Poetry in Action
Understanding experiences, perceptions, and impacts of PIA in secondary schools
Research Report Part 2: Schools

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RESEARCH REPORT PART 2 - SCHOOLS
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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ABS: Australian Bureau of Statistics

AATE: Australian Association of Teachers of English

ACARA: Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority

COVID-19: Coronavirus pandemic

NESA: NSW Education Standards Authority

PIA: Poetry in Action

PL: Professional Learning

QCAA: Queensland Curriculum and Assessment Authority

TIE: Theatre in Education

RESEARCH TEAM

Professor Susanne Gannon has an research interest in creativity in and out of schools, particularly in writing, and secondary English education. She has evaluated educational programs for Education Departments, corporations, professional associations and not for profits.

Dr Eva Vass is an expert in creative learning pedagogies and embodied learning. Her international reputation has led to research partnerships with the Kodaly Institute in Hungary and a Docent title from the University of Helsinki, Finland.

Adjunct Professor Mary Mooney researches in the fields of teacher education, effective teaching, positive behaviour systems and artists in school residencies. Mary has been Vice President and Director of Research for Drama Australia.

1   EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 Abstract

Poetry in Action is an Australian touring theatre group that has worked for fifteen years delivering intense, high-energy performance-based programs to schools around Australia and beyond. Poetry in Action aims to evoke joy and wonder, bring poetry to life, inspire and complement the work of teachers. In its emphasis on the vocal elements and musicality of poetry, and on embodiment and physicality in poetic expression, Poetry in Action provides more dynamic entry points to poetic language and form than students usually experience in text-based study of poetry. This mixed method research evaluates the impact of PIA on artists, teachers and students in the diverse secondary schools that PIA reaches. *Report 2: Schools* draws on a national survey with teachers and interviews with PIA artists to explore what schools value most and identify those factors that are barriers to delivery and quality of impact. Clearer insights into PIA's value to schools informs recommendations based on how teachers currently incorporate PIA shows into teaching and learning in their schools and how this might be strengthened to further increase and diversify the impact of PIA in secondary schools.

1.2 HIGHLIGHTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

We present the following highlights and recommendations arising from the research, especially in reference to the critical factors that impact on the success and replication of the PIA model in diverse contexts and school settings.

Report 2: Schools details a range of ways in which PIA experiences **influence teachers' professional development and pedagogy in English and the arts and beyond**.

Engagement with PIA visits to the schools and with PIA educational resources designed for teachers have the capacity to expand teachers' ways of delivering poetry lessons in their classrooms, and enhance their own enjoyment and understanding of poetry. This is

particularly impactful for early career teachers, and for teachers who feel less comfortable and confident in teaching poetry in the classroom. Teachers' own dispositions towards poetry have direct impact on the ways they teach poetry in their classrooms. What teachers learn from PIA shows has an impact how they teach poetry, including extending discussions about poetry in the classroom; introducing, reinforcing and consolidating learning of poetic concepts; and presenting to teachers the importance of aural and performance aspects of poetry.

Timing and availability of PIA shows are key criteria for teachers deciding which shows to book for their school but the degree of curriculum alignment is of particular importance. Curriculum alignment encompasses the poetic concepts and metalanguage of poetry that students need to learn at particular year levels, and it also extends to a lesser extent to particular poems and poets. PIA is currently more successful in reaching junior and middle years of secondary school than in the senior years.

Our data documents PIA artists' attention to the convergences between the PIA performances and educational requirements. Whilst the PIA overarching strategy to focus on the NSW curriculum has benefits (the current NSW syllabus does incorporate all of the *Australian Curriculum: English* content descriptors), it is recommended that PIA also expands its work to curriculum contexts outside NSW. National complexity in terms of syllabus design suggests that such a differentiated and agile marketing strategy would be required to pitch the performances to different state contexts in the senior years. Although there are state differences in the junior years of secondary school, teachers have greater choice in planning students' learning, and it is likely to be easier to meet the needs of schools.

In order to address the need for such diversification, it is worthwhile for PIA to connect with the national organisation *Australian Association of Teachers of English (AATE)* to request the review of their curriculum mapping, and/or to form a small education advisory group comprising a teacher from each state. This would help PIA to understand how to best align their program with state-specific contexts and curriculum requirements. The advisory group

would also support PIA with their timelines for marketing and communications with schools in different states and sectors.

PIA also has reach into Drama classes in schools, however, much less is known about their impact. Interest is more in the performance elements and theatricality of PIA shows, than in the poetic texts. There may be scope for PIA to create a more direct pitch to Drama teachers and students as supplements to the English-focused performances.

Although necessary during the Covid pandemic, digital versions of the PIA programs were not as effective as live touring because of the detachment of performers from audiences. Given the novelty, dynamism and richness of the embodied learning in live performances, there seems to be a preference in schools for live performances over the digital offerings. The niche of PIA will always be live performances, even though schools' have abundant access to very high-quality digital resources in general. Following from this, the ongoing monitoring of the digital performance strategy is advisable, in terms of bookings and post viewing evaluations. An education advisory group – as mentioned before – would be able to provide continued advice on how digital offerings fit within the learning ecologies of schools.

Whilst PIA's Education Packs are highly valued in many schools, there is an ongoing imperative to revise, modify and seek feedback from teacher users of the Education Packs so that they can be tweaked to best fit the requirements of schools. We suggest that it is more useful to think of the Educator packs as having the capacity to enhance and deepen pedagogy in the classroom. Teachers will still be teaching about poetry and reading poetry more extensively across a unit of work. No pack is a substitute for the teachers' work, but a skilful teacher will draw upon the resource within their teaching so that there is a seamless transition between the PIA experience with the classroom experience. Related to this, it is recommended that PIA follows up on the distribution of the Education Packs to make sure that teachers always receive these prior to the performance they have selected for their school. Furthermore, PIA might look at how familiar the artists are with those materials as they go out on tour, so that there is a mutual teacher-artist understanding of how the contents of the resources can complement the performance.

A further suggestion is that PIA offer live professional learning opportunities for teachers, which could be arranged as an optional extension of touring programs within schools or through English teacher professional associations as sessions at their annual conferences. PIA should monitor interest and responses to the PL course to consider whether it is worth seeking to reaccredit the course directly for NSW teachers, and what the context is for teacher accreditation in other states.

RECOMMENDATIONS

EDUCATIONAL ADVISORY COMMITTEE

PIA contact AATE and/ or form an educational advisory committee of teachers across states. This group could advise on curriculum mapping, review Educator Packs, digital performance strategy and online PL for teachers.

CURRICULUM MAPPING

PIA refine curriculum mapping of shows and teacher resources to account for differences between states.

TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

PIA review online professional learning and investigate feasibility of live professional learning, either in schools as a supplement to performances or at conferences for teachers.

DRAMA

PIA investigate how their performances can meet needs of Drama teachers and students.

Figure 1: Recommendations: Teachers' professional development and pedagogy

Our study has also detailed the diverse ways in which PIA **add value to students' learning, enjoyment and understanding of poetry**.

PIA performances are highly engaging and enjoyable for students, particularly those in the junior and middle years of secondary schooling. Students tend to respond well to the humour in some PIA shows, and to the poignancy of *Words of War,* which was the most popular show booked by schools in this research. Students are generally enthusiastic

audiences for live performances and are often highly engaged in Q and A sessions following performances. Students' interest and engagement in Q and A sessions extends beyond learning about poetry to the nature of performance and curiosity about careers in the arts sector. However, teachers also noted that sometimes PIA actors could be better prepared for Q and A sessions.

The high levels of interest that are triggered in performances carry back into their classrooms and their subsequent learning about poetry. PIA offers different ways for students to learn about and appreciate poetry than in their normal English classes. Their teachers report that student learning is directly and significantly enhanced through the experience of PIA performances. In particular, they deepen their understanding of poetry as a spoken art. Poetic concepts, metalanguage and the technical aspects of poetry are brought to life and made more accessible to students in PIA performances. PIA performances also have the potential to further student appreciation of poetry as a form of self-expression when they write their own poetry and submit it to the PIA poetry competition.

For students away from urban centres or middle class schools, the capacity to deepen their understanding and enjoyment is even greater than for those in urban centres or more privileged locations. However in schools with less experience of performance, students may find it difficult to keep up with the fast pace of PIA shows, especially in younger years.

Our analysis of the data suggests that PIA does have reach into schools across the spectrum of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. PIA's commitment to expanding its geographical footprint by touring the regions enables it to reach smaller schools. Forging and sustaining relationships with smaller secondary schools across urban and regional Australia is important and challenging for consolidating PIA's reach and impact, particularly as contact teachers may change more frequently in smaller schools.

Diversification of programs is recommended with regards to culture and language. For instance, the representation of Indigenous students was relatively low in the schools participating in the online teacher survey. However, in urban schools in our major cities and

across all school systems, some Indigenous students are likely to be present and inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and contexts could be a focus for PIA. Linked to this, the surveys and artist interviews showcased the participating schools' linguistic and cultural diversity. Whilst the responses to the national survey provide only limited insights into how PIA programs are impacting in culturally and linguistically diverse school settings, it is recommended that PIA builds on the linguistic and cultural diversity of contemporary Australia more extensively in their development of new work. Students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, including Indigenous students, would benefit from seeing this diversity reflected in PIA scripts, performances and performers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

LIVE PERFORMANCES
Sustain the primary emphasis of PIA on touring highly engaging live performances into schools.

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URBAN & REGIONAL SCHOOLS
PIA forge and sustain relationships with smaller secondary schools in urban and regional Australia.

YOUNGER AUDIENCES
Consider moderating pace of shows for younger audiences.

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DIVERSE AUDIENCES
Prioritise cultural inclusion to reflect diversity of contemporary Australia, particularly in developing new work.

Q&A SESSIONS
Prepare actors for breadth of issues that might arise in Q and A sessions.

Figure 2: Recommendations: Students' learning, enjoyment and understanding across a range of schools

2 RESEARCH REPORT PART 2 – SCHOOLS

2.1 THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

Introduction

Poetry in Action (PIA) is a theatre in education (TIE) company that has worked with schools around Australia for more than fifteen years, and apart from repeat bookings and anecdotal reports, little is known about the impact of PIA on teaching and learning in the schools that it has reached. In the arts industry, PIA provides employment to a range of artists, ranging from new graduates from theatre courses to industry experts. The research aims to investigate experiences, perceptions, and impacts of PIA in Australian schools and in the arts industry. *Report Part 1: Artists* analysed the impact of PIA on artists and the arts industry. This *Report Part 2: Schools* focuses on the impact of PIA on teaching and learning in schools.

PIA Background

Poetry in Action (PIA) has worked for more than fifteen years delivering intense, high-energy tailored performance-based programs to schools in Australia and beyond. Figure 3 displays the four key elements of the Poetry in Action model: Theatre, Education, Poetry and Arts Industry. Pertaining to the theatre and education elements, PIA has performed for more than 700,000 students and delivered more than 4000 live performances for schools in all sectors, states, and regions. Programs are designed to fit into school timetables, to minimize disruption while maximising impact, and are complemented by quality teaching resources to guide classroom activities in order to extend students' learning. Pertaining to the Poetry element, PIA aims to evoke joy and wonder, bring poetry to life, inspire, and complement the work of teachers. In its emphasis on the vocal elements and musicality of poetry, and on embodiment and physicality in poetic expression, Poetry in Action provides more dynamic and embodied entry points to poetic language and form than school students usually experience in text-based study of poetry.
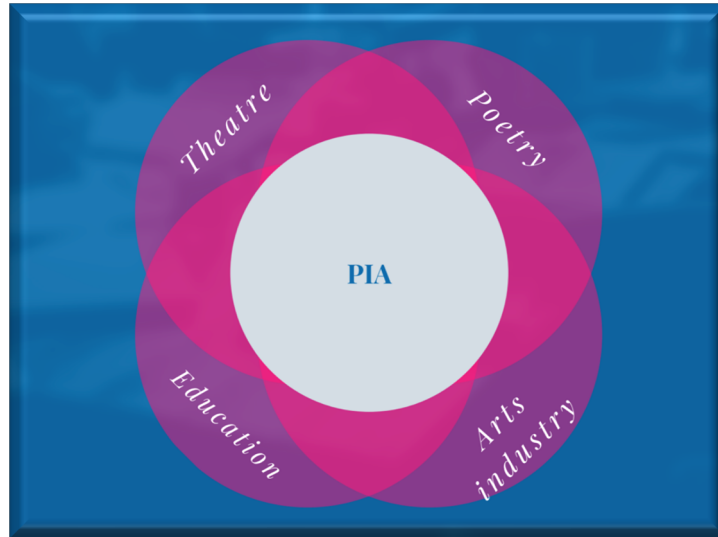
Figure 3: Poetry in Action model

PIA offers four distinct touring programs designed for secondary schools and pitched at student audiences across different year levels. Currently (2022) these are: *Unlocking the Poetry Code* (Years 7-8), *Power of Poetry* (Years 8-10), *Words of War* (Years 9-12), and *Fact vs Fiction* (Years 10-12). Programs change from year to year. While live shows are the backbone of Poetry in Action, closures of schools and borders during the pandemic prompted the development of an equivalent set of digital productions that are accompanied by live Q&A with the artists.

PIA provides low-cost, inclusive, and high-quality programs primarily for school audiences. The expressed vision for PIA is 'to be an expressive and articulate the Australian voice in the world'. The Mission of PIA is to 'unlock the power of words for everyone'. Touring records indicate that Poetry in Action is performing in schools in low SES as well as high SES areas, regional and urban locations, and has been widely adopted by public secondary schools as well as Catholic and Independent schools.

Research background

Research in Australia and overseas indicates that the study of poetry in secondary schools has been impacted by mandatory curriculum, a focus on functional literacy, and exam practices that emphasise analysis of poetic texts. Researchers suggest that this has led to

unengaging pedagogies and a narrow focus on literary analysis at the expense of experiential encounters with poetry (Benton, 2000; Dymoke, 2002, 2012; Dymoke & McGuinn, 2021; O'Neill, 2006; Weaven & Clark, 2011, 2013; Wilson, 2010, 2013; Xerri, 2016). They argue that creative encounters with poetry can refresh teachers' pedagogy and confidence (Locke & Kato, 2012; Wilson 2013), and re-engage and deepen students' enjoyment and learning (Creely, 2018; Gannon, 2011; Hennessy & McNamara, 2011).

Creative pedagogies nurture students' tangible, experiential relationships with texts. They: i) prioritise students' lived, co-creative encounters with poetry, ii) foreground transversal competence approaches to learning, and iii) collapse the boundaries between genres, modalities of expression and art-forms for meaning-making. Creative, experience-centred, performance-based pedagogies bring the English curriculum to life, extending teachers' skills, attitudes, and pedagogies (Galton, 2008; Thomson & Sefton-Green, 2011). Importantly, not-for-profit organisations are increasingly working with/in schools to enhance poetic pedagogies (Xerri, 2018) yet their impact and influence within the creative ecologies of school communities is under-researched (Hatton & Mooney, 2017).

2.2 THE RESEARCH DESIGN

Aim

The aim of the research project is to investigate experiences, perceptions, and impacts of PIA in Australian schools and the arts industry.

Scope of the research project

The project has targeted PIA activities and impact over a five-year period (2017-2021) when there had been significant growth in the organisation's scale and national reach. Although PIA has had some international activity through that period, the scope of this study has been limited to activities within Australia. The scope of this research report is limited to the findings from data collected from teachers via an online national survey and PIA Artists via online interviews. The scope of the research has also been impacted by the COVID-19

pandemic, which constrained and reshaped PIA school programs in 2020-2021 and which limited data collection in schools during 2021 and 2022.

Key research questions

The research questions guiding the study are:

1. How do PIA performance-based, live encounters with poetry impact on teachers, students, school communities and artists?
2. In what ways do PIA experiences influence teachers' professional development and pedagogy in English and the arts?
3. In what ways does PIA add value to students' learning, enjoyment and understanding of poetry?
4. In what ways do PIA experiences influence artists' professional capacities, career development and further opportunities?
5. What critical factors impact on success and replication of PIA model in diverse contexts and school settings?

Research Report Part 1: Artists addressed research question 4 and aspects of research question 1. This *Research Report Part 2: Schools* shifts the focus directly onto PIA's impact on schools and focuses on research questions 1, 2, 3 and 5.

Methodology and methods

As outlined in *Research Report Part 1: Artists*, the first phase of the project involved semi-structured, individual interviews with 21 PIA artists via Zoom to investigate the impact of Poetry in Action (PIA) on artists – actors, writers, dramaturgs, and directors. *Research Report Part 2: Schools* focuses on a second data set arising from the researchers' contact with schools via the online national survey. Data from the survey has also been triangulated with the artists' interview data pertaining to students and teachers in schools. A third data set – interviews with teachers in a sample of case study schools – was also planned however data collection was paused due to difficulties in gaining approvals from the relevant education sectors and barriers to the recruitment of teacher participants due to COVID-19 disruptions in schools.

Survey for schools

An online survey was devised and built on Qualtrics survey platform with a hyperlink emailed to PIA's previous school clients via the designated contact teacher. The survey contained scales and closed multiple-choice options to produce quantitative data as well as optional open text responses. Survey draft questions were piloted with teachers, then revised and shared with PIA via Zoom on March 20 before being finalised. (Appendix 1)

Research ethics approvals

As the first step, the research team sought the Western Sydney University Ethics Committee's approval for all components of the project: Phase 1: artist interviews, Phase 2: teacher survey and teacher interviews. University ethics approval was confirmed on October 20, 2021. (Appendix 2)

Subsequently, the research team:

- initiated the Department of Education ethics approval processes for public school systems in each state (with a separate application for each state);
- initiated the Catholic Education ethics approval processes providing each diocese with a separate application as required, and also;
- approached Independent Schools around Australia directly for survey participation.

Ethics applications were sent to all state education departments and all Catholic diocese that accept the National Application Form for Research in Schools. Applications were sent between November 2021 and February 2022 (excluding school holidays) to allow time for review and adjustments as required by each jurisdiction. For example, rewording of information sheets and consent forms was required by some states.

In all, twenty-four ethics packages were submitted to central offices of state and Catholic jurisdictions requesting permission to approach schools. Due to continuing COVID-19 disruptions in schools, research in some jurisdictions has not been allowed in the first half of 2022, while others withdrew or paused research approvals for blocks of time during Terms 1

and 2, 2022. Fourteen jurisdictions, each including multiple schools that had booked PIA, and spanning all states in Australia, approved the research within the timeline (Appendix 3).

