

StoryFACTORY

# ANNUAL REPORT 2025







## BOARD CHAIR'S REPORT

When a young person finds their voice, something shifts. They begin to see themselves differently. The future stops being something that happens to them and becomes something they can shape. That shift is at the heart of everything Story Factory stands for, and in 2025, we deepened our commitment to making it possible for many more young people.

This has been a year of both reflection and bold ambition, where we took decisive steps to ensure our impact endures and expands. Under Cath's visionary leadership, Story Factory continues to refine and strengthen our programs, reaching up to 1,000 students each week. This work is only possible because of our incredible team, extensive volunteer network, school partners, and generous supporters. Together, we have built a proven model that transforms lives through storytelling. Thank you. Your dedication and belief create the spaces where transformation happens.

In June, we farewellled our wonderful Chair, Gemma Salteri, whose leadership through challenging times laid the foundations for our bold future. I was honoured to step into this role, committed to positioning Story Factory for long-term impact through considered governance uplift.

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*When a young person finds their voice, something shifts. They begin to see themselves differently. The future stops being something that happens to them and becomes something they can shape.*

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As part of this, over the past year, the Board has undertaken a deliberate and thoughtful process of renewal. This has not been change for its own sake, but a strategic investment in the future of Story Factory. We welcomed our co-founder Tim McGregor back as Secretary, along with Albert Eichholzer as Treasurer, and Dr Katrina Barker, Professor Jennifer Barrett, and Bonnie Ashton. We also appointed our first student alumna to the board, Bindi Mutiara, adding a vital generational lens alongside her lived experience of how Story Factory transforms lives. These new directors bring deep expertise across education, evaluation, philanthropy, finance, law, and cultural leadership. Together with our continuing board members, this creates a governance group that reflects the communities we serve and brings diverse perspectives that enable robust, informed decision-making. As part of our forward-looking leadership structure, I am delighted to also share that we have appointed Bonnie Ashton and James Argent as co-Deputy Chairs.

Most significantly, we launched Voices of Tomorrow, our most ambitious fundraising campaign to date. With a goal of reaching 100,000 young people by 2027, this campaign represents our commitment to reach, depth, and legacy.

To everyone who has supported our work: you are not just helping young people write. You are helping them step into who they might become. Thank you for making this transformation possible.

**Ali Green**  
Chair, Story Factory Board

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

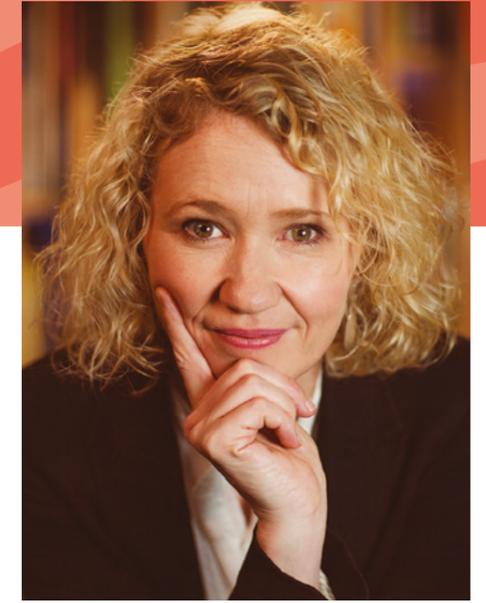
In our Strategy 2023-27, the word we used to describe our ambitions for 2025 was 'amplify.' We focussed on amplifying young people's voices in a variety of ways.

Our students ran a stall at the Sydney Writers' Festival called The Giving Shop, sharing their poems about love and friendship with the general public.

We asked young people in Mount Druitt what they wanted to tell the world and built a project around that, supporting nearly 300 young people to write about what was special about their community and the people in it. The project culminated in the publication of a beautiful book, *I Talk, It Echoes*, a poetic guide to the best of Mount Druitt and Blacktown.

We finished the year with an inspiring book launch at the University of Sydney, as nearly 200 family and friends gathered to celebrate the publication of 23 novellas and poetry collections by some extraordinary young people.

Growth is always about balancing reach and depth of impact. This year we increased our reach by seeing 4,229 young people all around the country in our live, interactive digital workshops, and an additional 5,000 through our online resources shared with teachers. At the same time, we also increased the depth of our impact in our in-person programs, with evaluation data showing that 82% of young people in our programs improved their literacy and 83% were more confident writers. We are particularly proud that we increased our impact with young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. This year we enrolled more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than ever before: 976 young people, or 17% of our in-person enrolments.



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*Two of our values at Story Factory are that we have heart, and we have high expectations of ourselves and the young people we work with.*

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This year, we were also very focussed on laying the groundwork for an exciting development in early 2026: the opening of our new Community Hub in Mount Druitt. We have been working in schools in this area for nearly a decade, and having a small space in the heart of the community will allow us also to run programs for the local community after school and in the holidays to deepen our impact further. We will share more news about this very soon.

Two of our values at Story Factory are that we have heart, and we have high expectations of ourselves and the young people we work with. I would like to sincerely thank all our staff who have been unstinting in their commitment to both these goals throughout the year.

We know that stories change lives, but we cannot do it without our generous and visionary supporters. Thank you for making this year such a success. We look forward to continuing to work with you.

**Dr Catherine Keenan AM**  
Executive Director and Co-Founder

# STORY FACTORY AT A GLANCE

Story Factory is a not-for-profit creative writing organisation for young people. We deliver award-winning programs that empower young people from under-resourced communities to find and share their voices, imagine new worlds and write their own futures. Our programs support young people to develop the confidence and literacy to thrive at school and beyond.



## VISION

We want to see an Australia where all young people have a voice, and the skills and confidence to tell their stories.

## MISSION

Our mission is to enrich the lives of young people in under-resourced communities through creative writing and storytelling.

## VALUES

- Young people come first
- Writing is agency
- Creativity unleashes potential
- Diversity makes us better
- We have high expectations of ourselves and the young people we work with
- We have heart. Passion matters.

