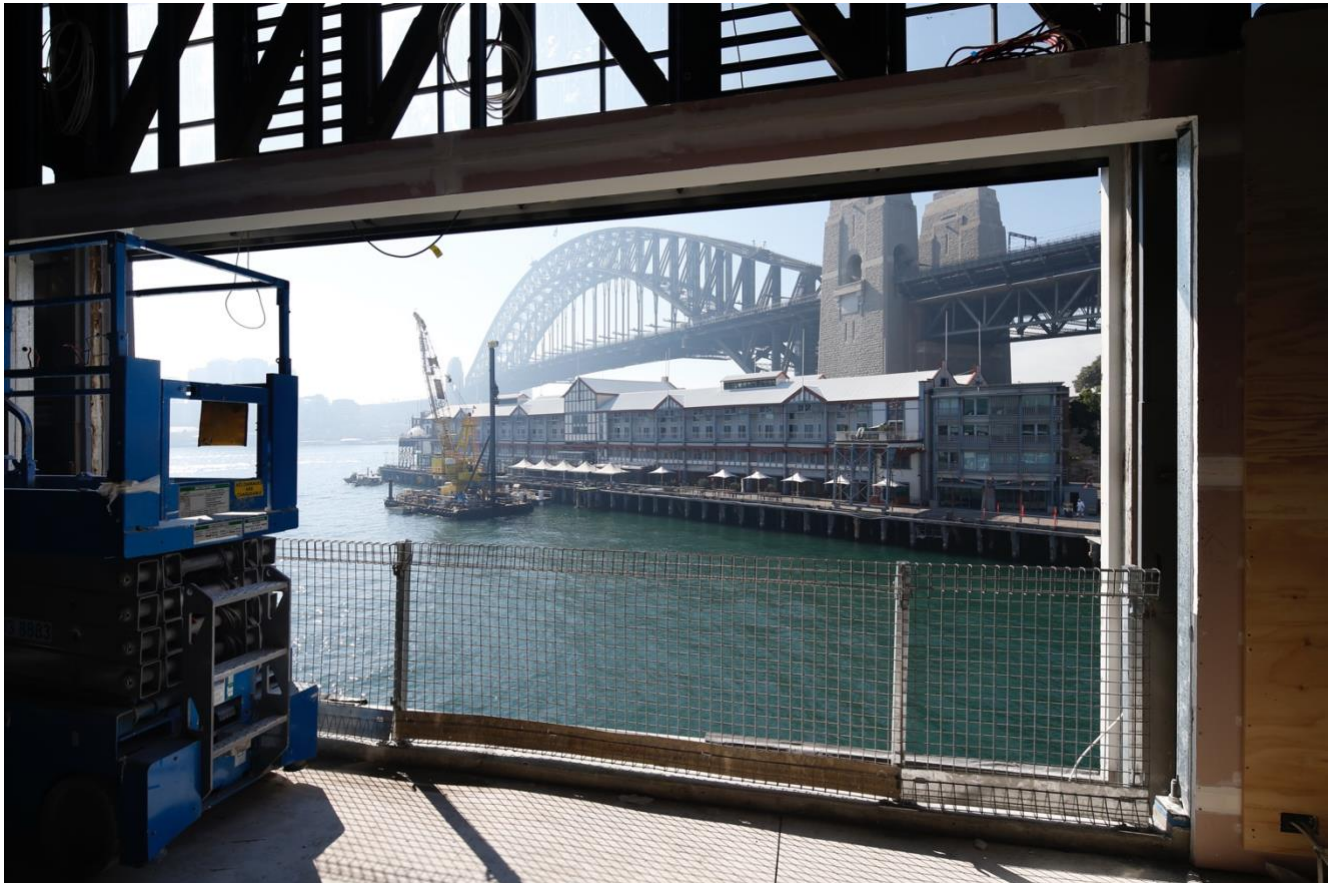


Bell Shakespeare receives major \$3 million gift from Neilson Foundation to fund new studio, *The Neilson Nutshell*

- *The gift is the largest single gift Bell Shakespeare has received in its history* -



Sydney, Australia: The Neilson Foundation has gifted Bell Shakespeare \$3 million in support of its new flexible studio and theatre space at **Pier 2/3** once the company moves into the Walsh Bay Arts Precinct later this year. This is the largest single gift Bell Shakespeare has received in its 31-year history, and it is delighted to name its new studio ***The Neilson Nutshell*** in recognition of the Neilson Foundation's support.