State/sector	Research ethics application sent	Response received (date)	Approval obtained (yes/no)	Conditions/ comments
1. NSW	23/11/2021	Multiple communications	No	Research in schools on hold
2. VIC	23/11/2021	Multiple Communications	No	Not accepting research applications
3. SA	23/11/2021	1/2/2022	Yes	
4. NT	23/11/2021	7/6/2022	Yes	Research approval paused until June 2022
5. ACT	23/11/2021	Multiple communications	No	Research in schools on hold
6. WA	23/11/2021	22/5/2022	Yes	Minor changes to documents and/ or procedures
7. TAS	23/12/2021	3/12/2021	Yes	Research approval paused until Term 2, 2022
8. QLD	23/11/2021	7/3/2022	Yes	Minor changes to documents and/ or procedures
9. WA Diocese	23/11/2021	7/12/2022	Yes	
10. NT Diocese	23/11/2021		Yes	
11. SA Diocese	23/11/2021		No	Research in schools on hold
12. Tasmania Diocese	23/11/2021		No	
13. Armidale Diocese	23/11/2021		No	Research in schools on hold
14. Broken Bay Diocese	23/11/2021		No	Research in schools on hold
15. Toowoomba Diocese	23/11/2021		No	
16. Ballarat Diocese	23/11/2021		No	
17. Parramatta Diocese			No	Current policy not to approve research applications
18. Wollongong Diocese	22/1/2022	17/5/2022	Yes	
19. Melbourne Diocese	23/11/2021	Multiple communications	Yes	Research paused permitted Term 2, 2022
20. Brisbane Diocese	23/11/2021	Multiple communications	Yes	
21. Canberra/ Goulburn Diocese	21/1/2022	28/3/2022	Yes	
22. Maitland / Newcastle Diocese	6/12/2021	6/12/2021	Yes	

| 23. Melbourne Diocese | 23/11/2021 | 22/ 12/ 2021 | Yes | |
| 24. Bathurst Diocese | 18/1/2022 | 15/3/2022 | Yes | |

Table 1: School research ethics approval processes

As Table 1 illustrates, the approval process for research ethics is complicated and difficult to predict and coordinate, with significant consequences on the scale of this research. For example, NSW has 35 government schools which have sustained engagement with PIA. Therefore, amongst the potential pool of sustained engagement schools across all sectors, locations and ICSEA, the NSW government schools would be ideal candidates for the research. Yet the NSW Department of Education banned all school-based research during 2022 to minimise additional burdens on teachers due to the COVID-19 pandemic impact on schools (Appendix 4). Therefore, the research team had no permission to approach this cohort of potential school participants. The Education Department of Victoria and a number of Catholic Dioceses took a similar position and did not allow research in their schools in Terms 1-2, 2022.

Recruitment

The teachers' survey opened on 19 April and closed on 16 June 2022. The team approached all schools that we had permission to contact for research participation. The spreadsheet of bookers and schools provided by PIA meant we could contact teachers who had been responsible for booking PIA for their schools, and would have the most thorough understanding of PIA's contribution and impact.

After receiving approval from an education jurisdiction, the researchers sent a personalised invitation including the hyperlink to the online survey to the email address of the teacher who was the named PIA booker in each school that had booked PIA in that jurisdiction between 2017-2021 (Appendix 5). An information sheet (Appendix 6) for the school Principal was attached and had to be shared before teachers could complete all questions in the survey. All teachers were sent two personalised email reminders from the researchers after the initial invitation. Independent schools were contacted individually. On the opening screens of the survey teachers indicated their own consent for their data to be included in

the research, and indicated whether or not they had the agreement of their principal to participate. Those participants who answered positively to both the opening questions were then able to proceed to the remaining questions.

Recruitment of schools is always complex, and participation cannot be guaranteed, even where systems (Department of Education, Catholic Education Office) have given permission to approach principals. As we were asking teachers to retrospectively report on Poetry in Action from previous years, rather than a recent engagement, this may have also impacted their willingness to participate and what they could recall. In addition, 29 teacher email addresses were no longer functional. The team invited 364 teachers to complete the survey. We received 33 responses to the national survey, with a response rate of 9%[1]. Our experience in other recent research has been that teachers have become reluctant to complete surveys. COVID-19 pandemic fatigue is a current explanation, however over-surveying is an increasingly problem across all populations.

Data analysis

This report on PIA experiences, perceptions and impacts on secondary schools draws on two data sets: the national online survey distributed to teachers, and interviews undertaken with PIA artists that were drawn upon in *Research Report Part 1: Artists*. The national survey generated anonymised data that is reported numerically and graphically to identify patterns and relationships. Comments from open text responses also provide qualitative insights that are grouped by themes for deeper understanding (Saldaña, 2016). We returned to the interviews for a further layer of analysis, extracting those comments PIA artists made about their experiences of working in and with schools. These enabled the research team to develop themes across teacher and artists comments to generate findings, and to illustrate these findings with illustrative quotes from teachers and artists (See 3.1 and 3.2).

PIA's expressed mission is 'to unlock the power of words for everyone' therefore it is important to examine the extent to which PIA has been able to reach 'everyone'. The

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[1] For reliability of results, a sample of 364 would require 187 responses from teachers to ensure 95% confidence in results with a 5% margin of error (according to Qualtrics sample size calculator).

research team has understood this as including teachers and young people in different locations and regions, with different degrees of privilege and/ or disadvantage, from different cultural backgrounds – all of whom have the right to access 'the power of words'. Our initial research design included case studies with a sample of schools in different locations and systems however this phase of the study was impacted by COVID-19. As an alternative analytical strategy to generate school-specific case studies, we drilled down into the most detailed responses from individual teachers to produce 'small stories' of how PIA impacts differently in various locations, communities, and types of schools (See 3.3). We returned to the artist interviews to extract vignettes of particularly memorable experiences they had on school visits. These provide another set of small stories of impact, from the perspectives of artists.

EMERGING THEMES

1 — TEACHERS' PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PEDAGOGY
Curriculum alignment
Teachers' experiences and engagement
Value-add of PIA resources

PIA'S IMPACT ON SCHOOLS

2 — STUDENTS' LEARNING, ENJOYMENT AND UNDERSTANDING
Learning experience and engagement
Understanding of poetry

3 — PIA AND DIVERSE SCHOOL CONTEXTS
'Small stories'
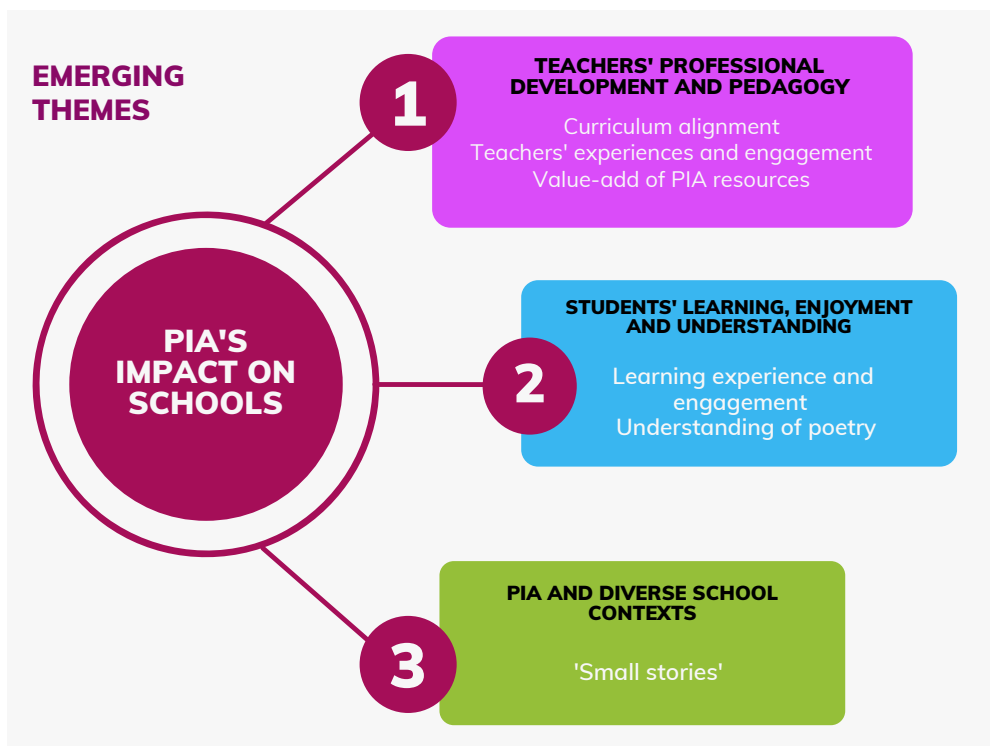
Figure 4: Emergent themes for Report 2: Schools

2.3   WHICH SCHOOLS AND TEACHERS PARTICIPATED IN THE RESEARCH?

The survey asked teachers to identify the role in which they had the authority to book PIA for their school. Figure 5 shows that the largest group of 40% of the teacher participants booked PIA as Heads of Department. This is the middle management position within a secondary school with a subject budget to manage and decision-making responsibilities for how to prioritise expenditure. However, some participants used similar descriptors of managerial positions in the open text field (Other): Assistant Head of Department, Assistant Head of Department (English), Assistant Head English (20%). In total 60% of respondents were in middle management positions when they decided to book PIA for their school. Heads of Department also have responsibility for the ongoing professional learning of the people they lead in their faculty, and for leading curriculum planning within the school. Importantly, smaller percentages of English and Drama teachers who are *not* in management positions also have influence in decisions to book PIA for a school. An implication for PIA would be that the organisation could seek to develop networks across all these roles in a school.
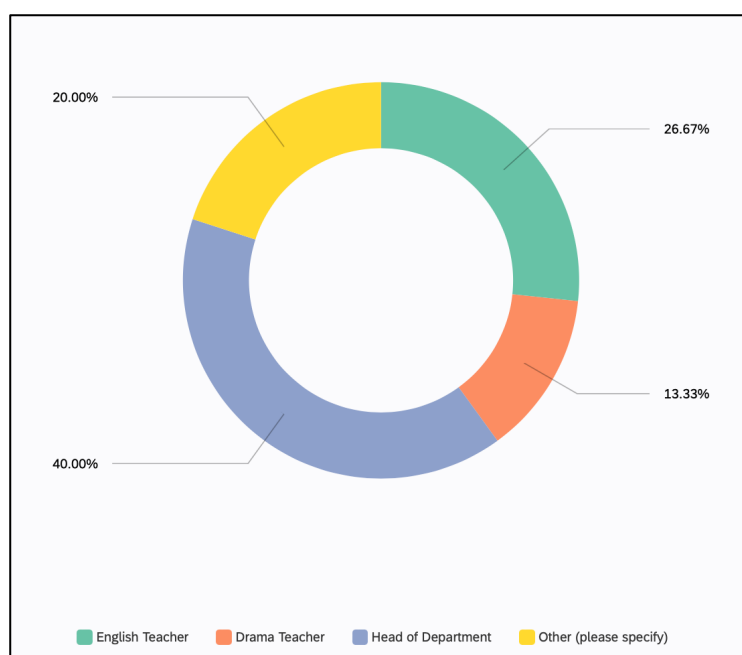
Figure 5: Role of participating teacher in school

Secondary schools across all major educational systems participated in the survey, with representation broadly reflecting distribution of Australian school systems. Figure 6 shows that state schools comprised the largest group of participating schools, followed by Catholic schools, with Independent and Anglican schools making up the remaining participant groups. This represents the wide range of types of school that PIA reaches, and therefore its capacity to influence students and teachers regardless of school system.
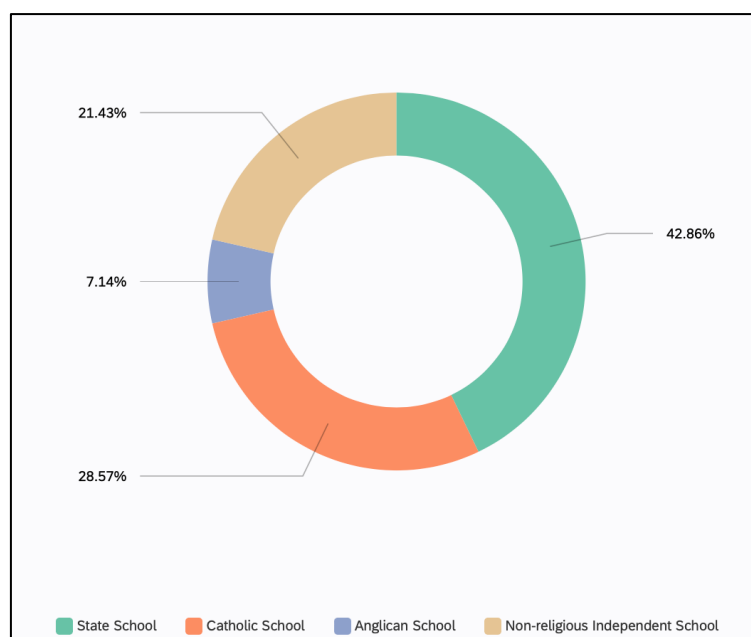
Figure 6: Type of school

Schools in all of the major states responded to the survey, however no responses were received from the small number of eligible schools in ACT and NT. The highest percentage of responses came from NSW at 35% or just over a third of responses, while Victoria contributed the lowest percentage of responses at 7%. All NSW and Victorian responses were from Catholic or Independent schools, as public schools in those states were not permitted to participate. Remaining responses were evenly distributed between SA, WA, Qld, Tas with just over 14% of responses each. In these four states, responses came from participants located across all school systems.

While state borders are important for understanding PIA's breadth and influence, more nuanced locational data offers greater insights into PIA's impact on schools. As a touring company which invests substantially in taking PIA performances beyond urban limits, PIA

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targets schools that are not as well served by opportunities for live theatre as those in major cities. However, regional and remote touring of live PIA performances has been limited by the COVID-19 pandemic since 2020. Respondents to the national survey were predominantly in schools in urban areas at 86%, with only 14% of responses from regional schools and none from remote schools. Therefore, it is important to note that comments from teachers in this report are predominantly from those located in urban schools. Teachers were mainly located in coeducational schools (71%), however teachers in single sex-boys' schools (21%) and single-sex girls' schools (7%) also participated.

The survey asked teachers to provide information about demographic features of their school communities including school size, socio-economic status, and an estimate of students from Indigenous backgrounds and language backgrounds other than English. The relative size of the schools participating in the national survey varied, however larger schools seemed more able to book PIA for their school according to survey responses. According to ABS Schools data (2017), the average size of Australian secondary schools is 584 students. Around 36% of participating schools had between 500-999 students, and 36% of schools had between 1000 and 1499 enrolled students. A significant proportion of 21% of schools had more than 1500 students. The largest schools may include independent schools encompassing primary and secondary years of schooling. Larger schools are likely to have greater resources. For PIA logistics, the size of a school directly relates to school resourcing and capacity. A very large school may be able to book the full suite of PIA programs for all year levels. A large school is also more likely to have a large customised performing arts space. However, PIA's commitment to expanding its geographical footprint by touring the regions enables it to reach smaller schools. Forging and sustaining relationships with smaller secondary schools across urban and regional Australia is important and challenging for consolidating PIA's reach and impact, particularly as contact teachers may change more frequently in smaller schools.

Teachers were asked to indicate the ICSEA (Index of Community Socio-Educational Advantage) of their school. This is a standardised measure developed by ACARA and indicates relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage of Australian schools with 1000 as the average. Of the participating schools, 57% indicated high ICSEA value (>1050),

while 36% indicated low ICSEA value (<949) with the remainder of 7% having average ICSEA. Poetry in Action aims to reach students in all locations and from diverse socio-economic backgrounds. While responses to the national survey were skewed towards more advantaged schools, responses came from schools across the spectrum. This suggests that PIA does have reach into schools across the spectrum of socio-economic advantage and disadvantage.

Schools participating in the survey tended to have few Indigenous students with only one regional state school in Qld reporting more than 25% of students with Indigenous backgrounds. Apart from the Lilla Project at Watarraka School, NT, which was not part of this impact study, the schools responding to the national survey had low percentages of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students. However, in urban schools in our major cities and across all school systems, some Indigenous students are likely to be present in the audience and inclusion of Indigenous perspectives and contexts could be a focus for PIA.

Schools participating in the survey had slightly higher inclusion of students from language backgrounds other than English, with 21% reporting that more than 25% of their students had diverse language backgrounds. Only one large independent school in NSW reported more than 75% of students with diverse language backgrounds. However, 79% of the schools responding to this survey had low percentages (<25%) of students from diverse language backgrounds despite their predominantly urban locations. Given the linguistic and cultural diversity of contemporary Australia, the responses to the national survey provide only limited insights into how PIA programs are impacting in culturally and linguistically diverse school settings. Inclusion and representation of cultural diversity could be another consideration for PIA in their development of new work.

We were also interested in how PIA was funded within schools. This is of crucial importance as it provides insights into how schools allocate the financial resources that they have available, where these come from, and the timelines that structure their decision-making. An annual subject levy paid by parents or carers is the most significant source (46%) that schools draw upon for PIA payments (Figure 7). Those who selected 'Other' all nominated similar sources: including 'covered by school fees', 'faculty budget', 'department budget',

'English budget'. When the English department is deciding on how they will allocate their annual budget or annual student subject levy, they need to be convinced well in advance of the value adding that PIA performances bring to teaching and learning in their school. This has implications for PIA's timelines for marketing and communications with schools. When schools use subject levies or faculty budgets, there is more likely to be whole year level attendance at PIA performances. It is factored into school planning and teachers of that year level can assume that all their students will have a shared learning experience that they can build on in the classroom. A much smaller percentage (15%) of schools nominated individual student payment, which is more administratively complex and less predictable in terms of which students access the PIA experience. If only some students and classes at a year level access PIA, then it is more difficult to integrate with teaching and learning back in the classroom.
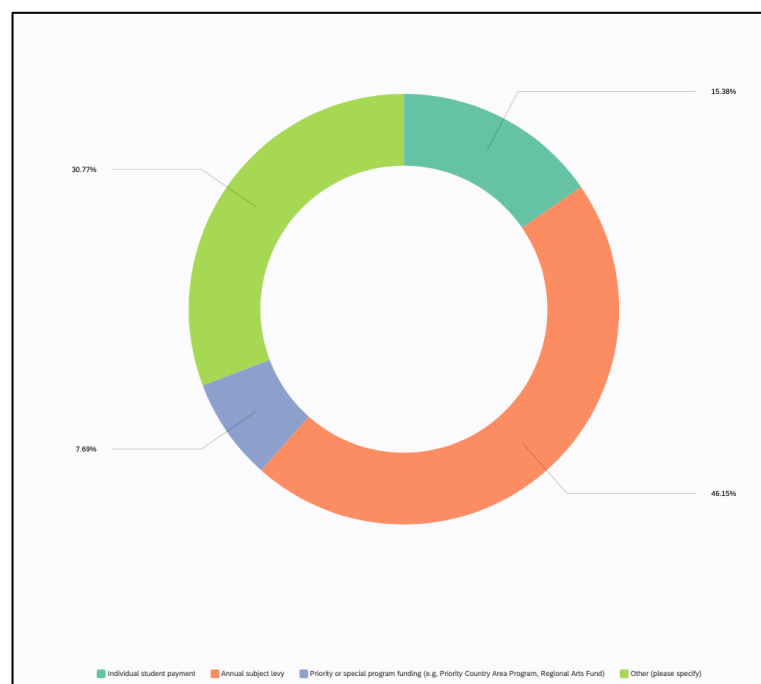
Figure 7: How are PIA performances funded in your school?

