, a half-day workshop, peer-to-peer networking, and an event for the local LGBTQIA+ community.

The growth since 2002 in mentorships and mentorship opportunities addressing a lack of opportunity, systemic exclusion, or bias through hybridised practices has occurred in the context of a heightened awareness locally and globally, particularly over the last decade, of the need to improve representation and opportunity across publishing sectors. During this period, a growing number of academic works (see, for example, Kon-yu, 2018; Booth & Narayan, 2021; Kon-Yu & Booth, 2022; Rutherford et al., 2022; Driscoll et al., 2023) and industry-sponsored reports (for example, Mar & Ang, 2015; Arts Council England, 2018; Chowdhury, 2020) have argued that widespread systemic changes are needed to develop diverse and inclusive practices in British, North American, and Australian publishing industries. Much of the energy advocating for such change has come from writers and writer-led organisations: this includes the #OwnVoices movement, which was started on X (formerly Twitter) by Dutch young adult science-fiction/fantasy author Corinne Duyvis to highlight books by authors who share a marginalised identity with a text's protagonist (White, 2020); open letters to publishers by writers' bodies such as the Black Writers' Guild UK (Cain, 2020); and high-profile statistical analyses drawing attention to gender and diversity biases, including the VIDA count (USA), the Australian Stella Count and Stella Diversity Survey, and the First Nations and People of Colour Writers Count (FNPOC Count) [12]. It is also important to note the mentorship and community-building work towards inclusion and diversity undertaken by literary journals such as *Mascara Literary Review*, *Peril Magazine*, *Liminal*, and *Djed Press* and community movements and collectives such as Sweatshop Literacy Movement and The

Finishing School, both based in western Sydney.

Concomitant with equity building for writers has been a growing understanding within the publishing and other arts sectors that reflecting the diversity and vibrancy of the Australian population is not simply a matter of increasing the representation of culturally and linguistically diverse people in published works, but scaffolding opportunities and access at all levels of industry, including in leadership roles (Diversity Arts Australia, 2019). The mentorships I have discussed above have developed within a constellation of mentorship programs that aim to decolonise, diversify and build capacity across the industry by supporting diverse editors, publishers, and festival programmers, in addition to the diversification of assessors on grant and award panels. Such initiatives have included the Writing NSW Boundless Development Program for Emerging Curators [13]; the Copyright Agency-Sydney Review of Books Emerging Critics Fellowship; the Australian Publishing Association's Open Book: Australian Publishing Internship program, which reserves one place for an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identified role [14]; and the Writing NSW Cultural Diversity Initiatives: Editor Internship Program, which ceased running in 2021. Established in 2012, the State Library of Queensland's black&write! program was one of the earliest and most innovative programs, which adopted a "double strategy" (Mar & Ang 2015, p. 117) of providing concurrent internships to First Nations editors, who read through all fellowship entries and are mentored to work with the chosen writing fellows, while also having the opportunity to commission short work from First Nations authors for *Griffith Review*.

Educating and developing audiences is another important aspect of this sector-wide scaffolding work, with the Stella Prize having been particularly proactive in employing women and non-binary writers to run professional development for teachers, in-school sessions, and the "Girls Write Up" festival for teens, to develop knowledge of women's and nonbinary authors' writing across different sectors. Other positive developments in diversifying gatekeeping roles include Allen & Unwin's 2020 appointment of Gamilaroi and Torres Strait Islander writer, actor and director Nakkiah Lui to head its Joan Press imprint, to publish "voices that get pushed to the fringes" and enact "systemic change" (Kembrey, 2020) and Simon & Schuster's 2024 appointment of author, editor and academic Professor Anita Heiss to lead its new imprint, Bundyi, with a focus on cultivating First Nations talent. Works in the Bundyi imprint are also written, edited and designed by First Nations people.

