



COUNCIL

Agenda and Reports

for the Special meeting on

Monday, 19 January 2026

at 5.30 pm

in the Council Chamber, Adelaide Town Hall

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Our Adelaide.
Bold.
Aspirational.
Innovative.

COUNCIL
Special Meeting Agenda, Monday, 19 January 2026, at 5.30 pm

Members: The Right Honourable the Lord Mayor, Dr Jane Lomax-Smith (Presiding)
Deputy Lord Mayor, Councillor Noon
Councillors Abrahamzadeh, Cabada, Couros, Davis, Freeman, Giles, Maher, Martin,
Dr Siebentritt and Snape

Agenda

Item	Pages
1. Acknowledgement of Country	
The Lord Mayor will state:	
'Council acknowledges that we are meeting on traditional Country of the Kaurna people of the Adelaide Plains and pays respect to Elders past and present. We recognise and respect their cultural heritage, beliefs and relationship with the land. We acknowledge that they are of continuing importance to the Kaurna people living today.	
And we also extend that respect to other Aboriginal Language Groups and other First Nations who are present today.'	
2. Apologies and Leave of Absence	
Apology -	
Councillor Couros	
3. Declaration of Conflict of Interest	
4. Deputations	
Granted at time of Agenda Publication – 19 January 2026	
• Phil Kalogeras	
• Greg Mackie OAM	
• Claire Hicks	
5. Reports for Council	
5.1 Adelaide Writers' Festival - Alternative Event	3 - 12
6. Closure	

Adelaide Writers' Festival – Alternative Event

Monday, 19 January 2026
Special Council

Public

Council Members:
Councillor Keiran Snape
Councillor Janet Giles
Councillor Eleanor Freeman

Contact Officer:
Michael Sedgman, Chief Executive Officer

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Pursuant to section 82 of the *Local Government Act 1999* (SA) (the Act), the Chief Executive Officer is required to call a special meeting of Council at the request of at least three members of Council.

The Chief Executive Officer received a request on 14 January 2026 from Councillors Snape, Giles and Freeman in accordance with the requirements under section 82 of the Act and has called this special meeting of Council to consider the following Motion:

'That Council;

Noting the City of Adelaide's longstanding support for the Adelaide Writers Festival and the impacts of the cancellation of the 2026 event, including an expected, estimated 50 million dollar boost to the City economy and the loss to our community of the City's most significant forum for books and conversation, asks the Administration to;

1. Immediately enter into discussions with the not for profit, Writers SA to assist the organisation to curate and manage an alternative event in February/March 2026 featuring participants who had been prepared to participate in the cancelled event
2. Request the Adelaide Economic Development Authority (AEDA) to make available to Writers SA any funding it considers appropriate to facilitate the alternative event
3. Supplement any funding for the alternative event from AEDA or sponsors of the cancelled event or other organisations and new sponsorship agreements with an amount from the Council's QF2 review not exceeding \$250,000 and
4. Make available to the alternative event any available venue such as the Town Hall, any Council owned or controlled building and public space, including the Park Lands.'

ADMINISTRATION COMMENT

1. A commitment of \$350,000 annually for the next 3 years was endorsed by the AEDA Board and approved by Council in its 2025/26 budget, to sponsor the Adelaide Festival.
2. The funding was recommended to the AEDA Board as the result of a contestable application process through the AEDA Events and Festivals Sponsorship Program.
3. The \$350,000 forms part of the Adelaide Festival's overall revenue and supports the funding of 6 main program elements, being:
 - Theatre
 - Music
 - Dance

- Visual Art
- Adelaide Writers' Week
- Festival Club

4. The funding commitment was communicated to the Adelaide Festival Corporation via letter to the Chief Executive on 2 July 2025, following adoption of the City of Adelaide (CoA) budget on 24 June 2025. The agreement is yet to be executed.

5. No funds have yet been disbursed.

6. Previous years' funding for the Adelaide Festival (AF) program of activities (including Adelaide Writers' Week (AWW) is as below:

Year	CoA Funding provided
2024/25	\$360,000
2023/24	\$360,000
2022/21	\$360,000
2021/22	\$320,000
2020/21	\$320,000

7. To date Council has received a total of \$5,204 from deposits for AWW Events for venue hire and \$9,137 has been received as deposit for Adelaide Festival events. No deposit has yet been received for the Adelaide Festival opening concert in the Park Lands.