We also asked schools whether PIA performances were appropriately priced for their school. The majority of respondents selected 'Just right'. Only two schools selected 'Could be cheaper' and these were both state schools, located respectively in Tasmania and WA. One of these is a small school that relies on Priority or Special Programs funding to enable the whole year level to attend *Words of War* which links directly to their cross curricular

unit. The other school is a large school with an arts focus which uses annual subject levies to fund the PIA visits. This school has booked almost all the PIA programs on offer for Years 7-10 students, however they focus on English academic extension classes and Drama classes rather than whole year level attendance. At this school, teachers who have attended performances include English, HASS (Humanities and Social Sciences), Science and Drama teachers, as well as Executive staff.

3   FINDINGS AND OUTCOMES

This section reports the impacts of PIA in Australian schools in three sections. Firstly (3.1) we focus on teachers to examine how PIA incursions into schools are experienced by teachers as audiences and how these experiences inform the work that teachers do in their classrooms. That is, to what extent does PIA extend teachers learning about poetry and how to teach poetry, and how does PIA shape teachers practice both in the classroom with their own students, and in their planning. In the second section (3.2), we examine students' experiences and interactions with PIA as they are reported by teachers and artists. The third section (3.2) presents small stories of impact from a sample of diverse schools. They provide insights into the breadth of possibilities and ways that PIA is taken up within the particular learning ecologies of individual schools.

3.1   PIA AND TEACHERS – PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT AND PEDAGOGY
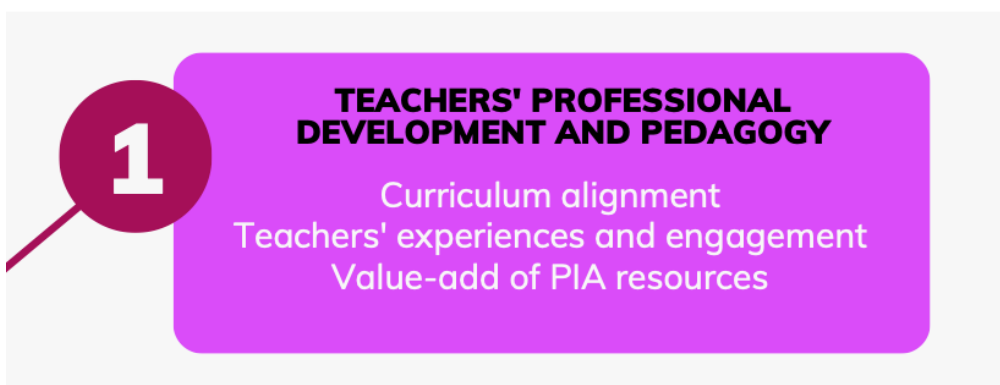
Figure 8: Focus on teachers' professional development and pedagogy

This section of the report focuses on teachers' experiences and perceptions of PIA in their schools and its impact, particularly on their own teaching. It answers the research questions:

How do PIA performance-based, live encounters with poetry impact on teachers?

In what ways do PIA experiences influence teachers' professional development and pedagogy in English and the arts?

Data from the national teacher survey is the key resource for this part of the report. The research team have supplemented this data with reports from artists about their interactions with teachers and their understandings of teachers' work as it overlaps with the goals of PIA. Three key themes were identified for teachers' professional development and pedagogy:

1. Curriculum alignment and complementarity
2. Teachers' experiences and engagement
3. Value-add of PIA Resources

Each section begins with data from the survey with teachers, followed by relevant extracts from interviews with artists.

PIA understands the need to appeal to teachers and enhance the work they do in schools. Teachers are the gatekeepers for PIA reaching into schools in the first place and they are the facilitators of PIA experiences within schools. On its website, PIA claims that 'regular consultations with educators from every state and territory have also firmly established PIA as an invaluable educational resource for educators across Australia'. The PIA performance experienced live and in situ as the company tours to schools around the nation is the cornerstone of PIA's offerings to the sector. This section of the report addresses how teachers understand, use and engage with PIA performances and resources in teaching and learning in English. PIA aims to value add to schools beyond the day of the performance with Educator Packs to complement each production, and online Professional Learning that is mapped against the National Professional Standards for Teachers. Completion of the Professional Learning can be counted towards 2.5 hrs of professional learning for ongoing professional accreditation. During the COVID-19 pandemic, PIA also developed digital versions of four of their programs: *Unlocking the Poetry Code* (7-8), *Power of Poetry* (8-9), *Words of War* (9-10), *Fact vs Fiction* (10-12).   We examine all of these dimensions of teachers' interactions with PIA through this section.

THEME 1: Curriculum alignment

Teachers' perspectives on curriculum alignment

Teachers' work is shaped and directed by curriculum which identifies which elements of poetic language and engagement must be taught at each year level in English, and requires teachers to map and document these in their planning. As teachers' work is intensifying, it is crucial that time allocated to outside organisations should directly enhance teachers' work and help them to meet system requirements. While curriculum documents (also called Syllabus in some states) tell teachers *what* to teach in terms of what student learning outcomes are required, they do not tell teachers *how* to teach this material. Poetry in Action directly contributes to and complements classroom pedagogy by teaching poetry through performance.

Curriculum alignment is a key selling point for PIA performances, however curriculum contexts vary across Australia. The *Australian Curriculum: English* (F-10), developed by ACARA, is organised around three strands of Language, Literature and Literacy. Poetry is located mainly in the curriculum strand of *Literature*. Each of the curriculum strands has content descriptors and elaborations that specify what students need to learn and be able to do. In their planning, teachers must identify which content descriptors they are covering with each unit of work, classroom activity, and assessment task set for students. It also provides the technical language - or metalanguage – for talking about poetry that students should be learning in a glossary[2]. Teachers translate the curriculum into distinct units of work and programs for their school. Teachers in Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, the Northern Territory and the ACT all use the *Australian Curriculum: English*. However, Victoria, NSW and WA have developed their own state English Syllabus and have embedded the national content descriptors within those documents. NSW includes additional poetry

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[2] Examples from the *Australian Curriculum: English* Glossary*:*
Poetic devices: Particular patterns and techniques of language used in poems to create particular effects.
Sound devices: Resources used by poets to convey and reinforce the meaning or experience of poetry through the skilful use of sound (for example, alliteration, onomatopoeia, rhythm, rhyme).

specific content descriptors, uses terminology that is not used in the *Australian Curriculum: English,* and offers more detailed definitions of the metalanguage of poetry[3]*.*

This means that when PIA maps resources for teachers the organisation needs to recognise the complexity of the curriculum landscape across Australia. This will help PIA to understand how to best align with state-specific contexts and curriculum requirements. It may be worthwhile for PIA to connect with the national organisation Australian Association of English teachers to request review of their curriculum mapping, or to form a small education advisory group comprising a teacher from each state.

The researchers asked teachers to identify which PIA performances they had booked for their school (Figure 9), and to describe in their own words how they had made this decision.
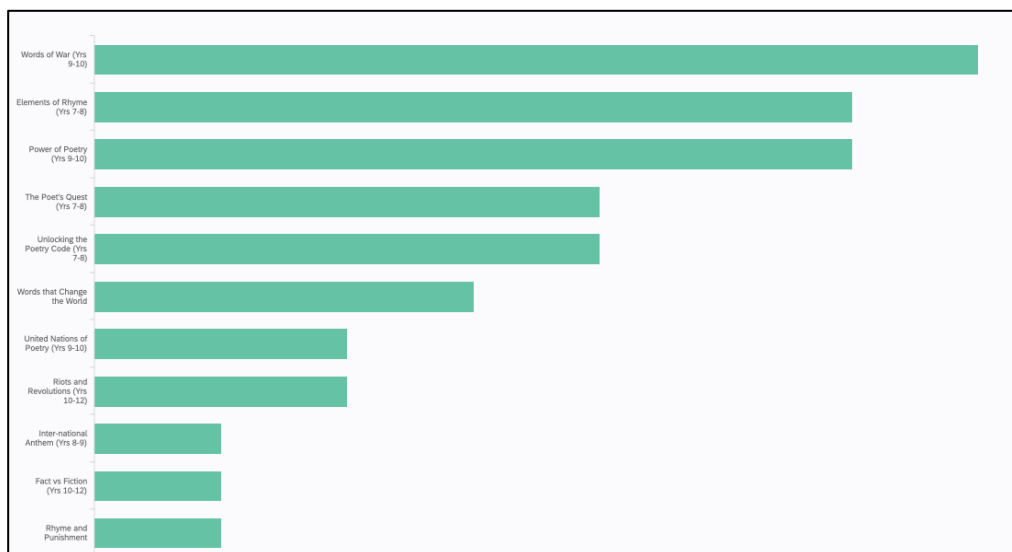
Figure 9: Which PIA shows have come to your school?

The most popular booked show amongst the respondents was *Words of War.* Performances designed for junior and middle secondary school years (called Stage 4 and 5 in NSW) appear

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[3] Extracts from *NSW English Syllabus K-10* Glossary

Poetic Devices: Particular patterns and techniques of language used in poems to create particular effects based in the use of sound, the creation of images and other sensory inputs. They include devices such as metaphor, simile, metonymy, rhyme, rhythm, onomatopoeia, alliteration and assonance. Note that poetic devices may also be used in prose writing and drama scripts to obtain such effects. (Sound devices does not appear in NSW Syllabus).

Poetic Forms: Fixed forms within poetry that must comply with certain requirements, such as ballad, sonnet, elegy, ode, dramatic monologue. The form will often be determined by the tone and subject matter. Note that some poets may deliberately subvert the fixed form.

to be most popular with the schools participating in the survey. As English is a mandatory subject in all states, and most senior English courses include poetry, there may be scope for further marketing performances for years 11 and 12. However this would require more niche programs and more complex mapping because different schools select different texts from mandated text lists in each state, within different senior curriculum contexts. PIA's national scope and ambition suggests that the strategy of providing high energy, well targeted, highly enjoyable and educative poetry performances for Years 7-10 is working well and should be maintained and strengthened.

For teachers, curriculum alignment is very important in their decisions to bring PIA performances into their school. Availability and timing of particular tours were mentioned by many teacher-participants, but alignment with curriculum and planning within the school was the key element in their decision making:

- Relevance to the units of work we are studying.[4]

- Relevance to curriculum offerings.

- It links to our cross-curricular unit.

- The content and direction of the program aligned with our units of work.

- Those which most align with our teaching programs.

- Where students are at with their understanding of poetry.

- Suitability and relevance to programs.

- Best-fit for curriculum.

- Opportunity to link it to other subject areas.

Bookings are made through PIA's website where information is immediately available to teachers on poetry that is included in each show. This provides preview information than teachers can build directly into their learning

2022 live shows available	Poetry included
The Poet's Quest (yrs 7-8)	Includes original poetry from our Artistic Director Bryce Youngman as well as poetry

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[4] As teacher comments tended to be brief in open text sections of the survey, we have listed these as dot points.

	by Dorothea MacKellar, W.T. Goodge, TS Eliot, Rumi, Anna Akhmatova as well as contemporary work from Bella Poarch and Olivia Rodrigo.
United Nations of Poetry (yrs 8-10)	Includes poetry and texts from Matsuo Basho, William Wordsworth, Sappho, Khalil Gibran, Shang Ye, U2, Alfred Lord Tennyson, Maya Angelou, Malcolm London, Kathy Jetinel-Kijiner and more.
Words of War (yrs 9-12)	Wilfred Owen. Poems include: Spring Offensive, Dulce et Decorum Est, Parable of the Old Man and the Young, Mental Cases, Disabled, Anthem for Doomed Youth, Futility.
Riots and Revolutions (yrs 10-12)	Includes original speeches, texts and poetry from Carl Sagan, Greta Thunberg, Charlie Chaplin, Malala Yousafzai, Aaron Sorkin, Bob Dylan, Mary Lee, Emma Gonzales, Jacinda Ardern and more.

Table 2: Poems included in PIA shows 2022

The survey asked teachers to identify whether (or not) PIA performances influenced teachers' unit planning and sequencing in English or Drama. With this question, we wanted to know what the direct influences of PIA were on curriculum within the school. Slightly over 50% of respondents said that it did have an influence (Figure 10).
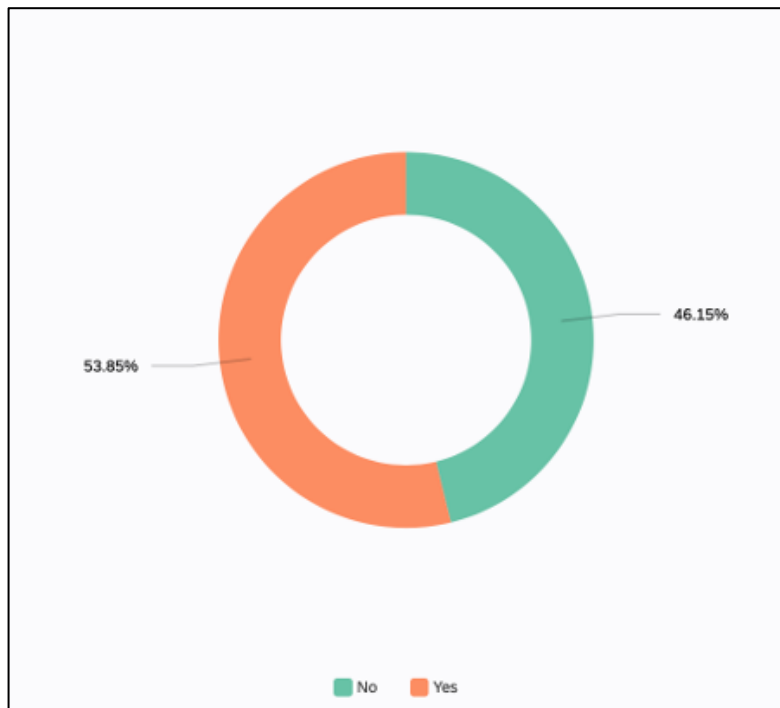
Figure 10: Do PIA performances influence teachers' planning and sequencing in English/ Drama?

We also asked whether the poems that PIA introduces in performance were also studied in English classrooms. As Figure 11 demonstrates, around 70% of the respondents report on the poems (texts) being also studied in classrooms. Through the PIA performances students have learned to appreciate the poems in different ways. The performances could be understood as providing high interest and enjoyable experiences that can hook students into more conventional school-like ways of appreciating and understanding particular poems. The enduring popularity of the performance *Words of War* (currently advertised as suitable for 9-12) may be indicative of how war poetry is studied in most schools in Australia.
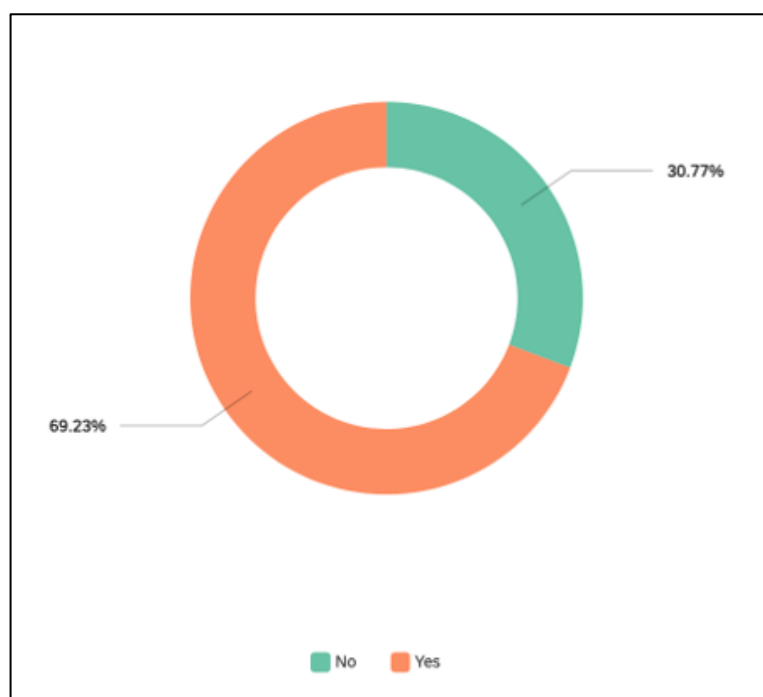
Figure 11: Do students study the texts from PIA performances in their classes?

Words of War case study

As *Words of War* was the most popular program based on the survey responses, we have drilled down into the responses to produce a case study of how the most successful performance is impacting on schools. Many of the schools booked *Words of War* along with many other programs. A large Western Australian state school, for example, had booked 7

different PIA programs through the period 2017-2021 but made specific mention of *Words of War*, because 'we study Owen in Semester 2 of Year 10'. Several schools were much more targeted, prioritising *Words of War*. We also note that *Words of War* is currently pitched across a very wide range of year levels (Years 9–12) meaning that it is expected to meet the needs of very different audiences and curriculum contexts.

A SA Catholic school that booked only *Words of War* selected this program because of its 'relevance to curriculum offerings'. The texts from the performance are also studied in class, with students in particular year levels benefiting more because of the 'closer ties to poems being used in class'. The teachers draw directly on the performance in their planning, and the performance enriches their planning, structuring and sequencing 'very well.' This school also made good use of the Educators' pack, which was 'very useful' to the school and informed both 'pre-performance' and 'post-performance' lessons. The final comment from this school was specifically about *Words of War*: 'The one we usually book, *Words of War*, works extremely well as it is. The script is relevant and well-written, and the performers are highly engaging and professional.' In this school, *Words of War* is deeply embedded in annual planning for the English faculty and costs are covered in school fees.

A state school in Tasmania also only booked *Words of War,* with the decision to select that program because 'It links to our cross-curricular unit, WWI and poetry'. In this school also, the texts are studied in class. The performance influences teacher planning and is rated 'very well' in terms of both its contribution to teacher planning, structuring and sequencing learning programs and expanding their repertoires of activities to engage students with poetry. The Educators' Pack is seen as 'moderately useful' and provides resources for both post-performance lessons and prompts for students' creative poetry responses. This school commented that 'Some of the themes are more suitable to older students' maturity levels, as well as curriculum areas.' This school also accessed the digital version of the performance and commented that they 'did not enjoy the online performance; harder to engage with the performers'. These students attending *Words of War* were at the younger end of the range of year levels to which this performance is marketed.

