



Impact Report

THE STONES by Tom Lycos
and Stefo Nantsou
2026

1,220 people, **11**
performances, **37**
schools, **3** venues.

THE STONES at a Glance



Access

Who gets to participate?



of tickets subsidised or free



Belonging

Who feels its for them?



of students felt welcome watching the show



Wellbeing

How kids feel about themselves and others

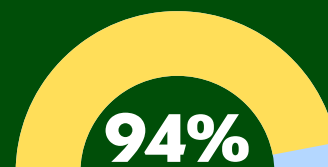


of students said its important to explore the themes of the show



Capability

Creativity, collaboration, resilience, problem solving, curriculum

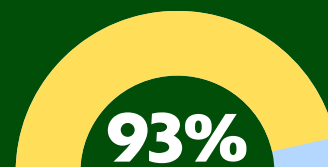


of teachers said students had reflective or critical discussions afterwards



Equity

Did we provide resources to better access participation?



of teachers said it was the first live theatre experience for some students



Quality

Artistic Merit



average overall experience rating from teachers

Methodology

1,220
total audience

200
student surveys

14
School Culture
Counts Surveys

37
Schools

3
Venues, 11
Performances

This report draws on data collected across THE STONES full 2026 season: 25 May - 5 June.

Student feedback was gathered via hand-completed survey forms immediately after performances, scanned and transcribed for analysis.

School feedback was collected through Culture Counts, a nationally recognised arts impact platform, with respondents rating experience across seven artistic dimensions and six impact metrics on a 0–1 scale.

Attendance and postcode data was drawn from ticketing records, with school bookings categorised as Access (free ticket + CLR), or Paid.

THE STONES was presented as a schools-only season — a recommended text on the WA senior secondary English and Drama curriculum — with no general public season. This report therefore reflects student and school data only.

2026 Tour

Perth

Subiaco Arts Centre: 25–26 May

Koorliny Arts Centre: 28–29 May

Kalamunda Performing Arts Centre: 5 June



Barking Gecko Arts respectfully acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Western Australia, and Lands to which we travel nationally. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and acknowledge their deep historical and spiritual connection to culture, country, waterways, rivers and seas. We are honoured to create our work on Whadjuk Boodja, the ancestral lands of the Noongar people.

Access

Bringing a WA curriculum text to life for students who might not otherwise see it



1,220 people reached



79% free tickets (958 people)



2 community partner organisations



4,689 contact hours



3 venues (Perth, Kwinana, Kalamunda)



