

An Examination of Resources for Writing for Performance



Australian Government



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The researchers also wish to thank those who returned our contact even when we could not schedule an interview.

Disclaimer

The research is qualitative and collates information obtained from specific organisations, with the researchers taking care to make this as accurate as the process allowed and with respect to the privacy of some information.

The researchers on this project also have a background as theatre artists and have benefited from programs of the organisations under examination. The chief researcher, Peta Tait, attended the first Playworks session in 1985 as an observer, presented sessions in 1995, and had dramaturgical assistance for two plays in the intervening years, script development with the ANPC, and a co-written play included in ASC's *Collection #5*.

Terms used in this report

The term 'script' is used in this report to encompass plays and other formats of writing for performance. The broad term 'script development' is used in Australia in 2005 to mean working on an unproduced script for its improvement as well as enhancing the skills of writers. An argument is made in this report to separate functions by using two terms: focused 'script development' in a workshop and the provision of a range of services for 'writer development' to assist with the writing.

- Novice or beginner means a writer who is training in writing and/or working on his or her first script.
- Emerging writer is a writer with at least one professional production. Writer respondents in this research who nominate themselves within this category also have up to five years experience in writing for performance.
- Experienced writer is a writer who has been writing for performance for more than five years, (although he or she may not have had a main stage production). This corresponds to the Literature Board term 'developing' writer.
- Main stage writer is a writer who is experienced and has had one or more productions for the main stage. These are productions by the funded major theatre companies. He or she might also be called an established writer.

Writers for performance are generally freelance and independent artists.

The term non-affiliated writer is used to mean a writer currently without a script associated with a theatre company or a theatre company script development program.

The term affiliated writer is used to mean a writer currently either associated with a specific project that involves a theatre company or with a script in a theatre company season or its script development program.

Abbreviations

INS	Information not supplied
OAI	Only available information
SDO	Script development organisation

For Sources of Research Information

AC	Annual Australian Council Applications and Acquittals
IC	Interviews for Comment
OP	Organisation Profiles
WQ	Writers Web Questionnaire (Anonymous)

Theatre Organisations

ANPC	Australian National Playwrights Centre
ASC	Australian Script Centre
JUTE	Just Us Theatre Ensemble
MTC	Melbourne Theatre Company
PTC	Perth Theatre Company
QTC	Queensland Theatre Company
STC	Sydney Theatre Company
STCSA	State Theatre Company of South Australia

1 Executive Summary: Script Development in 2005

1.1 Context for Research

The research for this report was carried out between April and August of 2005 and, unless stated otherwise, the financial information was current to 2004. The research on which this report is based was carried out in three parts as:

- 1) organisation profiles (OP)
- 2) (anonymous) writers questionnaire on the web (WQ)
- 3) interviews for comment (in confidence) (IC)

This research project was commissioned by the Australia Council and set out to examine script development organisations and survey programs in Australian theatre in 2005. The aims of research project are to:

- survey the resources currently available in Australia for the development of writing for performance
- assess the strengths of these services and identify gaps
- examine best-practice models in this area, both local and international, with particular focus on the institutional structures that support them
- make recommendations on how the Theatre Board's funds can best support the development of scripts for performance over the next five to ten years.

It is beyond the scope of this research to investigate theatre company preferences in programming or gender concerns about programming or non-script based works by physical theatres and circuses or festivals and new scripts.

Script development is a process whereby the writer is (or writers are) assisted by a dramaturg and/or director and actors to scrutinise and improve a script intended for theatre production. Until 1985 the Australian National Playwrights Conference was the main event facilitating this process and script development activities expanded subsequently. This growth in script development invites examination nationally.

The need for this research was identified in *An Analysis of the Triennially Funded Theatre Organisations of the Theatre Board of the Australia Council* (Roberts 2003: 23), because new works are central features of the programs of triennially funded major and smaller theatre companies. The need for this research was also raised by a meeting of representatives of script development organisations (SDOs) at the 2004 Australian National Playwrights' Conference. Of concern in the wider theatre industry is a problem identified by Julian Meyrick (2005) with the comparative decline during the 1990s in the number of small theatre companies that try out new work prior to its accession to a production by a major company.

The question raised by this research project is relevant to the present and future of Australian theatre: What script development programs are currently provided by SDOs, theatre companies and other writers' organisations?

In the USA the suspension of several high-profile script development programs in the late 1990s for financial reasons highlighted the conflicting demands of an institutional theatre sector and writers as freelance entities (Todd 2002: 18). Rather than the deterioration of the sector, this suggested a rationalisation of resources among the 100 programs for script development in the USA. Admittedly Roberta Levitow (2002) acknowledges that there seems to be a climate of declining audience attendance in the USA. However, Roberts finds a steady increase in paid attendance at Australian theatre (2003: 15). The results of a 2002 survey in the USA also show considerable expansion in the arts industry. Forty percent of USA script development programs were begun in the last five years, 82 percent of writers were invited to participate in script development, with 39 percent of respondent theatres commissioning specifically for production (Brown 2002: 34). A joint ANPC and Live Events Research Network pilot research sample in February 2004 suggests that two-thirds of scripts in development with the companies that replied to a mailed-out questionnaire were to be produced. The 2002 USA survey found that nearly all works developed through commissions and invitations to writers chosen by companies are produced and that, with time, many receive main stage productions.

Development work in theatre might address how theatre is a visual as well as an aural art form that presents action, interaction, images and spoken text and/or dialogue which commonly begins from the written script. The script or writing process is the starting point, although in a circular way it is also the legacy of the art form of theatre.

1.2 Summary of Current Situation

1.2.1 Key points from survey of 38 organisations

- Script development is an accepted industry-wide practice but the range of activities is unevenly implemented.
- Theatre companies are now major providers of script development programs in Australia.
- Script development accounted for an estimated \$2,250,000 of activities within the funded Australian theatre industry sector in 2005—the financial information provided by theatre companies is an estimate.
- The conclusion reached by Roberts (2003), that creative development needs more investment, should be aligned with strengths and gaps identified in script development.
- Commissioning remains the central practice for obtaining new works by theatre companies producing scripts but without certainty of production by major companies.
- National SDOs generally provide the following opportunities (core functions):
 - writer assistance with the writing through one or more sessions with a dramaturg or

- script development with a workshop with a director, actors and usually dramaturg followed by a rehearsed reading for an audience.
(Writers can be given additional assistance to help with their development.)
- Established main stage writers are not the main focus of any one SDO and all provide programs for emerging through to experienced writers, and mentorships for novice writers.
- The process of the professional development of new scripts for Australian theatre is one of writers' participation in and self-identification with a culture of development prior to production.
- It can be concluded from recent trends in which theatre companies call for proposals and reject receipt of unsolicited scripts, that the artistic practice of speculatively writing scripts is not actively encouraged by the theatre industry.

1.2.2 The current strengths in script development are:

- The script development programs offered by the national SDOs are a different and complementary if limited service.
- The Australian National Playwrights' Conference is valued as the only national forum for the theatre industry.
- Funded theatre companies provide a range of script development processes in different parts of Australia.
- The practices of SDOs and theatre companies can be grouped as:
 - writer development where the opportunity is serving a broader function of enhancing the writers' skills and writing for creating a script
 - script development where the full focus is on improving a script nearing completion in readiness for production
 - creative team collaboration over a defined or extended period to create a script often with a production outcome.
- One-to-one dramaturgy with an experienced professional has evolved as the most cost-effective development for new works for the largest number of writers.
- The SDOs offer a significant access point to professional theatre and are responsive to the need for a balance of gender and racial and ethnic identity in the selection of writers.
- Australia Council recognises the freelance non-affiliated position of writers for performance by providing them with programs that they can apply to through both the Literature and Theatre Boards.
- The state arts ministries welcome writers for performance applying to literature and theatre programs.

- The ASC's unique service promotes 25–30 produced scripts from the 80 selected annually for electronic access and thereby maintains a record of productions nationally.

1.2.3 The gaps and weaknesses in script development are:

- Funding has effectively remained static for almost a decade for Playworks and ANPC-Australian National Playwrights' Conference.
- These national SDOs provide for emerging to experienced writers, stretching available resources as well as providing a range of supplementary activities and membership services.
- National SDO programs halved between 1995 and 2004–2005, which reduced dramaturgy for male writers at a national level.
- Where one-to-one dramaturgy is currently provided without further progression, it becomes an extended script assessment session.
- There is minimal duplication in the development of individual scripts across the national SDOs but there has been duplication with theatre company programs in the past, and in the interviews for comment there were claims of duplication in reader assessments of one script (IC).
- New works are sometimes being equated with 'new writers' encompassing novices, but there are few other professions in 2005 that would allow entry without evidence of prior training.
- There were four Sydney-based mentorship schemes in 2004–2005 and one other opportunity in WA.
- There is an institutional gulf in the theatre industry between script development and production, even within theatre companies.
- Problems emerged with respect to commissions: 5 writers volunteered that they spend the shortest time writing to commission/deadlines (WQ); commissioned scripts can be programmed while they are being written and before they are fully developed (IC); and thorough script development processes are unevenly available for commissioned scripts (OP). Only smaller companies are committed to producing commissions for financial reasons.
- Theatre companies need to take a stronger position against programming work that has not progressed as expected (IC).
- It is freelance writers who are ultimately responsible for ensuring that their scripts receive adequate time in development.

- There is varied levels of knowledge among theatre professionals about the achievements, contribution and history of SDOs and theatre companies within the theatre industry, and between states.¹
- The Sydney-based ANPC and Playworks have been providing state-based services combined with national programs, which impacts on perceptions of national opportunities. Both organisations are familiar with outside suggestions about amalgamating office facilities that pertain to the 1990s when the ANPC was funded to operate as a centre as well as a conference.

1.2.4 The best-practice models nationally and internationally are:

- Script development processes in Australia correspond to script development processes overseas, but the institutional arrangements for these processes vary enormously (see 4.7 and Appendix 6.5)
- The most sought-after script development opportunity for writers nationally is a workshop with a director and actors (WQ and IC).
- Progressive script development to production exists in theatre company programs—these are a small number per company annually.
- Two international examples of UK organisations overseeing work from development to production are relevant to the recommendations (see 2.1.8).

1.3 Recommendations

It is recommended to the Australia Council that:

- 1 ANPC and Playworks be given funding that adequately supports the renewed capacity of their core functions of script development and writer development (see Terms).
- 2 ASC be accorded triennial funding as a unique and effective organisation within Australia in providing long-term electronic access to unpublished produced scripts.

It is recommended to the Australia Council and national script development organisations that:

- 3 The national SDOs assume a leadership role by targeting some support to established non-affiliated writers (see Terms).
- 4 Shorter workshops for showcase readings at the Australian National Playwrights' Conference be increased, and that week-long workshops be allocated to scripts

¹ The detail in this report is attempting to address this issue.

that have not received a similar workshop with another organisation, and that a two-year lead time be considered for some scripts.

- 5 National dramaturgical support revives opportunities for male writers while retaining the capacity for advocacy on gender issues.
- 6 Dramaturgical support involves a minimum of two sessions, which are 6 months apart to facilitate progress.
- 7 Training courses in writing, and teaching skills development not be considered functions of national SDOs given their availability elsewhere.
- 8 The three national SDOs, their core functions, programs and their governance remain separate and distinctive.
- 9 Consultation be undertaken with state and local governments to negotiate for funding the costs of refurbishing and relocating ANPC and Playworks to combined office facilities to support the administration of the distinctive programs, with any state-based dramaturgy becoming a separately named program.

Rationale: This research finds script development is an accepted industry-wide practice, and SDOs provide an essential service to free-lance writers for performance and therefore to the theatre industry. The whole area of script development underwent changes with the advent of state-based organisations and theatre company programs after 1990. While the overall capacity of script development nationally has expanded including the promotion of produced scripts through electronic access, it is now reliant on theatre company programs. However, annual opportunities fluctuate with shifts in funding and artistic leadership and so strategic commitment to specialised delivery and funding continuity is needed to offset volatility in script development over the next five to ten years.

The Australia Council funds access to workshops (ANPC) and script promotion (ASC) for male and female writers, but in 2005 dramaturgy only for female writers (Playworks). The three national organisations currently provide separate and distinct core functions and levels of funding have effectively remained static for a decade for ANPC and Playworks, and the ASC funding has only increased to ensure continuation of the organisation. These SDOs responded by halving programs for writers, introducing fee-for-services which reduced demand, and industry partnerships, and with ongoing funding short-falls reduced hours of work and positions, and struggled to maintain adequate office facilities.

The imperative to generate income for SDOs by providing mentoring and courses for novice writers has led to the provision of non-core services and has inadvertently impacted on opportunities for established writers. This research finds that there is no clear provision for the more experienced and established writers who are not currently affiliated with a theatre company. Dramaturgy is a vital requirement for writers, and a one or two day workshop several months before rehearsal is a basic requirement for most scripts.

It is recommended that the Australia Council funded national script development organisations:

- 10 Focus on their core function programs and recognise the sequence of development from: writer development and dramaturgy, to script development workshop and showcase reading, to promotion of produced scripts.

- 11 In consultation with the theatre industry—possibly using on-line communication—develop and make available over the next year minimum guidelines for professional script development, which recognises sequential progression. This should impact on improved reporting of a program’s results.
- 12 Provide for more experienced and established writers through proactive strategies for inclusion, which will in turn attract interest.
- 13 Rationalise supplementary activities like membership services, forums and other activities to reduce duplication between organisations.
- 14 Short-list from the scripts selected for dramaturgical and workshop programs to make formal industry submissions about scripts.

Rationale: Services by SDOs can be grouped as: writer development and dramaturgy, script development and workshop, promotion of produced scripts, and the recognition of these services as following a sequence highlights institutional gaps (see 5.1). This research could not locate any guidelines for evaluating a script once it was under development and the value added by script development would seem to be assumed rather than explained.

There is an uneven geographical distribution of access to mentoring and collaborative creative teams, and the repeated effort of training novice writers and skills development becomes duplication especially given the expansion of courses in the education sector since the mid-1990s. These resources might go to supporting experienced and established writers.

It is recommended to the Australia Council and its funded script development organisations and theatre companies that:

- 15 Script and writer development activity is necessarily:
 - national for experienced and established writers working in a range of script styles
 - state-based and regional to encourage all writers regardless of levels of experience and script styles
 - company-specific to suit the much more specialised requirements of particular organisations

and that exchange and communication between these three layers and their respective government funding sources will ensure artistic diversity and meet the requirements for new works in the foreseeable future.
- 16 Adopt clear strategies of progressive script development and allow sufficient time to consolidate work on new scripts.
- 17 Recognise directors in the provision of dramaturgical support along with professional dramaturgs.
- 18 Induct emerging writers into script development processes prior to workshops and include opportunities to observe development and rehearsals of other writers’ scripts.

Rationale: Script development has become diversely national, state-based, regional, and company specific since 1990, because of theatre industry initiatives. However, opportunities can be time poor and often without strategies for progression. Regardless of what has actually

happened, there is often an assumption that a new script has received sufficient and worthwhile criticism to which the writer has responded accordingly with redrafts that progress this work substantially. In reality, outside a small number of theatre company commissions and invitations which have script development attached, writers are left with the responsibility of gaining and making the most of development. Sometimes directors can be confronted with difficult aspects of script development history with rehearsals imminent (and often a confused writer). This issue can be pronounced in the case of emerging writers. Because of the financial and organisational commitment required in providing even a workshop with director and actors for a script, there is a tacit assumption that the script under development should be approaching its final draft ready for a workshop and showcase and might therefore have undergone progressive stages of development to that point.

It is recommended to the Australia Council that:

19 SDOs continue to provide a major point of entry to professional theatre for freelance non-affiliated writers for performance.

Rationale: Respondents who read scripts indicate that they initially select and give priority to a well-developed script and/or a new voice. Since 2000 national SDOs have offered specific programs with published deadlines and conditions of application and, since 2003, the Australian National Playwrights' Conference has had its own submission process. By the late 1990s, however, most theatre companies rejected the implicit practice of receiving and responding to unsolicited scripts—there was a one-script-in-ten-years likelihood of production. This has been offset by a growth in competitions, which now provide an alternative if questionable avenue for the submission of unsolicited scripts to the industry.

20 In order to address issues of quality, a new initiative of seeding grants to independent broker organisations be implemented and that these broker organisations have a sustained commitment to the work of (possibly up to 6) writers and their specific new works, overseeing progressive script development through to first and subsequent productions in partnerships with other organisations.

Further Explanation of the Recommendation: One broker group could involve minimally 2 to 3 practitioners working independently of existing SDOs and theatre companies, and the works that it develops would reflect a recognisable 'house' style of writing. It would work on behalf of writers and be responsible for the quality of writing. One seminal UK organisation, Paines Plough, without theatre facilities, is involved in early script development through to co-production under the leadership of a working director.

Rationale: There are gaps in the theatre industry for new scripts moving from script development through to production even within theatre companies. The theatre industry remains dependent for its pool of new scripts and productions on the approaches instigated by freelance writers and artists in an increasingly complex system. Freelance writers generally bridge industry gaps between the writing, development and production on the basis of their own submissions at each stage (see appendix 6.6). Advocacy over years on behalf of a selected group of writers is not the function of SDOs as it would compromise their capacity for non-partisan selection from a wide range of script types as an annual entry point into professional theatre (see recommendation 19). The new initiative is in keeping with theatre companies calling for proposals for scripts to generate work suited to the company. Additionally, the proactive strategy of seeking out suitable writers by one theatre company, and the proactive effort to reach more experienced writers by one national SDO, indicates effort to enhance script quality.

It is recommended to the Australia Council, script development organisations and theatre companies that:

21 Script development supports the writer to forge an ongoing relationship with one or more professionals in a planned, dynamic sequential development process, as this will ensure best-practice for a vibrant Australian theatre in the future.

Rationale: There is a contradiction between artistic values that shift writers from the centre of the creative process, and an ongoing theatre industry reliance on commissions by companies to obtain new works. Writers and others therefore look overseas for examples of where the writer continues to be esteemed and respected for what has been accomplished with a script. In 2005 there are multiple script development models that have evolved out of Australian theatre and organisations (see 5.1), and these should be valued as responses to what is a unique national theatre culture given that concerns about the quality of new works and audiences are evident in other countries, and in other art forms.

New initiatives by theatre companies reflect attempts to actively involve the writer in an extended collaborative creative process in order to enhance the creation of (scripts) texts. Responses outline the need for a writer's workshop studio theatre, which is in-between script development and full production (IC). The importance of the independent theatre sector in providing production opportunities is appreciated but not systematically integrated into the formal networking of funded organisations.

The question about the selection of new works facing Australian theatre is: What makes freelance writers for performance, and in particular the experienced, persevere and continue writing? One answer is that script development programs provide important support for writers of performance in the intervals between productions, and this vital function for the industry is extremely difficult to quantify.

2 Interpretation

2.1 Questions

This examination of script development reveals diverging expectations— even competing expectations—and these are summarised below as questions.

For the writers

- How to connect to a creative team/company to produce the script?
- How to get an emerging writer acknowledged as having potential/ possibilities?
- How to find for the experienced writer ongoing opportunities for production, and for the established writer more main stage opportunities?

For the script development programs

- What scripts require which development process?
- What constitutes innovation or a new voice?
- What prevents more scripts from receiving productions?

For the theatre companies

- How to keep established writers producing viable work in terms of box-office attendance?
- How to find and encourage interesting, well-written scripts?
- How to determine whether the better approach is to foster closer relationships with a small number of experienced affiliate writers or canvass a larger group of emerging to experienced affiliate writers?

2.1.1 Overall Pattern 1990–2005

(See Recommendations 3 and 19)

a) *Expansion*

The domain of script development evolved 1990–2005 as arts funding bodies responded to practices and initiatives from the theatre industry (AC). Script development is defined by its practices and the current organisational arrangements are a consequence of historical precedents (AC). The need for script development is widely recognised in Australian theatre and there is an expectation of some development in the preparation of a script for a theatre production (IC). This reflects the lasting influence of development processes pioneered by national SDOs.

b) *Theatre companies*

Theatre companies produce a limited number of new Australian scripts—one or two annually and often one of these is co-produced. Within major companies, programs of script development evolved alongside, or out of, literary management functions between 1995 and 2005. The STC provides extensive support to script development, allocating approximately \$690,000 (OP). Smaller theatre companies turned to script development strategies according to their capacity between 1995 and 2005 in order to improve new work commissioned for their particular company (OP). An expectation that smaller theatre companies could undertake creative development prior to the production of a new work in short succession in the same year had gone by the mid-

1990s (IC). Nonetheless a process of writing and script development with sufficient time is yet to become standard practice.

c) *Trends*

Commissions remain the main source of new scripts. The number of annual commissions available for writers can only be generally and conservatively estimated. Based on ANPC membership of 440 members in 2004, 1 commission for every 10 writers. The issue of how experienced and established writers can be served by script development was repeatedly raised. If current trends 1995–2005 continue, theatre company-specific requirements are likely to increasingly drive the selection and development of new works through invitations. This trend orientates writing for performance and therefore potentially artistic originality to the prevailing produced work. Yet if the measure of success for a script is its production (for writers and for SDOs), then this trend is acceptable. If Australian theatre is seeking new works that extend the parameters of existing writing for theatre, then theatre company requirements must be balanced by other opportunities. In which case, development initiatives should continue to encompass the divergent ways in which theatre has been created since the 1980s utilising SDOs but introducing a new initiative (see recommendation 20).

2.1.2 The National Organisations

(See Recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 7, 8, 9 and 13)

a) *Service to the theatre industry*

Because SDOs provide a service to the theatre industry, and in particular to freelance writers for performance who are not in a position to pay the full costs, the core functions of SDOs are dependent on funding with only minor supplementary income available from other sources (AC). As a specialised function of theatre arts the necessity of script development is probably only fully appreciated within the arts industry and within the theatre profession. This work remains largely unseen by the outside community (researcher's analysis).

b) *Past achievements under recognised*

Further, there can be poor institutional memory about past programs within a particular organisation and across SDOs (OP). ANPC and Playworks in particular have each provided a version of the current processes as well as other more innovative approaches at some point over the past fifteen years.

c) *Small organisations*

National SDOs have three or four part-time staff working one, two and possibly three days a week on administration, management and artistic functions (OP). SDOs are reliant on the commitment of their staff to work beyond their paid hours at certain times of the year. Funding levels have not kept pace with rising costs for staffing and administration, and there is also some dependency on the unpaid expertise of readers.

The three SDOs each experience similar difficulties to other small theatre organisations (AC). Since 1990, aside from small deficits, all three organisations have experienced three periods of financial difficulty in which they have had to revise their programs significantly. An organisation's responsiveness at these times ensured its survival. In 2002 the ANPC restructured the artistic director's position and scaled back programs to the core function of the conference. The ASC has undergone

considerable consolidation through cost cutting in 1996 to emergency assistance because of sick leave in 2004. The scenario is not specific to SDOs and demonstrates the degree of vulnerability to which all small organisations are susceptible. Playworks outlines a period of revaluation in 2000–2003 and has just appointed a new artistic director. Individuals are important to the effectiveness of script development opportunities and a degree of mobility among staff in an organisation with only two or three people can seriously impact on the provision of programs. The respective Boards need to be involved in determining programs to ensure continuity.

SDOs have become membership organisations to generate income and each must offer services for members, such as newsletters and events, and all three do this. The researcher had a further and larger concern that SDOs are responding short-term to approaches made to them by other organisations rather than initiating their work through longer-term strategic planning of their capacity and direction.

d) *Combined resources/separate programs*

In the annual reports in previous years, SDOs have sometimes nominated an event organised in partnership with another SDO. There would be greater benefit if the three national organisations could separate their programs from each other's and, instead, pool resources while maintaining the same number of distinctive opportunities. For example, as indicated two might share a not-fully-staffed office.

The durability of the three national organisations over twenty to thirty years suggests their robust capacity. Without triennial funding it would be difficult to expect the three national SDOs to implement strategies beyond one year, and to plan five to ten years in advance. While indexing of the arts returned with the 2005 Australia Council budget, with an increase of 3 percent from the Federal Government, and while this might be expected to flow on to the major companies, it is unclear if key organisations can also expect this increase. An absence of indexed grants over a decade is a contributing factor as to why national SDOs have had to cut programs and staff hours and therefore appear to be in difficulties. The current problems with script development reflect the funding uncertainty facing these programs.

In annual reports to the Australia Council, SDOs need to highlight their important core activity rather than describing every activity undertaken because what is unique to an organisation is not communicated effectively. The impression that might be taken, quite erroneously, is that the organisation's work is duplicated elsewhere in other organisations, which also provide skills training, lectures, newsletters and workshops.

2.1.3 Script Development, Script Promotion or Writer Development? (See Recommendations 10, 12 and 16)

a) *Script development*

Writers participate in the programs of more than one organisation at different times in their career working on different scripts (AC). While there is minimal overlap between national organisations with regard to selection of a specific script, there is some duplication between SDOs and theatre company script development programs (AC). Some writer development, however, such as Indigenous writer development, needs the resources of several organisations. In the current circumstances established

writers are only served by commissions and/or script development programs of theatre companies, and these offer limited numbers of opportunities.

b) *National SDOs are specialising*

- i (women) writers and their skills development (Playworks)
- ii specific scripts near readiness in a workshop with actors (ANPC/conference)
- iii produced scripts and writer promotion (ASC)

These distinctions operate in practice. In relation to the capacity of SDOs to deliver stability in their programs over the next five to ten years, and to inject vitality and leadership into script development at all levels, there is a need for concerted co-ordination among organisations about the core function of each national organisation, and their relationship to state-based ones. Comments about future directions indicate a lack of appreciation about the core functions of the other organisations.

Electronic access to scripts has been developed over several years by the ASC. It seems most appropriate to build on this existing capacity for on-line access and for this organisation to seek suitable partnerships rather than be duplicated elsewhere from scratch. Electronic access to scripts should not be confused with publication of a script, which is a separate issue—one with higher cost implications, even when publishing via on-demand delivery (see 4.4).

The provision of a dramaturgs' and/or a writers' skills register reflects the necessity of providing services to members and writers. However, only one organisation needs to develop this register and maintenance of on-line delivery would require additional funding. While a dramaturgs' register is clearly not a practical solution to the provision of sufficient professional dramaturgical assistance, such a measure might, quite unreasonably, be viewed as a substitute for SDOs.

c) *Mentorships*

The Australia Council supports the mentoring of emerging artists under thirty. The mentoring initiative that received the most comments in this research (IC) is the Griffin Theatre's playwrights' residency program for five writers under thirty, but this is still in its initial phase. The small number of applicants for SDO mentorships is surprising given the growth in creative writing elsewhere.

ANPC, Playworks and the Australian Writers' Guild offer beginner to emerging writer mentorships and Griffin Theatre Company offers playwrights' residency program, which makes these opportunities Sydney-centric. Sydney's The Ensemble theatre also offers an annual opportunity for a novice playwright. The allocation of resources to emerging artists from the Federal Government's Young and Emerging Artists Initiative ensures that young writers are being encouraged to write via mentorships and other grants programs such as the Young Artists Initiative of the Theatre Board where young writers can apply to commission themselves to write a play. Writers can apply as part of a workshop to develop a draft or be involved in a collaborative process to develop a script and be paid professional fees via this grants programs. In programs co-ordinated by SDOs and theatre companies, however, payment to writers depends on the program offered by the co-ordinating organisation and it might be an issue where payment is made to mentors, actors and directors but not to the writers. However, SPARK run by Youth Arts Queensland, writers receive small payments for their work as it is seen as a professional development opportunity.

While SDOs could be funded to advertise more widely, young writers might simply seek production opportunities for their work in the independent theatre sector rather than engaging in the much longer process of development prior to production. A more targeted strategy of promoting the benefits of dramaturgy at appropriate venues and events like festivals could prove more productive.

d) *Courses for novices*

The usefulness of learning to write courses to the core functions of SDOs is unclear. SDOs might be expected to provide one or two master classes for members who are experienced writers. SDOs and theatre companies need to deliberately assess whether their involvement in training is required and an appropriate direction for the organisation.

The considerable growth of creative writing courses since the mid-1990s offers opportunities for novice writers of all ages (see 4.6). City-based SDOs and theatre companies can redirect novice writers to courses by writers' centres, community centres, TAFEs or TAFE-accredited private providers, and universities. ANPC's self-supporting correspondence classes run in conjunction with writers' centres provides for remote location access to tuition.

In Sydney, for those writers with some experience, there is NIDA's Playwrights' Studio, which has run for twenty years and takes six writers a year. For very young writers, SDOs might reasonably expect an indication of prior interest in theatre and drama studies, given their widespread availability in school curricula. As well, there are secondary school programs for young playwrights (see *Young Dramatist Page to Stage 2004*), youth theatres and Interplay—this expectation would need to take into account remote location and diversity issues.

2.1.4 Theatre Company, Regional and State-based, and National (See Recommendation 15)

a) *Overview*

Since 1990 state-based and regional initiatives have arisen as a response to the nationally dispersed Australian practice. In 2005, state-based script assessment, and script and writer development opportunities that include some theatre company programs (see sections 3.5, 5.1 and 5.4) are funded by their respective state governments and available in:

- *Western Australia*: Stages WA for writer development programs since 1991.
- *South Australia*: Vitalstatistix, and, until 2004 the Australian Writers' Guild SA in conjunction with the STCSA.
- *Victoria*: Playbox, as a theatre producing only new Australian plays, dominated script development in Victoria until 2004, and gave that state the advantage of the largest program and budget as well as hosting the Ilbjerri Indigenous Playwrights Conference. La Mama continues its program of assessment and production, and there is script assessment available from the Victorian Writers' Centre and Melbourne Writers Theatre with the potential for a reading group.
- *Tasmania*: The ASC, while meeting their national objectives, has also functionally served as the Tasmanian script and writer development organisation since 2001 with distinct programs.

