

ADELAIDE
FESTIVAL **AF**

2026 IMPACT REPORT





Adelaide Festival 2026

"As the curtain dropped on a triumphant final weekend in the SA capital, the country's most important festival did what it so often does, and spoke for itself."

Tim Douglas, The Australian

In 2026, Australia's premier international arts festival delivered an ambitious, richly layered program, bringing together extraordinary artists and audiences from around the world and across Australia. Presented across 17 days and nights, the Festival celebrated the power of art to inspire, challenge and connect.

This year marked the first Adelaide Festival programmed by Artistic Director Matthew Lutton OAM and led by Executive Director Julian Hobba.

The Festival opened with an unforgettable free concert by British indie rock icons Pulp in Elder Park, attracting 10,000 people to the CBD for an electrifying opening night that set the tone for AF26.

No other Australian festival brings together the same international breadth of excellence in a single program. Across theatre, music, dance and visual art, audiences experienced work at the pinnacle of contemporary artistic practice.

The 2026 Adelaide Festival demonstrated, once again, the enduring cultural, social and economic impact of presenting the very best art from around the world.

Thank you for joining us for Adelaide Festival 2026.

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

AF26 Opening Concert – Pulp

Image: Andrew Beveridge

AF26 by Numbers

188,236 total attendances
(including WOMADelaide)

49,458 tickets sold

33% of ticket sales to
interstate or overseas
audiences

\$40.8 million gross
expenditure generated for
South Australia

\$29.2 million net impact on
the Gross State Product

\$29.1 million new
expenditure generated for
South Australia

\$3 million invested by
donors and sponsors

31,655 visitor attendances

60,008 total visitor nights

\$5,198 average spend per
visitor in South Australia

194 jobs created
(full time equivalent)

44 events were presented by companies travelling from over **15 different countries**, with works including **8 World Premieres**, **14 Australian Premieres** and **21 events exclusive to Adelaide Festival**.

The 2026 Festival showcased over **100 performances**, utilising **20 different South Australian venues** and performance spaces.

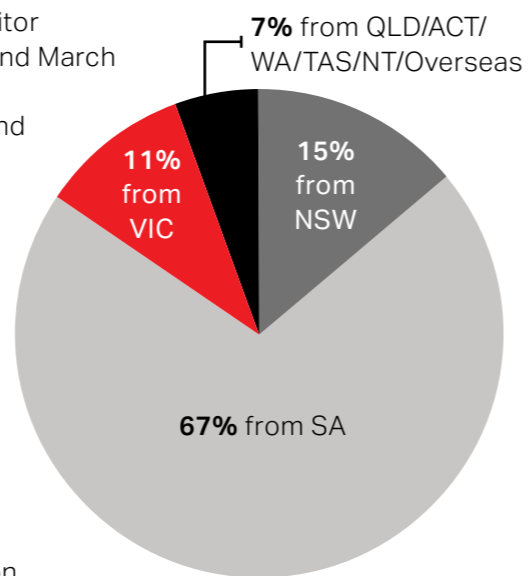


Interstate Visitation

Adelaide Festival is an essential contributor to South Australia's visitor economy, with arts lovers travelling to the state through February and March to see international work appearing exclusively in Adelaide for the Festival. The 2026 program featured performances of rare depth and virtuosity, including **sell-out seasons** of *Mary Said What She Said*, starring icon of French film and theatre Isabelle Huppert, and Simon Stone's *The Cherry Orchard*, featuring an all-star Korean cast. Music lovers were captivated by the Australian debut of Ensemble Pygmalion and their acclaimed performances of Bach, Monteverdi and Rossi.

The average total spend per visitor travelling specifically to Adelaide Festival was **\$5,198**.

Economics literature supports the importance of a strong cultural infrastructure in underpinning a skilled, innovative workforce. Adelaide Festival's contribution to South Australia's reputation as a culturally sophisticated city significantly impacts business attraction, skilled workforce retention and tourism outcomes that are real and enduring and that support the Festival's role as a cornerstone of our state's cultural life and its long-term economic potential.



Marquee Programming Impact

Adelaide Festival invests heavily in marquee work presented exclusively in Adelaide. In recent years, it has also been the only Australian organisation to back the presentation of large-scale international opera and major classical music ensembles.

In 2026, the Festival raised more than \$1.6M through box office income and philanthropy to present the centrepiece works *Perle Noire: Meditations for Joséphine* and Ensemble Pygmalion's three acclaimed programs.

