

**INQUIRY INTO ARTS AND MUSIC EDUCATION AND  
TRAINING IN NEW SOUTH WALES**

**Organisation:** Sydney Theatre Company

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22 July 2024

To the Joint Select Committee on Arts and Music Education and Training  
Parliament of NSW

Sydney Theatre Company (STC) is committed to providing quality Education Programs and has a long track record in providing opportunities for primary, secondary and tertiary students and teachers to learn creative skills and we offer pathways for further arts education and employment. **Sydney Theatre Company would like to support the recommendation that there is increased and dedicated funding for companies that deliver arts education and training.**

Due to a combination of factors, including the increased cost of delivering Arts Education Programs along with decreased budgets for Teacher Professional Learning, it is becoming increasingly difficult to offer quality Arts Education and training without state funding and support. Sydney Theatre Company plays an important role in linking students and industry professionals and we offer educational and training programs that fall outside of core operational programming and funds.

STC offers several activities that engage young people in practical, creative and entrepreneurial skill development including creative workshops, work experience week, trainee and mentorship programs as well as exposing them to high quality theatre and art experiences that fire their imagination and creativity. As the State Theatre Company for NSW, we take our responsibility to develop the theatre makers of the future seriously, and we want to ensure that there is a pipeline of creatives coming through our employment channels. We offer opportunities for young writers, directors and actors through our New Works department and our creative workshops in scenic art, design and scriptwriting are popular with secondary and tertiary students looking for shorter, quality courses that offer skill development at an accessible price.

We know there is demand for skill development programs that link secondary and tertiary students together with industry experts and have cases studies of employees at STC who first gained exposure to the company and associated practical and creative skills through work experience, then through mentorships and finally with full employment at the company. Apart from the current suite of mentorships that we offer, such as the one in partnership with Accessible Arts, we do not have adequate resources to support these programs. We endorse and believe in the efficacy of programs that build upon the industry expertise that resides in arts organisations and develop pathways for secondary and tertiary students to gain industry experience and become job-ready.

One of the very successful programs that Sydney Theatre Company has run for the past twelve years is *School Drama* but unfortunately this will have to discontinue in 2025. With no funding attached to it, STC is simply unable to keep investing in it. This program, designed

**SYDNEY THEATRE COMPANY**

THE WHARF  
PIER 4 HICKSON ROAD  
WALSH BAY NSW 2000  
AUSTRALIA

PO BOX 777  
MILLERS POINT NSW 2000  
AUSTRALIA

**BOX OFFICE**  
PHONE (612) 9250 1777  
FAX (612) 9251 3687  
BOXOFFICE@SYDNEYTHEATRE.COM.AU

**ADMINISTRATION**  
PHONE (612) 9250 1700

SYDNEYTHEATRE.COM.AU

and delivered in partnership with the University of Sydney, addressed the need for teacher professional development in primary schools and offered a robust and evidence-based model of mentoring for teachers to improve student literacy and engagement. The program reached over 35,000 teachers and students across Australia and New Zealand and there is a large body of evidence that indicates the success of the program is due to increasing teacher confidence in using creativity, storytelling and drama techniques as a teaching tool. The analysis of data collected from 12 participating schools in 2019 indicated “an average shift of 2.5 marks (just under a full grade shift of 3 marks) was acknowledged” (Saunders, 2019. P 129). This was across a range of different English and literary foci including inferential comprehension, descriptive language, confidence in oracy and creative/imaginative writing. Students struggling with literacy, particularly male students, showed the greatest shift when comparing pre-and post-program testing (Saunders, 2019).

*“School Drama was incredibly liberating. It empowered me to connect the power of narrative with students. It helped lift my student’s engagement with literacy and to deepen connection with their experiences of their own emotions (and the characters they were reading about), life and different cultural/gender/social perspectives. It also improved our school’s writing and literary results”. Shanti Clements – Principal at Seven Hills West Public School.*

As part of the inquiry into the arts and music education and training in NSW, **Sydney Theatre Company would like to support the recommendation that there is increased and dedicated funding for companies that deliver arts education and training.** As one student as part of work experience recently commented:

*“Thank you so much for the incredible work experience week. I feel so fortunate to have been invited to participate, I’ve learned so much; now know about more job opportunities and I met so many incredible people. I truly can’t thank you enough.” – Chloe, age 15.*  
*“Thank you so much for everything you coordinated for work experience week, it was an invaluable experience, and I will take what I learned with me for the rest of my life.” – Raph, age 16.*

Signed

Anne Dunn  
Executive Director,  
Sydney Theatre Company