	Deposit	Total	
Festival			
Adelaide Town Hall	\$9,137	\$30,435	4 musical events
Parklands	-	\$10,505	Opening concert - Pulp
Writers Week			
ATH	\$5,204	\$17,345	Auditorium and Banquet Room venues
Total	\$14,341	\$58,285	

8. The AWW booking for Pioneer Women's Memorial Gardens and Esther Lipmann Garden in Red Gum Park / Karrawirra (Park 12) has been held at the request of the Adelaide Festival Corporation, pending the final direction of the new incoming Adelaide Festival Board. Site Hire fees will be \$13,410 if the booking proceeds.

9. Council also charges remediation costs for Adelaide Festival parklands venue use. Those associated with Adelaide Writers' Week in 2025 were \$16,000.

10. Other involvement with AF and AWW includes liaison with event organisers on a Park Lands Event booking and Adelaide Town Hall venue bookings.

11. It is Council's understanding that Writers SA has a small organisational footprint and operates on a limited budget – approximately 3 to 5 FTE, with only 2 full time staff (a Director and Operations Manager), and is not likely to have the capacity or capability to deliver an alternative event currently with a short turnaround.

12. Similarly the Council Administration does not have the capacity nor the in-house capability to curate or otherwise deliver the event in the proposed timeframe, even as a partner with Writers SA.

13. Given the short lead time, current capacity constraints across the sector, and competing event commitments, it is not feasible for CoA to operationally support or deliver an alternative literary event at this time without significant risk.

14. Notwithstanding the cancellation of 2026 Adelaide Writers' Week, the Adelaide Festival contributes significantly to the City and State economies and provides a significant contribution towards CoA's strategic objectives. As such, any diversion of the funding commitment from the broader Adelaide Festival program is likely to have some detrimental impact on the above outcomes.

15. No public information is available on the economic benefits to the state from Adelaide Writers' Week specifically, or the program delivery cost, or the revenue it generates. However, economic impact for the broader Adelaide Festival (reported by the Adelaide Festival Corporation - **Attachment A**) reports that it:
 - hosts 365,402 total attendances (including WOMADelaide)
 - generates \$47.1m net towards the Gross State Product
 - attracts 27,400+ visitors to the state for ticketed events
 - generates 121,485 total visitor nights.
16. Key risks if CoA were to operationally support an alternative event:
 - 16.1 Insufficient planning and delivery timeframe.
 - 16.2 Increased financial, operational, and reputational risk borne by Council.
 - 16.3 Reduced capacity to support existing major events during this period (e.g. Garden, Gluttony, Adelaide Fringe, Lassu, Infamous, Big Bounce, Adelaide Oval events).
 - 16.4 Outdoor delivery risks, including weather impacts and safety considerations.
 - 16.5 CoA community centres and libraries do not have the same capacity for audiences as a large outdoor event with multiple stages and coordinated scheduling.
 - 16.6 Potential alternative venues (noting limitations): University buildings or Mercury Cinema.
17. The viability of an alternative event would be contingent on Adelaide Festival and AWW being willing to support existing bookings and facilitate a handover to alternative event coordinators.
 - 17.1 An alternative event would rely on securing experienced personnel at short notice ideally those already engaged by Adelaide Festival/AWW to manage logistics such as travel, accommodation, scheduling, and artist/author support.
 - 17.2 AWW relies upon a substantial volunteer group from the Adelaide Festival to facilitate the days events – front of house, etc.
 - 17.3 Key value is book sales to draw the support of booksellers or publishers for any event to be viable or attractive to prospective authors.
18. Based on Council's experience with delivering events, it is estimated that the scale of AWW (the 2025 event had over 220 authors) is likely to cost in the vicinity of 6 to 10 times the \$250,000 proposed and as such, \$250,000 may not be sufficient to deliver an impactful alternative event.
19. An additional \$250,000 to establish a temporary event in 2026 would necessarily require funds to be diverted from other Council priorities and commitments. This does not take into account revenue foregone from venue hire nor the likely impact on CoA resources to support such an event, noting the limited resources within the Writers SA organisation (3-5 staff total, 2 full time).

ATTACHMENTS

Attachment A – Adelaide Festival 2025 Impact Report

- END OF REPORT -

ADELAIDE
FESTIVAL **AF**

28 Feb – 16 Mar 2025

Australia's
International
Festival

2025 Impact Report



Adelaide Festival 2025

The 2025 Adelaide Festival truly fulfilled its promise of being Australia's premier international festival. This year's 40th edition showcased an extraordinary program, featuring breathtaking performances across all genres and a global lineup of world-class artists and creators.

