



## **Australian Theatre for Young People**

*12 August 2014*

To whom it may concern,

I am delighted to present a formal submission supporting the Walsh Bay Redevelopment project on behalf of the Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP).

Our company is very excited about the potential that a new permanent home on Pier 2/3 offers. We have a corresponding capacity to deliver great benefits to Pier 2/3, the Walsh Bay precinct, the arts sector, the NSW government and the people of NSW.

Aaron Beach  
General Manager  
Australian Theatre for Young People

### **WHY ATYP NEEDS A DEDICATED NEW HOME AT PIER 2/3**

ATYP needs to address longstanding and critical issues in relation to its current accommodation at Pier 4/5. These have been well documented and concern the absence of adequate performance, workshop and office facilities to meet the essential current and future requirements of the Company. These issues are limiting the Company's operational effectiveness, potential for growth and capacity to respond to increasing market demand for its programs for and by young people. At Pier 4/5, ATYP has reached its maximum operating capacity

ATYP's future artistic, financial and organisational development is contingent upon suitable new accommodation and has been deferred due to continuing discussions with the NSW Government which have yet to reach fruition. The opportunity exists now to achieve a permanent solution through a new home at Pier 2/3 for ATYP that reflects its status as the national flagship company for young people's theatre. This has been the focus of detailed planning and documentation by ATYP and Arts NSW now for over a decade. ATYP supports the Walsh Bay development as we see this as an exciting opportunity for the expansion of our company and what we can offer youth arts in Sydney and Australia.

### **THE BENEFITS ATYP DELIVERS TO THE WALSH BAY PRECINCT AND THE NSW GOVERNMENT**

ATYP's proposal addresses the NSW Government's objectives and priorities for Pier 2/3, the Walsh Bay precinct and the arts and cultural sector, strongly and clearly. ATYP is uniquely positioned to maximise the creative vibrancy and diversity of participation sought for the redeveloped Walsh Bay Precinct.

ATYP is Australia's national youth theatre company and will bring unprecedented levels of high quality public participation in the arts by young people at Pier 2/3;

ATYP's role and contribution is distinctive and complementary to the existing suite of arts activity in the Walsh Bay precinct, and bridges the divide between young, emerging and professional artists;

ATYP is a strong and highly experienced collaborator and has established and effective partnership arrangements in place with many key arts organisations and businesses at Walsh Bay;

ATYP has an international reputation for excellence in youth theatre built over 50 years, a prestigious international touring profile and an influential network of relationships with leading artists and organisations;

ATYP has the capacity to contribute capital towards the fit-out costs of Pier 2/3, supported by ATYP's cash resources, including the ATYP Foundation, and a targeted capital fundraising campaign.

ATYP will deliver very high levels of participation by the NSW Government's target population group of children and young people and generate around 45,000 attendances at Pier 2/3 annually;

ATYP offers a supportive environment for young artists to take risks, explore their creativity, stimulate their imagination, develop skills and engender in them a lifelong love of theatre;

ATYP harnesses the inspiration and excitement of young people through a process of empowerment that stays with them into adult life and through our alumni, continues to shape cultural life internationally;

ATYP is dedicated to meaningful engagement in theatre by young people and will deliver a program of outstanding quality with diverse opportunities for creative and receptive participation;

ATYP reaches an extremely diverse demographic of young people, families, teachers, schools and artists, including young people from diverse regions, backgrounds and Indigenous Australians;

ATYP is renowned for its innovative contribution to the development of youth theatre practice, delivery of a unique canon of work for young people under 26 and its contribution to a dynamic theatre ecology;

ATYP has pursued its vision for a permanent new home at Pier 2/3 with exceptional levels of unwavering personal and organisational commitment and is well prepared for the transition to a permanent new home at Pier 2/3;

We believe that ATYP will add significant value to the Walsh Bay precinct. It is also firmly in line with the priorities identified by the NSW Government for the long-term use of this space and its arts and cultural policy;

ATYP remains very willing to partner with other high quality arts organisations and commercial partners for Pier 2/3 and is committed to delivering maximum benefit to all key stakeholders for this development: artists, audiences, arts companies, the arts sector, the Walsh Bay precinct, commercial partners, and the Government and people of NSW.

