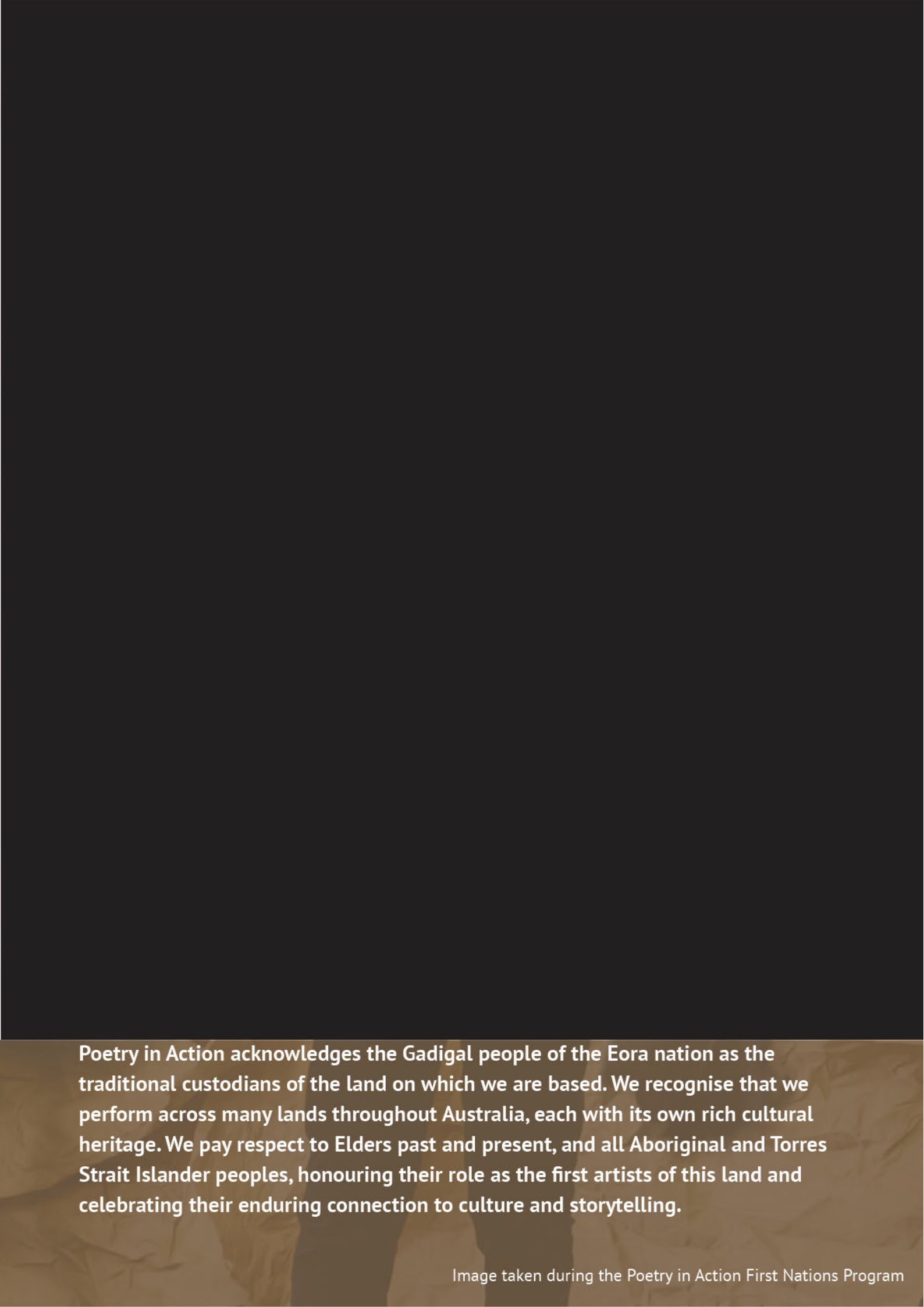


# NATIONAL CULTURAL POLICY SUBMISSION

*Poetry in Action is not a new program  
but a model proven over 20 years*

**POETRY  
ACTION**



Poetry in Action acknowledges the Gadigal people of the Eora nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which we are based. We recognise that we perform across many lands throughout Australia, each with its own rich cultural heritage. We pay respect to Elders past and present, and all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, honouring their role as the first artists of this land and celebrating their enduring connection to culture and storytelling.