- *New South Wales*: Because of their Sydney location, the national organisations, Playworks and the ANPC, have also by default become script centres for NSW. Based on the last available breakdown by state in 2002, 230 of 384 ANPC members resided in NSW (AC).
- *Queensland*: Playlab has provided script and writer development programs since the mid-1990s, and JUTE currently runs a three-stage development program, and a regional playwrights' conference.
- *ACT*: A playwrights group is funded.
- *Northern Territory*: Darwin Theatre Company's program produces new works and is shifting towards script development for these works.

Theatre company programming requirements for new works are usually specific to that company but the QTC and STC, and formerly Playbox, and to some extent MTC, STCSA and PTC, provide script development programs that are separate to their programming. PTC also organises regular meetings to read the works of a significant number of writers and these progress to a public event. The provision of script development varies considerably depending on the commitment of the artistic director and there is no automatic access even for commissioned writers.

b) *State ministries of arts*

Support the three layers of SDOs with grants to national and state organisations and theatre companies (see 3.5).

c) *Local government partnerships*

SDOs' and smaller theatre companies' programs benefit from city council and state government initiatives in relation to arts centre facilities—for example, the Judith Wright Centre in Brisbane and Salamanca Place in Hobart. The NSW Ministry supports the publication of a print directory that lists freelance artists and theatre organisations in Western Sydney by municipal area. The contribution of venue managements, which increasingly provide a metropolitan and/or regional touring circuit to productions, might also be sought to provide greater support for script development. One important example in 2005 is that the ANPC was held at the Newcastle Civic Centre with the support of the Newcastle Municipal Council and the NSW Ministry for the Arts.

d) *Local knowledge*

This research finds that knowledge about theatre is commonly localised and short-term, and that there is a lack of information about what has happened and is happening elsewhere. This translates into artists who are writing, creating and producing in different parts of Australia in 2005 asking for a receptive environment of exchange and claiming that there are dismissive attitudes towards works developed outside the 'centres'.

2.1.5 Submission and Selection

(See Recommendations 12, 14, 17, 18 and 19)

a) *Script Assessment/Unsolicited Scripts*

In 2005 three SDOs and two theatre companies offer fee-for-service assessments or smaller fee (with membership) and subsidised service year round (OP). From the mid-1990s theatre company literary managements rejected an implicit policy of receiving and responding to unsolicited scripts year round—in 2005 only Company B, La

Mama, Deckchair, Yirra Yaakin, Kooemba Jdarra and Vitalstatistix respond to these. In 2003 the Australian National Playwrights' Conference has introduced a call for submissions with a \$55 fee and receives a high number of applications approximately 130 annually. There has been a steady decline in applications to the ANPC's fee-for-service assessment since 1995. There is no information as to whether the feedback from script assessment discourages writers or assists them to develop work further. There is anecdotal evidence that writers react strongly to what they perceive as negative comments.²

Experienced writers are aware that unsolicited scripts to theatre companies very rarely receive productions and are least likely to submit on this basis. An experienced and an established writer might only realistically expect a production every two to three years, which is about the time a writer might expect to spend on a script (WQ). It might be assumed that lack of access to production will eventually discourage writers from continuing to write and submit work.

Over a decade there has been a decline in the number of submissions for fee-for-service script assessment to the Australian National Playwrights' Conference and Playworks. This decline corresponds with much more targeted programs so that writers apply for a specific program with a deadline for submission. Applications to the Australian National Playwrights' Conference do not support claims of a decline in the number of writers. Furthermore, 'Short and Sweet', a ten-minute play competition, received 1,000 submissions in 2005 and there were 195 applications to the STC and SMH's Young Playwrights Award.

b) *Quality*

SDOs rely on writers submitting scripts to make selections for their programs. The main programs of national and state-based SDOs require writers to submit applications for selection with background information and, in addition, Playworks requires letters of support. SDOs rely on writers approaching them and/or responding to their published deadlines with submissions (OP). The consequence of this submission-based application process is that the calibre of writing and writers available for selection depends on who is motivated to apply in any given year. The repercussion is that the quality of the writers' submissions sets the standard of work entering a script and/or writer development program. There was concern expressed that some submitted scripts were substandard and yet the industry's apparent dependency on submissions from writers (artists) for a pool of new works or proposals remains largely unquestioned (IC).

The ASC states that since 1997, in order to improve the quality of the scripts that it receives, it has been proactive in canvassing writers' organisations and making contact with writers whose work was produced within the independent theatre sector venues (AC). The QTC proactively approach writers for participation in their Works program.

² It is difficult to establish if there was a decline in unsolicited scripts sent to theatre companies as a result of the almost complete lack of productions coming out of this practice or whether an overt policy of not receiving scripts brought about a decline in the volume of unsolicited submissions. Nonetheless, Company B receives around 70 plus unsolicited scripts a year.

Mobility between the specialised functions of writer and that of performer, director or any other creative artist engaged in theatre is common. A novice writer who is recognised as an established performer or director may be unreasonably advantaged in relation to other writers with regard to having a reputation in theatre and also may be perceived to have an increased likelihood of production.

c) *Artistic preferences/networks*

Selection criteria are premised not only on a good script but also on the likelihood of production and therefore of an audience for the script. The centrality of the individual preferences of decision-makers as artistic directors or literary managers is widely acknowledged. Artistic decision-making is conditioned by experience and the turnover of staff may have an impact (IC). Therefore the background and experience of the artistic leadership of an SDO is relevant to script selection. But SDOs are seen as being able, to some extent, to offset the special interests of theatre companies by selecting a wider range of new scripts.

Knowing of a writer is a factor in selection for invitation or commission by theatre companies. Writers become 'known' it seems through both formal and informal networks. Writers currently being produced and/or produced frequently are best served at any one time. This research suggests that theatre companies frequently use informal networks for knowledge about writers (researcher's analysis). Informal networks may be short-term and personality dependent in comparison with more systematic communication processes to inform decision-making. Where formal networks operate, there is an unclear relationship to script development opportunities. Two theatre company literary managers confirm that the scripts are read from the industry submissions by theatre organisations, writers' agents and literary agents.

d) *Calls for proposals*

In 2005 six theatre companies called for proposals for scripts and ideas. (This is a completely separate process to a major theatre company inviting a writer to write a script to first draft for a fee and/or to become an affiliate writer.) The call for proposals for ideas and scripts suggests theatre companies wishing to have a wide field of submissions to select from (researcher's analysis). This is an effort to invigorate new works and shape the type of writing available to them while rejecting unsolicited scripts. Collaborative text-making has proven extremely effective for some types of new works and particularly for special interest groups such as youth theatre. It is not clear if the process of calling for proposals for scripts is attracting established writers.

e) *Competitions*

There has been an increase in competitions as theatre company receipt of unsolicited scripts declined from the mid-1990s (see 4.3). Theatre companies are watchful of competitions for unproduced scripts because these might identify and bring forward new writers (IC). Competitions are likely to be allied with theatre companies although winners are not necessarily produced (OP). Competitions have become a substitute for the receipt of unsolicited scripts by a theatre company. They require a small entry fee from writers but potentially offer a financial reward and an increased profile for a writer and his or her work. Competitions circumvent fee-service script assessment or membership fees with SDOs.

f) *Invitation*

At the point of invitation and commission within the industry, theatre companies proactively select writers. Major theatre companies produce the commissions of a handful of established writers whose careers have generally progressed through script development programs, and/or productions with smaller companies—for example, Hannie Rayson's works have progressed from the independent theatre sector to Playbox to the MTC and STC in 2005. Writers become available for commission or affiliation once they have had one or more productions by a smaller theatre company or, to a lesser extent, a play reading by a recognised organisation such as at the annual Australian National Playwrights' Conference.

A writer may gain the attention of a smaller theatre company if involved in an independent theatre sector production selected for a season at, for example, La Mama, B Sharp at Belvoir St, Metro Arts with Queensland Theatre Company, PACS venues in Perth, and since 2005 the Tower Room at the Malthouse as well as a number of other smaller venues. Generally a group with writer(s) working in the independent theatre sector must achieve sustained critical acclaim before they will be co-produced by theatre companies.

g) *Identity Diversity of Writers*

Unless a theatre company's stated mission is to do with diversity and identity, this research finds that racial, ethnic and gender diversity is a low priority for theatre companies and therefore diversity of opportunity should continue to be addressed at a national level by policy and through funded SDOs (researcher's analysis). Diversity of writer identity often requires more writer development and/or creative team work.

h) *Lack of payment:*

Poor remuneration impacts on the time needed to improve the quality of scripts. David Throsby and Virginia Hollister find that writers across all genres earn a mean income of \$20,400 a year, which is below actors on \$22,500 but above visual artists (2003: 45). Theatre companies pay a \$10,000 commissioning fee according to the Writers' Guild recommendation in 2005. Established writers for performance might earn annual incomes from their writing comparable with writers in other fields as outlined by Throsby and Hollister. The levels of remuneration and fluctuations from year to year lead established writers to undertake other types of writing such as for television.

Emerging and experienced writers for performance derive most of their annual income from sources other than writing although these may be related such as teaching, and the amount derived from writing will vary from year to year (researcher's analysis). The necessity of an alternative source of income or career impacts on the retention of experienced writers.

i) *Criticism of new works*

One of the most contentious issues that has arisen in interviews is that of value judgements about the quality of new work (IC). Criticisms in the industry about new works should take into account that theatre caters for a wide range of audiences and tastes. It is often unclear if a critical opinion about the quality of a writer's accomplishment and/or the production indicates a taste preference rather than an evaluation of aesthetic considerations. In addition, a very experienced theatre-goer may adhere to a set of standards and expectations that are not explained as part of a criticism.

There were comments about a tendency to ‘conservative form’ where theatre decision-making is audience-driven rather than artistically motivated (IC). This tendency suggests that projects that use innovative forms face difficulties gaining productions. Innovative productions, however, have traditionally been done by groups in smaller venues so that subsidised venues remain extremely important to innovation (researcher’s analysis). Innovation can mean either form or socially challenging content or both, and innovation in theatre after 2000 is clearly focused on content with over 20 new works on the theme of asylum seekers (researcher’s analysis (Milne 2004)).

There is a perception in interviews for comment that theatre companies feel obligated to do new Australian works (IC). This may detract from the restaging of previously produced Australian plays. There is concern expressed in interviews for comment that those who assist with scripts as either a dramaturg and/or director should have the capacity (talent) for this specialist role as well as the necessary skills (IC).

2.1.6 New Initiative (See Recommendation 20)

20 In order to address issues of quality, a new initiative of seeding grants to independent broker organisations be implemented and that these broker organisations have a sustained commitment to the work of (possibly up to 6) writers and their specific new works overseeing progressive script development through to first and subsequent productions in partnership with other organisations.

This initiative for encouraging more effective transitions from script development to production is *not* a recommendation for dramaturgy as an end in itself, or for writer self-promotion, or for adding an extra program in an existing company. (The theatre and literary agents who represent established writers would seem to operate with a presumption that the writer is responsible for the development of new work; only 19% of writers in this research have agents (WQ).)

a) Production

Writers for performance seek to have their work produced (WQ). A writer’s primary relationship may be with a director (researcher’s analysis). This relationship is accommodated uneasily within script development where dramaturgy is professionalised. Playwrights often work with the director prior to a rehearsal on what can only be seen as script development, but this work with a director seems to be the least formally recognised script development activity. It arises because the script is going into production or the director helps facilitate production.

An institutional gulf becomes apparent in the attempt to track how non-affiliated writers cross between script and writer development organisations to production opportunities when no organisations have this function. The theatre industry is reliant on a submission-based system for its pool of writers/artists: the writer makes a submission to a SDO, a funding organisation, then the writer (or his or her agent) makes a script submission to a theatre company/literary manager (unless an invitation is forthcoming).

There are Australian examples of producing organisations that receive funding but do not operate theatre venues, and produce and co-produce new writing and commission writers; e.g. Windmill Performing Arts (for children) in SA and Steamworks in WA.

b) *Freelance*

The freelance nature of writing and the type of sustained endeavour means that writers for performance are appropriately grouped with writers more broadly: 75 percent of artists are ‘freelance or self-employed’ (Throsby and Hollister 2003: 79). Individual writers benefit from the current separation of funding:

- Applying through the Literature and Theatre Boards and state ministries of arts programs for commission funding.
- Seeking script development with SDO funded by the Theatre Board and Literature Board—at best in 2005 this would be a workshop and reading with a director and actors.
- Seeking script development by applying through the Theatre Board’s New Work category to fund a script development phase encompassed by creative development that may include whatever grouping of artistic collaborations that the writer sees as appropriate.
- Seeking production with a theatre group, and ideally a company funded by the Theatre Board and a state ministry or at least access to a venue subsidised by the Theatre Board and state ministry.
- Writers might also work in creative development teams and/or project teams with shorter deadlines for reaching production in the independent theatre sector but preferably in a subsidised venue.

The burden of a submission-based system on freelance writers is considerable. Writers experience long intervals waiting for responses to their scripts and submissions. A sense of a group identity might in part alleviate some of the ‘wear and tear’ on freelance writers within the current system.

c) *Independent production*

To continue to produce outside the professional (funded) sector, artists must raise funding and this is difficult to sustain over time (see Appendix 6.6). Aside from a generalised acknowledgement of a vibrant independent theatre sector, this potential is not systematically acknowledged as a source of new scripts. The gulf between the fertile fringe and the established funded professional companies can be bridged for writers by script development programs and subsidised venues such as La Mama can be foundational to professional theatre.

Commissioning initiatives by Playlab during 1998–2003 and by the ASC during 2002–2003 would appear to recognise the need to proactively engage writers. However, this does not bridge the institutional gulf between script development and production. The commissioning of new works or the funding of collaborative projects by SDOs means that these organisations become quasi-theatre companies and, since commissioning is still the most common theatre company activity to generate new work, this seems a surplus activity for SDOs.

According to Ausstages figures for the total number of productions, by 2005 Daniel Keene can be included in the five most produced playwrights in Australia (Milne 2005). Four out of the five—(Shakespeare), Williamson, Nowra, and Enright—had

been produced by 1980 by major theatre companies. Although he has been writing since the early 1980s, Keene's work would seem to have gained prominence due to an independent producing venture with director Ariette Taylor.

2.1.7 Minimum Guidelines (See Recommendation 11)

The researcher asks: In listing all the current practices according to the time allocated and resources required (detailed in 5.1), are these graduated stages and if so, how long should the writer be given to digest input at each stage before proceeding to the next? It is evident that SDOs need to take responsibility for outlining and providing a progressive framework (researcher's analysis). SDO selection should carry an obligation to advise writers and the industry realistically.

a) Responsibility for script development

There is a consensus that the writing of a good script takes time and probably more than one year (WQ, IC). Script development precedes the production of many new works. Given the uneven provision of sequential script development, with some noteworthy theatre company exceptions, and a submission-based system (see 2.1.6), writers are ultimately left with the responsibility for determining if their script has had sufficient and worthwhile development. Claims that the writer is best served by determining what is needed for development does not align with theatre company programming requirements for specific types of scripts developed to a particular standard of readiness (OP). Alternatively, some theatre company staff are critical of scripts tailored to what writers think the company requires (IC).

b) Evaluation

SDOs require readers' gradings in order to rank scripts from A to D for internal use and selection at their initial submission. The research did not find any guidelines for a script once it had undergone development. (It notes at least three conferences to clarify the role of professional dramaturgs.) It concludes that there is a need for some industry guidelines or minimum protocols for script development and for writer development (see 5.1) to assist as an evaluative tool in considering works. This might be progressive phases set according to a minimum time frame. At present commitment to writer development would seem to alleviate a SDO from the responsibility of critically evaluating whether a writer has progressed in his or her work.

c) Benefits

SDOs proclaim the benefits of script development, and the theatre industry wide expansion to include script development processes make the worth of such development undeniable. Script and writer development is validated by its practices. The implicit assumptions among writer and script development programs would seem to be that all development is beneficial but outcomes are subjective to individual writers and cannot be generalised. Yet the results need to be evaluated for effectiveness to offset stagnation in the field of script development.

This research found some variation in levels of writer support for different types of development but an overwhelming preference for a workshop with a director and actors (see 5.2). Currently, the benefits of script development are measured by whether the script is picked up for production by a theatre company. After inclusion in

an SDO program, writers are expected to approach theatre companies and to advocate their own work to artistic directors or their representatives who might attend public play readings. Given three decades of script development processes, what is achieved should be articulated by the professional organisations so as to assist writers in this process of approaching suitable theatre companies (and for self-producing). This in turn will assist SDOs' planning strategies and reports.

d) *Dramaturgs*

Dramaturgs make a vital contribution in facilitating script development from early to later stages. A professional dramaturg is usually a freelance part-time professional working on multiple projects to generate an income. Only a small number of theatre companies maintain a dramaturg-in-residence, continuing a 1980s and 1990s practice. Dramaturgs research and support the production of known works especially classics as well as assist with the development of new ones. A dramaturg might be someone with between one and twenty years experience or another writer. He or she might be someone selected by the writer and therefore a mentor rather than a dramaturg. While noting the clear statements of backgrounds of professional expertise by several organisations and one tertiary subject, it is beyond the scope of this research to comment on the professional function of dramaturgs.

Some writers fail to understand what is needed from them through script development, while others are methodical about redrafting. There is some concern, expressed in interviews for comment, however, that too much development can undermine a script's integrity (IC). Yet script development cannot always rectify a poor standard of writing, although a good production can at times enhance a script and a poor production can at times undercut a good script. Sometimes the comment that a script 'needs more development' can be a veiled question: How did this script get produced?

2.1.8 Multiple Models (See Recommendation 21)

The scope of Australian theatre activity reveals multiple models for script development in operation in 2005, which arose within this country's theatre culture (see 5.1). Other countries have one city that dominates the country's theatre whereas Australia has a geographically dispersed performance culture. Overseas models for script development are pertinent if not directly transferable.

For International see 4. 7 Overseas models and Appendix 6.5 for Report on New Writing Development Overseas and in particular, see its section on Soho Theatre Writers Centre.

a) *The best-practice models*

Script development processes in Australia correspond to script development processes overseas but the institutional arrangements for these processes vary enormously.

National

The most sought-after script development opportunity for writers is a workshop with a director and actors such as the Australian National Playwrights' Conference provides. In 2005 the *STC* provides the largest artistic and financial commitment to a script development program, supporting innovative works, some of which progress through to production. The *QTC* has a thorough and regularly modified process that includes

being proactive in seeking out the writers for its Works program and offering defined stages of development.

There are smaller theatre companies providing cost effective one or two day workshops with a reading to an audience on small budgets. *Subsidised organisations* like La Mama and Theatreworks in Victoria and PACS in WA assist with absolutely crucial production opportunities for the independent theatre sector. *Indigenous theatre* companies are working towards providing thorough induction into the process script development for novice writers. *JUTE* provides clearly progressive script development at a *regional and small* theatre company level.

International

Two examples from the UK are relevant to the recommendations:

- Paines Plough has a thirty-year history of overseeing work from early script development through theatre company production under the leadership of a working director, and its writers include Mark Ravenhill and the late Sarah Kane.
- Battersea Arts Centre has ‘producers’ who can be approached, and who scout for writers and productions in the independent theatre sector to be associated with the centre.

Playmarket is the licensing agent for plays and playwrights in New Zealand (81% writer participants in this research do not have agents).

Certainly the models for excellence in spoken word theatre can be English as cited in this research, but equally the French theatre is renowned for image-based theatre and the latter influenced Australia greatly from the 1960s through training opportunities. In the USA, writers are more likely to be identified as being connected to an actors’ theatre, like Steppenwolf in Chicago, rather than to a collaborative image-based directors’ theatre, like New York’s Wooster Group. Non-script-based physical theatres thrived in Australia in the 1990s because of culturally specific attributes.

b) *Writers’ Theatre*

The idea of a writers’ theatre was raised in various guises in this research, but oddly was often contextualised to English rather than Australian theatre history. But given the centrality of new writing to innovation in Australian theatre since new wave drama of the early 1970s, women’s drama of the 1980s, and Indigenous writer-performers of the 1990s, the question becomes: What type of writers’ theatre?

In 2005, calls for a writers’ theatre seem state-specific if not city-specific rather than national. These are sometimes descriptions of a place that writers can go to and feel comfortable in, like a writers’ drop-in centre (see Appendix 6.5 on Soho Theatre). The proposition that significant writing comes from a theatre focused on encouraging writers is undeniable. The feasibility of a writers’ theatre in Australian theatre is overshadowed by the end of Playbox in Victoria in 2004.

Playbox was a flagship company for this idea from 1987 to 2004 with its commitment to producing only Australian plays, and it will be theatre history that validates the achievements of Playbox. Of the estimated 200-plus writers associated with Playbox and its script development programs in some way, a legacy is currently evident in the contrasting styles and prominence of writers such as Hannie Rayson, Joanna Murray-

Smith, Michael Gurr and Matt Cameron. These writers had the benefit of key relationships with directors and/or stable production teams in their formative writing period.

This research raises for consideration the possibility that, contrary to the current call, it may take a large pool of writers for a few to gain national prominence. Innovation in form might be cyclic, since theatre artists and writers are currently drawn to making strong innovative comments on their society such as over twenty new works produced on the theme of asylum-seekers since 2000 (Milne 2004).

c) *Creative Development and Collaboration*

Devised collaborative works with performers, directors and other artists including writers are a source of new works for 12 Australia Council-funded companies that were included in this research doing non-script-based work, although not necessarily in 2005. These companies are STC, STCSA, Malthouse, Deckchair, Vitalstatistix, Melbourne Workers Theatre, Legs on the Wall, Urban Theatre, Ibijerri, Sidetrack, Arena and Jigsaw.

The approach of the STCSA during 2000–2004, and the Malthouse from 2005, towards development processes with an ensemble or creative team suggests the broadening of theatre company practices towards the creation of new works. This artistic direction is influenced by practices that evolved fully in the independent (theatre) performance sector from the late 1980s and was recognised in Playworks development programs in the mid-1990s.

Static funding for SDOs has meant that the early 1990s ideal of nurturing innovative writers over time away from the audience-specific requirements of particular theatres has faded. There is a danger with reliance on any one way of making theatre and, given Australia's recent history of innovation, at this point in time, a range of processes must co-exist. Writing is a starting point. The question facing every creative team is: Where to start? Recent initiatives of development opportunities for creative teams by STCSA and Malthouse is premised on a different way of working in creating theatre. This emphasises collaboration and is a manifestation of the twentieth century's evolution of a directors' theatre. The project team of writer and director, and possibly designer and/or composer, functions as a core group and writing is being supported in this creative context.

Ensembles with the writer embedded in a production team provide an ideal model for theatre—although, as has been noted elsewhere, such theatre is sustained best in countries with a high degree of government subsidy for the arts or a large audience base. An ensemble-based way of working has been artistically proven to produce innovative high-quality theatre but such works are difficult to retain once an ensemble has disbanded. A compromise model is shaping up as a 'team' or 'dramaturgical team', with core members being the director-writer or writer-performer etc. This corresponds with a broader notion of a writing process from the collaborations of the director, designer and performers rather than one clear identifiable figure of the writer. However, where this model has been widely used since the mid-1980s for performance-making, a writer has often been included as part of the creative team because of the difficulty of a group creating conceptually layered and well-structured

work without a considered set of writing skills. This writing process invariably requires specialist skills to be effective.

The merit of the recent experiments with creative teams has more to do with including the writer in the process of making theatre and receiving a continuity of input from a stable production team over a long gestation period that bridges the separation between writing, script development and production. Writers who write with a team, even a script development team, are working in the theatre and towards production, which is the most important activity for writers for performance.

Conclusion

Theatre's contribution to national culture is a cumulative one that does not rest on the merits of one script or one theatre company but reflects and comes out of the broad cultural milieu. New works also come out of a particular socio-cultural artistic period. For example, Jane Harrison's *Stolen* had the highest sales for a Currency Press play text in 2004–2005 because of the education market.

At present there is a contested call across the cultural industries for funding organisations to support fewer accomplished recipients more fully to achieve better results. The recent history of script development suggests that this may be counterproductive, since a play like *Stolen* might not have eventuated. Script writing is a creative undertaking that does not fit neatly into a model in which there are defined inputs with specified outputs.

The cultural benefits of theatre to Australian culture are that: theatre enhances a sense of community through the attendance and enjoyment and/or knowledge of the work; theatre draws public attention to current local issues; theatre responds comparatively quickly to shifts in social ideas; and theatre expresses the complex human dimensions to contemporary debates.

3 Script Development Organisations

3.1 Script Development Over Three Decades

The history of script development in Australian theatre is now in its fourth decade and reflects considerable change in Australian theatre, arts funding and society. The history after 1990 is presented for each SDO at 5 year intervals, and correspondingly for theatre companies (see 5.4). If available, financial information is current to 2004.

Seventies

The first organised script development of Australian plays was held in 1972 at a conference for playwrights organised by a committee who did the play reading (Parsons 1988: 5). This Australian National Playwrights' Conference is foundational and an inseparable part of the formal script development processes. It established the tradition of developing new work from all over Australia through a process of intensive workshops with the writer/s and professional performers and directors based on a USA model. The playwrights' conference was a response to the unmistakable widespread innovations in Australian theatre at the time (Robertson 2001; Meyrick 2002). It soon became a 'major meeting point place for Australian theatre' (Parsons 1988: 9), and had a 'virtual monopoly' by 1975 (ibid: 17). The tension between artistic innovation and commercial viability was there from the outset, as was the difficulty of gaining opportunities for new playwrights. The 1975 conference was opened by the then Governor General, Sir John Kerr, and contained a seminar on the 'Emergence of Urban Aboriginal Identity Through the Arts' chaired by Jack Davis (Parsons 1988: 14; Casey 2004).

Eighties

The sense of historical continuity in Australian theatre initiated by Mick Rodger for the playwrights' conference in 1978 (Parsons 1988: 21) also provided a vital change catalyst leading into the 1980s as Australian theatre became the subject of serious academic study. In that decade Australian theatre increasingly found its place in university courses, although play writing was yet to follow suit. Australian theatre-makers needed to know their own history and understand that developments like the centrality of the director within Australian theatre, which had become apparent, followed precedents elsewhere. By 1985 play selection was based on the reports of readers. The themes of "'multiculturalism and black/white relations'" (Parsons 1988: 35) arose from the submitted plays, and a delegation took a play to the O'Neill Center.

The first plays arising from theatre company commissions were workshopped in 1986 and represented a change in ANPC policy. Theatre companies now had literary managers or committees responsible for script assessment. An office was established in 1975 in Sydney and the organisation became the Australian National Playwrights Centre (ANPC) in 1986. There was an ongoing relationship with Australian Society for Authors and the Australian Writers' Guild where the ANPC had its first office before its current location. Other script development programs emerged, and while script assessment and the conference remained a core activity of the ANPC, activity was diversified—annual finances permitting. Playworks was established in 1985 (*Telling Time* 1996) and there was the Black National Playwrights' Conference, the

Australian National Young Playwrights' Weekend, and other theatre conferences including the Australasian Drama Studies Association annual conferences.

Nineties

The 1990s decade was typified by the diversification of script development programs to state-based initiatives and by theatre companies. The worth of script development was no longer in question and the ANPC also ran the National Young Playwrights' Weekend during the mid-1990s. Playworks, in particular, pioneered innovative script development processes with dramaturgy and the provision of an ideas stream. It also expanded the range of artistic collaborations to include choreographers and more physical body-based texts. The 1990s was also a period of great expansion for the theatre of images and physical theatre, which requires a different type of creative (writing) process and therefore different approaches by a writer.

The research for this report was carried out between April and August of 2005 and, unless stated otherwise, the financial information was current to 2004.

3.2 ANPC and Australian National Playwrights' Conference

The ANPC serves professional playwrights and, according to the ANPC's web-published list, 67 scripts selected for development in the ANPC and the Australian National Playwrights' Conference programs have been produced since 1993. From the 2004 conference scripts, 10 out of 11 were produced (OP).

2005 Script Development Programs (application numbers for places)

National Playwrights' Conference (130 for 8)
Script Assessment fee-for-service Program (40)
New Dramatists Exchange (50 for 1)
Mentorships (5 for 3)

Other activities

Publication of *Dialogue* magazine
Publication of On-line newsletter for members
Workshops and events
Correspondence course on play writing

Conference

The Australian National Playwrights' Conference held in Newcastle in 2005 revisited the location of the 1974 Australian National Playwrights' Conference at the University of Newcastle, which was attended by guests from equivalent organisations overseas for the first time (Parsons 1988: 11). As part of the ANPC's ongoing one-for-one international exchange in 2005, a New Dramatist (USA) playwright attended and had a play read. The conference remains the most important program of the ANPC and has a stand-alone outcome of public play readings. The conference emerges from this research as the most widely supported program (IC), and the workshop with reading as the most effective script development process (WQ).

Eight scripts were chosen for the 2005 workshop program (8 scripts were chosen in 2000, 10 in 1995, 12 in 1990 with 5 in workshops and 7 play readings). In 2005 there were four male and four female writers, and since 1990 there has been equitable

representation of women writers. The workshop program involves a week of reading and reworking the script for the writer, with a dramaturg, a director and actors, which allows the writer to hear how the script is acted in rehearsal and receive comments from experienced professionals. The writer can rework parts of the play during the conference. The scripts are presented in public readings within a 'Final Day' program.

Artists in the workshops are partially funded to attend by the Literature Board. Additional support comes from the state funding bodies, theatre companies and cash sponsors. The 2005 conference had 17 actors, 8 directors or dramaturgs, a production manager and a residency tutor. Writers are given the opportunity to attend six master classes with industry professionals as well as forums to debate current issues. There is a fee for master classes.

From 2002, the conference curator has been contracted for three annual conferences and makes the selection of scripts based on readers' reports. This rotation of the position of conference artistic director is intended to encourage variety in types of work selected and is also an acknowledgement that artistic decision-making can be subjective. The conference must operate as one entity, in part because of financial necessity, so that there is a doubling of artistic functions among those attending. The financial constraints of the conference budget are conducive to pragmatism in the final selection of performers, dramaturgs, directors and writers.