## OUR IMPACT

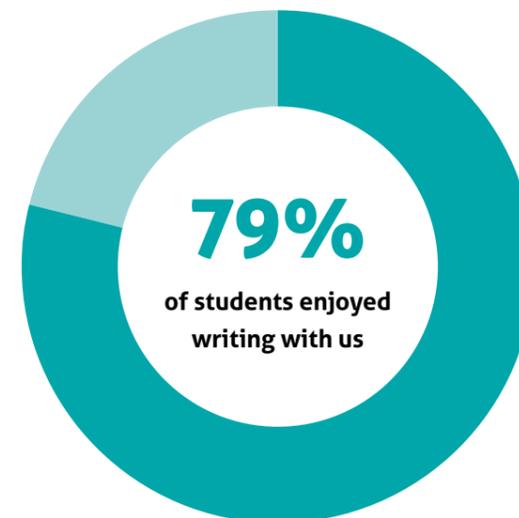
Our programs support young people to develop vital literacy skills and grow their confidence, ensuring they have the opportunity to thrive creatively, personally and academically at school and beyond.

We have developed robust evaluation systems with consultancy Clear Horizon, which continue to prove the positive impact we have on young people nationwide. Our program design and delivery is informed by the lived experience of our team, which includes First Nations and culturally and linguistically diverse staff, as well as staff who grew up in the communities we serve.

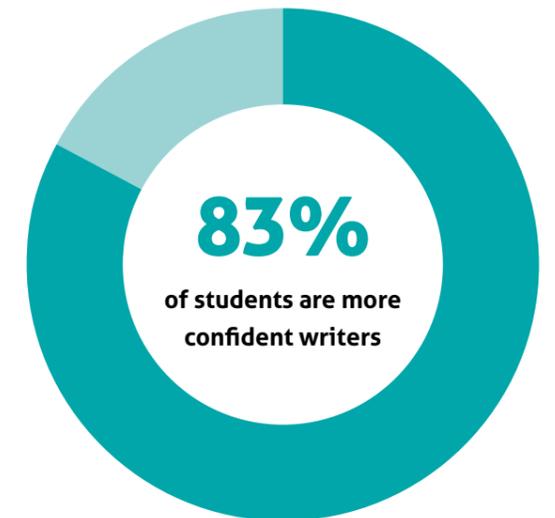
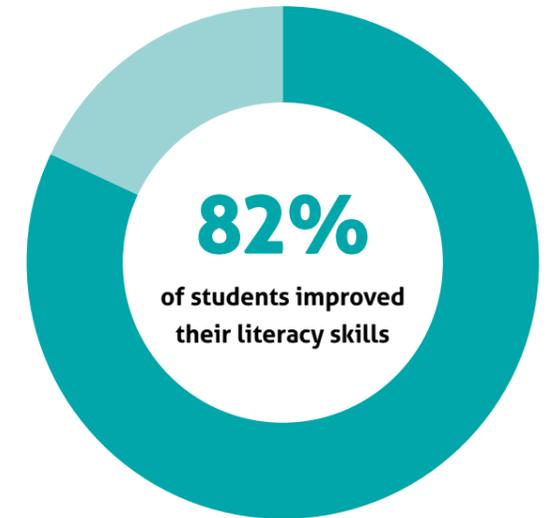
We believe firmly in championing and amplifying the voices of the diverse young people we are privileged to work with. We work closely with our students to foster their creativity, publish and showcase their original work, and ultimately integrate their perspectives into the wider Australian literary landscape.

## IN 2025:

ACCORDING TO STUDENTS:



ACCORDING TO THEIR TEACHERS:



ensuring our programs continue to have impact long after we have left the classroom.

# STUDENT PROFILE

## 2025 YEAR OF POETRY MARIANNE HANDOKO

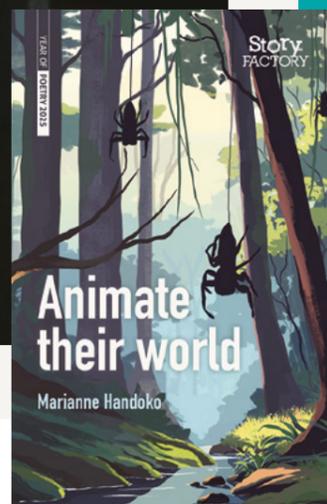
Marianne Handoko, a Year 10 student at Aspect South East Sydney School, participated in our Year of Poetry program for the fourth time in 2025. We were delighted to publish her fourth book with us, *Animate their world*.

Marianne is innately curious and deeply philosophical. Her poetry asks challenging questions, encouraging her readers to think about the world around them. “[At Story Factory] we are taught to find our voice through writing,” she says. “I am autistic. Story is a way to let [the] world know that I have thought.”

Her mother, Meliana, says: “We started with Story Factory at Redfern, working one-on-one with a staff member. After that, Marianne joined the group workshops in Parramatta. Coming to Story Factory, it’s an outlet for her – she doesn’t do this anywhere else.”

Marianne writes her books by pointing to letters on an alphabet board system, which her mother or a Storyteller or volunteer transcribes. This process takes time but allows her distinctive voice to shine through.

“It’s a joy to work with Marianne,” says Purnima Mahesh, Story Factory’s Open Programs Officer. “It’s wonderful to view the world through her eyes and to see all the words that she carries with her.”



### INCOME IDEAS — Marianne Handoko

*Excerpt from Animate their world*

Takes time to leave the old Spanish versions.  
Zoom into our jetpacks through the mind-sky!  
Cases lean on their backyards.  
Varieties launch carefully to the planet Earth.



Pictured left to right: Julia Baird, Benjamin Law, Zindzi Okenyo, Debra Oswald, Dr Amy Thunig-McGregor and Jennifer Wong.

“

*Story Factory gave me an opportunity I never thought I would have. The mentorship and encouragement every step of the way by the dedicated team was fundamental to each and every participant. Without their dedication to the program my ideas would still simply have been a dream, but with their help, [the team] brought my ideas to life.*

— Emanuel Gatt

*Year 11, Year of the Novella 2025*

# OUR REACH

Throughout 2025, we increased our reach, passing a major milestone of working with 75,000 young people since opening in 2012. We deepened relationships with schools that we have worked with long term, and also built relationships with new schools and reached new students across the country in our digital programs.