93% of teachers said it was the first live theatre experience for some students



32% of schools recieved an additional bus subsidy

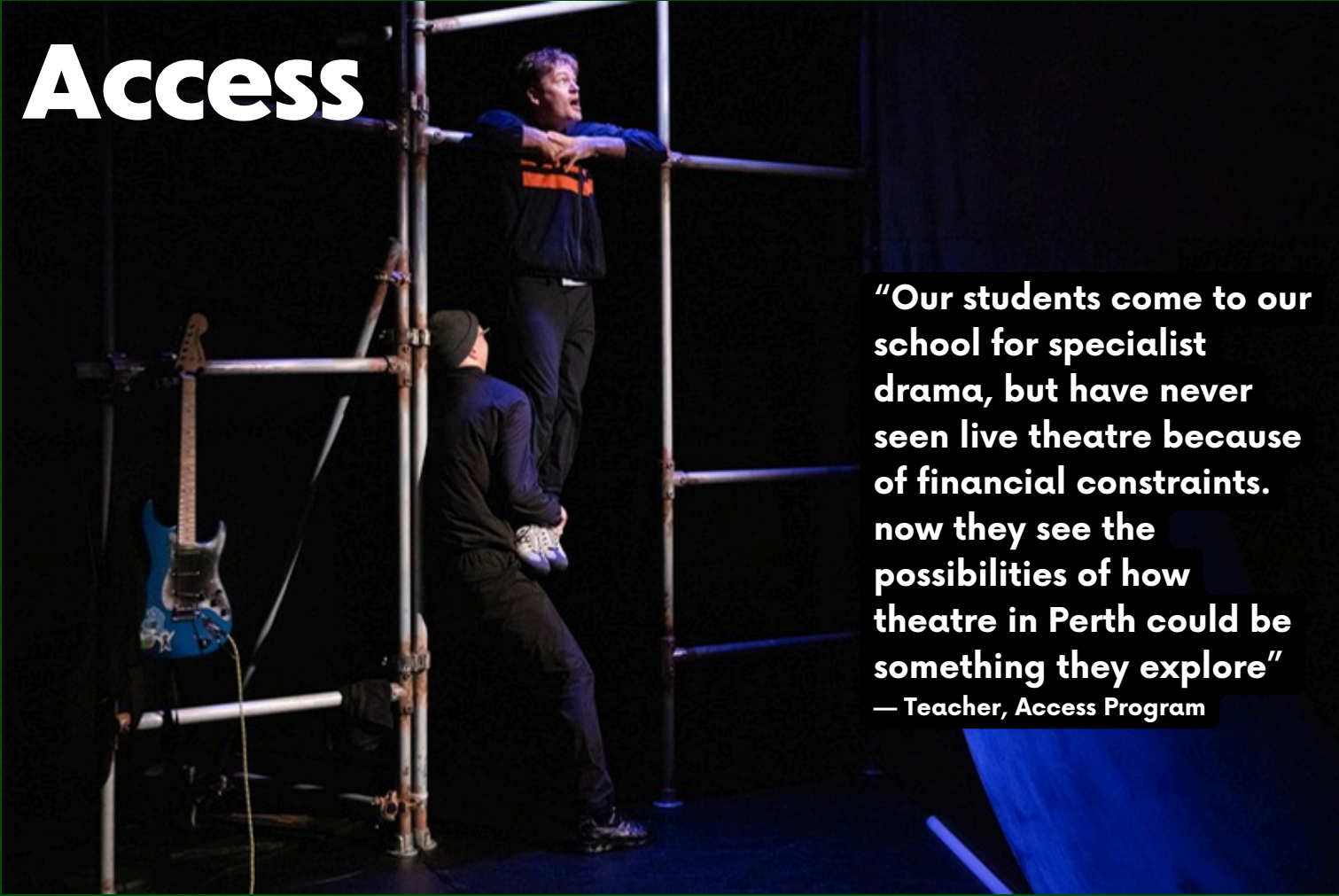


52% of schools in attendance were from outer metropolitan suburbs



- Subiaco, Subiaco Arts Centre
- Kwinana, Koorliny Arts Centre
- Kalamunda, Kalamunda Performing Arts Centre

Access



"Our students come to our school for specialist drama, but have never seen live theatre because of financial constraints. now they see the possibilities of how theatre in Perth could be something they explore"

— Teacher, Access Program

Attendance Breakdown

Across 11 performances at 3 venues, THE STONES reached 37 schools, 1,074 students, staff and guests, generating 4,689 contact hours. A further 146 people attended a public preview performance at Subiaco Arts Centre on 23 May, ahead of the school season, bringing total reach for THE STONES to 1,220. Of those 1,220 attendees, 79% attended on subsidised or free tickets, and 21% were paid in full.

Outer-Metro Reach

Venue location and the geography of who attended are not quite the same thing. Outer-metro venues (Koorliny and Kalamunda) accounted for only 28% of total attendance, but 52% of all participants came from outer-metro school communities, many of them opting to travel into Subiaco Arts Centre rather than being served by a venue on their side of the city.

Biggest Barrier to Participation is Cost

Asked what typically stops their school from attending arts excursions at all, teachers overwhelmingly named cost (93%), followed by budget approval (53%) and excursion paperwork or logistics (53%). Tellingly, every teacher whose barriers were removed by the subsidy program named cost specifically (100%), with budget approval close behind (62%) the subsidy is not a nice-to-have on top of an otherwise workable booking, it is what makes the booking possible at all.

Offering Scheduling Flexibility

Performances were also scheduled across morning, afternoon and evening sessions, Unlike BGA's primary-school productions, which run during school hours only. Feedback from secondary teachers has consistently flagged how hard it is to release students from timetabled elective subjects during the school day, so 3 evening sessions were offered specifically for high-school excursions. This lets parents drop students directly at the venue, removing bus fees, relief-teacher costs and timetable rescheduling from what a daytime excursion usually requires.

"It's important to go to the theatre to see how the actors actually play it out on stage, and to see if it's different from the script"

— Year 11 student, Access Program

Belonging

A story teenagers recognised as their own



92% of students felt welcome watching the show



93% of teachers said the story felt relevant for my students



96% of teachers felt welcome and comfortable in the theatre space



92% of teachers said that students could connect to the ideas and perspectives in the performance



83% of school respondents said my students felt theatre is something that belongs to them

"He was basically my age."

— Year 10 student, Access Program

"What if I knew them? What would I think?"

— Year 10 student, Access Program



"The team went above and beyond in making this performance accessible to all our students with varying communication, auditory and language needs. It was fantastic that each one of our students had full access to the show."

— Teacher, School Program

Belonging

"There isn't much theatre relevant to our age group. It also teaches about the damage of recklessness — which is important for teens to know."

— Year 11 Student, Paid Program



Students Recognised Themselves on Stage

THE STONES was a two-hander built around teenagers making a split-second decision, told through the same age group sitting in the audience. Students repeatedly named the age and situation of the characters as the reason the show landed. Several noted that theatre "for people like them", confronting, contemporary, and unapologetically for a teenage audience, is in short supply.

School Audiences

The 37 schools spanned a wide range of contexts and challenges. Some were large metropolitan colleges within easy reach of their venue; others were schools in fast-growing outer suburbs where community infrastructure, including access to professional theatre, has not kept pace with population growth. A number of schools travelled in from well outside the metro area, for whom the round trip alone could take up the better part of a school day. The season also reached a specialist Deaf Education Centre, where communication access needs shaped how the excursion was planned and delivered, and a home-education network whose students typically have far less structured access to group theatre outings than those enrolled in a mainstream school.