The 2003 conference connected the application process directly to the conference in order to address criticism that access to the selection process of earlier conferences was limited. Prior to 2002 the artistic director selected scripts for the conference based on readers' reports on year round submissions for script assessment, and there were more opportunities for scripts. There has been a \$55 fee for submitting to the conference since 2003, and 8–10 scripts are chosen.

The longstanding role of the Australian National Playwrights Conference in showcasing scripts that theatre companies should consider has lessened due to the expansion in SDOs and theatre company programs. The current shift is towards the conference having theatre company relationships. In 2004, 10 out of 11 conference scripts received productions. The 100-plus annual applications for the conference correspond to a decline in the number of fee-for-service year-round script assessment submissions, which went from around 100 annually down to 63 in 2003 and 40 in 2004. Writers are indicating their preference for direct application to the conference workshop and showcase.

The Australian National Playwrights' Conference would consider choosing a play by the same writer two years running but not for three. There are Indigenous writers chosen each year, and in previous years there were creative teams to generate an 'ideas stream' based on research indicating potentially good subjects for which no written scripts existed. In addition, the conference runs a fee-for-service residency program for writers who can pay to attend the conference. The residency scheme for nine writers in 2005 costs either \$600 or \$900, and writers are given one-to-one access to dramaturgy and a director.

International Program

ANPC is the organisation that continues to represent Australian writing for performance internationally. It also officially hosts international theatre artists visiting Australia and is contacted by other departments of government for this purpose. The New Dramatists Exchange program allows one dramatist a year to work in New York for six weeks, and a New York writer to attend the Australian National Playwrights' Conference. The Australian playwright must have had two productions, and takes one developed and one new play to New York where the new work receives a reading.

Script Assessment

The ANPC continues to offer a fee-for-service year-round script assessment. Assessment can be a written report and/or a face-to-face meeting or telephone call with a dramaturg. In 2005 the provision of script assessment is a manageable service for the ANPC staff. Fee-for-service script assessment is done by assessors who have worked for a major company. As a way of evaluating the scripts internally they are graded from A to D, but there would only be one A and a couple of Bs on average awarded a year by assessors. The grading information is not given to the writer.

Submissions for Script Assessments

1988	250 scripts submitted
1990	250 or 100 (unclear information)
1995	150
2000	105
2003	63
2004	40 (15 from NSW)

Mentorships

Writers under the age of thirty can apply for an unpaid mentorship of eight months, by submitting their script and suggesting a mentor who is paid. The script receives two workshops with a director and actors.

Additional Services

The ANPC produces four editions of a magazine, *Dialogue*, annually for the industry. It also produces an on-line newsletter for members, and in 2004 it had 440 members receiving \$16,679.81 income. The breakdown state-by-state was last available in 2002, with NSW having 230 members, Vic 58, Qld 37, ACT 20, SA 14. A correspondence course in play writing remains viable and is run in partnership with writers' centres. It includes audio tapes, notes and writing exercises and is intended for writers living out of metropolitan areas and also those living overseas.

2005 Facilities and Personnel

The office facilities consist of two upstairs rooms above the NSW Writers' Centre, costing \$6,000 in 2004. While the location is appropriate, there is a clear need for refurbishment. The ANPC responds to member inquiries but does not staff an office for general public inquiries. The ANPC has the benefit of a very experienced general manager with considerable arts and administrative experience who works part-time, an experienced artistic director and administrative assistance.

2000 Centre Program

- Australian National Playwrights' Conference (as above).

- Centre Program. In addition to the conference, the ANPC offered a program, which involved 12-months continuing dramaturgy for selected playwrights from every state that funded the program.
- There was extended script development over time with access to dramaturgy and/or creative teams, which may or may not have involved selection for the conference.
- ‘Drop-in Dramaturgy’ was offered by a part-time resident dramaturg.
- Young Playwrights’ Studio: Workshops in NSW, ACT, NT, Qld, Tas, SA for 26 writers
- New Dramatists New York, playwrights’ exchange.
- Landmines Project with Australian and Asian writers.
- Script assessment.
- Courses and events.

1995 Centre Program

- Australian National Playwrights’ Conference for eight scripts selected with two Indigenous writers and two readings.
- Centre playwrights with dramaturgical assistance for 16 writers annually, of whom at least half came from NSW.
- Dramaturg-in-residence.
- Fertile Grounds initiated in 1995 with six play readings from the Australian repertoire.
- Young National Playwrights’ Weekend for NSW, Vic, NT and WA (with ICI/STC Young Playwrights’ Competition)
- International: New Dramatists New York, playwrights’ exchange.
- Script assessment

1990 Centre Program

- National Playwrights’ Conference in Canberra, including a workshop for students from VCA, NIDA and WAAPA.
- Dramaturgical assistance for writers: this instigated a separate program from the workshop with directors and actors.
- Young National Playwrights’ Weekend in Melbourne for 24 playwrights. This picked up the program run by Sydney’s Shopfront Theatre for young people for over a decade funded by the Literature Board.
- International: New Dramatists New York exchange finalised.
- Events
- Script Assessment

Strengths

- The Australian National Playwrights Conference has the full support of the profession for providing the only national gathering of this kind in the theatre industry (IC).
- The ANPC provides a stand-alone annual outcome with the conference play readings for an audience.
- ANPC provides official international representation for Australian writers for performance, and a contact point for other Australian government organisations like embassies.
- The workshop with actors and directors followed by play readings remains the most sought-after method of script development (WQ).

- The impressive track record of this national organisation attracts leaders in the field of script development.
- New initiatives to rotate the annual conference around the states are very effective attracting state ministry support for the conference. In 2004, \$50,000 came from the South Australian Ministry, \$15,000 from the Adelaide Festival, and the venue was provided by Flinders University. In 2005 in Newcastle there was \$45,000 from the NSW Ministry, \$5,000 from the municipal authority and the Civic Centre facility. WA Arts Ministry will contribute \$60,000 for 2006 and plans are being made for Queensland in 2007. Qantas has also been approached for support.
- Partnerships with theatre companies have the benefit of serving writers who will be produced.
- The ANPC serves professional playwrights. While it is difficult to qualify this label of ‘professional’, it can to be taken to mean playwrights who are writing for the industry’s attention and show the capacity to attract it by securing productions for their work.

Issues of Concern

The number of script development programs and activities offered declined 1995–2004/2005. The ANPC provided dramaturgical assistance for writers outside the conference up until 2002, but this capacity has been curtailed completely. Scripts and the conference would benefit from this preliminary work.

The Australian National Playwrights’ Conference serves professional writers, but there are few writers included who have had main stage productions yet remain non-affiliated to a theatre company at present. A strand of readings and/or workshops at the conference along with a proactive engagement with non-affiliated writers for suitable new scripts might address this concern. The ANPC would seem to be the appropriate contact point for this group of experienced professional writers.

While partnerships with theatre companies have positive advantages (see Strengths above), the partners may actually take up an opportunity that would otherwise go to an non-affiliated writer. It is said in the interviews for comment (IC) that the ANPC is responding to what is already in the pipeline and would be produced anyway and theatre companies should take responsibility for the development of such scripts.

The static funding over the past decade means that the ANPC can only cover the basic administration of the conference and some membership services. The ANPC staff handle queries from members but cannot provide a general information service. Even though this is a national organisation, which rotates its conference around the states, state arts ministry funding is not assured. In 2003, Arts Victoria ceased its Professional Development Program funding and therefore funding the ANPC (and for the ASC). In 2005 Arts Victoria provided a grant to the ANPC.

Included in the following figures is financial information available at the time of the research, and the total funding from the Literature Board supports the conference and New Dramatists New York Exchange.

Main Funding and Income Streams

2004 (total budget \$327,454)

Theatre Board	\$75,000
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Lit. Board	\$55,000
	\$ 4,000
NSW	\$35,000
ACT conf.	\$12,634
Qld conf.	\$10,653
SA conf.	\$36,000
WA conf.	\$12,576
Adelaide Festival	\$15,000
Sponsorship & Donations	\$14,021
Conference fees	\$14,999
Course fees	\$11,352
Membership	\$16,680
script assessment fees	\$ 4,232
Interest	\$ 3,753
Tapes, box office, advertising, sundry	\$ 6,554

2000 (total budget \$368,148)

Theatre Fund	\$75,000
Lit. Fund conf.	\$69,000
ACT conf.	\$ 6,000
NSW	\$25,000
SA conf.	\$20,000
Qld and Vic. confs	\$10,000
WA centre	\$ 5,000
Adelaide Festival conf.	\$40,000
Other grants	\$25,195
Sponsorships & donations	\$24,801
Conference fees	\$31,971
Membership	\$14,629
Script assessment fees	\$11,046
Interest	\$ 5,839
Box office, Dialogue sundry	\$ 4,667

1995 (total budget \$314,453)

PAB annual	\$75,000
Lit. Board conf.	\$46,500
NSW centre	\$10,000
ACT conf.	\$ 8,405
Qld, WA, Vic.	\$18,000
Other grants	\$30,608
Sponsorships & donations	\$14,443
Conference fees	\$75,848
Membership	\$15,831
Script assessment fees	\$ 7,291
Interest	\$ 6,804
Box office, sundry	\$ 5,723

1990 (total budget \$203,642)

PAB annual	\$45,000
PAB project conf.	\$14,000
Lit. Board	\$28,000

NSW	\$14,000
ACT	\$ 8,000
NT	\$ 2,000
WA	\$ 4,000
Other revenue	\$67,855
Donations	\$ 6,222
Membership fees	\$ 7,470
(deficit	-\$7,095)

3.3 Playworks

‘Through dramaturgy and development programs between 2000 and 2005 Playworks has supported 155 writers and 190 performance works’ thereby contributing to ‘46 productions nationally on a broad range of stages (main stage, small–medium, regional, and independent)’ (Playworks information). Playworks ‘dramaturgy, mentorship and writer development programs are intended pro-actively for women’. Since 2000, workshops and residencies are open to both men and women. From 1985, Playworks sought to encourage women’s writing when women were professionally underrepresented in theatre as artists and its programs have involved many of the significant women writers in Australia. Playworks maintains that there are ongoing constraints to women’s representative participation in writing for performance in 2005. Its programs are largely for ‘writer development’.

2005 Programs

(25–30 applications annually for all programs, 13 selected in 2005; 16 selected out of 43 in 2000; 16 out of 49 in 1995; 10 out of 100 in 1990)

- First draft
- Second draft
- Rehearsal draft
- Varuna Mentored Residencies
- Mentorships
- Indigenous Dramaturgy Traineeship
- Workshops
- Events

Playworks’ focus from 1985 was nurturing writers in a process that started before the script was written and was to encourage women writers. In addition, Playworks describes its role as a connection point for a network of dramaturgs and writers and/or collaborators seeking dramaturgical input to their work. It serves writers directly and seeks to meet their requests, some of which fall outside the established convention of a literary dramaturg or a theatrical director dramaturg. The playwright might, for example, seek a composer or a designer.

It would appear that this model of responding to writer-led requests produced innovation in the domain of script development in Australia during the 1990s. This responsiveness to writers has been innovative and Playworks can be identified with the earliest versions of writer development from ideas rather than actual scripts. The organisation states that writers are ‘free to experiment with form’.

Playworks accepts scripts in line with its programs, which have submission deadlines, but might consider approaches from experienced writers at other times. It is the only organisation that ranks gender balance and ethnic diversity as the priorities in selection of scripts, followed by a balance of emerging and experienced artists and writers.

Programs

First draft is aimed at emerging writers or new scripts and provides dramaturgical consultation and assistance to a maximum of nine hours for structuring a new script. The writer requires an independent assessment in support of the application. The selection of scripts is made by readers and the artistic director, and is based on the standard of the work and the clarity of idea about what is to be achieved in the dramaturgical process. Second draft is aimed at experienced writers and a well-developed script and proposals are accepted throughout the year. To be eligible a writer must have had two professional productions, and assistance varies according to the script and available resources. Rehearsal draft offers up to nine hours dramaturgical assistance with the director, dramaturg and actor. This is given to a script that is scheduled for production up to four months before rehearsals begins.

Varuna Writers' Centre Mentored Residencies were available for 2–3 writers in 2005 for two weeks, and Playworks provides nine hours dramaturgical support and can provide assistance with child care.

Of the mentorship offered in 2004–2005, one was given to a woman writer of an Arabic-speaking background.

The Indigenous Dramaturgy Traineeship has continued over several years and matches a dramaturg with three Indigenous writers. The role of this program is part-mentorship and part-advocacy.

Playworks undertakes about four workshops a year. These include workshops on writing radio drama, which is a subject not widely available outside media studies courses in universities that have highly competitive entry requirements.

Playworks also offers organisational services to members, including a newsletter.

Playworks maintained an advocacy role on behalf of women writers with publications and a 1996 conference as well as attendance at the International Women Playwrights' Conferences. In August 2005, Playworks sent out a research questionnaire to women writers to update its research.

2000 Programs summarised

- Members submitted scripts for assessment but this program finished in this year. Scripts were selected for the next stage of three, six or nine hours development.
- 'A writer-centred model'
- Radio drama development
- Runs workshops
- Some workshops available to men and women
- Writing projects
- Industry partnerships
- (2001: 8 women in program)

1995 Programs summarised

- Script development for 7 to 10 scripts, e.g. 18 hours with dramaturg
- Short-term development of 3–5 hours
- Promotion annual showcase playreadings and regular communications
- Festival: Playing With Time
- Survey of Women Writers

1990 Programs (AC information unclear; also see *Telling Time*)

- Promotion annual showcase readings 4 plays at Belvoir St Theatre
- Workshop Program
- Membership offered
- Planning for directory of women writers

2005 Facilities and Personnel

The office is used for the administration of programs and cannot be staffed to provide a contact point for writers during office hours, as would be desirable given its central city location next to the offices of *RealTime*. The office is in need of refurbishment and costs \$12,100 in rent. The position of artistic director is in transition at the time of the research.

Strengths

- The youthful profile of staff.
- Playworks provides free dramaturgy for women writers.
- It has a history of contributing innovation to the field of script development. It remains receptive to a diversity of forms in performance.
- The Board has always been actively committed to helping run events and assisting with activities.
- The radio drama workshops have been very valuable for writers for performance as they offer further production opportunities that are national in impact, with a national audience.

Issues of Concern

There is an organisational tension between the offering of mentorships, and the programs for emerging writers, and dramaturgy for experienced writers. The expectations around supporting writers in writer development and script development need very clear delineation when offered by the same organisation.

The organisation underwent a change in direction in 1996, and again between 2002 and 2003 when Francesca Smith took over as artistic director. In 2005 Teresa Bell was appointed artistic director after this research was carried out.

Playworks had 25 submissions from writers for dramaturgical support in 2004. There are a number of reasons and related issues as to why applications might have declined since 2000.

- a) There is no marketing or advertising budget and only a brochure, web page and *RealTime* advertisement. However, experienced writers might need to be pro-actively approached.
- b) Programs involve a maximum of nine hours of dramaturgy.
- c) Experienced writers often only apply when they have a production possibility.

Contractual arrangements to acknowledge Playworks' contribution to script development are not always honoured during the life of the script. Until 2000, Playworks also showcased work that provided a stand-alone outcome for its annual programs.

Main Funding Streams

2005(OAI)

Theatre Board	\$90,000
Literature Board	\$23,000
NSW Ministry of Arts	\$23,000
(2004 total budget \$E171,106; 2003 \$158,845 (OAI))	

2000 (total budget \$179,640)

Theatre Fund	\$90,000
Literature Fund	\$13,000
Australia Council other	\$8,194
NSW Ministry of Arts	\$23,000
Project grant	\$5,975
Membership	\$4,985
Other earned income	\$34,486

1995 (total budget \$149,671)

PAB Board	\$46,000
Australia Council	\$23,000
Literature Board	\$12,500
NSW Ministry of Arts	\$12,000
Creative Nation	\$10,000
Other grants	\$11,400
Memberships	\$ 3,200
Production income	\$19,066
Interest	\$ 7,494
Other income	\$ 5,010

1990 (total budget \$61,800)

PAB	\$35,000
PAB Project	\$ 1,000
Literature Board	\$ 9,600
NSW Ministry of Arts	\$ 3,500
Membership	\$ 1,105
Registration	\$ 1,280
Interest	\$ 4,315
Box office, sundry	\$ 6,000

3.4 Australian Script Centre

'Australia's national script library is dedicated to the collection, promotion and distribution of unpublished, produced Australian plays. David Williamson and Robyn Archer are its patrons. The register has 500 playwrights, including winners of every major script award, and 850 scripts available electronically on request' (ASC information).

2005 Programs

- Script access electronically (select 80 out of 120 applying annually)
- Script promotion publication *Collection #1–5* (2005, 25; 2004, 30)
- Writer promotion (as above)
- Assistance towards licensing
- Membership services

Script Access

The ASC collects, catalogues and provides access to unpublished produced scripts. This is a service that directly benefits writers and all produced writers are eligible for inclusion. It is a service and resource base that also directly benefits the theatre industry and the wider community. The ASC provides for the distribution and promotion of unpublished, produced scripts with a catalogue available after 1995. In 2005, the ASC is the only organisation collating information on Australian theatre productions nationally.

Script and Writer Promotion

Since 1999, the ASC has published five promotional volumes describing the selection of scripts submitted annually. Copies of 25 scripts became available with *Collection #5* (2005), which includes a CD-ROM version of the production script. The impetus for the ASC came from the need for a national library archive of produced but unpublished scripts since it has long been evident that only 10 to 15 scripts are published annually (see 4.4). Borrowers pay an initial fee to read the script according to the length of the play as and then pay a photocopying license fee if they wish to produce it. Writers receive 50 percent of this photocopying license fee.

Background

The ASC was formed in 1993 out of the Salamanca Script Centre, which was the Salamanca National Resource Centre for theatre-in-education scripts founded by Barbara Manning in 1979. The ASC was established as a membership organisation in 1993 for organisations and individuals. Until the mid-1990s, the ASC was a repository that required a physical storage space and it retains thousands of scripts. In 2005, 850 scripts remain in its ‘active’ collection as accessible to members and other users.

Long-term centralised access to scripts and the writers’ profile is fundamental to the possibility of further production, and as a means of preserving a record of Australian theatre. In 1999 the ASC shifted policy and began to select scripts for inclusion in the library and for promotion although it continues to catalogue all scripts that are submitted to it annually from around Australia. This is a unique service for the theatre industry, and particularly for smaller companies, freelance writers and directors, educational institutions and interested individuals in the community.

There is a steady demand for scripts from schools and universities. Since 1995 the ASC has made a concerted effort to reach schools and teachers through their professional associations and *Lowdown* magazine. The education sector makes up 50 percent of the total of fee-based requests.

In 1995–1998 the ASC received multi-year funding from the Performing Arts Board. From 1999, it was on annual funding as part of the Theatre Board’s Development program. To cut costs, the ASC shared accommodation with the Tasmanian Writers’

Centre in 1996 but had to close temporarily at the end of the year. The introduction of new technologies from 1997 enabled the ASC to steadily improve its services despite further funding shortfalls. The ASC demonstrates partnerships with Playworks after 2001 and distribution for its promotional publications with Currency Press in 2002–2003.

The 1997 decision for ASC to become proactive in approaching writers through organisations as a means of improving the quality of the scripts submitted to the archive and for promotion had significant results. In 2000 there were 130 scripts submitted and the view that these were of a much higher calibre of script, an important consequence of working with and through other organisations for the ASC.

Services

- Currently 150 subscribers. Subscription for membership brings:
 - i) free *Collection* volume
 - ii) electronic newsletter
 - iii) free loans of scripts
- Subscriptions: writers \$38.50, individuals \$55, organisations \$77 and educational institutions \$250 including lending rights.
- Advice service on suitable scripts, steps to production, playwrights.
- Additional fee for service: to contact playwright, obtain permissions.
- Future services: 10 percent of script viewable on web page, curriculum notes for scripts, distribution for curriculum study purposes with the current proposition, e.g. Reg Cribb's *Last Cab to Darwin* for WA students.
- Novice writers for performance are directed to the Tasmanian Writers' Centre.

2005 Facilities and Personnel

The ASC office is well located in two-and-a-half rooms in historical Salamanca Place, in the heart of Hobart's arts tourist precinct. With galleries and the Peacock Theatre on the ground floor, the ASC is part of an active arts complex with day and night public access. The rental of \$6,600 is subsidised. The ASC has submissions in place to replace office equipment through approaches to corporate sponsors that are still pending at the time of this report. The replacement of equipment is badly needed and the ASC has a business plan to replace the photocopier bought second-hand in 1993, and update the computers and technological capacity to provide a more efficient web-based delivery, and reduce labour time for each borrowing request.

Two experienced knowledgeable, part-time staff present a lucid understanding of the organisation and its objectives to the advantage of ASC's public profile and summaries of programs in annual reports. The addition of a dynamic marketing person (paid for four hours a week) has enabled a business plan and approaches to proceed in 2005 and enhanced the promotion of *Collection #5*. The organisation currently has no administrative support.

Strengths

- The ASC is providing a unique service for Australian theatre nationally and effectively from Hobart.
- The ASC has a stand-alone outcome with a print and electronic publication for its annual program.
- The Tasmanian location of the ASC is bringing an invaluable regional perspective to national organisations.

- The ASC can be considered an integral part of the major new Arts Tasmania initiative towards funding writers and writers' festivals, and, importantly, publishing nationally, and the ASC is already benefiting and well-placed to benefit from proposed initiatives in the future.
- New policy initiatives by Arts Tasmania towards funding for publishing ventures more broadly—two monologues on the visual arts and one in press as well as financial support for the University of Tasmania Press, Quintas—provide a state-based broader context for the encouragement of the ASC's publications.
- New initiatives include \$12,000 from Arts Tasmania towards a new venture with monologue publication from the ASC's scripts.
- The transition to the electronic delivery of scripts has been managed in a timely and appropriate way and is ongoing with plans for more fully automated payment and delivery.
- The ASC has in development a national database of Australian writers.
- The monthly web page traffic averages 5,000 visitors who open up two or more web pages.
- Through its web page the ASC is increasing as an international point of contact for Australian scripts. Figures from an internal survey of web page usage in March 2004, show that the most accessed pages are the index notice board, followed by playwright profiles and new scripts. One-third of that month's contacts originated in the USA, and 20 percent in Europe with most of these in the Netherlands, and not quite 20 percent from Australasia.
- The ASC is the only organisation that has stated for some time that it seeks to be 'proactive' in searching out writers. Since 1997 the ASC has promoted its services to writers through writers' organisations. This has produced a corresponding rise in the number of annual submissions and, from the organisation's perspective, also a rise in the quality of scripts.
- The scripts are selected for inclusion in the library and promotion on the advice of two or three (unpaid) readers from a published register of experienced dramaturgs and writers.
- The ASC seeks to include a range of writing styles in its selection of scripts.
- Experienced writers who have seen the benefits of production, income and promotion are sending subsequent scripts for the collection and to be considered for inclusion in the annual promotion volume.
- In previous years the ASC has received Arts Tasmania funding for its program of initiatives of commissions, readings and workshops, which has the advantage of bringing considerable expertise and national contacts to script development regionally.

Issues of Concern

The program of initiatives of commissions, readings and workshops makes the ASC a quasi script development agency in Tasmania. While the ASC would like to ensure that these activities continue, the staff recognise that it would be best served by a project officer and funded administrative support so that these activities are additional and do not take time from the core function of the ASC.

The administrative person left the organisation unable to reconcile the expected work load with the paid hours. The service needs adequate triennial funding to ensure its effective planning beyond a year. Staff hours have been cut to accommodate a deficit.

The director's time is currently dominated by at least nine funding submissions annually to make the service viable.

Main Funding Streams

2005 (OAI)

Theatre Board	\$35,000
Literature Board	\$5,000
Arts Tasmania	\$28,300

2004 (OAI)

Theatre Board	\$35,000
Literature Board	\$5,000
States	\$51,500

2000 (Total Budget \$118, 435 April 2000 to March 2001)

ASC Board became national in 2000.

Theatre Fund Development fund	\$30,000 (sought \$30,000)
Literature Fund	\$11,000
Other Australia Council website	\$17,000
Audience development	\$ 3,000
Vic	\$ 5,000
NSW	\$ 5,000
Tas	\$ 3,900
WA	\$ 3,000
Local government	\$ 4,658
Subscriptions	\$14,250
Sales	\$15,675
Other	\$ 5,952

1995 (Total Budget \$56,383)

Performing Arts Board	\$25,000
Literature Board	\$ 2,500
NSW, Vic, WA, ACT ministries	\$ 4,000
Arts Tasmania	\$ 500
Subscription	\$ 6,212
Sales	\$ 5,407
Other income	\$ 5,704
(deficit	-\$ 7,060)

Current organisation formed in 1993.

3.5 Arts Ministries and State-based Organisations

State ministries fund script development indirectly by funding theatre companies that create new works. Each state indirectly or directly funds script development to benefit writers who reside in that state. In 2005, Western Australia and Queensland directly fund separate state-based SDOs, and New South Wales funds a commitment to the national organisations, Playworks and ANPC. Tasmania funds the ASC for Tasmanian script development and Arts Victoria supports La Mama for script assessment and productions (see summary 2.1.4).

Arts WA (Western Australia)

Arts WA supports playwrights working in the industry rather than writing in isolation. Whilst its strategy is to improve the quality of writing for performance, Arts WA also provides support to playwrights for periods of research and development that may or may not lead to a production. The Australian Bureau of Statistics accords the highest rate of theatre attendance to Western Australian audiences.

Arts WA funds a Western Australian SDO, Stages WA, which provides services to emerging and experienced playwrights and also gives the state representation at the Australian National Playwrights Conference. Arts WA supports the Western Australia branch of the Australian Writers' Guild, and provides \$5,000 to the ASC. The national organisations are seen as providing important opportunities for WA writers, especially the national competition winners of recent years.

There are five triennially funded theatre companies in Western Australia. Of these companies—Perth Theatre Company (PTC), Black Swan and Deckchair (see section 5)—are expected to outline their script development activities as part of their contract with Arts WA. They are to commission writers and/or offer script development programs. Deckchair is contracted to produce two new works annually from commissioned writers. The PTC and Black Swan do not guarantee production to their commissioned writers. The Performing Arts Centre Society (PACS) provides access to the Blue Room Theatre, the Blue Room Studio and the Rechabites Hall as venues for the independent theatre sector. PACS also provides a limited financial subsidy to independent producers whose projects are selected to be part of the annual Blue Room Theatre Program.

The 2006 Australian National Playwrights' Conference will be held in Perth, and Arts WA has provided \$60,000 towards the conference. Future developments include: Theatre Funding Strategy 2006–2009, investigating how the theatre industry can increase funding and, importantly, improve the quality of new work; and to support an increase in the creation of works to capitalize on the building of a new performing arts centre opening in December 2008.

Stages (WA) 1991–

Stages receives \$44,000 from Arts WA, which will be increased to \$60,000 in 2006. It was established in 1991 and employs one artistic director for 10 hours a week and an administrative assistant. In 2005, the Stages programs are:

- Script Assessment for two assessments, which offers a subsidised fee-for-service to non-industry playwrights (8 writers).
- Script Development and Dramaturgy, upon application by the writer who specifies what he or she requires and who he or she wishes to work with. Assistance might involve one meeting with a dramaturg or up to ten hours dramaturgy, or sometimes a workshopped reading with director and actors (6 writers).
- Dynamic Stage or Skills Development for new writers, two hours a week (12 writers).
- Mentorship Program, which places one writer with a company for a year to learn rather than write (3 mentorships and 18 applicants).
- Playwright Development Weekend Workshop, run annually as a skill-based writing workshop.

- Seminars
- Residency at Writers' Centre covers accommodation and living expenses.
- Newsletter in electronic format for 65 members.
- Board assistance to performance-makers and playwrights.

This program represents an expansion from Assessment Service and Playwright Development in 2000.

Arts SA (South Australia)

Arts SA provides support and funding for script development, directly through its project assistance and other funding categories and indirectly through its funding of theatre companies that commission and develop new work.

Arts SA's funding programs are not art form specific. \$1.1 million is provided annually in project assistance to independent artists and projects, which may involve support for writers, and the commissioning of scripts or script development. Applications are assessed by committees including theatre professionals. The programs include:

- a) Emerging artists (up to \$20,000); Established artists (up to \$40,000) for projects that develop skills, new works and artistic career and reputation; for Festival, Events and Commissions (up to \$40,000) for the presentation of work.
In these categories, funding is available to writers applying on their own behalf, or to independent theatre companies/groups of artist collaborating with a playwright: for writing and script development, to workshop a script with or without a dramaturg, to stage a production or to undertake professional development (mentorships, masterclasses etc.).
- b) Two major commissions (of up to \$100,000) are available each year to commission new work by leading South Australian artists for presentation in high profile settings. To be eligible for this category an applicant must have secured 30-50% of funding from other non-arts funding sources, have a partnership in place, and the project should have a major presentation outcome. Since 2000 two productions for STCSA have been funded under this program, both of which had script development factored in, and both of which were presented as part of the subscription year (*My Love, My Love* by Pat Rix, and *Night Letters* adapted from Robert Dessaix's book by Chris Drummond and playwright Susan Rogers).
- c) Key private sector arts organisations (producers, presenters etc) can apply for up to \$10,000 for private sector promotion of South Australian artists nationally and internationally. This includes funding for producers and agents to visit South Australia to see artists work.

In addition, Annual and Triennial funding of approximately \$3 million per annum is provided to 40 small to medium organisations, including six theatre companies and organisations. These include"

- *Australian National Playwrights' Conference* (\$6,200 in 2005) towards activity in South Australia, and participation by South Australian playwrights and theatre artists.
- *Vitalstatistix* which receives \$200,000 in 2005, some of which is used to fund the National Call Script Development program (see 5.4).

- *Paradello* (\$140,425 in 2005) which is also triennially funded by the Australia Council.³
- *Brink Productions* (\$210,500 in 2005) which includes script development in annual application.
- *Mainstreet* (\$172,000 in 2005) some of which is used to fund its National Call and Script Development programs (see 5.4).

South Australia's two major theatre companies, STCSA and Windmill Performing Arts are actively involved in script development and commissioning.

