



The Wheeler Centre
Books Writing Ideas

Candidate Pack

Chief Executive Officer
May 2023

The Wheeler Centre acknowledges the Wurundjeri Woi Wurrung people of the Kulin Nation as the Traditional Owners of the land on which the Centre stands.

We pay our respects to their Elders, past and present, and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture.

We also acknowledge and pay our respects to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and their Elders, past and present, as the custodians of the world's oldest continuous living culture.

As an organisation committed to promoting diverse perspectives and cultural exchange, the Centre recognises the ongoing impact of colonisation and the importance of reconciliation and respect for all First Nations peoples.

We are grateful for the opportunity to live, work and create on this land and we are committed to learning, listening and working towards a future of shared understanding and meaningful collaboration.

COVER IMAGE: An audience at the Wheeler Centre during Spring Fling 2022. Photo by Brett Walker.

A Message from the Board of Directors

Melbourne's renowned Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas was created in 2010 as a dedicated hub for literary excellence and innovation.

Since then, the Centre has hosted more than 2500 public events featuring more than 4800 speakers, engaging close to 500,000 live audience members.

Each year, the Wheeler Centre invites hundreds of writers and speakers from all over Australia and around the world to deliver talks, readings and performances, and take part in conversations, debates, panel discussions, videos and podcasts.

Reporting to the Board, the CEO is the public face of the Wheeler Centre and, alongside a highly engaged and talented team, steers the vision and success of Australia's only cultural institution dedicated to the art of public conversation.

The Wheeler Centre is a hub for the exchange of knowledge and ideas, a conduit between smaller literary organisations and a nationally recognised centre for both readers and writers. Our purpose to foster a thriving literary sector is shared by the communities we connect with, the partners we collaborate with - writers' festivals, major cultural organisations, community groups and grass-roots collectives - and the other literary organisations in the building that are supported by the Centre.

We are looking forward to welcoming the Wheeler Centre's new CEO and supporting them to lead our organisation that is so unique and crucial to the literary ecology of Australia.

Thank you

The Wheeler Centre Board of Directors
April 2023

Who We Are

The Wheeler Centre is a globally unique not-for-profit organisation dedicated to celebrating and supporting writing and ideas from Australian and international voices.

Located in the heart of Melbourne, the Wheeler Centre provides a welcoming space for writers, readers and thinkers to foster creative connections and engage in meaningful dialogue.

Through an extensive range of conversations, debates, readings, performances and discussions, alongside acclaimed development programs, the Centre explores ideas, highlights literary developments and showcases emerging and established writers.

The Wheeler Centre building on Little Lonsdale Street is home to ten other literary organisations: Australian Poetry, Blak & Bright, Melbourne City of Literature Office, Emerging Writers' Festival, Freeplay, Melbourne Writers' Festival, Express Media, PEN Melbourne, Small Press Network and Writers Victoria.

Together, they further the Centre's commitment to supporting diverse writers and literary cultures and its role as a central figure in Melbourne's status as a UNESCO City of Literature.



An audience at Spring Fling's 2022 Gala, Lightbulb Moments. Photo by TJ Garvie.

Background

In 2008, Melbourne was designated a UNESCO City of Literature.

Our designation heralded the establishment of the Centre of Books, Writing and Ideas – a vibrant new hub for a diverse range of literary and ideas-based organisations and activities – and a home and focal point for the conversations that matter to Melbourne, Victoria, and Australia.

The Centre was established as an independent, not for profit company limited by guarantee within a dedicated wing of the State Library of Victoria and with the commitment of our patrons, Maureen and Tony Wheeler of Lonely Planet the Centre’s position was secured.

From that day, the Centre of Books, Writing, and Ideas became the Wheeler Centre, driven from inception by a deep commitment to facilitate discussion, ideas, and debate, and supporting and amplifying the practice of writing and communication.

With recurrent State Government funding, private philanthropy, trusts and grants, the Wheeler Centre consolidates Melbourne’s reputation as a world leader in this arena.

We have delivered an annual program since inception. Our events foster conversations on a broad range of topics, including literature, art, social responsibility, politics, ethics, copyright, urban planning, sports, First Nations storytelling, and public affairs.