Welcome vs Belonging

93% of teachers said the story felt relevant to their students, 92% of students felt welcome watching the show, and teachers rated the sense of welcome and comfort in the theatre space even higher, at 96%. Teachers also reported that 92% of students could connect to the ideas and perspectives in the performance. However, another measure, "my students felt theatre is something that belongs to them," sat lower, at 83%. That gap is worth reading alongside another figure: 93% of teachers said this was the first live theatre experience for at least some of their class, many of whom were studying THE STONES as a set Year 11 or 12 English or Drama text. Recognising yourself in a story, feeling welcome in a venue, and analysing a script for class are related to belonging, but not the same. A felt sense that theatre itself is "yours" tends to build over repeated encounters, not a single curriculum-driven excursion. This is something we aim to build with repeated offerings for teen audiences in future years.

"Were they still friends after?"

— Year 9 student, Access Program

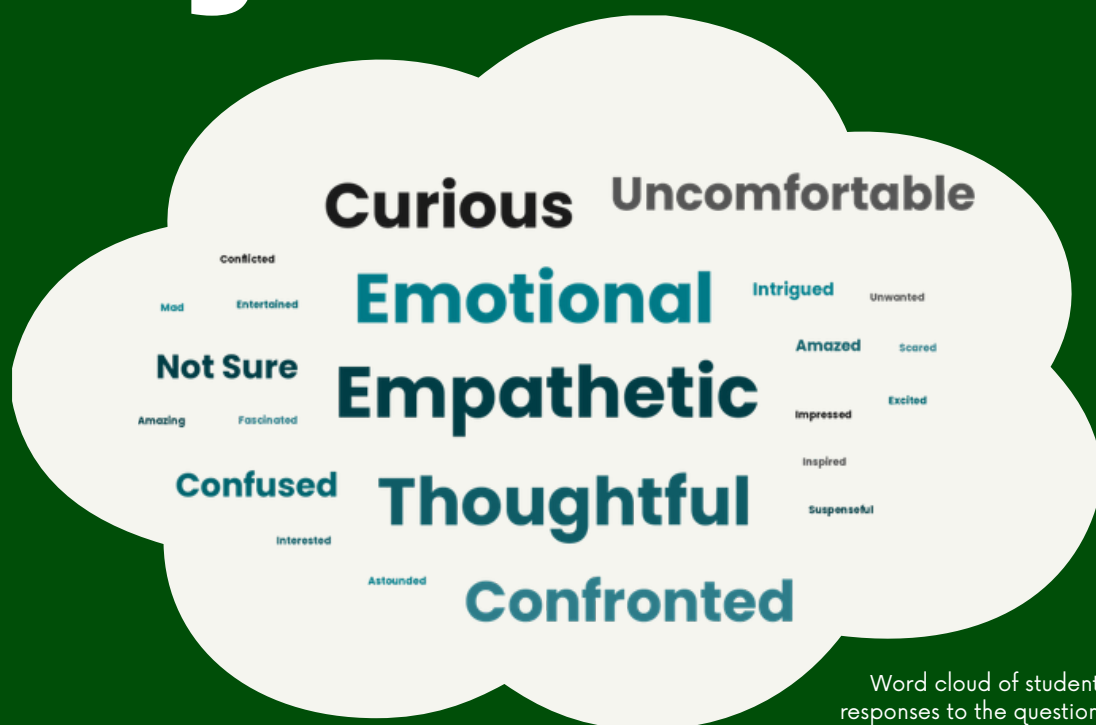
"How do I keep my future kids from doing dumb things?"

— Year 9 student, Paid Program

Wellbeing

Sitting safely with hard feelings

"Shy boy progressively got more and more anxious and depressed as the play continued"
— Year 11 Student, Access Program



Word cloud of student responses to the question "the show made me feel"



47% of students felt empathetic after seeing THE STONES



91% of students felt it was important to explore the topics and themes of THE STONES



93% of schools said the show supported students to engage with complex or challenging topics



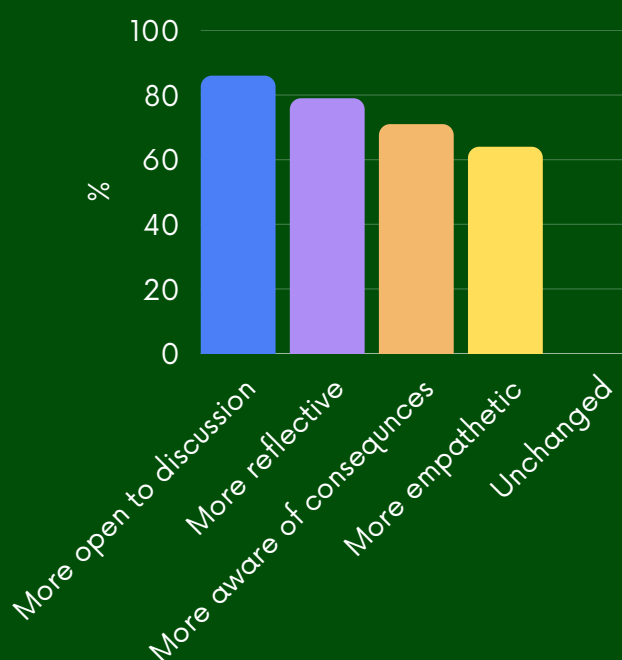
86% of schools said that the students were more open to discussion afterwards.