Arts SA also provided additional support to the Australian National Playwrights' Centre towards the costs of delivering the Playwrights Conference in Adelaide in 2000 and 2004 (see 3.2)

Arts Victoria (Victoria)

Arts Victoria funding focuses on outcomes within Victoria or where an outcome support Victorian artists. Arts Victoria has funded national SDOs in the past where they promoted Victorian writing and writers at a national level:

- *ANPC*: received project funding only through the Professional Development Program, which ceased in 2003: \$10,000 in 2002 and \$14,000 in 2003. In 2005, there was a one-off grant of \$12,300 towards the conference.
- *ASC*: has not received funding from Arts Victoria since 2003.

Arts Victoria supports script development for individual writers and productions through project funding, as well as theatre and literature organisations, some of which also provide script development as part of their activities, through operational funding. In 2004–2005, Arts Victoria funded small theatre companies, organisations and individuals a total of \$7,659,086 through various programs, including recurrent organisational funding, individual project grants, and festival and events grants. Arts Victoria funds small to major companies and these companies commission 1–2 writers a year (see 5.5.5).

In 2004-5 Arts Victoria funded the annual operations of following organisations, which provide script development:

La Mama Theatre: Script assessment is given on all unsolicited scripts (200 plus a year) and in writing for a \$25 fee, and some scripts are directed to SDOs. The script assessment budget amounts to \$30,000 annually and the volume has increased in 2005 (corresponds with end to Playbox). There were 45 productions in 2005 (see 5.4).

Malthouse Theatre: writers are selected with other artists for creative development processes. *Playbox Theatre*: until 2004, this writers' theatre had the stated purpose of producing new Australian writing and it offered an extensive script development program (see 5.4 Malthouse Theatre).

Melbourne Theatre Company: there is a separate script development program, Hard Lines (see 5.4)

HotHouse Theatre has a clear development process for its commissioned writers (see 5.4)

Melbourne Workers Theatre: commissions and develops scripts (see 5.4)

Ilbijerri: develops commissions (see 5.4).

³ Paradello Theatre Company was unable make a representative available for interview. This has limited the company's inclusion in this research.

Smaller specialised theatre companies receiving grants in 2004-5:

- Arts Victoria funds companies including Arena Theatre, Polyglot Theatre, St Martins Youth Theatre, Platform Youth Theatre, which commission 1-2 writers a year (see 3.6).

- Companies that are not mentioned elsewhere in this report: Back to Back Theatre collaborate with a professional writer; independent production companies, Ranters with one writer; Theatre @ Risk producing 1-2 new scripts a year, and Red Stitch Actors Theatre newly commissioning an Australian writer; Aphids Events for *A Quarrelling Pair* with three writers in 2004; and Somebody's Daughter Theatre.

Melbourne Writers Theatre: has a process of rehearsed readings and offers a support group.

Writers funded in 2004-5 included Ben Ellis, Robert Reid and Raimondo Cortese.

Writer performers funded in 2004-5 for productions included: Margaret Cameron for *What Gulliver Walks Here*, Brian Lipson for *A Large Attendance in the Antechamber*, Sarah Cathcart for *Boat 2*.

Venues supported and available for independent productions include the Storeroom and Theatreworks and productions at such venues.

Regional touring: Arts Victoria provides funding for produced work that has been produced to then tour through Touring Victoria and Regional Performing Arts Centres (see Appendix 6.6).

Express Media presents a varied annual program including: the Emerging Writer's festival with a dedicated panel on writing for performance; the magazine Voiceworks which published occasional scripts; playwrights' workshops as well as mentorships; and with St Martins presents the Young Playwrights' Awards.

Other opportunities in Victoria

Arts Victoria works closely with City of Melbourne maintaining several artistic hubs including the Meat Market Arts Centre and the North Melbourne Arts Centre (former town hall) that provides office and rehearsal space for ten companies some of which also receive funding from Arts Victoria. As well, it provides performance spaces during festivals like the Fringe and Next Wave, which presents a large number of groups from the independent theatre sector that include writers. These hubs can also provide for subsidised hire by independent groups with writers.

Victoria had over 40 writers events, workshops and awards during 2004-5 supported by a range of organisations including local and municipal councils and these might include writers for performance. For example, writers for performance are prominent on at least one panel at the Melbourne Writers' Festival.

Arts Tas (Tasmania)

Funding programs are not art form specific. Arts Tasmania fund the ASC's *Collection #1-5*, and an upcoming monologue publication. The ASC has received funding for an annual program since 1999 generally for Tasmanian script development, and may become eligible for recurrent funding in the future.

Arts Tasmania support for writers includes grants to three visual arts monographs; Quintus, the University of Tasmania publishing press; the biennial Tasmania Pacific Region Prize for a fiction novel which could encompass drama; and the development of Tasmanian Living Writers Week in 2006 from the model of Living Artists Week. Tasmania Performs is a multistage project to advance audience, market and product development initiatives for the performing arts.

Grant programs include individuals and organisations for creative development, skills improvement, loans and residencies. Artsbridge will support travel for writers. organisational funding is available to companies that create new works, such as Is Theatre Ltd, Terrapin Puppet Theatre, and IHOS Opera and organisations performing in the Ten Days on the Island Festival. Arts Tasmania supports national organisations if there is direct benefit to Tasmanian artists and individual artists can apply to attend the Australian National Playwrights' Conference.

New South Wales Ministry for the Arts

The report from 2004 review of script development and dramaturgy commissioned by the NSW Ministry for the Arts was not released at the time of this nation-wide research. The NSW Ministry does fund art form specific organisations and projects (see 2005 Cultural Grants, published on web). (Also see 5.4 about theatre companies based in NSW. There are other specialised theatres, e.g. Australian Theatre of the Deaf, which can commission a writer.)

ANPC and Playworks: The two national SDOs are based in Sydney and receive funding from the NSW Ministry for the Arts, and it also supports the ASC. In 2005 the ANPC received \$35,000 (\$25,000 in 2000); Playworks received \$23,000 and the ASC received \$12,000. No specific state-based organisation exists. According to the last available membership of the two national organisations, half of its member writers for performance are based in NSW, so there are sound reasons for locating these organisations in Sydney. There was discussion at the ANPC during the 1990s about why far fewer known Victorian writers applied to the national organisations and it was presumed that Playbox and La Mama were serving script development in Victoria.

In 2005, Sydney has a thriving independent sector with B Sharp at Belvoir St, Darlinghurst Theatre Company, Parnassus den and the Old Fitzroy Theatre, which had, for example, 39 productions in 2004 and offers 'readings in the raw'.

Riverina Theatre Company, Wagga Wagga: in 2005, ran a 10-minute play competition to broaden the scope of local involvement. It received 40 plays, of which 10 were put on and 4 submitted with production teams organised.

Arts Qld (Queensland)

Arts Qld has published a 'Creative Writers - Queensland Writing Strategy 2004-2006' that recognises the economic worth of writing in contemporary Australia and the \$1 billion book industry. It has allocated \$1.33 million to this strategy over 3 years for specific projects to a range of organisations, including the Queensland Writers Centre, the Brisbane Writers' Festival, and the University of Queensland Press.

Arts Qld funds the state-based Playlab for script development and publication of one script a year. Arts Qld has provided ASC with project funding of two grants of \$7,000

each, in 2001 and 2003. It has also provided the Australian National Playwrights' Conference with project grants of \$7,000 in 2001; \$7,000 in 2002; \$10,653 in 2003; \$12,000 in 2004; and \$6,000 in 2005.

Arts Qld provides support for infrastructure with triennial operational funding for writing service organisations such as the Queensland Writers Centre and Playlab, and literary festivals such as Interplay Festival for Young Playwrights and the Brisbane Writers Festival, etc. It funds script development and publication through operational support for the state-based organisation, Playlab. It also funds Interplay, which assists young playwrights, with an annual operational grant of \$27,371 in 2005.

There is a perception evident in the interviews for comment in this research that Queensland writers were not usefully served from Sydney by the national organisations. The Qld Writers' Centre is the best funded of all state-funded writers' centres.

Arts Qld indirectly supports the commissioning of writers through its operational support to performing arts bodies such as QTC, La Boite, Just Us Ensemble and Kooemba Jdarra Performing Arts Company. These organisations have a strong focus on commissioning and supporting Queensland writers who present their communities in their work (see section 5).

Arts Qld also provides one-off project funding for individual writers, writing organisations and smaller literary festivals for writing projects that have strong outcomes for writers, the writing sector and arts and culture in Queensland.

Queensland Performing Arts Centre, which is engaged in a new initiative to support the development of a new, work in 2005.

Metro Arts is a subsidised venue for artists in the independent theatre sector.

The *Judith Wright Centre of Contemporary Arts* has a performance space that is also available for hire.

The Queensland Government also supports writing for performance through funding for the following awards: Queensland Premier's Drama Award (through QTC); QTC Young Playwrights' Award; George Landen Dann Award (through QTC); Playlab Award for Outstanding Contribution to New Work (see 4.3). Experienced writers can apply for Arts Qld Creative Fellowships for up to \$40,000. Arts Qld Creative Fellowships have been awarded to the following playwrights: Jill Shearer in 2003, Billie Brown in 2004 and Sue Rider in 2005.

Playlab (Qld)

Arts Qld provided funding of \$74,000 in 2005; \$74,000 in 2004; \$66,650 in 2003. Playlab is a triennially funded Organisation of the Queensland Ministry of Arts. Playlab services include:

- Receipt of 20–30 scripts per three months, of which two scripts on average show potential. It receives unsolicited scripts for assessment, including those sent to La Boite and QTC.

- Snapshot, Full, and Face-to-Face are the three types of script assessment for a fee, subsidised for members.
- Receipt of 2–3 requests per month for writers from freelance directors and theatre companies.
- A workshop program subsidised for members and involving 20–30 participants in a one-day workshop and partnerships with, for example, the Queensland Writers' Centre.
- Commissions: in previous years Playlab commissioned new work for festivals.
- Dramaturgical support.

Playlab expanded its initial script publishing to become a state-based SDO in 1999. Since then it has organised four collaborative projects over six years. Playlab states that its funding relies heavily on 'its script assessment services' and that it monitors its script assessment processes. Membership functions include: auspicing grants, assisting with applications, letters of support, and advocacy with theatre companies.

JUTE Regional Playwrights' Conference (see 5.4)

In 2005 regional participants came from northern Queensland, Northern Territory, Western Australia and Tasmania. JUTE ran forums and 12 play readings. The conference has an \$11,000 budget and pays its actors a fee equivalent to the conference registration.

Arts NT (Northern Territory)

Arts NT's funds key arts organisations and has a grants program that offers grants of up to \$15,000 for a range of arts activities. It strongly supports Indigenous artists and their organisations.

The emphasis is on encouraging the expression of Northern Territory stories. There is recognition that Northern Territory stories by Indigenous and multicultural artists are unique. It is also appreciated that the story-telling process of Indigenous artists is different and requires support. Links with national organisations can ensure that these stories travel to other parts of Australia, although it is felt that the regional environment is not well understood elsewhere—e.g. the fact that the Territory is cut off for half of the year by its climate.

Arts NT programs include: NT Key Arts Organisations, NT Project Rounds including Arts Development Presentation and Promotion categories, NT Quick Response scheme (up to \$1,500), and four Regional Arts Fund categories (Skills Development, Networks and Partnerships, New Arts Communities and Artist to Artist Support). A new funding framework for Key Arts Organisations is being introduced in 2005.

In 2003–2004, Arts NT funded annual operations for:

- Darwin Theatre Company, \$191,500 (see 5.4).
- NT Writer's Centre, \$61,500 and \$20,000 for the annual Wordstorm Festival.
- Red Dust Theatre, Alice Springs, \$10,000.
- Corrugated Iron Youth Arts, which offers script development to young writers, \$75,000.

Arts ACT

The ACT Government supports a range of arts activities through a \$4 million ACT Arts Funding Program and through a number of arts facilities. \$3 million is provided

to a number of triennially funded organisations across all art forms including theatre. The Street Theatre (\$532,500 a year), Jigsaw (\$134,000 a year), and Canberra Youth Theatre (\$137,000 a year) support some script development within their theatre programs. The ACT Writers Centre (\$102,500 a year) supports writer development within its writing programs. \$1 million is provided for project funding across all art forms including for script development. The ACT Playwrights Group and the Australian National Playwrights' Conference have received project funding for their activities. Individual artists including playwrights can also apply for \$35,000 fellowships.

3.6 Youth Theatre and Theatre for Young People

Youth theatres and theatre for young people work with writing and/or writings in the following ways:

- a) Commission professional writers:
 - Windmill Performing Arts*: 1-2 annually, and 1 co-production
 - St Martin's Theatre*: 1 annually, fee \$5,000.
 - Jigsaw Theatre*: 1 biannually, fee \$5,000–\$10,000, dramaturgy on script.
 - Arena Theatre*: 1–2 annually, fee \$6,000–\$8,000, writers in creative team.
- b) Collaborate with a professional writer:
 - Australian Theatre for Young People (ATYP)
 - Tantrum Theatre
 - PACT
 - Shopfront Theatre for Young People
- c) Produce plays by young people:
 - AYTP
 - Shopfront Theatre for Young People
 - Barking Gecko Theatre Company offer on-line writing experiences

Youth theatres generate performer-devised productions working with a director and these are often cross-arts productions.

Other development opportunities for young writers:

- *PACT, Sydney*: in 2005 offered 'writing for performance' development for 6 writers over one month with Bryoni Trezise, including public workshop readings.
- *Shopfront Theatre*: has a thirty-year history as a youth theatre and continues to present group-devised works and some scripts by young writers.
- *St Martin's Theatre, Melbourne*: offers writing workshops and has a competition for Young Playwrights. On an irregular basis, a few young participants will join to specialise in writing and there are mentorship possibilities.
- *The Australian Centre for Youth Literature*: has informal links with St Martin's Youth Theatre and offers performance writing workshops for its oldest participants.
- *Platform Youth Theatre, Melbourne*: in 2005 offers two paid mentorships for young writers 16–26 years, with mentoring from an experienced writer.

- Although not a youth theatre or theatre for young people, *Express Media, Melbourne*: in 2005–2006, offers 4 mentorships of 20 contact hours each with experienced writers.

Conferences

Interplay: a twenty-year-old organisation based in Queensland, provides support for playwrights under 26. Writers aged 18–26 can attend World Interplay for two weeks. This hosts 60 international participants, including Australians. Writers aged 13–17 can attend Youth Interplay. Funding of \$27,000 for these events is provided by Arts Qld.

Young Dramatists Page to Stage, NSW: started in 1994, this organisation encourages writers for performance in high schools. It had 16 schools generating 144 scripts in 2004, of which 8 plays were chosen for performance at the Ensemble Theatre and for publication as *Young Dramatists Page to Stage 2004* (Currency Press: 2004).

Puppet theatres

Commissions professional writers.

- Terrapin Puppet Theatre, Hobart: 1 annually (2 in 2006) fee \$8,000 plus expenses, no systematic script development

Artistic director develops scripts/productions.

- Polyglot Puppet Theatre, Melbourne.
- Snuff Puppets, Melbourne.
- Spare Parts Puppet Theatre, Fremantle.

4 Related Opportunities

4.1 Mentorships

ANPC Centre = 3

In 2004, there were three mentorships for writers under 30 for eight months:

- These were funded by the Australia Council Literature Board.
- There were five applications received for the three places.
- The writers were recommended by theatre companies or agents.
- Total budget: \$9,000; \$3,000 per writer allocated as \$2,000 to the mentor and \$1,000 to workshop. In each case, the writer was mentored but not paid.
- Outcomes: one writer received a production and one a public reading.

Playworks = 1

Playworks receives \$15,000 from Australia Council Literature Board but \$4,000 of this goes to ABC drama workshop. The mentorship is given to a novice writer.

Australian Writers' Guild = 8

In 2004, the AWG was funded \$12,000 by the Australia Council:

- No payment was made for writers themselves; mentors received \$1,000 each, readers \$200 each, administration \$3,000.
- There were 22 applications for eight places.
- The targeted group was NSW writers.
- Scripts submitted were selected by three readers.
- The program was advertised through theatre companies and other theatre industry organisations.
- Mentors were established writers who are also members of the AWG, e.g. Justin Fleming and John Romeril.
- Outcomes: second draft written and two play readings at Parnassus Den.

Griffin Theatre = 5

Griffin offers emerging playwrights residency affiliation.

- It receives 40–50 applications.
- In 2005 residency was open to writers under 35 (in 2004, under 30).
- These writers meet as a group monthly.
- They also have individual meetings with an artistic director and/or literary manager.
- Each script under development is given two workshops with a director and actors for two days.
- Outcomes: one script under consideration for production at the time of this research.

Stages WA = 1

An emerging playwright is placed with a theatre company to learn about the process of developing new work, but he or she is not expected to write. There is no payment to the writer. In 2004–2005, the writer was placed with Deckchair.

Playlab

In past years, Playlab has offered two mentorships. Playlab offered one mentorship in conjunction with La Boite but the latter is phasing out this opportunity.

Australian Writers' Guild of SA

Australian Writers' Guild (AWG) was funded by Arts SA to provide a mentorship at the STCSA. However, this has been suspended because STCSA required scripts it could produce, which were not always forthcoming. (See 5.4 for further information on STCSA and changes in script development programs)

Comment

In 2004–5, there were four Sydney-based schemes and very little opportunity for mentorship elsewhere. However, the Melbourne-based Platform and Express Media youth organisations have 6 opportunities in 2005-6 (see 3.6).

The Griffin Theatre's playwrights residency for emerging writers attracted the largest number of applications for a mentoring scheme. An affiliate position with a theatre company is offered without financial support. While there is no guaranteed outcome for a script, there is the possibility of a company's interest in the writer's work. The AWG budgeted to advertise their mentorships and attracted 22 applications.

The SDOs are aware that there are limitations on what can be achieved with mentorships. The concern is that writing is an activity with unpredictable results. There has been consideration given to offering fewer, focused mentorships. Payment for writers might make some mentorships more attractive.

The Theatre Board of the Australia Council provides for writers of performance for professional development activities and living allowances through their Skills and Arts Development grant category and established writers can apply for a Fellowship. Writers can apply for a commission and script development workshops through the New Work categories including Young Artists.

4.2 Australian Writers' Guild

The AWG sets industry standards and offers political advocacy services to member writers who write for theatre, radio and film. It is currently implementing a way to identify the number of its members who are mainly writing for theatre performance. The organisation negotiates standard contracts for writers with producers in a range of models for rates and agreements. It receives funding support from the Australia Council, NSW Ministry for the Arts, Arts WA, Arts SA and other organisations. There is a script assessment service available, costing \$137.50 or \$192.50 for a face-to-face meeting.

Current annual membership fees

<i>Writer's income</i>	<i>\$25,000</i>	<i>\$25,000–\$45,000</i>
1 year associate member	\$90	\$150
1 year full member	\$275	\$412

6-month membership available

The AWG provides advice on contractual agreements to individual playwrights. It also monitors and advises on the industry standards for payment and conditions. The AWG NSW offered a mentorship program in 2004 (see section 4.1). The AWG WA

ran weekend workshops on playwriting in 2004 for the first time, but usually focuses its activities on advocacy and writers generally. The AWG SA has in the past received support from Arts SA to provide mentorships in conjunction with STCSA. It has also been active in running monthly meetings for writers for performance, but these are not offered in 2005.

4.3 Competitions

There are two noticeable features: 16 of 37 competitions were started since 2000 and 10 competitions involve development. There are no competitions specifically for writers for performance originating in Tasmania or the Northern Territory.

Awards for Produced Plays = 9

- *Adelaide Critics Circle*: awarded annually, involves prizes, started in 1997.
- *AWGIEs*: awarded annually to members of Australian Writers' Guild, goes to a work produced within the previous 12 months across all categories, started in 1968.
- *Green Room Association Awards*: awarded annually, GRAA Fringe and Drama committees select from productions in the previous 12 months, involves trophy, commenced in 1982.
- *Helpmann Awards*: awarded annually, HAAC selects from Australian Entertainment Industry Association members, involves a trophy, started in 2001.
- *The Louis Esson Prize for Drama*: includes radio, goes to a work produced within the previous 12 months, contracted to the State Library of Victoria by Victorian Premier's Department, winner \$15,000, started in 1985.
- *New South Wales Premier's Literary Awards, Play*: awarded annually, goes to a work produced within the previous 12 months, sponsored by NSW Ministry for the Arts, winner \$15,000, started in 1979.
- *Queensland Premier's Drama Award*: sponsored by Queensland Premier's Department and QTC, 5 shortlisted and winner receive script development with QTC, started in 2001.
- *South Australia Premier's Award*: could go to a published play, winner \$10,000.
- *Western Australia Premier's Book Awards*: awarded annually, sponsored by State Library of Western Australia, goes to a work produced within the previous 12 months, winner \$7,500, started in 1982.

Competitions for Unproduced Plays = 13

- *ANPC Award*: sponsored by ANPC, open to playwrights who have made significant contribution, started in 2003.
- *Asialink Playbox Playwriting Competition*: awarded annually, open to playwrights drawing on regional themes, winner \$5,000 and public reading, plus \$2,000 if produced.
- *Factory Field Day*: awarded annually, open to scripts on political theme, sponsored by Melbourne Workers Theatre, involves one week script development and public reading, started in 2003.
- *George Fairfax Play Prize*: awarded biennially, sponsored by Castlemaine State Festival, provides for 2 actors and professional production, winner \$2,000, started in 1999.
- *Griffin Award*: awarded annually, open to non-commissioned scripts, sponsored by Griffin Theatre, winner \$5,000, started in 1998.

- *Jill Blewett Playwright's Award*: awarded biannually, open to South Australian writers, sponsored by Arts SA, winner \$10,000 in 2002–2005, started in 1986.
- *Kate Challis RAKA Award*: awarded annually but rotates art forms, sponsored by The Australian Centre at University of Melbourne, open to Indigenous artists, winner \$10,000, started in 1989.
- *Patrick White Award*: awarded annually, sponsored by STC, winner \$20,000, started in 2000.
- *R. E. Ross Playwrights' Script Development Award*: awarded annually, open to Victorian-based writers, minimum \$3,000 maximum \$10,000, started in 2003.
- *Rodney Seaborn Playwrights Award*: awarded annually, sponsored by NIDA and Seaborn, Broughton & Walford Foundation, winner \$10,000, started in 2001.
- *Playbox Malcolm Robertson Prize*: awarded annually, open to writers never produced, started in 2000.
- *Max Afford Playwrights Award*: awarded biennially, sponsored by ANPC, available for a play written within previous 3 years, open to under-40s, winner \$7,500, started in 2004.
- *Wal Cherry Play of the Year*: awarded annually, open to Victorian writers, sponsored by (Playbox) Victorian Arts Centre, winner \$5,000 and reading, started in 1989.

Young Playwrights Competitions = 10

- *ATYP National Young Playwrights Award*: awarded once only for 40th anniversary of ATYP, winner \$5,000, provides production.
- *George Landen Dann Award*: awarded annually, sponsored by QTC and Arts Qld, open to under-25s, provides prize and workshop and reading, started in 1992.
- *National Open Playwrights*: awarded annually, provides up to 6 actors, sponsored by Monash University Student Theatre, first prize \$2,000 others total \$5,000, started in 2003.
- *Phillip Parsons Young Playwright's Award*: awarded annually, sponsored by Company B, open to NSW under-35s with work produced within previous 12 months, winner \$10,000, started in 1996.
- *Origin Energy STCSA Young Guns*: 2 one-act scripts, open to under-19s and under-15s, winners \$500 plus one-week workshop development and reading, started in 1998.
- *QTC Young Playwrights Award*: awarded annually, open to under-18s, provides QTC season ticket and play reading, started in 1992.
- *STC and Sydney Morning Herald's Young Playwright's Award*: awarded annually, sponsored by STC and ANPC, open to one-act plays by NSW and ACT under-19s, provides weekend workshop and staged reading at Wharf, started in 1992.
- *St Martin's and Express Media Young Playwright's Award*: awarded annually, open to under-25s, sponsored by St Martin's Youth Arts, for plays of up to 8 characters, provides reading, development and magazine publication, started in 1997.
- *Young Playwright's Competition for Short Plays*: awarded annually at a dinner, sponsored by Naked Theatre Co. and Old Fitzroy Theatre, open to 18–30s with plays of up to 30 pages, provides 4 months development production, started in 2000.

- *Young Playwright's Studio*: awarded annually, open to under-25s, sponsored by La Mama, Melbourne, provides script development and public reading for 3 selected writers, started in 2000.

Short Play Competitions = 5

- *Bugfest Script Writing Competition*: awarded annually, for short plays, sponsored by Brisbane Underground Festival, provides performance for 6–8 scripts, started in 2000.
- *The Ten-Minute Play Festival*: regional theme, sponsored by Riverina Theatre Company, provides production for 10 plays, started in 2004.
- *Sex: Cubed*: for 10-minute plays, sponsored by MM Media and La Boite, started in 2005.
- *Short and Sweet*: awarded annually, for 10-minute plays, sponsored by Victorian Arts Centre, 30 short-listed and performed at VAC, prizes \$2,500, started in 2002 and also running in NSW.
- *Unhinged Short Play Festival*: awarded annually, for 10-minute plays from Illawarra region, sponsored by Illawarra Performing Arts Centre, winner \$6,000, started in 2005.

Comment

The proliferation of playwright competitions is serving as a channel for unsolicited scripts. Winning is not stated to be important to artistic decision-making and yet it is commonly acknowledged in reference to a particular script. Everyone in this survey recognised benefits:

For writers:

- 1) Emerging playwrights gain credibility for their work.
- 2) Payment in the form of a prize is made directly to the playwright.
- 3) There is an open submission opportunity, which companies no longer offer.

Therefore competitions open up opportunities for the writer to be read by a range of readers—if he or she is selected for shortlist and especially if he or she wins.

For companies:

- 1) Competitions help to serve the company's interests and yet make no time burden on the literary associate/manager or director.
- 2) Companies are able to survey what is being written currently.
- 3) Sponsorship comes with competitions and brings in more money to the company than would otherwise be available.
- 4) When asked, respondents consciously discounted competitions as a factor in selection but the acknowledgement of winners was slipped into discussion with the researchers as a confirmation that the artistic director or company has made the right choice.

Competition function varies, but this is not always well understood. For example: there is a difference between the Premier's Award in Queensland, which serves to encourage writers; and the Premier's Award in New South Wales, which rewards excellence; and the AWGIEs, which provide industry recognition to artists from their peers.

4.4 Publishing

Annual publications

Currency Press is the main publisher of produced Australian plays. In 2005, 10 books of scripts were published (7 consisting of single scripts, 2 of two scripts each, 1 of twelve short scenes). In 2004, 10 books of scripts were published solely under *Currency*'s imprint, a further 9 were published in partnership with *Playbox*, and there was an anthology of four plays from the 1950s.

Playlab receives funding for publication from Arts Qld and the Australia Council. In 2005, it published 1 script; in 2004, 5; in 2003, 2; in 2002, 5; in 2001, 5; in 2000, 1; in each year of the 1990s, 1.

Wakefield Press, an organisation subsidised by Arts SA, occasionally publishes scripts.

There is publication of scripts elsewhere too; for example, usually one script per year in journals such as the *Australasian Drama Studies Journal*.

Currency Press can apply for Australia Council grants to assist with the publication of scripts—\$2,000 per play or \$4,000 per book—but such grants amount to less than 1.5% of turnover.

Until 2004, *Currency* worked in partnership with *Playbox* to produce an affordable script to accompany *Playbox* productions of new Australian plays. According to this arrangement, *Currency* required its partner to buy a minimum of 500 copies—though it preferred a purchase of 1,000 copies—to make publication viable. With the change from *Playbox* to the *Malthouse* in 2005, this scheme ceased to operate. However, in 2005 *Currency* still receives telephone calls from Victorian school teachers searching for the kind of affordable scripts that the scheme used to make available.

La Mama Theatre and *Currency* irregularly publish one or two plays listed as VCE productions. There is also a *Currency* partnership that operates in a limited way with *La Boite*, and a one-off partnership with the *STC*, which published Katherine Thompson's *Harbour*.

When scripts are published, the long-term benefit for theatres, playwrights and educational institutions is that the scripts become more widely available and can be accessed through libraries over five or more years. However, the immediate effects of publication may be minimal, since the unpublished versions of scripts are regularly passed on to interested readers by writers and agents at an early stage. As well, *ASC* has the capacity to electronically disseminate 800 scripts that have been produced but are otherwise unpublished.

Jane Harrison's *Stolen* is currently the best-selling script for *Currency* because it has an education market. The short-term and/or long-term life of a script may depend on factors such as the cultural responsiveness of the public to its ideas. The programming of scripts on educational curricula depends, however, on their availability.

The comparatively small market for performance script sales makes theatre publishing a selective undertaking and one which does not serve the immediate needs of

promotion and distribution of new scripts. Nor would the publication of a greater number of scripts be economically self-supporting without subsidy. Theatre industry is dependent on the promotion and quick availability of its scripts in their unpublished formats. The ASC provide for the next stage with long-term access to unpublished produced scripts.

4.5 Writers' Centres

(This information covers the centres that replied to the researcher's contact.)

Writers' centres are funded to assist writers across genres, which includes writers for performance. The Victorian Writers' Centre is the only centre in Victoria and offers script assessment service. The Northern Territory Writers' Centre collaborates with the Darwin Theatre Company. The writers' centres in Victoria, Tasmania, NSW Northern Rivers, ACT and Queensland do provide courses for writing for performance on a user-pay basis, although the Tasmanian centre subsidises the fee. A course is usually a one-off writing workshop offered no more than once a year. Interestingly, the NSW South Coast Writers' Centre has a Performance Writers' Group of about thirty members that has met monthly since 1999, and includes writers, actors and dramaturgs. The group is linked to the Faculty of Creative Arts at Wollongong University.