We want everyone to participate – approximately 60 percent of our events are free or 'Pay What You Wish'. Our digital publishing arm produces original video and audio for the majority of our key events, which are available for audiences to access via our online content platforms, including the Wheeler Centre’s YouTube channel, podcasts, and our website.



Writer, speaker and cultural icon Roxane Gay in conversation with Jamila Rizvi. Photo by TJ Garvie.

2022 Teen Galia speakers Arshia Rana, Fig Russon, Charlie Mackenzie, Audrey McKenzie and Red Brazill took part in a special cover shoot for Spectrum. Photo by Simon Shuter courtesy of The Age.



Our Purpose

The Wheeler Centre supports and amplifies the many voices that make sense of the world through books, writing and storytelling.

The Centre is committed to the discussion of ideas to enhance and strengthen the creative connections we share.

We exist to support writers, readers, and thinkers, and to deepen public conversation through creative collaboration and community engagement.

Our Vision

To inspire curiosity, connection, and engagement through the transformative power of storytelling.

Our Principles

Our *Conversations to Create Change / Strategic Plan 2021–2024* reflects the Wheeler Centre’s commitment to being outwardly focussed, expansive, collaborative, and innovative.

Our Values

Respect

For each other and for ideas that challenge and excite.

Sustainability

In how we work, our finances, our relationships within the Centre, with the sector, with stakeholders, and with audiences.

Diversity

Across our team, audiences, programs, and conversations.

Boldness

Sharing inspiring, challenging, and transformative conversations with a spirit of curiosity.

Rigour

Applying discipline and transparency in what we do

Creativity

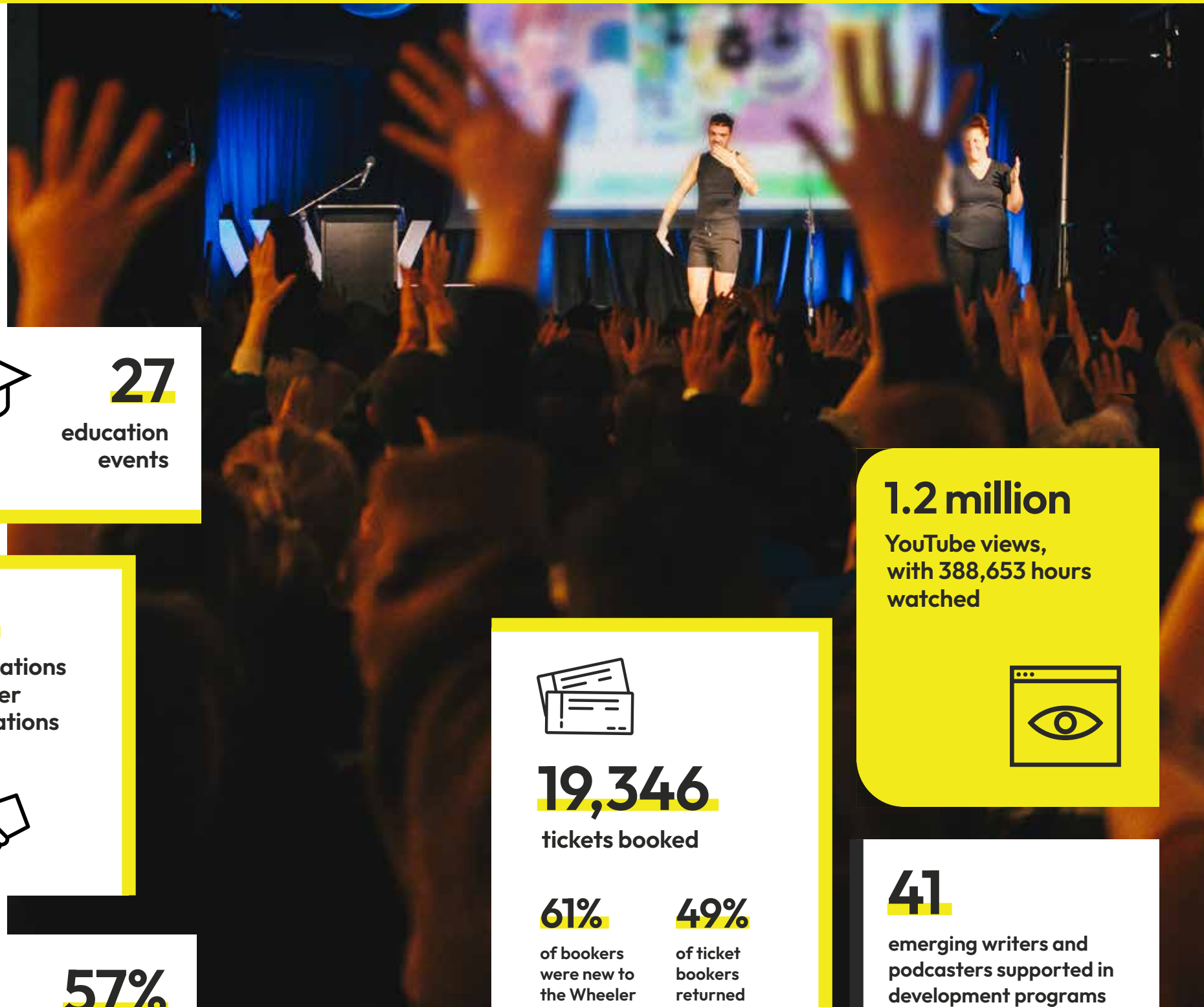
Contributing to the Australian literary and cultural landscape in ways that are new, innovative, and meaningful.