86% of schools said that THE STONES gave students an opportunity to empathise and imagine themselves in another person's situation

After the performance my students seemed

Teacher Survey



Culture Counts Survey

Wellbeing



"THE STONES. made my students feel emotional, inspired and motivated to discuss it with each other"

— Teacher, School Season

Emotional Response from Students

47% of students said the show made them feel empathetic, 44% emotional, and 40% thoughtful; 28% felt confronted and 20% uncomfortable "in a thinking way." Teachers rated the show's support for engaging with complex or challenging topics at 93%. Asked what their students seemed like afterwards, teachers most often chose more open to discussion (86% of respondents), more reflective (79%), more aware of consequences (71%), and more empathetic (64%) a consistent picture of a show that explores difficult themes.

Social and Emotional Wellbeing Factors

Teachers also linked the experience to broader wellbeing outcomes beyond the performance itself, most commonly empathising and imagining themselves in another person's situation (86%), exploring self-awareness of thoughts and emotions (79%), and having a safe opportunity to express emotion (64%) evidence that the show was doing double duty as both a piece of theatre and a low-stakes exercise in emotional literacy.

Backed by Research

This pattern is consistent with the broader evidence on youth theatre and wellbeing. Australian Theatre for Young People's 2017 "Exploring the Impact of Youth Theatre on the Mental Health and Wellbeing of Young Australians" found 94% reported a positive impact on their overall sense of wellbeing and 89% on self-confidence, with just over half reporting an improvement in anxiety specifically. Notably, ATYP's own research points to story and character, not overt issue-based messaging, as what drives that outcome, the same as THE STONES' approach to youth justice: a confronting true story told through drama, and character, not a lecture on the subject.

"Your decisions big and small can make an impact to the people around you"

— Year 12 student, Access Program

"Something that stayed with me was the impact that peer pressure can have on the outcome of someone's life, even a very young person"

— Year 11 student, Paid Program

Capability

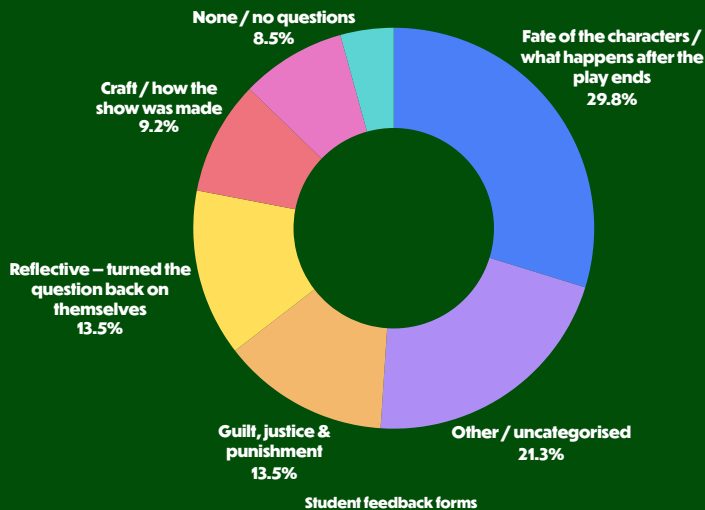
What students took home from THE STONES

"Is it more moral to convict children of adult crimes, or show mercy?"

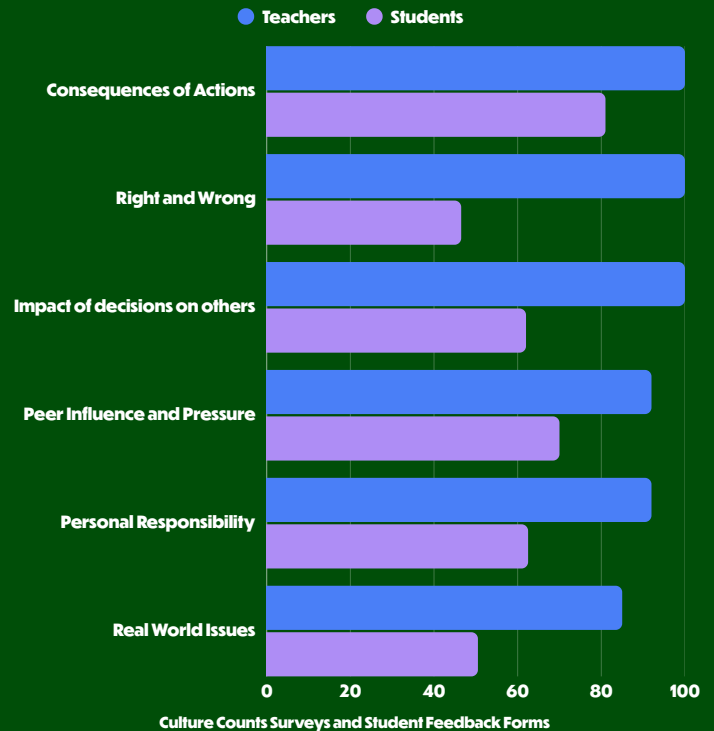
— Year 11 student, Access Program

What questions did the performance leave you with?