Writers' centres are open to all genres, and most do not have a way of numerically identifying writers by genre—ACT identifies 14 script writers out of 900 total writers. There is an awareness that a course on writing for performance cannot always be filled. In June 2005, the Victorian Writers' Centre cancelled its proposed course with an experienced, young Victorian playwright. The NSW Northern Rivers Writers' Centre (Byron Bay) runs play readings during the Byron Bay Writers' Festival, and offers emerging playwrights mentoring. The South Australian Writers' Centre leaves writing for performance courses to the Writers' Guild office, while the NSW Central West Writers' Centre (Orange) has more recently run courses in writing for radio. Western Australia has three writers' centres but the state also has a separately funded script development organisation. The centres do run courses in response to requests by members.

The funding sources for writers' centres are federal, state ministries of arts, regional programs, and often a very supportive municipal council.

4.6 Writing Courses

Based on the available information supplied by the institutions that returned the researcher's contact, most subjects were initially offered after 1990, with about one-third of those after 2000. Class sizes in these university subjects appear to be about 20–25.

NIDA's Playwrights Studio, specialising in writing for live theatre, has been offered annually for twenty years since 1985. Students have a play workshopped and staged and there is an alumni of recognised professional writers for performance. The course currently takes six writers a year into its practice-based weekly workshop and there is

a tuition fee of \$1,050. There is a proposal to offer a Graduate Diploma in Playwriting and a Masters of Dramatic Art in Playwriting in 2007.

The VCA offers a Graduate Diploma and Masters in Animateuring, which encourages collaborative ways of cross-arts performance-making and includes innovative writing.

It is important to note that *TAFE and TAFE-accredited providers* can include script writing subjects in writing courses. For example, *CAE at Degraes Street, Melbourne*, offers two subjects in playwriting and two in script writing within the Professional Writing Diploma course, and this may be an economical option in relation to tuition fees for creative writers.

The following 15 (of 38) tertiary institutions offer undergraduate 'Writing for Performance' subjects in Theatre and Performance or in Writing programs:

Curtin University of Technology: BA (2 subjects)

Griffith University: BA (Creative Arts) (2 subjects)

James Cook University: BA (1 subject)

La Trobe University: BA and BCA (1 subject)

Monash University: BA (Performing Arts) (2 subjects)

Murdoch University: BA (Creative Arts) (2 subjects)

Queensland University of Technology: BA (Creative Industries) (1 subject).

Southern Cross University: BA/Associate Dip. (2 subjects)

Swinburne University of Technology: Dip. of Arts (2 subjects)

University of Melbourne: BCA (2 subjects)

University of South Australia: BA (2 subjects)

University of Technology, Sydney: BA (1 subject)

University of New England: (2 subjects, Dramaturgy in Practice)

University of New South Wales: BA (2 subjects)

University of Wollongong University (4 subjects)

The following 7 tertiary institutions offer Writing or Performance subjects that give the possibility of writing for performance:

Australian National University

Chisholm Institute of TAFE

Deakin University

Macquarie University

RMIT (until 2004 there were 2 Playwriting subjects)

University of Newcastle

University of Queensland

The following 13 tertiary institutions offer writing for performance in higher degrees and probably also at fourth-year Honours:

Curtin University of Technology

James Cook University

La Trobe University

Macquarie University

Monash University

Queensland University of Technology (MA in Stage Writing)

RMIT

University of Melbourne

University of New South Wales

University of Queensland
University of Sydney
University of Technology, Sydney
University of Western Australia
University of Wollongong

The following tertiary institutions appear to offer a subject, but information could not be verified:

Australian Catholic University
Batchelor College, Darwin
Charles Sturt University, Bathurst
Edith Cowan University

Curtin University has a program in which about 25 plays are produced annually and one-third of these are new writing. There are play readings and a forthcoming Black Swan Press will offer three student scripts in a series called: Scripts for High School. At *La Trobe University*, one component of the subject's writing is produced as internet performance, and students have produced scripts with the student union theatre. *Queensland University of Technology* facilitates the production of its postgraduate students' work. At *Murdoch University*, undergraduate writing is produced within the subject and some has progressed to outside performances. Some of the *University of Tasmania's* student writers go on to readings with Theatre North and student theatre productions, and students do continue on to become writers. Student union theatres have been prolific producers of young writers and a training ground for professional theatre, but they face an uncertain future in 2005 because of legislative changes.

4.7 Overseas Models

(See also Appendix 6.5 for more examples.)

The processes of script development in the following overseas examples are fundamentally the same as it is in Australia, in that opportunities offered range from one-to-one dramaturgy through to workshops with directors and actors and public play readings. However, overseas institutions are organised differently and they can have extended or different functions. For example, the Playwrights Guild in Canada is an autonomous guild that also distributes and publishes work.

Playmarket, New Zealand

- Script assessment for \$100
- One-to-one dramaturgy
- Workshops of two days with director/actors
- Laboratory for team-devised meeting with dramaturg, 6 to 12 times
- Weekly script reading in Wellington with student actors and dramaturg
- Adam family sponsored playreadings of four plays in 2005 in conjunction with the theatre company, Downstage. Open submission to a deadline.
- Playwrights Studio over 10 weeks offered in four different cities
- Masterclasses for writers

- Agent for Performance Rights licensing, of which Playmarket receives 1% of the 10% of writer's box-office
- National Young Playwrights Competition
- E-bulletin for members and discounts to theatres
- Newsletter for Independent Theatre Groups
- Magazine with articles published twice a year
- Bookshop
- Accessible office for playwrights to contact for assistance and public to inquire
- Script promotion in *Newsletter* for independent theatre groups
- Script order service of either published or unpublished work
- Electronic search and direct order from Playmarket or 'perusal script' from NZ Theatre Federation

Playmarket is located in Wellington, which is the capital although Auckland is the largest city. It receives core funding from the government and has a director for 32 hours a week, two script development personnel for 20 hours each a week, an administrator for 13 hours a week, an accountant for 10 hours a week, and one full-time office manager.

Playwrights Guild of Canada

Established as a co-op and then a union after 1972, its purpose is to promote Canadian writing, distribute scripts, and publish through Playwrights Canada Press, as well as offering professional advocacy on behalf of its 500 members. The organisation provides:

- A directory of Canadian plays and playwrights
- Access and distribution of plays
- Membership services to playwrights, including newsletters
- Advice on contractual arrangements to members
- Oversight of copyright enforcement
- Regular lobbying and negotiation of contractual arrangements with the Association of Canadian Theatres
- Publication of four editions of *CanPlay* annually
- International links for Canadians

The organisation supports a separate organisation, The Foundation for Recognition of Excellence in Drama, to promote and educate about Canadian drama, organise playreadings, and offer professional development and masterclasses for writers.

New York: New Dramatists

The organisation will support the work of a writer for seven years with a residency that is open to New York city writers or those living nearby. 5–7 writers are selected annually with 40 writers in the program in 2005. There is dramaturgical support and a work space for writers and this is a free service for those selected.

USA: The Literary Managers and Dramaturgs of the Americas

This is an organisation that, with its sub-branches, has participated in conferences and meetings across North America for 20 years.

USA: O’Neill Playwrights Conference

This selects 8–12 scripts for 4-day workshops with 2 staged readings from an open field of submissions and is held annually as a residency program with travel and accommodation costs covered. The umbrella organisation is the O’Neill National Theater Institute in Connecticut, which offers university-equivalent summer school subjects in all theatre arts for 24–35 undergraduates from all over the USA. (Conservatorium theatre training in the USA, including programs with writing for performance, is most often available in universities.) The O’Neill Playwrights annual conference has links with the Association for Theatre in Higher Education and other Institute conferences include annual conferences for music theatre, puppetry and the critics institute.

UK: Royal Court, Sloane Square, London

The Royal Court has an extensive range of activities that include new play development and commissioning, and it provides very inexpensive tickets for theatre professionals as well as extensive school programs to educate about theatre. Royal Court calls itself ‘a writer’s theatre’ and is often cited in Australia as an ideal model—the ‘Blueprints’ program at the STC looked to the Royal Court model. It was at the Royal Court that John Osborne’s celebrated *Look Back in Anger* was produced in 1956 (see Rebellato, Dan (1999), *1956 and that: the making of modern British Drama*, London: Routledge). In the early 1990s the Royal Court underwent considerable change under Roger Daltree, who introduced first-time writers and the idea of producing the audience as well as the play in a cyclic interrelationship. This confirms a process of revitalisation through artistic leadership. The Royal Court theatre:

- produces first plays by emerging young writers.
- ‘proactively seeks out and cultivates writers’ (Royal Court information).
- supports ‘senior playwrights’ such as Caryl Churchill and David Hare.
- runs workshops in other countries using its own writers and directors.
- runs an annual residency program for 20 young playwrights and directors in August.

UK: Paines Plough

The organisation has been operating for 30 years touring regionally and recently acquired an office and a rehearsal space in Southwark, London. It does not have a theatre space. It works with a small number of plays under development each year and two or three of these will be produced in co-productions with companies who have theatre facilities anywhere from Glasgow to London. Paines Plough require that they be the sole development organisation for the script, with artistic rights over the production. The artistic director of Paines Plough is most often the director of the productions. The artistic director, associate director and literary manager will search out writers and scripts in fringe venues and/or commission them for a Paines Plough style of script.

UK: The Battersea Arts Centre

The Arts Centre building is a theatre space. Among its staff are one full-time producer and three to four trainees. In 2005, there is the Ladder of Development program: in which groups are invited to contribute to the scratch night open field of performances and the writer is usually included in the group. This is an initial stage of introduction

to the BAC. There are nominally five stages towards a full production and a selective few writers would reach the fifth stage.

5 Results 2005 Theatre Industry Survey

5.1 Descriptive and Diagrammatic Summary

1) National SDO by core function in 2005:

- ANPC organises an annual national conference
- Playworks provides one (or two) dramaturgical sessions of 3 hours to women writers.
- ASC's annual publication showcases produced unpublished scripts from those selected annually for electronic access

There was rationalisation in the organisational capacity for SDOs around 2000–2002 (AC). The ANPC ceased offering dramaturgy sessions in 2002 to reduce costs and the office cannot provide general public access; similarly, Playworks had to cease public play readings in 2000 to reduce costs, and has office access only by arrangement.

The ANPC, Playworks and ASC receive funding from the Australia Council's Theatre and Literature Boards. The states provide small projects grants to ANPC and ASC—Arts Victoria withdrew funding in 2004 when its Professional Development Fund ceased—only the NSW Ministry of Arts funds Playworks.

Number of core function opportunities in 2005

ANPC	8 workshops
Playworks	13 dramaturgical sessions for women writers
ASC	25 scripts in publication and 80 selected for access

Outcomes of core functions

ANPC	workshopped scripts likely to reach production
Playworks	while these targeted opportunities for women are justifiable, there is no further progression from dramaturgy at present
ASC	receives an average of 15 enquiries a week to read or photocopy scripts and assists with licensing/copyright payments for script reading and production use. The promotional and distribution service has over 800 scripts in its active collection, with 80 selected annually. There are five promotional publications available with 25–30 produced scripts in each.

2) State-based SDOs provide

WA Stages	6 dramaturgical sessions for emerging through to experienced writers
	12 two-hour sessions for novice writers
Qld Playlab	subsidised script assessment and courses
JUTE conference	12 scripts given play readings

Additionally:

Tas	ASC programs 2002–2004
SA	Vitalstatistix for women and AWG of SA until 2004
Vic	La Mama and Playbox de facto SDO until 2004
NSW	ANPC and Playworks
Qld	JUTE's development program

3) Theatre company script development programs

- 8 offer a type of writer development program
- 14 offer script development workshop with director/actors
- 12 facilitate creative team collaborations

The dependency of the theatre industry on non-affiliated writers increased after the mid-1990s. Australia Council funding for theatre company playwright-in-residence programs ended in 1996 (AC).⁴

4) Summary of industry practices of SDOs and theatre companies.

Writer development

- Unsolicited script comments from artistic directors (Vitalstatistix, Deckchair, Darwin Theatre Company, Mainstreet, Kooemba Jdaira, Yirri Yaakin)
- Fee-for-service written commentaries from assessors of varying professional backgrounds (ANPC, Playlab, Stages, Company B, La Mama)
- One session (3-hour) discussion with a dramaturg (Playworks, Stages)
- More than one session with a dramaturg after first draft (Playworks, Stages), ideally with a dramaturg of 10–15 years of professional experience.
- A creative process with an artist other than a script-focused dramaturg (Playworks)

Script development

- One-day or two-day or one week workshop with director and actors (and/or dramaturg) (ANPC, theatre company)
- A play reading for an audience (ANPC, theatre company)
- Meeting with the director (even actors) prior to (ideally three to four months prior to) rehearsal to modify the script (theatre company)
- Director working as script editor on script during rehearsal (theatre company)

Creative team

- Creative development with a team over a defined or extended period to create a script and possibly leading to production (STCSA (until 2004), Malthouse, theatre company, independent theatre sector)

5) Writers' preferences

- 44 out of 74 (60%) writer respondents in this research rated a workshop as 'vitally useful'; a further 15 'very useful'; total 80% (WQ).
- 30 out of 74 (40%) writer respondents rated dramaturgy as 'vitally useful' and a further 21 as 'very useful' although the research question did not stipulate its context; total 69% (WQ).

⁴ Between 1987 and 1990 there were 44 playwrights-in-residence and 17 dramaturgs-in-residence (Allen 1993).

6) Competitions

There are 37 competitions for scripts in 2005, 10 of which offer script development as the prize including the R E Ross Playwrights Script Development Award (see 4.3).

7) Training

There are: 15 universities that offer one or more undergraduate subjects in writing for performance as well as NIDA's Playwrights' Studio and postgraduate courses; TAFE subjects, writers centre courses, and high school programs (see 4.5 and 4.6). 51 out of 74 writers respondents in this research have relevant tertiary qualifications (WQ).

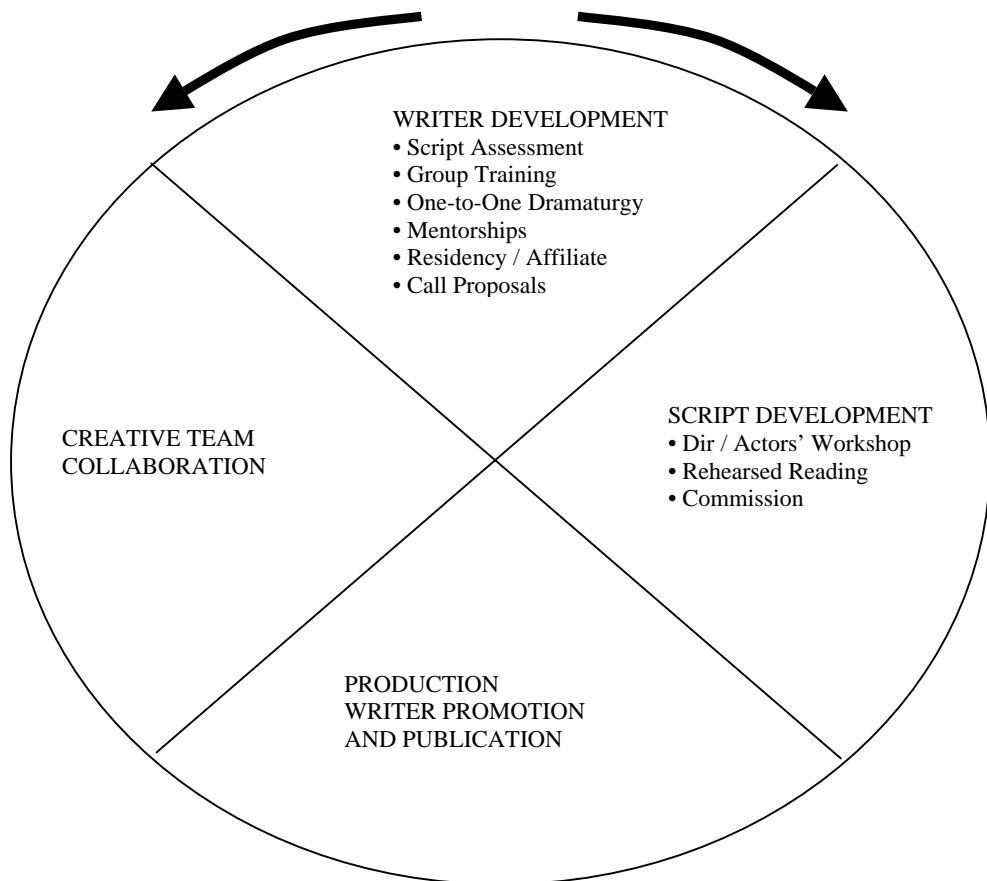


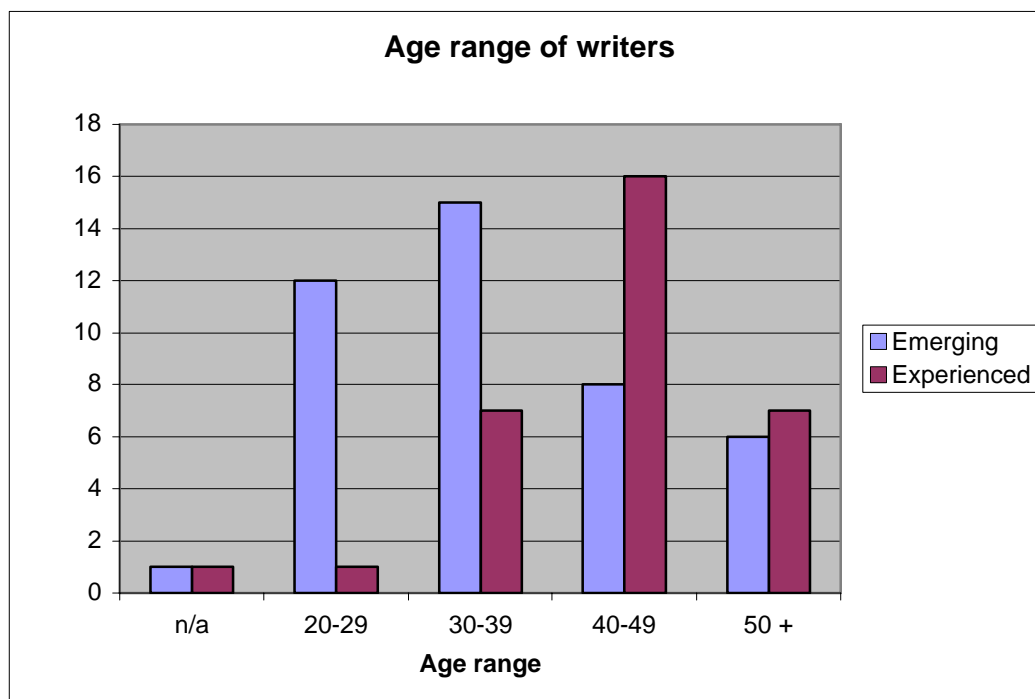
Diagram 5.1.1

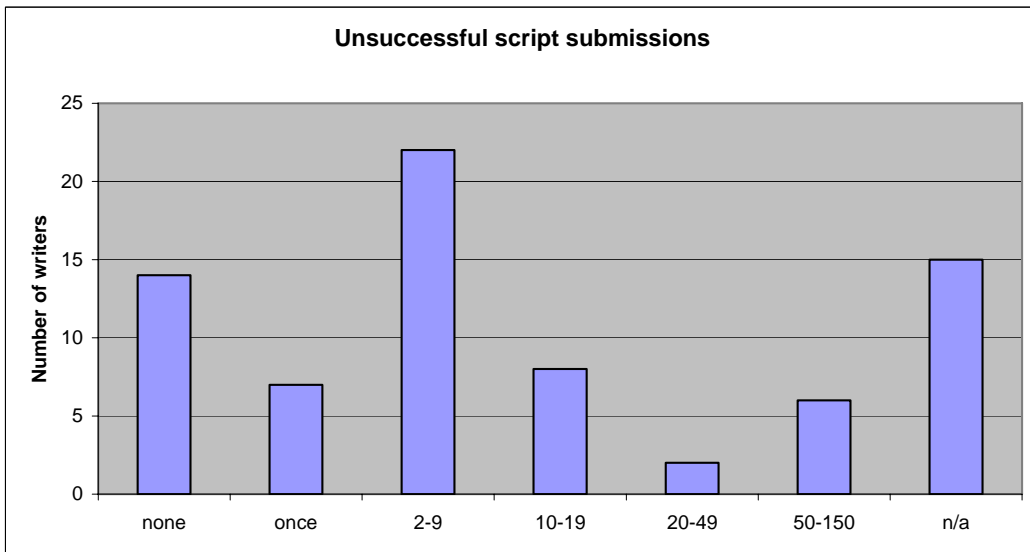
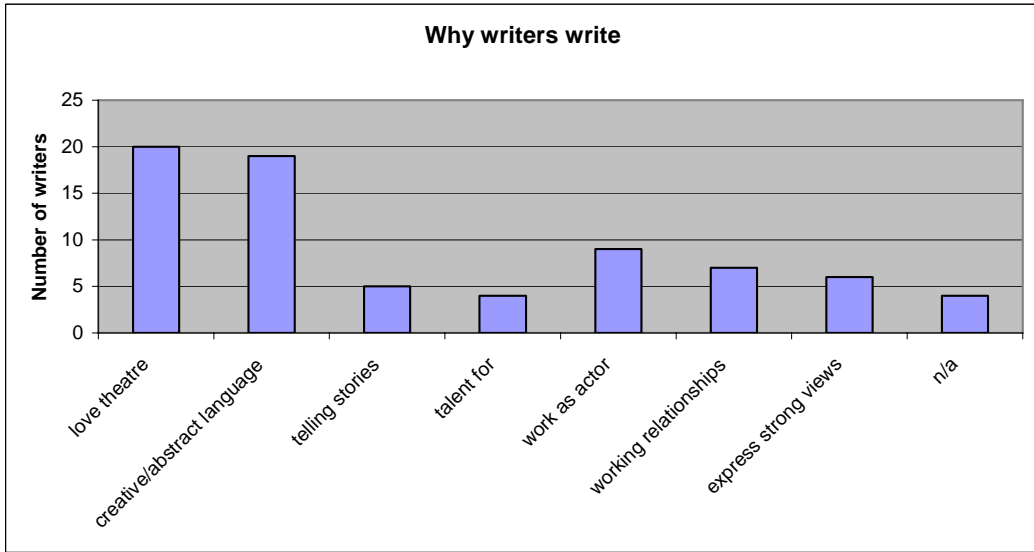
5.2 Writers' Web Questionnaires

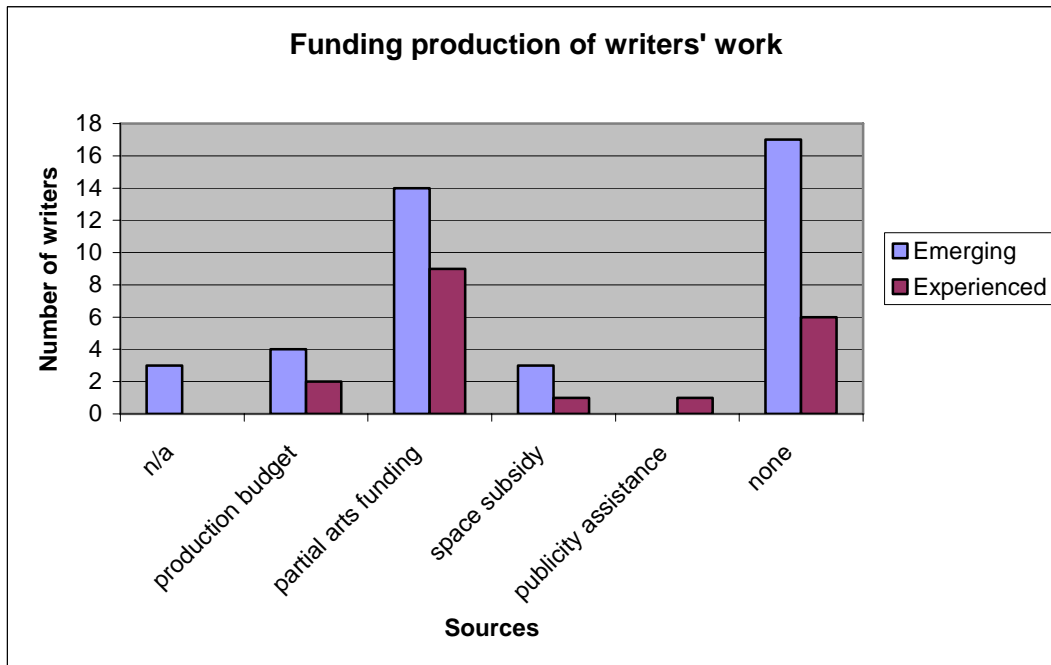
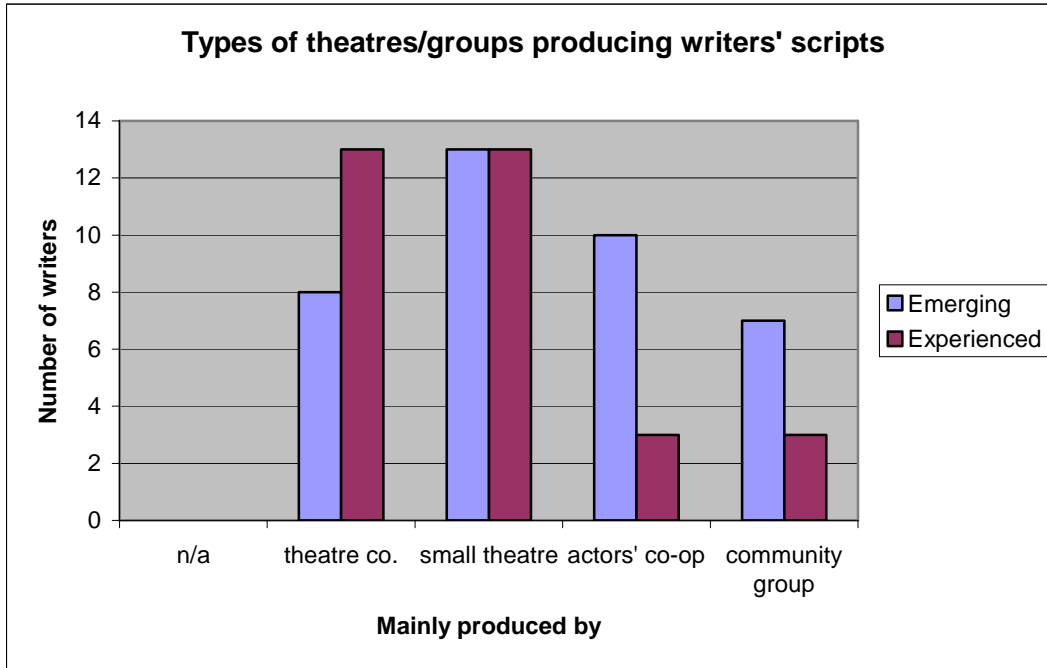
<i>Participants</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>total</i>
Emerging writers	30	11	41
Experienced writers	21	10	31
Main stage	1	1	2
			—
			74

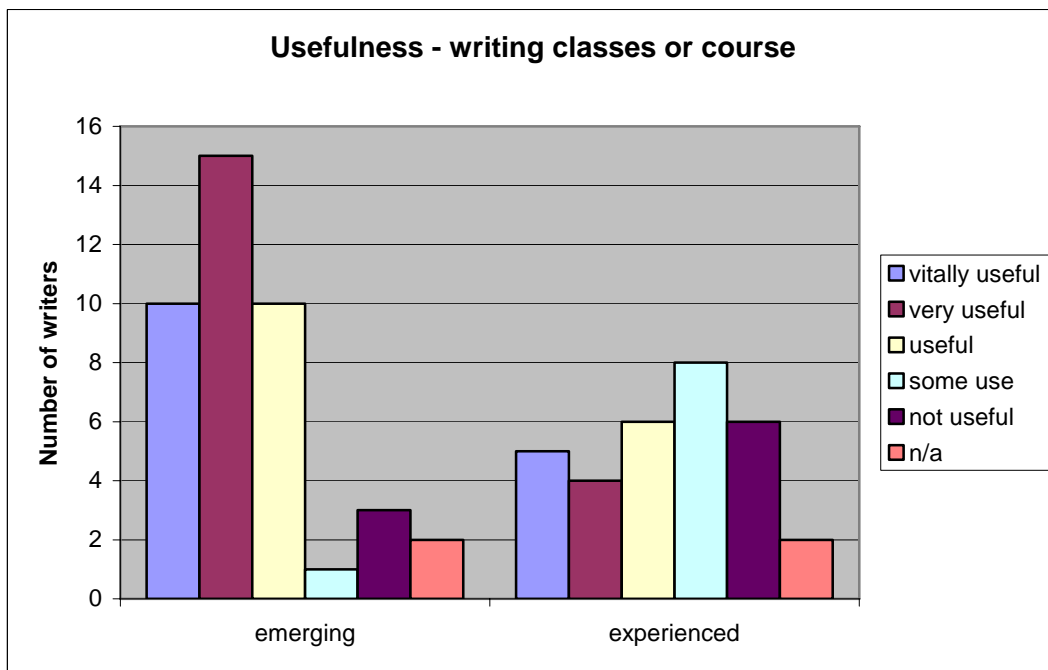
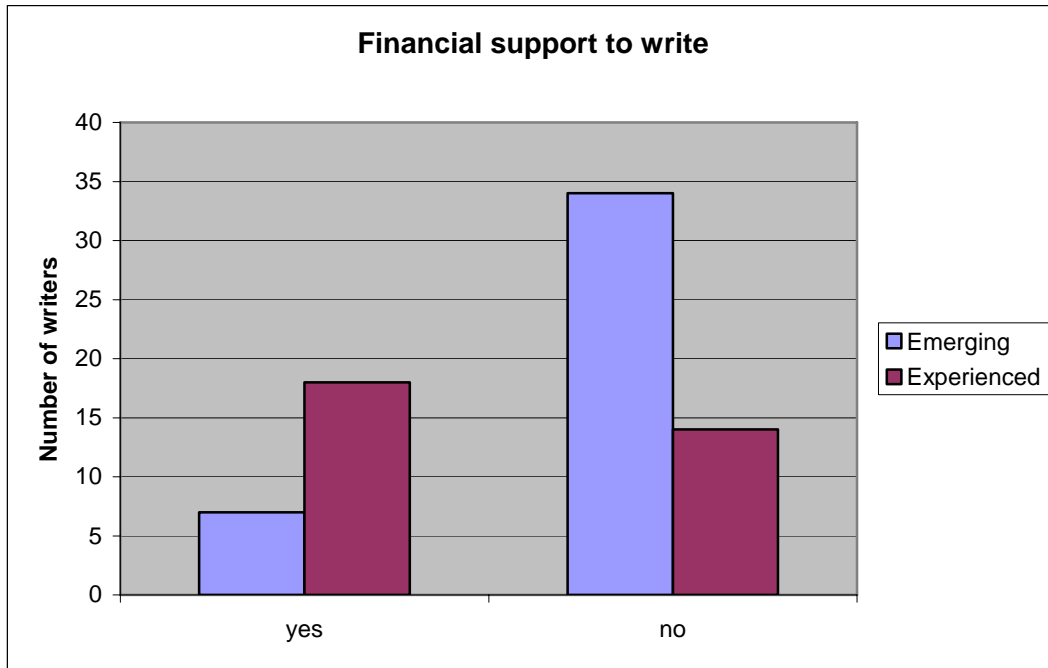
The Writers' Web Questionnaire about script development was available from June to August 2005 from a link on the La Trobe University Theatre and Drama Program home page. It was advertised during that time through writers' organisations, and in *Realtime* and with postcards. Writers nominated a category of emerging, or experienced or main stage. In graphs below, the small number of main stage writers is combined with experienced.

