



**Sydney
Festival**

MEDIA RELEASE

Press Release: Wednesday, 4 June 2025

Sydney Festival amplifies First Nations leadership with key appointment

Sydney Festival proudly announces the appointment of Aidan Rowlingson as its new Creative Producer – First Nations, marking a pivotal step in the Festival's ongoing commitment to celebrating and centring First Nations voices.

This significant role – an evolution of the former Creative Artist in Residence position – will make possible the Festival's dedication to ensuring Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander stories, traditions, and contemporary expressions are at the heart of Sydney's premier summer celebration.

In this capacity, Rowlingson will devise the Festival's First Nations programming, complementing the artistic leadership of Festival Director Kris Nelson. Aidan takes on the role following the distinguished tenure of Jacob Nash, who will present his final Blak Out program in 2026, marking both his remarkable contribution and the Festival's 50th anniversary.

A proud Butchulla man, Rowlingson is a writer, director, creative producer, and multi-disciplinary artist whose work spans festivals and theatre, with a strong track record in First Nations-led programming and community-engaged arts practice. Recently Associate Producer – First Nations at QPAC, he has led projects such as *Warriors* (2024) and *BlakBeats*, and his acclaimed debut play *Capricorn* premiered at La Boite Theatre in 2023.

Kris Nelson, Sydney Festival Director, stated *"Aidan is an exceptional artist and cultural leader whose bold vision, deep community connection, and strong producing skills make him the ideal person to shape and drive the next chapter of First Nations programming at Sydney Festival. Building on the extraordinary legacy of Jacob Nash, Aidan brings a dynamic and collaborative approach that will continue to amplify Blak voices and stories in powerful new ways. I'm thrilled to welcome him to Sydney into this key leadership role and can't wait to see the work he will make possible."*

Commenting on his new role, Rowlingson said, *"I am very excited to take up this position at Sydney Festival, building from the immense contributions of Jake Nash and his commitment to culture, community, and holding space for important conversations."*

He continued, "This opportunity means I get to continue my passion for creating meaningful and fruitful creative pathways for our mob. I know Kris Nelson shares my passion for supporting emerging artists, new work, and creating memories for diverse audiences. As I look ahead. I'm focused on listening, learning, and establishing meaningful connections with this incredible city."



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Jacob Nash said: *“I’m really looking forward to welcoming Butchulla man Aidan Rowlingson into this role at Sydney Festival, and to working closely with him in the lead-up to what is shaping up to be an incredibly powerful Blak Out program for the Festival’s landmark 50th year.”*

Adding to the appointment news, Kate Dundas, Chair of Sydney Festival, said, *“We are thrilled to welcome Aidan to the team at Sydney Festival. His passion and talent for showcasing exceptional First Nations work and encouraging emerging artists is where the Festival shines brightest. While we will definitely miss Jake’s insights, work, advice and commitment to the Blak Out program, welcoming new creative talent is part of our DNA.”*

Aidan Rowlingson will take up his position of Creative Producer – First Nations with Sydney Festival this month.

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For media enquiries, contact Nia Jones, Sydney Festival’s Communications Manager, nia.jones@sydneyfestival.org.au 0436 100 201.

NOTES TO EDITORS:

Biography: Aidan Rowlingson is a proud Butchulla man, a writer, director, creative producer and multi-disciplinary artist with a strong track record in First Nations-led programming and community-engaged arts practice. He was mostly recently Associate Producer – First Nations at Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC), where he led initiatives including Warriors (2024), BlakBeats, Mob Music for Clancestry, and the Sparks writers program.

His work spans festivals and theatre, with previous producing roles at Queensland Music Festival, Jungle Love Festival, La Boite Theatre and Digi Youth Arts. His acclaimed debut play Capricorn, which he wrote and co-directed, premiered as part of La Boite’s 2023 mainstage season. He has recently directed regional touring productions including *I Gut This Feeling* (Jute Theatre) and served as Associate Director on *The Visitors* (Moogahlin Performing Arts/Sydney Theatre Company).

About Sydney Festival - Sydney Festival is one of Australia’s largest international arts festivals, with a stellar reputation for bold, inventive and intelligent programming. Its vibrancy reflects the confidence, creativity and vigour of one of the world’s most beautiful cities. Under the curation of new Festival Director Kris Nelson, the Festival’s mission is to deliver an exhilarating summer of art, drawing stories from Sydney’s 65,000-year history through to its contemporary zeitgeist. Sydney Festival stages the world’s best artists whilst nurturing its homegrown talent; many of Australia’s most memorable theatrical productions have stemmed from its premieres and commissions. The buzz of summer wouldn’t be the same without the Festival’s spectacular installations, immersive experiences and live events splashed across Sydney each January. In 2026 Sydney Festival will celebrate its 50th anniversary.



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Sydney Festival 2026 Official Dates: Sydney Festival will take place from 8 – 25 January 2026
This will be the Festival's 50th edition.