Australasian Association of Writing Programs

TEXT

Journal of writing and writing courses

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

Breaking borders: Launching a regional literary journal in times of arts funding uncertainty

Raelke Grimmer, Adelle Sefton-Rowston and Glenn Morrison

To cite this article: Grimmer, R., Sefton-Rowston, A. & Morrison, G. (2021). Breaking borders: Launching a regional literary journal in times of arts funding uncertainty. *TEXT: Journal of writing and writing courses*, 25(2): 1-26.

Charles Darwin University

Raelke Grimmer, Adelle Sefton-Rowston, and Glenn Morrison

Breaking borders: Launching a regional literary journal in times of arts funding uncertainty

Abstract:

A new literary journal of the Northern Territory, *Borderlands*, launched an online pilot edition in 2019 and an online print edition in 2020. The publication comes twenty years after its predecessor, *Northern Perspectives*, ceased publishing due to losing its Australia Council funding and support from Northern Territory University (now Charles Darwin University). As the editors of the journal, in this article we analyse how we funded and published the journal's pilot editions against the backdrop of precarious arts funding and a ravaged arts sector, due in part to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. We provide a cost breakdown of publishing the journal and analyse our approach and processes in order to offer some insight and transparency to stakeholders, patrons and others contemplating literary journal publishing. Despite the challenging landscape of arts funding in Australia, ultimately the benefits of pursuing literary publishing in the regions to foster regional writing as part of Australian literature are worth the obstacles encountered on the path to publication. Our research suggests there are four key pillars integral to a journal's success and sustainability in an underfunded sector: a flexible approach, community support and engagement, early stakeholder consultation, and transparency surrounding the costs of literary journal publishing.

Biographical notes:

Dr Raelke Grimmer is a lecturer in Creative Writing and Applied Linguistics at Charles Darwin University. She is a founding editor of *Borderlands*, a literary journal of the Northern Territory, and treasurer of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association. Raelke's research explores multilingual Australian literature and the role of genre in text construction and the creative process. Her creative work has been published in *Westerly, Griffith Review, Kill Your Darlings* and *Meniscus*.

Dr Adelle Sefton-Rowston lectures in Literature and Creative Writing at Charles Darwin University. She is a Fulbright scholar and president of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association. Adelle is a founding editor of *Borderlands* and her debut book is titled *Polities and Polemics: race relations and reconciliation in Australian Literature*.

Dr Glenn Morrison is an adjunct Senior Research Fellow at Charles Darwin University where he leads the *Borderlands* research and publishing project as general

editor. He has lectured at several Australian universities and written of the nation's Centre and North as a journalist, broadcaster, researcher and newspaper editor for more than twenty years. Glenn's work is widely published, including the trade book *Songlines and Fault Lines* and academic text *Writing Home* for Melbourne University Press.

Keywords: literary journals, arts funding, Northern Territory, regional writing, crowdfunding

Introduction

Atop Darwin's Myilly Point, heritage listed Burnett House keeps watch over Mindil Beach. The dwelling was completed in 1938 and designed for the tropical climate by architect B C G Burnett (Tetlow, 2008). The house suffered but survived through the bombing of Darwin in World War II and again at the hands of Cyclone Tracy in 1974 (National Trust NT, 2021). After the damage inflicted by Tracy, it was restored and remains a time capsule of life in 1900s Darwin. It is open to locals and tourists seeking a snapshot of part of Darwin's history. In the upstairs lounge room, the wooden louvres offer slatted views of the ocean. Beneath these windows, on a low side table adorned with a collection of magazines, a copy of *Northern Perspectives*, a literary journal of the Northern Territory (NT) published between 1979 and 2000, rests on top of the pile. Much like the house, the journal provides a window to a Northern Territory of another era, in ways only writing can do. Unlike the house, *Northern Perspectives* did not survive the suffering inflicted on it: the precarity of Australian arts funding.

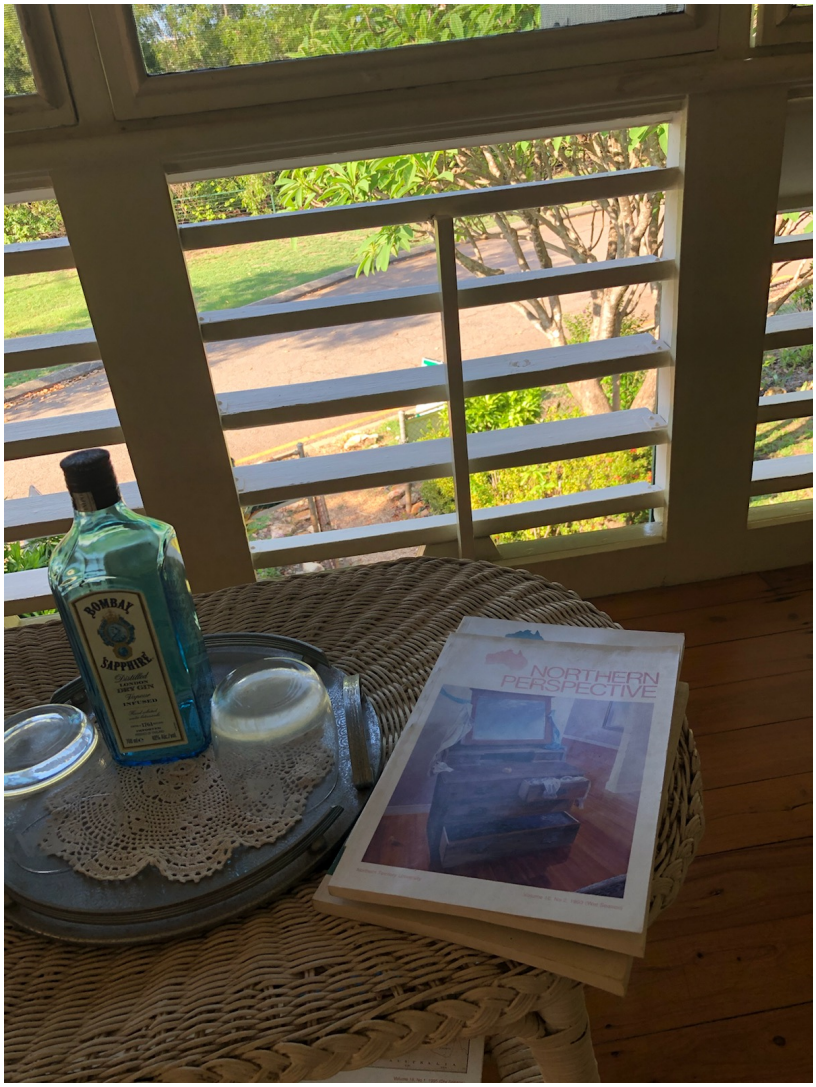

Fig. 1. A copy of *Northern Perspectives* at Burnett House (Grimmer et al 2021)

When *Northern Perspectives* ceased publishing, it left the Territory without a literary journal of its own, and without a place for local emerging and professional writers to articulate their perspectives of and insights into the Territory. In 2015, Dr Glenn Morrison started to explore the idea of launching a new Northern Territory literary journal and applied for funding from ArtsNT for this purpose. This initial grant was unsuccessful, but after teaming up with Charles Darwin University lecturers Dr Adelle Sefton-Rowston and Dr Raelke Grimmer in 2018, the team were successful in securing an initial ArtsNT grant to fund research into what a literary journal of the Northern Territory may look like and whether it would be a viable undertaking, given the current arts funding landscape. Three years after securing the first grant, the Northern Territory's first print literary journal in twenty years, *Borderlands*, was included in the *Australian Book Review*'s list of the best Australian books of 2020 (Australian Book Review, 2020). This acknowledgement of Northern Territory writing as a valid and essential part of Australian literature highlights the need for regional publications and writing in the regions; yet the precarious state of arts funding in Australia that led to *Northern Perspectives'* demise has only further denigrated in the time since.