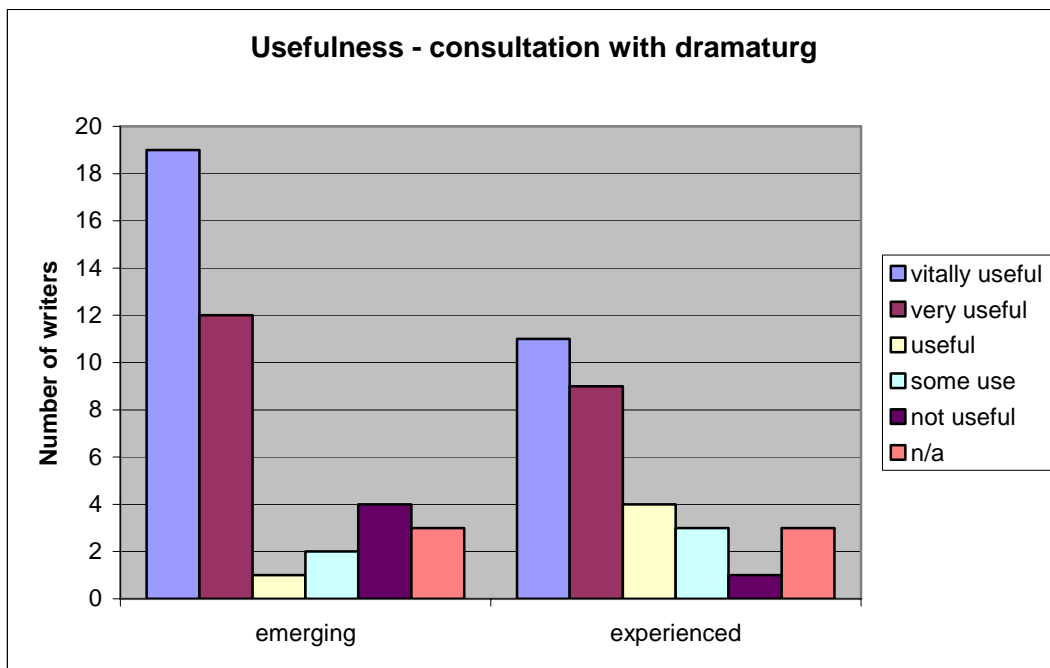
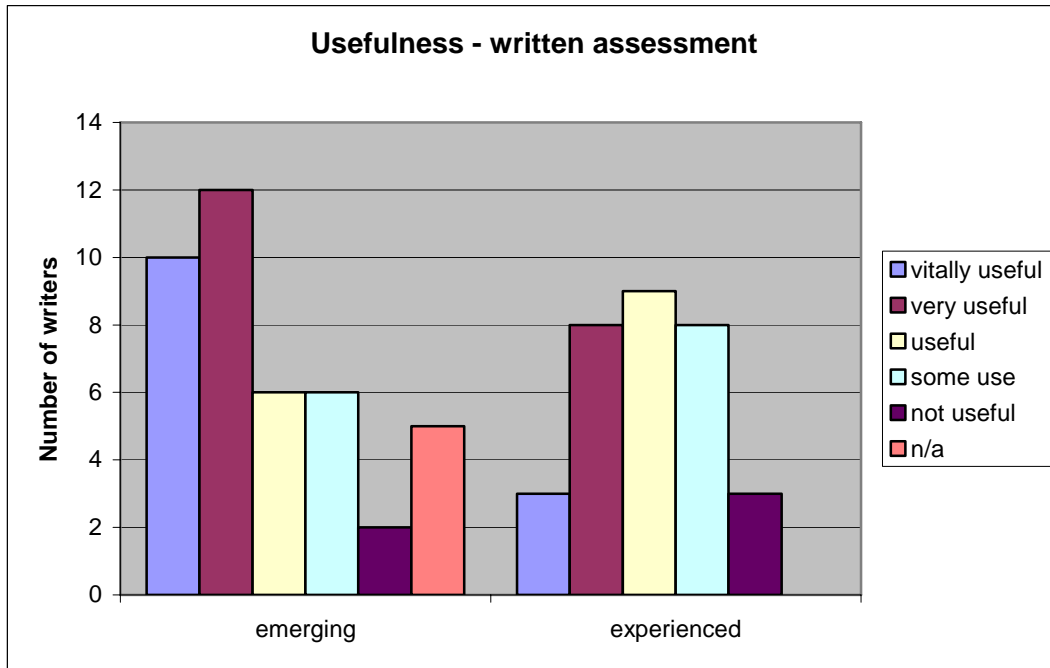
The most relevant findings are presented in graphs below.

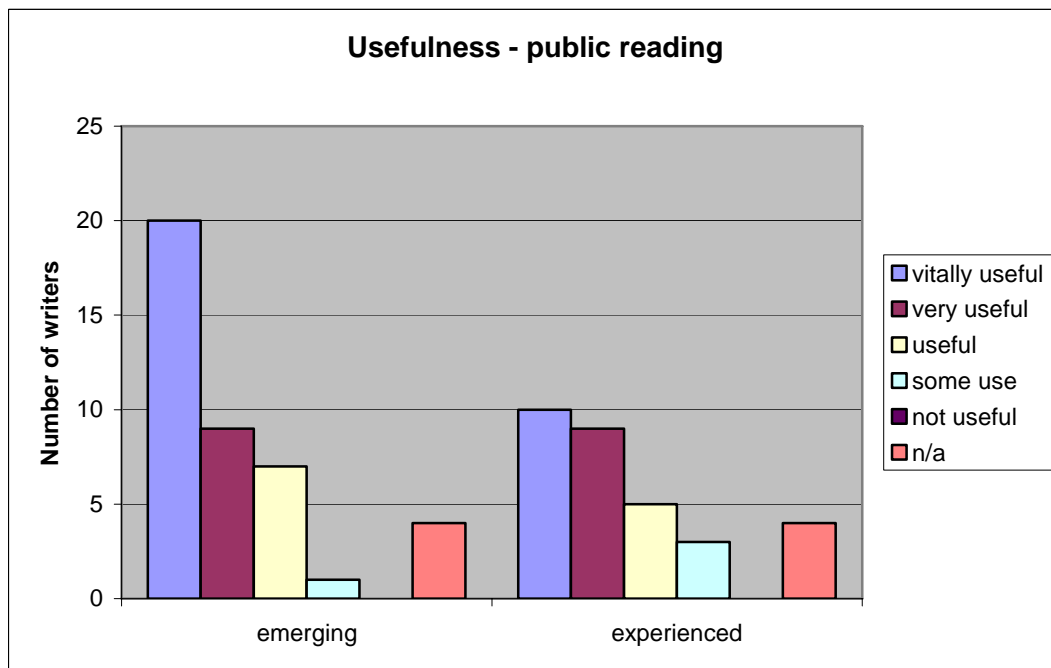
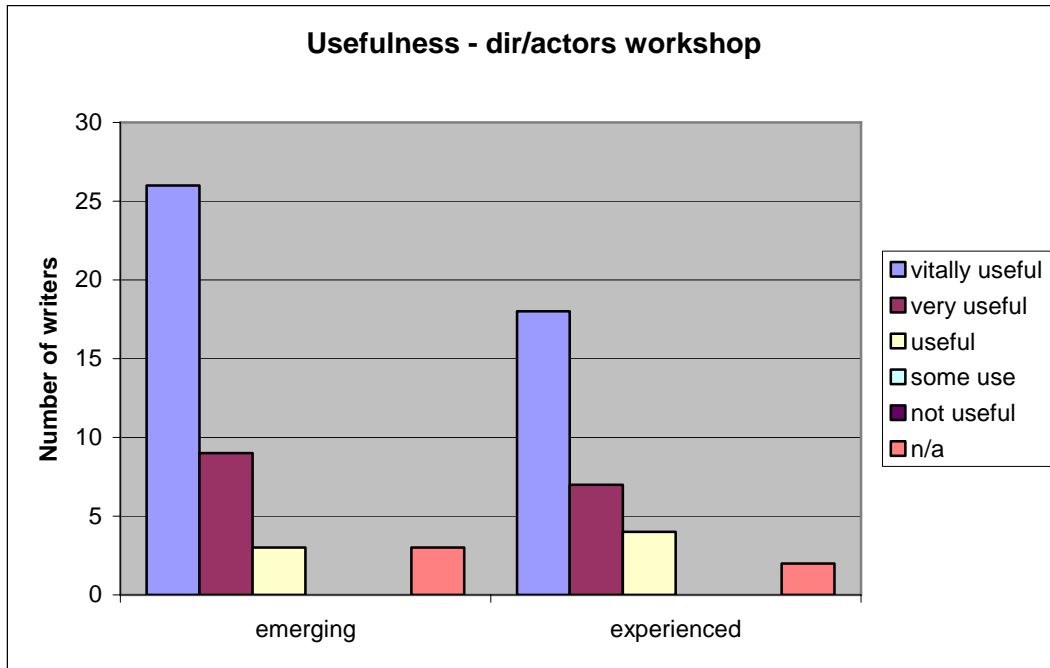


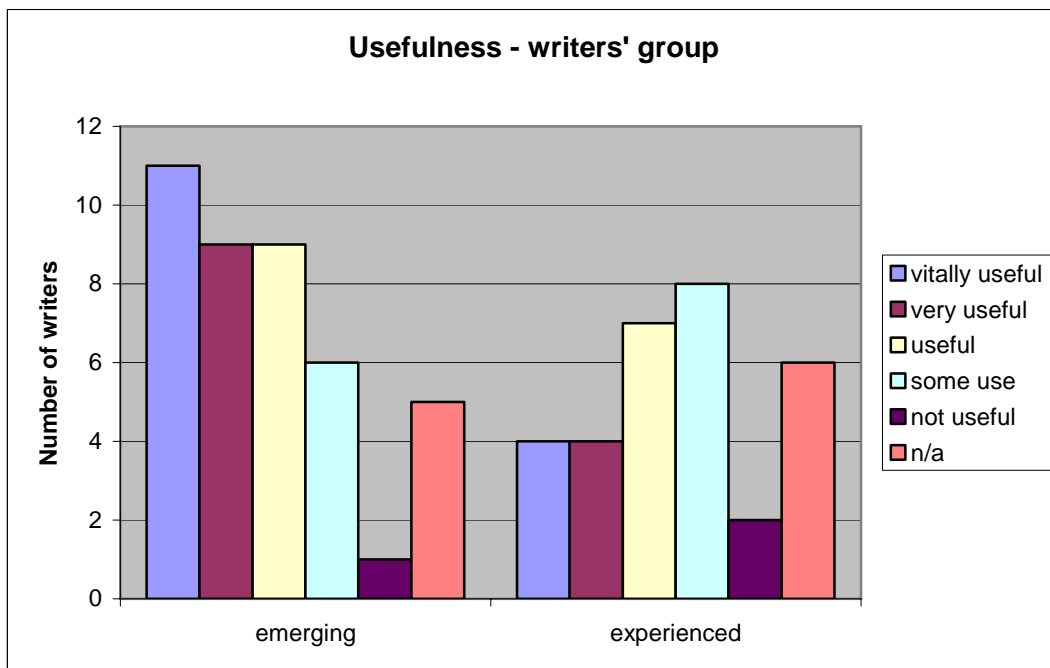
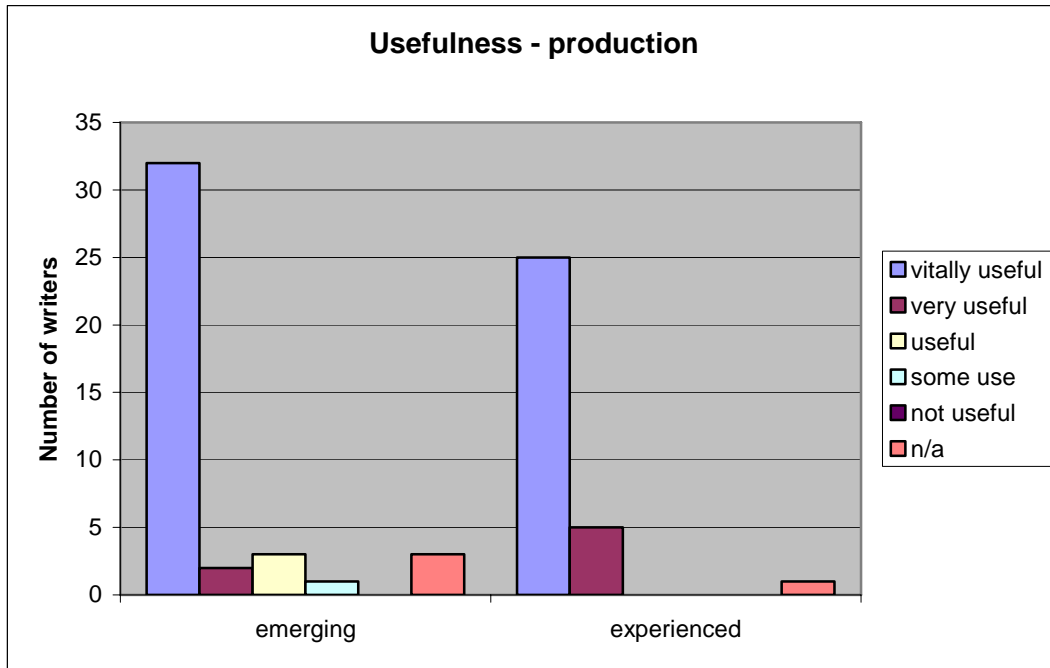


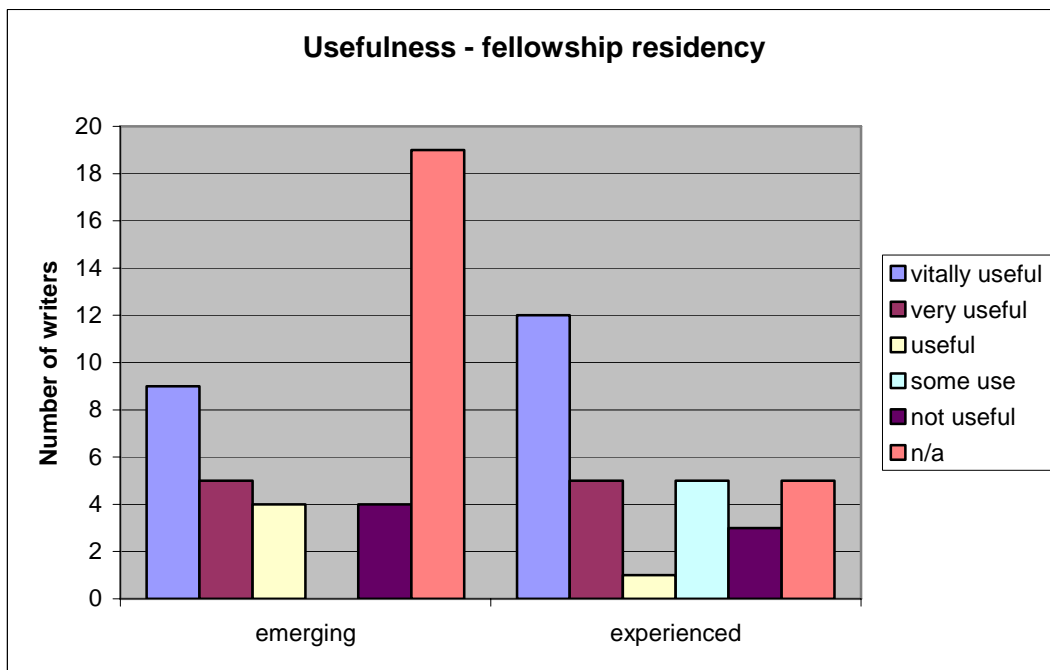
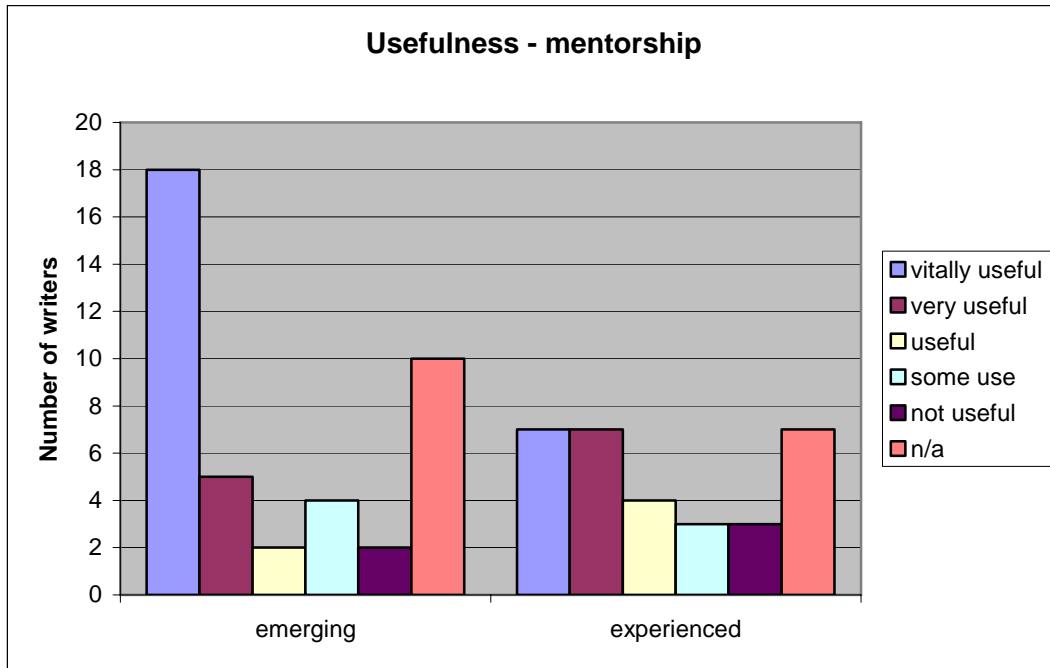


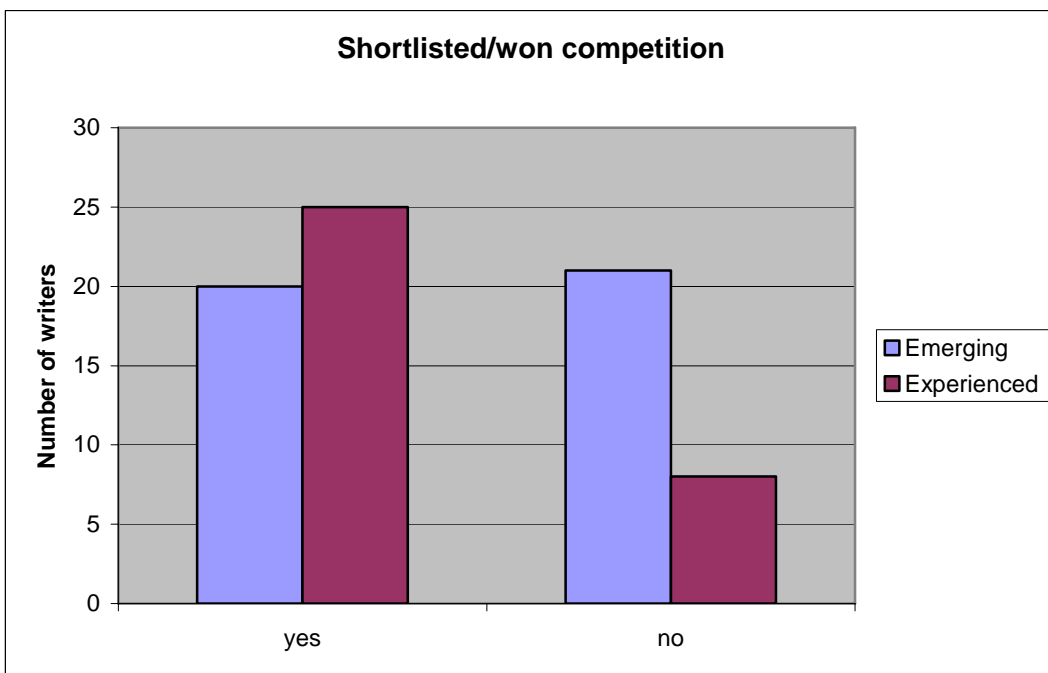
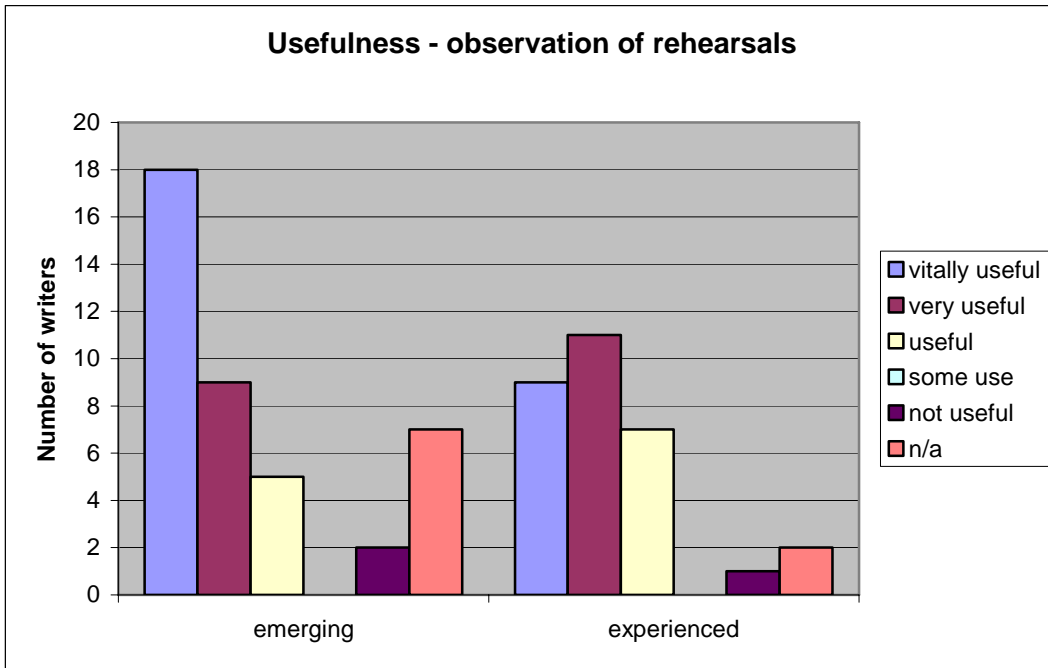


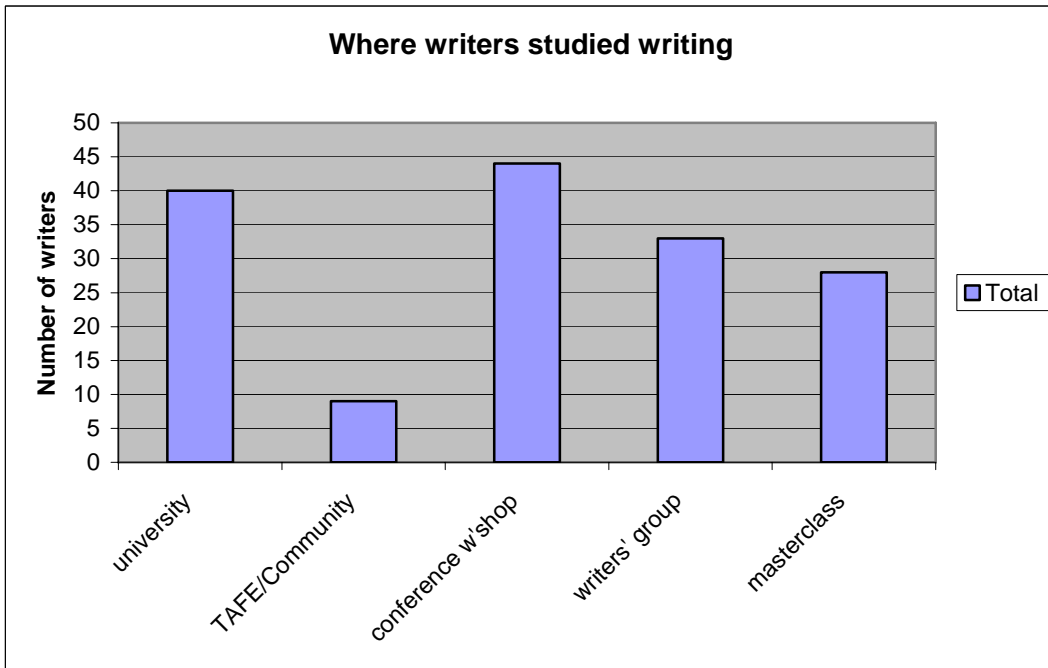
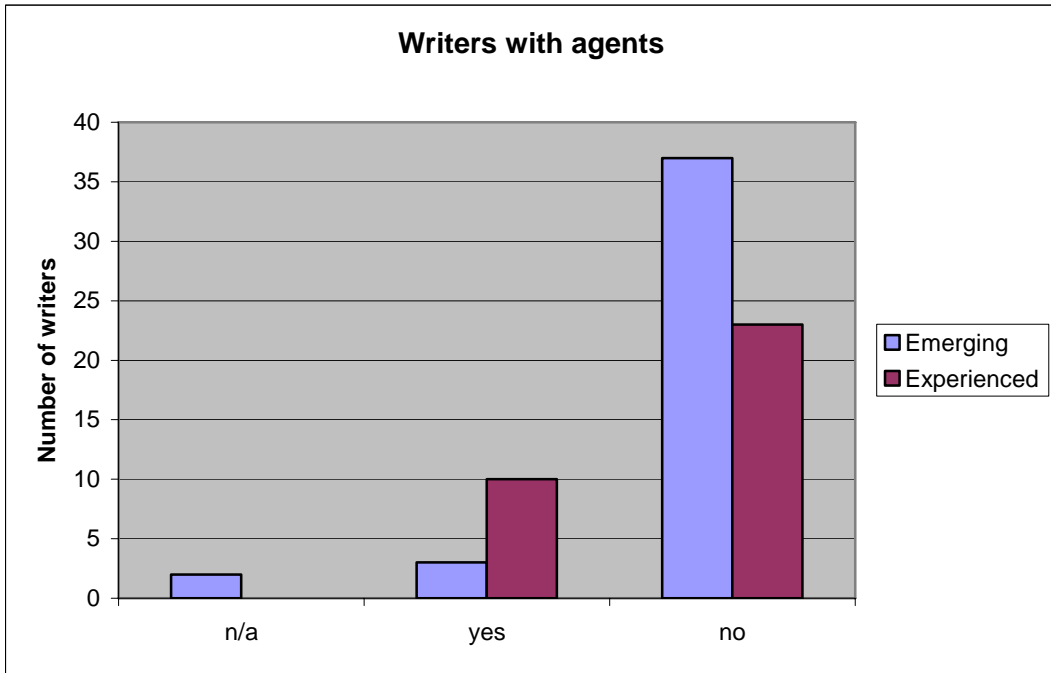


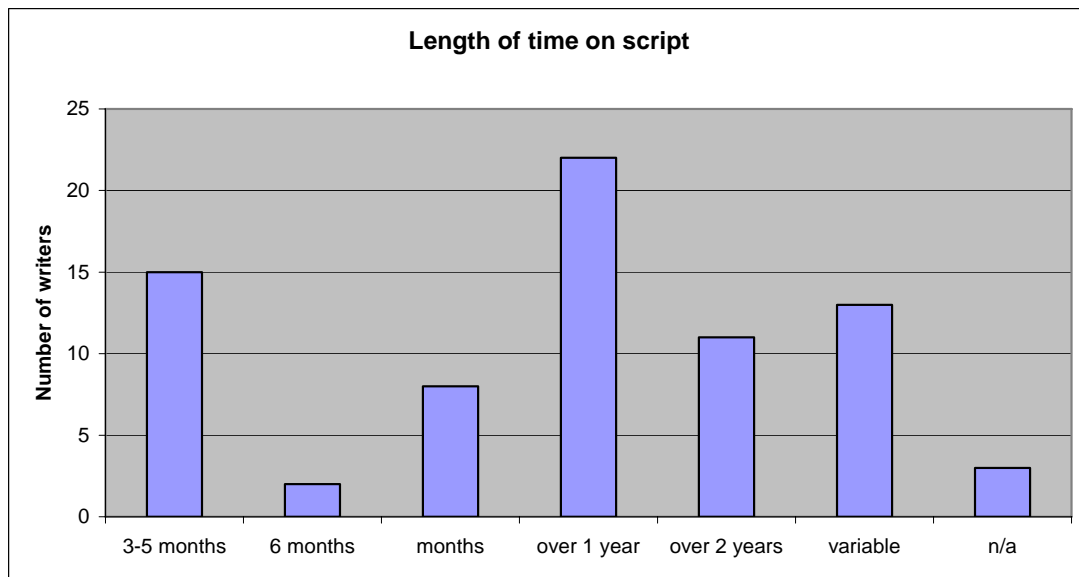
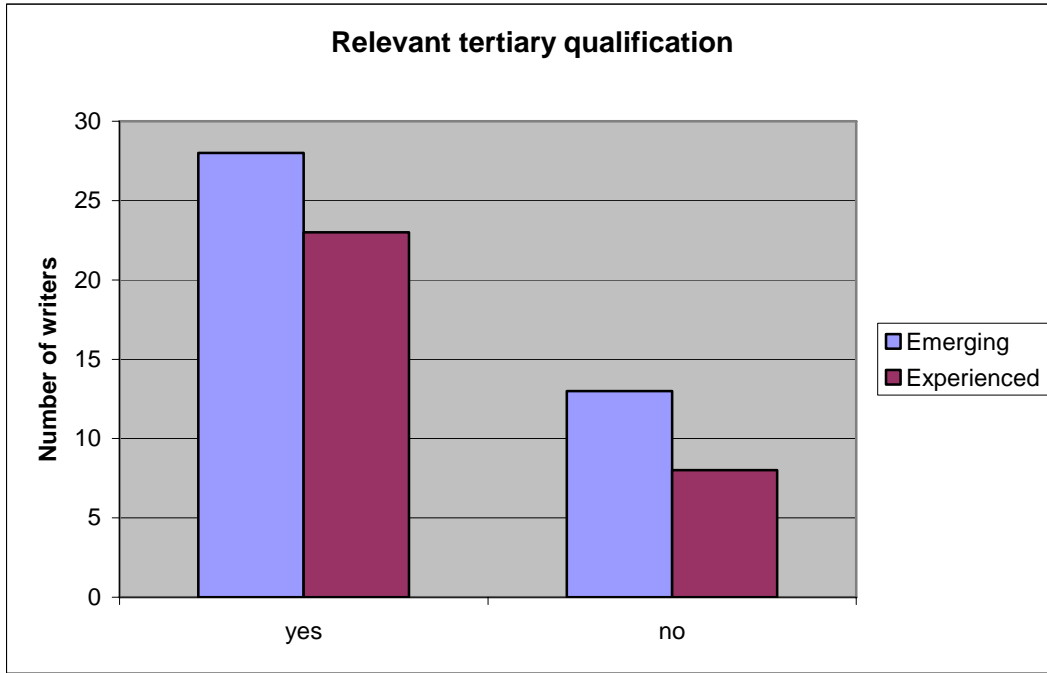












5.3 Interviews for Comment

28 Interviews for Comment were conducted with professionals working in script development by 4 researchers to elicit qualitative information about script development in Australian theatre in 2005—some respondents were also involved in both Organisational Profiles and Interviews for Comment. Comments are summarised and paraphrased under each question when two or more participants make the same point and broadly held views are integrated into the Interpretation (see 2)—responses provided in confidence.