Excellence

In the quality of our work, people, and ideas.

Year in Review

The Wheeler Centre's bold and inclusive program of year-round events inspires and challenges readers and audiences. With the focus areas of books, writing and ideas at the core of our activities, we collaborate widely with Victorian and national cultural organisations, arts and literary festivals, and community groups. Events range from talks and panels to lectures, performance, gameshow and walking tours – with something to appeal to every audience member.



162
total events



27
education events

15
regional events



102
collaborations with other organisations




36 additional venue hires

542
speakers



57%
Pay What You Can and free events




19,346
tickets booked

61% of bookers were new to the Wheeler Centre's database

49% of ticket bookers returned for a second Wheeler Centre event in 2022

1.2 million
YouTube views, with 388,653 hours watched



41
emerging writers and podcasters supported in development programs

SMUT fan fiction event presented at the Wheeler Centre in partnership with Sissy Screens. Photo by Matto Lucas.

Role Summary

The CEO has overall responsibility for the Wheeler Centre's strategic planning and execution.

With the current Strategic Plan expiring in 2024, the CEO will take the lead in developing the vision and planning for 2025 and beyond.

The CEO leads the Centre's team to creatively deliver this vision in tandem with strong financial outcomes.

An experienced and confident leader, the CEO has strong and demonstrated commitment to building high performing teams, aligning vision to business, leading through values-based actions, and managing a complex organisation with clarity and calmness.

With commercial acumen, a lateral approach to challenge and opportunity, and demonstrated strong understanding of finances, the CEO identifies new revenue streams and secures financial outcomes for the Centre.

The CEO leads strong and transparent organisational governance frameworks, understands how the creative program aligns with the Centre's business operations, and is committed to continuous improvement in how the Centre operates.

They support the team to design and deliver an impactful annual program of events that engage all Australians and promote Australia's literary and ideas communities.

Stakeholder management, including positive, collaborative relationships between the Centre and its resident organisations, is led by the CEO.



Behrouz Boochani in conversation with Richard Flanagan. Photo by Ernesto Arriagada.

Role Details

Reports To

Board of Directors

Direct Reports

General Manager; Head of Finance; Head of Programming; Head of Digital & Marketing; Head of Production

Key Relationships

Board of Directors; the Wheeler Centre team and audiences; Government and non-Government funders; resident organisations; State Library Victoria; donors/philanthropic sector; writing, publishing and creative industries sectors; industry partners; corporate partners; First Nation communities; regional communities; higher education sector; Maureen and Tony Wheeler.

Employment Basis

Full time. Regular out-of-hours work is required. Irregular regional and interstate travel is required.

Flexible work arrangements can be discussed.

Employment Conditions

This is a three-year contract with negotiated reappointment no later than six months before the end of the first three-year period.