An independent school in SA booked two programs: *Words of War* and *Power of Poetry.* Their decision is shaped by: 'what is available each year, ideally something without a specific theme so that the performance will appeal to a wide range of students.' This preference for non-themed performance seems to apply to *Power of Poetry* rather than to *Words of War*. The performances in this school complement teachers' planning and repertoires of activities 'moderately well' and do not directly influence teacher planning. However, the Educator's Packs for these performances are seen as 'very useful' by this school and are used in 'post-performance lessons'.

Words of War was selected by teachers fairly evenly across WA, SA, NSW, and one school in Tasmania, but was not selected by the participating schools in other states. This may have been impacted by which programs were offered in each touring program and state. None of the schools that selected *Words of War* had significant percentages of Indigenous students or students from Language Backgrounds other than English. Of the schools that selected *Words of War,* close to half of them also had their students submit their own poems to the PIA poetry competition. Teachers in the schools that booked *Words at War* were mostly 'highly engaged' with the performances.

Although in this section of the report we have focussed on curriculum alignment, the breadth of teachers' responses varied from several who wanted a direct match of poems with those studied in class, through to those who looked for poetic devices and metalanguage that they would be further developing in class. In effect, complementarity is the goal so that what teachers and students experience in the performances extends and deepens learning. It need not directly match what is going on in the classroom for it to be a valuable contribution in the school. Teachers have the professional skills and knowledge to mediate between the learning spaces of the PIA performances and the classroom.

Artists' perspectives on curriculum alignment

Curriculum alignment and complementarity was raised by some of the artists who were interviewed. This was of particular interest and concern to the directors, writers and producers who designed each performance. They had an acute awareness of the need to embed curriculum requirements, but this could not be at the expense of the theatrical

qualities of the work. They also were keen to avoid an overly didactic approach. If curriculum was allowed to override the creative process, the risk would be producing a boring and unengaging show. Therefore, for these creatives, who have expert knowledge and extensive experience in professional theatre, there is always a balancing act between making good theatre and at the same time providing performances that meet curriculum requirements. The following comments[5] illustrate these tensions:

> It's about kind of making things entertaining, making them engaging for kids, but also addressing criteria for the for the syllabus.

> The creative process comes first and then we extrapolate that to the curriculum, because I think if we sit down with the curriculum first, I just think it would be too prescriptive.

> I never wanted to sit down and make a show based on the curriculum because I thought that was boring.

> Often, we would get out the paperwork that shows what's in the curriculum, such as the learning outcomes and you would highlight the things that were relevant and often if you were doing your job well, you would be covering those elements. But certainly, you would after writing a draft, go back and check and go okay what are the things that we are touching on that are that are useful for the students and the teachers working on this particular unit of study.

> While I always feel a little bit like the syllabus is kind of out of my wheelhouse, I feel supported enough by these companies to kind of go, what about this bit? I don't know the syllabus like a teacher knows the syllabus, but I also feel comfortable kind of recognizing where the gaps are in my knowledge.

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[5] As artists' interviews provided more lengthy quotes, we have indented these (without dot points).

So some of the challenges I suppose related to ongoing curricular changes so just making sure you're staying on top of what's being taught. Without ever sounding too didactic because that's a huge issue for us.

Teachers' comments and evaluations of the extent to which PIA performances aligned to the curriculum and enhanced teacher practice indicate that – at least in the schools that responded to the survey – the balancing act between dynamic engaging performances and educative ones has been well managed. However, some gaps in knowledge also appeared in artist interviews.

Earlier in this section, we outlined the complexity of curriculum contexts across Australia. This complexity is not well understood even by teachers who are embedded in their own contexts, however it is helpful for organisations working nationally to recognise this complexity. One of the PIA artist interviews described how PIA uses NSW as the central curriculum context.

> We tend to focus on the New South Wales Syllabus, but then the New South Wales Syllabus refers to the National Syllabus.

While this strategy makes sense in that NSW does incorporate all of the *Australian Curriculum: English* content descriptors, it may mean that PIA risks not speaking as directly to the curriculum contexts outside NSW. The comment about 'ongoing curricular changes' also points to the instability of curriculum that artists are already aware of. However, greater changes are to come as NSW is currently drafting a comprehensively revised Syllabus to be implemented from 2024. As we previously noted, it may be worthwhile for PIA to form a small education advisory group comprising a teacher from each state.

As noted earlier, *Words of War* is the most popular show booked by the schools that participated in the survey. It was also raised specifically in artist interviews in terms of how programs are mapped to curriculum:

> Our shows are mostly targeted at the English content and outcomes. So mostly English teachers, particularly shows like *Words of War* which is specifically for particular unit of work that's for the HSC.

HSC is a reference to *NSW English Syllabus: Stage 6* (Years 11-12), however there is currently no specific unit of work that addresses war or war poetry. A text list (called *HSC English Prescriptions 2019-2023* produced by NESA) identifies the specific texts that must be studied in the HSC Year 12 course. However past *HSC Prescriptions* have included well-known war poetry. The 2015-2020 list included Wilfred Owen' poems: The Next War', 'Anthem for Doomed Youth', 'Dulce Et Decorum Est', 'Insensibility', 'Futility', 'Strange Meeting' as an option in the *Module B: Close Study of Texts* for Standard English in NSW. Although the HSC text lists change regularly, teachers tend to continue to use previous HSC texts in the Year 11 Preliminary course where they have much more autonomy in planning. So in NSW Senior English, *Words of War* should be marketed for Year 11 and lower year levels. Similarly in Victoria, the current VCE text list does not include any war poetry. In Queensland, the 2023-2025 Prescribed text list for Senior English does include Wilfred Owen in a long list of poets whose work can be studied (QCAA, 2022). The *Australian Senior Secondary Curriculum: English* does not prescribe specific texts, but offers a list of examples of literary texts and authors suitable for study in the senior years (ACARA, 2022). Wilfred Owen is on that list. This national complexity suggests that a differentiated and agile marketing strategy would be necessary to pitch the performances to different state contexts in the senior years. Although there are differences in the junior years of secondary school, teachers have much more choice in their planning and it is likely to be easier to meet the needs of schools.

Actors who tour with PIA shows tend to be young with some of them young enough to have experienced PIA performances in their own school years. They also expressed awareness of the importance of curriculum alignment.

> Every time we got a new script, the director would break down with us what the what the curriculum elements were that we were sort of focusing on. And as someone in their 20s, looking at the script, I could sort of see what we were trying to do quite trickily through the narrative… Each of them taught a different very specific thing for the year levels.

Again, there was some vagueness about alignment with NSW HSC:

One play was linked. It was a World War One poetry play. And so it was about Wilfred, Owen, and Siegfried Sassoon, so looking at that kind of stuff supporting the kids learning with the HSC literature.

In the rehearsal period, particularly with the older plays, xxx was like, Okay, so like the previous HSC question was about this. So we really need to dissect iambic pentameter, in whatever poem, and, and made sure that we knew exactly what we were talking about when it came to question time so that we can confidently answer their questions and support their learning.

The 'very specific things' that actors needed to be adept with included the metalanguage of poetry that students need to learn: such as 'iambic pentameter' in the comment above. In the question and answer section after each performance, actors needed to be prepared for any question from the student and teacher audience.

THEME 2: Teachers' experiences and engagement

In the classroom, where curriculum is translated into teaching and learning, effectiveness is contingent on the skill, knowledge, and experience of the teacher. Research has established repeatedly that English teachers tend to be least experienced and comfortable with poetry, compared to other modes of literature. Literary analysis tends to dominate with the 'dead hand' of assessment (Dymoke, 2012) having increasingly negative effects on school experiences of poetry as students' progress into higher year levels of secondary school. Therefore, teachers' experiences of PIA are crucial in value-adding to teaching and learning in the school. PIA can also respond to gaps that help teachers to see how learning of poetry can be enhanced and approached in different ways. The survey asked a series of questions about teachers' experiences with PIA performances.

Teachers' perspectives on engagement

The teachers who participated in the survey were mainly Heads of English who are responsible for all of the teachers in their department. We asked them to describe how PIA

performances impact on the teachers generally in their school. Their responses were dominated by ideas about performance elements of poetry, and aural aspects of language, which increase impact and interest in poetry.

Some of their responses were about how it aligns with planned teaching in the school – particularly how it renews and refreshes their approaches. Even where there is no 'new knowledge' for teachers, PIA performances influence how and what they emphasise in their teaching of poetry.

- A renewed appreciation of the way words create sounds and rhythm – no new knowledge.
- Reinforce the importance of reading poetry and the importance of emphasis.
- Solidifies our approach to teaching poetry consolidating the content with the live performance.
- Gives us ideas on how to simplify some of what we teach, especially around rhythm.

PIA performances have particular impacts on teachers who have less experience or comfort with poetry. For these teachers, PIA performances can change their views or open them to new practices:

- For teachers who have a little interest in poetry, I think it might change their perceptions of poetry.
- It does provide inspiration to a small number of teachers in the use of drama in the English classroom.
- For some teachers, the experience expands their own experience of poetry and its spoken delivery. Not all English teachers graduate with a solid background in this form of literature. For experience teachers, they may discover a new poem of interest.

Many of the open text comments about how teachers respond to PIA performances also emphasised how teachers enjoyed the performances. Teachers' positive disposition towards poetry influences how they teach poetry and PIA performances contribute to this.

The word cloud in Figure 12 is a visualisation of the importance, intensity and frequency of particular words in their responses.

Figure 12: Word cloud: How do teachers respond to PIA performances?

Detailed responses provided insights into how PIA is organised in a school, with some teachers who are not English teachers also present for supervision. The longer answers also reinforce that what matters most to teachers is the quality of the experiences of their students:

- They look forward to attending even though it is challenging when performances are not scheduled during English lessons.
- We enjoy attending and seeing students so keen.
- Those who have attended – English, HASS, Science and Drama teachers as well as executive staff - have all enjoyed the performances and see value in them.
- Very positively: I always hear a lot of good things afterwards even from non-English teachers who are required to help supervise students.

The survey asked how *engaged* teachers were during the performances. This indicates the extent to which teachers are paying attention to the performance itself, beyond their supervisory responsibilities for student behaviour, and without attending to other activities while the performance is underway. The survey asked whether teachers were minimally engaged, somewhat engaged, moderately engaged or highly engaged. Figure 13 shows that

the majority of teachers (61%) were perceived to be highly engaged. No participants selected minimally engaged.
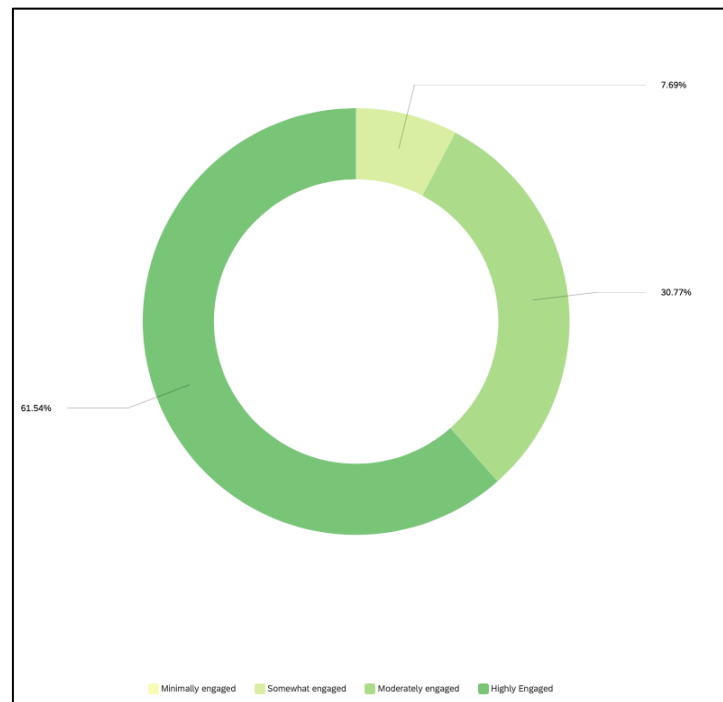
Figure 13: How engaged are teachers with PIA performances?

The survey also asked participants to describe in their own words how teachers responded to the content and creative delivery of PIA performances. This question aimed to drill further into how well teachers appreciated the creative and performative approach to poetry which is likely to be very different from how poetry is usually approached in the classroom. Again, their responses included very positive descriptors like: impressed, happy, appreciated, highly valued. The longer responses also pointed again to the usefulness of PIA performances in value-adding to classroom learning. Teacher responses are contingent on how they can deploy the PIA performance as a shared experience that they and their students have in common, to bring back to the classroom.

- I think the performances create talking points for future lessons. The performances also encourage them to seek out the PIA resources to use in their lessons.
- It's a nice change of pace to the classroom. It also provides some new ways to approach teaching poetry.
- It gives them ideas for what they could do in the classroom. It also helps support the instruction/analysis they provide students when studying poetry.

- It helps me in giving students live examples of professional actors and gives talking points and references for students to aim towards.

Earlier responses suggested that although English faculties generally cover the costs of PIA performance, many non-English teachers also attend the performances. Several comments gave further insight into this:

- Over the years I have had very positive feedback from teacher, mostly English teachers, but drama teachers have loved the performances and HASS teachers have also enjoyed performances, particularly those with a social or environmental message.
- Favourably especially those with Drama backgrounds. I try to organise performances so English teachers attend with their classes. On occasion, that has not been possible due to visits not coinciding with English lessons and difficulties in releasing/swapping staff. When that happens it is sometimes difficult to capitalise on the visits. However, having said that, some teachers from other faculties manage to offer interesting and useful responses.

While many of the open text responses were very positive, the survey also asked participants to evaluate the extent to which PIA performances assisted teachers to expand their repertoire of activities for engaging students in poetry study. When participants had to make a judgement, none of them selected the most positive option: extremely well. Figure 14 shows that the most popular response was moderately well (38%), followed by very well (31%).
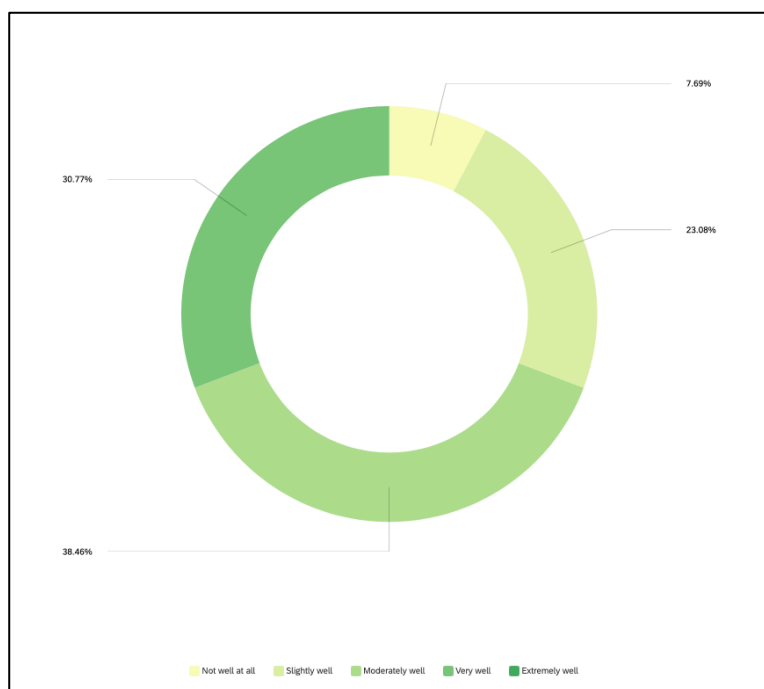
Figure 14: How well have PIA performances assisted teachers to expand their repertoires of activities to engage students in poetry study?

A related question asked participants to evaluate how well PIA performances helped teachers in planning, structuring and sequencing learning programs. This sequence of questions was designed to work into the nuances of teachers' perceptions of PIA. Again, none of the participants selected the most positive option of extremely well. Figure 15 shows that the largest percentage of responses was moderately well (38%), with equal proportions of participants selecting very well (23%) and not well at all (23%). This suggests that there is breadth of skill apparent in how well the PIA programs fit with the work of the school. As the data has shown, some schools are very deliberate in their integration, for example of war poetry in their planning for the year. However, even in those schools, direct impact of the program on teacher planning was mixed.
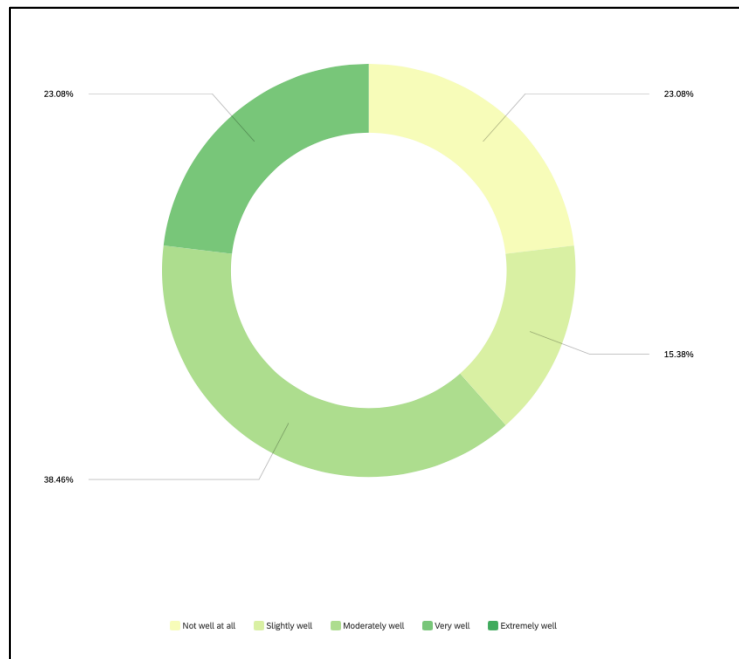
Figure 15: How well have PIA performances assisted teachers to plan, structure and sequence poetry and performance learning programs?

Artists' perspectives on teacher's engagement

The national survey asked teachers to consider how PIA performances expanded their repertoires of approaches to learning. This was commented on by many of the actors who reported what they had heard from teachers or observed in teacher responses. They emphasised the power of performance as a mode of learning that is not readily available in classrooms:

> I've definitely noticed that even just from chats with teachers, they talk about how helpful it is in their syllabus for the kids to see poetry performed, because again, poetry is a performative text you're meant to perform. So, he's talking about like, having professionals to perform that for the kids is very different to a teacher standing up and trying to perform it and they're like, it completely changed the way that kids view poetry and how they approach it because they realise it's meant to be read. This is how it can be read.

> Understanding that learning can happen in so many different ways. It's not just chalk and talk and textbooks, learning can be achieved through performance, and that it is an option for them.

