

E-bulletin No2
April 2010

Dear Backroom Pressers,

It has been a while since our last bulletin, and you must be wondering what we have been up to.

The manuscript we mentioned in our last bulletin has benefited from the close attention of Robyn and Jacqui. The author has responded enthusiastically to their suggestions, which so far are mainly from Robyn about the illustrations and design. The text will be carefully worked through once the story has been clearly depicted. At the next stage, we hope to offer the author a contract. We are aiming for a pre-Christmas launch and release, subject to completion of text and illustrations.

In February, while Joyce was away and Jean unable to attend, Robyn, Jacqui, Maria and Pat held a special meeting to discuss the future of Backroom Press: our purpose and aspirations. We regretfully accepted Maria's resignation from the management committee; Maria is off to a new life and job in Perth. We thank her for the work she has done for Backroom, and hope she remains a member and keeps in touch.

We discussed a manuscript that had been submitted recently. It is in rhyming couplets for children, which we felt needed more work. We have returned it to the author with our comments.

We have received a proposal for a Kimberley Anthology, proposed by Sandy Toussaint and Pat Lowe, who have already attracted interest from a number of authors. We agreed to take on the Anthology as a Backroom Press project, subject to funding. That is, we are auspicing the work in the second funding application to the Department of Culture and the Arts, and if the application is successful, we will work towards possible publication of the anthology. However, our policy of not offering a contract until we have a complete manuscript to assess will remain unchanged.

Many ideas for the future of Backroom Press arose during the meeting, some of which may be achievable sooner than others. They were:

1. Elicit work from our own community. We could do this by putting out a call for manuscripts or running a competition. We could create a flyer about Backroom for distributing through libraries, asking for submissions of mss.
2. Run and/or host a writing workshop, eg in Fitzroy Crossing (a very successful one was held there some years ago, hosted by Magabala Books. Maybe a joint effort would be feasible?) It was suggested we link this to the Kimberley Writers Festival in Kununurra. However, since the meeting, Steve Kinnane has independently suggested holding a Broome Writers Festival, which would be another possibility. To

discuss further.

3. In conjunction with a Writers Festival, we could offer to help writers to work on their mss, perhaps back-to-back with an illustrators' workshop.
4. Robyn and Jacqui were keen to seek funding to offer a Backroom Press workshop to Kimberley schools, as part of our outreach effort, and to offer other mentoring.
5. An anthology of love stories from the Kimberley.

All these ideas would take a lot of time and money. A series of writing workshops, for example, could be funded through the Australia Council or DCA in WA. Sounds easy, but we need people to write submissions for us. If any of our members are good at submissions, please put your hand up.

Now that Backroom Press is Incorporated as a not-for-profit association, we are able to accept grants and donations, and we want to be able to pay people such as Jacqui and Robyn and others for their professional time. Any ideas for funding from our members would be most welcome.

Please remember that paid-up members can buy Backroom Press publications at a 40% reduction on the rrp — a good saving. Place your orders directly with Backroom Press, please. Pat, Joyce and Jacqui hold stock and can supply your books.

At our most recent regular meeting, on 29 March, we proposed inviting Carmel Leahy to join us on the management committee. Carmel has expressed interest in Backroom Press in the past and is a literacy teacher with many years of experience; and we would value her knowledge of young Kimberley people's reading habits, levels and interests. Carmel is now a paid up member of BPI, and has agreed to join us. We look forward to working with her.

At the same meeting we agreed that it may be necessary to use some of our funds to employ someone to write submissions and help with other tasks.

We will let you know when we have more exciting news for our members. We welcome any comments, ideas, suggestions from any of you, so do please keep in touch.

The Backroom Team.