We saw the phenomenal contemporary opera *Innocence* directly before it transferred to the Metropolitan Opera in New York, we hosted the world's most celebrated dance company in Pina Bausch's Tanztheater Wuppertal alongside Spain's wildest exponent of flamenco, Rocío Molina. We saw musicians celebrated for being the absolute best in their fields, alongside virtuosic theatrical performances where we witnessed Australia's best artists in every genre. Together they celebrated the transformative power of art in its many forms leaving audiences inspired.

No other Australian arts festival has the capacity to present a program of works including epic international dance, opera, theatre and music. Year on year, Adelaide Festival enables Australian audiences to see the absolute pinnacle of artistic achievement from around the world and the social and economic impacts are far-reaching and are explored in this report.

Thank you for joining us at Adelaide Festival 2025.

Adelaide Festival acknowledges and thanks the people and the lands of the Kaurna Nation of the Adelaide Plains and the Peramangk Nation of the Adelaide Hills. We recognise their ongoing connection to place and land as the oldest continuous culture. We acknowledge these traditional lands have been a place of movement, music, and storytelling for over 60,000 years and take pride in honouring those traditions. The Festival is committed to programming events that reflect First Nations traditions and cultures and their contemporary expression.

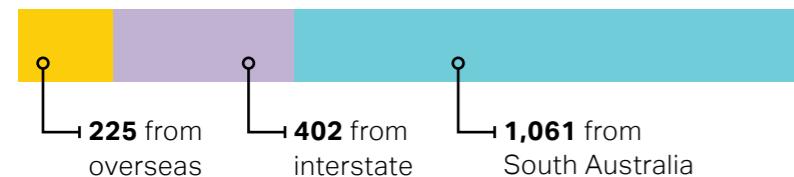
Caída del Cielo (Fallen from Heaven)

Image: Andrew Beveridge

AF25 Overview

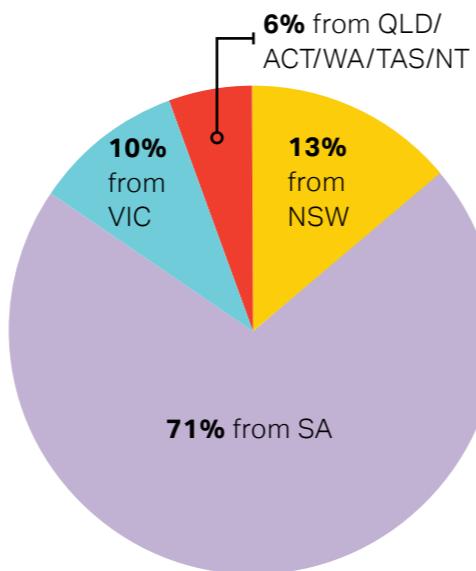
Our 2025 Artists

A total of **1,688 artists** took part in the 2025 Adelaide Festival.



65 events were presented by companies travelling from over **13 different countries**, with works including **11 World Premieres**, **9 Australian Premieres** and **15 events exclusive** to Adelaide Festival.

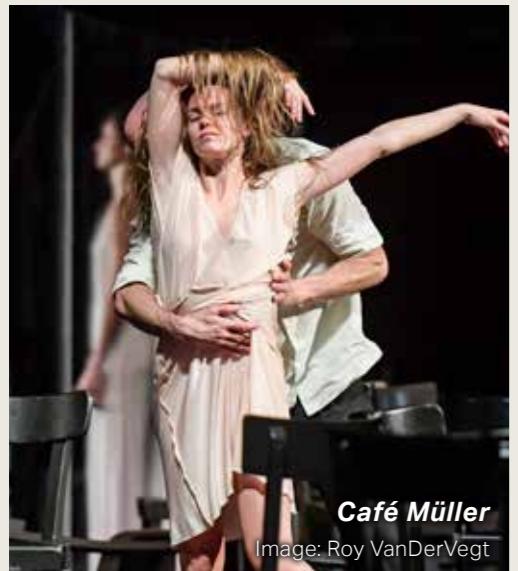
The 2025 Festival showcased over **400 performances** (including 166 Writers' Week sessions), utilising **24 different South Australian venues** and performance spaces.



Interstate visitation to Adelaide Festival

Adelaide Festival continues to be a significant contributor to South Australia's visitor economy, with arts-lovers flocking to the state through February and March to see international work appearing exclusively in Adelaide. The opening weekend of AF25 featured multiple Festival exclusives, including Stephen Rea starring in the critically acclaimed presentation of Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* by Landmark Productions, and the Australian premiere of the festival's stunning operatic centrepiece, Kaija Saariaho's *Innocence*, directed by Simon Stone.

Across the 2025 program, the Festival attracted 29% of all ticket sales from interstate. Shows presented as Adelaide exclusives attracted a significant 35% visitation on average.