Student response thematic breakdown



THE STONES made students consider Teachers compared with Students



89% of teachers said the show supported students to develop critical thinking skills



93% of teachers said students engaged in reflective or critical discussion afterwards



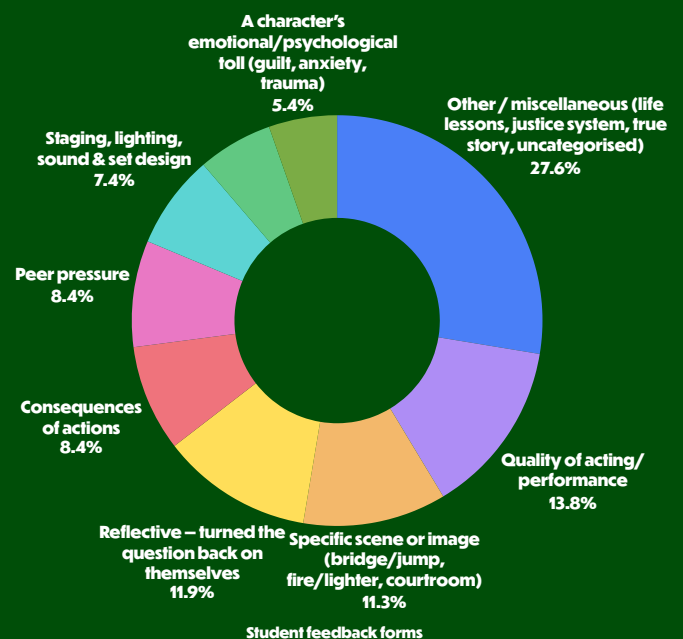
89% of students submitted a question to the creative team



91% of students felt it was important to explore the topics and themes of THE STONES

What is something from the performance that has stayed with you?

Student response thematic breakdown



Capability

"They talked about... the criminalisation of children in Australia, and how some of their school mates have ended up on a similar path"

— Teacher, Access Program

Key Themes

81% of students said the show made them think about consequences of actions, 70% about peer pressure, and 62% about how decisions affect others. 91% said it's important to explore these themes at all. Teachers rated the show's support for critical thinking at 89%, and 94% said their students engaged in reflective or critical discussion afterwards, with almost every teacher respondent selecting multiple themes their students grappled with: consequences of actions, right and wrong, real-world issues, peer pressure, personal responsibility, and the impact of decisions on others.

Conversations beyond the theatre and the classroom

That appetite for discussion carried beyond the theatre. Every attendee received a postcard from No Place for Poverty, a WA movement working towards a future where poverty has no place in the state noting that around 420,000 West Australians live below the poverty line, including 1 in 7 adults and 1 in 6 children. Participants were also invited to donate phones to the Hello Initiative, a WA charity supporting young people navigating the justice system. It extended the production's throughline about how quickly circumstance can close in on a young life into a live, local issue students could act on outside the show.

What stayed with students

What actually stayed with students, in their own words, points to messaging and craft in equal measure. Among the 179 written responses to "what has stayed with you," the most recurring themes were the quality of the acting itself (14%), the staging, lighting and sound design (11%), peer pressure (10%), and the consequences of actions (8%) — with the bridge/jump scene and the fire/lighter scene each singled out by several students as the images that lingered longest. Capability, in other words, was built as much through the craft of specific moments as through the play's explicit themes.

Cultivating curious citizens of the world

The questions students said they were left with tell a complementary story. Of 141 written responses, the single largest theme (30%) was curiosity about what happened to the two central characters after the play ends. The story doesn't resolve neatly, and neither did students' thinking about it. A further 14% asked directly about guilt, justice and punishment ("should a young person be charged like an adult?", "is the justice system flawed?"), and another 14% turned the question back on themselves ("why do we make decisions without thinking about the consequences first?"). Only 9% asked about how the show was made, acting, staging or technique, suggesting that for most students, THE STONES held their attention as a story and an ethical question first, and a piece of craft second.

"It showed the consequences of your action and how one small kick can affect everything."

— Year 10 student, Access Program

"How similar is the actual case?"

