

**Welcome to the 68th edition of The Beacon**

**Three Cheers for The Lighthouse—We're  
Turning 3!**

Can you believe it? *The Lighthouse Toowoomba* is officially three years old, and just like any three-year-old, we're full of energy, curiosity, and a little bit of cheeky ambition!

As A.A. Milne once wrote in *Now We Are Six*,

*"But now I am three,  
I'm as clever as clever,  
So I think I'll stay three  
Now and forever."*

While we may not *stay* three forever, we're certainly celebrating this milestone in style—with inspiring events, creative opportunities, and a big dose of literary magic!

A sneak peek into this edition:

- **Screenwriters and novelists, assemble!** We're rolling out the red carpet for *John Collee*, fresh from his AACTA win, for a masterclass that's not to be missed.
- **Aspiring young authors, take note!** The legendary *Di Bates* is inviting kids to be part of her latest book, *Winner! Winner! Winner!*
- **Art lovers, rejoice!** Tarn McLean's *Seeing Painting* exhibition is challenging us all to rethink how we experience visual art in a digital world
- **A bookish bonanza!** We have free readers looking for a home, volunteers needed for *Twinkles Reading Program*, and *International Read to Me Day* just around the corner—because every day should be a read-aloud adventure!

And that's just the beginning! So grab a cuppa, mark those dates in your diary, and get ready to celebrate another wonderful edition of *The Beacon*—now three and thriving!

Cheers to stories, creativity, and the magic of community. Here's to another amazing year ahead!

If you would like to send us a digital birthday wish we'd love any sentiments on what The Lighthouse means to you! And we'll happily share them in our next edition.

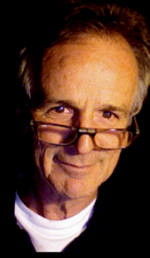
Drop us a greeting through [hello@thelighthousetoowoomba.org](mailto:hello@thelighthousetoowoomba.org) - because who doesn't love love on their birthday!

# Novelist & Screenwriters Masterclass

Join us for an exclusive opportunity to learn from one of the most accomplished screenwriters in the industry, John Collee. With a career spanning novels, feature films, and television, John has worked with some of the world's leading directors and producers, shaping stories that captivate audiences globally.

Master and Commander: The Far Side of the World (2003)  
Happy Feet (2006) / Tanna (2015) / Hotel Mumbai (2018)  
Lee (2023) / Boy Swallows Universe (screen adaption) (2024)

Fresh from his recent AACTA award for Best Screenplay in television – Boy Swallows Universe, John will share his expertise on the fundamentals of screenwriting.



Date: Monday, 17 March 2025  
Location: The Lighthouse Toowoomba

**BOOK NOW**

## Calling all Screenwriters & Novelists!

**Monday, 17 March 2025 | The Write Gallery**

**Session 1:** Adults | 9:00 AM – 10:00 AM | \$20

**Session 2:** Senior School Students | 11:00am -  
12:00PM | Gold coin

\*Schools and carers may nominate students who would benefit most from this masterclass - please pass this on to your teachers!

Join us for an exclusive opportunity to learn from one of the most accomplished screenwriters in the industry, John Collee. With a career spanning novels, feature films, and television, John has worked with some of the world's leading directors and producers, shaping stories that captivate audiences globally.

Fresh from his recent AACTA award for Best Screenplay in television – *Boy Swallows Universe*, John will share his expertise on the fundamentals of screenwriting, including:

- Theme and structure
- Character and dialogue

- How to make your script stand out when submitting for funding

Each session will feature insights from John's extensive career, supported by illustrative clips from well-loved films.

### **About John Collee**

Formerly a foreign-aid doctor and medical journalist, John has written movies in almost every genre, including action/adventure such as **Master and Commander** (2003), family sagas - **The Patriarch** (2016), **Wolf Totem** (2015), and big-budget animation such as **Happy Feet** (2006) and **Walking with Dinosaurs** (2013).

His films, often co-written with their respective directors, have three times been nominated for Oscars: **Master and Commander** for Best Film, **Happy Feet** for Best Animation, and the Vanuatu-based love story, **Tanna**, for Best Foreign Language Feature.

Several of John's previous films have shown at TIFF, including his Charles Darwin biopic **Creation** which opened the festival in 2009 and his terrorist drama, **Hotel Mumbai**, which was a hit of the festival in 2018. He also co-wrote last-year's **Lee** (TIFF 2023), about war correspondent Lee Miller, with Kate Winslet in the lead role.

