

playwriting

australia

REĀ Review

Playwriting Australia

**A Consolidated Vision for Plays
and Playwriting in Australia**

March 2020

CONTENTS

01	Preface	Page 03
02	Review Purpose	Page 04
	2.1 Purpose	
	2.2 Scope	
	2.3 Methodology	
	2.4 Sector Response	
03	Environmental Context	Page 06
	3.1 Organisational Focus	
	3.2 Operational Model	
	3.3 Performance Partners	
	3.4 Essential Evolution	
	3.5 Responses and Submissions	
04	The Changing Environment	Page 16
	4.1 A Fourteen Year Span: 2006 – 2019	
	4.2 Mechanisms to Support Play Development	
05	A New Entity	Page 23
	5.1 Overview	
	5.2 Entity and Governance	
	5.3 Strategic Focus	
	5.4 Leadership Considerations	
	5.5 Transitional Considerations	
	5.6 Funding Mechanisms	
	5.7 Playwright Support and Development	
06	Recommendations	Page 34
07	Appendix	Page 38

01. Preface

The importance of plays and playwriting in Australia's maturing creative and cultural identity has long been acknowledged.

Playwriting Australia, and its predecessors, the Australian National Playwrights' Conference and Playworks, have played an essential role in the discovery and development of playwrights in bringing them to our national stages.

This review, written for the Board of Playwriting Australia, has been informed by wide consultation with the sector. The consultation process has elicited a contest of ideas in relation to equity and emphasis, but an overwhelming consensus on the importance of the existence of an independent playwriting development body.

Since its inception in 2006, Playwriting Australia has played an important role in the development of Australian plays and playwrights. New Australian work has never been more present and celebrated on our stages, and Australian voices are now seen by the major companies to add essential definition to their larger audience offering.

Fourteen years on, this review finds that a new entity is once again required to adapt to a changed and changing funding, production and play development environment.

A consolidated vision for play and playwright development in Australia will better support our artists, our production companies, and ultimately our audiences – better contributing to the commercial viability of our sector and the development of our wider cultural identity.

02. Review Purpose

2.1 Purpose

After a period of internal transition, in July 2019 the Board of Playwriting Australia commissioned this review to assist with decisions about its future. Following consultation with playwrights around Australia by Playwriting Australia in early 2019, the Board sought views from the wider theatre sector about the most effective and sustainable model of supporting play development in a changed and changing environment.

An anticipated challenging federal funding environment in the offing, together with changes in audience taste and enthusiasm for Australian plays, caused the Board to seek direction on how best to activate the skills and infrastructure of Playwriting Australia to both nurture and deliver a diversity of contemporary playwriting voices to professional stages.

Within this context, this review sets out issues identified within the current operating model of Playwriting Australia and puts forward a proposal for a new entity that is better able to respond to the changing environment of the theatre sector, and prioritises paths to production.

2.2 Scope

This review considers and makes recommendations on:

- » the range of existing support mechanisms for play development in Australia;
- » the environmental elements which have changed since Playwriting Australia was established; and,
- » whether any of the objects and functions or services currently provided by Playwriting Australia are no longer required or could best be provided by other organisations or the sector itself, or whether new objectives and functions are needed.

2.3 Methodology

A discussion paper, *Playwriting Australia: Discussion Guide for Submissions*¹ was released in August 2019 seeking views from the wider theatre sector. The discussion guide sought responses as to how best to create an environment within which the development of diverse Australian playwrights and the production of their plays could flourish.

Submissions were encouraged from playwrights and the broader theatre sector: individuals, artists, theatre professionals, philanthropists, audience members,

1 Appendix I: Playwriting Australia: Discussion Guide for Submissions, REĀ Consulting Pty Ltd

and government entities. Representation from underrepresented voices, First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse, LGBTIQ+ writers, writers experiencing disability and regional writers and communities were specifically encouraged.

Views were sought in relation to the current objectives and functions of Playwriting Australia and any issue that respondents felt relevant for consideration, specifically:

- » the relevance and efficacy of current play development mechanisms;
- » improvement and development of these mechanisms;
- » the best model for their delivery.

This report relies upon data drawn from the Australian Writers' Guild's annual analysis of theatre programming trends together with data provided by the Australia Council. Additionally, REA commissioned a survey of eight of the funded companies with larger seasons and diversity of program in order to investigate, and finally support, the sector view that Australian works are performed much more and are more popular with audiences than they were when Playwriting Australia was first formed in 2006.

REA and Playwriting Australia have undertaken consultation via face-to-face meetings or teleconferences with key stakeholders including donors, the broader sector and the larger theatre companies throughout July – December 2019. Key consultations were undertaken with the Australia Council, the Australian Writers' Guild, representatives from major theatre companies, playwrights, theatre makers, culturally and linguistically diverse and First Nations representatives, all of which have contributed to the recommendations provided in this review.

2.4 Sector Response

A total of 94 written submissions were received and a further 30 interviews were undertaken during the course of this review. Of the written submissions 49 were collected and passed on by the Australian Writers' Guild. Of the Guild submissions, 29 were anonymous and not identifiable other than by geographic location.

Of the identifiable submissions, 53% were from female respondents, 42% were from NSW, 25% from Victoria with Western Australia comprising the third largest segment at 12%. Tasmania represented 9% of responses, Queensland 8% and South Australia 3%. 31% of respondents were identified as having had a direct association with Playwriting Australia programs and services in the past – either as a recipient, participant or assessor.

Of the identifiable submissions, 9% came from First Nations respondents, 5% from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and 10% from regional Australia.

Those identifying as playwrights and dramaturgs represented 66% of identifiable written responses, with producing companies representing 18% (the balance being from funders, publishers, and industry representative bodies). Multiyear funded theatre producers represented 9% of responses and 8% came from companies within the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework (formerly known as "Major Performing Arts Organisations").

03. Environmental Context

3.1 Organisational Focus

Playwriting Australia is acknowledged by the industry as Australia's only national organisation with a focus on discovering, developing and finding a pathway to production for new Australian plays. The organisation was established in 2006 through the consolidated funding investment of its predecessors, the Australian National Playwright's Conference and Playworks.

Over the years Playwriting Australia has supported, and in some cases seeded, the development of over 500 scripts with a number of these going on to full production within differing parts of the theatre sector. Since 2015, the organisation's overarching stated concern has been to ensure that there is a higher quality and ambition (in scale and theme) in new plays developed, with a greater representation from writers of Indigenous and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, LGBTIQA+ and regional and remote areas.

Playwriting Australia established an organisational focus through four key goals:

- » more excellent and ambitious new plays on the Australian stage;
- » to be a national organisation that invests in the diversity of contemporary Australian playwriting, developing a body of work reflecting contemporary Australia;
- » to see playwrights at the heart of theatre culture, with higher status and profile;
- » maintain our impact by growing diverse income streams within a sustainable business model.

The sector had an overwhelmingly strong and positive response in relation to the ongoing relevance of these current goals, albeit with some nuances which will be examined in section 3.5 of this report.

3.2 Financial Framework

Playwriting Australia has regularly received funds from both the Australia Council and the NSW Government. It was successful in achieving a substantial grant from the Federal Government's Catalyst program and has also been successful in smaller amounts of State and project-based funding, giving rise to a total grant income in 2018 of \$710,000.

Significantly, the Board and management have managed to leverage government investment with earned income from private philanthropic foundations and individuals. In 2018, together with performance fees and sundry income, earned revenue was \$386,000, representing 35% of total revenues of \$1.1m. After commissioning expenses of \$60,000 the organisation returned a small profit of \$7,000. This level of philanthropic support is a remarkable achievement and as a percentage of total revenue places the organisation at the top of the theatre industry, including companies and wider support organisations.

Core organisational costs have been limited to two full-time positions for an Artistic Director/CEO, and a General Manager. Over the years there have been various additional project-based staff, depending on the nature of projects and programs which have been largely run as variable cost lines within the budget. As a result, with a recent staffing average of approximately four full-time equivalent positions, the organisation has been able to be nimble and responsive to linking funding and program objectives with opportunity.

The organisation has managed its resources soundly and is in a good position to manage its future options with accumulated reserves of c. \$500,000 (noting that c. \$180,000 of these funds are currently restricted for large-scale play development).

3.3 Performance Partners

The development of plays necessarily requires producing performance partners. Playwriting Australia is not a producing entity (nor should it become one) and, therefore, partnerships with producers and companies are essential to complete the development of plays.

There are currently nine major professional producing companies in Australia that are funded over a multiple-year horizon which typically produce regular subscription seasons of four or more plays. These include the following organisations that are within the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework:

- » Belvoir Street Theatre
- » Black Swan Theatre Company
- » Malthouse Theatre
- » Melbourne Theatre Company
- » Queensland Theatre
- » State Theatre Company of South Australia
- » Sydney Theatre Company

and the following organisations which have successfully been invited to apply for a further four-year funding term commencing January 1, 2021:

- » Griffin Theatre Company
- » La Boite Theatre Company

and a tenth producing company, Ensemble Theatre, which operates outside the traditional national funding framework.

These organisations fundamentally run on an extremely commercial basis as levels of State and Federal Government investment are limited and diminishing in real terms. Box office receipts and philanthropy are critical in an environment where government subsidy can be as low as 7% of turnover for the larger organisations.

The broader small to medium subsidised sector, of which the three organisations mentioned above are constituents, is under varying levels of financial duress. The Australia Council's available investment funding pool over an extended period has been inadequate, which has in turn driven increased competition between organisations. Within the Australia Council's new multiyear funding program which comes into being in 2021, it is likely that fewer organisations will be funded. However, some organisations may receive a greater level of investment as the previous annual multiyear investment ceiling has been lifted from \$300,000 to \$500,000. The impact of this change is yet to be felt. It could exclude a number of organisations and there are fears that it could precipitate the closure of a number of others, especially if they have limited reserves and abilities to reinvent themselves within the requisite timeframe.

The above group of ten is joined by a number of other important companies within Australia which produce Australian plays within differing presentation modes and cycles, and these include (but are not limited to):

- » Australian Theatre for Young People
- » Barking Gecko Theatre Company
- » Bell Shakespeare Company
- » Blue Cow Theatre
- » Brink Productions
- » Ilbijerri Theatre Company
- » Jute Theatre Company
- » Monkey Baa Theatre Company
- » Moogahlin Performing Arts
- » National Theatre of Parramatta
- » NORPA
- » PlayLab
- » Red Stitch
- » Tasmanian Theatre Company
- » Terrapin Puppet Theatre
- » Windmill Theatre Company
- » Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company.

Outside the producing company framework, there are a number of other avenues for plays to be produced on an individual basis by freelance producers, the regional and metropolitan venue network, festivals and organisations such as Performing Lines.

3.4 Essential Evolution

Despite a consistent level of performance against its goals in recent years, in 2019 Playwriting Australia found itself in a period of internal transition and uncertainty. This was unfortunate, but perhaps not entirely surprising as very small organisations are acutely vulnerable to key staffing changes, especially when they occur in an unforeseen, unmanaged or unmanageable fashion.

As mentioned in section 3.3 above, the Australia Council's new round of four-year funding for arts organisations commences on 1 January 2021 and Playwriting Australia's current four-year funding agreement concludes on 31 December 2020.

Playwriting Australia, like a number of other organisations, was unsuccessful in being invited to submit a Stage Two application for the 2021 – 24 round of four-year funding. The final results of the Australia Council's four-year funding program will be known by the end of March 2020. It is broadly understood that the Australia Council's budget will not extend to fund many organisations deemed worth of funding, and estimates suggest that approximately 40 per cent of applicants' multiyear funding will be unsuccessful. Opportunities will still exist for competitive annual and some project-related funding, but in real terms a number of the undercapitalised organisations will either face closure or an essential reinvention to reposition themselves for alternative support.

Playwriting Australia's application to the Australia Council fell at a moment in time where the organisation was particularly vulnerable. It is neither possible nor profitable to divine whether the organisation may have been more successful had it not been going through a period of internal uncertainty, but following a public outcry and several meetings with the Australia Council, it is clear that losing the function of Playwriting Australia at this moment in our history is of great national concern.

Amplifying the impending loss of investment to the playwriting sector through Playwriting Australia was the simultaneous lack of a further invitation to submit a Stage Two application for the Hobart-based national organisation Australian Plays. Australian Plays provides critical services to playwrights through the online publishing, licensing and promotion of plays to a global market of producers and primary, secondary and tertiary educators – services which are not currently reproduced in other parts of the sector.

In straitened and competitive times, the current funding framework and assessment process necessarily causes organisations to be assessed at a particular moment in time within a multi-year funding cycle. It is questionable whether support and service organisations are as competitive as producing organisations, and whether the current framework is an optimal process for longer-term strategic investment within the sector, giving consideration to the impact on broader ecologies. 'Plays' are, of course, only one way that Australian stories are told in a theatrical form, however as a form 'plays' are likely to continue to be a key driver of audiences and employment for the sector.

To potentially lose Playwriting Australia and Australian Plays simultaneously would have a devastating impact on a range of services, development pathways and income to playwrights, educators, theatrical producers, companies and ultimately, audiences.

Despite its well-developed fundraising muscle, without core and ongoing funding from the Australia Council, Playwriting Australia is likely to be unable to continue its work in a manner and scale which effectively contributes to the industry.

It should be noted that an invitation to submit a Stage Two application would in no way have guaranteed a positive funding outcome for either organisation, so in some sanguine respects the early opportunity to consider with certainty their respective futures may be seen as positive.

In order to ensure the benefits to the artform, industry and audiences of both Australian Plays and Playwriting Australia are retained, developed and enhanced, a new entity with a broader range of services should be formed and presented to its stakeholders for support, as individually both ultimately face an unviable economic and creative future.

3.5 Responses and Submissions

Further to the overview in Section 2.4 of this report, there was strong engagement from a broad cross section of the sector in response to the announcement of this review and the subsequent Discussion Guide.

The overwhelming concern was that Playwriting Australia as an organisation would be lost, because the role it plays was seen as critical for playwrights and the theatre industry. Whilst there were some prominent and conflicting views about the organisation's areas of focus and execution, the key goals of the organisation were seen to be sound and there were strong views about unnecessarily changing something that was seen to be operating effectively.

It is possible to summarise feedback for the Board's attention into the following areas:

- » Support for the organisation
- » Governance and Management
- » Strategy
- » Industry concern
- » Playwright support

Support for the organisation

There was support from some individuals and organisations who felt the current organisational performance was high, the role it played critical and strong messages that it should continue unabated.