Employment Benefits

- Significant leadership opportunity with an internationally recognised cultural centre in the heart of Melbourne's CBD.
- Positive, engaged work culture.
- Access to Employee Assistance Program.
- Professional development opportunities.
- Salary to be negotiated.

Location

The position is located in the Wheeler Centre for Books, Writing and Ideas at 176 Little Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000.

Core Duties

Strategic Planning

- Lead the development and articulation of a three to five-year vision for 2025 and beyond, demonstrating an understanding of a changing and competitive sector.
- Lead the delivery of the Centre's vision through developing and implementing the Centre's strategic plan and strategic priorities in collaboration with the Board, staff and stakeholders.

People Management

- Foster, lead and monitor a positive work culture, underpinned by the Centre's values, where all staff can contribute meaningfully to strategy and organisational leadership.
- Support staff to understand, embrace and deliver the Centre's vision, ensuring that each role is aligned to the Centre's successful delivery and the team has a clear and compelling collective direction.
- Manage and mentor the Centre's management team, including direct management of five senior staff, and be accountable for compliant and effective HR systems and processes.

Program Strategy, Development, and Delivery

- Lead the team in the strategic design, development, and delivery of high calibre, engaging, and pertinent in-person and online programming.
- Lead the development of the Centre's significant digital library and archive of content, maximising its potential, driving its use and accessibility, and optimising related commercial opportunities.
- Oversee the development of the Wheeler Centre's digital content and programming strategy.

Financial Management

- Lead and oversee the management of the Centre's finances with accountability for growing and improving the organisation's financial outcomes.
- Secure and build revenue streams including government funding, philanthropic and corporate investment, and the Centre's commercial opportunities.
- Work with the Board to strategically manage the use of endowment funds available to the Centre, within the terms of the endowment deed.

Stakeholder/Partnership Management

- Lead and manage sophisticated and high-level partnerships with a focus on building, maintaining, and nurturing relationships with government and non-government funders, donors and philanthropists, resident and partner organisations, industry, and corporate partners.
- Bring a deep understanding of the needs of diverse stakeholders to the role and secure optimal benefit to the Centre through managing and prioritising stakeholder needs.
- View the Centre's operations through the lens of audiences/stakeholders/partners to enhance their experiences of the Wheeler Centre.

Process Improvement

- Understand evaluation and how to assess performance and outcomes using qualitative and quantitative measures.
- With a healthy understanding of, and respect for, business and organisational processes, ensure these are transparent, robust, and ongoingly improved.
- Balance the priorities of managing a cultural organisation and delivering an artistic program, with financial and other constraints.

Attributes for Success

We are looking for a CEO who:

- Is an inspiring and visionary leader, able to engage and align staff with the strategic aspirations of the Centre.
- Has strong commercial acumen and demonstrated capacity to build and grow revenue streams.
- Listens to staff, board, community, writers, book retailers and publishers, funders, and partners.
- Embraces their role as an amplifier of thinking, writing, ideas, storytelling, and safe, open conversation.
- Is an enabler of creativity, discourse, deep thinking, and community building.
- Speaks with maturity and gravitas on behalf of the Wheeler Centre and all its stakeholders.
- Has a sophisticated level of professional judgement and a confident, evidence-based approach to problem-solving and strategic decisions.
- Works in an efficient, autonomous, organised, systematic manner to manage the demands of the role.
- Is passionate about the intersections between creativity and business.
- Is a global thinker, with strong emotional intelligence and intellectual curiosity, who acts with integrity and diplomacy.



Drag artists DANDROGNY and Mora Money at Spring Fling's Drag Storytime in 2022. Photo by Layra Du Ve.