Having recently adapted the seven-part **Boy Swallow's Universe** for Netflix and co-written a fight movie, **Monkey Man**, with Dev Patel, he is attending this year's festival as co-writer of **The Return** (2024) about the return of Odysseus to Ithaca, starring Ralph Fiennes and Juliette Binoche.

### **Why Attend?**

- Gain insider knowledge from an award-winning screenwriter

- Learn practical techniques to enhance your storytelling
- Understand how to craft compelling scripts for the film and television industry
- Ask questions and receive insights from a master of the craft

This is a rare chance to learn from one of the best in the business. Spaces are limited, so secure your spot today!

1. [Adult Session Booking link](#)
2. [Student Session Booking link](#)

Here is his response when we reached out and asked about his advice to writers:

*"One of the things which struck me at the recent AACTA awards was that a lot of the best writing which comes out of Australia, (actually the best writing from anywhere) derives from real life experience. As a writer starting out you tend to think of daily life with its many problems as an obstruction to the creative process - the difficult business of raising kids or managing a family or making a living in a chaotic world. But actually, Boy Swallows Universe was all about domestic problems, Utopia is about tedious office culture, the brilliant "Bluey" is all about raising small kids and "Colin from Accounts" is all about the impossibility of finding a work-life balance. That's really the core of my message to aspiring writers - use those irritations to make pearls - everything you think of as getting in the way of a creative life is actually your story, if you merely adjust your perspective slightly."*



## Oh to be published... another opportunity for aspiring writers

Di Bates is a writer of over 150 books and *Winner, Winner, Winner* is her latest project. Di is also the curator of the Buzz Words monthly industry newsletter. Now that 'Pass it On' curated by Jackie Hosking has folded, this is the only one that comprehensively covers books for children and YA audiences, industry opportunities, publishers open for submission, and insights into the writing process. As you can imagine, given we are all about books, this is a super useful newsletter! If you are curious about this, you can find more information

<https://www.justkidslit.com/directory/3458/buzz-words-industry-newsletter/>

Di Bates inviting Toowoomba kids (and beyond to be involved in her latest writing project. See her letter of invitation below!

*Hi there, friend!*

*Would you like to take part in a writing project? It's for a book called Winner! Winner! Winner! How to Be a Super Success. What I hope is that you (and your friends) will answer these questions below,*

and then to send them back to me [dibates@outlook.com](mailto:dibates@outlook.com).

*What I intend to do with your answers is post them in my book with your first name and the initial of your last name. The answers don't have to be very long. And you will need to get your parents' permission to take part in this publishing project. So, here are the questions:*

1. *What's the best way to get on with people?*
2. *What do you do when things go wrong?*
3. *What do you do when your parents annoy you?*
4. *What are some achievements in your life so far?*

*Thank you so much for helping me! (I will reply when you send me your email)*

*PS: Here's some information about me:*

*I am a children's author who has written about 150 books, mostly for children (some for adults). I've been writing for about 30 years. My husband, Bill Condon, is also an author. We've been living at Cordeaux Heights for about 12 years. We both enjoy playing Scrabble and cards, reading, and writing (of course!) My friends call me Di (or Daisy), but my real name – and my writing name – is Dianne Bates. If you want to know more about me, check me on Google (eg Wikipedia!)*



**SEEING  
PAINTING**

A SPECIAL EXHIBITION  
BY DR TARN MCLEAN

JUST FOR STUDENTS!  
MARCH | APRIL 2025

THE WRITE GALLERY  
126 MARGARET STREET TOOWOOMBA

BY APPOINTMENT / BOOKING ONLY

'Seeing Painting'

## March 2025 / Tarn McLean

Seeing Painting invites audiences to step into a world where the act of painting itself becomes both subject and inquiry. In an era dominated by digital imagery and fleeting visual content, this series asks: What does it mean to paint today? What truths can be explored through the slow, deliberate process of making art when digital culture prioritises immediacy and manipulation?

This is more than an exhibition—it's an invitation to think differently about art's place and purpose in the 21st century.

### **Art Teachers have you booked in yet?**

"Seeing Painting" - Artist Q&A with senior art students.

This is an epic opportunity but we have limited sessions available!

**[BOOK NOW!](#)**





## Free Readers

Thanks to a kind school donation we have plenty to spare!