Individuals identified that whilst a number of smaller organisations and companies were all contributing to play development, a national organisation providing leadership was of value. It was seen to be important to have a national independent body that could advocate for plays and playwrights to multiple companies nationally. Playwriting Australia was acknowledged to be an organisation that worked beyond the annual programming cycle of the larger companies and beyond the style and taste of individual Artistic Directors which change over time. Beyond individual company commissioning, the organisation was seen to have worked inventively to find different models to produce work.

A number of respondents highlighted Playwriting Australia's focus on diversity and non-dominant voices as important, and that the organisation had developed a strength in its ability to work in partnership with grass roots and independent presenters and communities to better identify playwriting talent. These forms of partnership were seen as key in the discovery and development of new voices, to reach further into communities and foster the development of a diversity of work and a more representative picture of Australia's national identity.

Cited as best practice, the Lotus program, in collaboration with Contemporary Australian Asian Performance and initiated by the Girgensohn Foundation, was seen to be a highly successful long-term vision for the development of an underrepresented Australian voice. The program was a prominent example of one which backed entry-level skills development for program participants and ultimately providing high-profile productions and connecting the new playwrights with further opportunities.

There was strong support for the organisation from First Nations' respondents whose recent experiences at the Bundanon Retreat were highly valued. Playwriting Australia was viewed as very adept at running these workshops where participants felt in control of their process and engagement. A number of participants stated that their work had developed and opportunities arisen as a direct result of their experience with Playwriting Australia.

There was broad acknowledgement within the submissions of a growing consciousness of, and appetite for, Australian theatre, but not at the rate consumed by some other cultures. Respondents asserted that work must continue in order to develop the presentation of Australian plays and some noted that commissioning support for smaller organisations would be of value. Gender parity was seen to be a fragile and relatively new development that needed ongoing focus to be retained.

A pertinent and prominent show of support was received in the form of a letter² from the Artistic Directors of 22 theatre organisations of varying sizes and locations to the Australia Council and Playwriting Australia of 25 July 2019. Within it the Artistic Directors state:

“PWA is responsible for providing a link between the largest professional theatre companies and the independent and small-to-medium theatre sector. Events managed by PWA bring our diverse sector together to discuss, reflect and showcase new writing. This showcase has lead (sic) to many new works receiving production opportunities that otherwise would not have occurred. PWA’s services are particularly vital to the under resourced independent and small-to-medium sector that frequently needs support commissioning or developing professional theatre. These services are not replicated elsewhere in the industry.

Though our theatre companies are involved in commissioning, developing and staging new Australian plays, we are not resourced to monitor and address whole of industry concerns and initiatives. As theatre companies our aesthetics and programming frameworks change with each change in leadership. The loss of PWA would have ramifications for playwrights nation wide and impact all levels of the industry.

We are concerned that, should PWA lose its Australia Council Key Organisations funding, there will be no capacity to reimagine the organisation or establish a new body for play writing. It is our concern, regardless of the outcomes of its independent review being conducted, our peak service organisation will be defunded and closed, leaving a gap that none of our theatre companies are in a position to fill.”

A majority of responses indicated that Playwriting Australia has an important role in the broader ecology of theatre presentation in Australia, and that this role and the organisation’s key goals are critical to the theatre industry.

Governance and management

A strong sense of ownership and propriety of the organisation by its stakeholders was evident through direct commentary to the Board requesting greater transparency about the organisation’s governance and management. Questions around staffing changes and the necessity of an external review given that a national consultation with playwrights had recently been undertaken were prominent amongst some respondents.

Of greatest concern was a view that the Board intended to close the organisation down. There was a clear sense by some that the organisation was designed for playwrights. Playwriting Australia and its predecessors (Australian National Playwrights Conference and Playworks) were seen to be like “scaffolds or trellises”, providing a structure around which playwrights could be “supported and entwine themselves” and in so doing provide new writers and those in the middle of their career a sense of value.

2 Appendix II: Letter from Artistic Directors to the Australia Council and Playwriting Australia

The centrality of playwrights and artists and their connection and control of the organisation came through as some submissions suggested that the organisation would be more effective if it were run by artists and playwrights. There was a sense from some that the organisation should be “playwright-centric” rather than “administrator-centric” or “producer-centric” or “dramaturg/literary manager-centric”.

It was also observed that the current relationship between the sector and the organisation was not strong enough to enable the best outcomes.

Strategy

A key battleground within submissions was that of strategic focus and quality. There was a strong sense that some more experienced individuals felt overlooked by Playwriting Australia (and the industry) in favour of new, young and emerging playwrights of diverse backgrounds. Claims that there were too many opportunities for young, emerging and diverse playwrights were balanced by claims that existing opportunities for underrepresented groups including disabled playwrights remained unbalanced and insufficient.

Key to arguments was a sense that writers of quality and craft were missing opportunities in favour of writers whose work was not yet ready for the stage. A disproportionate interest in new voices from diverse backgrounds was claimed to have given rise to work being rushed to the stage with insufficient support, resulting in lower quality plays and productions.

There was a call for Playwriting Australia to move from a “values-based artistic policy” of inclusiveness and diversity to a more measurable “professional skills and professional success-based policy”. Some called for the organisation to be “tougher”, to engage higher-quality mentors and staff and only engage with “successful” writers.

Others stressed another approach: in order for quality to be maintained that there be a renewed focus on “story”, rather than “voice”. Some claimed that Playwriting Australia had an “over-developed (leftish) political agenda”. Conversely, some First Nations respondents expressed concern that great stories were being overlooked in favour of more polished written work and that Playwriting Australia needed to be more open to new ways of telling and developing stories.

A number of respondents called for the organisation to foster a higher-level national conversation, international in outlook and connected to the global playwriting community rather than being focussed on “fringe issues and audiences”.

There was a broad acknowledgement that the audience and role of Playwriting Australia’s National Play Festival had changed over time, and that it had previously been more successful as a vehicle to foster formal and informal links to the producing companies. There were also suggestions that greater links to companies and opportunities abroad would be desirable and might be fostered through a closer relationship with the major Australian producers. There was concern that Playwriting Australia didn’t have enough influence over the major companies when it came to producing and commissioning, and that the organisation needed to better understand what excited them. There was a corresponding view expressed that the development of plays should not be

driven by companies and their “commercialism” and that this was a danger if Playwriting Australia were to cease to exist. There was a call for a national conversation around play development, and a need to decentralise the authority within Playwriting Australia over who was chosen for projects. There were also calls for the organisation to concentrate on the connection between playwright and producing organisation, rather than concentrating so heavily on script development alone.

The ability to come together as a group to network and discuss issues of common interest was a strong and recurrent theme. First Nations participants appreciated the opportunity to meet and discuss their work and experiences with Indigenous playwrights from a diversity of knowledge bases and language groups.

Whilst there was general agreement that Playwriting Australia was too small to have state-based offices, partnerships with state entities were seen to be important and could in turn lead to partnerships with local organisations and festivals.

“Play development” as opposed to “playwright development” were raised and acknowledged as being two distinct types of development pathways. A well-managed and resourced organisation that could develop both plays and playwrights was seen to be important, especially with the ability to take a longer view of investment and development.

Industry concern

A number of submissions expressed frustration with the industry itself, their lack of access to it and apparent barriers to production. These concerns included observations that the larger companies were “too commercial” and that they only programmed playwrights with “celebrity status or large social media followings”, through to comments that a number of the smaller stages and companies that had afforded greater access to playwrights had been, or were in the process of being, lost.

Concerns were voiced about homogeneity throughout the leadership of the producing companies (and specifically within their artistic teams and Boards). Within the companies’ own development cycles, there was a sense that there needed to be greater time and space and dramaturgical support to create work.

Having access to key producing decision makers was a prevailing theme, including some playwrights from regional areas who felt particularly remote. A number of submissions called for a greater number of Australian plays to be presented by the companies, including a call for the Australia Council to take more of a leadership role and that quotas be introduced.

Some writers felt that there needed to be a vehicle to develop work that “we want to create, rather than just the work the companies want to program.” There was an acknowledgement from some that whilst there was more Australian work being created, that there were less opportunities (for them) as the areas of development were being narrowed. There were also some comments about where writers experimenting with form might have an outlet for their work, and whether this was a gap within the industry.

There was some concern that playwrights were being forced to go overseas due to the lack of opportunity within Australia.

A number of submissions mentioned the essential nature of Australian Plays as an organisation, concern that it may not survive, and that it played a vital and unique role as a national and international resource. There were statements that playwrights needed the opportunity to be published as well as a marketplace to sell and promote scripts. The loss of Australian Plays was seen to be particularly acute as its services were not reproduced elsewhere in the industry.

Concern about the loss of funding to Australian Plays, Playwriting Australia and a number of small to medium companies was seen to narrow the frame of focus of new play development in Australia. There was a feeling of vulnerability expressed about being subject to the tastes of a few “gatekeepers”, and that “both ends of the spectrum are being impacted, support for the development of new work on one hand, and ongoing marketing and sale of published and unpublished work on the other.”

Playwright Support

A call for a variety of services for playwrights came through within the submissions. There was an acknowledgement that the careers of playwrights are increasingly and necessarily spanning a range of artforms – from stage to film to television to comedy, fiction, radio and online platforms. There was an appetite to encourage playwrights to bring their expertise to other mediums which may in turn promote playwriting to a wider group of writers and ultimately a broader public.

As playwrights negotiated these differing media, there was a call for more professional development and assistance in their career trajectories where “artistic agency and self-producing skills are integral.”

Amongst First Nations playwrights, finding environments where they could feel spiritually and culturally welcome and safe to be vulnerable and share their work was important. First Nations respondents in particular requested assistance in their relationships with producing companies and help with negotiating contracts and broader industry protocols.

There was an acknowledgement that the supply of playwrights and plays was much greater than demand, which necessarily created tension and competition. This reinforced some playwrights’ requests for a closer and more direct relationship with companies and producers.

04. The Changing Environment

4.1 A Fourteen Year Span: 2006 – 2019

Since the consolidated investment of the Australian National Playwrights' Conference and its sister organisation Playworks in 2006, Playwriting Australia remains the only national independent organisation with an overview of playwriting culture and a mandate to identify and respond to gaps within the industry.

Playwriting Australia has sought to play a catalytic role, seeding and developing new Australian plays and influencing professional theatre companies to present more new work. Over the period, Playwriting Australia has also worked to discover and give prominence to under-represented voices and stories, particularly from First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse playwrights.

Since its inception, Playwriting Australia has been headed by four successive Artistic Directors as organisational CEO. The role that these individuals have played has varied, depending upon their strengths and relationships within the industry. Ultimately, the CEO has asserted a strategic focus for endorsement by the organisation's Board, and then worked with the General Manager and project staff to fulfil organisational goals and objectives.

What has changed?

As mentioned in section 3.5 of this review, it is broadly accepted by respondents that the mood and landscape within presenting companies and audiences nationwide have changed since 2006. There is a view that Australian plays are a more prominent part of our larger companies' subscription programs and, given the increased commercial imperatives of these companies, this suggests a level of expectation of this type of programming from audiences and a correspondingly improved box office response.

Data drawn from the Australian Writers' Guild's annual analysis of theatre programming trends³ states that of the 94 plays staged across the main seasons of the ten largest theatre companies in 2018, 58 works (62%) were by an Australian playwright (up on 2017's figures at 55%).

This increased interest in Australian content, including but not exclusively plays, is borne out by indicative Australia Council data which suggests from 2011-2018 there has been a 140% increase in the presentation of Australian work across multiyear funded organisations.

REA commissioned a survey of the seven organisations that fall within the National Performing Arts Partnership Framework, being companies with larger seasons and a greater diversity of program, and Griffin Theatre Company (due to its critical role in presenting Australian work). The aim of the survey was to validate these trends and investigate them in more detail.

3 Appendix III: The National Voice 2018, Australian Writers' Guild

Methodology and findings

Data collated for this survey was drawn from publicly available data and data provided directly by the theatre companies where public data was incomplete or unavailable. There are a number of practical matters which impact the numbers, including the occasionally complex task of categorising any given piece of work. A decision was made to limit the survey to those plays presented amongst the main subscription seasons of the companies. A number of the companies may have programs which support the production of new work that are excluded as a result of this decision (for example, one-off evenings of new one-act plays), however, the decision was taken in order to create clearly defined parameters for the study. The study has been as accurate as possible at a granular play-by-play level, with the larger aim to draw general trends from the data. The findings below accurately summarise and support the general view from the sector that Australian work has become a more prominent part of the Australian theatre landscape. Nonetheless, given the intricacies in categorisation the below findings should be considered indicative rather than final.

It has been necessary to include two versions of the numbers in Table 1 in order to present a more accurate picture of what has changed since 2006. The first version includes all of the companies surveyed and the second version excludes the two highest performing presenters of Australian work. We found that these companies' consistent presentation of Australian work, meant that their trend over time was either stagnating or decreasing slightly (owing to changes in the size of their total season rather than a choice to present less Australian work). This resulted in a negative impact on the trend across other companies which was increasing.

Table 1:

Whilst there is variability year-on-year, the survey showed across a rolling three-year average from 2008 (encompassing 2006/7/8) until 2019 (encompassing 2017/18/19):

	Average number of works produced in the first period (2006/7/8) by all companies	Average number of works produced in the final period (2017/18/19) by all companies	Percentage increase in rolling average across all companies from 08-19	Average number of works produced in the first period (2006/7/8) across the sample	Average number of works produced in the final period (2017/18/19) across the sample	Percentage increase in rolling average across the sample from 08-19
New Australian Plays*	17.33	20.33	17%	10	14	40%
Remounted Australian Plays	11.67	16.67	43%	8.67	13	50%
New Australian Adaptations	5	7.67	53%	3.67	6.33	73%
New Australian work (including new plays, new adaptations and new Australian content)	25	30	20%	18.67	27.33	51%
Australian work (including new and remounted plays, adaptations and Australian content)	38.33	49.33	29%	24	35.67	49%

* New Australian Plays as a category excludes adaptations, devised or physical theatre, music theatre, revues, or other contemporary performance. These wider categories have been included in aggregate categories above in order to capture the full spectrum of Australian work being presented but not directly attributable to the work defining Playwriting Australia as an organisation.