Image taken during the Poetry in Action First Nations Program



# POETRY IN ACTION



21 May 2026

**Office for the Arts, Canberra**

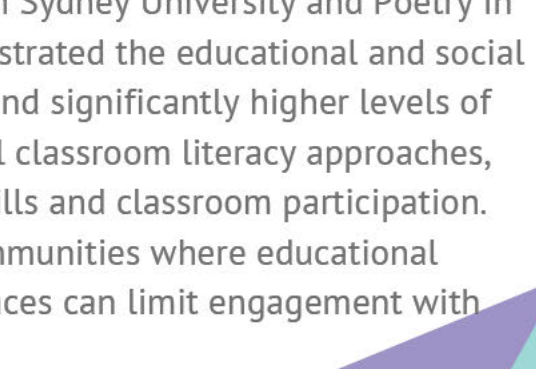
## **National Cultural Policy Submission**

Poetry in Action welcomes the opportunity to contribute to the development of Australia's next National Cultural Policy.

Revive was a critical support for Poetry in Action at a desperate time. While many companies were forced to close their doors Poetry in Action was able to maintain operations throughout the pandemic and retain all staff. This form of support was crucial and remain so today.

For 20 years, Poetry in Action has demonstrated that arts engagement is not an optional extra within education and community life. Through live, curriculum aligned performances and workshops, we strengthen literacy, confidence, communication and critical thinking for young Australians at national scale. Each year, we engage almost 70,000 students across metropolitan, regional and remote communities and, over two decades, our work has reached almost 1 million young Australians. Every production we create is 100% new Australian work, written and performed by Australian artists.

Independent research conducted through Western Sydney University and Poetry in Action's impact reporting has consistently demonstrated the educational and social value of the Poetry in Action's work. Research found significantly higher levels of student engagement compared with conventional classroom literacy approaches, alongside improved confidence, interpretation skills and classroom participation. These outcomes are particularly important in communities where educational disadvantage and reduced access to arts experiences can limit engagement with language and learning.



## OUR PURPOSE

To make poetry accessible, exciting, and transformative for young people and communities across Australia and beyond.

## OUR VISION

An articulate, expressive, and creative world where every young person experiences the magic of language.

## OUR MISSION

To unlock the power of words for everyone, transforming poetry into dynamic performances that inspire and connect

## OUR VALUES

Creativity, Equity, Empathy, Excellence

# TWO DECADES

## WHAT YOUNG PEOPLE EXPERIENCE

Following recent performances exploring Australian voices and the cultural diversity of the country (spanning First Nations, immigrant, and colonial perspectives) educators across multiple Poetry in Action productions have reflected on the work's reach and impact:

██████████ (NSW), a location with an ICSEA value of ██████ – significantly below the state average – described the work as "dramatic and highly engaging" and observed young people demonstrating "deep engagement" through "well-considered questions."

██████████ (NSW) reflected that the experience is "highly valuable... for our rural students, who quite often are too far away to access live theatre," while

██████████ (QLD) noted the productions had "brought poetry to life... [inspiring] students about language, history, and the power of poetry."

Others reported that the work "enlivened poetry – made us laugh, moved us, led us to think and feel" (██████████, NSW), and was "evocative, inspiring, and educational" with "powerful messages" delivered through a "captivating performance" (██████████, VIC).

The WSU research further highlights Poetry in Action's contribution to workforce development, with many artists describing the organisation as their first sustained professional employment pathway into careers across theatre, film, television and education.

# ONE & TWO

## **Revive Pillar 1: First Nations First**

First Nations First reflects the importance of storytelling, language and cultural leadership within Australia's identity and future. Through our Lila Project and First Nations engagement programs, Poetry in Action works alongside First Nations artists and cultural consultants to support culturally safe creative practice and meaningful community engagement. Independent Wiradjuri and Weilwan artist [REDACTED] has guided culturally sensitive material and engagement with regional and remote communities across NSW, reinforcing the importance of long term relationships, trust and sustained investment in cultural regeneration. As [REDACTED] notes, "To establish and strengthen the bond between Poetry in Action and communities we need to go out every year to have more of an impact. The more times we are seen in the community, the better the turnout for these events and workshops, the bigger the impact."

## **Revive Pillar 2: A Place for Every Story**

This principle is deeply embedded within Poetry in Action's national touring model and creative programs.

Every production created by Poetry in Action is 100% new Australian work, ensuring young people engage with contemporary Australian voices, stories and perspectives through live performance. Through touring to metropolitan, regional and remote communities, the organisation works to reduce the growing inequity in access to arts and cultural experiences, particularly for young people in communities where opportunities for live performance and creative engagement are limited.

Poetry in Action also supports participation and representation beyond the stage. Through initiatives including the Student Poetry Competition, mentorship opportunities and the Ambassadors Program, the organisation encourages and elevates diverse voices and perspectives from school aged writers through to mid-career poets. These programs create pathways for young people and artists to feel heard, represented and connected within Australia's cultural landscape.