Key Selection Criteria

Essential

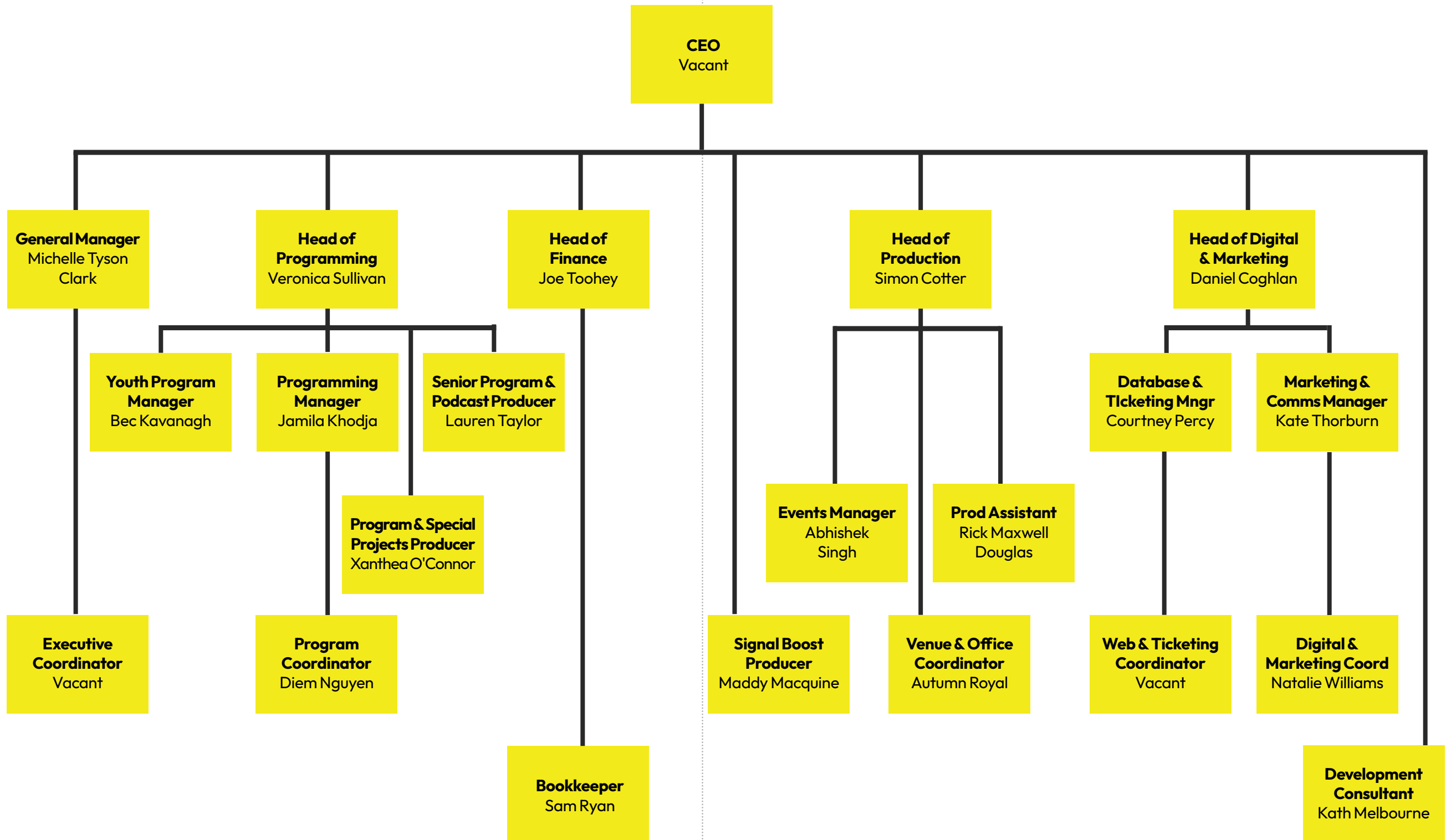
- Alignment with the Wheeler Centre's values and principles.
- CEO/senior executive experience including leadership of medium to large organisations and oversight of human resources, policy, governance, business and financial systems, and people management.
- Confidence, drive, and capability to represent the Wheeler Centre to the public and external stakeholders.
- Demonstrated capacity and experience in developing and managing teams and fostering inclusive, collaborative, and generative work cultures.
- Proven advanced financial literacy and successful P&L management, including revenue lines and cost centres for financial sustainability and success.
- Strong track record in building and nurturing relationships with a complex range of stakeholders (for example, with partners, government, Boards, donors, resident organisations, corporates and/or philanthropic bodies).
- Proven capacity to create and implement long-term business strategies aligned with the creative direction for the Centre.
- Strong negotiation skills, along with precision of thinking, logic, commercial and political acumen.
- Passion for the Wheeler Centre's purpose and for books, writing, and ideas.
- Strong understanding of the creative industries locally and nationally.