1) What is the place of the Australian writer or the new play in theatre in 2005?

- It is important not to confuse the status of the new work in theatre with the positioning of theatre as a live art form more broadly.
- New work is still very important to theatre, as important as it has ever been. Art can help to develop a sense of identity.

- In 2004–2005 ‘reality plays’ and documentary-style dramas have become common.
- The form of new work is often based on television structures rather than innovative writing.

- Writers themselves are often so subjectively focused that the wider perspective is not there in much new work and, as a public art form, theatre needs social and political resonances.
- The capacity of theatre practitioners to write is not the same as producing quality writing for performance, but this is not widely appreciated.

- ‘The writer is central to Australian theatre but is no longer the centre.’
- The increasing prominence of an intertextual approach to creating text has changed the position of the writers.
- Writers are somewhat marginal.

- The majority of new works are produced in the independent theatre sector.
- Young writers give prolific output in fringe venues in the independent theatre sector.
- Writers need to be able to try out work to improve.
- There is little actual opportunity for plays to progress from small venues that put on Australian new works, such as La Mama, to other theatres and a further production.
- Gap between the theatre writer and the production can be overcome by collaborative teams.
- Major companies are conservative about work that they program. However, there has been an increase in major company opportunities for Australian writers during the 1990s in comparison with the early 1980s. This has come out of efforts throughout 1980s. By 1995, STC had significantly programmed Australian writers but MTC and QTC had yet to develop programming of Australian works. By 2005 this has changed considerably, with QTC programming Queensland writers.
- The issue remains one of the quality of new works rather than simply a quota.
- Themes in recent works can be strongly male orientated.
- There is considerable comment about the reduced number of opportunities for women, and systemic problems increasingly disadvantaging women writers.
- Australian culture is struggling to be supported broadly. This is about cultural attitudes.

2) What is the contribution of script development programs to Australian theatre in 2005?

- Script development is important and improves quality.
- It can make scripts more theatrical and ready for production.
- Writers need different processes.
- Some writers need an intense relationship with a dramaturg over time whereas others only come forward with a script ready for workshopping.
- Writers who work fast to create a first draft do not necessarily work well to create subsequent drafts.
- Theatre companies are running the development programs so this means that SDOs must realign their functions.
- Script assessment may not be useful to development of professional writers.
- Script development is as good as its financial support and this determines its contribution. The problems are not lack of vision or need for new leadership but lack of resources and this is the crucial issue.
- Writers should also be made aware of the limitations imposed on companies with regard to budget and programming choices.
- Good dramaturgs are hard to find whereas a number of people can provide some dramaturgical advice, which makes this process rather variable.

3) What are differences between SDOs?

- Unanimous views that the ANPC conference is effective and provides a crucial national activity that must be maintained because: a) it brings industry professionals together from all over Australia, and b) it provides writers with a national profile.
- At least ANPC has one format that is recognizable. This came from the USA initially as a model and a two-week pressured environment only suits some writers.
- The ANPC has been responsive to new trends in work over time.
- ASC is important and under-appreciated for what it is achieving.
- Playworks currently seems slower to react than in the past.
- Playworks is really important because too many women do not have a sense of their own entitlement to work as strongly and take on challenges and Playworks has substantially defended this right.
- More broadly there is no consensus on best practice and it is left up to individuals to try to fathom how it works.
- The differences depend on who is running the organisations.
- All other script development programs and activities have changed over time. Much is trialled but hard to maintain and undergoes flux.
- Acknowledgement of 'double dipping' is a problem if moving between companies and SDOs.
- Admissions of lack of knowledge about SDOs in other cities and states.

4) What do writers require from script development programs in 2005?

- They ultimately need production, and a good one. Prior to a production they need a workshop and ask for chances to work with actors.
- The most suitable dramaturg, and therefore a good collaborative relationship between writer and dramaturg; then subsequently between director and/or producer.
- Writers want more opportunities and ones that suit their particular approach.
- Writers need to be financed to write.

- They also need access to libraries to do research.
- Writers need to be acknowledged to be worthy of individual grants.
- Writers need access to experienced readers. Someone must read the script but then meet with writers and tell them what is wrong with script.
- Writers ought to be able to expect ‘best practice’ in dealings with them by organisations: careful comments, work promptly dealt with; if company cannot do the play then it needs to reply quickly to a writer.
- Writers do not want to hear the negative advice given in written script assessment. They can get furious at assessments, and that includes writers with a range of experience. They do not seem to want well-considered advice. There seems to be a better reception of advice by writers when there is a working face-to-face process.
- The art of silently reading a script can be difficult and it may be more important to hear it.
- Theatre is a public art with other creative artists involved and therefore writers can be either lauded or blamed disproportionately.
- There is too little attention given to the value of productions in the independent theatre sector.

5) What is the function of playwright competitions for the industry?

- Competitions are valuable for writers and they know that work is being read. The ones with monetary prizes are attractive.
- Deadline for writers to work to and keep them working and some established writers do submit for this reason, depending on competition.
- They are useful but winners are not necessarily produced. However, industry becomes aware of new scripts.
- It can uncover exciting ideas.
- Risk that the standard can be low in a number of scripts and that a field of good writers is not necessarily submitting.
- Competitions duplicate each other in attracting the same scripts.
- Young new writers are winning competitions, which suggests that competitions are not attracting experienced writers.
- Judging is a process of compromise to select a winner.

6) Why do you think theatre companies have been developing their own script development programs?

- In most instances this is to generate scripts that suit the company and cater to audience.
- Companies have strong preferences.
- Scripts continue to be developed after a first production and this is an important part of theatre that is often ignored as if a script comes into production fully finished.
- Some theatre companies have been very effective at generating new work through to production. For example, STC’s Blueprints has been successful in developing new innovative productions.
- QTC programs plays in its script development program into the main season.
- Other companies do not guarantee production but smaller companies must produce work for economic reasons.
- The opportunities provided by SDOs are inadequate and there is a need for far more extensive development programs.

- The support of a state theatre company given to encouraging emerging artists depends on leadership.
- Companies develop own programs because of their need for scripts to suit their specific programming and audience requirements.

7) Is there duplication between the programs of SDOs and theatre companies?

- There is considerable duplication in assessment; with readers paid to assess same works.
- Writers are completely under-resourced. There is a need for a range of processes.
- Important that ANPC exists because some scripts are not being developed by theatre companies.
- Rationalising infrastructure resources might make economic sense but it may ultimately limit diversity of artistic approach and opportunities.
- There is some duplication if all organisations working with young artists.
- There is a territorial attitude to writers who succeed in one locality that may actually make it difficult for the work to be produced elsewhere.
- Where ‘double dipping’ is happening, this may also result from how the industry selection relies on other people to evaluate a work rather than close readings of work.
- Reading scripts is a difficult task and in the past it has sometimes been done by readers without an understanding of theatricality.
- Feedback to writers should be a transparent process.

8) What is the function of national SDOs given localised state-based development?

- The national SDO should be doing work that is not being done by other organisations.
- They should bring national opportunities to work.
- Bringing artists together from across geographical distance extends beyond existing working relationships. It is a really valuable opportunity for new creative partnerships and directions.
- The ANPC conference during 1970s–1980s was exciting in bringing forward new writers to be discovered. But it was seen for a time workshopping ones that are known about in the industry.
- In the past, ANPC received fewer scripts from Victoria because of Playbox and La Mama, since these 2 organisations were reading all scripts and providing script development process.

9) What effect do the artistic preferences of individuals have in deciding script development programs?

- Wide-reaching and long-lasting through policies and practices, although if Boards have the capacity to develop a vision, this can be offset.
- Communities contributed more to artistic decision-making in the past.
- Tastes of individuals can be individual and even quirky at times.
- If the program is supporting writers and scripts it will be different to what an artistic director will need from a theatre organisation.
- Artistic director does not necessarily deal with writers so assessment is only as good as assessors or dramaturgs, although AD responsible for choice of assessors. But AD does decide direction of the organisation and theatre company.
- Some companies manage continuity of approach even with a change of artistic director but this is organisation specific.

- There does seem to be an arts industry preference for new people that does not build on achievements of experienced people to keep them in the industry. This might be compared to other industries where experience is valued.

10) From your experience, how accurate are complaints that script development only leads to further development opportunities rather than production?

- There is some validity but there are so few development opportunities so this cannot really be the case, and this may have been relevant several years ago.
- Scripts that are workshopped, as opposed to those given dramaturgical support, tend eventually to be produced.
- Development can be the only way a play can remain visible. Writers find it difficult to progress to further plays with unproduced plays.
- It may be that a play is not going to be finished and this is recognised within the development process.
- The imperative of the showcase at the end of the ANPC conference leads to a particular pressure on writers to create work for that event which can change the play in unintended ways.

11) Alternatively, what do you think about complaints that new plays often need more work?

- Not enough investment in script development.
- Directors should not accept work unless finished.
- Decision to program work often made on first draft, but when writer is too busy to spend sufficient time on work then it is outside the control of the theatre.
- Theatre companies produce plays that are not ready because even with script development scheduled companies will program before it is evident that work is completely finished.
- This is a problem especially relevant to commissions. A writer might have a better script than the one being commissioned but the less completed script is produced.
- Plays that are commissioned may or may not receive a development process.
- There were several anecdotal accounts of two scripts recently produced in the independent theatre sector that had script development support beforehand and then were picked up by another venue.

12) What type of program serves development of a script best?

- Unanimous agreement that there is not one script development program to suit all writers.
- Stepped processes, even commissions.
- Aside from production, a committed director and cast working on script with writer in a workshop.
- Ideally, an ongoing workshop studio (writers' theatre) that supports a select group of writers and gives them access to professional actors, director and dramaturgs but is focused completely on presenting a play without design or other theatrical elements and a short rehearsal time.
- A producing theatre has advantages over an organisation set up to receive and develop work especially if funded to have writers in residence.

5.4 Theatre Company Script Development Programs

Company B, Belvoir St Theatre, Sydney

Script development program(s) in 2005

Company B: Company B is under the artistic director, Neil Armfield, and general manager, Rachel Healy. The company's home is the historic Belvoir St Theatre located in Surry Hills, Sydney, where it stages an annual season of work with prominent and promising directors, actors and designers. Company B also tours frequently within NSW, interstate and overseas.

B Sharp: This is a partnership between Company B and independent theatre companies or individuals. The aim is to support the development of theatre practice within a mainstream environment. Works presented include new Australian works, re-workings of classics and 'cutting-edge' contemporary international works. This program was started in 1999.

Company B is not, essentially, a new writing theatre. It does, however, include at least one new Australian work in its season per year. In recent years Company B has refined its script development and reading processes. If an approach is made through a Literary Agent, the company's Literary Manager will read the scripts and consider them for programming. Any other scripts must be submitted through the 'Submit scripts' process outlined on the website (www.belvoir.com.au).

Unsolicited scripts and Assessments: Unsolicited scripts that are submitted with a \$50 fee are assessed. The script is read by one of a team of readers. The full assessment is filed. The playwright receives a summary of this assessment. If the company is interested in a play, they will either begin a dialogue with a playwright or keep the work for future discussion.

Commissions: Although only a small number of works are commissioned, the company does ask for scripts to be submitted.

Annual International Play Readings: These were set up to develop an international perspective on writing. Also, they ensured that Australian playwrights would have access to these plays.

Program in 2000

There was no formal script development program and work was developed according to artistic director, Neil Armfield's interest at the time and his interest in developing an artistic 'team'. In this way, relationships with writers were established.

Annual International Play Readings: These were set up to develop an international perspective on writing. Also, they ensured that Australian playwrights would have access to these plays.

Production Dramaturgy: Scripts were often developed as part of the rehearsal process in an immediate dramaturgical response as the work was getting up and 'off the page'. While Paul Livingstone's *Emma's Nose* was workshopped at the Australian National Playwrights' Conference in 2000, and then received very heavy production

dramaturgy, where the work was further developed/dramaturged during the ‘on the floor’ process. Even during the dress rehearsal, the script was heavily cut—the development of the script happened right up to the last minute. Another example was *Aliwa*, which is an Indigenous play also first workshoped at the playwrights’ conference. The rehearsal period lasted for longer than the ‘normal’ time, with Neil Armfield as the director.

Commissions: An artistic advisory panel was created to encourage the development of new work. Writers were approached to write a new play, but often these arrangements fell through because the writer was too busy or for other reasons.

Program in 1990 and 1995

At this time there was a board that would decide on all the artistic development, as opposed to direction by the artistic director. Everyone in the board had equal power, and the script policy was decided through dynamic dialogue from all members.

Commissions: At this time, specific writers were approached to create a work that would fill in the program.

Production Dramaturgy: As above in 2000. However, the Artistic Council would sit in on an open rehearsal to give feedback. The writer would be part of the process in the first week of rehearsal.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Sense of high theatricality
- Political
- Strong emotional journey
- Humour

Criteria in 2000

- Choice of artistic director

Criteria in 1995 and 1990

- Relationship with writer
- ANPC or Playworks recommendation

Black Swan Theatre Company, Perth Script development program(s) in 2005

Black Swan does not have a specific development program.

Commissions: Writers and writer/directors are commissioned to do new work. Artistic director, Tom Gutteridge is keen to utilise WA writers. He is looking at the Malthouse model of soliciting projects: i.e. a developing or experienced writer submits a short synopsis rather than a script, along with a rationale as to why the project should be developed by Black Swan. Black Swan decides whether or not it is interested in the premise of the piece and wants to take it further. This is to avoid the past practice of receiving full scripts that could not be read or responded to quickly enough. It also allows the company to develop an ongoing working relationship with a writer, and therefore creates a more realistic possibility of the work being produced.

Development Process: At the moment, the development process is not fixed but depends on the nature of the individual script. If the company receives a ‘fully

formed' script, it may be produced as it is. An example of different working processes is Reg Cribb's *Ruby's Last Dollar*. This came as a proposal with an existing creative process and he was asked to suggest a team. The piece was given a one-week workshop—3 days with actors and 2 days with a dramaturg. The piece was then worked on by the director (Jeremy Sims) and Tom Gutteridge for another month (approx. 20 hours work). Reg Cribb wrote major drafts, which incorporated changes made by directors, and then it was produced. Another development model is Tom Wright's adaptation of *The Odyssey*, in collaboration with Malthouse Theatre, which took four years of script development.

Adaptations/Translations: Contemporary and adapted versions of plays. The interest is to place these works into an Australian context: e.g. translation of Chekhov's *Uncle Vanya* with Ningali Lawford and an Australian idiom to provoke a response from an Australian audience.

Program in 2000

Commissions: Scripts were often given a long period to develop without the promise of being programmed. Andrew Ross would work very closely with the writer during the process. These were often large-scale projects, e.g. *Bran Nue Dae* and *Cloudstreet*.

Program in 1995

- As above for 2000.
- Writers like Dorothy Hewett commissioned.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Tom Gutteridge is still also interested in the traditional 'well-made' play.
- Prefers plays that are responses to, and in conversation with, 'The World' rather than other 'Art'.
- Generosity of attitude in relation to the audience, e.g. direct address—acknowledging the audience.
- Intensity of experience for the audience.
- Theatricality of the work.
- Bigger works will be considered.

Darwin Theatre Company, Darwin

Script development program(s) in 2005

There is no formal script development program at present. However, artistic director, John Du Feu, would like to develop this by running a season of play readings for discussion and feedback of new local/regional work. By creating relationships with other regional companies—especially JUTE—he wants to help DTC writers to get involved with the development process. John Du Feu feels that JUTE is already providing a part of the service that writers in the area need particularly in relation to writing conventional plays but he wants DTC to take on perceived gaps developing a broader approach to writing for performance. This would be particularly relevant in the NT where conventional plays are not necessarily the most obvious solution for emerging Indigenous writers.

Commissions: Most commissions have been for short plays—around 35 minutes: e.g. 'Caravan' was a series of 3 short plays by local writers. The Australia Council funded

this program as a separate project-based grant and the writers were given a series of deadlines to come up with ideas and the first draft of their script. The process of development for the works was deemed unsatisfactory, with the one week of dramaturgy with the actors and Mary-Anne Gifford also being the first week of rehearsal. John Du Feu wants the process to change, so that the workshop is two staged conducted some weeks earlier and the writer therefore has more time to further develop the work.

Program in 2000

Commissions: Approximately 1–2 works commissioned per year. Most of these were works written by the artistic director of the company, Tanya Lieman, in collaboration with other writers (e.g. Stephen Carleton). The works were given a one-week workshop with the actors, as part of the rehearsal period. However, some of the works were also workshopped in other circumstances including at the Australian National Playwrights Conference (e.g. *Tin Hotel* by Tanya Lieman and Gail Evans).

Program in 1995

The company functioned more as a rep company, programming a broad range of material.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Northern Territory focus
- Northern Territory character.

Deckchair Theatre, Fremantle

Script development program(s) in 2005

Commissions: Most commissions are given 12 months, although this is flexible depending on the content of the piece and the writer—e.g. *Mavis Goes to Timor* by Katherine Thompson involved a much shorter process. Conversely, Deckchair is presently working on a commission with an Indian company and it is expected that this will take up to 3 years to write. The company develops the works in a range of ways, including a workshop before rehearsal, but this is not always possible due to funding restraints. The artistic director, Angela Chaplin, estimates that 30 percent of commissions are given workshops. These run for one week and involve actors, director and possibly a composer. Angela generally works as dramaturg on all new works, and will be working with 2–3 writers at any one time. There can also be readings of the works in progress.

Mentorships: The first mentorship was in 2004–2005. This was a Stages WA initiative. Emerging playwrights applied to Stages to do a mentorship at Deckchair. During the mentorship, which runs for 1 year, the writer sits in on rehearsals, is given a workstation in order to write, is given dramaturgical advice from Angela Chaplin, and sits in on writers' meetings. The idea is that they get to understand the role of the writer within a company. There is interest in running another mentorship.

Program in 2000

Commissions: As above. However, there was more new work being developed.

Program in 1995

Commissions: As above. The company shifted its focus from youth theatre to adult theatre around 1985.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Having an existing relationship with writer (e.g. Katherine Thompson).
- Approaching writers with a reputation/body of work.
- Focus on women.
- Telling stories of people from ‘non-dominant cultures’.
- Exploration of form and style.

Criteria for selection in 2000

- As above.
- Fremantle stories.

Griffin Theatre Company, Sydney

Script development program(s) in 2005

Playwrights’ Residency: Five playwrights under 30 years were selected for the 2004-5 program, which provides one year of professional development. This program was initiated in 2004 by the artistic director, David Berthold, and is the core of Griffin’s emerging artist program. The 2005–2006 program called Playwright’s Residency was open to playwrights under 35. There are 2 strands to the program: 1) the writers meet as a group every month to discuss and explore issues of product and professional practice, and sometimes a guest playwright or other practitioners might join the session. 2) Each of the plays in development gets 2 workshops, with each workshop running for 2 days with actors and a director. The writer might have individual meetings with David Berthold or the literary manager.

Assessments/call for proposals: Griffin will give consideration and feedback to the script if the writer fulfils one of the following criteria: has received a professional production; is represented by an agent; had a play workshopped at Griffin; or been shortlisted for the Griffin award. Other writers are asked to submit a one-page outline of their play with a ‘ten-page sample’ of the work. If the company is interested in the work, they will request the full script.

Writing workshops: Griffin runs a 10-week writers’ course. The draft written at the end of the workshop is given a written assessment. If Griffin is interested in the work, the playwright might be asked to submit a further draft.

Commissions: Plays are commissioned and developed as needed. Two commissions over the last two years. Most new plays offered production will have at least two days workshops prior to rehearsal.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- a) Emerging Playwrights’ Residency
 - Under-30s (changed to under-35s for 2005-6)
 - No more than 2 plays professionally produced already
 - A rationale as to why the residency would be of benefit
 - Ability to work well in a group
 - A play concept that is of some interest to Griffin.
- b) Selection for Griffin production
 - Personal relationship with the writer
 - Discussions with writers

- Unproduced play in the marketplace
- Taste of the artistic director
- Balance with the season
- Scale of the work: Griffin is small, so the work cannot have more than 5-6 actors.

HotHouse Theatre, Wodonga

Commissions

HotHouse Theatre under the direction of a seven member artistic directorate drawn from Melbourne, Sydney and Albury Wodonga, commissions new Australian plays on a three year cycle of writing in year one, creative development in year two and production in year three. The company has a well-articulated policy of not programming works for the following year until the script is completed and ready for production.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Strength of idea.
- Asks writers to submit ideas.

Residency program

HotHouse Theatre operates a Month in the Country, a national creative development residency program which offers funded residencies to groups of performing artists to spend up to four weeks living in a large farmhouse and working in the adjoining rehearsal studio.

Ilbijerri, Melbourne

Script development program(s) in 2005

Indigenous Playwrights' Conference: The conference has been running for 4 years. In 2005, the company changed its form to look at collaborative ways of working. It was set up as an open forum for artists to write and create.

Commissions: The company generally commissions via invitation or by approaching selected writers. Writers can be asked for a work that is based on a theme: for example, for *Stolen*, Jane Harrison was found after the company placed an advert in the newspaper calling for a playwright to write a play about the stolen generation of Indigenous children. Only one Indigenous writer applied, and the research and development of the play took several few years. The process was extensive and included a number of different strategies, including readings by different theatre companies, writing dialogue with the actors, and director and dramaturg input into the process. Writers might also be asked to apply for a commission by submitting an idea. Ilbijerri would then take on the idea and develop it in its own way: e.g. *Dirty Mile* will be developed more into a performance event rather than a traditional script. Ilbijerri is looking for alternative and Indigenous ways of writing for theatre.

Co-productions: This is a new direction for Ilbijerri. In 2005, under artistic director Kylie Belling, the company is partnering with Polyglot Puppet Theatre for the Headhunter Creative Development Program. From this, a performance for young audiences is being created which deals with family ties from an Aboriginal perspective.

Program in 2000

Indigenous Playwright's Conference: over 2000–2004, the conference invited playwrights to submit scripts. From these, 4–5 scripts were selected for workshopping at the conference, which ran for two weeks at Playbox. Plays could be selected for two years running, could have already been part of another development process. Scripts could also be ones that the company had commissioned. An 'official' reading with feedback was held at the end of the process. During the conference, there were also panels on Indigenous theatre issues.

Commissions: as above.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Community relevance
- Indigenous writer
- Strong idea

Criteria in 2000

- As above

Just Us Theatre Ensemble (JUTE), Cairns

Script development program(s) in 2005

JUTE has an annual 8–9-month script development program in place, catering for a range of writers who apply to the program at the beginning of each year—from those with no experience to those with a script close to production. Some writers have started without experience but, over a period of 3–4 years, have moved through the process to have their new work produced.

Enter Stage Write: There are four streams to this program:

- 1) *Open Stream:* This stream is for new/emerging writers with little or no experience in writing for performance. They are introduced to the basic-medium skills of writing for stage through group dramaturgy as well as group workshops. Participants develop a ten-minute work towards a single theme for reading at the JUTE Theatre.
- 2) *Writer/performer:* This is aimed at emerging or established writers who are also experienced performers with an understanding of devised work. Works are developed through dramaturgy and masterclass workshops by visiting dramaturgs, JUTE's artistic director. Some are read at the JUTE Playwrights' Conference.
- 3) *Development Stream:* This is for emerging or established writers who have drafts or mature concepts for a new work. Process as for writer/performer. Some are read at the JUTE Playwrights' Conference.
- 4) *Production Stream:* The company will invite writers who have been developing scripts through the ESW Development stream to move into the production stream. Applications are also accepted from writers with a mature script, which the company believes is almost ready for production.

Program in 2000

As above. The program has transformed over the years to meet the needs of the company and the writers. The transformation has come about through debriefing with writers and dramaturgs involved in the program each year.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Style of writing.
- Strength of the writer behind the work and the underlying idea.
- Contemporary play but not 'kitchen sink' drama.
- Culturally diverse.

Kooemba Jdarra, Brisbane

Script development program(s) in 2005

There are 2 script development programs.

New Playwrights: In this program, the playwright contacts the artistic director, Marilyn Miller, with an idea. In 2005, she requested an experienced writer or dramaturg to be assigned to the writer to identify problems. He or she would go through an 18 month development stage for writing and reworking with 3 workshops. (This development phase is reduced from 3 years.) The script should then be ready for rehearsal.

Adaptation of Award-winning Novel: This program was set up in 1993 and a project in the pipeline was staged in 2005. The company recognises the need and value of the proper development of a work. All scripts are scheduled to be read at a workshop or a conference.

Program in 2000

New Playwrights: If the company was interested in a proposal, the writer was given 3 years to develop the script. The script was read at a workshop or conference before progressing to a fully professional workshop with actors, director and dramaturg.

Adaptation of Award-winning Novel: continuing.

Program in 1995

Adaptation of Award-winning Novel: as above

Criteria for selection in 2005

- A voice as an Indigenous artist.
- Trends in the arts—finding the gaps to fill.
- New frontiers—opening gates.
- Different interpretation on issues.

La Boite, Brisbane

Script development program(s) in 2005

Developing new work is a relatively recent process for La Boite. Formerly it would produce existing new plays and now it has built relationships with local and national writers who are under commission.

Commissions: Commissions are by draft or by 'idea'. La Boite asks for a presentation of ideas in a treatment form. The idea is then 'interrogated' in discussion with the writer and will go through 3–4 drafts over 2 years. There is a workshop period for the development of these works and this process is presently being refined. At the moment the scripts have a 1–5-day workshop with actors, director (generally artistic director, Sean Mee, or Ian Lawson) and dramaturg. The intention is to have two

workshops, with the second lasting 2–3 days and taking place one week before the rehearsal period with the actual cast for the production.

Adaptations: The focus is first on finding the appropriate person to do the adaptation, and Janis Balodis is currently doing an adaptation. The script is given a 3-day workshop.

Mentorships: Sometimes La Boite takes on an emerging writer through Playlab, although this is being phased out.

Program in 2000

La Boite produced new plays and also bought in productions either from Playbox or other national companies.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Will the script bring a new audience to the theatre?
- Company's relationship with writer.
- What does the work say on a social or political level?
- Is it innovative in terms of form?
- Queensland writer, however this criteria is becoming less important.

Criteria in 2000

- At this time, there were 3 writers at La Boite.

La Mama Theatre, Melbourne

La Mama provides a venue for the staging of new works and existing works. It receives over 200 applications a year from a range of writers—from emerging to established writers for performance, and from co-operatives of professionals through to groups of new graduates—of which 40–50 are supported by La Mama for production (2005 = 45). Annually, 86 percent of plays will be new Australian works and in 2006 64 percent will be emerging writers. Funding is \$165,000 through an operational grant from Arts Victoria in 2004–2005 and an identical Australia Council grant.

Script development program in 2005

Assessment is given on all unsolicited scripts (200 plus a year) and given in writing for a \$25 fee (some scripts are directed to development organisations). The script assessment budget amounts to \$30,000 annually.