At its core, this pillar recognises that culture should not be determined by postcode, privilege or proximity to major cities. Poetry in Action's work demonstrates the importance of sustained investment in equitable cultural access so all Australians can participate in, contribute to and see themselves reflected within the nation's creative life.

# THREE, FOUR & FIVE

## **Revive Pillar 3 and 4: Centrality of the Artist and Strong Cultural Infrastructure**

For two decades, Poetry in Action has created employment and development pathways for actors, writers, directors, teaching artists and arts workers whose practice connects performance, creative writing and community engagement. We have also built long-term relationships with communities across Australia, demonstrating that cultural infrastructure is not only buildings and venues, but also the organisations, artists and touring systems sustaining participation nationally. Yet organisations delivering proven outcomes continue to rely heavily on short-term funding, philanthropy and corporate partnerships to sustain delivery and equitable access.

## **Revive Pillar 5: Engaging the Audience**

Young people are not future audiences. They are audiences now. Through live performance and creative engagement, students develop stronger communication skills, empathy, confidence and connection to learning and community.

Poetry in Action is the only theatre company in Australia making theatre from poetry and one of the country's most widely toured companies, full stop. Each year we reach tens of thousands of young people across metropolitan, regional, rural and remote locations, commissioning Australian writers to dramatise the work of Australian poets, First Nations voices, women, writers of colour, and gender-diverse and international writers.

No other theatre company for young Australians programmes a broader range of poetic voices or champions Australian writers more deliberately.

Australia already has organisations delivering measurable educational, social and cultural outcomes through the arts. The next National Cultural Policy presents an opportunity to ensure long term investment matches that impact so every young Australian, regardless of postcode or circumstance, can participate in the cultural life of this country.

*"To be yourself in a world that is constantly trying to make you something else is the greatest accomplishment" **Ralph Waldo Emerson***

Australia already has organisations delivering measurable educational, social and cultural outcomes through the arts. Poetry in Action is not proposing a new response to these challenges, but demonstrating that long term, equitable and impactful arts engagement is already possible at national scale.

Australia's cultural future depends on whether young people can access the skills, stories and creative experiences that help them feel connected, capable and heard. Across two decades of touring, Poetry in Action has seen the transformational role arts engagement can play in strengthening literacy, confidence, empathy and participation in communities across the country.

The next National Cultural Policy presents an opportunity to ensure long term investment matches that impact and move beyond short term access towards sustained cultural equity. With strategic investment, organisations already delivering proven outcomes can expand their reach, deepen community connection and ensure more young Australians, regardless of postcode or circumstance, can participate in the cultural life of this country and experience the power of language, storytelling and live performance as part of everyday life, not as a privilege.

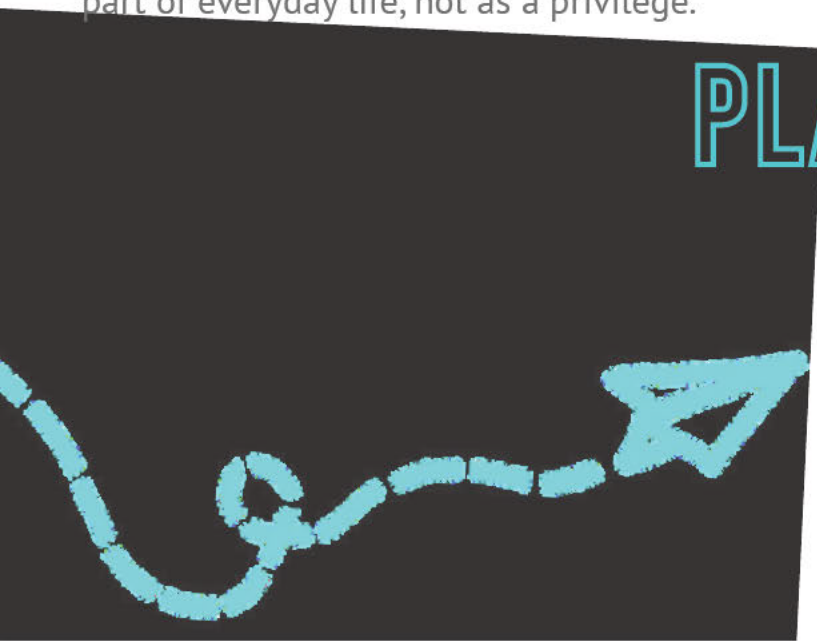
# PLAY YOUR PART

## *Executive Contact*

*Bryce Youngman | CEO and Artistic Director*



*Dee Rennie | Head of Impact and Engagement*



# TWENTY YEARS OF POETRY THAT INSPIRES AND ENGAGES

SCAN AND WATCH



POETRY  
ACTION



[www.poetryinaction.com.au](http://www.poetryinaction.com.au)