Arts funding in Australia has always been uncertain and, given the comparatively small percentage of arts funding awarded to literature, literary projects exist within precarity and uncertainty. The history of literary magazines in Australia is awash with publications that have succumbed to the unpredictable and insecure funding landscape of literature in Australia: *Wet Ink* (2005–2012)*, Tincture* (2013–2017)*, Outrider: A journal of multicultural Australian literature* (1984–1994) and *Northern Perspectives* (1979–2000), to name only a few. Despite this history, the role literary journals play in cultivating emerging writers and providing opportunities for professional writers to be published cannot be underestimated, and we persisted in bringing a new Northern Territory literary journal to life. This article will firstly provide an overview of why we decided to launch a Northern Territory literary journal. It will then discuss a detailed case study of our process of funding and publishing the pilot editions of the journal against the background of an increasingly precarious arts sector, due in part to declining government funding for the arts and a struggling higher education sector, the impacts of which the COVID-19 pandemic has only exacerbated. The case study highlights how regional literary journal publishing differs from metropolitan publications. Based on our research and experiences over three years of getting *Borderlands* to publication and an analysis of trends within the literary publishing sector, we have identified four pillars that are integral to a literary journal's sustainability in an underfunded sector: a flexible approach, community support and engagement, early stakeholder consultation, and transparency surrounding the costs of publishing a literary journal.

Background

In November 2019, in the same week we launched the journal's online edition – showcasing some of the best Northern Territory writers and celebrating a new regional literary publication – news broke of the uncertain futures of two other important regional Australian literary organisations: *Island Magazine* and the University of Western Australia (UWA) Publishing (Walter, 2019; Young, 2019).

Tasmania's *Island Magazine* announced they may not publish in 2020 and beyond, due to losing their Arts Tasmania funding (Walter, 2019). Additionally, UWA Publishing

announced its imminent closure (Young, 2019). While Perth itself is a metropolitan centre, it is still a city isolated from the eastern seaboard, and UWA Publishing has played a huge role in publishing underrepresented writers. Furthermore, a few weeks before these announcements, the Australia Council for the Arts released its annual report, revealing that only seven per cent of its funding pool was awarded to literature projects (Australia Council for the Arts, 2019). This came off the back of the Australia Council itself losing $70 million in funding over four years from 2015, decreasing the overall amount available for the arts (Caust, 2016). In early December 2019, one month after launching the online edition of *Borderlands*, Prime Minister Scott Morrison reduced the number of Federal departments from eighteen to fourteen, cutting out the arts department as a sole entity to instead exist under the Department of Infrastructure, Transport, Regional Development and Communications, meaning that the ideation of "arts" has been completely removed from the title (ArtsHub, 2019). It doesn't end there. In August 2019, *Overland* found out that their expression of interest for four years of Australia Council funding was rejected and they were not invited to submit a full application, resulting in a loss of $80,000 a year worth of funding from 2021. Then-editor Jacinda Woodhead explained that this would mean a loss of two full-time positions at the magazine (Woodhead, 2019a).

In early 2020, as we prepared to publish and launch the first print edition of *Borderlands* in May, COVID-19 accelerated from a highly infectious disease to a full-blown pandemic, not only delaying the publication of the print edition to September but further ravaging an already decimated arts sector. As some of the most precariously employed workers in the country, artists and arts workers did not qualify for the federal government's JobKeeper program (Watts 2019; Boland 2019). The live events that form the lifeblood of the industry could not safely go ahead and thousands of workers in the industry faced unemployment. On top of that, as COVID-19 reduced the capacity of Australian universities to accept international students into their programs and as universities were ineligible for JobKeeper, casualised university staff – many of whom are arts workers – also lost their work, further impacting the arts sector negatively (Marshman, Baré & Beard, 2020).

Additionally, in the first few months of 2020, several key Australian literary journals missed out on Australia Council funding, including *Australian Book Review*, *Sydney Review of Books, Overland* and *The Lifted Brow* (Boland, 2020). While 2020 held challenges for Australia's arts sector, the year brought better news for *Island Magazine* and UWA Publishing. Despite losing their Arts Tasmania funding in 2019, *Island Magazine* secured enough philanthropic support to publish two issues in 2020. Further, in September 2020, the magazine announced they had secured an Arts Tasmania grant to support their 2021 publishing activities (Island Magazine, 2020). Thanks to widespread backlash and petitioning from the writing community, the University of Western Australia made the decision to keep UWA Publishing under a new publishing model beginning in 2021 (Pascuol Juanola, 2020). Still, the turmoil of inconsistent funding takes a toll on the industry.

This background paints a bleak picture for launching a new literary journal, and a regional one at that. But it is in these times we need to double down and push even harder for new initiatives and support for existing literary organisations. During the long, isolated hours of lockdown, the public turned to the arts for entertainment, company and comfort. Literary journals were one of the few artforms that were able to continue publishing and paying writers throughout the restrictions. The social and economic value and necessity of such

publications is tangible. Even so, our decision to explore the possibilities for a dedicated NT literary journal in such a volatile landscape begs the questions: *Why launch another literary journal when those currently in existence struggle to survive?; How did we secure funding for and launch the journal in a time of lean arts funding?; How can literary journals sustain their existence?*

A literary journal of the Northern Territory

In an article for *TEXT* in 2019, we wrote about the scope for an NT literary journal and the research we undertook in determining whether or not an NT literary journal was viable and something the Northern Territory community wanted (Morrison, Grimmer & Sefton-Rowston, 2019). The NT is a unique part of the country, characterised by an extreme climate and tiny, isolated population of approximately 240,000 people (Northern Territory Government, 2018). Yet the NT is also one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse regions in Australia (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2016) and is home to some of the most devastating and defining events in Australia's history, including massacres of Indigenous peoples, the World War II bombing of Darwin Harbour and Cyclone Tracy. The NT is full of stories of Australia and of writers ready to tell these stories. Too often, writing about the Territory has been left to outsiders without a lived experience of the Territory, who cannot provide insider perspectives of this part of the country (Morrison, 2019). In his 1937 novel *Capricornia*, Australian writer Xavier Herbert chastised southern writers – those who live below the Tropic of Capricorn – for their characterisation of Northern Australia: "The blunny place is always either a desert or a lake. Rabbits've got more sense than them blowbags that write in the Southern papers" (Herbert, 1937, p. 409).

