

PEN Melbourne participates in Worldwide Reading to support PussyRiot in Melbourne, Australia 12 December 2012.

When I received the notice from the Berlin International Literature Festival asking organisations to participate in this year's World Wide Reading I jumped at the chance. Our PEN Centre has a strong connection with women writers of every genre because I was the Chairperson of the PEN Women Writers Committee for six years from 2003 to 2009.

We felt so strongly the injustice that is being done to the women involved.

A group of about thirty of us gathered at the La Mama Courthouse Theatre in Melbourne where we read the final statements that were read in the courtroom and two young people sang the Punk Prayer "Virgin Mary, Put Putin Away". They had set the words to their own music. There were many young people present because of the subject of the reading being punk musicians.

The president of our PEN Centre talked PEN's work supporting writers in prison and I spoke about the situation of the Pussy Riot women.

We were very moved by the statements and intrigued by the cultural differences between Russian punks and local punks.

The evening was a resounding success.

Best wishes from Dr Judith Buckrich, Vice-President, PEN Melbourne Centre and all of us at PEN Melbourne.