Delivery and practice

In 2002, program managers Irina Dunn (NSW Writers' Centre), José Borghino (ASA) and Hilary Beaton (Queensland Writers' Centre) compared matching mentors and mentees respectively as "a kind of dating service," in which they acted as a "marriage broker," or facilitated "a literary blind date" (Krauth & Baranay, 2002, p. 3). Yet a remark by Dunn suggests that at least one program manager expected mentees to prove themselves worthy through a demonstrated understanding of a "hidden curriculum": an unspoken set of implicit hierarchies, rules and values underpinning entry into the publishing world (Jackson, 1968). Dunn told the authors that she found it enlightening to ask mentees to nominate mentors

because “if they have no clue, it’s warning bells. Have they read in their field?” (Krauth & Baranay, 2002, p. 4).

While funded mentorships are still awarded on a competitive basis in 2025, with applicants submitting writing samples for consideration, sensitivity to the cultural safety of underrepresented writers means that they can now reasonably expect to be assessed by and connected with mentors who share similar knowledge and experiences. A case study of the State Library of Queensland’s black&write! program, which has been pivotal in the careers of authors including Ali Cobby Eckermann, Nardi Simpson, and Claire G. Coleman, was included in a 2015 report on diversity in Australian arts (Mar & Ang, 2015). It noted that enabling Indigenous editors and writers to work together in a supportive community was crucial for the development of trust, with an understanding of nuances and cultural sensitivities creating a “greater familiarity, ease, and sense of connection” (p. 118), with a “cultural thread,” as mentor editorial fellow Linda McBride-Yuke termed it, established from the day the first manuscripts arrived (p. 123). The pairing of Indigenous editors and authors also gave “precedence to the cultural context in which the work is edited ... giving a voice to another way of seeing that is an alternative to the non-Indigenous voice” (Publishing Manager at Magabala Books Margaret Whiskin as cited in Mar & Ang, p. 118). Editorial mentee Jasmine McGaughey has noted elsewhere that the benefits of learning from a First Nations senior editor within a realm of cultural safety are “the sense of community and the absence of pressure to be The One to know all about Indigenous writing” (McGaughey, 2023).

Perhaps as a result of a heightened awareness of cultural safety across the sector, mentorship is becoming less one-directional and more focused on creating strong communities of practice. An implicit understanding that diverse mentees bring valuable experiences and knowledge to the mentorship relationship is challenging the traditional dyadic mentor–mentee relationship. While there have been no studies of changing modes of creative writing mentorship in Australia, my observation that the sector appears to be losing its appetite for the traditional dyadic model is supported by a 2024 study of the creative industries in the UK, which noted there is “now an understanding of mentoring as a phenomenon that transcends the exclusive relationship between mentor and mentee, while putting a strong emphasis on community building and networks” (Cateridge et al., 2024, p. 187). Although the authors did not include writing and publishing as creative industry categories, around 50% of the mentorships surveyed in their 2024 study offered one-on-one mentoring while around 20% offered other activities or combinations of activities such as group, speed, or peer-to-peer mentoring methods (p. 182).

Enabling communities of practice through hybrid mentorship may drive the development of yet-to-be-imagined modes of community building and knowledge exchange. Although it falls outside of this study’s scope, Screen Canberra’s three-month +Screen Stories Mentorship Program for LGBTQIA+ filmmakers, screen storytellers and game makers, which was inaugurated in 2024 with partners University of Technology Sydney, Screen NSW, the Australian Director’s Guild and the ACT Government’s Office of LGBTIQ+ Affairs, is a useful exemplar for its explicit articulation of the potential for a “secure and inclusive environment” to prompt new forms of mentorship (Screen Canberra, 2024, p. 1). By creating

dynamic, intergenerational and interdisciplinary networks of queer creatives in the screen community, where “mentees can thrive both personally and professionally without the constraints of heteronormative expectations,” its application form stated it anticipated that participants would be able to evolve “queer mentorship principles” (p. 1). The creation of the First Nations Board and the Elevate: First Nations Storytelling and Literature Fund within Creative Australia, as part of the 2023 National Cultural Policy, provides grants to Indigenous writers, editors and arts sector workers to spend on professional development opportunities that might include capacity building, networking, mentoring, residencies or audience development, and thus also has the potential to further accelerate communities of practice led by First Nations mentorship principles.

