

Growing the Borderlands project

WE AIM TO ...

1. Showcase high quality, original Northern Territory writing and storytelling
2. Promote Territory stories in online and print editions of *Borderlands*
3. Consolidate sustainable support to keep the editions coming, and
4. Prepare forthcoming editions from early 2022

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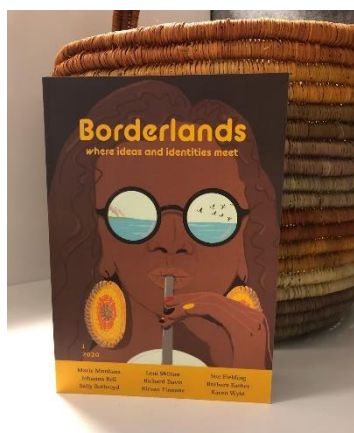


First print edition sparks critical praise

A long-awaited first print edition of a new Northern Territory literary journal *Borderlands* was published to critical acclaim in September 2020. One year later the publication has sold more than 700 copies nationally via Territory bookshops and online portals, even finding its way into the carry bags of journalism and literature students at Charles Darwin University.

That might not seem like many. But sales of Australian literary journals are modest, with some older mastheads also selling under 1000 print units, barely pipping those of the *Borderlands* pilot. All of which suggests healthy initial market demand for the start-up.

The print edition was a test of the market for a new publication focused



'Rich, needed': Critics praise *Borderlands*' first foray into print.

on storytelling from Australia's Centre and North, regions significant to a national identity but roundly neglected in existing offerings. Aiming to fill the gap, *Borderlands* would be a twice-yearly platform for seldom-heard viewpoints, amplifying Indigenous and other culturally diverse voices in digital and print formats.

Indeed, launch of the print pilot had followed a

Borderlands feature of NT writers in [Westerly](#), then [Borderlands online](#), which earned national media attention, both launched in 2019.

Critical response to the print edition was strong. In a '2020-books-of-the-year' edition of influential [Australian Book Review](#), Professor Glyn Davis writes: 'These welcome voices from Alice Springs and Darwin bring insight and energy to an essential conversation about identity.'

In [Westerly](#), academic and author Jen Bowden writes that *Borderlands* is a 'rich and much-needed literary journal that offers us the chance to be introduced to writers and their works who otherwise may not have come to publication. It's a gift to have access to pieces like these ...'

Auspicious beginnings.

Eyes on University home and strategic synergies

After the success of *Borderlands*' pilot editions many have asked: What is *Borderlands* doing now? When's the next edition coming out?

Since 2018, *Borderlands* has relied largely on the efforts of three NT scholars to conceive the

project, attract funding, manage submissions, edit and promote the journal, mostly in their free time. Even with several arts grants, hard-won crowd funding, generous support from patrons and in-kind help from Charles Darwin University, such effort is

tough to sustain. Research shows journals homed at universities such as *Griffith Review*, *Westerly* and *Meanjin* are more likely to survive economic stress and share strategic benefits. So during 2021 *Borderlands* has been negotiating a formal home at Charles Darwin Uni.

‘At a time when the language of those in positions of influence is frequently steeped in mendacity, it’s timely to have this reminder ... of the impact that words used with care can have.’

Literary critic **Dr Rita Horyani**, reviews *Borderlands* for *Imprint* – annual journal of the NT Writers Centre, 2020

From big idea to making Territory history

By 2018, when *Borderlands* launched as a research project with a big idea, it had been almost two decades since Northern Territory readers were able to enjoy their own literary journal.

From 1977 to 1999, *Northern Perspectives* had featured Territory writing, published first by Darwin Community College then Northern Territory University (NTU), the forerunner of Charles Darwin. Back then the

volumes appeared annually, but in the 1990s publishers struggled to make ends meet, eventually losing funding from the Australia Council and NTU.

Rebadged as *Northerly*, the journal limped on for one more edition in 2000 then folded, leaving NT writers without a place to publish and the university short of an exceptionally handy strategic marketing tool.

Since 2019, *Borderlands* has published three pilots showcasing the cream of Territory writing, with a quarter of the print edition’s content penned by Indigenous authors. The 2019 [online edition](#) leveraged innovative digital forms of storytelling.

Now the diverse stories of Australia’s Centre and North could again be told by those who lived there and knew its landscape and culture best.

‘Think-tank’ journal zooms to the nation

Borderlands hopes to create a platform for writers, thinkers and researchers to ‘fill the gap’ in intellectual leadership about Australia’s North and Centre.

It may also provide an Australian outlet for outstanding international articles of relevance.

In doing so, *Borderlands* could help position Charles Darwin University as a centre for ideas



Dr Richard Davis

and as a voice for the Centre and North in national policy debates.

During Reconciliation Week 2020 at the height

of the COVID disruption, Northern Institute partnered with *Borderlands* for a [Zoom event](#). Renowned anthropologist Dr Richard Davis explored public controversy surrounding Bruce Pascoe’s *Dark Emu*, using arguments from an essay for *Borderlands*.

The seminar attracted more than 100, including key names in the field, and is [available to stream](#)

Philanthropy key to growth and funding mission

Borderlands requires stable recurrent funding to publish annual print and online editions.