Gender and diversity

In terms of gender, within a sample of seven of the funded companies in the category of 'New Australian Plays' across a rolling three-year average from 2008 (encompassing 2006/7/8) until 2019 (encompassing 2017/18/19) the number of female playwrights has moved from 26% in 2008 to 65% in 2019.

First Nations works are more prevalent too, being absent within the sample group in the early years of Playwriting Australia, through to between three and four works a year since 2017.

Culturally and linguistically diverse works appear to have grown too, again absent in the early years to an average of three a year after a high point of five identified works in 2017.

There has been a marked growth in both culturally and linguistically diverse works and works from First Nations Playwrights, especially recently. Within the sample they each account for 9% of the total new work commissioned across the period, 18% in total. However, a sample of the most recent three-year period (2017-19) suggests that First Nations work now represent 19% of the total new work produced, and culturally and linguistically diverse works 19%, 38% in total.

How Australian works are positioned within subscription seasons

Theatre companies and the media are actively and proudly positioning Australian playwrights and their work, but given population densities and with only two major subscription companies in Victoria, four in New South Wales, two in Queensland and one in each of South and Western Australia (and none in the Territories or Tasmania), it remains a small industry with relatively modest numbers of new plays being produced.

Whilst the number is limited by these parameters, it is encouraging to learn that new Australian work is by far the most produced 'category' of work presented in subscription programs across all companies surveyed. A rolling three-year average across the sample indicates that Australian work, as a percentage of all works presented over subscription seasons has steadily been increasing. This trend is consistent across all the segments of Australian work (as defined in Table 1).

Table 2 below summarises the various categories of Australian work (as defined in Table 1) and their increase as a percentage of the total number of plays presented within the subscription seasons of the companies surveyed.

Table 2:

The survey showed across a rolling three-year average from 2008 (encompassing 2006/7/8) until 2019 (encompassing 2017/18/19):

	Percentage of the total number of plays in 2006/7/8	Percentage of the total number of plays in 2017/18/19	Percentage increase since 2006/7/8
Presentation of new Australian plays	24%	27%	13%
Presentation of existing Australian Plays	16%	22%	39%
Presentation of new Australian Adaptations	7%	12%	51%
Presentation of new Australian work (including new plays, new adaptations and new content*)	34%	40%	17%
Presentation of Australian work (including new and existing plays, adaptations and content)	53%	66%	25%

Summary

These trends confirm that Australian work is more prevalent and now makes up almost two thirds of all theatre presented on larger stages in Australia, with a marked rise in First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse works.

The ecology which produces these results is complex, inter-related and constantly changing with multiple stakeholders. Playwriting Australia may not claim to be solely responsible for the ultimate production of any of these works, but it has been a part of many discussions and varying levels and types of investment in a range of works that have caused, in some cases, the discovery of new talent, and in many cases, play development.

These trends are very recent and there is not a sufficient track record to guarantee this success into the future without ongoing support. Few First Nations or Asian-Australian playwrights, whilst recently prominent, could be described as “well established” and only a sustained effort will deliver an enduring presence within major company seasons and throughout the small to medium theatre sector.

Nonetheless, it is encouraging that the trends in producing new Australian plays have been upward when funding has in real terms been steadily in decline.

4.2 Mechanisms to Support Play Development

The means of play and writer development around the globe differs by city and continent and is informed by history, resourcing, and the long-term development of a writing culture largely within companies. Play and writer development in Australia is comparatively young. Dedicated and enduring support for play development through to production within Australia has been, and remains, limited outside of the work of Playwriting Australia and the major companies.

At a grass roots level there are a number of competitions and awards for scripts, but there are very limited coherent pathways through to the next level of development and production. Given the range of activities available at any point in time it is evident that there is enthusiasm for play development within the sector, but the ephemeral nature of a number of these initiatives suggest that they cannot be relied upon for consistent playwright and industry development.

Consistent with the rise in Australian content outlined in section 4.1, all of the major companies now have a range of programs to support and encourage new writing. Indeed, in a “sovereign and competitive” commercial and creative environment, each of the companies appear keen to develop their own stable of writers. It is unlikely and unreasonable, however, to assume that a company environment can provide everything that a writer needs to be successful. Companies have their own imperatives and are immediately focussed on the increasingly challenging task of presenting compelling annual seasons to subscription and single ticket buyers. A significant development has been the recent Melbourne Theatre Company’s \$4.6m five-year Next Stage program, creating a new benchmark for commissioning and development within a company environment. Notwithstanding the investment, Next Stage cannot guarantee a production of a commissioned script, and indeed there will always be many more commissions than productions.

Over the years a range of ‘second’ spaces to create work has come and gone, Wharf 2, Downstairs Belvoir (now 25A), and the Lawler studio space have variously come on and off-line. For writers that have a more traditional development pathway, these and other theatrical spaces available to major and small to medium companies provide an important bridge before writing for larger stages. The inconsistency in availability of these spaces, together with a reduction in opportunities provided by the small to medium sector, have made the transition for some writers more challenging.

In addition to the important support for playwrights within companies, Playwriting Australia has played an important role in an active identification of new voice development, and an active ushering of individual playwrights through divergent development phases to eventual production. In order to ensure movement and career development for emerging, established, and senior playwrights a greater and more conscious connection within the industry is required.

A survey of national support for playwriting, Support for Playwriting in Australia; An Environmental Scan 2019⁴, compiled by Michelle Kotevski, outlines examples of the range of awards, competitions, courses and other support mechanisms available for playwrights. As opportunities and new priorities have emerged, so too has support for these initiatives, albeit with some inconsistency in longevity. The survey highlights the prominence of First Nations initiatives compared with a lack of support for culturally and linguistically diverse, regional playwrights or those experiencing disability. Of particular note is the apparent lack of formal opportunities for playwrights to gather and discuss their work and wider issues.

In the development of new playwrights, it has been broadly acknowledged that it is rare to find a writer with a voice that is fully formed. A multi-faceted approach to writer development, play development and partnerships to production are a crucial part of a healthy playwriting ecology. Playwrights are seen to be best positioned for success through consistent practice and engagement with the sector, and almost all playwrights depend upon writing for a range of forms beyond theatre to make a viable income.

Playwriting Australia has provided a range of development programs within its annual program. These programs have had a number of different names over the years and have consisted of script development opportunities, from pure readings with professional actors through to two-week creative developments and opportunities for extended dramaturgical support during a period of writing.

4

Appendix IV: Support for Playwriting in Australia; An Environmental Scan: 2019, Michelle Kotevski

Of particular note and regard has been the Lotus Asian-Australian Playwriting Project which engaged with over 50 emerging writers and has given rise to prominent seasons of work at La Boite, Belvoir and Sydney Theatre Company. Similarly, the Bundanon and other residencies for First Nations playwrights have been reported by participants as being of a high quality. Playwriting Australia is seen to have developed a skill in creating environments where culturally and linguistically diverse and First Nations playwrights' concerns and requirements are heard and respected, and some of the models for their engagement are being reproduced. The importance of engaging and connecting with broader community groups, especially in relation to works from culturally and linguistically diverse playwrights is a necessary future focus for the industry beyond immediate ticket sale imperatives.

Plays and playwrights are being developed independently of Playwriting Australia within theatre company environments. Key benefits that Playwriting Australia has brought to play development are a national view of play development (independent of individual season constraints) and an overt mission to discover new voices from underrepresented communities.

05. A New Entity

5.1 Overview

The key element of this review was to establish whether any of the objectives, functions or services currently provided by Playwriting Australia are no longer required or could best be provided by other organisations or the sector itself, or whether new objectives and functions are required. The Board of Playwriting Australia have stated that the organisation's key focus "has been to invest in and improve the development culture and contexts of new plays and to broaden the representation of individuals and communities who have the opportunity to create work in our industry."

Since the announcement of this review, the ground has shifted somewhat in terms of the announcement of Playwriting Australia's unsuccessful application for Australia Council funding. Having now established that the objectives and functions and services mentioned above are determined to be desirable to continue, then an appropriate vehicle for their operation now needs to be discovered.

Contemplated outcome: closure of Playwriting Australia

Following notification of the lack of an invitation to submit a Stage Two application to the Australia Council, the closure of Playwriting Australia as an entity was contemplated within the scope of this review.

As outlined in section 3.5 of this review, whilst some weaknesses in organisational performance were identified due to scale and scope, Playwriting Australia's unique position in the theatre sector and its essential aims and purpose were fiercely advocated by a majority of respondents. The responses revealed unanimity on the value of an independent organisation as a whole to sector, whilst revealing a battleground in vital nuance around which type of work and playwrights should be prioritised.

Overall, despite demonstrable increases and successes in the presentation of new Australian work, particularly in First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse presentations, there is a resounding view that there is more work to be done to embed these results.

Moreover, there is now the opportunity to capitalise on current successes and examine a further deliberate step in the development of Australian plays and writing. A sustained effort over many years is necessary to effect continued success and growth.

In the absence of a new strategy to deliver the goals of the organisation within the sector, closure of Playwriting Australia at this time is not recommended.

Contemplated outcomes: a merger with production house or producing/touring organisation

Leaving to one side funding considerations and any likely third party agreement to take on additional costs and responsibilities, an examination of whether another organisation might be better positioned to undertake the key functions of Playwriting Australia has been examined.

Contemplation of a merger with a production company, perhaps most obviously within an organisation dedicated to the development of new Australian work like Griffin Theatre Company or within a much larger organisation like the Melbourne or Sydney Theatre Companies, was examined. Also examined was an option to operate within a national producing and touring organisation like Performing Lines.

Limited financial efficiencies existed in both models, and a loss of autonomy, focus and fundraising identity were of primary concern. A state-based production house's ability to effectively focus and resource a national program of discovery and development in amongst their primary role, whilst not impossible, was seen to be a risk, as was the ability for a company to effectively and neutrally advocate scripts to competitor organisations. Without a dedicated organisation, resources disappear and with the best of intentions, tend to eventually be absorbed into company operations over time.

A merger with a production house or producing/touring organisation at this time is not recommended.

Preferred outcome: the creation of a new entity

Having established the ongoing need for an independent organisation, consideration of what this means in the current funding environment needs to be given. As discussed in section 3.4 of this review, Playwriting Australia has been unsuccessful in securing multiyear funding in the current round. Whilst it can apply for annual and project funding within its current structure, an ability to adequately plan, operate, fundraise and make commitments within the requisite planning cycles for a long-term development organisation will be extremely limited.

Accepting that the current model is unviable, only significant transformation and reinvention will provide a new platform capable of working at a greater scale and attracting renewed support and energy for a larger vision and consolidated provision of services for playwriting in Australia.

The final recommendation of this report is that a new entity is formed, incorporating agreed key functions and goals of both Playwriting Australia and Australian Plays, and in so doing addressing gaps and opportunities identified by the sector throughout the process of this review. This key recommendation is outlined more fully in the sections that follow.

5.2 Entity and Governance

Recognising the challenges that Playwriting Australia would face in order to remain as an unchanged standalone entity, a new energy and proposition must be put to the market for support. A unique opportunity exists for a symbiotic merger with Australian Plays to create a new, larger, coherent and vertically integrated organisation that will benefit playwrights, the education sector, audiences and the wider industry.

A new entity

Mirroring the timely amalgamation of investment from Playworks and the Australian National Playwrights' Conference to create an entity with a renewed focus for a new environment, an amalgamation and enhancement of purpose for Playwriting Australia and Australian Plays to form a more substantial entity would provide a new, national and efficient development, publishing and promotional organisation. A new entity provides an opportunity to present a compelling new offering which will assist to reset relationships with the sector, donors, State and Federal funding bodies and wider stakeholders.

The goals of Playwriting Australia unchanged, neatly accommodate and are augmented by the key functions of Australian Plays: the publishing and sale of Australian play scripts, the commercial exploitation of the intellectual property through commercial subscriptions and production licensing, and the leveraging of the intrinsic value of the published work through the education and community sectors for research and further productions. Australian Plays is not a development organisation, but one which preserves and promotes for future life an otherwise largely ephemeral artform. It is the home of some important collections (Nimrod and Playbox) and has a database of approximately 20,000 education, community and theatre professionals.

There is an enhanced ability for this new organisation to monitor and address whole of industry concerns and initiatives which have been identified as being impossible for individual producing companies alone, or indeed Playwriting Australia or Australian Plays in isolation. An organisation with a greater remit and spread of commercial and licensing skills will also be better able to assist with a broader range of services identified as being desirable by First Nations and other respondents within section 3.5 of this review.

The current subsidy by the Australia Council of Australian Plays is c. \$200,000 per annum (to support 3.7 full-time equivalents) the major funder being shared with Playwriting Australia which receives c. \$300,000 per annum.

Further work would have to be undertaken to drive some, probably limited, efficiencies from a merged entity, but the advantages of having a new organisation with a key part of its function based outside of Sydney in Hobart has some distinct advantage. Similarly, the commercial skills of Australian Plays, combined with the philanthropic muscle of Playwriting Australia - with an enlarged and tangible play development pipeline from discovery, to development, to production, to published script with direct education and community outcomes - holds the promise of new and enhanced yield from private and commercial sources.

It is recommended that talks with Australian Plays commence and due diligence is undertaken to explore such a merger to establish a more prominent and focussed, networked and commercially viable vision for the support and development of playwriting in Australia.

Governance considerations

In order to prepare for the work ahead in examining and, subject to appropriate due diligence, merging the two entities it is recommended that a new, smaller, transitional Board of Playwriting Australia be immediately formed. Some current Board members have indicated that they would be content to cycle off the Board in order to allow for refreshed and renewed leadership.

It is recommended that a transitional Board be formed to undertake the due diligence and negotiations with Australian Plays, chaired by theatre maker and festival director David Berthold, Indigenous lawyer Simone Smith, and playwright Angela Betzien – the remaining Board Members from Playwriting Australia would resign but would retain a close relationship with the organisation through their philanthropic and wider networks.

Subject to negotiations between the parties, it is recommended that a new entity would include a Board initially comprised of two existing Board Members from each organisation, and new Board Members that leverage the experience of two playwrights and two senior members of major producing companies. The balance of members should fill out the requisite skill base, with specific reference to First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse representation together with philanthropic and education networks being a priority.

It is recommended that appropriate briefings and formal communication with senior staff at the Australia Council, Create NSW, and Arts Tasmania be undertaken. Investigations with other State funding bodies outside of NSW and Arts Tasmania should also be undertaken to reflect the national nature of the new entity. Meetings with the relevant State and Federal Ministers and their key advisors should also occur.