We were excited to launch our inaugural Ambassador program, with six prominent people generously offering to further amplify the voices of young people and support our work. We welcomed author and journalist Julia Baird; author, screenwriter and journalist Benjamin Law; actor and musician Zindzi Okenyo; novelist, screenwriter and playwright Debra Oswald; academic and author Dr Amy Thunig-McGregor; and writer and comedian Jennifer Wong. These talented and passionate individuals bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to our mission, and also reflect the diversity and life experiences of the young people we work with.

## IN 2025:

**135** schools or community organisations partnered with

**9,963** total enrolments

**49%** students spoke English as an additional language or dialect



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*The best thing about this program is that it allowed me to think without any limits.*

— High School Student

# ABORIGINAL & TORRES STRAIT ISLANDER ENGAGEMENT & PROGRAMMING

Across our in-person and digital programs, we engaged 976 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people in 2025, which represents over 17% of our total in-person enrolments. To deepen engagement and strengthen program design, we expanded the role of Ngarrindjeri man Russell Smith as Indigenous Programming Lead. Russell guides our entire programming team to embed First Nations content across all our programs. We have further strengthened the organisation's cultural leadership by welcoming Russell to the Leadership Team and appointing Raylene Hassall, a proud descendant of the Yiman Clan, to the new role of Elder in Residence.

Wiradjuri woman Rebecca Cawthorne also joined us as Indigenous Engagement Coordinator. Together with Community Engagement Manager Julie Collins, Rebecca has forged strong connections with First Nations community groups, young people, and respected community members in Western Sydney. She has also developed relationships with Aboriginal Liaison Officers in Blacktown-area schools, enabling us to consult directly with First Nations students about program design. This ensures that young people have a genuine say in the programs they attend.



Building on the foundations of our completed Reflect RAP, we took the next big step on our Reconciliation journey and submitted our much more ambitious Innovate RAP to Reconciliation Australia. Key progress includes:

- New partnerships with First Nations organisations in Western Sydney, allowing us to increase enrolments from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people;
- Offering reconciliation-focused workshops to schools;
- Hosting a stall at the annual Mount Druitt Reconciliation Walk and Gathering.

We continue to encourage all our staff to meaningfully engage with Reconciliation through several initiatives:

- Giving team members opportunities to take part in National Reconciliation Week and NAIDOC Week activities during work hours;
- In-depth conversations about Reconciliation at all-staff meetings;
- Indigenous film screenings for staff and volunteers;
- A rotating membership of our RAP Working Group while maintaining First Nations representation.

## GREATER WESTERN SYDNEY GIANTS POETRY WORKSHOPS

We supported 90 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people through poetry and art workshops delivered in collaboration with AFL team the Greater Western Sydney (GWS) Giants. The workshops were designed to create a culturally safe, creative space where young people could explore identity, expression, and pride in who they are.

Students reflected on what matters most to them, and these reflections were written into 'I AM' poems, a simple yet powerful form which celebrated their individuality.

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*I really enjoyed the cultural poems as they allowed us to push through stereotypes and show our culture.*

— Student  
Pendle Hill High School

### POEM — Justin, Year 10 Greater Western Sydney Giants Poetry Workshop

I am anywhere with my mates  
I am my mum, nan and siblings  
I am sand goanna  
I am the rain and thunder  
I am the smell of rain coming  
I am my art  
I am my culture



# SCHOOL PROGRAMS

**Our in-person school programs are delivered free-of-charge at primary and high schools across Sydney and Western Sydney. Our expert team of Storytellers, along with our dedicated volunteer tutors, provide a unique classroom experience for students, while supporting teachers' practice and increasing their capacity.**

Storytellers craft one-off or term-long programs, which explore concepts and techniques from the English syllabus through a creative and unusual lens to excite and engage students. Students aren't tested or assessed, and there are no right or wrong answers. All students are supported to find their own voice, and we often find that the most reluctant writers surprise their teachers with what they have produced in our workshops. At the end of the term, students receive published anthologies of their work, celebrating their achievements and sparking an ongoing interest in writing.

## IN 2025:

**4,997** enrolments across all our school programs

**61%** of students spoke English as an additional language or dialect

**226** school programs at 41 schools

A hugely popular 2025 workshop series was Video Vortex, where students imagined they were trapped in a retro video game, and were challenged to create a video game world, characters, and an escape plan through various levels. Students loved the opportunity to explore their own ideas and interests through creative writing.



*This program truly gave me a sense of freedom. Getting so many opportunities to write and be creative has truly helped me.*

— Student  
Bonnyrigg High School



*After 33 years of teaching English I was newly inspired.*

— Teacher  
Bonnyrigg High School



## ENCHANTED FOREST

— Isla, Year 6

Video Vortex program

I walked out of the cave and into a forest. It was dark and it instantly dampened my spirits. It pushed me over the edge of sanity causing my hairs to stand on end. I could see the coarse cedar trees, their bows hanging low, anticipating my clumsiness just waiting for me to fall. The canopies inflicted fear as there was no light as far as the eye could see. Bright vibrant mushrooms climbed up the tree trunks, their colour symbolising poison. I could smell the poison seeping through the skin of the fungi. The foul rank odour clouded my thoughts as I tried to continue through the soggy undergrowth and the slick shiny leaves...

## GIDJIRRIGAA!

A particularly memorable 2025 school program was Gidjirrigaa!, where Year 4 students at Shalvey Public School explored character development by creating their very own imagined pet budgie. The school is located on Dharug Land, and the program provided an opportunity for students to learn about Dharug language as they gave their budgie its name, personality, a trick, a travel device, and even its favourite playlist. The program's finale was a special moment: one of our long-term volunteers brought in her real-life pet budgies as students received their own published book. We went on to deliver Gidjirrigaa! to students in Years 3-4 at seven schools across Sydney and Western Sydney. Our Executive Director Cath and Programs Lead April also showcased the program at the 2025 Writing Our World conference in Sweden, inspiring representatives from an international network of youth writing centres.