And then see poetry performed live as well as being studied. Poetry can be quite bland when you read it on a page and as soon as you say it it's brought to life and can unlock something in the text.

Poetry is not just 'words on a page', and we talk about that as well with kids, and teachers. If, we can we talk about that and get them to say it because otherwise poetry makes no sense.

It was like bringing joy to the teachers, but also maybe show them a different way of teaching it [poetry]. It's not just about rules and regulations with poetry.

The actors understood that the performances were one component of a sequence of teaching and learning opportunities in the school. Inspiring teachers is an important part of enhancing those experiences. Influencing teachers who in turn influence students is described in mild terms as a 'trickle effect' by an actor and in much stronger terms by writers as a 'depth charge' or as a 'springboard'.

I think one of the greatest things that I have seen is the reflection of the trickle effect of teachers on the students.

It should be a one-hour inspiration, kind of a depth charge to bring up all of these ideas and exciting things that a teacher can pick up and run with in the classroom over a year of study.

Ultimately the works have to be a stimulus and inspiration for people who are studying poetry rather than a lecture in learning outcomes and the purpose of PIA's work is a springboard for the teachers to go on with rather than as a dry lecture.

Crucially, PIA performances make the work of teachers work easier, according to several actors reports of what teachers have said to them:

They'd say, you know, that was really valuable. I've never seen them so engaged, and thank you, you've made my next unit a dream to teach because I can refer back to this.

Or, they would say, I'm so glad you chose that poem, I'm actually teaching it to them next week.

It's inspired them to teach it in a different way, or just reminded them why they love teaching

THEME 3: Value-add of PIA resources

As well as the live touring programs that are the backbone of PIA's engagement with schools, the company has developed a number of resources to enhance and extend their impact on schools. These include the digital versions of four PIA performances, Educator Packs designed to support each touring program, and an online teacher Professional Learning program for English teachers and Drama teachers. We asked teachers to report on each of these resources in the national survey.

Teachers' perspectives

The digital performances were a crucial strategy for PIA to maintain operations, keep connected to schools, keep generating high quality content during the periods of COVID-19 pandemic lockdowns, and maintain artists in employment. Four high quality digital performances are now available to schools as an alternative to live touring performances. This has the potential to compensate for when scheduling is inconvenient or does not align well with school planning and is likely to be a cheaper option. It could also offer more flexibility with the digital performances better able to be viewed in classrooms and smaller groups than the whole year levels. They may also be less disruptive in terms of school timetables. During lockdowns and state border closures, live question and answer session with actors that followed the screening of a digital performance aimed to maintain the liveliness of the experience as far as possible. Figure 16 shows that of the schools that participated in the survey, more than half of them have also accessed the digital versions of

performances during 2020-2021. This reinforces these schools' commitment to PIA as an integral part of their planning, even in the most disruptive conditions.
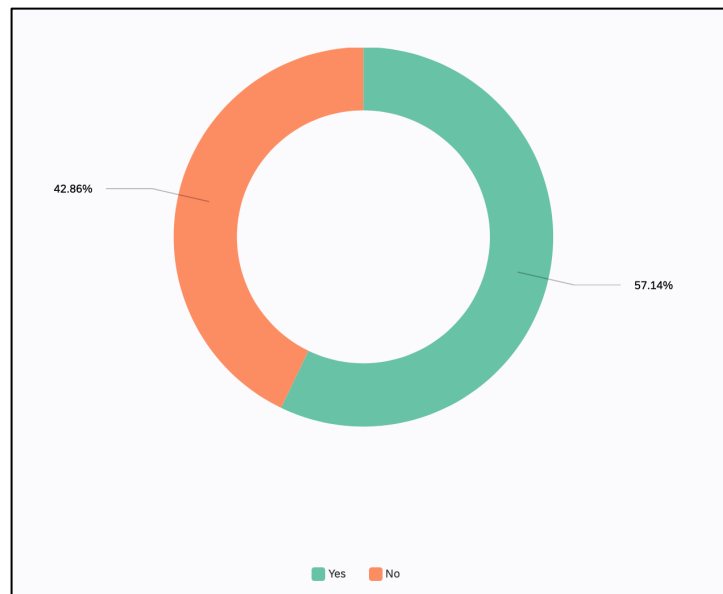
Figure 16: Have teachers at your school accessed PIA's digital performances?

Several of these schools made specific comments about the digital performances in the final question which asked them for advice for PIA on how they might improve their offerings.

- The performances that were recorded were not all that well received in the classroom. Think of ways to make this more dynamic/interactive.
- Did not enjoy the online performance; harder to engage with the performers

Given the novelty, dynamism and richness of the embodied learning in live performances, there seems to be a preference in schools for live performances over the digital offerings. Schools have an abundance of access to very high-quality digital resources and the niche of PIA will always be live performances. Ongoing monitoring of the digital performance strategy is advisable, in terms of bookings and post viewing evaluations. An education advisory group would be able to provide ongoing advice on how digital offerings fit within the learning ecologies of schools.

Educator Packs are a key tool for assisting teachers to make the most of the performances that come into their school. The researchers did not review the existing Educator Packs but we would expect that they are tailored to each performance, that they include full texts in

print of the poems that are included in each show, with suggested classroom activities that could be used in the lead up to performances and after performances. As the Educator Packs are intended to assist teachers to integrate the performances into their classrooms, we would also expect to see explicit use of the metalanguage of poetry, and references and links to curriculum. Figure 17 shows that of the schools that participated in the survey, 17% said they were not used at all in their schools. This question offered four possible uses that teachers could select from. Of those that did use the Educator Packs, most (44%) used them in post-performance lessons, while a significant number of schools (28%) used them for pre-performance lessons. Interestingly, an equivalent proportion (28%) used them specifically as prompts for students' creative work in writing poetry (17%), or drama-making (11%).
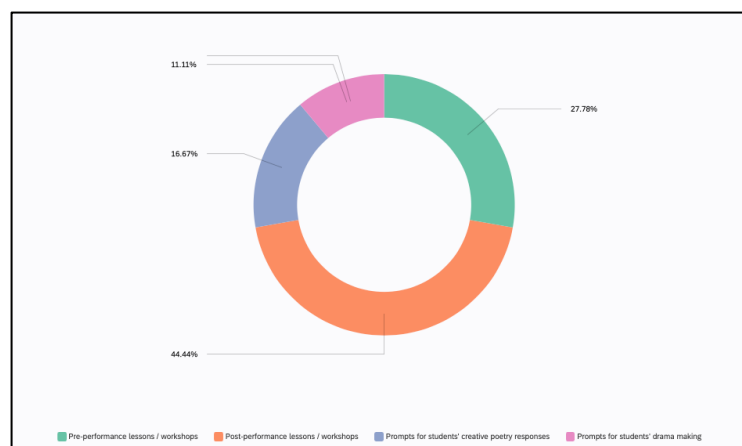
Figure 17: How are the PIA Teacher Resource Packs used in your school?

Two teachers who selected Other as their response, explained their use of the packs in terms of how they complement school programs. However, one of these comments also points out the necessity of students experiencing performance for its own sake, as a way of enhancing pleasure and enjoyment. These affective or emotional dimensions of experience contribute powerfully to learning. Although they do not often appear in curriculum documents or explicit learning outcomes, they are important to teachers who care deeply about all dimensions of their students' experiences[6].

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[6] The *Australian Curriculum: English* mentions enjoyment broadly in all of the year level descriptors, as: Students engage with a variety of texts for enjoyment. However enjoyment is not mentioned in any of the content descriptions or elaborations.
The *NSW English Syllabus* includes enjoyment in the overall rationale for English and in Stage level descriptors:
Stage 4 (years 7-8): Students who have achieved Stage 4 respond to literary and other texts for enjoyment and to

- They are mostly used by Year 10 teachers whose students attend the Wilfred Owen performance.
- Depends on how well the performances correspond with timing of appropriate units. The closer the proximity the more likely the uptake AFTER the performance. But as previously intimated we want these performances to be pleasurable experiences in their own right.

We also asked teachers to evaluate the usefulness of the Educator Packs in their schools. None of the participants selected the most positive option: Extremely useful. Pleasingly, Figure 18 shows that almost half of the respondents (42%) selected Very useful whilst 33% found it Moderately useful. However, a quarter of respondents (25%) perceived the Educator Packs to be only Slightly useful (17%) or Not at all useful (8%). This suggests that while the Educator Packs are a valuable component of the leaning infrastructure that PIA offers to schools, and are valued as such in many schools, there is an ongoing imperative to revise, modify and seek feedback from teacher users of the Education Packs so that they can be tweaked to best fit the requirements of schools. Another issue that is of concern is the group of teachers who did not see an Educators Pack when a performance came into their school. PIA needs to follow up on the distribution to make sure that teachers always receive the Educator Pack for the performance they have selected for their school.

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expand their perspectives on their own lives.

Stage 5: (years 9-10) By the end of Stage 5 students respond to and compose a comprehensive range of imaginative, factual and critical texts using different modes and technologies. They enjoy, reflect on, critically assess and articulate processes of response and composition.

Enjoyment is also explicitly mentioned as content outcome in Outcome 1, Outcome 5 and Outcome 7. For example, Outcome 7: Students respond to and compose sustained imaginative, creative and critical texts that represent aspects of their expanding personal and public worlds, for a wide range of purposes, including for enjoyment and pleasure.
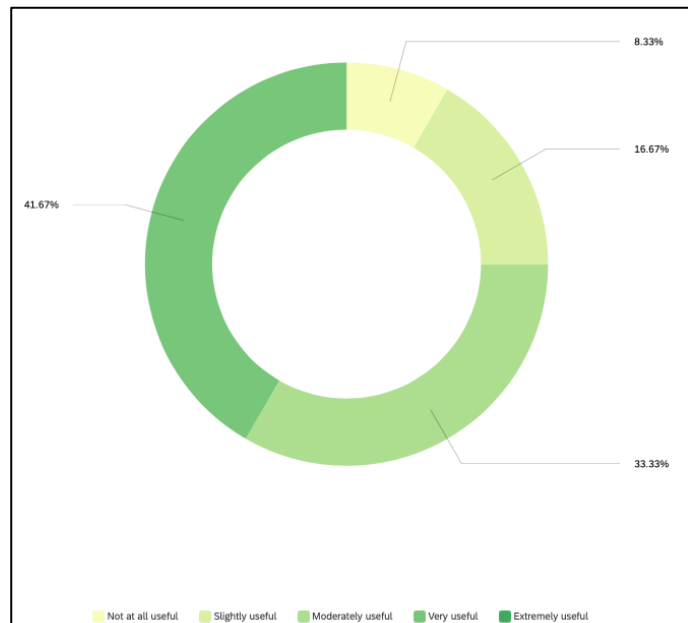
Figure 18: How useful have the PIA Teacher Resource Packs been to supplement the performances and poetry learning in your school?

Another important initiative from PIA has been the online Professional Learning short course for teachers. This offers 2.5 hrs of professional learning that teachers can use for the ongoing professional learning requirements of accreditation. It comprises self-paced learning modules with recorded video, information packs, and an assessment quiz. The course had been mapped against the National Professional Standards for Teachers. This is an incentive for teachers to engage with the learning and meet their own professional requirements for ongoing accreditation. We did not receive any feedback on the effectiveness of the online professional learning because none of the participants in the national survey had engaged with the Professional Learning. However, there are factors that have complicated the provision of professional learning for teachers. In NSW, this is managed by the NSW Education Standards Authority (NESA). However, the landscape is rapidly shifting in this area as in November 2020, NESA revoked all provider authorizations and instituted a new process with priority areas identified for teacher professional learning. The four priority areas are: delivery and assessment of NSW Curriculum; student/child mental health; students/children with disability; and Aboriginal education and supporting Aboriginal students/children. Poetry does not map easily against these priority areas. All providers were required to remap their offerings in line with these priorities in order to be authorised. The recently published list (June 2022) of accredited providers only mentions poetry in courses that are run by private provider Teacher Training Australia (TTA) Pty Ltd

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(NESA, 2022a). Professional learning in Drama for teachers is offered only by TTA and the Sydney Theatre Company. Teachers may be able to credit the hours as 'elective PD'. Strict guidelines apply to the types of activities teachers can submit and how they must be documented. Similar processes may have occurred in other states (NESA, 2022b). PIA should monitor interest and responses to the PL course to consider whether it is worth seeking to reaccredit the course directly for NSW teachers, and what the context is for teacher accreditation in other states.

Artists' perspectives

PIA artists provided insights into the importance and experience of digital performances that have been discussed in detail in *Research Report Part 1: Artists*. Apart from this the artists did not provide much commentary on PIA resources. The Educators' Packs were mentioned only once by an actor, who perceived the pack as a substitution for the teachers' work:

> We produce teachers' packs as well that they can use in classrooms. And so it takes a lot of weight off teachers having to teach themselves about poetry, and having to read because we do a lot of in depth work on it.

We suggest that it is more useful to think of the Educator packs as having the capacity to enhance and deepen pedagogy in the classroom. Teachers will still be teaching about poetry and reading poetry more extensively across a unit of work. No pack is a substitute for the teachers' work but a skilful teacher will draw upon the resource within their teaching so that there is a seamless transition between PIA experience with the classroom experience. The extent to which the touring artists are familiar with the contents and emphasis of the Educator's packs was unclear. However, it is logical to assume that they would know the contents of the resources that complement their own show. PIA might look at how familiar the artists are with those materials as they go out on tour.

Conclusion

This section of the report provides rich insights into how PIA performances fit into the learning ecologies of schools in terms of complementing and aligning with curriculum and planning and expanding their own knowledge and understanding of pedagogies for poetry.

The survey asked teachers for advice they would give to PIA to improve performances. Tailoring performances to curriculum and texts in different contexts was mentioned by some participants. A school that books performances only for Years 7-8 suggested that teachers need to know how the program facilitates learning in senior English. Another school talked about matching poems to school programs. These comments reflect the difficulty of matching performances to complex and heavily prescribed curriculum contexts.

- offer teachers more information about how this is tailored for senior students, relevant planning activities or programming opportunities
- Try to tailor some performances to the poems studied at the school (although I know this is likely an impossible ask!)

Other teachers' comments pertained to resources beyond the live experience of performance. Although necessary during the COVID-19 pandemic, digital shows were not as effective as live touring because of the detachment of performers from audiences. A suggestion that PIA offer Professional development for teachers indicates that although teachers may not yet be accessing the online professional learning, it could be a move in the right direction (though there are accreditation complexities). There may be scope for live Professional learning opportunities as part of touring programs, or through English teacher professional associations as sessions at their annual conferences.

- The performances that were recorded were not all that well received in the classroom. Think of ways to make this more dynamic/interactive.
- Did not enjoy the online performance; harder to engage with the performers.
- PD courses for teachers to upskill.

Please see Executive Summary for Recommendations relevant to this section.

3.2   PIA AND STUDENTS - LEARNING, ENJOYMENT AND UNDERSTANDING

Figure 19: Focus on students' learning, enjoyment and understanding

This section of the report emphasises the experiences of student audiences of PIA performances in response to the following research questions:

How do PIA performance-based, live encounters with poetry impact on students?

In what ways does PIA add value to students' learning, enjoyment and understanding of poetry?

Data from the national survey with teachers supplemented by comments on students from interviews with artists contribute to this part of the report. Teacher reports on how the students that they know well respond to PIA experiences are likely to provide more reliable accounts over the long term about student learning than the impressions from single visits to schools that the artists have shared. However, artists' recollections also provide interesting insights from inside the high intensity performances and can offer fresh angles on the levels and nature of engagement of cohorts of students. Two research themes pertaining to students' experiences were identified:

1. Student audience learning experiences and engagement with PIA performances.
2. Value adding to students' understanding of poetry.

THEME 1: Student audience learning experiences and engagement with PIA performances

Teachers' perspectives on the capacity of PIA shows to engage students

Teachers reflected on the on the capacity of PIA shows to engage students and to enhance their learning and understanding of poetry. Audiences across the schools participating in the research encompasses students from across Australia in Years 7–8, Years 9-10, and Years 11–12.

Teachers observed that PIA performances are generally received positively by their students. In addition, teachers perceived that:

- Students are mostly engaged by the humour.
- Students are engaged in the shows, and it makes poetry more relevant.
- Students usually enjoy the shows and are enthusiastic and appreciative of the performances and Q&A every year.
- Students engage well and are keen to participate in the post-performance discussions [Q&A].
- Students are quite enthusiastic to ask questions and make comments on the actors' journeys during the post-performance discussion.
- Drama students have discussions around the content of the performances and the performances themselves then they complete a response task critiquing the production.
- Students at an Arts School being au fait with performance, theatre, and audience protocols, essentially means that every PIA performance has been a success.

One teacher identified that:

- Often the performance length and the school's timetable do not allow extensive [post-performance] discussion [with students].

However, discussions are not limited to the day of the performance, and they do not only take place with the PIA performers in post-performance Q&A. Back in the classroom with their students, the discussions continue. Some teachers:

- Use the performance as the way to introduce a poetry unit, so the performance opens the discussion about poetic techniques.
- Have very positive conversations in both English and Drama classes as a follow up to the PIA performances.
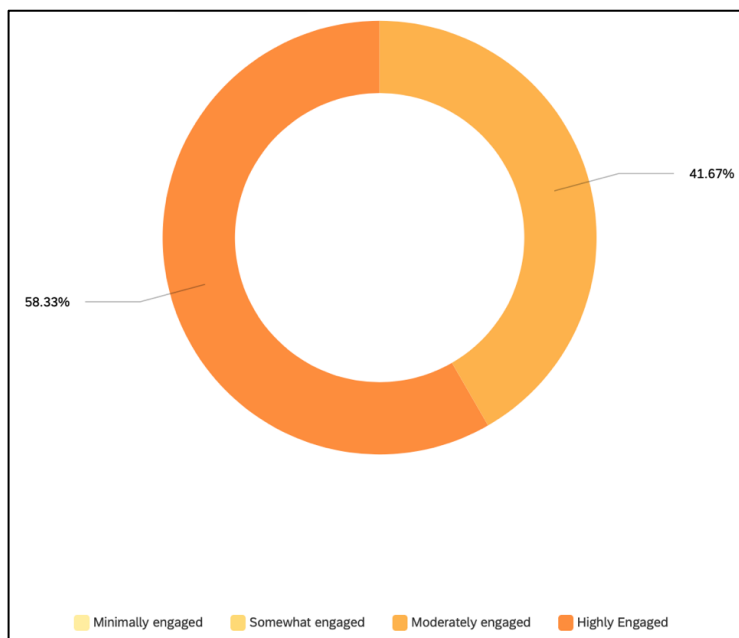
Figure 20: How engaged are students with PIA performances?