Following these meetings, it is recommended that a broader communication plan to the wider industry be developed and implemented as soon as possible.

The Board and staff of the new entity should be guided by important advice from a new National Advisory Panel, which should be immediately constituted as outlined in section 5.4 below.

5.3 Strategic Focus

As mentioned in sections 3 and 4 of this review, the overwhelming desire of the sector is for Playwriting Australia's core strategic focus to remain unchanged. It is widely acknowledged that the organisation is not resourced to do everything, all of the time, and this will be particularly true as a new merged entity comes to terms with itself.

It is recommended that Playwriting Australia's work in the discovery and development of non-dominant voices remain at the new entity's core. The organisation has gained the respect of many participants, especially within its First Nations' Retreats and the Muru program. Similarly, the Lotus Program and other considerations in the development and mentoring of culturally and linguistically diverse playwrights are seen to be something to which the organisation has been particularly attentive. A continued focus on the discovery and development of First Nations, Asian, and works from culturally and linguistically diverse communities is recommended. It is recommended that works of ambition and scale remain a priority.

From page to stage – a collaborative development

The most critical key performance indicator for Playwriting Australia is staged, professional, productions of work seen by the widest possible audiences. Embedded relationships with the theatre sector are key, and a greater sense of partnership and connection between Playwriting Australia and the small, medium and larger theatre presenters, festivals, and independent producers is essential.

A key imperative for a national development organisation is a longer-term view and the identification of underrepresented areas requiring development. It is essential that this is done in partnership and with the imprimatur of the producing companies. Only a close relationship with producing entities will enable an alignment of longer-term vision and the essential programming of identified writers.

Developing a fast-tracked relationship for writers towards organisations that can produce their work is of primary importance. Generally, Artistic Directors of companies prefer to have a primary relationship with playwrights for their own organisation. They like to be an essential part of the play's development. For a work to become too developed, ironically perhaps, may make it less attractive to an Artistic Director who would like to be a part of the artistic journey rather than being presented with a 'finished' play, especially perhaps in the case of new and emerging writers.

Developing writers' work in isolation of producing entities' interest is neither efficient nor ultimately profitable. Development of scripts which are deemed unlikely to have professional presentation may have some academic or research interest but should not be the primary focus of this organisation. A more focussed strategy is recommended where a National Advisory Panel (discussed in section 5.4 of this review below) jointly identifies strategic areas of focus and discovery for the new entity.

Playwriting Australia's key job is to find writers for companies and to undertake preliminary mentoring and development work as required to prepare them for a production period, in consultation and collaboration with a producing entity or entities. A co-operative and co-ordinated formal approach to development is required with co-investment from both parties. Co-investment need not necessarily be an equal sharing of costs, and indeed within the small to medium or independent sectors is unlikely to be, but both parties having 'skin in the game' is essential, rather than Playwriting Australia becoming a de facto bank for development funding alone. Initial mentoring and a filling out of identified gaps in playwrights' practice should continue to be a role the new entity fulfils.

Dramaturgical support and the development of dramaturgy as a process, rather than necessarily a role to be played by an individual throughout the process, was raised by a number of respondents. A greater focus on dramaturgical intervention and skill is seen to be important and is probably beyond the scope of a renewed merged organisation in the immediate term. Dramaturgical support for culturally and linguistically diverse works is something seen as highly specialised and will need particular attention as a greater number of these works are brought to the stage. Not all companies will necessarily have the in-house skills to support these types of works, and this should be an area where Playwriting Australia can offer insights from the range of contacts and work it has undertaken over a longer period.

It is acknowledged that writers with differing levels of experience will need bespoke development programs of various lengths, however, it is recommended that the core focus be a fast track to production through introductions to companies and directors. Recognising that many of the larger organisations have their own stable of writers, getting new work up within an internally competitive company environment will require deft research and relationships. Often a pathway to production for a writer may be best served through a popular director, rather than a direct approach to the company itself. Identification and partnerships with interesting and sought-after directors is an important channel to consider. Delicate ushering of writers, especially those with limited experience of the industry, is essential, but the main role is to quickly bring them to a point where they can establish an unmediated relationship with a company or a director that can bring their work to the stage.

An analysis of a sample of 235 Australian plays suggest that ten directors have directed 36% (85) of the total, and the top 20 directors have done 53% (124). Within the sample only 24 people have directed 3 or more Australian plays, and 82 directors (of the 108 in the sample) had directed only one or two new plays.

Co-commissioning and multiple seasons

Where possible, a greater communication and connection between companies could see a greater number of co-commissions and multiple seasons of new works. This might also be achieved through co-commissioning within the large festival and arts centre networks in the context of the Major Festivals Initiative.

Multiple seasons and shared projects are more likely to occur in an environment of trust, shared vision and information sharing. In effect, an additional pooled development arm for the sector is possible where companies are not in direct competition and this should be striven for in the medium term.

National Play Festival

The National Play Festival is an important industry gathering that allows playwrights to celebrate their collective effort and hear their work read by professional actors. In the past the festival was an active marketplace for companies to attend and see and hear new work and meet playwrights. Over time companies, having developed their own groups of writers and internal development programs, no longer send senior staff to the festival to discover new work.

Understanding that development of plays happens year-round and the Festival no longer functions as a marketplace, Playwriting Australia has been in the process of transitioning the festival into a new form of conference.

Writers of all levels of experience and cultural backgrounds highly value the opportunity to come together. A new model of festival headlined by a cultural leader posing questions around writing and playwriting practice, how work comes to market and some of the larger international issues for the field would be of interest and attract both playwrights and senior company members. Creating environments where industry and playwrights come together formally, and informally, is key to a more developed relationship with the field.

Discussions mooted a 2021 festival to be held in partnership with the Adelaide Writers' Festival and Flinders University within the Adelaide Festival are a positive example of a model with a renewed and higher level of debate and engagement. Within the new model, showcasing of plays and the introduction of new playwrights will be features to consider. Opportunities for publishing and wider discussions around the previous functions of Australian Plays are plentiful, especially attached to a literary and festival environment.

A new, vertically integrated entity of a scale and scope not previously seen before within Australian theatre will be well positioned to amplify a new model of festival debate, development and publication.

5.4 Leadership Considerations

As mentioned in section 4.1 of this review, since its inception in 2006, Playwriting Australia has been headed by four successive Artistic Directors in the role of organisational CEO. As the organisation changes form and merges with Australian Plays, the organisation will need to fit itself for a new and evolving future.

An Executive Producer Model

In addition to the new shared goals of the enlarged entity, the primary success of the organisation will be not only the identification and development of new scripts, but critically bringing them to production. Leaving aside the absence of any public outcome or revenue opportunity for the writer, the development of a script with no professional rehearsal and production outcome remains an incomplete playwriting process for the playwright.

Given that there are a number of artistic leaders and decision makers within the companies who will ultimately decide which work to present, another artistic filter or director at the Playwriting Australia level could be seen as an impediment to the successful placement of a play with a producing company.

A key focus must be on the ability of the CEO to identify talent and match it with market potential. It is recommended that the CEO role move from being one of an Artistic Director, to that of an Executive Producer. An Executive Producer may well have either an artistic or administrative background, but primarily they must be able to conceive, identify, develop and deliver a future life for the work of a playwright. A detailed knowledge of producing companies, contexts, market conditions, audiences, requirements and challenges, together with solid relationships within festivals and the presenting networks will be essential for this role to be optimally successful. Central to the success of any 'producer' model is the brokering of creative relationships. As such, a sound knowledge of playwrights and their collaborators will be key. Taste is always important, but primarily the role will be one of identifying and matching talent with opportunity and in so doing, ultimately deliver the playwright the desired public season of their work.

The orientation of the organisation must be one of partnership and trusted relationships. Blended with the commercial skill base needed to oversee the functions of Australian Plays, the Executive Producer must be able to recruit and lead relationship builders who can crowdsource insights from a national and international field. Assuming the Executive Producer has key relationships with the larger producers, bridgebuilding staff with closer relationships with the small to medium and independent sectors will be vital to ensure the organisation can identify talent and understand the requirements and opportunities with the larger industry.

A new Executive Producer could be a playwright, director or other artist but might also be a creative programmer who knows and admires the field. It is essential that they have a high level of cultural awareness, the respect of their peers, established relationships that they can call upon, an energy and focus around income streams with established skills and interest in building relationships with philanthropists.

A National Advisory Panel

The new organisation will not function effectively unless it has the buy-in of the broader theatre industry. Over the years the trust, respect and ultimate investment by the companies in Playwriting Australia as an organisation has varied. It is essential that companies see value in and are themselves invested in the longer-term strategic work the organisation is undertaking, effectively as an independent research and development arm on their behalf.

It is recommended that a senior (voluntary) national advisory panel, representative of the sector, be established to meet in person and work closely with the Executive Producer and relevant staff of the new entity to discuss, establish and jointly set the longer-term development agenda. This panel will work to ensure information and initiatives are shared, links through the ecology are made, pathways across and between playwrights, companies, and producers are also made and that the organisation and sector can draw upon international best practice. It is recommended that the National Advisory Panel advise on whose voices are next, and how the current voices are best positioned to be embedded for longevity and future success.

Recognising that, in actuality, the presentation decisions remain exclusively with the artistic leadership of each of the companies, the success of the National Advisory Panel will depend upon its constituents being within high-level artistic leadership positions within companies that have an ability to mount professional productions of plays. It is recommended that the panel initially comprise of up to six playwrights drawn from across the sector, four representatives from the major producing companies, and two from the small to medium and independent sectors. It is essential that there is representation from First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse individuals. It is recommended that positions cycle on and off every two years in a staggered fashion and the panel meet quarterly. Companies should fund the attendance of their own members, and playwrights should be afforded assistance as required to attend meetings in person.

In addition to setting and monitoring progress, the panel will provide additional opportunities for playwrights to meet and work with senior company members, and for playwrights and companies to gain a better understanding of the drivers behind decision making and creative writing requirements and processes.

The panel's role will also be to embed and amplify the work of the organisation through their own networks, and they may be called upon as artistic representatives from time to time for philanthropic and stakeholder events.

5.5 Transitional Considerations

Pending negotiations, there will inevitably be a period of vulnerability as Playwriting Australia and Australian Plays undertake the requisite due diligence and merger arrangements.

Given the reduced staffing of Playwriting Australia at present and the need for leadership support, within the transitional Board structure recommended in section 5.2 of this review, it is recommended that Interim Chair David Berthold act as Executive Chair for up to three days a week.

Stability and alacrity will be key to ensure that both organisations develop appropriate and comprehensive communication plans to their diverse stakeholders. It is recommended that relevant contract staff of Playwriting Australia (Michelle Kotevski) be maintained to continue to deliver the annual program at the same time as providing strategic advice and working closely with the Interim Chair and transitional Board to manage merger arrangements.

Organisations with a small core staff are by their nature fragile. The transitional Board will need to focus to ensure corporate history and relationships with key stakeholders remain firm and intact.

Consideration must be given within merger negotiations to practical items such as intellectual property, databases, websites, and organisations' individual and respective deductible gift recipient status. The data of both organisations is key to their success and survival. It is of value to the wider industry and must not be lost.

Following communications with the wider industry, round table discussions may be appropriate to ensure that any concerns or further ideas can be taken into account during merger discussions.

5.6 Funding Mechanisms

Given the current funding advice for both Playwriting Australia and Australian Plays the creation of a new entity should be done as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Recognising the national concern at losing both key national organisations, after initial discussions with the Australia Council and Create NSW, strategic transitional funding should be requested. It is recommended that the reserves of both organisations are used to develop a solid business plan to present to governments once the new entity has been resolved and to fund an interim period of transition before longer-term funding is resolved. It is recommended that the new entity develop a longer-term plan for funding which should include the development of a proposal to all States and Territories. Such a proposal would be strengthened if it were to be led by the Australia Council, drawing attention to the new entity's national impact, reach and role in the discovery, development, definition, preservation and dissemination of a distinctively Australian cultural voice. Acknowledging the evolving theatre ecology and the nation's diverse cultural consciousness, it is appropriate that a new organisation of this scale and remit achieve national support.

As outlined in section 3 of this review, Playwriting Australia has been extremely successful in private fundraising, and it is anticipated that a new entity and its assets will be even more so. It is recommended that in tandem with requests to governments, a philanthropic campaign exploring matched funding opportunities to assist the new organisation in its transition be explored.

A continued culture of philanthropy must be driven at Board level in order to manage an organisation with short-term funding cycles and longer-term program of development. Philanthropy and advocacy will be key parts of the role for the Board, staff and National Advisory Panel members.

Given the new nature of the organisation with a publishing and educational arm, as well as a research and development agenda, it is recommended that key tertiary institutions be targeted as significant cash and in-kind partners. Partnerships would make sense with universities headed by confident academic leaders fluent in the cultural and literary arena, those with larger cultural awareness and advocacy programs, courses in playwriting and significant publishing arms. The most obvious institutions with these characteristics include the University of Melbourne, the University of Western Australia and the University of New South Wales.

Ideally, as seen in larger industries, the funding of the longer-term research and development arm for theatre would be jointly funded by the constituent companies themselves. It is not anticipated that any of the companies will be in a position to contribute at the current point in their development cycles given the financial duress many are experiencing. It is anticipated that a higher level of trust and engagement will also need to be built over a period of years before such a scheme might be initiated.

5.7 Playwright Support and Development

The ability for the organisation to support playwrights in all facets of their development is not possible. The building of stronger informal constituencies within groups of writers, and creating environments for them to share experiences and ideas amongst their peers and meet the wider sector is important. Advice requested of a more technical industrial nature is available from the Australian Writers' Guild and it is recommended that playwrights continue to be referred there for advice of this nature.

The development of playwrights as a first priority and development of plays as a second priority, or the other way around, were subjects broadly mooted within the submissions. Ideally both avenues would be possible, but in constrained circumstances decisions will have to be made on a case by case basis on how to prioritise. Expert opinion from the National Advisory Panel will assist in deliberations such as these, of which there will be many as the organisation evolves.

Of concern throughout a number of the submissions was an apparent lack of understanding of the economics and functioning of the professional theatre companies, and especially the correlation between box office revenues, audience expectations and taste development. It is recommended that opportunities for professional development are offered in order for playwrights to become more familiar with how companies operate and why decisions are taken. A better understanding of the environment would assist playwrights in better understanding how to conceive and pitch their work.