# AFTER-SCHOOL & HOLIDAY PROGRAMS

IN 2025:

**737** enrolments across all our after-school and holiday programs

**61%** of students spoke English as an additional language or dialect



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*[The best things about this program were] the people - the students and tutors - and the environment that is created, sharing and supporting each other, and the format of taking inspiration from other poets and seeing how that shapes our own work (and how that differs for each student).*

— High School Student  
After-school Program

Our after-school and holiday programs are fun, creative programs delivered in person at our Parramatta centre and online. This year, in anticipation of opening our Community Hub in 2026, we also ran after-school workshops at community spaces in Mount DrUITT. After-school and holiday programs are a catalyst for young writers, offering a unique opportunity to explore their creativity more deeply, take their writing journeys further, and ultimately unleash their potential.

These programs also provide a support network for young writers, particularly those participating remotely, by offering feedback and encouragement in safe and nurturing spaces. Students' achievements were recognised each term in take-home bound anthologies featuring their writing, helping young people to imagine themselves as authors.

## AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAMS AT LEARNING GROUND

In 2025, we began offering after-school programs at Learning Ground, a local community centre in Bidwill, Mount DrUITT. Student attendance was a challenge in Term 1, but Storyteller Chloe Lamayo and community engagement staff Julie Collins and Rebecca Cawthorne created such a safe and welcoming space that word soon spread. Term by term, more young people came, and by Term 3 they had created a unique, tight-knit writing community of predominantly Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people. After participating in a range of writing workshops spanning ghost stories, superheroes, and sci-fi haiku poems, each young person grew in confidence and became more engaged in their writing.

The impact of delivering these workshops in Mount DrUITT was two-fold. We were able to reach a community where there is significant need, providing young people with an arts-based learning opportunity that they otherwise would not have had. We also built relationships with local young people who we really look forward to welcoming into our new Community Hub right next door in early 2026. We are very grateful to Learning Ground for their invaluable support over the past year in helping us to connect with these students.

## WHY LOVE IS — Claire, Year 8

the warmth in your hands interlocked with another. the affection in a hug, deeper than just skin. the flower crown that's put on your head because "you're my queen, sis". the lingering feeling of belonging that you know stays engraved in your bones, your head, your heart. the hearthfire crackling and smelling of burnt wood, of incense. the tang of strawberry shortcake on your tongue. the dripping of melted ice-cream down your lips and dribbling on your chin. the ever-so slight smile that's just for you. the knowledge that wherever they are, you are, is home.





## YEAR OF THE NOVELLA & YEAR OF POETRY

**Our Year of Poetry and Year of the Novella programs are Story Factory's two most involved and rewarding programs. They provide high school-aged writers the chance to professionally publish their very own novella or poetry collection, supported by a community of peers and a network of professional writers, editors and creatives.**

This year we published 23 books - 13 novellas and 10 poetry collections - which we launched at a joyful event at the University of Sydney. Arriving at this milestone was the result of our young writers coming together from across Western Sydney throughout 2025 for weekly workshops at our Parramatta centre. Each student turned to their writing tool of choice – scraps of paper, scrolls, the Notes App, even a letter board - and brought a unique writing style and voice. Our young poets conjured up hip hopped verse, hilarious conversational lines, and personal vulnerability. Our novelists wrote 25,000+ word stories from tales of murder and mystery to sci-fi adventures and mythical narratives.

Week by week, they workshopped their ideas and wrote (and re-wrote) their drafts. Novella students received visits from authors Debra Oswald, Nadine J. Cohen, Jeremy Lachlan, and Benjamin Law, and Poetry students from poets Dakota Feirer, Hani Abdile, and Miles Merrill. The students also worked closely with professional typesetters, volunteer editors from Penguin Random House and elsewhere, and designers to ensure their book covers reflected the stories inside. They built tight-knit friendships, supporting each other on their writing quests and cheering each other on.

## STUDENT PROFILE

### 2025 YEAR OF THE NOVELLA HEIDI JESSOP

While Heidi Jessop, a Year 9 student at Toongabbie Christian College, has always devoted much of her spare time to writing, she thought it would be many years before she could publish a book. However by the end of Year 9, after completing the Year of the Novella 2025 program, Heidi had her very own novella published. "Story Factory is definitely a different opportunity to what I have at school," says Heidi. "I never thought I would be able to publish a book when I'm only 14!"

As well as supporting her to publish a book, Story Factory provides a unique community, Heidi says. "It's knowing there are other young writers out there who also enjoy writing. It's kind of hard to find each other, it's like we are a very small fandom." Her story is about a character who watches old security feeds of a hero and a villain in a fictional city. As he tries to piece together their lives, he asks: "What if the hero and the villain aren't really the hero and the villain?"



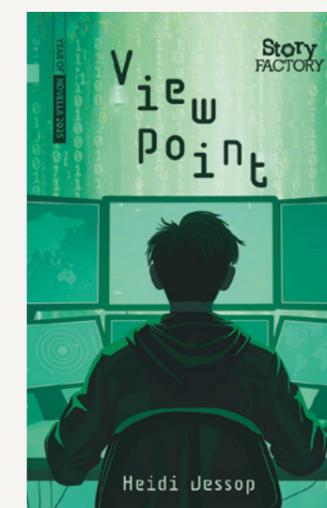
### EXCERPT FROM *VIEWPOINT* — Heidi Jessop

I have been sitting like this – hunched over for almost 15 minutes.

That's okay though. My patience could last me eons, just for this chance to prove myself, my theory, and make my way upwards.

The screens pause, a blinking wonder of dots and dashes. My fingers freeze in midair, and I hold my breath.

The blue light stops. For a moment I'm surrounded by the darkness – my eyes must be shining, I'm so excited. The lights flash back on, and I press play.



# SPECIAL PROJECTS & PUBLICATIONS

Special Projects provide unique and inspiring opportunities for young people to engage with writing. We often deliver these large-scale projects in partnership with other organisations and artists such as Powerhouse Museum, Sydney Fringe Festival and the Parliament of New South Wales.