Teachers reported on the levels of student engagement that they observed in their students as they experienced PIA shows (See Figure 20). Many more students across Australia were highly engaged (58%) when viewing PIA performances than students who were moderately engaged (42%). None of the participating teachers reported that students in their school were only somewhat or minimally engaged.

Further evidence of student engagement with PIA shows is evident in the extent to which students took the opportunity to write and contribute their own poetry to PIA's poetry competition (See Figure 21).
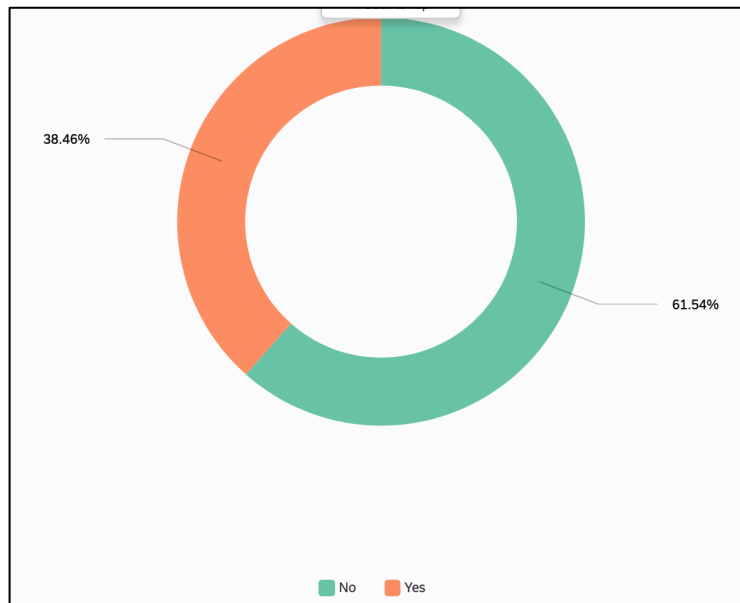
Figure 21: Have students from your school submitted poems to the PIA poetry competition?

Figure 21 reveals that more than a third (38%) of student audiences in the schools that participated in the national survey demonstrated their engagement with PIA performances by composing their own poems for submission to the monthly PIA poetry competition. This creative response by student audiences is a tangible outcome of their learning experiences and engagement with PIA performances.

Many of the open text comments about how students respond to PIA performances stressed how positive and engaged students were, and their enjoyment of the performances. These high levels of interest contribute to discussion both after the performances with actors in Q&A sessions and back in the classroom. The word cloud in Figure 22 is a visualisation of the importance, intensity, and frequency of particular words in their responses.

Figure 22: How do student audiences respond to PIA performances and post-performance discussion?

Detailed responses elaborate some of the reasons teachers gave for the high levels of engagement of their students:

- Students are mostly engaged by the humour
- Students are engaged in the shows, and it makes poetry more relevant.
- Students usually enjoy the shows and are enthusiastic and appreciative of the performances and Q&A every year.
- Students engage well and are keen to participate in the post-performance discussions.
- Students are quite enthusiastic to ask questions and make comments on the actors' journeys during the post-performance discussion.

Artists' perspectives on the capacity of PIA shows to engage students

Artists who had direct contact with schools and student audiences were mainly PIA actors though some writers and directors indicated their work's alignment to school students' learning.

Actors' perspectives of working in schools with students emphasised the high levels of interest that they observed from students in the work as well in the particular content of the show:

We were there for a whole other hour after the show finished, which gave us the opportunity to have a much more in-depth discussion with the students. What I loved about that was we were getting really specific questions from kids asking about the process of putting on a show. A lot of them wanted careers in the arts industry and they wanted to know the process of that and how that works and how we manage it as artists. It was amazing, because then we were able to really talk about our own experiences…and talk to the kids about how this industry is really tough but a job like this is amazing. And there's ways that you can make it work and this is how, and then afterwards we had the opportunity because again, one of their [school] bells went.

PIA actors also met students who had submitted their poetry to the PIA poetry competition. This is a logical consequence of the inspiration, creativity and love of poetry that PIA and their teachers aim to nurture in students. It facilitates ongoing relationships with students in schools from year to year:

One school we were at they [the student audience] were like, 'Oh I won the poetry competition last year, we're like the most amazing and we were the winner for the overall year'. We [at PIA] take these [winning] poems and put it into the shows for the next year. So, that means that when we go to the schools, we say, the poem I just performed was by so and so, and then after [the show] we would talk about, oh by the way, did you bring your poems? But we would always make sure to say, you don't have to write poetry if it's something you have to do for class, or it's just a scramble of words that you really like. That's poetry. So, send yours in. It's just making it more relatable and digestible to kids, and I really felt like Poetry in Action definitely does that.

Actors reflect on the students' poetry learning deficit if they weren't exposed to performances about poetry:

I think it would be difficult to connect to poetry because with my experience in school it was like just sit there and read Shakespeare and what's the themes and what's this, but showing people with passion about poetry, I think that's what [students] would lose, they would lose having people on stage, have emotions attached to what they're saying, having feelings, and then talking about those

feelings and seeing what that brings up. And they'd lose a performance to understand poetry in a different way.

I think the students getting to experience live theatre is really important rather than just having a teacher get up and explain it. It's also memorable. So, if they're studying a poem that we perform, or even if they're not, they might find a poem that they love and go, I remember when I first heard that poem. It can affect both their education, but also their personality, like it might be a discovery for them.

Directors and writers also offered their perspectives of PIA performances that aligned with schools and students' learning:

We want to make sure [the shows convey] an engaging narrative that doesn't feel like an English class.

We want to make it fun and not patronizing for the kids but also not going over their heads and not expecting them to take this very seriously. In fact, we understand what the students probably want. So, we need to meet them where they are and make sure that it is as fun and silly, as they are.

We find there's always a great love for what we do, and the students find it really engaging and exciting.
We make theatre that is not dry, it's exciting, it's interesting, and modern relevant and persuasive [with] powerful examples of history, modern [narratives], and even, rap music. So, I think we can access some students that otherwise might struggle to comprehend [poetry] just sitting down in the classroom.

We find interesting ways to keep the students' attention for 40 minutes by using all sorts of different characterisations and being innovative and versatile. So, that's a fun creative challenge.

THEME 2: Value-adding to students' understanding of poetry

Teachers' perspectives on the capacity of PIA shows to add value to student learning

As well as student engagement and enjoyment with PIA performances, the experience must enhance student learning about poetry for it to be a worthwhile investment for a school. Teachers identified that 75% of PIA performances worked very well at adding value to students' appreciation of poetry and literature by inspiring enthusiasm for poetry as a form of self-expression (See Figure 21). None of the participating teachers selected the not at all well response option.

8.33%   8.33%   8.33%   75.00%

Not well at all   Slightly well   Moderately well   Very well   Extremely well
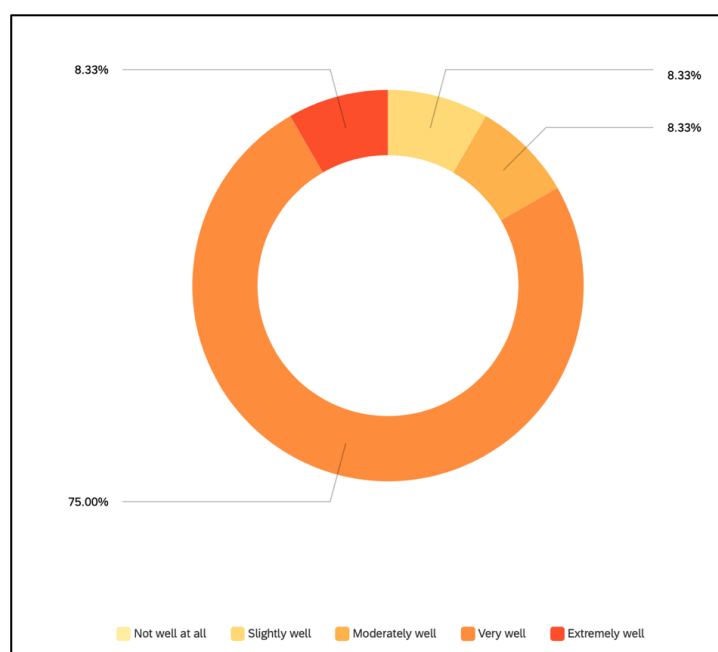
Figure 22: How well do PIA performances add value to the learning experiences of your students?

Teachers were also asked to identify whether particular year levels benefited more than others from Poetry in Action shows.
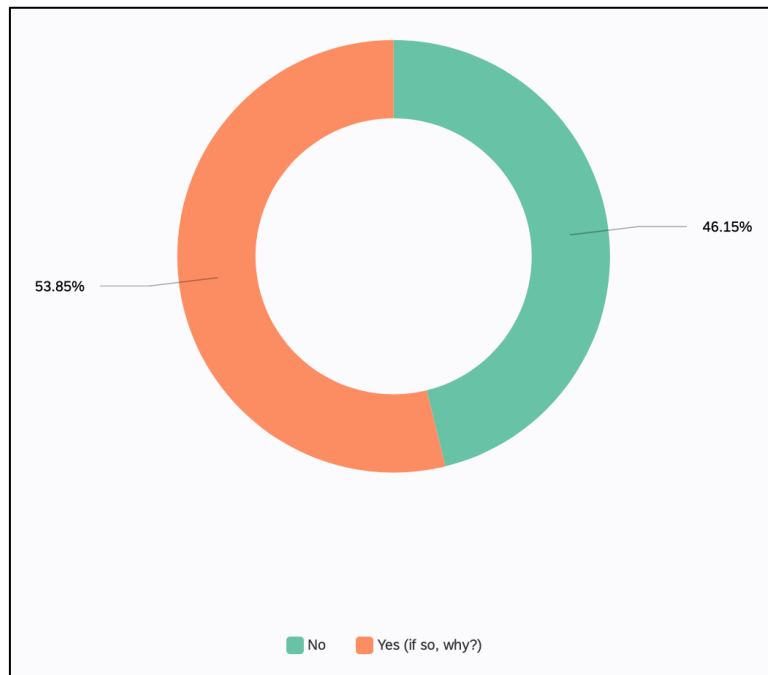
Figure 23: Do particular year levels benefit more than others as audiences of PIA performances?

Figure 23 reveals that more than half of the participating teachers (53%) felt that students at particular year levels benefitted more than others from viewing PIA performances. Most of their comments were about the benefits for students in junior and middle years of secondary school.

Teacher examples of PIA benefits to particular year levels:

- Year 8 students where their classes focus on creative expression, as PIA performances facilitate closer links to poems.

- Year 8 students' learning of poetry are inspired by PIA performances with some students maintaining a love of poetry into senior school.

- Years 9-10 students' maturity levels and curriculum are more suited to some themes of PIA shows.

- Year 7 students benefit from engaging with PIA performances as the Year 7 curriculum isn't poet or topic dependent.

- Years 7–10 students experience poetry as a spoken art, so their classroom learning is reinforced by PIA performances.

- Years 9 and 10 students' experiences of PIA performances enhances their learning of performance poetry as it features in their curriculum.

Teachers observed that PIA performances impact their students' approach to and understanding of English. Teachers recalled that:

- Using PIA performances to bring to life the concepts, content, and technical aspects that are studied in class benefits the students.

- Students seeing the techniques acted out by PIA is of particular benefit.

- Students in Years 7 and 8 who have viewed PIA performances have really enjoyed poetry and have shown a greater interest in poetry as a written form of expression.

- PIA performances encourage students to see the potential for using language for creative expression thus gaining a better appreciation of the lyrical qualities of words and poetry.

- PIA performers provide a voice other than the teacher's and they give students the experience of live performance, presenting poetry in context, which helps focus their learning on components of poetry, and helps to prioritise poetry for our students.

- PIA performers introduce human experiences and key metalanguage in an engaging manner so students hearing and seeing poems performed makes them more relevant to students and supports what is being taught in the classroom.

- PIA performances probably don't have much of an impact because our students are exposed to many performances throughout the year, but PIA offers a different type of performance, therefore comes across as fresh and interesting particularly with a young cast.

- PIA performances make some of the more technical stuff teachers do more grounded in the actual art of poetry. Some of the jokes are initially a bit above the students' heads but once they start paying enough attention, they get it.

- PIA performers give students insights into expressing themselves artistically especially those students who have little opportunity for experiencing live theatre. So, over the course of high school, there is a cumulative effect and students especially come to understand that elaborate sets and costuming are not needed for effective expression. They witness the players' power of interpretation and suggestion. I have never wanted the PIA performances to simply be extensions of units studied but more so to complement what we study.

Artists' perspectives on the capacity of PIA shows to add value to students' learning

PIA artists provided illuminating commentary on their perceived impact on student audiences through developing their enthusiasm and familiarity with the expression of poetic techniques.

A script writer articulated that in creating PIA shows:

> We communicate complex ideas in a way that isn't a lecture but embodies what poetry is about, as well as being thought-provoking to make students want to leave the show to investigate the content further with a confidence that they can understand that and then they can master that because actually it's not as daunting and challenging as they may have thought.

Several actors had very clear ideas about the ways that PIA offered a different mode of learning to students. Their responses suggest that they had a clear sense of their own pedagogical responsibilities both in the show and in the important post-performance Q&A:

> In a 45-minute performance, we're able to tell the students, that their opinion matters and to take time to question things and talk about why you're questioning those things because it's not really something that I remember learning in school.

> Poetry is not just 'words on a page', and we talk about that with student audiences and teachers. I can see the impact of these students connecting with poetry and performance, or finally seeing themselves like poetry.

> I think it excites them and ignites a passion for the work, that supports their studying of poetry, because suddenly they had this amazing show to associate with the study of poetry and that's fun. All shows were fun and exciting and alive.

Conclusion

This section of the report provides rich insights into how PIA performances fit into the learning ecologies of schools. It describes the ways that the PIA experience adds value to students' learning, enjoyment and understanding of poetry and performance, both during PIA visits and beyond as PIA impacts continue into the classroom.

The teacher survey finished with a question about what advice teachers would give to PIA to improve performances. Some of the participants used this as an opportunity to provide further positive feedback to the company about how impactful they are for students:

- None. They are incredible performers who are incredibly inspiring to students.
- Nothing in particular. The one we usually book, *Words of War*, works extremely well as it is. The script is relevant and well-written, and the performers are highly engaging and professional.
- The shows are fast, minimal props, require good listening skills so I love them as they are.

Others suggested adjustments in the pitch to student audiences – both in terms of the complexity of the performances and the pace of delivery:

- Sometimes the performances aimed at Years 7-8 are quite difficult for students to access. Slow down, the pace is energising but it can be alienating.
- The actors tend to have a lot of script to get through. This requires them to speak at an intense rate for an hour and they tend to shout (rather than project). This has been exhausting to watch and a sensory overload for Autistic students. I suggest they shorten their plays, so they don't need to move through the stories at such an intense pace and allow students processing time.

Audience engagement and interaction were also the focus of advice from participants, however the diversity of their comments reinforces the very different school contexts for which PIA is designing its performances.

- In our context where many students are performance savvy, more audience interaction always goes over well. We have many students who would fall over each other to participate even for a few minutes – in fact we have had literally had that, when an actor called for volunteers, probably thinking he'd need to coax a few to

volunteer, and certainly didn't expect the stampede he generated.

- Come prepared with some answers to Frequently Asked Questions that you can deliver at the end of sessions for those awkward moments where nobody asks a question!

Suggestions for ways to engage students were the focus of several comments. These included the very broad comment about 'techno lives' of young people that would apply to contemporary students everywhere, through to a very specific comment from a regional Queensland state school about the potential for greater acknowledgement of country and culture as part of PIA performances.

- Also, perhaps with the Indigenous population of our region, it would be nice to see a nod to some of our local artists and cultural artefacts. Connections with country and cultures would be so appreciated and significant for our students
- Perhaps there is more room for technological/digital support during the performance to match the kids' techno lives.

Please see Executive Summary for Recommendations relevant to this section, and to the diverse school contexts that are described in the following section.

3.3   PIA AND DIVERSE SCHOOL CONTEXTS
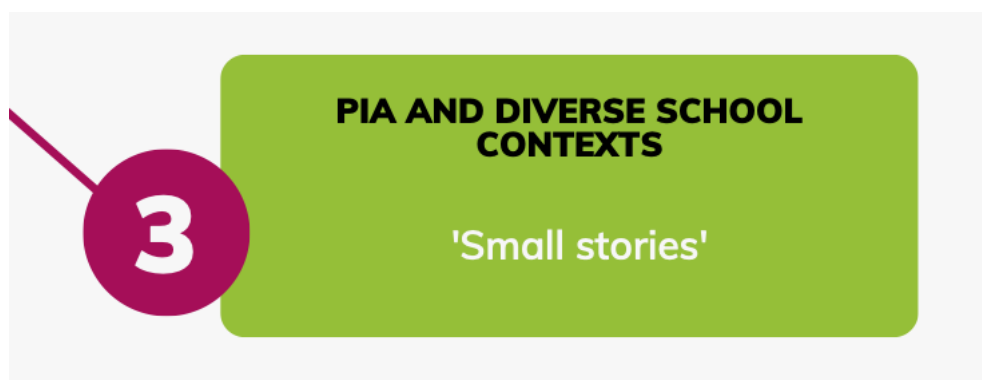
Figure 24: Focus on diverse school contexts

This section of the report focuses on the impacts of PIA in diverse school settings. It draws on teacher responses to the national survey to create 'small stories' of the PIA experience for a sample of schools, and it extracts vignettes of school visits from the interviews with actors. It aims to answer the research questions:

How do PIA performance-based, live encounters with poetry impact on school communities?
What critical factors impact on success and replication of PIA model in diverse contexts and school settings?

These 'small stories' and 'vignettes' are glimpses rather than complete accounts of PIA impacts in schools.

Teachers' perspectives: Small stories of impact

Previous sections have summarised broad criteria for PIA success including: alignment with curriculum and school planning, text selection and marketing. Teacher comments in the national survey were limited to short responses and gave only glimpses of how PIA shows landed differently in schools with different resources, facilities, demographics and in different locations. In this section we revisit the national survey data and examine it in order to retrace the details provided by individual schools, including the written comments by teachers and demographic details about the school context. These individual details enable

us to create stories that contrast how PIA is experienced and shaped by local factors. This sample of five small stories across different states and locations indicate the wide diversity of PIA's impact and the different priorities that influence the PIA experience.

School 1: Regional coeducational state school (Qld)

This is a relatively small secondary school with a lower socio-economic profile than most Australian schools, and a very diverse student population comprising substantial numbers of Indigenous students and students from language backgrounds other than English. The English head of department has booked four of the shows pitched at Years 7-10, and pays for these from the annual subject levy. Decision making is influenced by 'best fit' for curriculum and time of year, and what is on offer from other touring companies. Price is also important because 'funds are limited, and I try to make the experience of theatre as affordable as possible for my low-income clientele'. For this school, the price could be a little cheaper. Performance logistics within the school include comfort, because 'students have to sit on the floor' as there is no 'auditorium or space where they can be seated.'