Research in the UK also indicates financial support and access to facilitated networking may enhance social diversity in publishing, by helping to break class barriers to the publishing industry (Shaw, 2020). These practices are evident in many development programs for emerging writers in Australia incorporating mentorship, which, as part of centring equity and inclusion, also include material supports to alleviate the material obstacles to mentees’ flourishing. Many now ensure access and opportunity by providing mentees with office space, residencies, internship payments, the option of online attendance, or coverage of travel and application costs. Varuna has also been working on removing other barriers to accessibility. It opened its accessible Jerra studio building in 2020, in partnership with Create NSW, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, and the NSW Government, to provide comfortable and accessible accommodation for writers with disabilities, and can make arrangements for support workers.

A recent awareness in the sector that writers at all levels of development might benefit from access to mentors is also challenging the hierarchical structure of traditional mentorship. When Varuna was a smaller organisation, some writers (including myself) valued the spontaneous mentorship of the Creative Director. On his retirement, it appointed three in-house consultants, and at the time of writing offers all writers in its 47 residential fellowships and 30 other fellowship weeks the option of a free one-hour, one-on-one consultation. Executive Director Veechi Stuart notes (personal communication, February 27, 2025) that almost all writers, regardless of how mature their practice, take advantage of this option, which suggests that further avenues for funded, formalised peer-to-peer support for mid- or even late-career writers might also merit investigation [15].

Measuring success and directions for future research

Creative writing mentorship practices in Australia have grown organically, through the initiative of multiple providers. This decentralised development is both their strength and their weakness. The diversity of mentoring practices present from their beginnings in 1996 and the practical intent with which they were founded may have spared them the Telemachan excesses and the accumulation of lore observed in the American model. It is notable that, unlike the arts mentorships across the UK studied by Cateridge et al., of which 40% had emerged over the previous year as part of a “turbulent picture with a great deal of change” (Cateridge et al., 2024,

p. 184), the Australian creative writing mentorship space is relatively stable. Many of the Australian award mentorships and programs incorporating mentorship surveyed in this paper – such as The Next Chapter, Text Publishing’s Indigenous Writers Mentorship (formerly Boundless Indigenous Writers Mentorship), and the black&write! Writing Fellowships – have run since at least 2018, while the ASA’s award mentorships have run for thirty years.

As this overview of currently available programs indicates, a growing commitment to centring equity and maximising opportunities for writers whose experiences have been marginalised in Australian literature and publishing has gone hand in hand with a decreasing appetite for traditional or hierarchical mentorship structures. Text-based mentorship practices are now often embedded within a range of other supports, such as stipends and travel aid, office space, masterclasses, industry Q&As, facilitated networking opportunities, platforms for peer-to-peer work sharing, online delivery options and accessible spaces, while placing a greater emphasis on creating ongoing communities of practice within and beyond the mentorship period. As outlined, these hybrid mentorship practices have developed within the context of growing efforts to increase equity across the sector, based on an understanding that increasing diversity within Australian publishing also requires programs that encourage diversity in editorial, curatorial, critical, and leadership positions, and growing readerships.

It has not been within the scope of this overview to consider best practice. However, in spite of the growth and continued popularity of both award and private mentorship practices, no organisation contacted for this article had measures in place to determine whether a mentorship was “successful”. Although some providers sent out surveys after the delivery of the programs to ask how they might have been delivered better, none spoken to had compiled data in response to standardised questions. Anecdotally, some providers and mentors in conversation with me have echoed Taylor and Luckman’s contention that success lay less in mentees achieving publication than in reinforcing “feeling experiences” (2025, p. 256): they valued hearing from mentees that mentorship had made them feel that their work was important and that it mattered.