Acknowledging the flow of writers from the stage to other genres, a focus for the organisation may also be to promote playwriting as a genre. Enthusiating writers about the possibilities of live performance will increase the interest in plays, the development of new forms and ultimately the overall quality of writing for Australian stages and beyond.

06. Recommendations

A Consolidated Vision for Plays and Playwriting in Australia

At a time when Australian plays have never been more distinctive, prominent and present on Australian stages, two of the nation's critical vehicles to develop and support playwriting are in jeopardy.

This review neither recommends the closure of Playwriting Australia nor the merging of Playwriting Australia with a production house or producing/touring organisation.

This review recommends combining the strengths of Playwriting Australia and Australian Plays to create a new, larger, more connected, more public, and more commercially viable entity to support playwrights and playwriting into the future.

Outlined below are the essential 33 recommendations of this review. Further detail and explanation of these recommendations can be found within the body of the review.

A NEW ENTITY

1. That Playwriting Australia's role in the identification, development and presentation of new voices to stages remains critical, and this function must continue to exist.
2. That Playwriting Australia merge with Australian Plays to establish a new national and efficient long-range play discovery, development, and publishing entity to promote new plays to the arts industry and education sectors.
3. That the current goals of Playwriting Australia remain core to the new entity and, following negotiation with Australian Plays, be minimally augmented as required.
4. That due diligence by each organisation commences in advance of merger finalisation.

GOVERNANCE

5. That a smaller, transitional Board of Playwriting Australia be formed to prepare for the merger, to be chaired by theatre maker and festival director David Berthold and initially comprise of lawyer Simone Smith and playwright Angela Betzien.
6. Following a proposed merger between the two entities, that a new Board be formed and be initially comprised of two Board Members of each organisation, two playwrights, two senior members of major producing companies, and a balance of members to fill out the requisite skill base.

7. That briefings and formal communication with Australia Council, Create NSW, Arts Tasmania and relevant State and Federal Ministers commence immediately as part of the due diligence process.
8. That an appropriate communication plan for the industry and stakeholders be developed.
9. That the new organisation is headed by an appropriately qualified Executive Producer, with the relevant relationships, skills and respect of the producing companies and broader sector.
10. That a diverse National Advisory Panel of six playwrights drawn from across the sector, four representatives from the major producing companies, and two representatives from the small to medium and independent sectors be formed to help guide the new organisation's strategic focus.

STRATEGIC FOCUS FOR THE NEW ENTITY

11. That the discovery and development of non-dominant voices is a central mission.
12. That works of scale and ambition are a priority.

Collaborative Development

13. That there is a cooperative, coordinated and shared investment in script development workshops between the new entity and producing entities.

Co-commissioning

14. That an environment of trust and shared vision through shared development goals and outcomes be created to encourage greater numbers of co-commissions and multiple seasons of new works.

National Play Festival

15. That a new festival model with a renewed and higher level of debate and engagement continue to be developed to attract playwrights, senior company members and the wider industry.

LEADERSHIP

Executive Producer

16. That the CEO role be moved from being one of an Artistic Director to that of an Executive Producer, with a focus on being able to conceive, identify, develop and deliver a future life for the work of a playwright.
17. That the Executive Producer and staff have key relationships with larger producers and with the small to medium and independent sectors in order to identify talent and understand the requirements and opportunities across the industry at large.
18. That the Executive Producer has the respect of their peers, established senior industry relationships, and an energy and focus around income streams with established skills and interest in building relationships with philanthropists.

National Advisory Panel

19. That a senior (voluntary) National Advisory Panel, diverse in its representation and respected by the sector, be established to meet in person and work closely with the Executive Producer and relevant staff of the new entity to discuss, establish and jointly set the longer-term development agenda.
20. That positions on the panel cycle on and off every two years in a staggered fashion and the panel meet quarterly.
21. That the companies fund the attendance of their own members, and playwrights are afforded assistance as required to attend meetings in person.

TRANSITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

22. That within the transitional Board structure, Interim Chair David Berthold act as Executive Chair for up to three days per week.
23. That relevant contract staff of Playwriting Australia be maintained to continue to deliver the annual program and provide strategic advice to the Interim Chair and transitional Board.
24. That consideration be given within merger negotiations to practical items such as intellectual property, databases, websites and organisations' individual and respective deductible gift recipient status.
25. That round table discussions with the wider industry be convened as appropriate to ensure that any concerns or further ideas can be taken into account during merger discussions.

FUNDING MECHANISMS

26. That transitional strategic funding be requested from the Australia Council and Create NSW.
27. That the new entity consider a proposal to all States and Territories, ideally led by the Australia Council, to jointly fund the organisation given its national impact, reach and role in the discovery, development, definition, preservation and dissemination of a distinctively Australian cultural voice.
28. That the reserves of both organisations are used to develop a business plan to present to governments and fund a period of transition before longer-term funding is resolved.
29. That a philanthropic campaign exploring matched funding opportunities to assist the new organisation in its transition be explored.
30. That key tertiary institutions be targeted as significant cash and in-kind partners.

PLAYWRIGHT SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

31. That consideration be given to the establishment of professional development for playwrights to become more familiar with how companies operate and broader industry dynamics.
32. That playwrights continue to be referred to the Australian Writers' Guild for advice of a technical or industrial nature.
33. That the organisation considers actively promoting writing for the stage as a genre to the wider writing community.

07. Appendix

Appendix I:	Playwriting Australia: Discussion Guide for Submissions, REĀ Consulting Pty Ltd	<i>page 39</i>
Appendix II:	Letter from Artistic Directors to the Australia Council and Playwriting Australia	<i>page 49</i>
Appendix III:	The National Voice 2018, Australian Writers' Guild	<i>page 52</i>
Appendix IV:	Support for Playwriting in Australia; An Environmental Scan: 2019, Michelle Kotevski	<i>page 63</i>

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Appendix I:
Playwriting Australia:
Discussion Guide for Submissions,
REĀ Consulting Pty Ltd

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Consultation Paper

Playwriting Australia

Discussion Guide for Submissions

August 2019

Contents

01	Purpose	<i>Page. 3</i>
02	Context	<i>Page. 3</i>
03	Scope	<i>Page. 4</i>
04	Playwriting Australia Function and Goals	<i>Page. 5</i>
05	A Guide To Your Submission	<i>Page. 6</i>
06	Appendix	<i>Page. 8</i>

01 Purpose

Following a period of internal transition and consultation with playwrights around the country, the Board of Playwriting Australia (PWA) has commissioned this review to consider the most effective and sustainable model of supporting play development that also offers a pathway for writers to see their work through to production and support playwrights in their career development. This review will help guide PWA as it makes decisions about its future.

02 Context

Playwriting Australia (PWA) was established in 2006 and was born out of the consolidated investment previously allocated to the Australian National Playwrights' Conference and Playworks.

Building on the legacy of these two organisations, Playwriting Australia has worked to seed, develop and guide or promote high-quality Australian plays into production, nurturing the career development of promising artists and in so doing, deliver a critical mass of scripts reflective of a diverse Australian culture to all levels of the theatre sector.

The landscape in 2019 is very different to 2006. The presentation of Australian work on professional stages has developed enormously. Australian voices are now a prominent part of our major companies' subscription programs, embraced and expected by audiences across all companies within the sector.

First Nations plays have become essential to Australian theatre and there is a greater diversity of voices being produced. Today a great number of theatre companies actively invest in and produce new Australian plays. PWA is not entirely responsible for this but is pleased to have played a catalytic role.

There is more work to be done, and an opportunity now to capitalise on current successes to examine a further deliberate step in the development of Australian plays and playwriting.

This review will help inform the future structures and processes to support the development of Australian plays ensuring that these mechanisms reflect the diversity of contemporary Australia.

03 Scope

The review will consider and make recommendations on:

- the range of existing support mechanisms for play development in Australia;
- the environmental elements which have changed since PWA was established;
- whether any of the objectives and functions or services currently provided by PWA are no longer required or could best be provided by other organisations or the sector itself, or whether new objectives and functions are needed.

This discussion guide invites written submissions from all parts of the sector. Submissions are encouraged especially from playwrights and the broader theatre sector: individuals, artists, theatre professionals, philanthropists, audience members, and government entities.

PWA's focus on the development of underrepresented voices within the sector from First Nations, culturally and linguistically diverse and LGBTIQ+ writers, writers experiencing disability and regional writers and communities is important to this review, and submissions from these voices are specifically sought.

There will be a four-week response deadline from the date of circulation. In order to assist with the widest possible range of submissions, please disseminate the discussion document through your networks.

04 PWA Function and Goals

The function and goals of PWA as outlined in the 2018 Annual Report are available in more detail as an Appendix to this document.

PWA has three main arms of operation:

- script development
- writer development, and
- community building within and between playwrights and the sector.

Each year PWA assesses approximately 300 script submissions to its programs. It supports the development and promotion of up to 80 new Australian plays and employs more than 200 artists in a year.

PWA is focused on generating new works and helping to create career sustainability and longevity for writers at all stages in their careers. Stated goals of the organisation are:

- more excellent and ambitious new plays on the Australian stage;
- to be a national organisation that invests in the diversity of contemporary Australian playwriting, developing a body of work reflecting contemporary Australia;
- to see playwrights at the heart of theatre culture, with higher status and profile; and
- maintain our impact by growing diverse income streams within a sustainable business model.

PWA has also actively supported plays that speak to the diversity of Australia and Australia's national conversations and identity. This includes working with First Nations and CALD writers, LGBTIQ+ writers, and regional writers and communities.

PWA has operated with a total annual turnover of c. \$1.1m. This is made up of Commonwealth and State assistance through grants of c. \$700k, and a very successful program of philanthropic and foundation support of c. \$400k. Concerns have been raised by the Board at the level of resourcing available given the extensive national operation, and the absence of box office, membership and others streams of income.

05 A Guide to Your Submission

This review seeks a response from the field as to how best create an environment within which the development of diverse Australian playwrights and the production of their plays can flourish.

Specifically, views are sought in relation to the relevance and efficacy of the current mechanisms to assist the development of playwrights and their plays.

Having established a view on these mechanisms, the review seeks views on options for the best model of their delivery.

In the context of the changing environment within which plays are being developed and presented since PWA was formed, this review will consider models including a revitalised and restructured PWA, a new organisation, or a new arm within an existing organisation (or organisations). PWA's ability to implement these final two options is naturally very limited, but there is value in offering them for wider consideration.

Please feel free to be guided by the three questions outlined below, however we encourage you to make submissions about any issues that you find relevant for consideration. Please cite examples where appropriate.

Submissions of no more than six (6) A4 pages should be emailed to Richard Evans: richard@rea-consulting.com no later than 5pm, Friday 6 September 2019.

• Question One

What is required in order to create and develop the next generation of Australian playwrights and new high-quality works of national and global relevance?

- how can representation of non-dominant voices be improved?
- are audiences more accepting and interested in Australian plays?
- how do we continue the momentum into the future?
- how do we ensure diversity of playwrights and playwriting?

• Question Two

Recognising that there have been some changes in the presentation of plays across Australia in recent years, where are the gaps in representative voices on our stages, and what mechanisms might be introduced to make a step change in presentation?

- are the current relationships and links between playwrights and producing companies sufficient or should more be done to foster these relationships?
- should previous organisational goals and ambitions of PWA evolve and if so, how?
- is the National Play Festival still relevant in its current form?

- **Question Three**

Understanding that PWA is one point of access into the industry for new plays and playwrights: what are the benefits of a national organisation versus state focused organisations?

- a) how relevant and effective are the recent goals and ambitions of PWA in addressing current and emerging issues in the presentation of plays; and
- b) how might these evolving goals and ambitions best be delivered in a sustainable way into the future?
 - within a revitalised PWA governance and staffing structure?
 - within an existing organisation external to PWA?
 - split between existing organisations?
 - the establishment of a new body?

06 Appendix

PWA FUNCTION AND GOALS AS STATED IN 2018 ANNUAL REPORT:

Our primary function is the advancement of artists and repertoire and in this role we deliver services to identify and nurture the skills of promising artists.

Through our extensive workshop program we develop high quality new scripts and broker the relationship between theatre companies and playwrights.

We also act as a creative research and development hub, delivering initiatives that identify new directions for Australian theatre, investigate models for best practice in play development and develop the capacity of the industry to better support Australian playwriting.

GOAL 1:

More excellent and ambitious new plays on the Australian stage

Objectives

- Create, develop and support the production of high quality new Australian plays.
- Provide artistic leadership and professional development to extend the boundaries of playwriting.
- Connect the highest quality new works and writers with producers nationally and internationally

GOAL 2:

To be a national organisation that invests in the diversity of contemporary Australian playwriting, developing a body of work reflecting contemporary Australia

Objectives

- Source and support playwrights from the widest possible range of cultural, geographical, socio-economic and demographic backgrounds.
- Maintain and strategically extend equality of access to our programs nationally, focusing on expansion in WA and including outer metropolitan and regional areas.

GOAL 3:

To see playwrights at the heart of theatre culture, with higher status and profile

Objectives

- Elevate the role of playwrights within the theatre making process
 - Advocate for playwrights in decision-making roles within the theatre industry
 - Champion and advocate for the value of playwrights in Australian society
-

GOAL 4:

Maintain our impact by growing diverse income streams within a sustainable business model

Objectives

- Restructure the company while preserving the quality of support for artists
 - Maintain and grow our focus on philanthropic income
 - Focus on other sources of funding income, particularly state arts agencies, trusts and foundations and the new Australian Government Catalyst arts funding program
 - Maintain best practice management and governance principles
-

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Appendix II:
**Letter from Artistic Directors
to the Australia Council and
Playwriting Australia**

Thursday 25th July, 2019

Play Writing Australia
C/O Peter Wilson - Chair
The Arts Exchange
Level 3, 10 Hickson Rd Sydney NSW 2000

To the Australia Council for the Arts and Play Writing Australia

We, Artistic Directors of the Australian theatre industry, are writing to express our concern regarding Play Writing Australia (PWA). We write to affirm the need for an independent organisation representing playwrights and championing new writing and request action to safeguard this important national body.

The Media Release distributed by PWA on the 25th June implies the organisation will close its doors following a brief independent review. The media release announced the redundancy of its staff, throwing doubt over the organisation's capacity to deliver the remaining funded programs throughout 2019 and 2020 or to secure Key Organisations funding from the Australia Council to support the company beyond.