Furthermore, there is an increasing shift towards ensuring that Australian writers outside of the Melbourne and Sydney literary hubs have opportunities to be published and have their voices heard as part of Australian literature. In 2017, Ben Walter argued in a piece for *Overland* titled "You can be a successful writer, but only if you live in Melbourne or Sydney" that writers outside of these metropolitan centres are disadvantaged:

> Some will argue that geography should not be compared in any sense with more inescapable markers of identity. Certainly, geographical disadvantages can be overcome more easily than many others – you can simply move, as countless people do … the implications of such advice leads all Australian writers to move to New York; or at the very least, to Melbourne and Sydney. Is this the outcome we want: even more of our serious journalism and distinctive literary writing engaging with the two largest centres of population? (Walter, 2017)

That is not to say that writing in the regions is without its advantages. In a piece for *Kill Your Darlings* in 2019, Raelke Grimmer argues for regional areas and areas traditionally outside creative hubs as ideal for creativity, despite the isolation:

> The hardest part of being a writer in Darwin is [the] isolation. When the majority of literary events in the country take place on the eastern seaboard, attending from Darwin means a minimum eight-hour return flight and accommodation … For all of Darwin's reasons not to be a city of choice for an aspiring writer, the city (and the

> Northern Territory more broadly) has a vibrant and supportive writing community that rivals its southern counterparts. A win for one Territory writer is a win for all Territory writers, and this alone makes the grind and extra effort worth it.

But for creative ecosystems to thrive in these regional locations, they require community and infrastructure that supports those ecosystems (Masson, 2019). They require publications like *Island Magazine* and *Borderlands* to claim a space and advocate for regional writers within Australian literature. Diverse publications also reflect the diversity of Australian writers, as former editor of *Overland*, Jacinda Woodhead, argues:

> We need a diversity of publications and of writers – culturally, formally and in terms of content. No one publication can do everything and nor should it. That would presume we are all identical and would weaken our cultural imaginings. (Woodhead, 2016)

Since *Northern Perspectives* ceased publishing in 2000, the NT has been without its own space to publish stories of the Territory. We created the journal because we saw a need for that space where emerging and established Territory writers could not only be published but be paid industry rates for their work. Critically acclaimed Darwin-based writer Mary Anne Butler eloquently described the importance of having this opportunity in her speech at our *Borderlands* fundraising launch in Darwin on 26 March 2019:

> I still remember the first time I was paid to write. It was around 1996 and I was commissioned to write an article for the Queensland Writer's Centre magazine. I was paid 'industry rates', which seemed a massive amount of money at the time. I remember holding that cheque in my hands and wondering whether to cash it in or frame it, because it felt so much more than money. It felt like the dream I'd had for so long had the first inkling of becoming a reality. It felt like validation, and possibility. And for the first time in my life, I felt like a 'real writer' … But – mostly – it was encouragement enough for me to keep going. And that's the whole point, as a writer. The encouragement to write the next piece and the next piece and the next, and with each piece you write, you come to understand a bit more about how and why you write. (Butler, 2019)

We wanted to create that opportunity for Territory writers, of not only being paid and feeling like a "real writer", but also the encouragement that comes with it. To achieve this, we devised a phased approach to creating the journal over three years, based on Morrison's initial research in 2015 and our application for an ArtsNT grant in 2018:

Phase 1: Research 2018

We undertook the research phase of the project in 2018, supported by an ArtsNT grant. As part of our research, we conducted a literature review into literary journals in Australia, surveyed key stakeholders and the Northern Territory community, interviewed literary journal editors and applied for additional funding. We also developed a strategic plan for the journal to guide its future development (see Morrison, Grimmer & Sefton-Rowston 2019). This research informed how we approached the pilot phase of the journal.

Phase 2: Pilot 2019–2020

For the pilot phase of the journal, we were fortunate to secure funding from Creative Partnerships Australia through their MATCHLab program for an online pilot edition. We also secured funding from the Australian Government through the Regional Arts Fund to publish a print pilot of the journal. At this stage of the project, Charles Darwin University also provided $5000 in seed funding and significant in-kind support for the project. The Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education also provided in-kind support towards the project.

Phase 3: Ongoing publishing plan – 2021 onwards

After the success of the pilot editions of the journal, we are now working on establishing a regular publishing schedule. We plan to seek out philanthropic funding and multi-year funding as part of our strategy.

Funding a pilot edition of a regional literary journal

Based on the research we undertook in Phase 1 of the project, it was clear that we would need to develop different revenue streams in order to fund the journal (Morrison, Grimmer & Sefton-Rowston, 2019). Given the uncertainty of funding, relying on more than one source of funding helps to secure the future of journals in times when one funding source or another may be lost. Our research also revealed that journals based at universities fare better in the long-term, as they provide access to existing infrastructure that can be used to support the journal, rather than the journal having to develop and maintain those infrastructures independently. To secure the interest of an institutional base for the journal, we firstly needed to demonstrate the viability of the journal through publishing pilot editions. For the pilot editions of *Borderlands*, we focused on four main funding sources: government grants, philanthropy, crowdfunding and in-kind support.

Government grants

Most literary journals rely on government funding to cover at least some of the costs of producing and publishing the journal (Edmonds, 2015). We successfully applied for and received a $22,200 ArtsNT grant in 2018 to undertake the research phase of the project. On the back of the ArtsNT grant, we also successfully applied for and secured $20,000 in funding from the Australian Government's Regional Arts Fund to publish a print pilot of the journal. These two grants were fundamental to publishing the journal. However, as discussed above, receiving government funding is not guaranteed, even for Australia's most established literary journals. Government funding for the arts has been continuously cut since 2011, despite an Australia Institute discussion paper finding that the Creative Arts contributed $14.7 billion to Australia's GDP in 2017 and 2018 (Browne, 2020). Given the competitiveness and precarity of government funding, a literary journal requires other revenue streams to be sustainable.

Philanthropy

Philanthropy is another key source of funding for literary journals and an option we explored pursuing for *Borderlands*. For example, *The Australian Book Review* runs a Patron's program, with different levels of patronage according to the amount donated by the donor (Australian Book Review). Even so, philanthropy in Australia is still a growing area. Philanthropy Australia is the peak independent body for philanthropy in Australia with the aim of "serving the philanthropic community to achieve more and better philanthropy" (Australian Philanthropy). In 2016, a report prepared by the Foundation Center, in partnership with United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, and Philanthropy Australia found that despite the data available for US organisations providing philanthropic funding to Australian projects, "there is a dearth of information about philanthropy in Australia that limits collaboration and coordination" (Foundation Center, United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney & Philanthropy Australia, 2016, p. 3). Of funding from the US to Australia, the highest funded sector was health at 42.6 per cent; the second highest was the environment and animals at 12 per cent; and arts and culture received only 1.6 per cent of all allocated funding. In 2011, Harold Mitchell prepared a report titled "Building Support: Report of the Review of Private Sector Support for the Arts in Australia". The report found that while there are notable examples of long-term corporate and private donations to the arts in Australia, there are opportunities to broaden support. It also identified that many arts organisations and artists lacked the skills and expertise required to attract philanthropic support and that exposure to the arts from a young age encouraged lifelong support for the arts (Mitchell, 2011). The report also recommended the amalgamation of the Australian Business Arts Foundation and Artsupport Australia into a new body for all private sector support for the arts in Australia. This led to the creation of Creative Partnerships Australia (CPA) whose "ultimate goal is to grow a more vibrant and robust cultural sector with strong connections to supporters and investors, for the benefit of all Australians" (Creative Partnerships Australia).

We investigated philanthropic opportunities for *Borderlands* for the project's pilot phase, including the Ian Potter Foundation, the Ramsey Foundation and corporate sector funding. In early 2020 we started working on a philanthropic funding strategy by showcasing *Borderlands* at Charles Darwin University Foundation's annual Black Tie Ball. However, we received feedback that having a journal pilot already published would make *Borderlands* a more likely prospect for philanthropists. We therefore decided to seek out other means of funding to complement our government grants and save looking into philanthropic funding for the project's post-pilot phase.