Marquee Programming Impact

Adelaide Festival invests heavily in artistically excellent marquee events to be presented exclusively in Adelaide. It is also the only organisation in Australia in recent years to invest in presenting a large-scale international opera. In 2025, **Adelaide Festival raised in excess of \$1.7m** from box office and philanthropy to stage the centrepiece operatic work *Innocence*. These marquee events are not only a significant driver of interstate audiences, but also of investment in the state with nearly **35% of philanthropy for marquee events raised from out-of-state**.

In addition to the economic impact of the audience who travel here to see it, this investment supports the considerable money spent by the festival in South Australia; on wages, contractors, suppliers, venues and hospitality establishments.

Adelaide Festival 2025 by Numbers

365,402 total attendances (including WOMADelaide)

\$47.1 million net impact on the Gross State Product

97,834 tickets sold

\$43 million of new expenditure generated for South Australia

29% of ticket sales to interstate or overseas audiences

\$3 million invested by donors and sponsors

\$62.6 million gross expenditure generated for South Australia

27,471 visitors to the state at ticketed events

121,485 total visitor nights

\$4,162 average spend per visitor in South Australia

338 jobs created (full-time equivalent)



Innocence

Image: Andrew Beveridge



MASS MOVEMENT
Image: Andrew Beveridge

Audience Impact

- **84%** of SA residents agreed that the hosting of the Festival was important for them living and working here.
- **84%** agreed that the Festival was a core avenue by which they gained their desired cultural experiences.
- **95%** of visitors were very likely to recommend visiting SA to friends and family to attend.
- **93%** of visitors were satisfied with their festival experience, and 97% were satisfied with their visit to SA.
- **92%** of visitors said they were very likely to attend the Festival again next year. Of first-time attendees, **93%** were likely to attend again next year.

Importantly, the hosting of the 2025 Adelaide Festival is conservatively estimated as creating **\$10.4 million of "well-being" value for South Australian residents**. This is driven by the value in the cultural opportunities provided, by the cultural contribution and by the public sense of ownership of the event.

Sustainability

The Festival is committed to reducing our environmental impact across all areas of our work. Key achievements in 2025 included:

- Maintaining our Carbon Neutral commitment and accreditation – we were the first accredited Carbon Neutral Arts Festival in Australia.
- Encouraging a vegetarian policy across corporate hospitality, events and functions.
- Championing reusables across all operations and venues.
- Providing an opt-in for artist packs and merchandise to all Adelaide Festival artists.
- Hosting a workshop with our venues on waste minimisation and energy efficiency.
- Continuing to reduce printing and paper use.
- Sourcing low emissions vehicles for the AF25 ground fleet.



Adelaide Writers' Week
Image: Julia McNab



Big Name, No Blankets

Image: Morgan Sette



Young Audiences and Education

We believe that thought-provoking and inspiring performances and arts experiences can be incredibly powerful for young people.

- **6,573 students** from **72 schools** attended AF25 events and performances through our schools' program
- **993 students** accessed equity prices tickets (\$5, \$12.50, \$15)
- **240 students** benefitted from free transport to the Festival thanks to our Festival Connect program

Teacher resources were provided to assist educators in deepening the experience of students attending Festival performances.

Adelaide Writers' Week hosted Schools Day at the Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden. A program each for Primary and Secondary Schools.



Trent Dalton's Love Stories

Image: Andrew Beveridge



Adelaide Writers' Week

Image: Julia McNab

Adelaide Writers' Week

The 40th Adelaide Writers' Week attracted a record-breaking **160,000 attendances** from across South Australia and interstate to the Pioneer Women's Memorial Garden, The Drill Hall and Adelaide Town Hall.

The 2025 program was the third under Director Louise Adler AM. Across six days, **over 220 Australian and international authors** convened for 166 sessions, spanning both live and virtual formats, and with programming for schools, families and young adults. The event was live streamed into **70 libraries**, schools, retirement villages and community centres.

The annual Writers' Week podcasts prove to be popular, tallying **over 160K streams and downloads**.

Outreach via Open House

Adelaide Festival's Open House program offers heavily discounted ticketing through our Tix For Next To Nix and Pay What You Can initiatives, which provide tickets for people with a current Health Care Card or Pension Card. These initiatives were generously supported for the seventh time by The Balnaves Foundation.

In 2025, almost **2,000 people** had access to Adelaide Festival shows through Tix For Next To Nix and Pay What You Can.

Accessibility Initiatives

At Adelaide Festival, we believe everyone has the right to access quality arts and entertainment.