As representatives of the Australian theatre industry and the producers of new Australian work, we write to express our grave concerns for the implications of losing our peak body for play writing. PWA is one of the Australian theatre industry's most important service organisations. It plays a vital role supporting playwrights, championing new work and offering consistency in the advocacy of writing for Australian theatre. While theatre companies are beholden to their audiences and their immediate community, PWA was founded in response to a need identified by Australian playwrights and theatre companies to serve the wider sector. It affects us all.

PWA is responsible for providing a link between the largest professional theatre companies and the independent and small-to-medium theatre sector. Events managed by PWA bring our diverse sector together to discuss, reflect and showcase new writing. This showcase has led to many new works receiving production opportunities that otherwise would not have occurred. PWA's services are particularly vital to the under resourced independent and small-to-medium sector that frequently needs support commissioning or developing professional theatre. These services are not replicated elsewhere in the industry.

Though our theatre companies are involved in commissioning, developing and staging new Australian plays, we are not resourced to monitor and address whole of industry concerns and initiatives. As theatre companies our aesthetics and programming frameworks change with each change in leadership. The loss of PWA would have ramifications for playwrights nation wide and impact all levels of the industry.

We are concerned that, should PWA lose its Australia Council Key Organisations funding, there will be no capacity to reimagine the organisation or establish a new body for play writing. It is our concern, regardless of the outcomes of its independent review being conducted, our peak service organisation will be 'defunded and closed, leaving a gap that none of our theatre companies are in a position to fill.

Following the closure of the Australian National Playwrights Conference and Playworks, PWA was born from a recognised need within the industry for a peak body for new Australian play writing. That need has not diminished. The closure of PWA would have consequences for the whole industry, yet these decisions appear to have been made without transparency or industry consultation.

We write to request urgent action is taken. Whether this be a renewal and continuance of PWA or a decision to safeguard funds to establish a new organisation to service future of Australian play writing. The potential loss of PWA has implications for everyone involved in theatre in Australia.

Sincerely

Christian Leavesley
Arena Theatre Company

Fraser Corfield
Australian Theatre for Young People

Luke Kerridge
Barking Gecko Theatre Company

Peter Evans
Bell Shakespeare Company

Clare Watson
Black Swan State Theatre Company

Sean Pardy
Browns Mart Theatre

Glenn Terry
Darlinghurst Theatre Company

Mark Kilmurry
Ensemble Theatre

Lee Lewis
Griffin Theatre Company

Karla Conway
Hothouse Theatre

Rachael Maza
Ilbijerri Theatre Company

Suellen Maunder
JUTE Theatre Company

Todd Macdonald
La Boite Theatre Company

Matthew Lutton
Malthouse Theatre

Brett Sheehy
Melbourne Theatre Company

Eva Di Cesare & Sandie Eldridge
Monkey Baa Theatre Company

Sam Strong
Queensland Theatre

Ella Caldwell
Red Stitch

Kip Williams
Sydney Theatre Company

Sam Routledge
Terrapin Puppet Theatre

Rosemary Myers
Windmill Theatre Company

Eva Grace Mullaley
Yirra Yaakin Theatre Company

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Appendix III:

The National Voice 2018, Australian Writers' Guild

AUSTRALIAN WRITERS' GUILD

THE NATIONAL VOICE 2018



AN ANNUAL ANALYSIS OF
THEATRE PROGRAMMING TRENDS



INTRODUCTION

The National Voice is an annual survey and analysis of programming trends across 10 of Australia's major theatre companies. Conducted by the Australian Writers' Guild playwrights committee, it aims to assess the commitment of these companies, as artistic leaders in our community, to programming the work of Australian playwrights in all its diversity and forms.

In 2018, 94 shows were surveyed across the 10 companies, which include each state's theatre company – Sydney Theatre Company, Melbourne Theatre Company, Queensland Theatre, State Theatre Company of South Australia and Blake Swan State Theatre Company – as well as Belvoir St Theatre, Malthouse Theatre, Ensemble Theatre, Griffin Theatre Company and La Boite Theatre Company.

For statistical purposes, the research focuses on the main stage programs of these companies. Education, independent or profit-share programs that fall outside the main subscription offerings have been excluded from the report, as have very short stand-up comedy seasons, which augment or accompany main stage programming rather than comprise the company's core business.

As with previous reports, the survey and analysis focuses on the Australian-written content of each season, paying particular attention to new and original Australian works while also mapping trends in revivals and adaptations. As a matter of interest in line with previous years, gender parity across Australian written-content has also been surveyed.

AWG recognises that theatre is, of course, created through many different processes, and that there are creators of theatrical works who, even when working in a substantially text-based form, might not describe themselves primarily as playwrights. This is ambiguous territory, but the purview of this reports is playwrights, and so in years past, while acknowledging works created by a devised process, we have tended to include these works in a different bracket in our statistics. No doubt others might come to a different conclusion about the categorisation of particular works, and we welcome that conversation. We also acknowledge the limits of our lexicon in lumping numerous different processes into a catch-all phrase such as 'devised', but, for the sake of readability, we press on.

Finally, we acknowledge that this snapshot is partial and that there is a great deal of brilliant work created by individuals and companies not within the remit of *The National Voice*. We applaud their work in creating engaging, stimulating and entertaining theatre and encourage them – alongside the 10 companies surveyed – to continue to embrace, nurture and program original works by Australian playwrights.



MAIN FINDINGS

There are 94 plays to be staged across the main seasons of the 10 largest theatre companies in Australia in 2018, with 58 works – or 62% – by an Australian playwright. This is up on 2017's figures, where 52 works (55%) were by an Australian playwright.

An additional two works are co-devised original works where no playwright is specifically credited, as well as one Australian adaptation with no playwright credited. This brings the total number of Australian works (written or devised) to 61 (65%). Of these, 44 are original works, including 40 new works and 4 revivals, and 17 are adaptations.

Over the years 2015–2018, the percentages of work programmed with an Australian playwright attached (including adaptations by not devised work) were 63%, 50%, 55% and 62% respectively.

2018 shows an overall increase in the number of Australian-written works compared with 2016 and 2017, however it marks a slight decline in the number of original Australian works programmed from last year (45 in 2017 and 44 in 2018), with an increased number of adaptations accounting for the additional Australian-written works this year.

While this is a point of difference to 2017, the number of adaptations in 2018 remains similar to those of 2015 and 2016, indicating an overall trend towards adaptations making up approximately 30% of Australian-written seasons and 18% of seasons overall.

Australian revivals remain a small part of the overall seasons with 4 programmed in 2018. This is in line with the average over the last four years, however marks a drop in revivals from 2017 where 8 were programmed. Of interest, all 4 revivals in 2018 were written by Australian male playwrights.

Encouragingly, we note that 8 of the 10 theatre companies have at least 50% Australian-written content in their season, with five sitting between 70 and 80%. Ensemble Theatre and Melbourne Theatre Company remain the exceptions, with 40% and 18% respectively.

When looking exclusively at original Australian-written work in a season, 5 of the 10 theatre companies have at least 50% original Australian content.

Griffin Theatre Company and La Boite Theatre Company come out on top with 100% of their 2018 seasons new and original Australian content.



GENDER PARITY

In 2018 all 10 theatre companies achieved gender parity or better across their Australian season, however we note that in some instances this is more a reflection of the low number of Australian works in the season (see MTC and Ensemble).

Of the 58 plays with an Australian credited playwright, 36 works (62%) were by an Australian female playwright, with the remaining 22 works (38%) by male playwrights.

This trend is consistent across original Australian work and adaptations, with 28.5 (65%) of the 44 original Australian works and 9 (52%) of the 17 adaptations by an Australian female playwright.

When we look at the gender split across original Australian work in the 2018 season, 8 of the 10 companies have achieved gender parity or better, with Ensemble Theatre and Melbourne Theatre Company both falling behind. This is in part due to there being only two Australian works in Melbourne Theatre Company's 2018 season, one of which is an adaptation and not included in these numbers.

An additional 3 works (2 original and 1 adaptation) had no writer credited but were given a 50/50 gender split when looking at statistics across all 61 Australian plays in a season.



AWG SAYS

We are pleased to again note the increased programming of Australian playwrights in 2018 compared with the previous two years, with 62% of the overall seasons written by Australian playwrights. This marks a return to numbers we saw in 2015, the first year of *The National Voice*, and a noticeable increase from 2016 when numbers dropped to 50%.


Of interest is that this jump in Australian-written work is not a result of an increase in original Australian work, but rather is due to the number of Australian adaptations programmed, which bounced back to numbers similar to 2015 and 2016. The number of original Australian works remains consistent with 2017, which could suggest a stagnancy in how many original works companies are willing to program in a single year, and a hesitancy from companies to take a chance on increasing the number of new voices in a season.

2018 does, however, see the second highest number of original works by Australian playwrights since *The National Voice* began, with 44 original works programmed following the 45 we saw last year. While we recognise the increase over the last few years, and the complexities involved in programming a balanced theatre season, we continue to encourage theatre companies to look at the successes of bold and original Australian works and to further their commitment to programming new works in years to come.

When averaged over the four years covered by *National Voice* reporting, original Australian-written works make up only 42% of the Australian seasons. As *The National Voice* noted back in 2015, it is challenging to sustain a viable practice as a playwright when less than 50% of the work programmed by the 10 main theatre companies are original Australian plays. Further to this, it is concerning that there are only on average 5 Australian revivals per year, indicating a disconnect between Australia's rich theatre history and a continued life for these works on the stage.

AWG strongly believes that Australian theatre is served best when the unique, complex stories of our past, our present and our people are told through the original voices of our playwrights, placed at the forefront of our main theatre seasons where they may connect with an audience. Whether this be through programming original works, giving further life to recently produced works around the nation or by reviving those revered plays from Australia's rich theatre canon, our national theatre culture – and the livelihoods of our playwrights – relies on a commitment by the 10 major companies to diverse Australian programming.

While four years of data can by no means indicate definite trends, we are cautiously optimistic the overall number of Australian-written works this season reflects this commitment, and that *The National Voice* serves alongside voices in the industry to foster an appetite for inventive, diverse Australian content.



We are encouraged by what is revealed when looking at gender, with all 10 theatre companies achieving gender parity across their Australian season. There is, of course, a bigger picture to be told here regarding statistics – for instance, while MTC has achieved gender parity in their Australian season they have done so through only programming two Australian works, one of which is an adaptation. Statistics on gender parity must therefore be taken within the wider context of the programming of Australian works on stage. It is promising that of the seasons programmed by the 10 companies, all have achieved gender parity across their Australian works – a goal we have long stated is attainable.

AWG recognises and supports the wider industry conversations regarding the importance of a diversity of voices on stage, in particular the representation of LGBTQI+, CaLD, Indigenous and disabled voices. *The National Voice* has deliberately excluded diversity analysis beyond gender from its remit. This does not reflect the value the Committee and AWG attaches to diverse voices on stage; rather, it reflects the Guild's strategy to first engage meaningfully with partners in the diversity space as part of an overall diversity program and to listen before making our voice heard in this space. AWG is committed to working with organisations in an ongoing way to champion better representation of diverse voices on our stages, and welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this discussion in a positive and appropriate manner.

While no statistics are presented below, AWG are keen to see the breadth of diverse stories, cultures and experiences in Australia reflected on stage, and for reporting on diversity on stage to become the norm.

THE SURVEY RESULTS

These statistics are based on the main stage subscription packages of the companies surveyed. Not taken into consideration are works such as stand-up comedy, independent or education seasons which sit outside the main stage subscription package.

AUSTRALIAN CONTENT

Theatre company	Total number of works in season	New Aus. works with Aus. writer credited	Aus. Devised works (no Aus. writer credited)	Aus. Revival	Total original works in season	Percentage original Aus. of original Aus. works in season	Aus. Adaptation	Total Aus. works in season	Percentage of Aus. works in season	Percentage of Aus. writer-credited work in season^
Sydney Theatre Company	14	6	0	1	7	50	3	10	71	71
Melbourne Theatre Company	11	1	0	0	1	11	1	2	18	18
Queensland Theatre Company	8	3	0	0	3	38	3	6	75	75
State Theatre Company SA	10	4	0	2	6	60	2	8	80	80
Black Swan State Theatre Company	8	3	0	1	4	50	0	4	50	50
Belvoir St Theatre*	12	5	0	0	5	42	3*	8	66	58
Malthouse Theatre**	11	4	1**	0	5	45	4	9	82	73
Ensemble Theatre	10	3	0	0	3	30	1	4	40	40
Griffin Theatre Company	4	4	0	0	4	100	0	4	100	100
La Boite Theatre Company^	6	5^	1	0	6	100	0	6	100	83
TOTAL	94	38	2	4	44		17	61		

* *Sami in Paradise* is based on *The Suicide* by Nikolai Erdman without a credited writer and is this being classed as an Australian adaptation but is not included numbers relating to writer-credited works in a season

***Trustees* is a collaborative work between Natalia Kaliada and Nicolai Khalezein from Belarus Free Theatre and Daniel Schlusser and the cast and thus is being classed as a New Australian devised work but with no credited Australian writer

^*The Village* is a devised Australian work, and therefore does not fall under writer-credited work

THE SURVEY RESULTS

GENDER – ORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN WORK (New, devised and revival but not adaptation)

Theatre company	New Aus. works with Aus. writer credited	M \ F	Aus. Devised	M \ F	Aus. Revival	M \ F	Total original Aus. works in season	Total M \ F (original Aus. Work in season)	Percentage M\F (Original Aus. Work in season)
Sydney Theatre Company	6	1 \ 5	0	0	1	1 \ 0	7	2 \ 5	29 \ 71
Melbourne Theatre Company	1	1 \ 0	0	0	0	0 \ 0	1	1 \ 0	100 \ 0
Queensland Theatre Company	3	1.5 \ 1.5	0	0	0	0	3	1.5 \ 1.5	50 \ 50
State Theatre Company SA	4	0 \ 4	0	0	2	2 \ 0	6	2 \ 4	33 \ 66
Black Swan State Theatre Company	3	0 \ 3	0	0	1	1 \ 0	4	1 \ 3	25 \ 75
Belvoir St Theatre	5	2 \ 3	0	0	0	0	5	2 \ 3	40 \ 60
Malthouse Theatre	4	0 \ 4	1	0.5 \ 0.5	0	0	5	0.5 \ 4.5	10 \ 90
Ensemble Theatre	3	2 \ 1	0	0	0	0	3	2 \ 1	66 \ 33
Griffin Theatre Company	4	2 \ 2	0	0	0	0	4	2 \ 2	50 \ 50
La Boite Theatre Company	5	1 \ 4	1	0.5 \ 0.5	0	0	6	1.5 \ 4.5	25 \ 75
TOTAL	38	10.5 \ 27.5	2	1 \ 1	4	4 \ 0	44	15.5 \ 28.5	