Yet, in a precarious industry facing multiple challenges, mentorship practices that cannot articulate the history, value, and distinction of their varied approaches may be vulnerable. A lack of any qualitative or comparative studies may mean that opportunities are being lost for even more innovative practices to be developed and supported. In addition to measuring publishing or career outcomes for writers, it will also be important to assess the ways in which mentorship can contribute to career longevity and social resilience and to be able to communicate this to policy makers and funding bodies (Haugsevje & Heian, 2024). At the same time, while the remarkable popularity of mentorship, in both award and user-pays forms, indicates an industry-wide assumption that it conveys positive benefits, it could be useful for the sector to consider whether it also has a “dark side” (Cateridge et al., 178) and what could be learned from less-than-positive mentoring experiences. Given that user-pays mentorship services are now so firmly embedded within the sector that fellowship and grant providers expect them to be incorporated into applicants’ budgets, it would benefit both funding bodies and writers to have better tools for identifying good practice. In such a crowded field, it will also be useful to understand whether some models work better than others, or whether, among

writers and funding partners, there is any perceived hierarchy of quality or value. Luckman's four-year partnered research study, conducted with the University of South Australia, into the artist-led Guildhouse Catapult mentorship program (Luckman, 2022), examined the conditions of success, long-term impact, and popularity of mentorships for artists, and provides a strong model for a more ambitious, longer-term study that could be adapted to the literary sector. The artist-centred nature of both the mentorship program and the evaluation seem particularly apposite compared, for example, to government- or industry-led studies of "resilience," given the concept's entwinement with a neoliberalist market-centred logic that may require organisations to furnish performative narratives of resilience (Newsinger & Serafini, 2019).

Thirty years after mentorships were first trialled in Australia, the time is ripe for further investigation of their evolving and ongoing practices. This paper is intended as a first mapping exercise that might open pathways for future research. This might include case studies of the affective labour between mentors and mentees in contributing to wellbeing; a longitudinal study of mentorship's contribution to the nation's literature and publishing culture; granular analysis of the evolution of new mentorship principles within communities of practice; or a study into the roles of cultural policy and philanthropy. A strong potential model is offered by Mar and Ang's 2015 report into promoting diversity of cultural expression in Australia and its use of comparative case studies. Addressing Australia's unique mentoring cultures and practices in depth also has great potential within the international field to answer Surkan and McGill's call for "more stories about other kinds of literary mentorship" outside of the Telemachan model (2018, p. 18).

In 2025, the question raised by Krauth and Baranay's 2002 survey – "Is it teaching, editing, counselling?" – is more lively and complex than ever. Whether mentorship will continue to be the most appropriate name for the multiple hybrid practices that continue to evolve is at present an open question.

Notes

[1] There is some ambiguity about the origin date of the ASA's pilot mentorships for creative writers. Krauth and Baranay date the first mentorships to 1996 (2002, p. 1). However, Rose dates the ASA pilot mentoring project to 1995 (Rose, 1996). Further research indicates that these mentorships were first advertised in *Australian Author* 27(2) 1995 (Winter, p. 8), with an application deadline of 18 July of that year, indicating that 1995 is a more reliable date. Rose also reports that four of these mentorships failed but the match between novelist Rosie Scott and Georgia Blain ran over nine months from late 1995 to early 1996 and resulted in Blain submitting a novel into the 1996 Vogel Awards. As a result of this pilot, Rose reported, the ASA aimed to commence a formal mentoring scheme to begin in 1997. It had applied in 1996 to the Australia Council under its new Partnership Scheme, seeking funding for ten emerging writers to be paired with more experienced mentors to work on specific projects over a year, with the result expected in November of that year (Rose, 1996).

[2] A full list of programs is included in the Appendix at the end of this paper. This paper does not count all 47 fellowships at Varuna that incorporate a free hour's consultation with one of its writing consultants, but only the fellowships that offer *additional* mentorship or support.

[3] Varuna, in Katoomba, NSW, was the home of author Eleanor Dark. In 1989, the Dark family gifted it to the state of NSW and it became Varuna Writers' Centre, a residential retreat for writers. Now operating as Varuna, The National Writers House, it offers residential and virtual fellowships and other activities such as masterclasses. The author was a member of the board of management from 2003 to 2007 and has been awarded residencies through a competitive process outside of that period.