We produce high quality artistic outputs featuring young people's work, such as professionally published books, exhibitions and films, integrating their perspectives into the wider Australian arts landscape. In 2025 we delivered 10 Special Projects including a collaboration with The State Library of NSW where students were given access to re-invent foundational national documents, and a partnership with The Smith Family where students created their own radio play, which later aired on FBI Radio.

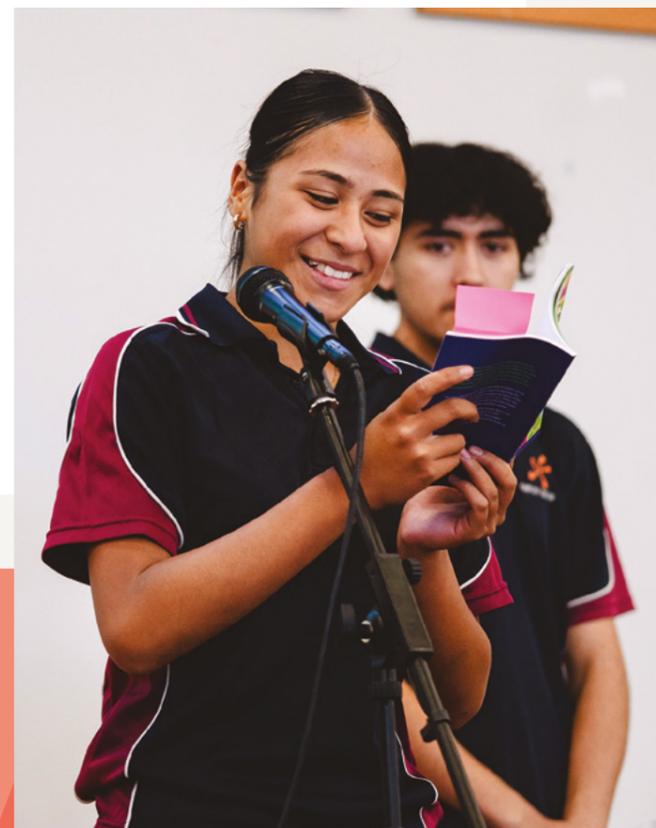
## IT'S OUR TURN

This program is about recognising the voices of young people as essential to shaping the future of the places in which they live. In collaboration with The Hive, we delivered the first year of this three-year project with young people at four high schools and four community organisations across Blacktown. Throughout the year, almost 300 students reflected on and shared their expert knowledge about their communities and their worlds through consultations and creative writing workshops. This culminated in the publication of a poetry collection titled *I Talk, It Echoes*. Both deeply personal and fiercely communal, the book maps out the streets and inner worlds they know best - from Popondetta Park to a charm bracelet that is much more than just a bracelet.

## SWITCH — Isaiah, Year 10

*Excerpt from I Talk, It Echoes*

There's foam in the atmosphere  
at Tregear IGA  
The stop lights shake  
The bus yawns  
And in my veins a switch is flicked



## SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

We once again worked with the Sydney Writers' Festival to present The Giving Shop, a pop-up poetry store. In exchange for a small donation, students in Story Factory's Year of Poetry 2025 program presented more than 600 festival-goers with short, personalised poems. These carefully crafted pieces celebrated what each customer treasured about their loved ones, and also reflected the writers' ideas and experiences as young people from Western Sydney.

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*To write poetry you have to look at your past, your present and possibly even your future. So I feel like poetry is one of the best ways to explore this journey.*

— Summer, Year 10

*It's Our Turn program*

## POEM — Tina, Year 10

*Written as part of our collaboration with the State Library of NSW, in response to an archived newspaper article about the first Aboriginal person to purchase a film ticket in Walgett, NSW in 1965.*

Like the sky and the sea think themselves different shades of the same colour, so does the queue of midday moviegoers. What happens when you are bound by blood, separated by skin? ... When the movie that spans your lifetime starts to sound like the culmination of the singular register 'ding', and century-long enduring murmurs mix into one, when the warm buttery air starts to mingle with the cold tingle of hanging suspense, looming like a cloud, when the small smooth ticket starts to feel like a sweaty palmed handshake, does everything change?



# STORY FACTORY DIGITAL

## IN 2025:

**9,000+**

young people reached, including 4,229 in live, interactive digital programs

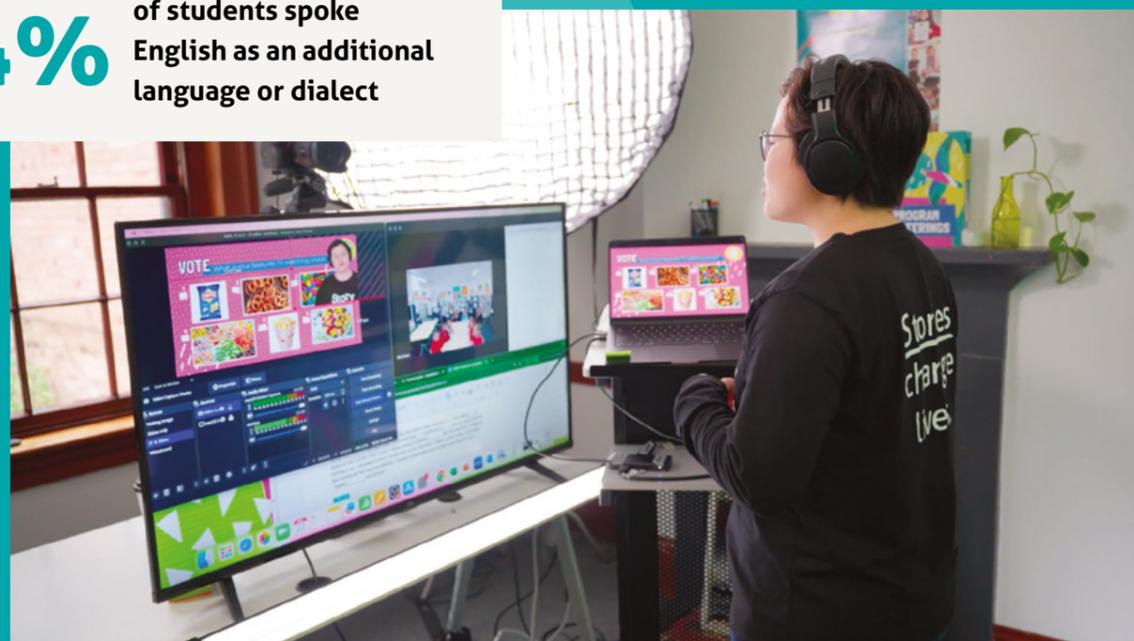
**97** digital programs delivered at 88 schools