Marquee events not only attract strong interstate visitation; they also bring new investment into South Australia, with almost 60% of marquee-event philanthropy contributed by donors from outside the state.

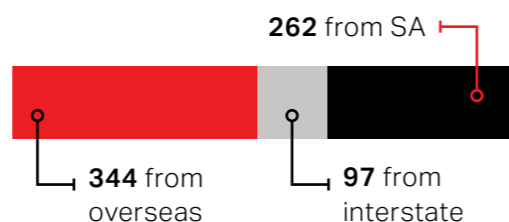
Beyond the visitor spend generated by audiences travelling to Adelaide, this investment underpins the Festival's substantial local expenditure supporting jobs and directing funding to South Australian contractors, suppliers, venues and hospitality businesses.

2026 Artists

Adelaide Festival continues to be a major platform for profiling South Australian artists, employing cultural workers and developing event infrastructure. Event support roles – sound, staging, ticketing and venue management – provided employment for an estimated 154 people beyond the Adelaide Festival Corporation and the venues activated by the Festival support the ongoing viability and international profile of our permanent cultural institutions.

In 2026, Adelaide Festival facilitated the third year of the Beyond Borders program, through which a generous syndicate of donors support 50 independent South Australian artists to engage deeply with the Festival and its international productions and artists.

A total of **703 artists** took part in the 2026 Adelaide Festival.



"The productions this year were inspiring, artistically excellent and meaningful. They left a deep impact on me, which is the most we hope for in the festival."

2026 Audience Survey



Mama Does Derby
Image: Tony Lewis



Sustainability

Adelaide Festival is committed to reducing its environmental footprint across all areas of work. Key initiatives included:

- Supporting sustainable waste practices through a three-bin system at all Adelaide Festival sites, including appropriate sorting and diversion
- Encouraging audiences to adopt sustainable practices such as guide recycling and mindful consumption
- Reusing or recycling all site materials and signage where possible
- Reducing printing and overall paper use
- Connecting artists with campaigns such as BYO Bottle and No Music on a Dead Planet

Audience Impact

Adelaide Festival generates significant social value in parallel to the striking impact borne out in financial and tourism metrics. This is represented in the impact analysis as 'wellbeing value'. Presenting such a concentration of prolific and diverse artistic activity in the city during Adelaide Festival gives South Australians an overt and collective experience of our shared humanity; a chance to come together through a universal joy found in creative expression. It expresses community-held values such as empathy and inclusion, and creates civic pride by giving Adelaide a sense of international standing and connection.

When asked to quantify this worth, audiences conservatively estimated the creation of an additional **\$3.3 million in 'wellbeing' value**, indicating their perception of the benefit provided to them by Adelaide Festival over and above the amount paid for their tickets. At its core, this measure speaks to the intangible transformational power of art.

- Survey respondents rated the Festival as representing, on average, **32%** more value than the cost of attending, and **96%** rated it as fair to excellent value for money.
- **84%** of SA residents agreed that hosting the Festival was important to living and working here.
- **80%** agreed that the Festival was a core avenue by which they gained their desired cultural experiences.
- **90%** of visitors would recommend attending Adelaide Festival to their family and friends.
- **80%** of people were satisfied or very satisfied with their Festival experience and **94%** were satisfied or very satisfied with their visit to South Australia.
- **92%** of visitors said they were very likely to attend the Festival again next year.



"Adelaide Festival holds immense cultural significance for our local and wider community, serving as a vibrant celebration of creativity, diversity, and artistic excellence... The Festival not only enriches our city's cultural fabric but also inspires us to think deeply, feel profoundly, and engage more fully with the world around us. It truly is a highlight of the year!"

2026 Audience Survey



Theatre of Dreams
Image: Andrew Beveridge

Equity Initiatives

Adelaide Festival's Open House program provides heavily discounted ticketing through Tix For Next To Nix (\$5 tickets) and Pay What You Can. These initiatives support people with a current Health Care Card or Pension Card to access the Festival.

In 2026, 1414 tickets were accessed through the Tix For Next To Nix and Pay What You Can initiatives.

Young Audiences & Education

We know that engaging, challenging arts experiences can have a lasting impact on young people. Through our schools' program, 5588 discounted tickets were accessed by students from 84 schools.

In total, 994 students accessed equity tickets (\$5 and \$15).