Crowdfunding

In addition to the two government grants, we also secured a place in Creative Partnerships Australia's MATCHLab program. The purpose of the program is to educate artists about philanthropy and crowdfunding in the arts. As part of the program, we attended a two-day Raising Money for Your Art workshop in Melbourne with the other MATCHLab recipients in November 2018 to prepare a fundraising campaign. If we could raise $10,000 towards the project, Creative Partnerships Australia would match our funding dollar for dollar. We could run our campaign in any way we chose, including private donors, sponsorship or crowdfunding. After attending the workshop, we chose to run our campaign using two crowdfunding platforms: Patreon and the Australian Cultural Fund.

Crowdfunding emerged in the late 2000s as a way for entrepreneurs to seek private capital for their ventures. Zhao, Harris and Lam (2019) define crowdfunding as "the use of a crowd (crowdfunders) to raise funds via online platforms (crowdfunding platforms), in which individuals who are interested in the new project pledge a relatively small amount of capital to support the project" (p. 2). Anybody with a project or product in mind who seeks development funding can use a crowdfunding platform to try and raise funds for their idea. American platform Indiegogo launched in 2008, followed by Kickstarter in 2009 (Zhao, Harris & Lam, 2019). Entrepreneurs or creators set a fundraising target and offer rewards to pledgers based on how much they contribute to the project. In 2010, Australian crowdfunding platform Pozible was founded in Sydney and specifically targeted towards artists (Pozible, 2020). For Kickstarter and Pozible, creators only receive the money raised from their campaigns if the fundraising target is met; for Indiegogo, users can choose whether they want to "fix" their funding (only receiving funds if the fundraising goal is met) or opt for "flexible funding", where they receive all funds raised, regardless of whether or not they meet their target (Indiegogo, 2017). American platform Patreon joined the scene in 2013, a platform where fans can pledge a monthly amount to artists or creators in exchange for rewards (Patreon) and in 2003, Creative Partnerships Australia launched the Australian Cultural Fund, a donor based crowdfunding platform for Australian artists (Australian Cultural Fund, 2021). Rather than offering rewards in exchange for donations, all donations made through the platform are tax-deductible.

The popularity of crowdfunding rose significantly in the early 2010s, although there is much debate within the arts industry about the merits of using crowdfunding to fund art. In a piece for *Overland* in 2013, Anwyn Crawford wonders whether, in a society that refuses to see the value of art, a reward-based crowdfunding model is appropriate, when the art itself should be considered the reward for contributing to a project. She also points out that a crowdfunding model prioritises art that is consumable and has a tangible final product. Emilie Collyer (2015) writes that many artists had concerns that government bodies would use the rise of crowdfunding to further cut support to the arts. Furthermore, some artists do not like the idea of asking for money for their art. Still, when Collyer needed to secure more funding to produce her play *Dream House*, she turned to crowdfunding. She chose to use the Australian Cultural Fund and, despite some initial reservations about asking for money, "it struck [her] that [she] wasn't asking for money for [herself]. It was to support a team of artists who had already committed to [the] project". The funds she was raising were to support artists and the wider industry, not only her own artistic practice, and therefore she did not feel as uncomfortable asking for money. In 2018, literary journal *Kill Your Darlings* successfully raised $10,000 through a Pozible campaign to help fund the production of the journal (Kill Your Darlings, 2018).

There are many examples of successful crowdfunding campaigns for artists but creating and running a campaign can place an enormous toll on the artist. In his 2014 book *Funemployed: Life as an Artist in Australia*, writer and musician Justin Heazlewood writes extensively about the toll of trying to earn a living as an artist in Australia and how artists fund their work. He planned to launch a *Pozible* campaign to fund an album in 2012 but ultimately decided against running the campaign due to burnout after ten years of grinding out a living for himself as an artist in Australia.

Despite the challenges that come with crowdfunding, the benefits of crowdfunding suited *Borderlands*. While we harboured some reservations about the process in the same way as Collyer (2015), we were asking for funding not to support our own individual artistic practice but to pay numerous NT storytellers for their work. Approaching our campaign with this purpose in mind made it easier to run the campaign. As the project was at the pilot stage without a published journal in place to use to seek sponsorship, we decided that running a crowdfunding campaign rather than attempting to secure sponsorships was a better fit. It would also give us an opportunity to test the NT's appetite for a local literary journal. For our fundraising, we chose to split our campaign across two different crowdfunding platforms: the Australian Cultural Fund and Patreon. We ran our campaign between February and June 2019.

The Australian Cultural Fund (ACF) was established in 2003 to encourage philanthropic donations to the arts and is managed by Creative Partnerships Australia (Australian Cultural Fund, 2021). It works in the same way as Pozible or Kickstarter, with artists creating a campaign and fundraising target. The key differences are that rather than a rewards-based system, the ACF offers tax deductible donations and artists keep all of the money donated to the project, even if they don't reach their fundraising target. A 2012 Australia Council report into crowdfunding in the arts in Australia identified "no tax deduction benefit" as one of the key barriers to attracting donors through crowdfunding (Klaebe, 2012). The ability to offer our donors tax deductible donations was a key reason why we chose to use the ACF platform for our campaign. We also preferred that we did not need to hit our fundraising goal in order to keep the donations pledged to the project. This meant there was less risk in setting a higher fundraising target. It also appealed to us as it was a platform created specifically for artists. We set ourselves an ambitious target of $20,000 and raised $8,632 from fifty-six donors.

We also chose to use Patreon, an American platform where donors can pledge a recurring monthly amount to an artist or project and receive rewards based on their pledge amount. As a start-up literary journal with no previous issues, that was still working out what the publishing schedule would look like after the completion of the pilot phase, we tested Patreon to see if it would be a good option as a subscriber platform. Instead of subscribing to the journal itself, donors could "subscribe" to the journal through Patreon instead. One of the biggest downsides to using Patreon is that it is based in the US, therefore all donations are processed in US dollars, a barrier for some donors [1]. Even so, at the end of the campaign, we had 11 donors for a total of $117 US dollars per month. For the purposes of the MATCHLab program, as Patreon was a monthly pledge rather than a one-off donation, Creative Partnerships Australia multiplied the total monthly pledges by 12 to match our funding. We received $1,404 US dollars in matched funding from Patreon, and together with our $8,632 from the Australian Cultural Fund, we reached our $10,000 fundraising target and received our matched funding for a total of just under $20,000 towards producing the journal.

In-kind support and collaboration

Apart from government grants and crowdfunding, the journal could not have been published without the in-kind and collaboration support we received. As Woodhead (2016) notes, literary journals "run on extremely slender budgets and a helluva lot of volunteer labour". In 2016, *The Lifted Brow* published a cost breakdown of publishing one issue of the journal:

> As part of TBL32: the Capital Issue, we have attempted to enumerate the labour and costs that have gone into the production of this issue, in order to examine the conditions of its existence and to provoke greater reflection upon its worth. (The Lifted Brow, 2016)

A total of 1729 hours of labour went into producing the issue: of these, 977 were unpaid and the remaining paid at a nominal contributor's fee (The Lifted Brow, 2016). It is not uncommon for editors of literary journals to be unpaid, as the emphasis is on paying contributors for their work.