## **BACKGROUND**

ATYP is Australia's flagship theatre company dedicated to putting young people centre stage. Established in 1963, ATYP is the nation's oldest and largest theatre company working exclusively with young people. We have featured in the lives of thousands of artists, many of whom have gone on to shape our nation's cultural identity as actors, directors, playwrights, technicians, managers and advocates. Some of ATYP's more well-known past attendees include Nicole Kidman, Toni Collette, Abbie Cornish, Baz Luhrmann, Rebel Wilson and Rose Byrne.

ATYP's proposed home at Pier 2/3 will be a national centre of excellence and innovation for young people's theatre, driving the development of new work for and by young people under 26, and providing a platform for partnerships between young people and the most exciting emerging and established theatre practitioners, companies, venues and festivals.

ATYP is well prepared for the transition and has the financial capacity to contribute to the fit out. Providing a permanent home at Pier 2/3 would realize great benefits, to the development of young artists and to the expansion of audiences for young people's theatre. ATYP's presence on Pier 2/3 will also enrich the vitality and attractiveness of the Walsh Bay precinct as a destination for the arts, and for creative and commercial purposes.

ATYP's unique cultural offering merges a supportive, inclusive youth arts philosophy with a drive for artistic excellence. This has led to collaborations with internationally recognized companies including Cirque Du Soleil, Sydney Theatre Company, The National Theatre, the Sydney Festival, Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, and the Sydney Opera House amongst many others.

ATYP is Australia's national youth theatre company, generating around 45, 000 attendances annually and will deliver a very high level of participation by the NSW Government's target population group of children and young people. By placing young people at the centre of the vision for Pier 2/3, the NSW government and people of NSW would be investing in the future development of young people and the continued development of theatre in Australia.

## OUR IMPACT BY NUMBERS

- Over 25,000 young Australian annually as participants in workshops and performance projects at the Wharf;
- Over 10,000 in attendances to our annual performance seasons and showings;
- Over 100 schools, 150 teachers and 6,000 students in Sydney and across Australia;
- Over 120 artists and arts workers engaged annually as writers, directors, tutors, designers, stage managers and technicians;
- Over 150 indigenous young people locally and nationally;
- Over 200 young, emerging and professional artists, presenting and performing work;
- Over 250,000 people watch an ATYP production or download an ATYP resource on-line each year;
- ATYP receives \$154k from the federal government and \$98k from state government and in return invests \$1,132,719 annually in wages for Australian artists;
- ATYP invests more money on the development of Australian playwrights and the commissioning of new plays than any other Australian theatre company;
- ATYP is the most effective fundraiser of the nation's small-to-medium theatre companies turning every \$1 of government funding into \$6;
- Every year high schools around the country perform plays commissioned by ATYP and this number is increasing each year;
- And most importantly, we know the experiences of working with ATYP stay with young people for a lifetime, enhancing a love of the performing arts.

## ATYP in PIER 2/3

ATYP has had a commitment from the NSW Government to be housed in purpose-built premises at Pier 2/3, Hickson Rd Walsh Bay since the 21<sup>st</sup> of May 1997. First confirmed in writing by Gianfranco Cresciani from the Ministry, the commitment was formally announced by Premier Bob Carr in 1998 and has been reiterated by successive Arts Ministers.

In committing to the move the NSW Government acknowledged that the company's current facilities have significant shortcomings. This has been an ongoing concern for Australian Theatre for Young People. At the same time it is recognised that the company must remain within The Wharf precinct.

There are three principle reasons for this.

- **Access** – the leading Australian company in the heart of the city
- **Community** – an active hub amidst artistic excellence
- **Creative partnerships** – at home with flagship companies

## ACCESS

The area around The Wharf, Hickson Rd, Walsh Bay, is recognised as Australia's leading performing arts precinct. It houses a cluster of the nation's flagship companies; Sydney Theatre Company, Sydney Dance Company, Australian Theatre for Young People, Bangarra Dance Theatre, and the Sydney Philharmonia Choirs – in the shadow of the iconic Sydney Harbour Bridge.