— Year 10 student, Access Program

"I think its important to see shows like THE STONES to let us see how things are done in real theatre"

— Year 9 Student, Access Program



79% of all tickets were free



35% of all seats were in postcodes more likely to be identified as disadvantaged



96% of teachers said THE STONES production and education resource increased access to high-quality arts learning

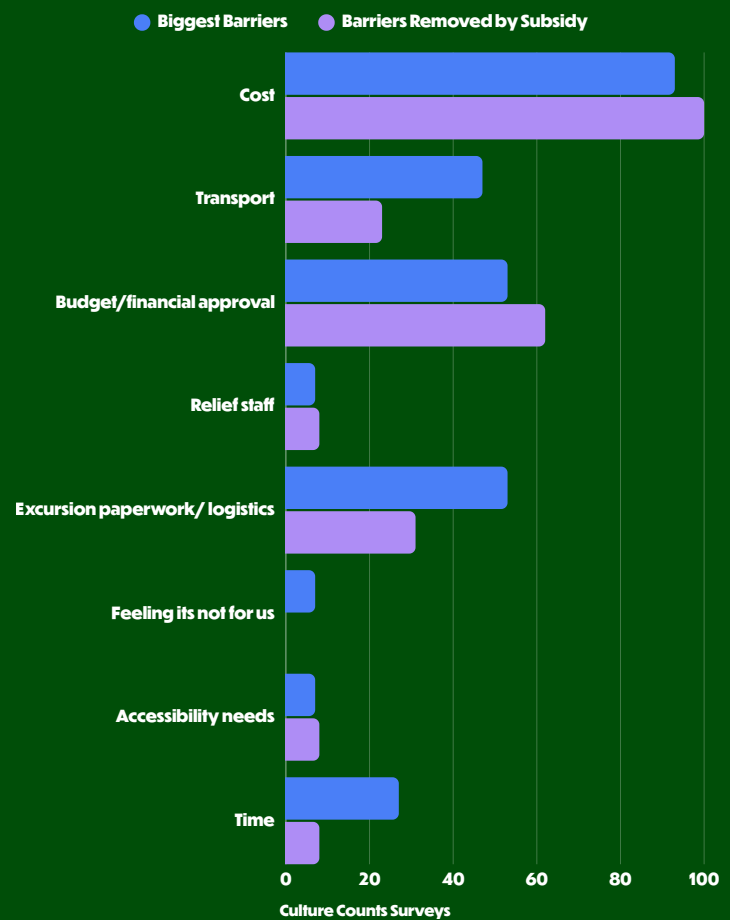


93% of schools said that cost was the biggest barrier to attendance



5 phones donated to Hello Initiative's Mobile Support Program for young people in the justice system

Biggest Barriers to Attendance vs Barriers removed by Subsidy
Teacher Survey



"This allowed me to take my students to see their first piece of live theatre. Many of my students struggle financially, so being able to take them on a cost-free excursion was invaluable."

— Teacher, Access Program

Equity



"Where did the mum get the bail money? "

— Year 9 Student, Access Program

Inviting Schools That Are Missing Out

79% of all tickets across the season were subsidised or free, and teachers rated the increase in access to high-quality arts learning at 96%. For many attending schools — specialist drama cohorts without the budget for professional theatre, students who had never sat in a theatre before — the excursion itself was the equity story.

Removing Barriers Beyond Cost

Teachers were candid about what the subsidy actually removes. Beyond ticket cost, several noted that transport and other logistics remain a live barrier even when tickets are free: one teacher explained that "the cost of transport to and from the venue was quite costly in itself, so the free tickets were an amazing help... it's more the other logistical costs that the school wasn't willing to absorb" that make excursions hard to justify. Others were plain about who this reaches: "our students are from a low socio-economic school so some can't afford to see live shows, so it was a new and exciting experience for them that didn't cost them at all."