Do you know someone who loves reading or wants to build their confidence with books? We have **hundreds** of older school readers ready for a new home – **and they're absolutely free!**

Covering simpler text, these books are perfect for **anyone, of any age**, looking to practice their reading skills. Whether you're a parent, a teacher, a tutor, or part of a community group working on literacy, we'd love for you to come and collect as many as you need.

**Help us spread the word!** If you know a community program, or a group that could benefit, please share this opportunity with them. The more

these books get into the hands of eager readers,  
the better!

Let's give these books a second life and help more  
people discover the joy of reading. See you soon!



## Presenting to Rotary City

The Lighthouse was invited by Rotary Club of Toowoomba City to present at their weekly meeting at Jilly's Cafe.

Emily attended and enlightened members of the programs and activities we offer at 126 Margaret St and beyond! It was a great opportunity to discuss youth services and engagement in the Toowoomba area.

Part of Rotary City's ongoing commitment to youth development is a monthly breakfast for the students of Harlaxton State School. As you know Harlaxton School is close to our heart and it was great to share ideas around how we can continue to champion this worthy community.



## Exciting News

### Science + Sorcery Club is Now FREE!

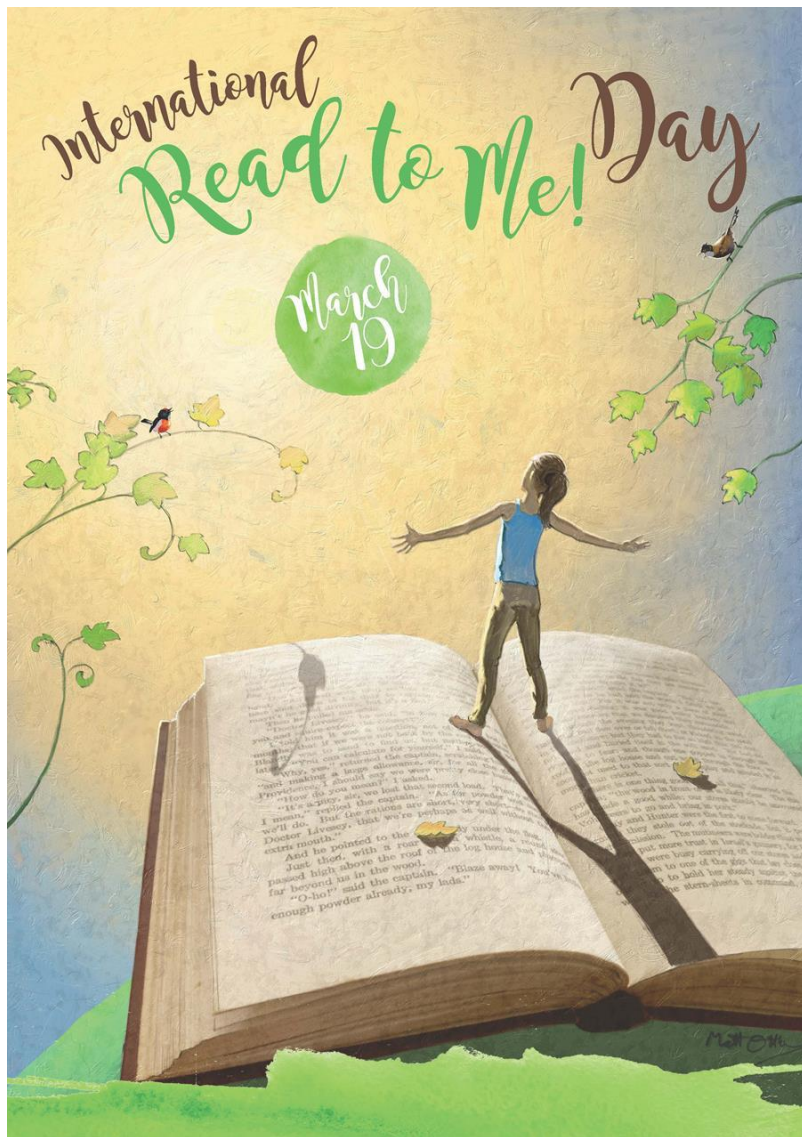
Thanks to the generosity of the facilitator extraordinaire, Tim Hunter, we can now offer the rest of this term for FREE!