GENDER – ORIGINAL AUSTRALIAN WORK (New, devised, revival and adaptation)

Theatre company	Total original Aus. works in season	M \ F	Aus. Adaptation	M \ F	Total Aus. works in season	M \ F	Percentage M \ F (All Aus. Work in season)	Total Aus. Works with Aus. Writer credited^	M \ F	Percentage M \ F (All Aus. Writer-credited work in season)
Sydney Theatre Company	7	2 \ 5	3	0.5 \ 2.5	10	2.5 \ 7.5	25 \ 75	10	2.5 \ 7.5	25 \ 75
Melbourne Theatre Company	1	1 \ 0	1	0 \ 1	2	1 \ 1	50 \ 50	2	1 \ 1	50 \ 50
Queensland Theatre Company	3	1.5 \ 1.5	3	0.5 \ 2.5	6	2 \ 4	33 \ 66	6	2 \ 4	33 \ 66
State Theatre Company SA	6	2 \ 4	2	2 \ 0	8	4 \ 4	50 \ 50	8	4 \ 4	50 \ 50
Black Swan State Theatre Company	4	1 \ 3	0	0	4	1 \ 3	25 \ 75	4	1 \ 3	25 \ 75
Belvoir St Theatre	5	2 \ 3	3	1.5 \ 1.5	8	3.5 \ 4.5	44 \ 56	7	3 \ 4	43 \ 57
Malthouse Theatre	5	0.5 \ 4.5	4	3.5 \ 0.5	9	4 \ 5	44 \ 56	8	3.5 \ 4.5	44 \ 56
Ensemble Theatre	3	2 \ 1	1	0 \ 1	4	2 \ 2	50 \ 50	4	2 \ 2	50 \ 50
Griffin Theatre Company	4	2 \ 2	0	0	4	2 \ 2	50 \ 50	4	2 \ 2	50 \ 50
La Boite Theatre Company	6	1.5 \ 4.5	0	0	6	1.5 \ 4.5	25 \ 75	5	1 \ 4	20 \ 80
TOTAL	44	15.5 \ 28.5	17	8 \ 9	61	23.5 \ 37.5		58	22 \ 36	



INDIVIDUAL COMPANY REPORTS

Companies are presented in order of their programming of Australian-written work, from highest to lowest.

GRIFFIN THEATRE COMPANY

- Total works programmed: 4
- Australian-written works: 4 (100%)
 - o New Australian-written works: 4

LA BOITE THEATRE COMPANY

- Total works programmed: 6
- Australian works: 6 (100%)
- Australian-written works: 5 (83%)
 - o New Australian-written works: 5
 - o Group-devised works with no playwright credited: 1

STATE THEATRE COMPANY OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA (STCSA)

- Total works programmed: 10
- Australian-written works: 8 (80%)
 - o New Australian-written works: 4
 - o Australian adaptations: 2
 - o Australian revivals: 2

QUEENSLAND THEATRE (QT)

- Total works programmed: 8
- Australian-written works: 6 (75%)
 - o New Australian-written works: 3
 - o Australian adaptations: 3

MALTHOUSE THEATRE

- Total works programmed: 11
- Australian works: 9 (82%)
- Australian-written works: 8 (73%)
 - o New Australian-written works: 4
 - o Australian adaptations: 4
 - o Group-devised work with no playwright credited: 1



SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY (STC)

- Total works programmed: 14
- Australian-written works: 10 (71%)
 - o New Australian-written works: 6
 - o Australian adaptations: 3
 - o Australian revivals: 1

BELVOIR ST THEATRE

- Total works programmed: 12
- Australian works: 8 (66%)
- Australian-written works: 7 (58%)
 - o New Australian-written works: 5
 - o Australian-written adaptations: 2
 - o Devised adaptation with no playwright credited: 1

BLACK SWAN STATE THEATRE COMPANY

- Total works programmed: 8
- Australian-written works: 4 (50%)
 - o New Australian-written works: 3
 - o Australian revival: 1

ENSEMBLE THEATRE

- Total works programmed: 10
- Australian-written works: 4 (40%)
 - o New Australian-written works: 3
 - o Australian adaptations: 1

MELBOURNE THEATRE COMPANY (MTC)

- Total works programmed: 11
- Australian-written works: 2 (18%)
 - o New Australian-written works: 1
 - o Australian adaptation: 1

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Appendix IV:
Support for Playwriting in Australia;
An Environmental Scan: 2019,
Michelle Kotevski

Support for Playwriting in Australia An Environmental Scan: 2019

Compiled by Michelle Kotevski

Contents

Summary	3
1. Playwriting Awards	4
2. Playwriting Competitions	4
3. Playwriting Courses	5
4. Dramaturgy Courses	5
5. Initiatives, Groups, Companies and Organisations with activity or focus on new writing in theatre	6
Indie/Unfunded/Minimal Project Funding	6
Funded/Subsidised	8
6. Literary Managers/ New Work roles	16
7. Residencies and Space Programs	16
8. Regional Activities	16
9. First Nations writers	17
10. Culturally and linguistically diverse writers	17
11. Writers experiencing Disability	17
12. Funding to support new work development for individuals	17
13. Publishing	18
14. National Service/Advocacy/Membership Organisations in the broader sector	18

Summary

This document provides a brief summary of a range of activities, programs and organisations that serve, through various means, the development and presentation of new Australian plays and/or the development of playwrights.

There are a range of opportunities across the country for new play development and playwright support. The bulk of these opportunities do not progress very much past initial developmental support and there are no clear pathways to production. Whilst numerous competitions and awards exist, only one guarantees a production of the winning work.

Many programs and activities are ephemeral and are not repeated. This could be because they exist in the indie space or because the initiatives are project funded and organisations have difficulty attracting sustained funding. Conversely, as new priorities and initiatives emerge from different funding agencies and philanthropists, new opportunities come up to support playwriting and playwrights. Furthermore, many opportunities exist in a broader theatre making context which includes devising practices, physical theatre, spoken word and other contemporary performance forms - not just playwriting.

Whilst all major companies have writer-focused activities or initiatives, a nation-wide culture of ongoing, stable and significant investment into playwrights and script development does not exist.

Specific opportunities for First Nations playwrights are amongst the strongest of the targeted initiatives in the sector. At present no significant opportunities target playwrights that identify as CALD, regional or experiencing disability.

Sector development, advocacy, discourse and dialogue activities for playwrights and playwriting specifically are scant in the sector.

Michelle Kotevski
January 2020

1. Playwriting Awards

There are over 30 specific Playwriting Awards in Australia: from the suite of AWGIE Awards to the State-based Premier's Awards; from company-based awards such as the Balnaves Award (Belvoir) to State-specific awards such as the Jill Blewett Playwright's Award in South Australia.

PWA has the Max Afford Award for a young playwright as does Flinders University and Belvoir (Phillip Parsons Award). There are also specific awards for women (Mona Brand).

No award other than the Queensland Theatre's Queensland Premier's Drama Award guarantees a production.

Some awards are for produced plays only (AWGIES, David Williamson Award, and Helpmann Awards).

Australians are eligible to submit to international awards such as The Bruntwood Prize (UK).

2. Competitions

From one-act play competitions run by amateur community theatre companies in regional Queensland to the Short and Sweet franchise, there are numerous playwriting competitions across Australia, many of them for one act plays (such as the Noosa Arts Theatre - National One Act Playwriting Competition) with prizes and opportunities of varying scale.

A lot of competitions come and go each year. Many have entry fees.

As with the awards, there are numerous international competitions Australians are eligible to enter.

3. Playwriting Courses

The various private, not for profit and member-based writers' centres across Australia run various courses on playwriting on an ad-hoc basis.

Some theatre companies such as Griffin will run a fee-based 8-week course run by an Australian playwright annually. NIDA Open runs some playwriting courses, again for a fee. There are numerous international online playwriting courses available for a fee and a free one on iTunes from the National Theatre in the UK.

At a tertiary level The University of Queensland has a graduate subject for a semester called Playwriting & Dramaturgy: Creative Practice. NIDA offers a Master of Fine Arts – Writing for Performance. University of Melbourne (VCA) offers a Masters in Theatre (Writing). University of Newcastle sometimes offers a subject at an undergraduate level called Writing for Performance and the University of Tasmania offers a subject of the same name.

Many universities offer Creative Writing courses at undergraduate and graduate level but there is nothing more specific to playwriting except for the University of South Australia's undergraduate degree Writing Drama for Theatre and Film.

Other courses at universities such as University of Sydney, Wollongong and WAAPA are more 'maker' focused than playwright focused. Curtin University runs a program called Stage One which offers a Western Australian playwright the opportunity to write and premiere a new play and provides undergraduate acting and technical students with the experience of working with a professional playwright on a new work.

4. Dramaturgy Courses

NIDA Open offers a small dramaturgy 'bites' course.

At an undergraduate level the University of South Australia offers a subject Directing & Dramaturgy, as does University of Queensland - From History to Workshop at Queensland University. Curtin University offers a subject - Dramaturgy and Creative Production. Griffith University often offers a subject called Dramaturgy. University of Melbourne (VCA) offers Master of Theatre (Dramaturgy).

Over the years PWA has run different dramaturgy programs including training and internships with companies.

First Nations dramaturgy workshops have been offered by Ilbjerri Theatre Company.

5. Initiatives, Groups, Companies and Organisations with activity or focus on new writing in theatre

Indie/Unfunded/Minimal Project Funding

Melbourne Writers' Theatre (Melbourne)

Melbourne Writers' Theatre was founded in 1982. Their goal is to assist playwrights at all stages of their careers and to support the development of new Australian plays.

They are an unfunded organisation whose daily operations are carried out by a voluntary committee and additional volunteers. Income comes from membership subscriptions, box office sales and entry fees for submissions to two annual seasons of work: a Monologue season and a Short Play season. In 2020, they will also present a full-length play by a new member and a work commissioned by Gasworks Arts Park – i.e. four productions.

Writers need to be members of Melbourne Writers' Theatre in order to submit their work for production. When selecting plays, a 'blind reading' process is employed. Membership provides for script assessments, monthly 'how-to' workshops, advice and an e-newsletter.

In addition to the above services, Melbourne Writers' Theatre also runs In One Act program for the City of Yarra. Through this annual program, 15 new and emerging playwrights are launched each year.

<https://melbournewriterstheatre.org.au/>

The South Australian Playwrights Theatre (Adelaide)

Creating and performing original South Australian plays, the company takes submissions for four-handers of 90 minutes duration, year-round through an open process.

South Australian Playwrights Theatre is committed to developing and producing the works of local South Australian writers, both established and new. They seek to nurture a racially and culturally diverse community of playwrights, directors, actors and technical specialists to hone their craft and to network creative opportunities.

<https://saplaywrights.weebly.com/>

New Ghosts Theatre Company (Sydney)

New Ghosts Theatre Company describes itself first and foremost a playwright's company, collaborating with Australia's most up and coming writers and debuting the best international scripts locally.

They ran UNFOLD - a submission-based festival of new writing and panel discussions in August 2019.

<https://newghoststheatre.com/>

bAKEHOUSE (Sydney)

bAKEHOUSE describes itself as having a long history of identifying, engaging, and investing in the 'risky business' of independent theatre, diverse work and new and emerging artists. KXT - Kings Cross Theatre was established by bAKEHOUSE Theatre Company in late 2015 as part of a plan to help support and grow the arts community in Sydney. There is some new Australian work as well as extant Australian and international work within their programming.

bAKEHOUSE run Storytellers Festival, a two-week pop-up celebration of playwrights and words, presentations of full-length plays, small pieces of writing, and special events.

They also run Write Up for new work in development by opening the doors to a new popup space in the hotel's Bordello Room as part of the KXTPOPUPSTAIRS program. Support is provided through the provision of space.

bAKEHOUSE receive some project-based support from the City of Sydney.

<http://www.bakehousetheatrecompany.com.au/>

Lab Kelpie (Melbourne)

Lab Kelpie is a theatre company dedicated to the production of new text-based work by Australian playwrights.

<http://labkelpie.com/about/>

MK-Alpha (Melbourne)

MK-Alpha has been producing new work by established writers, new writers, and introducing overseas artists to Australian audiences since 2010. It has an open submission process.

<http://mka.org.au/corporation/>

Lonely Company (Melbourne)

Lonely Company is three artists who work to support playwrights through their first year of writing process on a new project.

<http://www.creativespaces.net.au/artists/643/lonely-company>

Funded/Subsidised

Australian Plays (national organisation, based in Hobart)

Australian Plays is an online showcase of Australian playwriting, featuring the combined catalogues of Australia's main theatrical publishers. Plays are available for purchase or copying.

Australian Plays also handle the performance rights to a large number of works. They also take submissions for digital publication of scripts. Presently they take submissions for publication four times a year.

<https://australianplays.org/about/about-the-asc>

Playlab (Brisbane)

Playlab has existed since the 1970's and its focuses are development, production and publication.

Playlab seeks to identify, nurture and support playwrights by offering: development initiatives that provide structure, critical feedback and investment to create high quality work, programs to build skills, and a pathway to the stage in the form of professional productions.

Playlab is also dedicated to the promotion of playwrights through the publication of their work and advocacy to local and national presenters and producers.

Funded by Arts Queensland, Australia Council, Sidney Myer Fund and Tim Fairfax Family Foundation.

<https://www.playlab.org.au>

Malthouse Theatre Company (Melbourne)

Malthouse has a staff member dedicated to New Work development - presently dramaturg and director Mark Pritchard.

Malthouse run a series of programs for artists and playwrights/writers including The Malcolm Robertson Program which commissions two new works a year from a young and emerging playwright. One aspect of The Besen Family Artist Program offers a writers' development program. The writers' development stream involves a curated program for writers to workshop their written material with other collaborating artists with a focus on developing work for mainstage theatres. This program is by invitation only. Malthouse's Living Now program is in its second year, partnering with Footscray Community Arts Centre to support CALD artists with an interest in theatre.