[4] This term refers to Homer's *Odyssey*, in which the goddess Athena disguises herself as Mentor to guide Telemachus while his father Odysseus is away from Ithaca, fighting in the Trojan War. A tradition has developed in mentorship literature of referencing this origin story in Greek mythology, including within the mentorship guidelines AltusQ developed for the Australia Council (now Creative Australia). (See Australia Council for the Arts and AltusQ, 2016, p. 3).

[5] As part of Melbourne's 2008 designation as a UNESCO City of Literature, the city established the Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas in a newly renovated wing of the State Library of Victoria. In 2009, Melbourne philanthropists Maureen and Tony Wheeler became patrons and it became The Wheeler Centre. It is a venue for public conversations, debates, readings, performances and discussions and a hub for writers and key literary organisations: Australian Poetry, Blak & Bright, The City of Literature Office, the Emerging Writers' Festival, Express Media, Melbourne Writers Festival, PEN Melbourne, and Writers Victoria.

[6] In May 2025, the State Library of Queensland sparked widespread criticism after cancelling Karen Wyld's fellowship hours before it was to be awarded, citing a comment the author had tweeted in October 2024 regarding the conflict in Gaza (Burton, 2025).

[7] Utilising a small percentage of members' contributions towards its collection of licence fees, the not-for-profit agency's Cultural Fund was established in 1996 to support research projects, particularly those aligned with copyright. In the early 2000s it began to introduce grants for individuals and organisations, with a focus on professional development for writers, editors and publishers. As members' contributions increased to 1.5% in 2010, the focus changed again to supporting new work, with increased support for fellowships, grants, and career-sustaining opportunities.

[8] Although scriptwriting and screenwriting are not considered in this survey, the Malcolm Robertson Foundation sponsors Sydney-based Griffin Theatre's Griffin Literary Associate program, in which an emerging playwright is embedded in the theatre's staff and Perth-based Black Swan Theatre's Piggy-Back-Draft Commission. It has also sponsored *Overland* journal's two (now closed) mentored writers' residencies. A range of other mentorships are also available for playwrights, screenwriters and critics: these include Accessible Arts, ATYP's Fresh Ink Mentoring Program, the Malthouse Writing and Dramaturgy Program, and InReview and CreateSA's First Nations Mentorship program for First Nations arts critics in South Australia.

[9] Of varying durations and price points, Varuna's masterclasses by application offer small groups of writers weekly meetings about aspects of writing, such as story structure, led by a successful writer. Writers can also access an individual consultation with the industry expert.

[10] Packages offered by the Australian Writers Mentoring Program are "The Original" (five hours of one-on-one meetings over six months, for new and emerging writers), "The Intensive"

for highly committed writers (eight hours of meetings for a period up to a year, working on a manuscript of up to 80,000 words), and “The Custom” (a personalised coaching experience for writers at any career stage, by negotiation).

[11] Unlike its online Writers’ Space Fellowships, Varuna’s residential Writers’ Space Fellowships do not offer the six successful writers mentorship activities beyond the one-hour sessions with Varuna consultants offered to writers across all its fellowships.

[12] In 2010, the US feminist organisation VIDA: Women in Literary Arts initiated an annual count documenting a disparity in the number of women’s books published and reviewed compared to men’s. Modelled on the UK’s Baileys Women’s Prize for Fiction (formerly Orange Prize), but incorporating fiction, poetry and non-fiction and including non-binary writers in 2019, Australia’s Stella Prize was established in 2012, to address the poor representation of Australian women in the shortlists of Australia’s Miles Franklin novel award. It included nonbinary authors in its eligibility requirements in 2019. The organisation initiated the Stella Count in 2012 to analyse gender bias in Australian literature; in 2016, it worked with academic Natalie Kon-yu to set up the Stella Diversity Count, “widening [the] count of books reviewed according to the author’s gender to examine how issues of race, ethnicity, disability and sexuality affected the rate of books reviewed by women” (Kon-yu, 2016). Kon-yu went on to lead The First Nations and People of Colour Count at Victoria University with Emily Booth, to develop the first large-scale numerical data set to examine representation of First Nations writers and Writers of Colour within Australian literature. Of the 1531 books in the 2018 project sample, 3% were by First Nations authors and 7% were by people of colour (Kon-yu & Booth, 2022).