Calling all young writers aged 13-17! If you love sci-fi, fantasy, and creating incredible worlds, the **Science + Sorcery Club** is for you. Join us for a six-week writing adventure where you'll develop unique characters, craft imaginative settings, and explore endless "what ifs?"—perfect for stories, games like D&D, or simply unleashing your creativity.

**Thursdays | Term 1 (until 27th March) | 5:00 –  
6:30pm**

**Upstairs at The Lighthouse Toowoomba | [Book Here](#)**

**Thank You Tim!**



## International Read to Me Day

'Every day is International Read to Me Day!' is an audacious campaign working to build a community where volunteers from around the globe read every ten minutes, 24 hours a day, supporting families by sharing the love of reading!

That's right only ten minutes out of 24 hours to encourage literacy and a life love of reading in this generation and the next and the next and the next! The countdown is on to March 19. To find out more and how you too can be a party of this mighty (easy) movement click [here](#).



## Let's talk about Kid's Reading Choices

We're often asked what books we recommend for children. And while we could give a list of award-winning literary masterpieces... in reality, if you peek at the books being selected in my household, you'd find an overwhelming theme of farts, bottoms, and all things toilet humour.

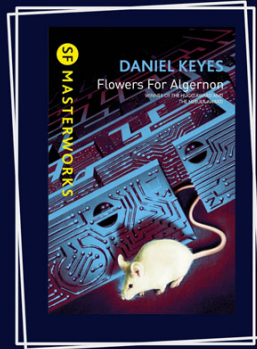
And you know what? That's perfectly okay! Because at the end of the day, it's not about what's on the page—it's about falling in love with turning the page.

So if your little one is cracking up over a book called *\*The Ultimate Guide to Bottom Burps\**, embrace it. Today's fart joke aficionado is tomorrow's lifelong reader! Let them read what they love (within reason... we draw the line at *\*The Encyclopaedia of Pranks\** in bed).

# Toowoomba's Biggest Book Club

Hosted by local prize-winning author Thomas Alan

Have you ever been curious about book clubs?  
This is your chance to see one in action, and get involved!



Flowers for Algernon by Daniel Keyes  
The Lighthouse Toowoomba, 126 Margaret Street  
Sunday 30th March 3:00pm to 5:00pm

- What to do? Read the book, and come along...
- Bring: a gold coin!
- Expect: to be grouped with other curious readers, and the conversation will be facilitated by Thomas.
- Why: to be part of a book club, and perhaps find other book lovers who would happily be involved again!

[BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL](#)



Adventures in Art workshops are in full swing.  
Terese shared her thoughts from the latest session:

*Although we worked from light to dark it was fabulous to hear the children's conversations go from negative to positive. Building confidence through experimenting, exploring and discovering the "I can" is a rewarding challenge for me as an art teacher. As my father pointed out, success comes in cans 🥫 not cannots 😊*

You can still join in for the second half of [Adventures in Art](#) - please contact [hello@thelighthouse.toowoomba.org](mailto:hello@thelighthouse.toowoomba.org) for pricing.



## Join the Twinkles Reading Program

### Volunteers Wanted! Needed! Appreciated!

Do you love books and storytelling? Would you enjoy sparking a child's imagination and love for reading?

We're looking for enthusiastic volunteers to read to children from kindergarten to Grade 3. If you can spare an hour each week (plus travel time) and want to help little ones discover the joy of books, we'd love to hear from you!

Location: Your choice of hubs, kindergartens or primary schools who have requested a "book lady" to read to their gorgeous little ones.

Support Provided: Our Twinkles Program Manager (aka Jane) will assist you with everything, including obtaining your Blue Card.

Why Volunteer?

- Reading to young children can:

- Stimulate language development and creative thinking
- Enhance communication skills and vocabulary
- Foster imagination and curiosity
- Help children transition smoothly into independent reading and writing
- Build a lifelong love for books and learning
- Your time and effort can shape a child's future in incredible ways!

Thank you for considering this rewarding opportunity—we look forward to connecting with you.

Contact us today!  
[hello@thelighthousewoomba.org](mailto:hello@thelighthousewoomba.org) or pop in to meet with Jane at The Lighthouse on Monday, Tuesday or Wednesday afternoon to discuss.

*Pictured above is our lovely Twinkles Term 1 moderator Helen reading to attendee Mary.*





## Book Launch

Local author extraordinaire Rory Mather launched his latest children's book *Laugh in the Bath* at The Write Gallery on Saturday 15 February. 40 adults and children attended the Launch and shared in the humour of giraffes and their bedtime routine!