Desirable

- Previous experience working to and with Boards and/or strong understanding of governance and governance frameworks.
- Understanding of the literary sector, along with networks and connections.
- Formal CEO experience.
- Government liaison and funding experience.
- A record of fundraising success and fundraising networks.

Beyond the specific responsibilities of the role of CEO, The Wheeler Centre, this role complies with policy elements for executives employed by non-government public entities within the Victorian Public Service Commission (VPSC) framework.

Organisation Chart



Resident Organisations

The Wheeler Centre is more than just a performance space and events venue – it's also a hub of creativity and collaboration for a range of arts and cultural organisations. The Centre is home to ten organisations in residence, each with their own unique focus and contribution to Australia's literary landscape.



Australian Poetry is a national organisation dedicated to supporting and promoting poets and poetry. It delivers programs including

the Australian Poets Festival and the annual OutLoud Poetry Slam competition for students, as well as publications like the Australian Poetry Journal and Best of Australian Poems.



Blak & Bright is a First Nations-led literary festival celebrating Indigenous writers and storytelling. Held biennially, the four-day program features a

range of events including panels, workshops, performances and book launches.



The Melbourne City of Literature Office works to promote and enhance Melbourne's status as a UNESCO City of Literature,

delivering a variety of literary initiatives and connecting with the global City of Literature network.



The **Emerging Writers' Festival** is a not-for-profit organisation dedicated to supporting emerging

writers and promoting a diverse literary culture. Programs include workshops, mentorships, and the annual festival, which features panels, readings, and performances.



Express Media provides national opportunities for young writers to develop their skills and connect with the literary community through workshops and mentorships. Express also delivers an annual program of events and publishes Australia's premier youth journal, *Voiceworks*.



Freeplay is the world's longest-running independent games festival. Established in 2004, the festival embraces the fringes, spotlights grassroots artists and game makers, and acts as a response to and critique of the status quo.



The **Melbourne Writers Festival** is a major cultural event that brings together local and international writers annually for a week-long program of talks, panels, performances, and workshops.



PEN Melbourne is part of PEN International, a global association that promotes literature, freedom of expression, and human rights for writers. PEN Melbourne advocates for writers who are at risk and provides a platform for writers to speak out on issues of public interest.

The **Small Press Network** represents small and independent publishers in Australia. It supports and promotes members through a range of programs and events, including the Independent Publishing Conference, and the Book of the Year Award.



Writers Victoria provides support and resources for writers at all stages of their careers. Opportunities include workshops, mentorships, manuscript assessments, the Victorian Writers publication and Writeability, a program for writers with disabilities.



Applications

Thank you for your interest in the Wheeler Centre.

We are committed to a diverse and inclusive workplace, and strongly encourage applicants from diverse backgrounds including First Peoples, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, people with disabilities, and people who identify as LGBTQIA+.

We understand that marginalised communities often self-opt out of opportunities – we really want to hear from you. Please advise us if you have any access needs for the recruitment process when making an enquiry or as part of your application.

Flexible working arrangements may be negotiated as required for the right candidate.

How to Apply

Your application must include the following:

- A cover letter
- Your CV
- Your responses to the selection criteria, no more than two pages in length
- The earliest date on which you would be available to commence in the role

Applicants are encouraged to speak with Jane Crawley via twc23.ceo@gmail.com.

Applications must be consolidated to a single PDF and sent to Jane Crawley at twc23.ceo@gmail.com.

Late applications, and applications that do not address the selection criteria, will not be accepted.

Applications close 5pm Friday 26 May 2023.

Timeline

Friday 26 May 2023

Applications close

Week of 5 June 2023

Round one interviews

Week of 12 June 2023

Round two interviews

Friday 16 June 2023

Preferred candidate negotiations commence

Week of 26 June 2023

Recruitment complete

Further Information

To arrange a confidential conversation with recruiter Jane Crawley, please email twc23.ceo@gmail.com to make a time.