Malthouse also run an in-house artists' residency program which supports independent artist residencies in Malthouse Theatre's Tower, providing time and space for dedicated creative development.

Since 2005 they have run the Besen Artists' program, a four-week paid observational artists' residency, which in 2020 will consider applications from dramaturgs.

Melbourne Theatre Company (Melbourne)

MTC has a Literary Director (Chris Mead) who leads two significant initiatives made possible by philanthropic support.

Next Stage – a program developed as a result of a \$4.6 million investment, \$2.3 million from the donors of MTC's Playwrights Giving Circle which is matched by a \$2.3 million contribution from the company. Announced in 2017 for an initial period of five years, the program will:

- » provide a total of 50 residencies and commissions
- » commission a minimum of 35 new plays, with flexibility in commission fees to allow writers additional time and resources to write;
- » engage up to 15 playwrights as writers-in-residence for up to three years; and
- » increase resources to workshopping and developing plays going through to production to ensure that they have been afforded every level of creative scrutiny and artistic support in making the finest possible work.

The aim of the Next Stage approach is to create stronger, stage-ready plays that will deepen Australian live storytelling.

MTC also run Cybec Electric – an annual play reading series. With scripts in hand, professional actors present new works-in-progress with the assistance of directors and dramaturgs.

Australian Theatre For Young People (national organisation, based in Sydney)

ATYP describe themselves a playwright's theatre company. They have a range of national programs for new writing including The ATYP Foundation Commission, which commissions two new works for young audiences each year and is delivered in partnership with Playlab. The Fresh Ink National Mentoring program for emerging writers runs annually and is often delivered in partnership with other organisations such as Blue Cow Theatre, Barking Gecko or Carclew Youth Arts., depending on the location. Through the annual National Studio program, twenty emerging young writers are selected from all over Australia to spend a week at Bundanon, working with leading Australian playwrights.

ATYP present a large number of new Australian plays for young people and are one of a very few companies with a resident dramaturg on staff.

Griffin (Sydney)

Griffin describes itself as the only theatre company in the country dedicated to new Australian work. They run three playwriting awards (Griffin Award, The Lysicrates Prize and The Martin Lysicrates Prize), none of which guarantee production. The Griffin Studio program which is for dramaturgs, writers and directors, is a year-long residency that support skills and new work development within a company context.

Blue Room (Perth)

The Blue Room presents independent performance works (theatre, dance and contemporary performance) works across a variety of styles and genres. Their development and presentation program is application based and supports 14 artists/groups with rehearsal and office space, productions, \$2,000 for marketing and technical support. There is no provision of artistic support.

Metro Arts (Brisbane)

Metro Arts has an open call out for residencies, creative development and performance each year.

Blue Cow Theatre (Hobart)

Blue Cow Theatre runs two play development programs. The first, Future Proof, is in partnership with ATYP for writers aged 18-25 where a one-week workshop with dramaturgs and playwrights supports the writing of short plays which are then staged by Blue Cow. The second program, Cowshed, has been running for six years and is for playwrights at all levels of experience. Participants pay approximately \$400 for a program which provides four weekends of face-to-face meetings and group workshops over 12 months, two phone conferences and a sharing of a 'work in progress' read by professional actors.

Ensemble Theatre (Sydney)

Ensemble Theatre provide creative development and dramaturgical support to their commissions. They also undertake play readings of new and existing works. Ensemble Theatre have a Literary Manager on staff.

Jute Theatre Company (Cairns)

Jute run writing outreach programs which form their Write Sparks program, three residencies delivered by Creative Producer Kathryn Ash throughout a six-month period running from Friday afternoons through to Sunday afternoons. Jute also run the Dare to Dream Program which develops, presents and tours new work by First Nations artists.

Jute commission new work and invest in creative development on new scripts with the support of dramaturgs, directors and actors. Jute has a playwright/dramaturg on staff.

Queensland Theatre (Brisbane)

Queensland Theatre run the Queensland Premier's Drama Award and this is the only prize in the country that results in guaranteed production. There is also a young playwright's program for school aged children that sees the winner get some stage time.

QT has a resident dramaturg on staff and a producer of new work.

Belvoir Street Theatre (Sydney)

Belvoir have a head of New Work, Louise Gough, and two artistic associates on staff. Belvoir run the Balnaves Fellowship for a First Nations playwright which includes an artists' in residency/associate program.

Belvoir also run the Philip Parsons Award for an Emerging Playwright. New work script development or commissions are generally developed through support from Louise Gough as dramaturg or other artists.

They are now also running the 25A Downstairs program - \$1,500 to make and present a show for independent theatre makers.

Sydney Theatre Company (Sydney)

STC has a Literary Manager on staff (Polly Rowe) and run an emerging writers' group (now in its second year) over a 12-month period focused on skills development.

STC also runs a submission-based program called Rough Drafts, a series of week-long creative developments that give theatre makers the opportunity to try out new ideas, new ways of working and new collaborations.

STC also offer the Patrick White Playwrights Award and the Patrick White Playwrights Fellowship. The Fellowship is for an established Australian playwright whose work has been produced professionally in Australia within the last four years. The winning playwright receives a total prize package of \$25,000 which includes a year-long fellowship in recognition of their body of work, and a commission to write a new play.

Ilbijerri (Melbourne)

In 2018 Ilbijerri ran a number of writers/makers programs including labs and classes through their Blackwrights stream.

This year in association with Melbourne Festival and MTC they are presenting Blackwrights - three readings of plays from writers who participated in the Creators Program in 2018.

Yirra Yaakin (Perth)

Yirra Yaakin create a significant amount of new Australian work, investing in script and creative development. Their writing focus includes commissions and creative developments, Yirra Yaakin Emerging Writers Group, and Yirra Yaarnz presentation of First Nations playwrights works in a play reading context.

Moogahlin (Sydney)

Moogahlin deliver the important and long running Yellamundie First Nations Play Festival in association with Sydney Festival every two years. The format of the festival is similar to PWA national Play Festival - submissions are accepted from First Nations writers around the country and then several are selected for a week's development and reading presentation.

This year Moogahlin are writing a playwriting program called Yellamundie Writing for Performance Workshops which are similar to the Muru Program PWA and Moogahlin collaborated on across 2017/2018.

Browns Mart Theatre (Darwin)

Browns Mart run a submission-based program for supporting new work including presentation. They also have a seeding and development program which offers space and up to \$18,000 for the development of a new theatre work.

This year they are also running a First Nations writers' workshop for six days for Northern Territory artists.

Browns Mart also runs a curated program of play readings throughout the year from NT playwrights. They produce and present an annual program of Territory theatre called Shimmer.

Red Stitch Actors Theatre (Melbourne)

Red Stitch engage with Australian playwrights through their INK Program- a tailored approach to script nurturing for four playwrights a year with a view to production.

Merrigong Theatre Company (Wollongong)

The Merrigong Playwrights' Program invests in the next generation of storytellers. This new initiative provides long-term mentoring for those with an interest in writing for the stage. Through regular meetings over the course of the year, masterclasses with industry professionals and tickets to all Merrigong Mainstage season performances, the Program aims to create a space where writers are encouraged to rigorously articulate their ideas in a safe and supportive group of peers. It costs \$300 to participate.

Merrigong also run two other programs, MERRIGONGX and Made at Merrigong, to support the development of locally-made performance across theatre forms and practices through invitation and submission.

Merrigong also commissions new work.

Street Theatre (Canberra)

The Street Theatre has a comprehensive new work and writer development to presentation program. Programs include The Hive – a script/performance development program for contemporary regional and Australian writers accessible via submission.

They also run The PlayWrite Sessions to keep playwrights connected and communicating about their work in addition to numerous masterclasses for theatre makers during the year. The First Seen program offers playwrights/theatre-makers the opportunity to collaborate with a creative team for up to seven days to further develop their writing/work through intensive practical investigation. There is no expectation to produce a performance-ready draft. Writers will be asked to share the development of their work with Canberra audiences and are provided with a weekly wage.

National Theatre of Parramatta (Parramatta)

Playwrights of Parramatta program is a community of aspiring and practising playwrights who are invited to attend a selection of plays throughout the year and meet with the playwrights, director or a dramaturg after the performance for an intimate discussion about the production and writing for the stage. The PWA/ National Theatre of Parramatta partnership, Page to Stage, ran from 2016-2018.

Contemporary Australian Asian Performance (Sydney-National)

CAAP develop new works by Asian Australian performance makers and have partnered with PWA on the Lotus program. They focus on profile raising and skills development for Asian Australian performing artists.

State Theatre Company South Australia (Adelaide)

State Theatre provides support to independent theatre makers through a few programs that focus on providing space and infrastructure support for the development of new work.

They run the Jill Blewett Playwriting Award and have an associate artist on staff who works with commissioned playwrights.

Black Swan (Perth)

Black Swan have a literary manager one day a week (Polly Lowe) and a director of new writing (Jeffrey Jay Fowler).

The company runs an emerging writers group for a year where participants receive \$1,000 as an honorarium and work with Jeffrey Jay Fowler. A key outcome is the development and workshop of scripts to be presented as a series of free public play readings.

Black Swan have an artists' residency program across the year for two artists which can include playwrights and is designed to assist with the understanding of how the company works rather than the creation of new work by the artists.

Brink (Adelaide)

Brink make new work from scratch in a collaborative process. They do not run any other programs.

La Boite (Brisbane)

La Boite has a range of programs for artists which include playwrights - from residencies to masterclasses. They present HWY Festival, which is a showing of new works, many in development, including plays.

La Boite do not have dramaturgs or playwrights on staff and need to specifically fundraise for commissions and script development.

HotHouse Theatre (Albury Wodonga)

HotHouse Theatre co-commissions works in partnership with companies and runs the Month in the Country residency for playwrights and theatre makers.

In 2017/2018 PWA delivered an eight-month playwriting program called Outposts for Hothouse. In 2019/2020 Hothouse are running a pilot initiative called Celcius supporting and resourcing local independent artists from the Albury Wodonga region. The program provides support for dramaturgy, creative development and presentation of a locally produced independent production.

6. Literary Managers/ New Work roles

All of the major CAST companies, ATYP and The Ensemble have a role in their organisation, be it one day a week or full time that is effectively the Literary Manager/Dramaturg role or a new work/new play development role. These individuals play a role in selecting works and writers for investment - from commission to development and production.

None of the companies take unsolicited scripts so the individuals in these roles parse the writers and the works attempting to get entrée into the major companies.

7. Residencies and Space Programs

There are several programs around the country, not specifically for playwrights in the main, which offer support through the provision of space or residency - with and without stipend. Almost all opportunities are application based and competitive. Examples range from the Adelaide Festival Centre's inSPACE Developments program, Bundanon artists residencies, Salamanca Artists Cottage and the Wheeler Centre's hot desk program (which does have one dedicated playwright space).

8. Regional Activities

Jute Theatre Company and HotHouse Theatre are overviewed above.

Country Arts SA has been running a First Nations playwright's residency for several years. A First Nations playwright is in residence with a First Nations community to write a new work specifically for that community and runs community writing workshops.

Some of ATYP's programs (mentioned above) are delivered in regional areas across the country annually.

Other notable initiatives include:

- » Bathurst Memorial Entertainment Centre's Local Stages program which provides space and other support for theatre makers. It works with the Central West Short Play Festival which has begun more developmental activities such as mentorships.
- » Totem Theatre in Alice Springs Short play festival which begins with a series of workshops.
- » Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga is running a playwright in residence program for two weeks.

Overall, there are limited and inconsistent activities and opportunities for playwriting and playwrights through the State-based regional arts networks and service providers.

9. First Nations writers

Most targeted and bespoke opportunities for First Nations writers are provided through the three First Nations theatre companies (Yirra Yaakin, Ilbjerri and Moogahlin). Playwriting Australia, Belvoir and Browns Mart and Country Arts SA are presently the non-First Nations companies with specifically targeted programs for First Nations playwrights.

10. Culturally and linguistically diverse writers

There are no significant professional theatre opportunities targeting the development or presentation of work by CALD playwrights apart from one at Browns Mart Theatre. Many companies or organisations state that they encourage applications or submissions from CALD artists. Opportunities are being delivered through specific decision making in organisations by producers and artistic directors.

11. Writers experiencing Disability

Very few bespoke opportunities exist for playwrights experiencing disability. There are a lack of opportunities and programs at a professional level available in this area across the country. The opportunities that do exist are mainly made available through local government programs or disability service program providers. There are occasional or seasonal projects delivered by arts organisations including Write Ability delivered by Writers Victoria and Arts Access Victoria. Most theatre opportunities or programs targeting people experiencing disability are steeped in devised theatre practices.

12. Funding to support new work development for individuals

There are funding opportunities through each State and Territory, regional arts funds as well as the Australia Council for creative development and new work creation and production (which playwrights are eligible to apply for) ranging from project grants to fellowships.

The Rodney Seaborn Playwrights Trust/SBW Foundation accepts submissions for work creation from playwrights.

The Copyright Agency's Cultural Fund also provides programs to support playwrights (and other writers/visual artists) in the generation of new work.

13. Publishing

The major publishers of Australian plays are Playlab, Currency Press and Australian Plays.

14. National Service/Advocacy/Membership Organisations in the broader sector

There is no organisation other than PWA in the industry with any specific focus on playwriting development, discourse development, form and dramaturgical development.

Theatre Network Australia was established from small to medium company members and individual artists and undertakes sector-wide advocacy and some training and runs the Australian Theatre Forum.

Confederation of Australian State Theatres (CAST) is a subgroup of Australian Major Performing Arts Group discussing issues relating to the theatre sector.

Australian Writers' Guild is a membership based professional association representing writers for stage, screen, radio and online.

Diversity Arts Australia advocates for and actively works towards an arts sector that reflects the complex diversity of the Australian population on screens and stages, audiences, galleries and books and within boards, committees, and positions of leadership into the future.

Arts Access Australia is the national peak body for arts and disability in Australia. They work to increase national and international opportunities and access to the arts for people with disability as artists, arts-workers, participants and audiences.

Regional Arts Australia works with and for regional artists, arts workers and arts organisations to support and increase understanding and appreciation for regional arts practice.

There are presently no significant bespoke services for Trans or non-Binary playwrights in the sector.

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