Bell Shakespeare's new home at Pier 2/3 will feature 1,700sqm of space over three levels, including *The Neilson Nutshell*. This multipurpose studio space will be used for rehearsals, performances and events, with 357sqm of floor space as well as two dressing rooms. Featuring a fully flexible seating system with capacity for up to 296 people in multiple configurations, *The Neilson Nutshell* will have direct views of Sydney Harbour Bridge and will provide an intimate setting to engage new and existing audiences and provide opportunities to partner with a range of organisations to support a vibrant cultural sector.

Founder and Director of the Neilson Foundation, Kerr Neilson said: "*Bell Shakespeare is a vital part of the artistic community in Australia, and we're delighted to be a part of its future. The Neilson Foundation is committed to furthering opportunities for artists and arts workers as well as increasing*

access to audiences and broader communities. We have a long relationship with Bell Shakespeare through its education and outreach work which takes Shakespeare's works to all corners of the country, including to young people in Youth Justice centres. We are delighted to be deepening our relationship with Bell Shakespeare by supporting The Neilson Nutshell at Pier 2/3 which will be an invaluable new space for the company to bring Shakespeare to Australian audiences."

Neilson Foundation has a long history and reputation of philanthropic leadership, and over the past five years has given almost \$1 million to Bell Shakespeare's education program. This has supported more than 197 young people who have participated in the company's Youth Justice Program and almost 400,000 students and teachers through the company's education program delivered in every state and territory, including regional and remote communities.

Bell Shakespeare Artistic Director Peter Evans said: *"We are so grateful to the Neilson Foundation for this incredibly generous gift that will go such a long way in supporting the future of Bell Shakespeare. Not only will it help us establish our very first multi-purpose performance space, it will also underpin our plans for an artistic ensemble and support our programming for the next several years. It is truly transformational, and we wholeheartedly thank the Neilson family who have been long-time supporters of Bell Shakespeare and who continue to provide such widespread support across the arts sector."*

Bell Shakespeare's relocation to Pier 2/3 is an infrastructure project led by the NSW Government to establish the Walsh Bay Arts and Cultural Precinct and deliver a world class cultural and creative hub. Bell Shakespeare's home at Pier 2/3 will provide space for artists, production and administrative staff, students, teachers, and patrons.

Ends

MEDIA CONTACTS: For more information and interview requests please contact Articulate: Jasmine Hersee, jasmine@articulatepr.com.au, 0451 087 196 or Claire Martin, claire@articulatepr.com.au, 0414 437 588.

ABOUT BELL SHAKESPEARE

Bell Shakespeare is Australia's national theatre company specialising in the works of William Shakespeare and his contemporaries. Founded in 1990 with the dream of sharing Shakespeare's plays in a way that was relevant and exciting to all Australians, the company has evolved further than its visionary founder, John Bell AO, could have hoped.

Today, Bell Shakespeare tours major theatre productions, education programs and outreach initiatives to every state and territory in Australia and beyond. Performing and teaching in theatres, schools, juvenile justice centres and regional and remote communities, the company enjoys unrivalled reach and impact, further extending its influence through innovative digital programs.
www.bellshakespeare.com.au

ABOUT THE NEILSON FOUNDATION

The Neilson Foundation was established in 2007 to support both the arts and charities that work towards social cohesion. Since inception, the Foundation has disbursed over \$124 million. The Foundation's focus is on improving accessibility to the arts, with the aim of enriching cultural diversity within Australian society, and assisting individuals and communities facing extreme disadvantage. These include programs that help vulnerable youth, migrants, those facing domestic violence, and those with mental health problems.

www.neilson.org.au