Although teachers do not use the performances for their planning and students do not study the particular texts in their classes, students are highly engaged, 'very enthusiastic and responsive' and the experience itself works very well to add value to student learning. Performance poetry is of direct relevance to their learning: 'junior high school students gain poetry experience as a spoken art and have their classroom learning reinforced. Performance of poetry features in the Year 9 and 10 curriculum'. The teacher from this school described in detail how PIA contributes to the learning ecologies in their context:

> The children at my school have little opportunity for experiencing live theatre and yet they are orally expressive students, so the visiting performers give them insights to expressing themselves artistically. Over the course of high school, there is a cumulative effect and students especially come to understand that elaborate sets and costuming are not needed for effective expression. They witness the players' power of interpretation and suggestion. I have never wanted the visits to simply be extensions of units studied but more so to complement

what we study, especially [to] come to understand that elaborate sets and costuming are not needed for effective expression.

Although the teacher said that PIA shows may influence lessons after the performances, and resource packs may be used by teachers, they reiterated again that 'at this school 'we want these performances to be pleasurable experiences in their own right'. Further details of context were provided in the final advice to PIA: 'Perhaps there is more room for technological/digital support during the performance to match the kids' techno lives. Also, perhaps with the indigenous population of our region, it would be nice to see a nod to some of our local artists and cultural artefacts. Connections with country and cultures would be so appreciated and significant for our students.'

This school's approach shows that the PIA experiences can go far beyond the aim of specific curriculum extension. When integrated purposefully and longitudinally, they can be foundational in developing students' understanding of effective (artistic) expression, and to enrich the student cohort's sense of self and nourish their well-being. The recommendations received from this particular school orient us to these latter aspects.

School 2: Urban coeducational state school (WA)

This is another relatively small school with a similar low socioeconomic profile relative to other Australian schools but low numbers of indigenous students and students from language backgrounds other than English. This school has booked three yr 9-12 PIA shows for drama students. The drama teacher makes the bookings and pays from the annual subject levy, and considers the price to be just right. Performances are attended by individual drama classes in the school theatre. The performance space available at the school comes with advantages ('big open space for the performers to adapt how that want) as well as disadvantages ('students need to sit on the floor to fit'). The performance is integrated with curriculum, classroom learning activities and assessment: 'Drama students have discussions around the content of the performances and the performances themselves- they have to complete a response task critiquing the production.' Students are moderately engaged with performances and discussions in this school are more focused on

the acting than about poetry. The drama teacher is the only teacher who sees the PIA shows but really enjoys them. The teacher makes use of Educator Packs for pre-performance and post-performance lessons, particularly as prompts for drama-making. It was in this school that the teacher suggested the scripts could be shortened so the pace is not as intense, and students have time to process what they are watching.

The targeted use of the PIA experiences to extend students' learning in drama classes brings unique needs (e.g. shorter scripts) and may influence the ways in which students respond (in this case, more moderate / less intense engagement levels).

School 3: Urban Independent girls' school (Vic)

This school is also relatively small with a high socioeconomic profile and substantial percentage of students from language backgrounds other than English. PIA shows are booked for Years 7-8 students by the Head of Department with the age of the students the most significant factor in making decisions about which shows to book. Funding is allocated to PIA from the English budget and the price is just right for this school. In 2021, they booked the digital version however said that 'in person was clearly better.' According to the teacher's entries in the survey, 'Teachers and students respond very well to the performances, PIA shows influence teachers' planning in English.' The key benefit of the PIA experience is that 'It makes some of the more technical stuff we do more grounded in the actual art of poetry. Some of the jokes are initially a bit above their heads but once they start paying enough attention they get it.' PIA has given teachers 'ideas about how to simplify some of what we teach, especially around rhythm.' Since the school's focus is on the technical aspects of poetry (metalanguage) their advice to PIA is that this could be made more explicit: ' Maybe they could expand the poetic devices focus. I think they didn't really do imagery? Which is a big part of what we do in our course. But on rhythm and rhyme it was really good.'

This example evidences the value of the PIA performances when purposefully integrated into the English curriculum, both for students and for teachers. Just as before, the

recognisable benefits for the school drive the way they envisage PIA's future use, with some very specific and targeted recommendations.

School 4: Urban Catholic boys' school (NSW)

This is a large high school with a high socioeconomic profile but low numbers of students from Indigenous backgrounds or language backgrounds other than English. The Head of English has booked five different PIA shows spanning from Years 7-12, making their decisions in terms of the 'content and direction of the program aligned with our units of work'. PIA shows are paid for from the faculty budget and are priced 'just right' for this school. The shows are held in the assembly hall: 'We don't have enough space on the stage for the performers in our hall; however, the theatre we have is too small to hold entire year groups.' Teachers plan around PIA and students study the same texts in their English classes. Both students and teachers respond very positively to the shows. Overall impacts are that 'PIA helps to prioritise poetry for our students' and for teachers 'it solidifies our approach to teaching poetry, consolidating the content with a live performance.' Although the PIA shows have a moderate impact on teacher pedagogy and planning, and teachers at this school do not use the Educator's pack, the shows are integrated into their annual planning in English in a broader way: 'We return yearly to PIA. The performances are highly valued.' Advice to PIA is about the pitch and pace of performances for their younger year levels: 'Sometimes the performances aimed at Year 7-8 are quite difficult for students to access. Slow down, the pace is energising but it can be alienating.'

This school's survey responses show the most extensive and systematic integration of PIA shows into their planning and teaching of the English curriculum. The responses show a healthy cohesion and productive synergy between taught classes and PIA performances, especially for poetry. For this reason, the school responses talk to the perceived need to differentiate for the different year groups – an insightful recommendation for PIA.

School 5: Urban coeducational state school (WA)

This is a large school with a high socioeconomic profile and low diversity in terms of Indigenous students and students from language backgrounds other than English. The school has booked seven different PIA shows for students Years 7-10, deciding which shows to book according to their 'suitability and relevance to programs' including subjects beyond English in Humanities and Social Sciences (HASS). Costs are covered from annual subject levies, and could be a little cheaper at this school. Some of the performances are for academic extension classes in English or lower years drama classes. This school specialises in the arts which means that students are already 'au fait with performance, theatre, audience protocols etc'. They have a purpose-built theatre which means 'there are sufficient audience numbers to generate good energy which usually enhances and ensures a good performance and great theatre experience.' In this school, 'audiences have enjoyed the performances every year and have enjoyed the Q&A,' so that 'essentially, every PIA performance has been a success'.

In contrast to schools where PIA is a unique performance experience, this school accesses shows from various companies, which moderates the impact to some extent: 'It probably doesn't have much of an impact because our students are exposed to many performances throughout the year, but PIA offers a different type of performance, therefore comes across as fresh and interesting - particularly with a young cast.' Teachers love the performances and have provided 'very positive feedback' including those from outside English (HASS, Drama, Science, school Executive), in particular HASS teachers have enjoyed performances 'with a social or environmental message.'   While the performances do not directly influence English teachers' understandings or approaches to poetry, the teachers 'all appreciate the use of poetry in performance arts - a genre which is dying a slow death.' In this specialist arts-focused school, the dynamism of the performances and audience interaction are greatly appreciated:

> The shows are fast, minimal props, require good listening skills so I love
> them as they are. In our context where many students are performance
> savvy, more audience interaction always goes over well. We have many

students who would fall over each other to participate even for a few minutes - in fact we have literally had that, when an actor called for volunteers, probably thinking he'd need to coax a few to volunteer, and certainly didn't expect the stampede he generated.

This teacher's reflections capture the unique value and positioning of the PIA performances within the industry. The insightful reflections also confirm the potentials for a broader integration – in this case extending to social sciences and environmental education – which PIA management may decide to expand on in the future.

The five stories indicate that PIA shows are taken up in different ways in different sites, and that ultimately teachers are the experts on what their students need and respond to. Student audiences have widely divergent experience with live performance, and this impacts on how they interact and respond to PIA performances. In all these sample schools, PIA is a much appreciated and valuable contribution to teaching and learning. While in all schools, livening up learning through performance is a priority, the extent to which a show is expected to match what happens in the classroom varies enormously. In the first school it is the experience of enjoyment and exposure to poetry in performance that is valued for students who do not often have this opportunity, while in the third school teachers would like to see closer alignment of the poetic devices and metalanguage that are studied in the classroom with the show. In the second school, the show provides immediate resources on acting for elective drama students in the middle and upper years, with an assessment task linked directly to the show. The fourth school has embedded PIA shows into their planning for English each year, as a valuable consolidation of what is learned in class. The final school suggests that even in a specialist context where students and teachers have an abundance of exposure to performing arts, PIA is still a significant contribution to the school in English and beyond.

In these cases, as in all the other schools that responded to the national survey, teachers are the mediators between PIA and classrooms. This suggests that, in general, PIA shows are broadly meeting the needs of diverse schools in very different locations. Teachers did suggest tweaking of PIA shows to suit their students and continuing to refine resources such

as the Educator Packs should also be a priority. The small stories provide glimpses into schools, however more detailed case studies of a sample of schools may be feasible after COVID-19 disruptions have ended and after in-person touring programs have been normalised again so that schools are reporting on recent live experiences of PIA in their schools.

Artists' perspectives: Vignettes from school visits

Another type of small stories of impact also appeared in the interviews with artists. We have called these 'vignettes' because they are mostly about moments of engagements with individual schools. Many of these vignettes included details of the diversity of schools, audiences and locations that PIA engages with through their touring programs. One artist described the disappointment from a rural school when there was a cancellation:

> [The teacher's] reaction was just devastating. She was like, we tried to tell the kids that. They know we're disadvantaged living in a regional area, but it's things like this that just prove that they are. She said look, this is the only theatre that comes through town so, if we don't have you guys then that just means a year will pass where the kids just don't have access to anything…I think that a lot of the grandparents and the local newspaper were turning up to take watch the show. For us [PIA] it was a stop on the trip, and I just didn't realize until we missed a step the level of impact that we can have particularly in regional areas where there just isn't access to theatre.

Given the effects of COVID-19 on school touring programs through 2020-2022, this feeling of missing out on the cultural and educational experience of PIA performances for schools away from urban centres is particularly poignant.

Interviews with the touring actors included vignettes of highly memorable and impactful school visits. These made deep impressions on young actors and reinforced the importance of taking PIA shows into schools. Most often the small stories they shared in their interviews were about the student audiences and how they responded to the materials and the actors.

Many of the artists lived in urban areas and touring outside cities was in itself a unique and new experience for them. In remote parts of Australia, there was great resonance and emotional intensity to performances with Aboriginal students:

> I think it was [remote WA regional state school], and we performed *Words that Changed the World*. And that's a play that we perform to year 10 students, and it's about famous speeches and language, and the Sorry speech is mentioned in that play. And when we're saying sorry to these Aboriginal kids, and oh, we were weeping, and you know, that's fine, that's a fine acting choice to make, but it was internally moving to perform that piece of text in front of those kids outside in the desert, you know, on the land.

Another memorable experience with the same show was in a suburban Sydney school where there was a powerful match of text and student audience:

> In *Words that Changed the World*, we did a speech by Aung San Suu Kyi. And that resonated really well in [urban NSW state girls' school], it's a very broad demographic of English as an additional language students so that, obviously, you come from another country. And I think that having representatives as well, and also my friend is Vietnamese, so also having that representation on stage is really important as well for young Vietnamese students.

Another actor described the experience of performing in a school with a diverse student body, when the acting troupe was also culturally and linguistically diverse:

> And so, the students were initially really timid during the Q and A process. All of the girls just didn't want to ask any questions. And then one hand went up, and the question was answered. And then more and more hands went up to the point where it was almost an hour Q and A of these young women, asking our performer what it's like to be a female artist, what it's like to be a minority, what it's like to be someone with a very introverted personality, what it's like to be someone who English is not their first or second language, working in an English poetry company, and it was really touching because the other member and I just sat back and listened. And being able to be a part of that not feeling like we had to interject or throw our two cents in was a very humbling experience, just to have this sea of all girls students,

raising their hands, genuinely asking questions about what it means to be a woman in the world where your voices being suppressed, what it means to be an artist, and have these big topics and tough conversations with brevity and with wit and with humour.

Performing for an audience of boys was also impactful for actors, as they were able to draw parallels between the themes and characters evoked in the play and the audience:

Particularly with our Wilfred Owen play. It was particularly resonant amongst teenage boys. And I think it was because the poetry and the language is so, there's so much imagery in there, and it's about war. And it's about blood and guts and gas and shooting and, and, and the futility of war. And, you know, we come on stage, and we've got the army costumes, and, you know, those kids, those boys, you know, that were watching the shows, were the same age as the soldiers. And I think that the beautiful thing about that play Wilfred Owen is that the kids can put themselves in those shoes and fully understand the poetry and understand how confronting it would have been for those soldiers at that time. And it makes that poetry seem really cool. You know? I think that that really resonated with boys in particular.

The Q and A sessions in schools were not described in detail by the teachers responding to the national survey, however they loomed large in the actors' memories of performing in schools. This part of the show created new connections and often took off in unexpected directions, led by student questions:

They had booked us for quite a long time. So, they only got us to do one show. But we were there for like a whole other hour after the show finished, which gave us the opportunity to have a much more in-depth discussion with the students. And what I loved about that was we were getting really, really specific questions from kids asking about the process of putting on a show. A lot of them wanted to get careers in the industry, in the arts industry. And they wanted to know the process of that and how that works and how we manage it as artists. And it was amazing, because then we were able to really talk about our own experiences and the fact that in my particular troupe, there was one guy who went to an acting school. I didn't, I just did a communications course and then got into acting. And then the other girl was

originally a singer. And so, she kind of got into that way. So, we were able to [share] totally completely different experiences and talk to the kids about well, look this industry is really tough, but a job like this is amazing. And there's ways that you can make it work and this is how.

Artists also generalised across the schools they had visited on tour, with very different atmospheres and resourcing apparent between schools and types of school. High energy responses from audiences are appreciated by performers when theatre is understood as a dynamic and participatory experience:

So, you sometimes have these schools, especially in areas I found, like low socio-economic areas, a lot of the kids were a lot louder, which worked really well for us. Because, again, we know that they're engaged, we even sometimes would break scripts to respond to something that kids said, they would love that because they're like, again, they see me it's not just me watching them, they actually see me too. But then you do have some schools, there was some Catholic school specifically, where discipline is very, very important. So, they have bought, when you watch the day, you sit quietly, and you enjoy it quiet, which is really tough, because then we would have to try to be like, It's okay, guys, you don't have to sit quietly, don't do that.

We'd go from everywhere from big private schools in Sydney to tiny rural towns. And the reception sometimes at those smaller towns is even more overwhelming even though there's a smaller audience because this is one of the only exposures to live theatre that these students have. Sometimes you are the first live performer they've seen before. And it might only happen once or twice a year when the schools can afford to bring people out.

[In the NT] I think the indigenous culture and Aboriginal culture plays a role in how theatre is received, because it's such a ritual for them. And they thought we were magic. Some of the younger kids thought we were magic, because we you know, have these stagecraft tricks and things like that. And they're like, wow, you guys are magic, that's fantastic. And I think that, you know, they're not often exposed, because they're so isolated, to theatre, that they just wanted more and more and

more, whereas I feel like some of the North shore Sydney schools, where kids luckily had access to theatre, probably STC memberships. You know, it's not quite as different and as a unique experience.

Actors who had themselves grown up in rural areas saw themselves in the students and schools that were distant from urban areas. This brought a deeper understanding and appreciation of the needs and potential impact of entering into these communities:

> There's no professional theatre anywhere, you can't see it. So having something like this in my school would have been the most exciting thing ever. And it was for those kids. And sometimes it meant that they didn't know how to behave as an audience. But we understood that as actors, and we dealt with that. And that was okay. Whereas the city kids, they had opportunities come up all the time. So they're a bit more blasé about it and took it for granted a little bit more just because they have very, very easy access. And I guess a bit more of a social understanding of what the theatre is.

The vastly different conditions in schools were also striking to actors who were able to effectively and rapidly adapt to very different performance spaces. However apparent inequities in facilities does not mean that students in less privileged schools have a less powerful experience when PIA comes to their school. In many instances, actors felt that their impact was greater in contexts of disadvantage. They rose to the challenge to ensure that these students in these places had a great experience.

> Sometimes you would perform on a basketball court. Wow, the students would be sitting in front of you on the basketball court. So you're all on the same level under fluorescent lights. And maybe there's 300 students that you're performing for. And then you go to other schools where they would have multi-million-dollar theatres, like state level theatres, and you'd perform for 10 to 15 students.

Through these sorts of interactions PIA actors continue the process of demystifying poetry, bring it closer to young people, and making it more meaningful in their lives. Schools in different locations with varied socioeconomic and cultural profiles were often seen as the

most impactful sites for PIA performances by artists and some of the teachers from the schools we have featured in this section.

Conclusion

The 'small stories' of impact in this section indicate the breadth of different impacts that PIA performances have in schools. Each school that PIA visits has its own complex and very individual set of demographic features, communities of students and faculty, and priorities. While actors have expertise in performing and connecting with audiences in authentic and memorable ways, teachers have expertise in deciding how they will best make use of the PIA experience to supplement their own teaching and extend their students' experiences of poetry and of performance generally. The very diversity of schools, and their varied intentions for PIA, mean that there is no single recipe or set of steps that can be discerned that would enable PIA to replicate its model and extend into new schools. Rather, PIA needs to be responsive, open and ensure that the performances continue to be useful to teachers and engaging to students.

Please see Executive Summary for comments on the full report and recommendations from the research.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Survey Design

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY

Consent

Q1.1.

Poetry in Action

You are invited to participate in a survey for a research study for Western Sydney University. The survey should take no more than 10 minutes to complete. The research is about the experiences, perceptions and impacts of the theatre company Poetry in Action in secondary schools. Poetry in Action runs performance based touring programs in schools, and has recently added digital versions of their programs during Covid-19. We are interested in understanding about how 'incursions' by arts education organisations, PIA in particular, impact on the educational needs of teachers and students.

As you have been a named school contact person for PIA bookings during the last 5 years, we would like to ask your impressions and recollections of PIA's engagement with teachers, students, school community and wider cultural opportunities available in your context. If you are not the current contact person or your school is no longer booking PIA programs, we would still like your insights so we can build the broadest picture of how PIA works with schools and what might be improved. You may also forward the email invitation to other staff who are closely involved in how PIA has worked in your school. You will not be asked to name your school or yourself in your responses on this survey. Your responses will be anonymous in any of the publications that arise from this research project, including in the report we will share with PIA.