**34%** of students spoke English as an additional language or dialect

“

*Each session has been a little different, responding to the unique student needs in each class. The response from students has been overwhelmingly positive and the feedback from staff, including our Aboriginal Liaison Officer, was that they are fantastic.*

— Zoe Morse, Teacher Librarian  
Yass High School



Story Factory Digital is our online, nationwide arm, which enables us to reach students in under-resourced communities in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas. In 2025, we were delighted to surpass our target of engaging 6,000 young people, reaching over 9,000. We enrolled 4,229 young people in our live, interactive digital workshops in schools, and reached an estimated 5,000 additional students through the free online learning resources available to schools across Australia through our new Teacher Resource Hub. In total, we collaborated with 88 schools across five states and territories, making it possible for us to work with thousands of young people nationwide who would otherwise miss out on arts-based learning opportunities.

Our digital offering was strengthened by robust feedback from 52 teachers through post-program surveys and one-to-one teacher consultations. We have applied the insights we gleaned to our 2026 planning, to enhance our programs and better respond to community needs.

### MEGAFUNA CORNER

A key addition to our Teacher Resource Hub was Megafauna Corner, a fantastically entertaining three-part series of free educational videos scripted, produced and performed by the Story Factory team in partnership with production company CLIPPED. In the series, Jerry, Professor Marcozovich, and Lady Kirst (Storytellers Jerry Ray, Marcus Khoudair and Kirsty McGowan) travel through time to discover Australia's fossilised megafauna, inspiring primary students to write about their own imagined animals. This pre-recorded, ready-to-go series is specially designed to meet the needs of rural and remote classrooms which find it hard to access our live digital programs because they lack a steady internet connection and often have multi-stage classes.

### HARMONY WEEK 2025

During Harmony Week 2025, we ran our largest workshop ever: a free, live, online creative writing workshop with over 2,300 primary school students! We reached students who wouldn't usually have access to this opportunity, with 58% of schools in regional, rural or remote settings. The workshop supported students to write powerful statement poems while also introducing them to Story Factory Digital. Many schools subsequently booked into our regular one-off workshops or three-week programs.



### FUTURE PLANS

In 2025, we also did a full review of our digital strategy. In 2026, we aim to:

- Work across all eight states and territories and engage 6,000 young writers in our live workshops and pre-recorded resources;
- Narrow our focus to students in Years 3-8, who engage best with digital workshops and benefit most from our support;
- Automate and streamline our booking system to allow us to spend more time building stronger relationships with teachers.

“

*Through this program I have found a passion that I never thought was mine to own.*

— Student, Year of the Novella 2025



# COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

**Our community engagement team plays a crucial role in our after-school and holiday programs, and our Special Projects. The team has built strong, trusted relationships with communities and community groups across Western Sydney to ensure that the young people who could most benefit from these programs are made aware of them and supported to enrol. The team also consults directly with students about program design so that young people have a say in the programs that they attend.**



In 2025, ahead of the opening of our Community Hub in Mount Druitt, we were particularly focussed on extending our reach and deepening our impact in that area. We worked with 1,068 young people across 11 schools and community groups. On average, these schools rank as more socio-educationally disadvantaged than 95% of schools in Australia. They also have diverse student populations, with an average of 32% Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and 36% culturally and linguistically diverse students. The deep connections and trust that our community engagement team has built with students, community groups, and respected community leaders in Mount Druitt has already increased young people's interest and engagement in our programs. These relationships will be vital when we open our new Community Hub in early 2026.

## COMMUNITY HUB IN MOUNT DRUITT

Set to open in Term 2, 2026, our Community Hub in Mount Druitt will allow us to explore a new model for engaging more deeply with a community. The Hub will be a small, welcoming space at the local shops, shared with another community organisation, The Hive, where we will run workshops after school and in the holidays. While our centres in Redfern and Parramatta are central locations from which we serve students right across Sydney and Western Sydney, our Hub will focus solely on young people in the Mount Druitt community, with programs designed to respond to their unique strengths and needs.

To build these authentic local relationships, a number of our key staff will be permanently based at the Hub, including Julie Collins, our Community Engagement Manager; Rebecca Cawthorne, our Indigenous Engagement Coordinator; and a Student Support Coordinator to be recruited early in 2026. Other staff, including Russell Smith, Indigenous Programming Lead, and a new Indigenous Storyteller to be hired early in 2026, will also regularly work from the space.

At the Hub we will run creative writing programs that we have tried and tested over 13 years, but we will also create programs specifically for our local community. We are particularly excited about Yarn Ya, a two-year program for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, delivered in collaboration with Indigenous facilitators. The content was shaped through multiple consultations carried out in 2025 with 40 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students.

Programs like this will allow us to work more deeply, and more impactfully, with even more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, supporting them to improve their literacy and find their voice.



# VOLUNTEERS

At Story Factory we are incredibly fortunate to have an active volunteer base of 325 dedicated individuals who play an integral role in our mission. The support they provide ranges from assisting Storytellers during in-person school workshops, to vital behind-the-scenes tasks of typing up student work, and providing students with feedback on their writing. Whether they are working in the classroom or from home, our volunteers are the quiet magic behind our work. They champion young people, listen with care, and bring joy, imagination and steadiness to each of our workshops.