For Australian Theatre for Young People, the Walsh Bay precinct offers a combination of benefits that cannot be replicated anywhere else in Australia.

Young people from around the nation access Australian Theatre for Young People's venues. Housed on the harbour under one of the nation's premiere landmarks, the precinct provides an iconic location for iconic companies. Coming to The Wharf generates a sense of excitement amongst visitors of all ages and backgrounds from around Australia and internationally.

In managing our own venues, ATYP is able to establish an environment and processes that are tailored to supporting young and emerging artists. This cannot be replicated in externally managed Arts venues that must adhere to specific protocols driven by professional and commercial needs.

Australian Theatre for Young People's venues at The Wharf are used expressly for the support and development of young people; as audiences, as participants, and as artists. As such it is the resident company that allows and encourages hands-on community access in the precinct renowned for artistic excellence.

The development of Pier 2/3, and ATYP's place in this development will ensure our central location, and continue our service to the national arts community, and especially the young and emerging artists within this community.

## COMMUNITY

ATYP is driven by the idea that the arts can inspire creative, courageous and confident young people wherever they are and whatever they want to be. We believe that the arts have the power to transform lives, enrich communities and ultimately impact upon the future of our nation. Our work is motivated by the need to improve access for all young Australians, to share their stories and participate in the arts.

- The company engages young people and the wider community through a range of programs.
- A main-house season of plays featuring talented young artists working with leading professionals;
- An incubator program supporting leading emerging professional artists to present work in a supportive environment;
- The country's leading script development program connecting young playwrights with leading industry mentors. A series of monthly forums and master classes connecting artists at all levels of the industry;
- One of Australia's largest school holiday workshop programs providing training in theatre and performance;
- A weekly workshop program running on afternoons and weekends;
- An ongoing range of tailored performance programs working with young people from diverse backgrounds and regions.

## CREATIVE PARTNERSHIPS

ATYP works closely with each of the arts organisations housed on The Wharf. These partnerships operate both formally and informally. ATYP has a longstanding relationship with Sydney Theatre Company (STC) including co-producing professional productions, sharing space, networks and resources.

ATYP is an active member of the Walsh Bay Arts & Commerce, the body representing the common interests of the companies on The Wharf. There are ongoing exchanges with local companies, particularly event catering companies Simmer on the Bay, Fratelli Fresh and the Sydney Dance Lounge.

Importantly, workshop and rehearsal space is exchanged with Sydney Philharmonia Choirs, Accessible Arts and Bangarra Dance Theatre. Technical equipment is shared with Sydney Dance Company and Bangarra Dance Theatre. These are important partnerships that will be maintained and strengthened through the improved facilities offered by a move to Pier 2/3.

## ARTISITC STATEMENT

ATYP specialises in integrating professional theatre practice with supportive youth theatre process. We love working with all levels of the arts industry, from the most celebrated national companies to the smallest youth theatres. Our work supports young people from their first theatre experience to their first professional

production. We want those experiences to be inspiring, to be 'cool', and to demonstrate that everyone has a story to tell, and that the stories well tell resonate with everyone.

The staff and board of ATYP understand that the name of the company brings with it an inherent responsibility. We are driven to create work that has the capacity to impact the way young people engage with theatre nationally for years to come. At the same time we want to see our most talented young people celebrated as artists alongside our industry leaders. We believe that building a love of theatre in the next generation of Australians builds confidence, creativity and better human beings.

At the heart of ATYP's processes is the collaboration between professional artists and young people. Whether it is the development of a new play or the facilitation of a workshop, all of our work requires the specific interests, ideas and passions of young people to give them meaning. When we create theatre, we understand that if it is to have any hope of attaining artistic excellence it must be constructed in such a way that young people are integral to the work. The philosophy is simple. If a play can be better performed by adult actors, it should be. If a belief in the relationship between adult and child characters is integral to a production, make sure they are played by adults and children. Don't make excuses because it is 'youth theatre'. Treat the work with the same artistic rigour as would be expected by any flagship Australian theatre company, but ensure the work is imbued with the passion, the honesty, and the respect of young people. Make sure young people are always at the centre of the process. These principles guide everything we do.