The survey is approved by the Western Sydney University Human Ethics Committee [H14656] and by your relevant local or state educational authority. If you have any questions, please contact: Professor Susanne Gannon, School of Education, Western Sydney University Ph: (02) 4736 0292 or

S.Gannon@westernsydney.edu.au If you have any complaints or reservations about the ethical conduct of this research, you may contact the WSU Research Ethics Officer at email: humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au or phone: (02) 4736 0493. Any issues you raise will be treated in confidence and investigated fully, and you will be informed of the outcome.

I confirm that I have read the introductory information above and am happy to continue to answer the survey questions.

O No
O Yes

Q1.2. You have also been provided with a letter for your Principal outlining the research. Please ensure that you have permission from the Principal to complete the survey.
I have discussed this survey with my Principal and have permission to complete the survey.

O No
O Yes

Demographics

Q2.1. My school is a:

O State School
O Catholic School
O Anglican School
O Presbyterian School
O Non-denominational Christian School
O Non-Christian Religious School
O Non-religious Independent School

Q2.2. My school is located in:

- ○ Australian Capital Territory
- ○ New South Wales
- ○ Northern Territory
- ○ Queensland
- ○ South Australia
- ○ Tasmania
- ○ Victoria
- ○ Western Australia

Q2.3. My school is in the following geographic zone:

- ○ Urban
- ○ Regional
- ○ Remote

Q2.4. My school is:

- ○ Coeducational
- ○ Single sex girls
- ○ Single sex boys

Q2.5. The size of my school is:

- ○ <499
- ○ 500-999
- ○ 1000-1499
- ○ 1500-1999
- ○ >2000

Q2.6.

What is the ICSEA value of your school?

(Please note this information about your school can be checked at the My School website - https://myschool.edu.au/).

○ <949
○ 950-1050
○ >1050

Q2.7. What percentage of students at your school are Indigenous Australians?

○ 0-24
○ 25-49
○ 50-74
○ 75-100

Q2.8. What percentage of students at your school have a language background other than English?

○ 0-24
○ 25-49
○ 50-74
○ 75-100

Range of PIA's Involvement

Q3.1. You are the named school contact person for Poetry In Action. Which of the following describes your role in the school? (You can choose more than one response)

☐ English Teacher
☐ Drama Teacher

☐ Head of Department

☐ Deputy Principal

☐ Designated school tour / arts council coordinator / arts incursion coordinator or similar

☐ [   ] Other (please specify)

Q3.2. Which Poetry in Action touring programs have come to your school?

☐ Words of War (Yrs 9-10)

☐ Elements of Rhyme (Yrs 7-8)

☐ Inter-national Anthem (Yrs 8-9)

☐ Power of Poetry (Yrs 9-10)

☐ United Nations of Poetry (Yrs 9-10)

☐ Words that Change the World

☐ Fact vs Fiction (Yrs 10-12)

☐ The Poet's Quest (Yrs 7-8)

☐ Unlocking the Poetry Code (Yrs 7-8)

☐ Riots and Revolutions (Yrs 10-12)

☐ Rhyme and Punishment

☐ I don't remember the names of any performances

Q3.3. How do you decide which Poetry in Action touring programs to book for your school?

[   ]

Q3.4. Did you also attend and view the performances at your school?

○ No - please consider sharing this survey with any teaching staff at your school who attended the performances.

○ Yes

Q3.5.

How are Poetry In Action performances funded in your school?

○ Individual student payment
○ Annual subject levy
○ Priority or special program funding (e.g, Priority Country Area Program, Regional Arts Fund)
○ Sponsorship or philanthropy
○ [   ] Other (please specify)

Q3.6. Do you consider that PIA is appropriately priced for your school?

○ Too expensive
○ Just right
○ Could be cheaper

Q3.7. Which students attend Poetry In Action performances at your school?

○ Whole year levels
○ Individual English classes
○ Individual Drama classes
○ [   ] Other (please specify)

Q3.8. Where do Poetry In Action live performances take place in your school?

○ Classroom
○ Library
○ Assembly hall / auditorium
○ Outdoor space / covered area
○ School theatre / performing arts centre
○ [   ] Other (please specify)

Q3.9. What are the main challenges or advantages of this as a performing

space?

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Poetry In Action and School Curriculum

Q4.1. Do Poetry In Action performances influence teachers' unit planning and sequencing in English / Drama?

○ No
○ Yes

Q4.2. Do students study the texts from the Poetry In Action performances in their classes?

○ No
○ Yes

The Poetry in Action Experience (Students)

Q5.1. How do student audiences respond to Poetry In Action performances and the post-performance discussion?

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Q5.2.
How well do Poetry In Action performances add value to the learning experiences of your students to appreciate poetry and literature, develop familiarity with poetic techniques, and enthusiasm for poetry as a form of self-expression?

○ Not well at all

○ Slightly well
○ Moderately well
○ Very well
○ Extremely well

Q5.3. Do particular year levels benefit more than others as audiences of Poetry in Action performances?

○ No
○ [   ] Yes (if so, why?)

Q5.4.
How engaged are students with Poetry In Action's performances?

○ Minimally engaged
○ Somewhat engaged
○ Moderately engaged
○ Highly Engaged

Q5.5. How do the Poetry In Action performances impact students' approach to and understanding of English?

[   ]

Q5.6. Have students from your school submitted poems to the PIA poetry competition?

○ No
○ Yes

The Poetry In Action Experience (Teachers)

Q6.1. How do teachers in your school respond to Poetry In Action Performances?

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Q6.2. How engaged are teachers with Poetry In Action's performances?

- ○ Minimally engaged
- ○ Somewhat engaged
- ○ Moderately engaged
- ○ Highly Engaged

Q6.3. How do teachers respond to the content and creative delivery of the Poetry In Action performances?

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Q6.4. How do Poetry In Action performances impact teachers' approach to and understanding of English?

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Q6.5.
How well have Poetry In Action's performances assisted teacher(s) to:

Expand their repertoire of activities to engage students in poetry study.

- ○ Not well at all
- ○ Slightly well
- ○ Moderately well
- ○ Very well
- ○ Extremely well

Q6.6.

How well have Poetry In Action's performances assisted teacher(s) to:

Plan, structure, and sequence poetry and performance learning programs

- ○ Not well at all
- ○ Slightly well
- ○ Moderately well
- ○ Very well
- ○ Extremely well

Poetry In Action Resources

Q7.1.

Poetry In Action touring performances are supported by a Teacher Resource Pack that is linked to the curriculum.

How useful have these been to supplement the performances and poetry learning in your school?

- ○ Not at all useful
- ○ Slightly useful
- ○ Moderately useful
- ○ Very useful
- ○ Extremely useful
- ○ I did not receive or see a teacher resource pack

Q7.2. How are the Poetry in Action Teacher Resource Packs used in your school?

- ☐ Pre-performance lessons / workshops
- ☐ Post-performance lessons / workshops
- ☐ Prompts for students' creative poetry responses

☐ Prompts for students' drama making

☐ [_____] Other (please specify)

☐ Not used as far as I know

Q7.3.

Poetry In Action offers a Professional Learning program for English and Drama teachers equivalent to 2.5 hours of professional learning (addressing Standards 1.5, 2.1, 3.2).

Have you accessed this Professional Learning?

○ No
○ Yes

Q7.4. How well has Poetry In Action's Professional Learning assisted you to:

Learn new strategies from theatre-making practices to engage and assess students in poetry units.

○ Not effective at all
○ Slightly effective
○ Moderately effective
○ Very effective
○ Extremely effective

Q7.5.

How well has Poetry In Action's professional Learning assisted you to:

Expand your repertoire of activities to engage students in poetry study.

○ Not effective at all
○ Slightly effective
○ Moderately effective

○ Very effective
○ Extremely effective

Q7.6.
How well has Poetry In Action's Professional Learning assisted you to:

Plan, structure, and sequence poetry and performance learning programs.

○ Not effective at all
○ Slightly effective
○ Moderately effective
○ Very effective
○ Extremely effective

Q7.7.
Poetry In Action has also introduced digital performances in response to COVID-19.

Have you/teachers at your school accessed Poetry In Action's digital performances?

○ Yes
○ No

Future Considerations

Q8.1. What advice would you give to Poetry In Action regarding how they could improve their performances?

[   ]

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Appendix 2: HREC Notification of Approval

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

20 October 2021
Professor Susanne Gannon
School of Education

Dear Susanne,

Project Title: "Understanding Experiences, Perceptions and Impacts of Poetry in Action in Secondary Schools"

HREC Approval Number: H14656
Risk Rating: Low

I am pleased to advise the above research project meets the requirements of the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018).

Ethical approval for this project has been granted by the Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee. This HREC is constituted and operates in accordance with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research 2007 (Updated 2018).

Approval of this project is valid from 20 October 2021 until 20 June 2022.

This protocol covers the following researchers:

Susanne Gannon, Eva Vass, Mary Mooney

Summary of Conditions of Approval

1. A progress report will be due annually on the anniversary of the approval date.

2. A final report will be due at the expiration of the approval period.

3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee prior to being implemented. Amendments must be requested using the HREC Amendment Request Form.

4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events on participants must be reported to the Human Research Ethics Committee via the Human Ethics Officer as a matter of priority.

5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the Committee as a matter of priority.

6. Consent forms are to be retained within the archives of the School or Research Institute and made available to the Committee upon request.

7. Approval is only valid while you hold a position or are enrolled at Western Sydney University. You will need to transfer your project or seek fresh ethics approval from your new institution if you leave Western Sydney University.

8. Project specific conditions:
There are no specific conditions applicable.

Please quote the registration number and title as indicated above in the subject line on all future correspondence related to this project. All correspondence should be sent to humanethics@westernsydney.edu.au as this email address is closely monitored.

Yours sincerely

Associate Professor Gabrielle Weidemann
Presiding Member,
Western Sydney University Human Research Ethics Committee

Appendix 3: Example of an Approval letter from state/sector

Catholic Schools Office
DIOCESE OF MAITLAND-NEWCASTLE

Director's Office
Brid Corrigan
LEADERSHIP AND SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

P 4979 1201 F 4979 1208
E brid.corrigan@mn.catholic.edu.au

6 December 2021

Susanne Gannon
Western Sydney University
Locked Bag 1797, Penrith, NSW, 2751
s.gannon@westernsydney.edu.au

Dear Susanne

RE: Understanding Experiences, Perceptions and Impacts of Poetry in Action in Secondary Schools

Thank you for your application to conduct research at four of our secondary schools in the Diocese of Maitland-Newcastle for your study. We confirm we have received a copy of your ethics approval and that you have insurance.

We note that neither researchers nor assistants will attend the school so do not require Working with Children screening clearance.

Please note the following points in relation to research in school requests:

- As per COVID-19 Level 3 restrictions, non-essential visitors are not permitted to enter schools.
- It is the school principal who gives final permission for research to be carried out in their school.
- The privacy of participants is to be observed in reporting and must comply with the requirements of the Commonwealth Privacy Amendment (Private Sector) Act 2000.
- There should be some feedback to schools and a copy of the findings of the research forwarded to this office.
- This letter of approval should accompany any approach to schools.

I look forward to the results of this study and wish you the best over the coming months. If you require any further assistance or wish to discuss any aspect of this research in our diocese, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Yours sincerely,

Brid Corrigan
LEADERSHIP AND SYSTEM IMPROVEMENT

Catholic Schools Office 841 Hunter Street, Newcastle West 2302 | PO BOX 714 Newcastle NSW 2300
Phone 02 4979 1200 Fax 02 4979 1209 ABN 79 469 343 054 Visit us online www.mn.catholic.edu.au

Appendix 4: NSW Statement on COVID

Subject: [External] Automatic reply: SERAP 2021433 Stage 2 Modification Requested

Date: Thursday, 7 July 2022 at 4:33:05 pm Australian Eastern Standard Time

From: SERAP, DET

To: Susanne Gannon

Thank you for your email, we will respond soon.

SERAP online
Research team, Strategic Analysis and Research | Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation
NSW Department of Education
T: 02 7814 0806| E: serap@det.nsw.edu.au | W: SERAP online

IMPORTANT NOTICE (updated 6 July 2022)

1. Restrictions on research in schools

After more than two years of pandemic disruptions, the NSW Department of Education is limiting pressure on schools by continuing to temporarily pause the approval of new research in NSW public schools. This pause is expected to remain in place during Term 3, 2022. It does not include research projects with current SERAP approval, which may proceed.

There is no pause on the SERAP application process. All new applications that are submitted through SERAP online will continue to be assessed. In the majority of cases, approval will not be granted for projects requiring access to schools, until the pause on research activity is dissolved.

During this time, we will continue to process requests for variation or extension for research projects that have current SERAP approval.

2. Advice for researchers who have submitted applications in 2022

Researchers who have not heard the outcome of an application submitted in 2022 are advised that once the assessment process is finalised, applications that receive provisional approval will remain on hold. Researchers will be notified of the outcome of their application as soon as the pause on new research is dissolved.

Applicants wishing to seek an exemption from the current restrictions should submit a written request to the Department via the SERAP online email. Requests for exemption should clearly state reasons why the project should proceed in Term 3 while there are restrictions on conducting research in schools. Researchers seeking exemption should also supply a list of schools that will be invited to participate in the research; include a statement of the potential impact to school operations; and state how the research is of value to the Department.

We sincerely apologise for any inconvenience and thank you for your understanding.

Please contact SERAP online by email if you have questions and regularly check the latest information related to COVID-19 on the Department's website:
E: serap@det.nsw.edu.au
https://education.nsw.gov.au/covid-19/advice-for-families
*** This message is intended for the addressee named and may contain privileged information or confidential information or both. If you are not the intended recipient please notify the sender and delete the message. ***

Appendix 5: Letter of invitation (emailed to teacher)

Dear John,

As a teacher who has booked Poetry In Action touring programs for your school during the years 2018 to 2021, you are warmly invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Professor Susanne Gannon, Associate Professor Mary Mooney, and Dr Eva Vass. The research investigates experiences, perceptions and impacts of Poetry In Action in Australian schools and the arts industry.

We invite you to complete a ten-minute online survey to gain insights into how Poetry In Action has influenced teaching in your school and impacted the needs of your students. The study has been approved by Western Sydney University and the NT Department of Education. An email and information sheet for your Principal is attached to this email message.

You must share these documents with your Principal before you start the survey.

Please use the link below to complete the survey, which will be available until June 16, 2022 at this link:

[Poetry in Action Survey]

 or scan this QR code on your phone:

As your school has made multiple bookings with PIA, you are also eligible for an online interview if you would like to share further information with the researchers. Let me know if you would an interview as well and I will send through further documents.

Please contact me via email at s.gannon@westernsydney.edu.au if you wish to discuss anything about the project before deciding whether or not to participate.

 Kind regards, Susanne, Mary and Eva

WESTERN SYDNEY
UNIVERSITY
W

Note that different jurisdictions and states required modifications to wording of email invitations, information sheets and consent forms. Attachments included jurisdictional approval letters where relevant (e.g. Appendix 3). This is an example.

Participant Information Sheet – Teachers

Project Title: Understanding Experiences, Perceptions and Impacts of Poetry in Action in Secondary Schools

Project Summary: This project will investigate the impacts of Poetry In Action on participating schools and artists with an explicit focus on those involved from 2017-2021. Impact for schools is defined as enjoyment of poetry, enhancement of learning and teaching of poetry, and increase in perceived relevance of poetry to young people and their teachers. Impact for artists is defined as both individual employment and career enhancement, and contribution to the arts sector, as well as their perceptions of the specific programs they have contributed to and the schools to which they toured programs.

You are invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Professor Susanne Gannon, Associate Professor Mary Mooney, and Dr Eva Vass, members of Western Sydney University's Department of Education.

How is the study being paid for?

This project is being funded by Poetry In Action.

What will I be asked to do?

You will be asked to participate in an interview via Microsoft Teams to report on your experiences, perceptions and impacts of Poetry In Action in your school and on the needs of your students. The interview will be audio-recorded.

How much of my time will I need to give?

The interviews will be up to 30 minutes long.

What benefits will I, and/or the broader community, receive for participating?

Your participation will contribute to an investigation of the impacts of Poetry in Action on participating schools, and potentially guide future workshops. Your contributions will also add to the broader knowledge base about creative learning in schools.

Will the study involve any risk or discomfort for me? If so, what will be done to rectify it?

There are no anticipated risks involved in this study, but you may withdraw your participation before, during, or after your participation prior to publication without providing a reason.

How do you intend to publish or disseminate the results?

The results of this research project will be published in a report provided to Poetry In Action. A report will also be forwarded to your Principal on completion of the research. The research team may also publish journal articles using the collected data. Broad comparisons may be made based on your contributions addressing how PIA's programs are received differently in different context, but not in a way that is identifiable. Neither participants nor schools will be identifiable in any reports arising from this research.

Will the data and information that I have provided be disposed of?

Appendix 6: Information Sheet (Principal)

Participant Information Sheet – Principals

Project Title: Understanding Experiences, Perceptions and Impacts of Poetry in Action in Secondary Schools

Project Summary: This project will investigate the impacts of Poetry In Action on participating schools and artists with an explicit focus on those involved from 2017-2021. Impact for schools is defined as enjoyment of poetry, enhancement of learning and teaching of poetry, and increase in perceived relevance of poetry to young people and their teachers. Impact for artists is defined as both individual employment and career enhancement, and contribution to the arts sector, as well as their perceptions of the specific programs they have contributed to and the schools to which they toured programs.

Your school is invited to participate in a research study being conducted by Professor Susanne Gannon, Associate Professor Mary Mooney, and Dr Eva Vass, members of Western Sydney University's Centre for Educational Research. Participation will involve the teacher from your school who is the contact person for PIA bookings completing an online survey and/or participating in an online interview.

How is the study being paid for?

This project is being funded by Poetry In Action.

What will the teacher be asked to do?

The teacher will complete an online survey about PIA engagement and impact in the school. This will be open to all schools who have booked PIA.

How much time will the teacher need to give?

The online survey will take approximately 10 mins.

What benefits will I, and/or the broader community, receive for participating?

The participation of your school will contribute to an investigation of the impacts of Poetry in Action on participating schools, and potentially guide future workshops. The school's contributions will also add to the broader knowledge base about creative learning in schools.

Will the study involve any risk or discomfort for me? If so, what will be done to rectify it?

There are no anticipated risks involved in this study, but you may withdraw your participation at any time before, during, or after your participation prior to the publication of the research report without providing a reason.

How do you intend to publish or disseminate the results?

It is anticipated that the results of this research project will be published and/or presented in a variety of forums. In any publication and/or presentation, information will be provided in such a way that the participant cannot be identified.

Will the data and information that I have provided be disposed of?