

Media Release
Tuesday 9 July

The Wheeler Centre expands winter events program: Plestia Alaqad, Don Watson and Thomas Mayo to appear

Melbourne's The Wheeler Centre will host trailblazing Palestinian journalist **Plestia Alaqad** this August at a special partnered event with PEN Melbourne.

Garnering global attention for her vivid on-ground reporting in the wake of 7 October 2023, Alaqad has led the charge in bringing the stories of Gaza to the world. Chronicling her experiences first-hand on Instagram to over 4.5 million followers, the 22-year-old has swiftly developed a reputation for her raw and fearless documentation of the ongoing conflict.

Following an opening address from PEN Melbourne Ambassador-at-Large, **Sami Shah**, Alaqad will appear in conversation with host **Samah Sabawi** to share her experiences of reporting from Gaza, her decision to leave the region and her recent journey to Australia. Alaqad will then close the evening with a poetry performance.

Erin Vincent, CEO, The Wheeler Centre says: 'This winter, The Wheeler Centre brings audiences compelling conversations about the defining issues in Australia and across the globe – with expert speakers discussing politics, human rights, current affairs, music, classic Australian novels and more. We hope audiences join us for an informative and insightful series of events unpacking the big questions of the moment.'

Further winter events announced by The Wheeler Centre today include:

Amidst increasing instances of Islamophobia, antisemitism and other forms of discrimination across the country, ***From Bias to Belonging: Combating Discrimination*** brings together a trio of expert thinkers to dissect the long shadow of intolerance in contemporary Australia and explore avenues for greater social cohesion. Panelists include sociologist of religion and author of *Fighting Hislam: Women, Faith, and Sexism*, **Dr Susan Carland**; historian and Director of the Australian Centre for Jewish Civilisation, Associate Professor **David Slucki**; with host human rights advocate, lawyer and CEO of Media Diversity Australia, **Mariam Veiszadeh**.

In a special Indigenous Literacy Day event, ***Always Was, Always Will Be***, activist **Thomas Mayo** shares a powerful address reflecting on the ongoing fight for justice for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in the wake of the failed Voice to Parliament referendum. Mayo will then be joined by a commissioner from the Yoorrook Justice Commission, the first formal truth-telling process into injustices experienced by First Peoples in Victoria, to discuss pathways to treaty and efforts to renew the momentum of reconciliation in Australia.

Will Republican nominee and now convicted criminal, former President Donald Trump, topple Democratic nominee and incumbent President Joe Biden? How did America reach this point, and how will either candidate's victory impact Australia's relationship with the US and the global political



landscape? **Don Watson: On the US Election** sees the celebrated Australian writer and former political advisor to Paul Keating unpack the American presidential race and more for a special Fifth Estate event with host **Sally Warhaft**.

For **Adapting The Children's Bach**, **Helen Garner** discusses the operatic translation of her acclaimed novella with librettist **Glenn Perry**, composer **Andrew Schultz** and host **Sian Prior**. In a taste of their upcoming production, musicians and performers from **Lyric Opera of Melbourne** will share a short performance from the opera.

Join Next Chapter alumnus **Jumaana Abdu** for a celebration of her debut release, *Translations*. The new novel follows Aliyah and her daughter Sakina as they retreat to rural NSW in search of a new life amid a series of personal disasters. When bushfires begin to rage around them, a reckoning soon approaches.

– ENDS –

Media contact

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Media centre

Images available [here](#)

The full list of events and dates are listed below. For more information, please visit wheelercentre.com/events

Plestia Alaqad in Conversation

Plestia Alaqad, Samah Sabawi, Sami Shah
7.00pm, Wednesday 14 August
Melbourne City Conference Centre

Adapting The Children's Bach

Helen Garner, Glenn Perry, Andrew Schultz, Sian Prior
6.30pm, Thursday 22 August
The Wheeler Centre

From Bias to Belonging: Combating Discrimination

Susan Carland, David Slucki, Mariam Veiszadeh
6.30pm, Wednesday 28 August
The Wheeler Centre

Always Was, Always Will Be

Thomas Mayo
6.30pm, Wednesday 4 September

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The Fifth Estate – Don Watson: On the US Election

Don Watson, Sally Warhaft

6.30pm, Thursday 5 September

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Jumaana Abdu: Translations

Jumaana Abdu

6.30pm, Tuesday 17 September

Workshop Space, The Wheeler Centre

The Wheeler Centre is Melbourne's home for smart, passionate and entertaining public talks, and exists to support writers, readers and thinkers. Through live and digital conversations, debates, readings, performances and discussions, it deepens public engagement with the most pressing topics of the day. It is dedicated to creative collaboration, community engagement, diversity, and innovation.

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