Thanks to our Festival Connect program, 485 students received free transport to attend the Festival. We also supplied teacher resources to support educators to extend and enrich students' engagement with Festival performances.

Accessibility Initiatives

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

Adelaide Festival has finalised a **Disability Access and Inclusion Plan (2025–2029)** to strengthen accessible, inclusive experiences across our programs. Guided by Inclusive SA: State Disability Inclusion Plan 2025–2029 and the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the plan embeds access and inclusion across policies, planning and daily operations, with a focus on identifying and removing visible and invisible barriers for audiences, artists and staff.

In 2026, our accessibility initiatives included **Auslan-interpreted, audio-described and relaxed performances, accessible program formats**, and continued use of an **accessibility widget** on the Adelaide Festival website. We continued to offer online bookings for **accessibility seating** (Companion Cards, wheelchair seating, Auslan-interpreted and audio-described tickets), and shared practical venue access information including public transport routes and accessible drop-off and parking locations. Our main venues were supplied with sensory tools (including sunglasses, ear plugs, quiet fidget toys and communication cards) for audience members to collect and keep as needed.

“Loved the HUGE variety of acts and shows! Good to see Adelaide buzzing with life with so many visitors from Australia and abroad. We are so lucky to live in this wonderful state.”

2026 Audience Survey



Perle Noire: Meditations for Joséphine

Image: Andrew Beveridge

Our Marketing Reach

Campaign

A comprehensive five-month national marketing campaign valued at approx. \$1.5 million was delivered across screen, digital, out-of-home and press. A key component of the campaign was the printed Adelaide Festival program guide, with 55,000 copies distributed across Adelaide, Melbourne and Sydney.

Media Coverage

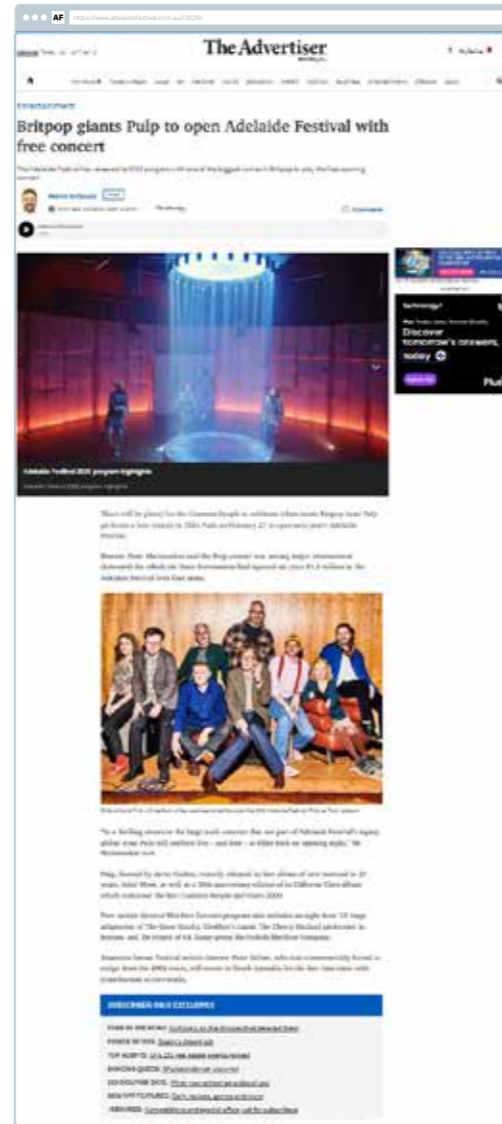
For the period 28 August 2025 – 31 March 2026, there were **22,382** direct mentions of Adelaide Festival across TV, print, radio, magazines and online. The cumulative audience reach was **214.2 million** (source: Stream Insights Plus Report for Government of South Australia and Adelaide Festival).

Leading national news sources reporting on Adelaide Festival were *ABC News*, *The Australian*, *The Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald*, the *Australian Financial Review* and *ABC News Breakfast*.

Digital

The Adelaide Festival website attracted over **1.5m page views** during the campaign period (Oct 2025 – Mar 2026) from over **370k users**.

Our social media channels generated a combined **reach of 2.4 million** across the campaign period. We also maintain an EDM database of over **70k highly engaged subscribers**.



**A D E L A I D E
F E S T I V A L A F**

25 Feb – 14 Mar 2027 | 3 – 19 Mar 2028

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Cover Image: Saige Prime