



In mid-2014, while I was still a literary agent, I was invited to attend the NT Writers' Centre's WordStorm Festival in Darwin. During that time I met several writers from the Northern Territory. In almost eight years of being a literary agent I'd seen only one submission from the Northern Territory, so part of my motivation for attending was to find out what NT writers were working on. I knew, from previous contact with writers' centre directors in South Australia, Western Australia and the Territory, that writers who do not live on the eastern seaboard can feel very disconnected from the publishing industry. In Darwin I found that out from the writers themselves.

One writer had a manuscript she'd been working on for 10 years. She workshopped the manuscript with her writers' group in Katherine; she'd redrafted and refined it and one chapter of it had been shortlisted for an award. Why, I asked her, had she not submitted her manuscript to agents and publishers? Her answer: 'Because I didn't think anyone would be interested.' I will publish that manuscript in 2016 because not only did I like it, but so did my colleagues. Clearly someone was interested.

Motivated by the experience with that writer and what I had been told by those writers' centre directors, I began to talk to people within Hachette about the inaccessibility – perceived and otherwise – of the publishing industry to writers who lived in places where members of the industry don't tend to lurk. Hachette already has its Manuscript Development Program in association with Queensland Writers' Centre, as well as a relationship with the Emerging Writers' Festival. This relationship was recently extended to encompass The Richell Prize for Emerging Writers, in memory of our late CEO, Matt Richell. However, the company felt it could offer more to writers and so the Hachette Mentoring Program came into being.

South Australia was the first writers' centre to offer this program to its members, and submissions have now closed, just as Tasmania's opened. Western Australia, the Northern Territory, rural and remote Queensland and Northern Rivers NSW (Byron Bay) will follow. One writer from each of these writers' centres will be selected to be mentored by a Hachette publisher as they work on a complete manuscript.

Many of these writers will be members of their local libraries, and I know from talking to one writers' centre director that libraries can be wonderful sources of information for writers, particularly in rural and remote areas. It is entirely possible that one or more of the mentored writers will be among your members and may even have written part of their manuscripts in your library. Libraries play a vital role in creating and maintaining communities for writers – even writers-as-readers – and accordingly they will play a vital part in this program.

If you would like more information about this program to pass on to your members and visitors, please contact Hachette (www.hachette.com.au). In the meantime, we're working to find more great stories to fill your shelves.

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