### DATE CLAIMERS (got your diary handy?)

March 19 - [International Read to Me Day](#).

March 19 - The launch of The Festival of Small Schools

May 14 - [Book Links Narelle Oliver Lecture](#), Brisbane

May 22-24 - Sydney Writers Festival 'Live and Local' at The Empire



You are invited to the ...

# Highfields Writers Group Workshop



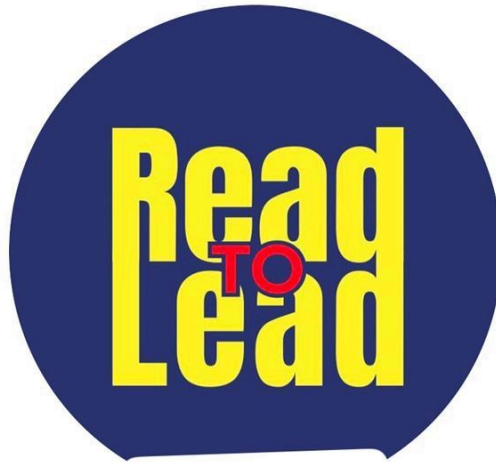
Unlock your creativity

**08 March 2025**  
**08:45am - 3:00pm**  
@ Highfields Cultural Centre

Learn about Editing, Publishing Pathways & Marketing. \$10 per session or \$25 to attend all three. Morning tea provided. BYO lunch or buy from local venues.

Join us for a fun and inspiring day.  
RSVP to reserve your spot.


Contact Heather for more information  
or to book on 0413 305 513

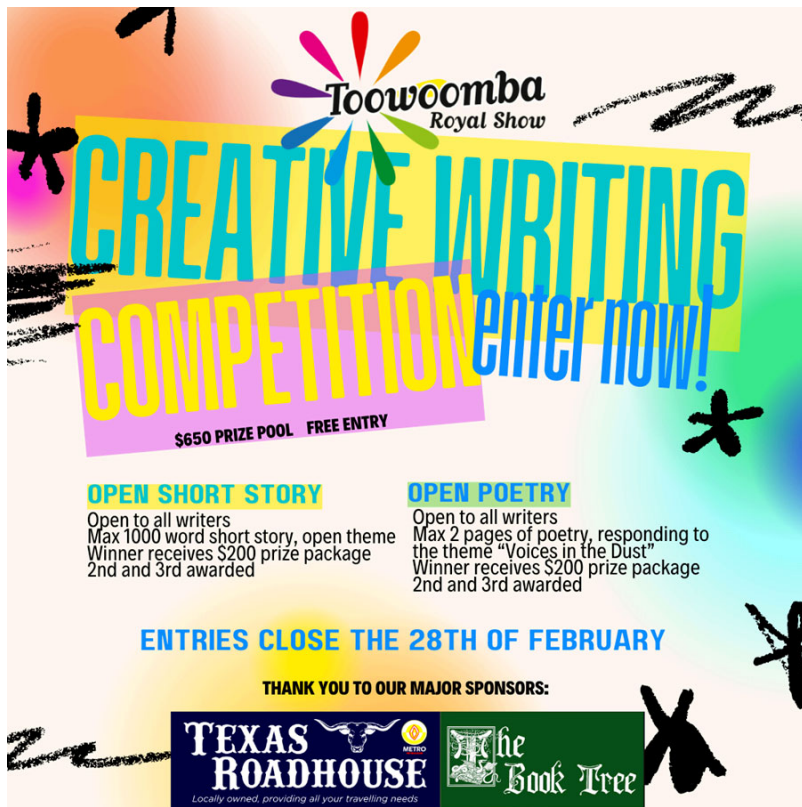


@READTOLEAD\_

**Read to Lead**

Welcome to our new page!  
Read aloud to your child every day  
@thelighthouseooomba

 Nonprofit organization



**Toowoomba Royal Show**

# CREATIVE WRITING COMPETITION

**Enter now!**

**\$650 PRIZE POOL FREE ENTRY**

**OPEN SHORT STORY**  
 Open to all writers  
 Max 1000 word short story, open theme  
 Winner receives \$200 prize package  
 2nd and 3rd awarded

**OPEN POETRY**  
 Open to all writers  
 Max 2 pages of poetry, responding to the theme "Voices in the Dust"  
 Winner receives \$200 prize package  
 2nd and 3rd awarded