Our 2025 program included:

- 28 Auslan interpreted performances / Adelaide Writers' Week sessions
- 4 Audio described performances
- 1 relaxed performance

We offered accessible versions of our program and continued use of an accessibility widget on our website.

We shared venue information like public transport routes, accessible drop off and parking locations and whether sensory tools were available.

We also provided social stories to help our audiences understand what to expect when they attend an Adelaide Festival event or venue.

Adelaide Festival is currently in the process of building our Disability Access and Inclusion Plan, which will further enhance our efforts to ensure our programs and experiences are accessible and inclusive to all members of the community.

Regional Impact

While many AF events take place in greater metropolitan Adelaide, Adelaide Festival interacts with the regions and offers ways for visitors and artists from regional South Australia to get involved.

In 2025 a collaborative adaption of H.G Wells' *War of the Worlds* by Arena Theatre Company, D'faces of Youth Arts and Riverland Youth Theatre was presented across Barmera, Whyalla and Bendigo. We welcomed thousands of ticketholders from regional areas to this year's Festival thanks to 10% of our advertising campaign spend targeted directly to regional audiences and businesses. Adelaide Writers' Week sessions were streamed into regional libraries and schools.

Our Marketing Reach

Campaign

A comprehensive five-month national marketing campaign valued at over **\$2m** was delivered across print, press, screen, radio, online and outdoor. A key component of this campaign was the printed program with **55,000** Adelaide Festival program guides distributed across Adelaide, Sydney and Melbourne, and **30,000** Adelaide Writers' Week program guides distributed across South Australia.

Media Coverage

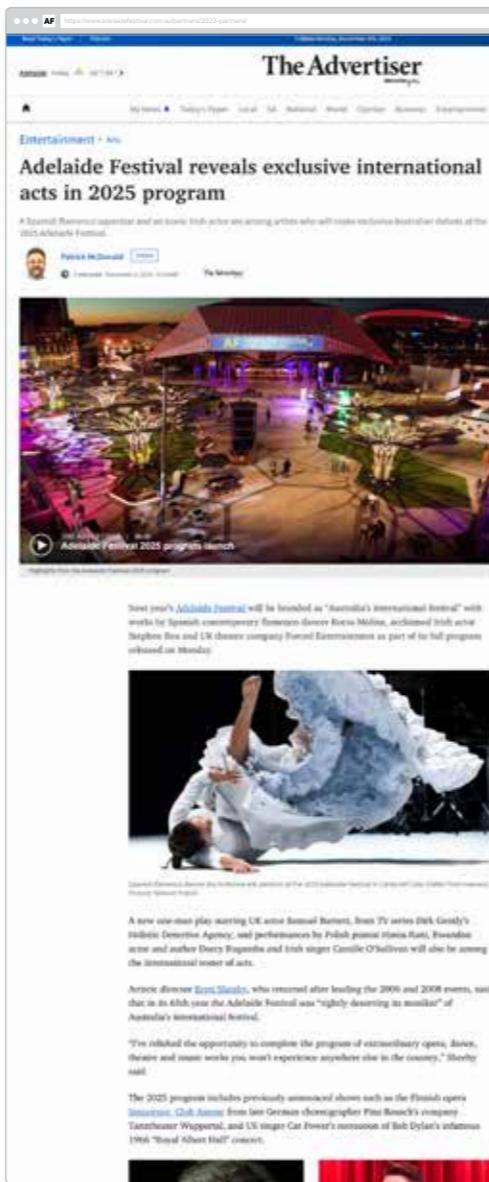
For the period 1 Jul 2024 – 31 March 2025, there were **6,805** **direct mentions** of Adelaide Festival on TV, print, radio, magazines and online. The cumulative audience reach was **185,728,410** with an advertising value equivalency of **\$14.5M** (Source: Insights Plus Stream Report for Government of South Australia and Adelaide Festival).

Features about AF25 were published in major national publications including *The Australian*, *Limelight*, *The Financial Review*, *The Saturday Paper*, *The Age*, *The Guardian*, and internationally in *The Stage UK*, *Fest Mag*, *The List* and *Variety*.

Digital

The Adelaide Festival website had **1.1 million page views** during the campaign period (June 2024 – March 2025) from over **360K** users.

Adelaide Festival and Adelaide Writers' Week social media channels generate a combined reach of **2.1 million** across the campaign period. 26 e-newsletters were sent to over **70K subscribers** of Adelaide Festival Insiders and Adelaide Writers' Week.





ADELAIDE FESTIVAL



28 FEB – 16 MAR 2025

28 Feb – 16 Mar 2025 | 27 Feb – 15 Mar 2026 | 26 Feb – 14 Mar 2027

adelaidefestival.com.au