[13] Under the Writing NSW Boundless Development Program for Emerging Curators, established arts curators such as Addi Road Festival director Sheila Ngoc Pham mentored three emerging curators from Indigenous or diverse backgrounds to program events at the Boundless Festival of Diverse Writers. However, the program has not run since 2023.

[14] The Open Book: Australian Publishing Internship offers four aspiring editors six-month paid mentorships in Australian publishing houses across Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, with external mentorship by Alisa Ahmed, managing editor at Ultimo Press. Of the internships, one is an Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander identified role while applications are strongly encouraged from people from a range of cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

[23] It is important to note that Stuart does not regard these sessions, for which consultants will prepare by reading submitted work for up to twenty minutes, as “mentorship” because she considers a mentorship relationship to be more sustained. (V. Stuart, personal communication, February 27, 2025).

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Appendix: Mentorships and programs incorporating mentorship, 2025

Mentorships

Allen & Unwin First Nations Picture Book Mentorship (one place). A five-hour mentorship with a publisher for a First Nations picture book creator. <https://www.allenandunwin.com/about/submission-guidelines/first-nations-picture-book-mentorship-submission-guidelines>

Australian Society of Authors Award Mentorships (ten places). Six twenty-hour mentorships with an ASA mentor for writers of adult fiction, non-fiction, poetry, young adult, and children's. Two five-hour mentorships for picture book and graphic novel authors. Two three-hour mentorships for highly recommended applicants in any genre. Mentorship packages for the successful writers include a free ticket to the ASA's Pitch Perfect course, one free ticket to a Virtual Literary Speed Dating pitch, and a one-year free membership. <https://www.asauthors.org.au/award/award-mentorships/>

Book Links Mentorship (one place). A mentorship for a work of fiction for junior fiction, middle-grade, or young adult readers, or two picture book manuscripts, open to any member of Book Links QLD residing in Australia. The winner works with a professional mentor to develop an early draft manuscript to publishable standard. Shortlisted authors (number unspecified) may receive one to three hours of virtual mentorship. <https://booklinks.org.au/programs/mentorship/>

Byron Writers Festival Residential Mentorship & Firsthand Feedback Scholarships (six places). Four writers within the region receive five-day residential group mentorships, with one-on-one mentoring of manuscripts in progress. Two shortlisted applicants receive feedback sessions from a professional author/mentor on works of 5000 words plus synopsis (equivalent to three hours). <https://www.byronwritersfestival.com/events/residential-mentorship-firsthand-feedback-scholarships>

Children's Book Council of Australia Aspiring Writers Mentorship (one place). A five-hour mentorship for a writer of young adult, middle grade, or picture book. <https://www.cbcanz.org.au/aspiring-writers-mentorship-program>

The Indigenous Writers Mentorship (one place). Formerly the Boundless Indigenous Writers Mentorship (a joint initiative of Text Publishing and Writing NSW) this mentorship is

a year-long mentorship for an Indigenous author to work on a manuscript with a senior Indigenous writer working in the same genre, with additional professional development from Text Publishing and Writing NSW. <https://www.textpublishing.com.au/boundless-mentorship>

Island Tasmanian Writer's Mentorships (four places). Tasmanian residents are eligible to apply by expression of interest for ten hours of mentorship tailored to their creative goals and aspirations by four winners of the Tasmanian Literary Awards.

Little Book Press Mentorship Program (two places). Mentorships for South Australian children's authors to work with an established creator, which include a publishing contract from Little Book Press. <https://raisingliteracy.org.au/little-book-press/mentorship-program/>

MIRROR Mentorship For Bilingual Writers And Illustrators (three places). Forty-hour, year-long mentorships from Think+DO Tank to create new bilingual children's literature. The mentorship package includes a \$4000 stipend, industry-specific webinars, and mentorship by a selected industry mentor, Scribble Books, and Lost in Books Multilingual Bookshop. <https://foundation.thinkanddotank.net.au/mirror-mentorship>