As the managing editors of *Borderlands*, we contributed our time towards editing the journal, building the website, marketing, launch event planning, and social media in-kind. Once we secured funding, Charles Darwin University (CDU) also contributed significant in-kind support through videography, website hosting and administrative resources. Seed funding from CDU contributed to teaching buyout so we could dedicate some time to the project. Three undergraduate CDU students also completed internships with the journal as part of credit towards their degrees: one in graphic design, one in social media and one in publishing and editing. The Batchelor Institute provided in-kind support by giving time to Morrison, who worked at the Institute at the time, to work on the project.

Furthermore, a key factor in our success in publishing the journal's pilot editions was due to a collaboration with *Westerly Magazine*. We had the opportunity to learn from *Westerly*'s editorial process, which informed how we created our editorial processes for *Borderlands*.

Cost breakdown of publishing *Borderlands*

The cost breakdown of publishing the online pilot and print editions of the journal are outlined below.

Westerly Northern Territory showcase

As we began working on our pilot editions of *Borderlands*, *Westerly* editor Dr Catherine Noske asked if we would like to curate a showcase of Northern Territory writing to be published in an upcoming issue of *Westerly*. This enabled us to test run our selection and editing processes and determined how we would work with contributors on their submissions for publication. We ran the call for submissions concurrently with our call for submissions for the online pilot edition between March and April 2019. The pieces for the *Westerly* showcase were published in *Westerly* 64:2 in November 2019. The only cost to *Borderlands* for the showcase was the mostly in-kind editing we provided, led by Dr Adelle Sefton-Rowston, for which we received a nominal fee of $300 as a donation to *Borderlands* from *Westerly*. *Westerly* paid the showcase contributors.

Online pilot edition

In our concurrent call for submissions for the online pilot and *Westerly* showcase we received more than one hundred submissions. The cost breakdown below reflects the costs that went into producing the online pilot of the journal.

Our only monetary costs for the online pilot edition were artist fees and $500 paid to our Indigenous Editorial Advisor, Marie Munkara. We paid our contributors industry rates as set out by the Australian Society of Authors during our call for submissions periods in 2019: $300 per poem and $0.71 per word for prose (Australian Society of Authors, 2019). Our audiovisual pieces were paid at $500. While these rates are higher than the rates paid by some other Australian literary journals – which start from one hundred dollars per piece and increase from there, depending on the journal – we were committed to paying our contributors industry rates to not only support the arts practice of our contributors, but to demonstrate the costs of publishing a literary journal if writers were consistently paid at these rates. We published five poems for a total of $1500; three prose pieces for a total of $5701 (8030 words); one audio poem for $500; and three short animations for $500.

The online edition also required extensive in-kind support to be published. As a member of the *Borderlands* team, Dr Raelke Grimmer volunteered her time to design and develop the website using Wordpress. She was also the main editor for the online edition and worked closely with contributors on preparing their pieces for publication in-kind, with support from Dr Glenn Morrison. We were also fortunate to have the additional in-kind support of our poetry editor, Dr Christian Bök and our audiovisual editor, Wendy Cowan. The launch event for our pilot edition in Darwin was run in conjunction with the Association for the Study of Australian Literature's Patron's Lecture 2019 and held at the Northern Territory Library and Archives, while the Alice Springs launch event took place at Red Kangaroo Books.

Our total expenditure for the online pilot was $8701.30 (Fig. 2). The pilot edition is freely accessible from the *Borderlands* website and no income was generated from the online pilot.

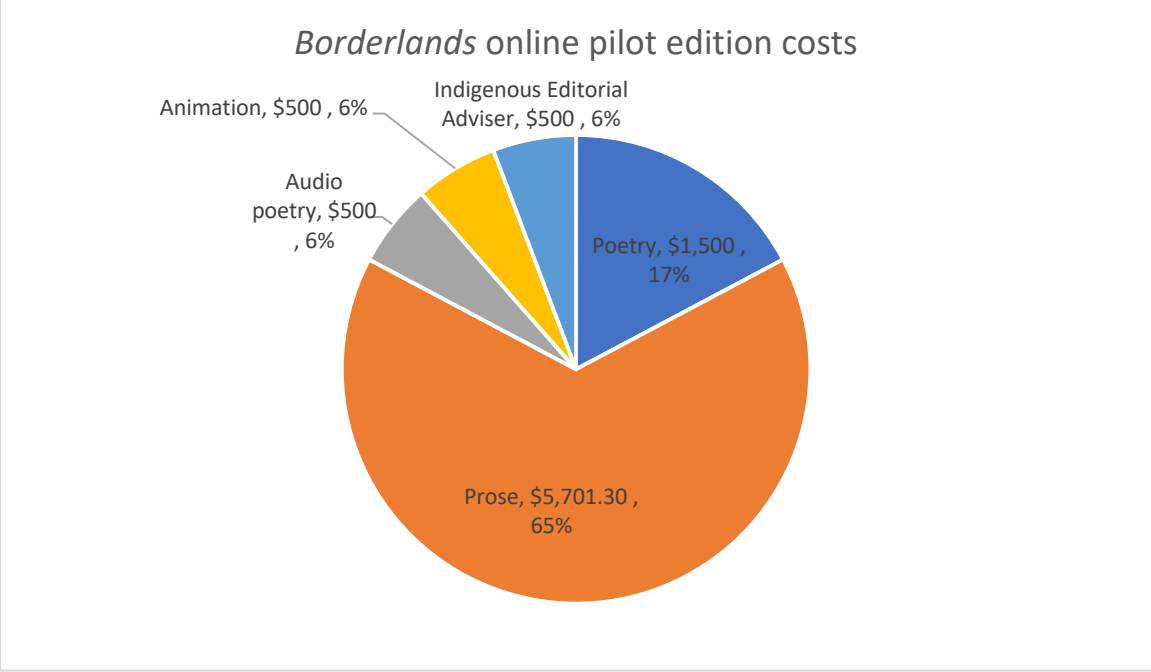

Fig. 2: *Borderlands* online pilot edition costs

Print pilot edition

We opened our call for submissions for the print pilot in January 2020. Submissions were open until the beginning of March and we received just under one hundred submissions. During this same period, we also called for entries to our Cover Art Prize and national First Nations' Writing Award, both generously funded by Charles Darwin University. As noted earlier, our initial plan had been to publish the print edition in May 2020 and launch the journal at the Northern Territory Writers Festival in Darwin. However, due to COVID-19, the launch of the journal was delayed to September 2020.

We again paid Australian Society of Author rates to contributors. We published seven poems for a total of $2100, twelve pieces of prose for a total of $17,520.17 and a piece of graphic art storytelling for $500. We also published the winning entry from our First Nations' Writing Award, Karen Wyld's "Clatter Tongue", and our winning Cover Art Prize entry, Lana Twyford's "My Country". Our prize winners each received $1000 prize money. In total, we published more than 26,500 words of prose and poetry.

We edited the journal in-kind, led by Dr Glenn Morrison and again with the assistance of our poetry editor Dr Christian Bök and Indigenous Editorial Advisor Marie Munkara, who received an honorarium for her work. We outsourced the copyediting to a local Darwin copyeditor for a total of $1240.84.

We enlisted the help of our printer, Uniprint, to design and typeset the inside of the journal, and together with printing 500 copies of the journal, this cost $4030. Other marketing and admin costs are broken down in the chart below. Our total expenditure for the print edition was $40,063.67, including $10,000 of in-kind editing (Figure 3).

