



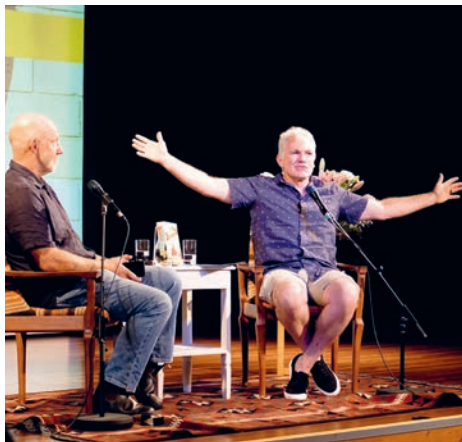
I Am Not Making This Up

November's festival of true stories at Coledale Community Hall was a big hit



Photos thanks to Matt Houston @ ironbark_photography and Josh Fahy @jfhay.au





The idea to hold a festival of true stories landed a few years ago, inspired by a desire to showcase local news, celebrate good journalism and revive people's faith in facts. Nothing more would have come of it had it not been for the efforts of two remarkable women. A huge thanks to journalist Caroline Baum and South Coast Writers Centre director Dr Sarah Nicholson who – in the space of six months, in between full-time jobs, fuelled only by coffee and conversation – took the idea, ran with it and delivered a professionally staged event with a terrifically stimulating program.

'In conversation' talks covered everything from friendship to crime, featuring nationally known authors, such as Walkley winner Kate Holden, former detective Gary Jubelin and Stella prize winner Heather Rose, as well as powerful local voices, including Dharawal language expert Dr Jodi Edwards, Prof Rob Brander and Anne Howell.

Other highlights included Patti Miller's 'Truth-telling in memoir' masterclass, Philippa McGuinness's insights into researching *Skin Deep* and singer Lo Carmen picking up a guitar to end her session with a song. The writers festival also gave visitors a sample of local produce, with a Darkes Cider tasting followed by dinner at Earthwalker with *Eat Weeds* author Diego Bonetto.

Thanks to Caroline Baum, Mark Mordue, Andy Muir, David Roach, Malcolm Knox and Jennifer Macey for being excellent interviewers.

All up, about 400 readers and writers attended the talks at Coledale hall, enjoying candid conversations, asking thoughtful questions and queuing up for book sales and signings – a resounding success all round!

The Illawarra Flame is so proud to have helped to launch this new literary event and we can't wait to do it again next year. ✨