## IN 2025:

**325** active volunteers

**153** new volunteers attended in-person or online training

**7,946** volunteer hours worked - valued at almost \$415,000

“

*For me, Story Factory is about assisting students to unlock a box of creativity, thoughts and magic that exists in their world. I believe each Story Factory student has a magic box of creativity locked away. Gaining the students' trust and confidence is the magic in volunteering. Seeing their faces brighten and light up when their creative world opens is the reason why I volunteer every year.*

— Saki Vakaciwa  
Aunty Uma Award Recipient 2025

# VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

## THE 2025 AUNTY UMA AWARD

Each year, we present an award to a volunteer in honour of Aunty Uma, one of Story Factory's most passionate and longest serving volunteers, who sadly passed away in 2025. This year, we were unable to choose just one individual for this honour. Instead, we were proud to jointly present the award to four volunteers: Lara Chapman, Rowan Darke, James Metzger and Saki Vakaciwa. All four volunteers saw two classes at Matraville Sports High School every week over four terms, each bringing their own form of care for the students. James gave pointed prompts and asked smart follow-ups; Rowan was a diligent scribe for the more reluctant students; Lara brought a sense of calm; and Saki nurtured laughter. We are so grateful for their work in encouraging our students, and for their shared contribution to Story Factory more broadly.



“

*One of the highlights is seeing the students receiving their end-of-term booklets and watching the pride on their faces, as well as the giggles and conversations this sparks. It is a moment when they realise their power to craft words and what it means to share stories with others. It is inspiring to be part of a community of Storytellers and volunteers who consistently show up with kindness, humour, persistence and a deep sense of purpose every week.*

— Lara Chapman  
Aunty Uma Award Recipient 2025



# PARTNERSHIPS

Story Factory partners with businesses, philanthropic and corporate foundations, government bodies and individuals to deliver our work and impact. Thank you to every one of our generous partners, our steadfast community of monthly donors, and all those who have donated in 2025. We couldn't do this work without you.

## Strategic Partner



## Principal Partners

Edward Federman



PACKER FAMILY FOUNDATION

## Significant Partners

Barbara Alice Trust  
Gardos Family  
Gemma Salteri and Angus Hutchinson  
Paul and Sandra Salteri



Celebrating 175 years



Australian Government

Story Factory was assisted by the Australian Government through Creative Australia, its principal arts funding and advisory body



Australian Government  
Department of Social Services

Story Factory is funded by the Australian Government Department of Social Services



Story Factory was supported by the NSW Government through Create NSW



## Key Partners

Bill and Patricia Ritchie Foundation  
Rosie Williams and John Grill AO



## Major Partners



## Supporting Partners

Anne and John Leece AM and Family  
Baly Douglass Foundation  
Bernadette Brennan and Justin Gleeson SC  
Deborah Fullwood  
Dick and Pip Smith Foundation  
Fay Duncan  
Rosebrook Foundation

Three Sisters Foundation  
The Wales Family Foundation



## Partners

Allen & Unwin  
The Barton Foundation  
Bloomsbury Publishing  
Bronwyn Gould and Ian Portek  
Caroline Beecham and John Lydon  
Commonwealth Bank  
Darrell John  
Day Family Foundation  
Eureka Benevolent Foundation

Greg Dean and Richard Unsworth  
Kee Wong and Stacey Wang  
The Key Foundation  
Kody Deretic  
Nautilus Foundation  
Neil Burns  
Norelle Feehan  
Park Street Group Wealth Advisers  
Ravenmill Foundation

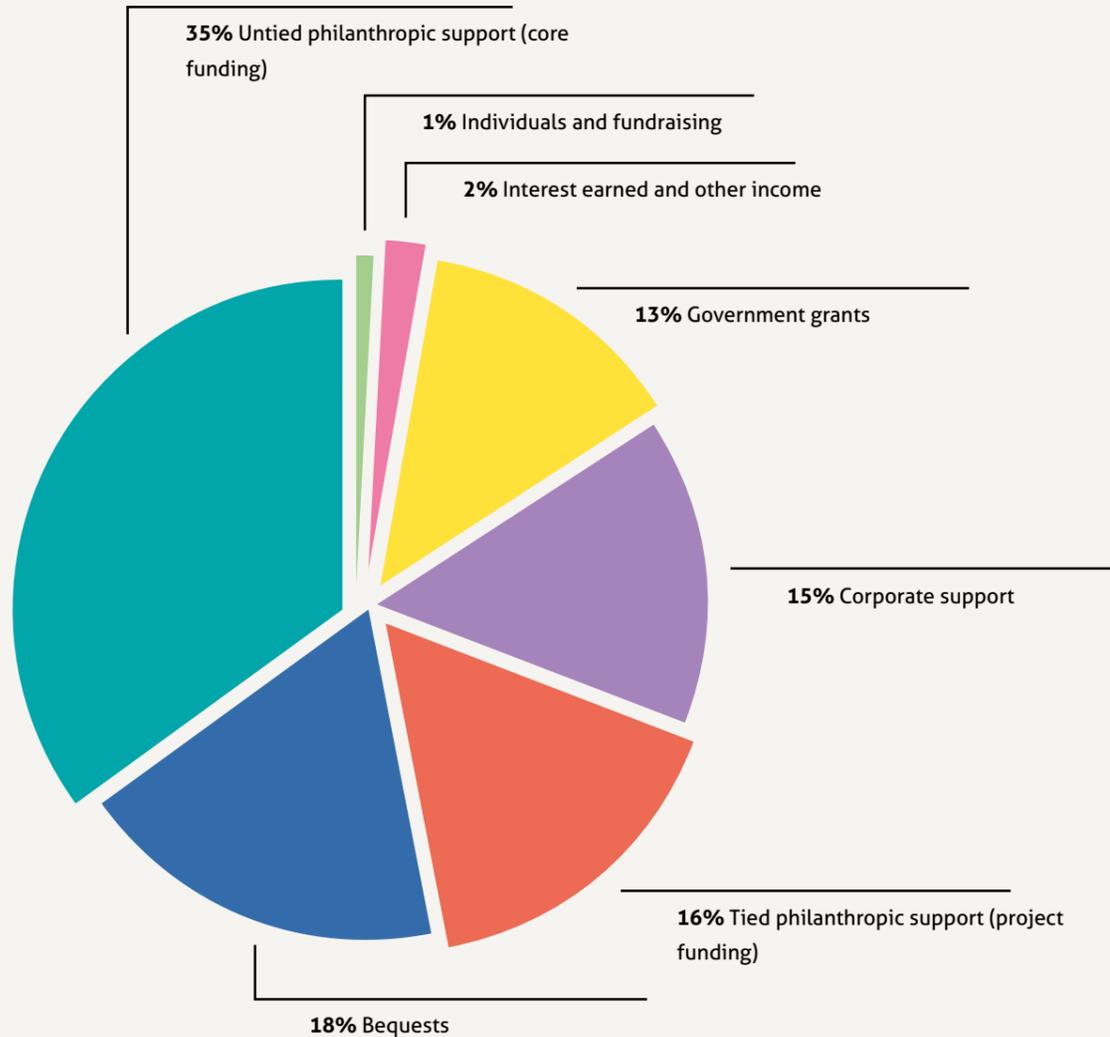
Sean Mooney  
Shiff Gillespie Foundation  
Tony Strachan  
Vine Foundation  
Wendy Fitzgerald  
  