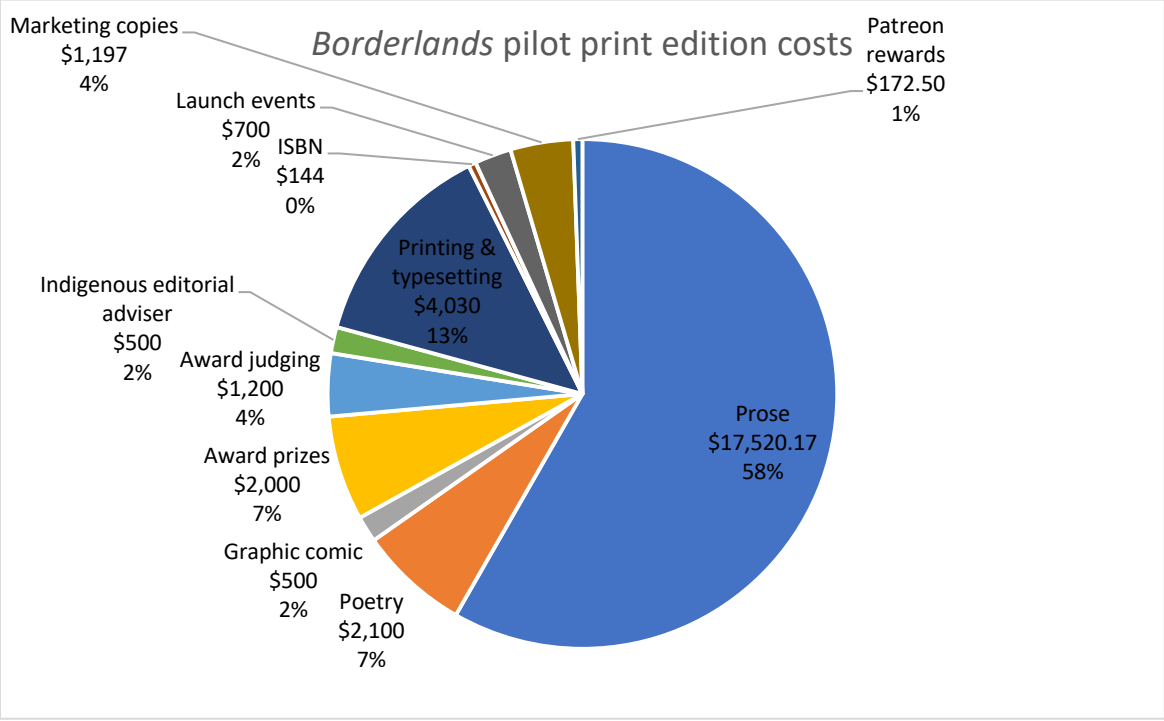

Fig. 3: *Borderlands* pilot print edition costs

From our September launch events at Lucky Bat Café in Darwin and at the Alice Springs community garden at the end of 2020, we sold 300 copies of the journal to Northern Territory bookshops (available in store and online from Red Kangaroo Books, The Bookshop Darwin and the Charles Darwin University Bookshop) for a cost price of $11.97 per copy, generating $3591. We also sold advertising for a total of $454.54, giving us a total income of just over $4000 from the journal (Figure 4).

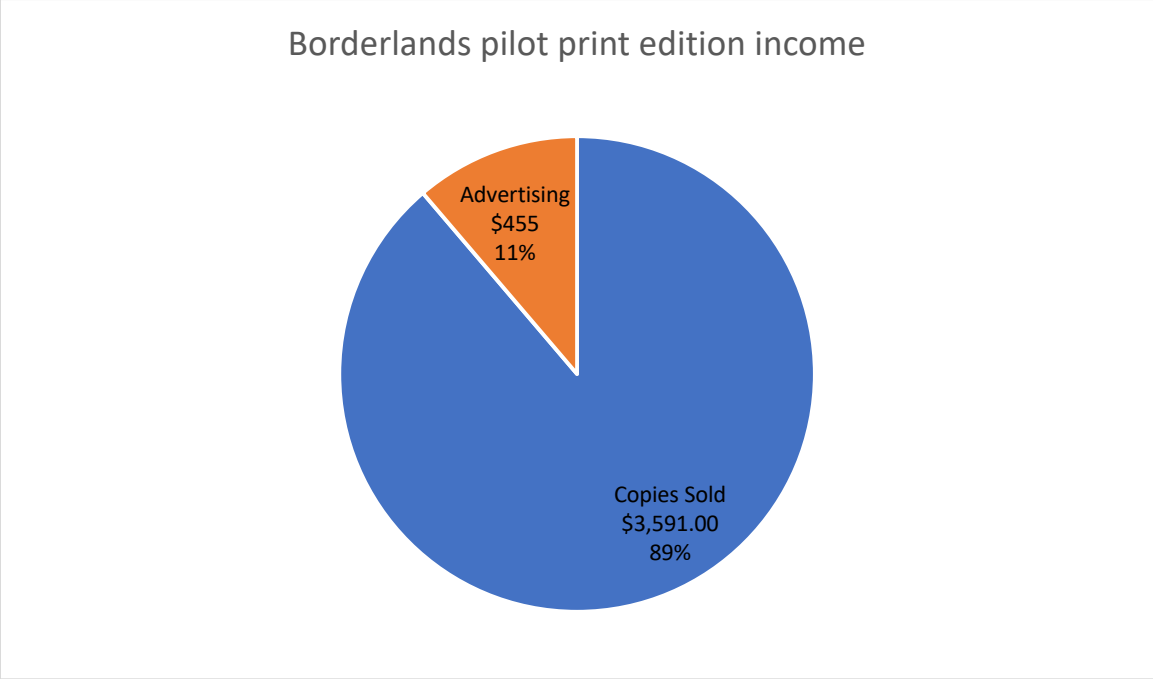

Fig. 4: *Borderlands* pilot print edition income

Towards sustainability in Australian literary journal publishing

Our experience of creating and publishing *Borderlands* highlights some key barriers and opportunities for achieving sustainability in literary journal publishing in Australia. Our research suggests that there are four key pillars literary journals must have in place to have a chance at surviving in the underfunded sector: a flexible approach, support and engagement from the community, consult stakeholders from day one, and transparency about the realities of what it costs (in money and time) to publish a literary journal.

Flexibility is key to survival in the sector

The precarious funding landscape for literary projects in Australia means that flexibility in approaches to fundraising and publishing is key if literary journals are going to be sustainable. Where many in the industry once rejected crowdfunding or had reservations about turning to this form of fundraising to keep publishing, now it has become an essential part of diverse revenue streams for literary journals to fund their publishing programs (Southerly, 2020; Kill Your Darlings, 2018; Collyer, 2015; Crawford, 2013). It provides a

safety net when journals miss out on competitive government grants and ensures publishing can continue in the interim. However, the amount of time and energy required by journal staff to manage crowdfunding is a huge undertaking on top of the already time-intensive work of editing and publishing a journal (Heazlewood, 2014). While our crowdfunding campaign secured the funding needed to publish the journal, the workload of running repeated campaigns is not sustainable long-term on top of the other work that is required to publish a literary journal. For already understaffed or voluntarily run literary organisations, coordinating these campaigns requires a lot of extra effort, and it often falls to the editors of the journals to write grant applications and run crowdfunding campaigns. To secure sustainable financial futures, there needs to be a dedicated staff member whose role it is to oversee, organise and coordinate these efforts. For this reason, relying solely on crowdfunding in place of government funding as a means of securing a sustainable future for a literary journal is not viable. This is where institutional support through providing a staff member one or two days per week to work on a journal is a viable model, yet given the difficulties Australia's higher education sector is currently facing, supporting a literary journal in this way is a tough case to make.