**ENTRIES CLOSE THE 28TH OF FEBRUARY**

**THANK YOU TO OUR MAJOR SPONSORS:**

**TEXAS ROADHOUSE**  
 Darling Downs & South West QLD Ltd  
 Locally owned, providing all your traveling needs

**The Book Tree**



**Lifeline**  
 Darling Downs & South West QLD Ltd

**The Chronicle**

**THE CHRONICLE LIFELINE BOOKFEST**

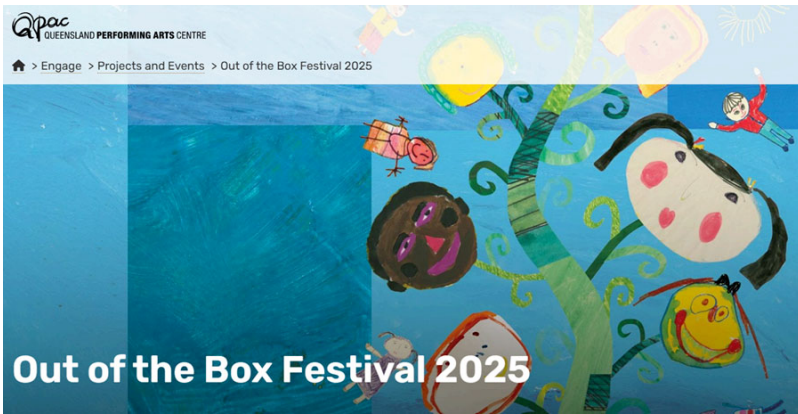
**Save the date!**

**1st & 2nd March 2025.**

*(Illustration of a woman with blonde hair shouting into a megaphone)*

Here's a thought...

if you go to the Bookfest and pick up a bundle of children's books to donate to us to give them to children in the region, then literally, everyone is a winner!



## EMPOWERHER youBelong

LEADERSHIP FOR LASTING IMPACT

**MENTOR A FUTURE LEADER!**

**You Belong's new EmpowerHER program is equipping refugee Waymaker women to lead and create change in their communities.**

**We're seeking inspiring female community and business leaders to be mentors—sharing experience, offering guidance, and empowering the next generation.**

**Your time and wisdom can make a lasting impact.**

**INTERESTED?**  
 Email [kelsey@youbelong.org.au](mailto:kelsey@youbelong.org.au)

**Tiffany Hill**  
*Masters of Teaching - Early Education Services*

Educational services and consultancy for early years centres. School readiness and transition to school programs.

W| <https://www.circleofgrowthcoach.org> E| [circleofgrowthcoach@gmail.com](mailto:circleofgrowthcoach@gmail.com)

## A reminder...

We are still up on the soapbox - but the thing is our tune simply doesn't

change! 😞

**It is our non-negotiable, wanting to ensure every child in Australia reads, writes, and creates with confidence.**

This goal informs everything we do at The Lighthouse, and in translating this goal into programs, projects, and publications, we have:

- A library inspiring parents to read to their children every day, fostering a love for stories, the joy of reading, and prioritising getting books into homes.
- A writers' centre empowering children to experience the impact of their own words, sparking a passion for expression and for writing.
- A gallery igniting children's curiosity and wonder by engaging them with cultural experiences, nurturing their imagination and their creativity.

### **Did you know...**

The Lighthouse is supported by The Child Writes Fund Ltd and it is a **registered charity** and [All donations over \\$2 are tax deductible.](#)



And one last thing...

So much gratitude for the lady that needs no introduction (but doesn't really like any accolades so no photo this time 😊), our superstar volunteer Librarian Glenda! Glenda has wrangled the situation above (a mammoth donation from Durong State School) into order this week, coming in to help for FOUR consecutive days! We can't really say anymore...but THANK YOU THANK YOU THANK YOU. **Glenda we appreciate you!**



The Lighthouse Toowoomba  
126 Margaret Street, Toowoomba, 4350

We acknowledge the First Nations storytellers of the land on which we work and tell our stories. We respect the ongoing relationships with water, land, and story by the people of this place, their elders, their ancestors, and their emerging leaders. We acknowledge that sovereignty was never ceded.

If you wish to unsubscribe from our newsletter please use the button below or email us at [hello@thelighthousetoowoomba.org](mailto:hello@thelighthousetoowoomba.org)

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