The artistic director, Liz Jones, and her literary advisor read all scripts between them before a shortlist is made. Directors are then approached and paid to read these scripts and good working relationships between directors and writers are established as a result of this process. Annually there are 25 play readings at La Mama. Many of these go on to have a full three week La Mama season. The quality of the work will vary from highly accomplished professional productions to new ensembles and this is considered part of the unique success of La Mama and appreciated by audiences on this basis. La Mama has a long history of experimental production.⁵

⁵ See Jones, Liz with Burstall, Betty (1988). *La Mama: The Story of A Theatre*, Melbourne: McPhee Gribble/Penguin Books.

The La Mama Young Playwright's Studio receives 35 entrants and selects three winners. The competition helps introduce new playwrights to La Mama. The winners usually go on to receive a full production.

***Mainstreet Theatre, Mount Gambier
Script development program(s) in 2005***

Commissions/Creative Development: Mainstreet commissions approximately 2 plays per year. All scripts, at present, are given time for the creative development of a one-week workshop. If a cast is in town for a different play, they will be used to work on a new script in development. In 2005, there were 4 active commissions and 1 pending. The time frame for a commission is 1.5–2 years. Writers are often asked which director they want to work with.

Dramaturgy: At the moment, playwrights can do one-on-one dramaturgical sessions with artistic director, David Ryding. In 2006, the intention is to have a dramaturg in residence.

Writers' Lab: 8 writers meet regularly. From these, David Ryding is hoping for plays to be written for future years.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Playwright should be established or on the way to it.
- Understanding of regional Australia.
- Flexibility of attitude and preparedness to re-write.
- Relationship with artistic director.

***The Malthouse (formerly Playbox) Theatre
Script development program(s) in 2005***

Call for Submissions: These are essentially 'production development' budgets where no commission is budgeted at less than \$16,000. The writer is paid \$8,000–\$10,000, depending on the scale of the work. The balance of the money is allocated in discussion with the principal artist/s, most usually by bringing together the creative team who it is proposed will create the production. This means that key meetings between the writer, director, actors and designer is seen as script development. A production is always being developed at the same time as the script development process. Submissions are called for three times per year, and are aimed at writers/artistic teams with the intention of further developing the work in collaboration with the company. The development process varies according to the needs of the individual project and the artistic team.

Dramaturg-in-Residence for development projects: The replacement of the literary manager and the appointment of the new artistic director Michael Kantor ended Playbox's 20 outstanding commissions. Malthouse currently supports a dramaturg to work on and co-ordinate its commissions.

Tower Theatre: This is a venue primarily programmed with independent theatre productions in second season. Premiers and education productions are also scheduled in this studio theatre.

Program in 2000

Script assessment: Playbox provided a free assessment service for unsolicited (and solicited) scripts. The assessment team was made up of readers selected from outside the company. \$10,000 was allocated to pay readers to read and write a 1–2-page response to all writers, regardless of the quality of the work.

Commissions: Fees were paid in small amounts with each draft.

Playbox Workshops: a one-day to one-week workshop scheduled for scripts that Playbox was considering for programming.

Theatre in the Raw Play Reading: A one-day workshop with a director and actors and a showcase reading at the end of the day. This was held monthly and scripts selected from submissions for script assessment as well as other submissions.

Competitions: included development process.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Writer's capacity to engage with the theatricality of their ideas.
- Programming concerns.
- Strength of the artistic team.

Criteria in 2000

- For programming, Playbox solicited writers whom it had produced or developed work with, and 'high-profile' established writers such as Stephen Sewell and Hannie Rayson. (The most produced playwright at Playbox was Barry Dickins.) Writers whose work might have been seen at theatres such as La Mama were also approached.
- Other writers who had been recommended might be approached.

Melbourne Theatre Company

Script development program(s) in 2005

New Australian plays form, on average, 15–20 percent of the MTC's annual program.

Hard Lines: Set up in 2002 by the literary advisor/artistic associate, Dr Julian Meyrick, this is a play-reading program providing a public outlet for the work of writers that the company is developing—these are not necessarily programmed. The scripts are workshopped for 2 days with actors, director and dramaturg, culminating in the public reading. The program functions as an intermediary for the company to both assess and present a work. Hard lines writers have been in the industry for an average of 5-10 years and have had 3-4 professional productions of their work in that time (corresponding with the term experienced writer in this research). The writers in question must have made play writing a major strand in their careers.

Affiliate Writers Scheme: MTC works with emerging writers, with whom they have established an ongoing relationship, for one year. The writers are paid \$3,000 to develop a draft of a play. The intention is twofold: to encourage the writing process as well as to create a relationship between the writer and MTC. Works produced out of this program include *The Sapphires* by Tony Briggs.

Commissions: The MTC commissions work from established playwrights with the intention of producing a work that can be programmed. The commissions are given to

writers with a proven track record and can take a number of years to complete. The writer is given a AWG pro forma contract.

Script Approaches: 100-150 scripts received annually inclusive of industry submissions and given a full assessment by literary advisor/artistic associate with the help of external script consultants in which the positives and negatives of the scripts are outlined for the Company's internal use.

Program in 2000

Script Assessments: 350 scripts annually were sent to the MTC and given a full assessment by Peter Matheson, in which he outlined the positives and negatives of the script for the company and for the writer. Relationships with the writers developed from this dialogue and Peter Matheson began affiliating writers to the company.

Commissions: as above for 2005.

Program in 1995

As in 2000.

Criteria for MTC selection in 2005

The MTC works with writers with whom there is an ongoing relationship. Scripts are not 'selected' in isolation but go through the commissioning process or possibly through the Hard Lines program or potentially the Affiliate Writers Scheme.

Melbourne Workers Theatre, Melbourne

Script development program(s) in 2005

Factory Field Day: This was set up in 2004 as a call to theatre-makers (not only specifically playwrights). In line with the company's agenda, the submitted works need to have a political edge. On the one hand, the company comes up with ideas, and on the other, the writer brings ideas to them as well. It is intended that this program will extend to include workshopping with up to five plays. The writer works for 2–3 days with an ensemble of actors, a dramaturg and a director. At the end of this process, there will be a public presentation—either a reading or a performance of an excerpt of the work.

Commissioned/Produced Plays: the company and artistic director, Andrea James, work with selected writers to develop a script with a view to producing it the following year. There are usually 2 commissions per year; however, in 2005, there is only one. Writers will often be briefed on a subject that the company wants to explore and are usually given a one-week workshop period with actors, director, dramaturg and singers/musicians as needed.

Program in 2000 & 1995

Commissioned Plays.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- **Commissioned Plays:** Melbourne Workers Theatre set a brief to decide issues it wanted to explore and then targeted appropriate writers within the community. Writers with a specific cultural background might also be targeted. There is an *Artistic Advisory Group* who meet every two months. In these meetings, writers are suggested. These will be writers who are working in the community and therefore fit the company's agenda.

- *Factory Field Day*: This is an open call for scripts, but they must be ‘political theatre’.

Criteria in 1990–2000

- As above for Commissioned Plays

Perth Theatre Company, Perth

Script development program(s) in 2005

Writers’ Lab: Set up officially in 2001, this is a group of 15 Perth-based writers (most are also directors and actors) whose main function is the exchange of ideas and feedback on new work. There are also a couple of ex-Perth writers who send in their scripts to be scrutinised by the group. The group meets regularly and the meetings are quite informal: ‘part salon, part forum’. They involve script readings of a member’s new plays/ideas for script/scene sketches, after which there is a chance for a critical response from the members. The work can be brought back to a future session, following suggestions and input from the other writers. The artistic director, Alan Becher, considers the plays (no formal assessment is given) and decides if the PTC can produce them. He then might suggest workshopping the play and, possibly, providing more detailed feedback. A number of plays have been programmed or picked up by other companies or venues. In 2005, Alan Becher created a group project of short scripts under a collective title. All the writers have read, ‘criticised’ and helped to develop each other’s work.

Uncut Gems: One week of readings and workshops of selected scripts from the Writers’ Lab at the end of each year.

Commissions: These are not common, resulting in about one play per three years. Generally a writer is approached, or rarely, a writer will approach Alan with an idea. There is no particular time frame for the writer to complete the commission and not all commissions are produced, although sometimes other companies produce them.

Program in 1995–2000

- As above – more informally

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Relationship with the writer.
- Western Australian writer (50% of PTC’s work must be Western Australian).
- Audience possibilities and to provoke responses.
- Interest in subject and relevance to Perth audience.

Queensland Theatre Company, Brisbane

Script development program(s) in 2005

The Works: This program is constantly evolving as the artistic director, Michael Gow, and associate director, John Halpin tries to find the best process. It involves identifying Queensland writers and working with them (and assessing the best new plays from elsewhere in Australia and the world). In the case of local work the writer has a one-on-one dialogue with a dramaturg or with the artistic development co-ordinator (until recently, Ursula Dauth). This is followed by a 2-week creative development workshop with actors and a director and culminates in play readings at the end of the year. The series runs for one week. There have been a number of plays

produced from this program, most recently *Eating Ice-Cream with Your Eyes Closed* by David Brown, which was originally chosen as a featured play for The Works. The audience response was positive and it was given more development time. It was then co-produced with Hothouse Theatre. The development process lasted over 2 years. In 2005, QTC has partnered with Metro Arts. This means that the focus of the development process is also on a final performance by independent theatre sector groups companies at Metro Arts.

Queensland Premier's Drama Playwright's Award: This initiative started in 2001, with the intention of 'stimulating new writing'. The biannual award commits to a mainstage production of the winning script and QTC has recently produced the runner-up. A panel shortlists between 3 and 6 scripts and writers are given a development fee to continue development of their play over a 6-month period. This can involve a partnership with Playlab, who provide dramaturgical assistance and/or one-on-one meetings with Michael Gow. At the end of this period, there is a professional reading with actors. From this there is a further cull of the works down to 3 scripts, which is followed by more one-on-one meetings with Michael Gow and a dramaturg. The final stage of development involves an intensive 2-week development period finishing with a reading of the works. The panel member/judges sit in on these readings to make their decision on the winning play that will be produced. The non-winning plays have also been successful in other ways: e.g. Stephen Carleton's *Constance Drinkwater* won the 2005 Patrick White Award and was workshopped at the Australian National Playwrights' Conference.

George Landen Dann Awards (for playwrights under 25) and Young Playwrights Awards (for playwrights under 18): Each play is workshopped for 1–2 days. The young writers sit in on the process to see how the play 'moves' and how the director gives notes. At the end of this period there is a public play-reading.

Commissions: 2 touring works per year are commissioned for the youth and education program.

Program in 2000

- *The Works:* as above.
- *Premier's Drama Playwright's Award:* as above.

Program in 1995

- Emerging Writers Network.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- *The Works:* Playwrights are sought out and asked to go through a process. From this, QTC makes a selection.
- *Premier's Drama Playwright's Award:* The QTC calls for applications.

State Theatre Company of South Australia, Adelaide

Script development program(s) in 2005

The new artistic director, Adam Cook, and associate director, Michael Hill, have changed the script development program in 2005 to provide for more scripts in development with more script reading 'activities' and, if possible, a one-day reading of a proposed script with professional actors. An ongoing relationship with the SA Writers' Centre will be re-developed, as will the openness to receiving new scripts.

Although the *On Site Theatre Laboratory* has finished its program, there will still be a focus on the development of new works.

Commissions: Will be made from ideas with a commitment to development of these works but not to production until the process has reached a satisfactory point. One new play has been commissioned in 2005.

Origin Energy State Theatre Company Young Guns 6 Playwrights' Competition: This was established by Rodney Fisher in 1998 for writers under 19 to submit one-act plays. Two winners are selected: an under-19 and an under-15. Each receives: \$500, a signed award, one week of dramaturgy, workshopping for their script with professional actors and director, and the play presented a play reading at the end of the process, with feedback.

Program in 2000

a) *On Site Theatre Laboratory:* Over 2000–2004, the then artistic director, Rosalba Clemente, committed to developing and producing South Australian work through the On Site Theatre Laboratory. It provided the resources for the development according to each of the script's needs. The artists were targeted by Rosalba for the program and there was a private sponsor supporting it. The goal was to select and commit to only a few projects to be developed, and to produce them; this was achieved. Five plays resulted:

- *Night Letters* and *Holy Day* were commissions developed in partnership with the ANPC and both were given 2-week development followed by a reading with the company.
- *Drowning in My Ocean of You* was given dramaturgical sessions with the writer and readings with actors. It was a co-commission with the AWG SA— with half the funding provided by them.
- *My Life My Love* and *The Trojan Women* were community-based projects with community participants and professionals involved in a series of workshops.

Program in earlier years

Artistic director, Rodney Fisher (1998–1999), worked closely with 3–4 scripts annually from writers associated with the SA branch of the Australian Writers' Guild. The company would commit to doing professional readings and workshops of those pieces. This was a way of assisting local writers and testing these works for their potential, but none was actually produced.

- *Origin Energy State Theatre Company Young Guns 6 Playwrights Competition:* as above

Under the artistic direction of Chris Westwood from 1995 to 1996, the company was called 'The Australian Playhouse' and produced only Australian plays in the repertoire. However, *Carrying Light* was developed during this time, with the SA Writers' Guild, and one commission.

Criteria for selection in 2005

No criteria have been set.

Criteria in 2000

On Site Theatre Laboratory :

- South Australian writer.

- Needs to stretch the theatre form.
- Needs to deal with new important thematic areas.
- Needs to demonstrate the writer's abilities.
- Discussions from within the community.

Sydney Theatre Company, Sydney
Script development program(s) in 2005

Wharf 2 Blueprints 2002/3-2005. Under the team of resident director, Benjamin Winspear and artistic development manager, Nick Marchand, the focus of Blueprints became two-fold:

1) The resident director works directly with emerging playwrights to develop 6 new productions for the Wharf 2 stage. This involved 3 new commissions, 1 work taken from the Blueprints Literary Program, and an East Coast premiere of an existing new Australian work.

2) *UBS Blueprints Literary Program* with 11 emerging playwrights affiliated to the company, was established so that emerging writers could be invited to work directly with the company—often for the first time. They have 12-15 months to write three drafts of a play. Appropriate writers are identified, the writers and the company's goals are discussed. Then at the second draft stage, a 1-day workshop and closed reading are given. At the third draft there is another workshop plus a public reading. The same actors are used for both and a 2-day rehearsal period is given.

It was clear that the writers are not writing for the STC main stage. The program was set up as a resource for artists to work on a script with the writer. The focus of this program is a public outcome that is seen as a presentation rather than a 'production'. The process allowed the writer to work intensively with a director and be paid, given a mentor and a dramaturg.

3) *Translation Project*: This is a very expensive project (approx. \$30,000) and might not be repeated. The translator transliterates the play, travels to the country to meet the playwright and discuss the script, and then writes their own. There is a one-week workshop with the playwright, the original writer and a cast.

4) *Reading Ahead*: Presenting 25 new or rediscovered plays from around Australia and the world and including collaborations with cultural organisations from Australia, Britain, France, Germany, Italy, Norway and Japan.

5) *The Advance Party*: 20 playwright's forums with guest speakers. These events also allowed Blueprints Writers' Assembly to present new 'issues-based' responsive projects so that they could be developed from concept to rehearsed staging, and include actors in this complete process.

STC Literary Program in 2005

Commissioned Adaptations: The classic text is chosen and the director directly involved in the process of the adaptation with 1–2 workshops, with one day 'on the floor' followed by a reading of the play in development. The aim is the programming of the work.

Commission for Mainstage: These may not necessarily reach production stage. However, writers are carefully chosen for the commissions and STC has a clear outcome to reach a production. Less commissioned work has been discarded than in

past years. The process of the commission involves a 1–2-day workshop and reading of the play in development.

Revisiting of Old Work: Occasionally, STC will remount existing scripts from the Australian repertoire and if living the writer will be paid to develop a new draft and funds allocated to workshops with actors.

Patrick White Playwright's Award and STC and SMH Young Playwrights' Award (see 4.3).

Program in 2000

Wharf 2 Blueprints 2000-2002

Blueprints was originally established in 2000 by the artistic director, Robyn Nevin, with artistic associate, Stephen Armstrong, as an alternative to the New Stages program to develop new work from its early stages. It operated in two distinct time-frames 2000-2002 and 2002/3-2005 (see above). 2000-2002 was led by resident directors Benedict Anderson and Wesley Enoch, with the support of Stephen Armstrong. There was limited script development in the first period of Blueprints as essentially it was a director-led initiative to develop new and existing work and curated by the resident directors. Productions included *Endgame*, *Fireface*, *The Cherry Pickers*, *Black Medea* and *Mr Kolpert*.

Wharf 2 has been the home of STC's art form development programs: Baz Luhrmann's *Six years Old Company*, Michael Gow's *New Stages*, *The Directory* with David Berthold, and most recently *Blueprints* firstly under Benedict Andrews and Wesley Enoch, and then Ben Winspear and Nick Marchand.

In 2000, Stephen Armstrong and Robyn Nevin reviewed the STC's New Stages script development program. They felt that it was problematic, because plays would not be produced for the main season. At this time there was only the mainstage production program. Problems that were identified included too much emphasis on a public outcome rather than on development of the work, and the artists involved often feeling as if the workshop was an audition. As a result, the program was changed.

Benedict Andrew was resident director in 2000 with specific interest projects. e.g. Ben Ellis was working on a 'responsive project' that tied in with Robyn Nevin's desire to explore the refugee situation.

The artistic director had three main initiatives to implement: the development program (this took priority over the other two); establishing an ensemble; and longer rehearsal periods.

Main Stage Commissions: 3–5 original works per year with a variable production rate. It was felt that there was a 'randomness' in the commissioning process that often led to a breakdown of commissions between the STC and the writers. Also, some writers seemed to double-guess what the STC wanted and their plays were considered less interesting on account of this.

Commissioned Adaptations of Foreign Classics: The intention was to immerse a contemporary Australian writer in a classic and create collaborative teams.

STC Literary Program in earlier years (circa 1990-2000)

New Stages: This was set up in 1991 by Michael Gow and then run by David Berthold and Marion Potts. It took both part-commissions and full-commissions and gave them a workshop and staged showing with professional actors and director and with minimal production values. The process was intensive, with one director possibly doing two plays and sharing the cast. The outcome of the showing would determine whether or not the company would pick the play up for production. This program was based on the Royal National Theatre's Studio model of Research and Development.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Direct approach from the artistic director to the writer, e.g. Katherine Thompson for *Harbour*.
- Relationship of writer to the company.
- Playwrights' Awards shortlist.
- Scripts sent by agencies (literary manager, Tom Wright, works through these).
- Reputation of writer.

Criteria in 2000

- Mainstage writers commissioned on the strength of their reputation. They would come back with an idea that would be picked up. Or writers would come with a proposal.
- Blueprints writers by invitation, with a preference for political work that engaged with contemporary issues.

Vitalstatistix

National Women's Theatre for women writers and performance makers.

Script development program(s) in 2005

Commissioned works: The company usually does 2–3 developments per year with actors and/or dramaturg working with the writer. First draft: one-week workshop with a director, actors and the writer; second draft: one week further development; third draft may be the final draft. Further development as and if required.

Winter Play Readings: The artistic director, Maude Davey, has been changing the focus of this program to one of development. However, some unsolicited scripts are still accepted. The readings allow for a first step in the development process of the works.

Devised Work: A team of collaborators is commissioned and given a fee to devise a work with the intended outcome to program the work. This is not specifically writer-based. The team is given support according to the project's needs and programming in 1–2 years.

National Call: This is being re-assessed, as it presumes Vitalstatistix is a 'producer' company as opposed to a 'creating' company. The aim of the Call is to solicit excellent projects from national artists, with primary outcomes in South Australia. There is a tension between the company's National Brief and its responsibilities to local South Australian Artists.

Co-Production: There is a new stream of investing in the script development projects of other companies, e.g. Steamworks Arts Productions in Western Australia.

Feedback to Unsolicited Scripts

Program in 2000

Commissioned Works: as above.

Winter Play Readings: Established in 1996–1997 by the artistic director, Catherine Fitzgerald, as a submission-based program that provided an opportunity for local writers to be workshopped with a director and actors. Some scripts were invited in and others were selected from unsolicited scripts.

National Call: Catherine Fitzgerald instituted this program in 1996. Proposals are solicited/invited for submission.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Driven by the vision of women—primary artists must be women.
- Match the company's agenda.
- Ideas and an artistic team.
- Provocative in form and content.
- Personal taste of the artistic director.

Criteria in 2000

- As above.

Yirra Yaakin, Perth

Script development program(s) in 2005

Fourplay: An intensive playwrights' workshop/mentorship initiated in 2004 that runs for 8 months. This is given to 4 Indigenous writers and runs as a national initiative. The company matches the playwright to the dramaturg for a week's work. The first stage of the process is the development of a relationship between writer and dramaturg. The writers are then given 6 months on their own, to write and develop their work, liaising with their dramaturg until they complete the first draft (if possible), and are brought back to Perth for a workshop with director and actors. The writer is given more one-on-one work with the dramaturg. The aim is to develop Indigenous playwrights who have gone through an intensive process of script development rather than them having only a 'writer's week'. The outcome is that works are produced by Yirra Yaakin and a pool of work is created for the 'BLAKSTAGE Alliance', which submits work to Indigenous companies around Australia. Opportunities for co-productions can be looked at.

Commissions: The company commissions new work.

Program in 2000

There was not a formalised or consolidated development process.

Commissions: The company commissioned new work.

Initiatives: e.g. Indigenous Women Writers' Workshops.

Mentorships: Artists that were around the company were nurtured through informal mentorships. The company aimed to develop Indigenous writers.

Criteria for selection in 2005

- Indigenous new work.
- Relationship with writer.

5.5.1 National and State-based Development Opportunities 2005

<i>Organisation budget estimate</i>	<i>Writer development</i>	<i>Script development</i>	<i>Direct benefit: paid work</i>	<i>Indirect benefit: writer's profile</i>	<i>Theatre Co. partnerships</i>	<i>Community access</i>
ANPC/Conference \$327,454 ('04)		8 (130 applications) • One-week workshop director/actors/ dramaturg; • Public reading	• Writer's \$1,000 fee and expenses • Director/actors/ dramaturg on payroll and expenses	National	4 Workshops of scripts in TC development	Readings open to public
Playworks \$171,106 ('04)	13 Women writers dramaturg sessions • 2 Residencies • 1 Mentorship (25 applications) • Writing courses		Dramaturgs paid		Playworks dramaturgy for Darwin TC, JUTE	
ASC E\$110,000 ('04)				25 scripts published on CD, out of 80 made available via electronic access (120 applications)		Publication for sale
Playlab \$74,000 ('05)	Writing courses		INS	State	La Boite	
Stages \$44,000 ('05)	6 Dramaturgy sessions • 12 Skills Development sessions • Writing courses	1 Workshop		State		
JUTE Playwrights' Conference E\$11,000	Forums	12 Play readings	Director/actors paid conference fee	Across regions	JUTE	Readings open to public
Interplay E\$27,000 (OAI)		Young writers' 2-week workshop		National		

5.5.2 Major Companies Development Opportunities 2005

<i>Organisation and budget estimate</i>	<i>Literary manager</i>	<i>Writer development</i>	<i>Industry partnership</i>	<i>Affiliate writers (by invitation)</i>	<i>Commissions by invitation</i>	<i>Creative collaborations</i>	<i>Production</i>
STC E\$690,000 (incl. salaries)	Reads industry submissions Resident director		1 to attend ANPC	5 (50 applications) \$3,000 fee Can progress 3 drafts to workshop with director/actors to public reading	8	3 progress to 'Blueprints' studio production	Potential
MTC E\$15,000	Reads industry submissions			2 \$3,000 fee 'Hardlines' 2-day workshop with director/actors to public reading	5 (high number)		Potential
QTC E\$86,000 (incl. salaries and commissions)	Reads industry submissions	3 'The Works' dramaturgy	Playlab unsolicited scripts		2 (TIE)		1 Winner of Premier's Award
STCSA E\$20,000 ('04)					1 ('05)	5 ('00-'04) 'On Site Theatre Laboratory'	4 of 5 ('00-'04)
PTC E\$25,000		5-6 Invitation to 'Writers' Lab' can progress		4 'Uncut Gems' workshop with director/actors to public reading (\$15,000)	1 (over 3 yrs)		Potential
Malthouse E\$250,000 ('05) Playbox E\$600,000 ('04, incl. salaries)	Dramaturg-in-residence	Calls for proposals (3 x year)	Tower space for independent theatre groups productions			10	Potential for 10
Belvoir St E\$50,000	Industry submission/ responds to 70-plus unsolicited scripts	International plays in readings	B Sharp produce with independent theatre groups		1 (over 2 yrs)		Production dramaturgy with artistic director

5.5.3 Smaller Companies Development Opportunities 2005

<i>Organisation and budget estimate</i>	<i>Access</i>	<i>Writer development</i>	<i>Script development</i>	<i>Commission by invitation</i>	<i>Production</i>	<i>2000</i>
La Boite E\$50,000–70,000	Unsolicited scripts to Playlab	1 Mentorship with Playlab call for proposals		4 treatments to 3 or 4 drafts over 2 years 3–5 day workshop director/actors/dramaturg	Probable	3 writers with company
Black Swan \$E37,000 (some salary)	Internal response: 100 unsolicited scripts	Call for proposals		2 Proposal to development week workshop 2 days dramaturg 3 days director/actors	Probable	Commissions longer time potential production
Darwin TC No separate budget	AD reads unsolicited scripts		Development through Playworks	3 half-hour plays (10 applications) First draft to workshop development week	Definite	1–2 Commissions
Griffin E\$50,000	Reads industry submissions	5 Affiliates under 35 • Dramaturgy to workshop • Calls for proposal • 10-week writers' course	Affiliates given 2 x 2-day workshops	1	Definite	Play readings and dramaturg
Deckchair E30,000–40,000	AD replies to unsolicited scripts	1 Mentorship		2 12 mths, one-third get workshop with director/actors/dramaturg	Definite	2 Commissions
La Mama No separate budget	Dramaturg & AD read unsolicited scripts/ assessment	Playreadings			45 productions	

5.5.3 Smaller Companies Development Opportunities 2005 continued

<i>Organisation and budget estimate</i>	<i>Access</i>	<i>Writer development</i>	<i>Script development</i>	<i>Commission to production</i>	<i>Devised works</i>	<i>2000</i>
Vitalstatistix E\$10,000–15,000	AD replies to unsolicited scripts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Call for proposals • Masterclasses 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Team-based works, 2 weeks devised • Public play readings • Co-production Steamworks 	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • First draft workshop director/actors • Second draft week workshop • Third draft 	1	Similar programs
JUTE E\$15,000 10% writer's box-office	Dramaturg trainee	<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Open Stream dramaturgy</p> <p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Writer/performer</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">4</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Dramaturgy workshop</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Workshop dir/actors</p>		Starting Open Stream
Melbourne Workers Theatre E\$25,000		Call for proposals can lead to workshop	<p style="text-align: center;">5</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Workshop 2–3 days with director/actors/dramaturg</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Workshop week with director/actors/dramaturg</p>	1	2 Commissions
Mainstreet E\$8,000		Writers' Lab		<p style="text-align: center;">2</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(over two years)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Workshop week with director/actors/dramaturg</p>		
Hothouse E\$15,000			Team residency	<p style="text-align: center;">1</p> <p style="text-align: center;">(over two years)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Workshop with director/actors and reading</p>		
Riverina				1		Playreadings
St Martin's Theatre E\$5,000				1		
Arena E\$8,000				1		
Terrapin E\$8,000				1		

5.5.4 Indigenous Companies Development Opportunities

<i>Organisation and budget estimate</i>	<i>Access</i>	<i>Writer development</i>	<i>Script development</i>	<i>Commission</i>	<i>Production</i>	<i>2000</i>
Ibajerri E\$INS		Dramaturg call for proposals		1	Blak Arts Festival Co-production Polyglot	Co-production for <i>Stolen</i>
Ibajerri/Playbox Playwrights Conference ('00– '04)		Call for proposals	4–5 scripts 2-week workshop to reading			First year conference
Yirra Yaakin E\$30,000	Responses to unsolicited scripts	4 'Fourplay' mentorships of 8 months dramaturg 1 week first draft	Progression to workshop director/actors/ dramaturg			
Kooemba Jdarra E\$53,400 (incl. salary)	Responses to unsolicited scripts	2–3 (15 applications) from proposals to draft with dramaturg includes adaptations	Progression to workshop director/actors/ dramaturg		Definite	
Other Organisations		1 Playworks 2 trainee dramaturgs	1 ANPC Workshop		Theatre companies invitations	

5.5.5 Summary of Opportunities 2005

	Writer development						Script development				Creative develop/ collaboration	Writer Promotion	Publications
	Script assessment - fee	Group skills training	One to one dramaturg	Mentorship	Residency/ affiliate	Proposals for scripts	Dir/Actors workshop	Reading of script	Commissions	Production			
ANPC	Yes			3			8	8					
Playworks*		Yes	13	1	1							80	25
ASC													1
Playlab*	Yes	Yes											
Stages	Yes	12	6	1			1						
AWG				8 ('04)									
JUTE*		4	2										
Griffin		Yes		5		Yes				1 ('06)			
Belvoir St.	Yes									1			
Malthouse*											10		
La Boite*						Yes				4			
Deckchair	Unsolicited						Yes			2			
Vitalstatistix	Unsolicited					Yes ('06)		4		2		1	
Black Swan*						Yes				2			
Darwin TC*	Unsolicited	Yes								3 short			
STCSA*										1		5 ('04)	
P TC		5-6						Yes		1 (3yrs)			
QTC		Yes						5		2 youth			
M TC					2		Yes	2		5			
STC					5					8		3	
Melb. Workers						Yes						5	
Mainstreet*	Unsolicited									2			
Hothouse										1			
Riverina										1			
Ranters										1			
Legs												1-2	
Urban Theatre												1	
Is Theatre													
Kooemba Jd*	Unsolicited									1			
Yirra Yaakin	Unsolicited			4						1			
Ilbjerri						Yes		4		1		1	
La Mama	Unsolicited										45		
Sidetrack												1-2	
Arena												1	
Jigsaw										1			
St Martins										1			
Terrapin										1			

* New Artistic Directors 2004-2005