Any change to funding sources may also require a change to publishing activities and journals need to be prepared to adapt to change. A key consideration for us when researching *Borderlands* was whether to create an online journal or a print journal. A survey of the local community indicated that most likely readers of the journal preferred a print format (Morrison, Grimmer & Sefton-Rowston, 2019). We were then fortunate to secure enough funding to move ahead with both a pilot print edition and a pilot online edition. As demonstrated in the cost breakdowns of publishing each edition earlier in this article, the print edition was four times more expensive to produce than the online edition. This was slightly offset by our ability to generate income through selling copies of the print edition, whereas the online edition was freely available and a conscious choice of ours to ensure accessibility for the very community we were representing and supporting.

Despite the cost differences, continuing to produce a print edition of the journal is still our preferred option moving forward. One way of making this option more sustainable would be to look at different printing options, including print-on-demand publishing (POD). POD publishing is cheaper than more traditional printing methods, as single copies of books can be printed as each sale is made (Gallagher, 2014). As Gallagher acknowledges, publishing in this way lowers barriers to entry and requires less capital to get started. This is an option for *Borderlands* to consider in the future. However, as a regional literary journal, it is important to us that we are not only supporting NT writers but the broader NT economy. An NT literary journal must be created by Territorians and produced using local industry wherever possible. Therefore, we chose to use a printing company that employs Territorians and is physically located in the Territory. Any decision to use a POD service located elsewhere needs to be carefully balanced against our responsibility to support local industry in all aspects of the journal's creation.

Despite our preference for a print edition, having the flexibility to also publish online and having editing procedures and processes in place for both formats means that we are able to adapt our publishing format if necessary, in line with funding constraints. In 2016, literary journal *Kill Your Darlings* made the decision to cease publishing their quarterly print edition and move the publication online from 2017 onwards (Steger, 2016). This decision enabled

the journal to publish more writers than was possible in the print edition. In 2020, Australia's longest running literary journal *Southerly* was faced with the predicament of needing to adapt after two years of not receiving state or federal funding. In January 2021, they opened a call for submissions to their first edition of the year: the first completely online edition in the journal's eighty-year history (Southerly, 2021). Additionally, in June 2021, *Island Magazine* launched their first online publishing platform (Island Magazine, 2021). If literary journals are to continue to survive, building flexibility into both the revenue streams and publishing formats is a necessary step towards a sustainable future.

Community support and engagement is integral to success

Another key pillar to the sustainability of literary journals is building strong community support around the publications. Without this support, projects such as *Borderlands* would not make it to publication, let alone have a chance at surviving long-term within the sector's precarity. When *Overland, Island Magazine, The Lifted Brow* and *Southerly* were faced with uncertain futures due to funding shortfalls, they first and foremost reached out to their readers and the literary and arts communities for support (Island Magazine, 2020; Overland, 2019b; Southerly, 2020; The Lifted Brow, 2020). It was thanks to the community rallying around the publications that they had the means to navigate the immediate challenges of the shortfalls. Arguably, building a community around a literary journal is even more important for regional literary journals with a smaller population base (Walter, 2019). From the very beginning, the support *Borderlands* has received from not only the NT literary and arts communities but from literary journals and organisations Australia-wide has been overwhelming and integral to the journal's early success. *Borderlands* would not exist without this support.

During the project's research, literary journal editors from around Australia openly shared information, insights, advice, challenges and journal costings with us when we reached out and shared our vision of launching a new NT literary journal (Morrison, Grimmer & Sefton-Rowston, 2019). These conversations provided us with a solid foundation to work with as we devised a plan and strategy for the journal. In the face of uncertain financial viability, the generosity of journal editors in sharing their own experiences of navigating the sector provided some much-needed motivation and encouragement to simply have a go and see where it led us. These initial conversations led to our partnership with *Westerly* and in turn enabled us to contribute to the wider Australian literary sector by working with *Westerly* on curating a feature of NT writers in *Westerly 64:2*. These partnerships between literary journals within the sector only serve to strengthen the whole literary publishing ecosystem. Contributing to and being embedded within the wider literary community is key to long-term success.

Additionally, support from the local writing and arts community is critical. They encompass not only the readers of the journal but also the majority, or – in the case of *Borderlands*, which only accepts submissions from NT writers – the entirety of the journal's contributors. Had the local community not thrown their support wholeheartedly behind the journal, the project would have remained stagnant at the research phase. The key to building that community support is to engage with the community early and seek their input and feedback. During the project's research phase, we distributed a survey using Survey Monkey to key community groups within the NT, asking for the community's opinions on what an NT

literary journal might look like (Morrison, Grimmer & Sefton-Rowston, 2019). We received 139 responses. More than one hundred of those respondents provided a contact email address to continue receiving updates about the journal and we kept the community informed through each stage of the process. It was from those initial contacts that we built a community around the journal that supported our fundraising campaigns and attended our launch events. Including the community in every stage of the journal's creation and incorporating their ideas and feedback fostered a sense of collective ownership and has therefore contributed to its success to date. The importance of undertaking community consultation in the early stages of literary journal planning cannot be ignored and is a key pillar in building a sustainable publishing model.

Stakeholder engagement from day one is critical

Another key factor to the success of literary journals is to consult with stakeholders from the very beginning of the project. In an industry as small as the Australian literary sector, and in the specific case of *Borderlands* in a region as small as the NT, it was crucial that we spoke to stakeholders about our plans for the journal while we were in the planning stage.

In addition to interviewing literary journal editors from around Australia, as part of our research phase we also interviewed key NT stakeholders, including prominent local writers, key academics at Charles Darwin University, the Northern Territory Writers' Centre (NTWC), the director of the Northern Territory Writers Festival and Ptilotus Press, among others (Morrison, Grimmer & Sefton-Rowston, 2019). These conversations helped shape where *Borderlands* would fit into the NT's existing literary ecosystem and developed networks for future collaborative opportunities.

Developing a strong working relationship with the Northern Territory Library and Archives (NTLA) early on in planning *Borderlands* enabled us to work collaboratively to the benefit of all. The NTLA runs the annual Northern Territory Literary Awards and the Awards' call for submissions overlapped with our initial call for submissions for the journal. Together we agreed that writers submitting to the journal could also submit their piece(s) to the Awards and vice versa.

Another key initiative that emerged from these early conversations was providing opportunities for literature, creative writing and communications students from CDU to get practical experience working in literary journal publishing as part of credit towards their degree through internships. Further, key pieces from the print edition have been included in the reading list for an undergraduate unit that explores conceptualisations of identity in Northern Australia. Engaging with the university in this way not only supports the publication of *Borderlands* but also helps to nurture emerging NT writers by providing local opportunities for emerging writers to gain experience in writing and publishing, in turn demonstrating it is possible to forge a career in the field outside of metropolitan centres (Grimmer, 2019; Walter, 2017; Walter, 2019). We are currently working with the NTWC on developing fellowship opportunities for local editors and writers. Stakeholder engagement not only provides essential support to a journal's publishing activities but, just as importantly, helps to embed literary journals within wider society, demonstrating their social value beyond the immediate writing community.