## OUR PURPOSE

ATYP is dedicated to bridging the divide between youth arts and professional theatre practice. The company partners with young people to inspire the nation.

## OUR VISION

To raise the national expectation of what theatre with young people can achieve.

**We do this through four inter-linked aspirations:**

1. **Be a fearless theatre company** with a national impact that all levels of the industry love to work with.
2. **Build an active playwriting community** that champions and supports young artists and their work.
3. **Be the first place teachers turn to for inspiration** and support in drama education.
4. **Maintain a vibrant creative hub** and company culture that young people around the country want to be a part of.

**Our work is determined by four overarching strategies:**

1. **National impact:** Recognise the company's role as the national youth theatre and prioritise initiatives that have the potential to resonate nationally.
2. **Artistic excellence:** Connect young people with industry leaders and work in partnership with companies, venues and producers synonymous with 'artistic excellence'.
3. **Innovation:** Embrace technology and the evolving nature of storytelling as it relates to young people and their place in the world.
4. **Pathways:** Maintain an environment that develops confidence and creativity in all young Australians by offering inclusive access to the company and supporting the career development of emerging professionals.

## THE FUTURE

ATYP was formed by a group of professional theatre makers in 1963 that realised that unless we engender a love of theatre and the performing arts in young people across the nation, we will forever struggle to attract people to the theatre as adults. The power of stories and storytelling, of sharing experiences and seeing life from another's point of view, is integral to everyone's growth and development. This philosophy remains at the core of everything we do.

To realise this goal ATYP must secure a purpose-built performance venue together with appropriate office space and two workshop spaces. This venue will be the home of young people's theatre in Australia. The venue will house exciting new plays of our own and present outstanding works from interstate and overseas. In the same way Sydney Theatre Company is a beacon for Australian theatre nationally and internationally, ATYP demonstrates to audiences of all ages the extraordinary capacity of young people to inspire imagination and creativity.

## TESTIMONIALS

*"Thank you so much for making a difference in the lives of that set of students. You have given them something that they can be proud of and that they will remember for the rest of their lives. This will be the event that they talk about when they are 20, 30 and beyond when someone asks about school. "I hated school, but there was this one time when..." Thank you for making the positive memories and please make sure you accept all the accolades that are coming your way - they are thoroughly deserved..."* **Kylie Murphy, Katherine High School**

*"The smiles and self-esteem boost for all of those kids said it all - you could see the pride in every one of them this afternoon."* **Josh Dean, Katherine High School**

*"ATYP has shaped my life and taught me so much about myself and the wonders of the world. It has given me so much and I love being able to give some of that back to other folks."* **Christopher Tomkinson, Actor**

*"ATYP was an integral part of my development as a theatre artist. It provided me with a group of like-minded individuals and tutors with passion and vision for the craft. It gave me a wonderful platform to launch a career as a young independent artist and a community to support and create with. It's a community I still work and connect with today, 18 years on."* **Leland Keen, Artistic Director Rock Surfers Theatre Company**

*"ATYP is where I learnt the fundamentals of theatre. It gave me the chance to work under the supervision of professional artists and technicians. It was at ATYP that I called my first show, went on my first tour and really fell in love with the artform. I wouldn't be here today without ATYP."* **Brenna Hobson, General Manager Belvoir**

*"ATYP is where I found a home in the theatre. I called my first show and worked with international artists on a Festival event for the first time. My fellow classmates have gone on to become close friends and colleagues and leaders in their field. The professional network ATYP helped me establish is now the foundation for my career in the arts."* **Bec Allen, Producer Force Majeure**

*"It was a completely formative time for me. Not only did I learn about acting, but I learned about the possibilities of self-expression. I met people at ATYP when I was 14, who I am still working with in one way or another today."* **Matthew Whittet Actor/Playwright**

*"I went to the ATYP National Studio in Alice Springs in the year 2000. I think it was the very first one! I had the most brilliant experience there. I met my peers from all over Australia and really connected with them and their work. I still know and am in touch with a lot of them all these years later. It not only opened my mind to what was going on in the arts in my age group all around the country, we were also taught and mentored by some of the most amazing artists. This was huge for my development as an artist and for my confidence as a young artist."* **Lally Katz, Playwright**