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SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL BREAKS ATTENDANCE RECORDS FOR SECOND YEAR RUNNING

Sydney Writers' Festival (SWF 2026) has concluded as the most successful Festival in its 29-year history, marking a second consecutive year of record-breaking attendance and ticket sales. More than **100,000 people** attended the Festival's 200+ events featuring over 250 writers and thinkers, with **over 55%** of events sold out.

Sydneysiders embraced Festival programming across eight days of packed venues, sold-out talks and city-wide literary conversation from **17–24 May**. United by the 2026 theme ***Show Me the Truth***, SWF sparked powerful and thoughtful ideas on culture, identity, history, politics and contemporary literature.

Sydney Writers' Festival CEO Brooke Webb said, "To see the Festival break records for a second consecutive year is an extraordinary result and an important reflection of the appetite audiences have for thoughtful conversation, great writing and shared cultural experiences.

"We were especially encouraged by the number of young people engaging with the Festival this year — whether through headline author events or conversations exploring the issues shaping their generation. Across the week, we saw a new wave of audiences embrace the Festival with enormous energy and curiosity.

"The scale and reach of this year's Festival was incredibly exciting. From major headline events in Sydney to more than **50 free events** and our expanded Live & Local program reaching **160 venues nationwide**, the Festival created opportunities for readers across the country to come together through books, ideas and shared cultural experiences.

"The Festival always looks to engage the next generation of readers and writers through its education programming, and this year, **11,995 students** participated in Primary School Days, Secondary School Days and Student Sessions across Festival week.

“These programs play an important role in nurturing future writers, readers and thinkers — creating opportunities for young people to engage with stories, ideas and creativity, while building the literary communities of the future,” said Webb.

Sydney Writers’ Festival Artistic Director Ann Mossop said, “This year’s Festival showed us truths that were wonderful, disarming and brave. What was clear throughout the week was that readers and writers were brought together through ideas, debate, and shared conversations.

“From **Daniel Hahn** sharing his insights into Shakespeare to **Patrick Radden Keefe** taking fans through his body of work, audiences embraced the Festival from its very first moments. Our Opening Gala, featuring **Robbie Arnott, Nikita Gill, Lily King, Michael Pedersen** and **Kirli Saunders**, set the tone for a week of ambitious and unforgettable discussion.

“As the Festival unfolded, audiences sold out venues to hear from extraordinary international voices including **Susan Choi, Roddy Doyle, Amitav Ghosh, Mick Herron, Tayari Jones, R.F. Kuang** and **Yann Martel**. These were the kinds of literary experiences that stay with us long after the Festival ends.

“It was equally exciting to see Australian writers connect so strongly with fans this year. Beloved authors such as **Stephanie Alexander, Trent Dalton, Melissa Lucashenko** and **Suzie Miller** generated great enthusiasm, while new books from writers like **Madeleine Gray, George Kemp, Antoinette Lattouf** and **Zoe Terakes** captivated audiences,” said Mossop.

Participation in education programming grew by **11.3%**, up from 10,782 in 2025 and 10,415 in 2024. Student Sessions increased participation by **30.2%** and free access to education programming was provided to **5,088 participants**. Attendance in School Days events increased across both Primary and Secondary events, with primary school participation growing by **2.5%** and secondary school participation by **7.6%**.

Manager of Children's & YA Programs, Nathan Luff said, “As a teacher and programmer, hearing the screams of delight as **Dav Pilkey** took to the stage, and then also seeing young students discovering new authors they now want to read more of, always brings me great joy. Our continued commitment to sharing these moments with underrepresented communities through free access makes it even more meaningful.”

Book lovers are encouraged to sign up to the SWF e-newsletter at swf.org.au to be the first to hear about tickets and events for the Festival’s year-round programming at the State Library of NSW and 2027 Festival next May – the 30th in SWF’s history.

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*****Sydney Writers' Festival Press Pack and Images Available [HERE](#)**

EDITOR'S NOTES

ABOUT SYDNEY WRITERS' FESTIVAL

From Sunday 17 to Sunday 24 May 2026, the 29th Sydney Writers' Festival brings together some of the world's most exciting literary voices for a week of insightful discussions, thought-provoking ideas, and unforgettable storytelling. The Festival features a dynamic program of in-person and livestreamed events, including author talks, panel discussions, workshops, and special events across Sydney. For more information, visit swf.org.au.