Lack of transparency

The literary journal sector seems, as a whole, to do most of the above well or, at the very least, are learning to do it well in the face of the exceedingly challenging year in the industry. Even so, one aspect in need of improvement is transparency in the amount of time and money it takes to publish a literary journal.

We were fortunate that literary journal editors were willing to have conversations with us about the specific funding circumstances of their journals. However, the only publicly available cost breakdown we could find during our research was from *The Lifted Brow* (The Lifted Brow, 2016). Crowdfunding campaigns go some way to providing further transparency, as individuals and organisations using these platforms inform their donors what the funds will be used for, yet this information is rarely provided in the form of a full cost breakdown (Australian Cultural Fund; *Kill Your Darlings*, 2018). While there are legitimate and valid reasons why literary journals may not be able to publish their costings, the lack of transparency about where literary journals get their funding from and how those funds are spent is a hurdle for the industry. The reality is that a lot of people simply don't know how much work goes into publishing a literary journal and why so much funding is needed. If this information was more readily available, it may encourage more people to donate to journals or buy an issue. Further, if journals are seeking philanthropic support, there is a duty of care to donors to be transparent about how those funds are being spent and what impact those funds are having (Foundation Center, United States Studies Centre at the University of Sydney & Philanthropy Australia, 2016). It is no longer acceptable for a journal to not pay contributors, yet the limited arts funding available makes it increasingly difficult for journals to not only pay writers but to pay them fairly. We made the decision to publish our cost breakdowns to add to the limited publicly available data on what it costs to publish a literary journal in Australia and to demonstrate the real costs of publishing a literary journal if all contributors are paid industry rates for their work.

In addition to transparency around funding, transparency is also required in how much unpaid labour and in-kind support goes into literary journal publishing. It is immense. This labour not only goes into the production of the journal itself but also into the vast efforts that are required to apply for funding and sustaining a journal which, in our case, was performed on top of our full-time duties as university academics. Understanding the cost and time breakdown behind literary journal publishing not only emphasises the impact of the funding shortfall in the sector but demonstrates why literary journals require additional funding to continue publishing.

Does Australia need another literary journal?

A better question may be, "is there enough funding in the limited funding pool for another literary journal?" On face value, the answer to both of these questions is probably not. But such an answer poses a huge problem for Australian literature, in that the majority of Australia's literary journals are located in Melbourne and Sydney. We need more regional, rural and remote voices forming a strong presence as part of Australian literature and a key

way to do that is to provide local opportunities and publications for those writers. The support shown for *Borderlands* from writers and readers within and beyond the Territory, as well as other journals and key literature stakeholders across Australia, is testament to this need. As Australian literary doyen Glyn Davis says of the *Borderlands* print pilot in *Australian Review of Books*, "These welcome voices from Alice Springs and Darwin bring insight and energy to an essential conversation about identity" (Australian Book Review, 2020). *Kill Your Darlings* has made a real effort to reach out to regional writers by running their showcase series since 2018, curating collections of writing from specific regions. They ran a Northern Territory showcase in 2018 and have since expanded to focus on writers from beyond Australia, including New Zealand, Indonesia, the Philippines and Malaysia (Kill Your Darlings). These initiatives are a great place to start, but we need to move beyond these one-off showcases and towards consistent inclusion of writers from the regions as an integral part of any literary journal.

Publications prioritising marginalised voices in Australian literature do exist. *Mascara Literary Review*, founded in 2007*,* "is particularly interested in the work of contemporary migrant, Asian Australian and Aboriginal writers" (Mascara Literary Review, 2021). In 2016, Leah Jing McIntosh founded *Liminal Magazine*, an "actively anti-racist literary platform, a space for the interrogation and celebration of the Asian-Australian experience" (Liminal Magazine, 2021). Additionally, *The Australian Multilingual Writing Project,* founded by Nadia Niaz in 2018, "aims to provide a space to showcase some of the linguistic complexity that resists and persists in Australia today" (The Australian Multilingual Writing Project, 2020). These publications provide essential spaces for underrepresented Australian writers to have their voices heard. Furthermore, *Westerly* commits to publishing a minimum of five per cent Indigenous writers in each edition (Westerly, 2016). As Sefton-Rowston (2021) argues in her book *Polities and Poetics: race relations and reconciliation in Australian literature*, we are in an age where Indigenous writers are claiming that writing is a sovereign act. Marie Munkara's memoir "The person in the mirror" appears in the print issue of *Borderlands* and closes with "I have found the person in the mirror, and she doesn't have anything to prove to anyone" (2020, p. 37); a statement reminding us that sovereignty was never ceded. Embedding writing from all regions and backgrounds as the norm within Australian literary publishing is becoming more common, yet achieving a common geographical diversity in publishing is possible through regional publications such as *Borderlands,* as they provide an initial platform for regional writers to have their voices heard.

The future for *Borderlands*

We are incredibly proud of the writing we have published in *Borderlands* to date and of the distinctly Northern Territory character within each of these pieces. But acknowledgement and pride does not pay for the ongoing costs of running a literary journal, just as writers accepting "exposure" in exchange for their words does not pay their bills.

In the current arts funding landscape, nothing is guaranteed. Government grants are increasingly competitive amid a diminishing funding pool and COVID-19 has impacted philanthropy and crowdfunding efforts. The pilot editions served as a way for us to experiment with what form an NT literary journal might take and what kinds of storytelling it might publish. The overwhelming response we have had from the arts community,

contributors and donors to the project indicates the importance of a literary journal to not only the Northern Territory literary community, but to representations of the Northern Territory and Northern Territorian writers as part of Australian literature. The reality is that we do not know what the future holds for the journal. However, based on the research undertaken and practical experience gained throughout the process of publishing the two pilot editions, we are striving to move forward with a regular publishing schedule for the journal. We plan to explore philanthropic sources of funding, apply for multi-year government funding and secure a permanent home for the journal at Charles Darwin University. We will continue to work on a strategic path forward for *Borderlands*; strengthening our stakeholder and community engagement and remaining transparent throughout the process to ensure an ongoing literary journal in this integral part of Australia. It is a matter of survival but moreover it is a matter of sovereignty for the many Indigenous storytellers throughout the Northern Territory. *Borderlands* continues to apply for funding, proving its worth in a rich arts ecology. However, its real worth belongs to the committed stakeholders of this journal and its sustainability rests with its engagement – a truth that funding bodies may need to realise before axing into the arts.

While the print pilot of *Borderlands* was published during the pandemic and in this way is a product of the pandemic, the pieces published within it are pre-pandemic pieces of writing. At this juncture, the impacts of COVID-19 have further highlighted the importance of regional areas to Australia, as many city dwellers leave metropolitan areas for the less hectic and less built-up regions. Darwin is again playing a crucial role in a pivotal moment in Australian history as an integral part of Australia's efforts to repatriate Australians stranded overseas. It is the storytellers on the ground in these locations who are privy to the details and who will, in turn, craft these moments into vital contributions to Australian literature. As Burnett House endured the best and worst that the hostile Northern geography subjected it to, it now stands as an historic building harbouring stories of place. Publications like *Borderlands* – as their predecessors did – will help to ensure these stories continue to be preserved and contribute to a diverse Australian literature representing the nation's diverse geographies.

Notes

[1] In 2020, Patreon started processing payments in Euros and British pounds. In 2021, Australian dollars were also added as a payment option.

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