Tasmanian Writers and Illustrators Mentorship Program (16 places). Fourteen twenty-hour mentorships with ASA mentors for Tasmanian writers of adult fiction, non-fiction, poetry, young adult and children's literature. Two ten-hour mentorships with ASA mentors for creators of illustrated works. Packages include tickets to the ASA's Pitch Perfect course and Virtual Literary Speed Dating pitch, a year's membership, two in-person events hosted in Tasmania, and access to a private Facebook group with fellow award mentorship recipients. <https://www.asauthors.org.au/award/tasmanian-writers-and-illustrators-mentorship-program/#:~:text=About%20the%20Mentorships,mentorship%20with%20an%20ASA%20mentor.>

UQP Mentorship Prize for Under-Represented Writers (two places). Editorial mentorships to develop a fiction or non-fiction manuscript by previously unpublished authors from communities that are under-represented in Australian writing for consideration by UQP. <https://www.uqp.com.au/pages/uqp-mentorship-prize-for-under-represented-writers>

Writing NSW Cultivate Mentorship Program for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Emerging Writers (up to five places). Emerging NSW writers from Indigenous or culturally diverse backgrounds receive guidance from an author/editor to develop a short piece of fiction or non-fiction (2000-5000 words) for publication. The package includes Writing NSW Membership and a free short course. <https://writingnsw.org.au/getsupport/prizes-opportunities/cultivate-mentorship/>

Fellowships and prizes incorporating mentorship

Affirm Press Fellowship (four places). This week-long residency at Varuna for writers of crime, thriller, and mystery novels incorporates on-site editorial support and guidance from Affirm Press editors. After the residency, Affirm Press editors continue to offer general advice up to the completion of a full or reworked draft. <https://www.varuna.com.au/for-writers/affirm2025>

black&write! Writing Fellowships (two places). Run by the State Library of Queensland, these two fellowships for First Nations writers include \$15,000 prize money, editorial development by the black&write! team, and a publication opportunity with UQP. Trainee editors receive mentorship alongside the chosen writers. <https://www.slq.qld.gov.au/get-involved/awards-and-fellowships/indigenous-writing-fellowships-and-editing-internships>

Bundyi Writing Prize (one place). This prize is offered by Simon & Schuster for an outstanding unpublished manuscript by an emerging Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander writer. It includes a \$10,000 cash prize, manuscript development with a First Nations editor and a standard book publishing contract with Bundyi Imprint. <https://www.simonandschuster.com.au/p/BundyiAUPrize>

Copyright Agency First Nations Fellowships (twelve places). These residential fellowships at Varuna incorporate one-on-one mentorship with a First Nations mentor and group reading sessions in a culturally safe space. <https://www.varuna.com.au/for-writers/firstnations>

Fresh Off the Books: The Pasifika Literary Initiative (twelve places). Offered by Sweatshop Literacy Movement, NewSouth Publishing and Diversity Arts Australia, the fellowships incorporate online writing workshops, an honorarium of \$1000, and ongoing mentoring, publishing, editing, networking and creative industry support from Sweatshop Literacy Movement. <https://www.sweatshop.ws/fresh-off-the-books>

Hage Award for First Nations Writers (two places). Two authors are mentored over 12 months by distinguished First Nations authors. The award includes a \$5000 stipend, hot-desk and author resources at Sweatshop in western Sydney, two online consultations with partner Ghassan Hage, and publishing, editing, networking and creative industry support from Sweatshop. <https://www.sweatshop.ws/news-1/sweatshop-announces-new-award-for-first-nations-writers>

International Lamplight Online Fellowship – Ireland (six places). Run in partnership between Varuna and the Irish Writers Centre, the fellowship provides four two-week places for Australian writers and two places for Irish writers. Designed to build international exchange, it incorporates mentorship by Varuna and the Irish Writers Centre, facilitated professional peer-to-peer networking, Q&A sessions with one established Australian and one Irish writer, and online industry exchange with representatives from the Irish and Australian publishing industries. <https://www.varuna.com.au/for-writers/irelandonline>

Kyogle Writer In Residence Program For A Regional Writer (one place). Funded by Kyogle Council, this two-week residency in Kyogle includes mentorship by an established author and a \$5000 stipend. <https://kraw.com.au/writer-in-residence/>