Story Factory was supported by the NSW Government through the Community Building Partnership program

## In Kind



## STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025 (SUMMARY)

	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
<b>ASSETS</b>		
Total current assets	3,441,762	2,603,106
Total non-current assets	398,721	549,799
<b>Total assets</b>	<b>3,840,483</b>	<b>3,152,905</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
Total current liabilities	1,220,801	1,340,324
Total non-current liabilities	344,903	521,433
<b>Total liabilities</b>	<b>1,565,704</b>	<b>1,861,757</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>		
Accumulated funds	1,291,148	1,259,121
<b>Total equity</b>	<b>2,274,779</b>	<b>1,291,148</b>



## INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT FOR THE YEAR ENDED 30 JUNE 2025

	2025 (\$)	2024 (\$)
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Untied donations	2,210,565	1,736,931
Other grants and tied donations	1,092,781	1,176,590
Government grants	643,326	262,994
Sale of goods	6,889	7,955
Workshop income	21,191	98,601
Venue hire	1,400	-
Membership income	36	80
Interest income	61,492	26,901
Other income	896,667	-
<b>Total revenue</b>	<b>4,934,348</b>	<b>3,310,053</b>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Costs of goods sold	(4,852)	(1,407)
Administration and other operating costs	(472,104)	(386,440)
Depreciation	(233,750)	(259,185)
Employee benefits	(3,005,078)	(2,477,364)
Finance costs	(37,343)	(43,849)
Fundraising expenses	(77,501)	(33,240)
Net foreign currency exchange losses	(124)	-
Program costs	(119,965)	(76,541)
<b>Total expenses</b>	<b>(3,950,717)</b>	<b>(3,278,026)</b>
<b>Net (deficit)/surplus for the year</b>	<b>983,631</b>	<b>32,027</b>
Income tax expense	-	-
<b>Net (deficit)/surplus after income tax</b>	<b>983,631</b>	<b>32,027</b>
Other comprehensive (loss)/income	-	-
<b>TOTAL COMPREHENSIVE SURPLUS/(LOSS)</b>	<b>983,631</b>	<b>32,027</b>

Note on surplus: In FY25, the Association earned a net surplus of \$983,631 which was mainly attributable to an increase of \$1,624,293 in revenue with a \$672,689 increase in expenses. The increase in revenue was mainly attributable to a one-off bequest of \$896,000, which has been designated by the Board for future capital and strategic investment purposes.

# LOOKING AHEAD

In 2025, as we arrived at the mid-point of our Strategy 2023-27, Story Factory's leadership team and board spent considerable time reviewing it to ensure it was still relevant and sufficiently ambitious. While we made some refinements and additions, we were heartened to find that it continues to provide a clear roadmap for how we can continue to enrich the lives of young people in under-resourced communities through creative writing and storytelling.

In 2026, we remain as committed as ever to deep and lasting impact. As well as opening our new Community Hub in Mount Druitt early in the year, we will continue to deliver transformative creative writing programs to thousands of young people who most need our support, building their literacy and writing skills and amplifying their voices. We will roll out our revised suite of digital programs and resources to young people across the country. We will also continue efforts to diversify our board and staff to better reflect the communities we serve, and keep refining programs and amplifying impact through close analysis of evaluation data. We have always been committed to robust evaluation of our programs, and in 2026 we will broaden our scope to more closely evaluate the wellbeing benefits of creative writing for young people.

Our Community Hub will allow us to work more deeply with more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students than ever before. In 2025 we enrolled a record number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students and we aim to increase this again to 19% of our total in-person cohort by the end of 2026.

One of our key innovations this year was to introduce a new strategy for how we engage with and support alumni of our programs: the young people who know us best and are our strongest advocates. While our mission will always remain focussed on young people aged 7-18, we will also offer opportunities for our alumni to maintain a relationship with us across their lifetime, inviting them to join us as volunteers, staff and board members. In the year ahead, we very much look forward to working with our newest board member Bindi Mutiara, who first enrolled in our programs when she was nine years old.

We would like to sincerely thank our students, donors, volunteers, partners and community members for your support, dedication and insights throughout 2025. We are immensely proud of what we have achieved together, and very much look forward to extending this impact with you in 2026 and beyond.



## 2026 GOALS

**74%** of students improve their literacy

**90%** of teachers improve their practice

**19%** of in-person students are Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander

**50%** of in-person students speak English as an additional language or dialect

**6,000+** students reached through digital programs and resources



## REDFERN

176 Redfern Street  
Redfern NSW 2016  
Gadigal Land  
02 9699 6970

## PARRAMATTA

90 George Street  
Parramatta NSW 2150  
Burramattagal Land  
02 8859 0353

## STORYFACTORY.ORG.AU

### GET INVOLVED AT



Story Factory is fully compliant with all requirements of The Australian Charities and Non-for-profits Commission, the national regulator of charities. We are a registered charity with DGR-1 status - all donations are tax-deductible.

ABN: 71 645 321 582

Photographs by Natasha Capstick and Julie Collins.

# StoryFACTORY