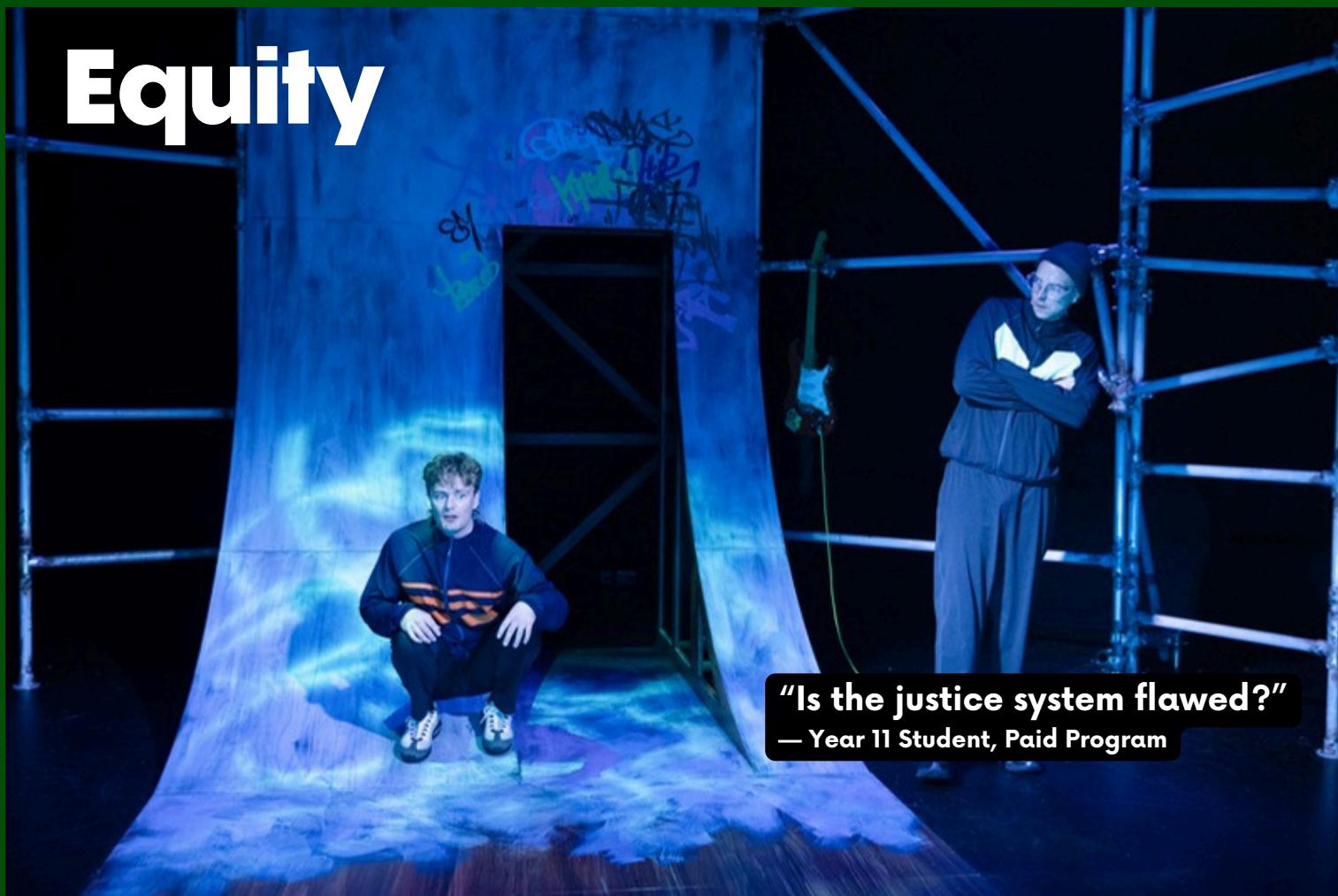
Schools Reached

The 37 schools ranged from large metropolitan colleges to specialist and home-education cohorts: several came from the metro core; a cluster travelled from the Rockingham–Mandurah corridor; others were based in the Kalamunda–Armadale area; and the season's reach extended to a home-education network and a specialist Deaf Education Centre, alongside mainstream secondary schools.

"These students got to experience what live theatre is for the first time - it affected them greatly! They loved it and it was hugely useful in discussing ethics and helping them understand other kids who might act like the characters in the play"

— Teacher, School Season

Equity



"Is the justice system flawed?"

— Year 11 Student, Paid Program

Postcode Reach Mapped with National Advantage

Mapping each school's postcode against ABS SEIFA 2021 data, the standard national Australian measure of relative socio-economic disadvantage, shows the subsidy reaching well into into specific, identifiable communities. Mandurah is recorded as the single most disadvantaged SA2 (suburb-level) area in Greater Perth, and Girrawheen ranks fourth; the Kwinana, Rockingham and Armadale local government areas are among the small number of Perth council areas scoring below the national average, alongside Belmont. Eleven of the season's 37 schools sit within these five identified areas of disadvantage, together accounting for 377 of the 1,074 school-season attendees, or 35%.

Motivating Young People to Take Action

The season also carried a direct-action partnership with Hello Initiative, a WA charity supporting young people in the justice system. Attendees were invited to donate old smartphones, which Hello Initiative wipes, refurbishes and gives to young people who need a phone to attend court, check in with support workers, access mental health services, or stay connected to school and family. Schools donated 5 phones across the season. Hello Initiative reports that 85% of young people in WA detention are unsentenced, around two-thirds are First Nations, and of the young people it has supported with a phone, 78% reduced offending, 79% completed their community order, and 67% accessed education or training — figures that gave the play's themes of consequence and the justice system an immediate, practical next step for students to take.

"\$16 is an amazing price per student - It's more the other logistical costs that the school isn't willing to absorb that make the overall cost more (or less) affordable for students."