The Next Chapter (ten places). Offered by the Wheeler Centre in partnership with Creative Australia, Australian Communities Foundation, and the Malcolm Robertson Foundation, the fellowships incorporate a year of mentorship, a \$15,000 stipend, residency at Varuna, and attendance at an end-of-year publishing intensive at the Wheeler Centre, where fellowship winners hear from a keynote speaker, past recipients, agents, and publishers. One fellowship place (The John Clarke Fellowship) is dedicated to a humour writer, and The Malcolm Robertson Fellowship to a poet. <https://www.wheelercentre.com/the-next-chapter>

Pitch Me! Agent and Publisher Introduction Program (two places). Two writers who have been awarded a Varuna fellowship in the previous three years will be selected for a one-week residency at Varuna. Each writer receives extended editorial conversation with an agent or publisher to develop work for publication and a \$2000 development payment, which can be used for editorial or mentoring advice. <https://www.varuna.com.au/for-writers/pitchme>

Scribe Varuna Fellowship (four places). Fellowship recipients receive intensive publishing mentorship to develop exceptional new work, including manuscript feedback and online meetings with Scribe editorial staff, who will offer further feedback after the residency on the work in progress. <https://www.varuna.com.au/for-writers/scribe>

The Richell Prize (one place). Offered by Hachette Australia with the Richell family, in partnership with *The Guardian* Australia and The Emerging Writers' Festival, the prize includes \$10,000 and one year of mentoring with a Hachette publisher). <https://www.hachette.com.au/richell-prize/>

Varuna Red Room Poetry Fellowship (six places: five residential, one online). The fellowship includes a \$1000 stipend, one-on-one mentoring, a group workshopping session, a public reading opportunity and online publication of a poem with an additional publication fee. One place is reserved for a First Nations poet, one for a CALD poet, and at least one for an emerging writer.

Varuna Roderick Centre Online Fellowship for Regional and Remote Writers (six places). Intended to foster connection and professional development for writers living in regional and remote parts of Australia, the fellowship includes two online sessions with a Varuna writing consultant, two Q&A sessions with established authors, and facilitated professional networking opportunities. <https://www.varuna.com.au/for-writers/roderick-online>

Varuna Trans and Gender-Diverse Fellowship (six places). These residential fellowships incorporate one-on-one mentor conversation, a half-day workshop, and community event with the local LGBTQIA+ community. <https://www.varuna.com.au/for-writers/trans-and-gender-diverse>

Westwords Academy (14 places). Supported by Create NSW, this one-year training program for writers and poets working on major projects incorporates individual mentorship by an industry writer with monthly ninety-minute online seminars, monthly 'Academy Live' open mic nights, and a showcase event. <https://www.westwords.com.au/westwords-academy/>

Westwords-Varuna Emerging Writers Residency (four places). These residencies for emerging, diverse Western Sydney writers developing a manuscript incorporate one-on-one mentorship and manuscript consultation with a Westwords mentor. <https://www.westwords.com.au/westwords-varuna-emerging-writers-residency/>

Write it Fellowship (three places). These one-year fellowships for unpublished voices across all genres focus on First Nations and CALD writers, writers from socio-economically marginalised backgrounds, LGBTQIA+ and writers with a disability. The winners are mentored by Penguin Random House AU editors, receive a \$2000 stipend, and participate in a PRH AU Open House session. <https://www.penguin.com.au/write-it>

The Writers' Space Online Fellowship for Writers with Disability (six places).

These online fellowships for writers with a disability or who are D/deaf include facilitated networking opportunities, two one-hour one-on-one sessions with writing mentors, ninety-minute Accessible Arts workshop, two online Q&A sessions, access to an online platform with writing prompts and exercises, and access to a Varuna “on-demand” course. <https://www.varuna.com.au/for-writers/twsfellowships-online>

Writing WA Emerging Writers Program (up to twenty places). This program for adult writers in any genre includes workshops, mentoring, per diems, networking and access to activities provided by the five co-hosting writing centres.