Funds would employ a part-time editor, pay writers and printing costs, promote and distribute the journal.

With seed funds from Regional Arts, we are

preparing to secure funds to match the budget.

Research shows that literary journals are not economically viable based on sales and advertising revenue alone and so require substantial subsidy.

Borderlands has documented the state of

Australian literary publishing and developed a sustainable funding plan through its 2018 research.

It is for a university-based journal funded by a mix of sales, grants, donation and patronage, with recurrent philanthropic support as key.

Arts minister delivers heartfelt endorsement

At his first public appearance as the Northern Territory's new Minister for the Arts, Chansey Paech spoke passionately to affirm a role for literary journal *Borderlands* in expressing and documenting culture in the Northern Territory.

"Territorians have unique lived experiences," Mr Paech [told press](#). "It's great to be able to put those experiences into words ... so others can share."

It was September 2020 and Mr Paech had arrived at Alice Springs Community Gardens in the town's east to help launch a print edition of the journal.

An engaging speaker and familiar face in the Centre, Mr Paech explained to a COVID-limited audience of 50 how culture embraces, but also goes beyond, the arts.

"It's important to everyone," he said, because "it's the foundation to our identity."



Everyone has culture: NT Arts Minister Chansey Paech launches *Borderlands*' print edition at Alice Springs Community Gardens in September.

"It doesn't matter if we're Indigenous or non-Indigenous, each and every one of us has culture and ... a strong connection to that culture."

Borderlands general editor Dr Glenn Morrison is planning to speak again soon with Minister Paech, with further NT Government funding for the project on the agenda.

"Arts NT provided seed funding in 2018, helping

launch a first research phase," said Dr Morrison. "Creative Partnerships Australia, Commonwealth Regional Arts Fund, CDU and a strategic partnership with UWA journal *Westerly*, helped to support production of the three pilot editions." Since then, Minister Paech said the NT Government had been looking forward to 'negotiations' for a second edition.

'These welcome voices from Alice Springs and Darwin bring insight and energy to an essential conversation about identity.'



Prof Glyn Davis touts *Borderlands* in *Australian Book Review*'s Best of 2020

Putting the 'lead' in intellectual leadership of the North

Borderlands journal showcases high quality, original Northern Territory writing and storytelling from five to 5,000 words, well beyond the scope of established media.

Whether exploring culture, public policy, philosophy,

history, science or the arts, the journal aims to stimulate national and local debate on matters of public and cultural significance to the Territory and its relationships with SE Asia, Indonesia and the Pacific.

Styles of writing range from storytelling to reportage, analysis, review, biography, memoir, essays — including photographic and visual arts — fiction and poetry. *Borderlands* appears in print and online.

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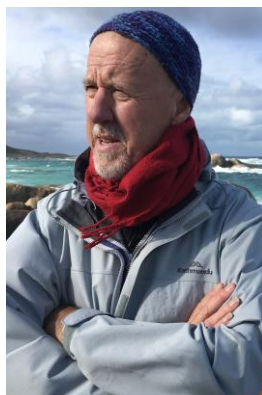
hello@borderlands.cdu.edu.au

Where ideas and identities meet ...

Meet the Borderlands crew ...



Dr Raelke Grimmer



Dr Glenn Morrison



Dr Adelle Sefton-Rowston

The *Borderlands* project is led from Alice Springs by honorary CDU senior research fellow and general editor Dr Glenn Morrison. Two more members of this tight-knit literary family are Darwin-based writers, researchers and co-editors of *Borderlands*, Drs Adelle Sefton-Rowston and Raelke Grimmer, both lecturers at CDU.

Other associates are also key, including Indigenous adviser Marie Munkara, poetry editor Christian Bok at Uni Melbourne, and copy editor Jeremy Garnet. While the project currently comprises a loose affiliation of colleagues with grand hopes, all have sights set firmly on *Borderlands* becoming a formal affiliate of Charles Darwin University and providing a home for Territory storytelling for many years to come.

Partnerships shape future for NT journal

Territory writers and Australian readers are the principal beneficiaries of the *Borderlands* project.

But the benefits of the journal will also accrue at local, national and global scales.

To date, partnerships have been crucial to the project's early successes and to audiences realising some of these benefits.

Several partnerships arose from existing networks, others from interviews undertaken in 2018 of key figures in

Australian literature, and from conferencing.

Our relationship with CDU has led to substantial in-kind support and prize monies for cover art and a writing award.

But *Borderlands* has also worked closely with NT Writers Centre and First Nations Australian Writers Network (FNAWN). As well, we enjoy relationships with *Westerly*, *Griffith Review*, *Sydney Review of Books*, niche NT publisher Ptilotus Press, NT Library, NT Archives and UniPrint.

Funding agencies Arts NT, RAF and CPA, have been pivotal, so too some-time mentors Julianne Schultz, Catherine Noske, Glyn Davis and Catriona Menzies-Pike.

Our aim now is to embed the publication at CDU to foster partnerships with philanthropic foundations and secure recurrent funding for the journal. *Borderlands* is also investigating opportunities for the distribution of future editions, as well as writing and Indigenous editing mentorships.

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