— Teacher, Access Program

"I would like to see more shows accessible for my age group"

— Year 10 Student, Access Program

Quality

Craft the teenagers noticed



NPS 93 - Net Promoter Score



100% of school survey respondents said THE STONES was artistically high quality



97% of school survey respondents said it was well produced and presented



94% of school respondents said that its important that its happening here



99% of school respondents said that it held their interest and attention

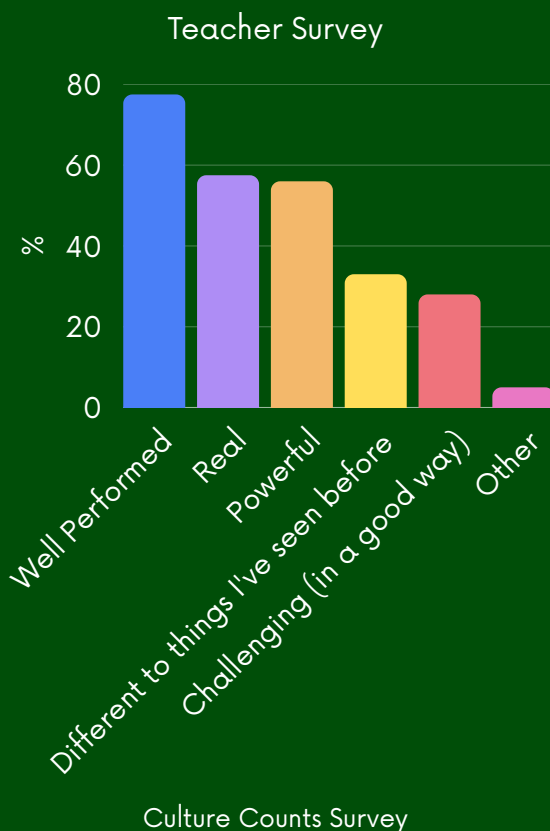


92% of school respondents said the performance was age appropriate for children in years 9-12

"The use of body language and lighting to convey a mood stayed with me."

— Year 10 Student, Access Program

After the performance my students seemed



"They have expanded their horizons as to what is possible. Since seeing this performance, my students have participated more fully in drama class, have discussed their ideas and perspectives more freely, and taken more creative risks in improvisation tasks"

— Teacher, School Season

Quality



"The ability to convey an impactful story with only two performers stayed with me."

— Year 10 Student, Access Program

High Quality Metrics

The average overall experience rating from accompanying teachers was 98%. Captivation scored 99%, presentation 97%, local impact 94%, and vibrancy 94%. Teachers rated the production as artistically high quality at 96% and age-appropriate for years 9–12 at 92%. Among students, 78% said the performance felt "well performed," and 57% used the words "powerful" and "real."

What Stood Out Artistically

What stood out to teachers and students, unprompted, was consistent: the two-performer physical transformation between characters, the set and lighting design, and the integration of live sound and music into a fifty-minute, fast-moving production. Presentation (97%) and captivation (99%) were the highest scoring artistic dimensions suggesting THE STONES read to teachers as a well-executed, character-driven piece of physical theatre. Combined with the 92% age-appropriateness score THE STONES offered a quality production of a text well known to WA senior English and Drama classrooms.

Building Trust

Quality also showed up as loyalty. Of the schools represented in the teacher survey, 61% had already attended one or two previous Barking Gecko Arts productions, and only 39% were attending for the first time, a sign that this season's experience sits inside an ongoing relationship with these schools rather than a one-off booking.

"I really liked the set design, it was well crafted"

— Year 11 Student, Access Program

"It means that students can see live professional theatre and see what is possible. For some it means seeing the world through a new lens and for others it is their first experience at the theatre."

— Teacher, School Season



THE STONES

Cast

Shyboy/ Quinn Isaac Diamond
Yahoo/ Russo Luke Joseph Ryan

Creative Team

Playwrites: Tom Lycos & Stefo Nantsou
Director: Sam Longley
Set & Costume Designer: Charlotte Meagher
Lighting Designer: Jolene Whibley
Guitar Coach & Mentor: Amaru Zachariassen
Video Designer: Roly Skender

Production Team

Production Manager: Stewart Campbell
Stage Manager: Thor Bjorklund Dam
Producer: Rebecca Nelson

Impact Report

Impact, Inclusion & Evaluation Manager:
Brianna Wotzko
Photography: Daniel J Grant

Synopsis:

The Stones is a fictional re-creation of a true story. In 1994, two Melbourne boys kicked rocks from a motorway bridge, killing a motorist; they were charged with manslaughter and six separate counts of recklessly endangering life. The trial and verdict sparked public outcry and sensational media coverage, but the incidents and issues surrounding the case remained unclear. These events caught the interest of two members of Australia's Zeal Theatre, artistic director Stefo Nantsou and actor/writer/director Tom Lycos. With the assistance of Detective David Jones, who oversaw the real case, and other police officers who work in youth crime, Lycos and Nantsou took the facts from this case, as well as other similar true stories from around Australia and overseas and wove them together into one dramatic narrative. They did not meet with the real boys or their families and respected their anonymity.

By exploring these events, The Stones seeks to highlight the dangers and consequences of reckless teenage behaviour, emphasising how such actions can have tragic results. Rather than focusing on the specific details and characters of the actual case, the play raises broader issues about teenage criminality and attitudes toward the law.

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