



Lala Guyala-Bayles at Black History Month 2025
Photographer Lewis James Media

SONGS OF PROTEST

WORKSHOP

EXTEND THE EXPERIENCE - CROSSING THE DIVIDE

BRIEFING DOCUMENT

Thursday, 19 February | 11.30am

Duration: 70 mins





Fred Leone at Black History Month 2025.

Photographer Lewis James Media

WELCOME

Dear Teachers,

Thank you for booking Songs of Protest. This workshop is one of the new offerings leading the way in our recently released Creative Learning Program, and we are delighted to be working with you and your students.

We are especially excited to welcome significant Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists who will be leading the workshop. Their full biographies are available upon booking, as artists may depend on the place of your workshop.

We look forward to working with you.

QPAC's Creative Learning Team.

Preparing for the Workshop

While the workshop will celebrate the artists' own songs of protest, its primary aim is to spark students' curiosity, voice, and creativity. The artists are keen to hear directly from students about the issues, ideas, and motivations that matter to them, and to support students in beginning to create their own songs of protest.

To help students get the most out of this experience, we kindly ask teachers to support the following preparation activities:

- Explore the provided timelines with students, highlighting the rich range of protest songs from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists, as well as international examples (Appendix 4).
- Unpack the themes and questions raised by these songs together. What are the artists responding to? Why do these songs matter?
- Invite students to consider which of the following musical genres they might like to work in and begin drafting lyrics. Suggested genres include hip hop, pop and folk.
- Encourage students to reflect on their own story: What do they want to speak about? What issue or experience feels important to them?

We greatly appreciate your support with this preparation, as the artists feel it will deepen student engagement and enhance the impact of the workshop for everyone involved.

If you have any questions, please don't hesitate to get in touch at:

Education@qpac.com.au

We look forward to working with you and your students.

(Please see Appendix 1–3 for suggested lesson plan and student worksheet.)

Curriculum Links

This workshop is designed to amplify and extend the following curriculum priorities and learning areas:

Cross-Curriculum Priority: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures

- English: Students explore Aboriginal cultural knowledge, traditions, and experiences as represented and communicated through traditional, modern, and contemporary texts.
- The Arts: Students learn about the distinctiveness and diversity of First Nations Australians' cultural practices and artistic expressions, which represent unique ways of being, knowing, thinking, and doing. They examine how First Nations artists use materials, forms, and technologies in innovative ways to celebrate culture, challenge perspectives, and communicate ideas.
- Through this exploration, students gain insight into how First Nations Australians continue to practice and revitalise their cultures, and how historical and contemporary events have shaped them. They also learn about the significant contributions of First Nations Australians to Australian identity and how these contributions are acknowledged locally, nationally, and globally. Engaging with these voices fosters authentic collaboration with artists, creative practitioners, and knowledge holders.

Curriculum Links Inquiry Questions

Specific Curriculum Links

- English v9.0
- AC9E10LE06: Compare the “voice” of protest in a range of poems or songs and evaluate how different voices evoke a response.
- AC9LIT10U03: Examine the language of specific texts (e.g. protest songs, graffiti) to identify how language is used for social commentary.
- The Arts v9.0
- AC9AMU8E01: Listen to and evaluate how elements of music are manipulated by composers to draw attention to social issues or values – for example, protest songs, nationalistic music, or songs exploring identity and belonging.
- AC9ADR8E02: Investigate the diversity of drama created and/or performed by First Nations Australians, considering culturally responsive approaches to Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights.
- Senior Syllabuses - The Arts General Subjects
- Aboriginal perspectives and Torres Strait Islander perspectives:
 - Teaching and learning in Queensland schools should provide opportunities for students to deepen their understanding of Australia by engaging with the perspectives of Aboriginal peoples and Torres Strait Islander peoples.
 - Positive outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students are supported by successfully embedding these perspectives across planning, teaching, and assessment.

Specific Senior Curriculum Links:

- Music: Unit 2 - Identities
- Drama: Unit 1 -Stories and Unit 3 -Challenge

From the Curriculum:

- How do musicians use their understanding of musical elements, concepts, and practices to communicate cultural, political, social, and personal identities?
- How can music or drama educate, challenge, and empower us to question society and advocate for change?

For the Workshop:

- How does song or music communicate protest?
- Why is a song such an important form of expression?

Appendix 1

Songs of Protest - Teacher Pre Lesson

This pre lesson is designed to prepare students for active participation in the Songs of Protest workshop. The artists are keen to hear students' ideas and support them in shaping their own creative responses, rather than focusing on polished outcomes.

Students do not need to arrive with a finished song, curiosity, ideas and openness are the priority.

Year levels: 7–12 (adaptable)

Curriculum areas:

- The Arts V9 – Music Drama Dance Media Arts
- English V9 – Songs of Protest
- Humanities and Social Sciences V9 (Civics, History)
- CrossCurriculum Priority: Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Histories and Cultures
- Senior Music, Drama and Dance

Time: 1–2 lessons (45–60 minutes each)

Learning intentions

Students will:

- explore music as a form of protest and social commentary
- analyse how lyrics, genre and performance communicate ideas and viewpoints
- consider diverse cultural and historical contexts, including First Nations perspectives
- begin developing ideas for an original song of protest.

Success criteria

Students can:

- identify themes and purposes in protest songs
- discuss how musical choices strengthen meaning
- articulate an issue or idea they care about
- begin planning lyrics and musical style for a protest song.

Lesson sequence

1. Tune in – What is a song of protest? (10–15 minutes)

- Ask students:
 - What does the word protest mean?
 - Where do we see protest today?
 - Can music create change? How?
 - How can music or spoken word be a tool for change?
 - Briefly discuss how music has historically been used to challenge injustice, raise awareness, or bring people together.

2. Explore – Protest songs across time and cultures (15–20 minutes)

- Introduce the Songs of Protest Timeline provided.
- As a class or in small groups, explore a selection of songs, ensuring inclusion of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander artists.
- Prompt discussion with questions such as:
 - What issue is the artist responding to?
 - Whose voices are being heard?
 - How does the historical or cultural context shape the song?

3. Analyse – How music communicates message and language elements (10–15 minutes)

- Choose one song and unpack:
 - Lyrics: language, repetition, storytelling, symbolism
 - Genre/style: why this genre might have been chosen
 - Mood and tone: emotional impact
 - Performance: voice, rhythm, energy
- Ask students: How do these elements work together to strengthen the message?

Appendix 1 (cont.)

4. Create – Planning a song of protest (15–20 minutes)

Invite students to begin planning their own song in preparation for the workshop.

Students consider:

- What issue, experience or idea matters to me?
- Is this a personal story, a community concern, or a broader social issue?
- Who is my audience?

Students select a genre to work in:

- Hip Hop
- Pop
- Folk

Students may:

- brainstorm key words or phrases
- draft a short chorus or verse
- jot down rhythmic or melodic ideas (no need for completion)

5. Reflection (5 minutes)

- Students record: key learning, questions, or ideas they want to explore in the workshop.

Appendix 2

Songs of Protest Student Worksheet for The Arts

What is a song of protest? (Please see the attached SOP timeline)

A song of protest uses music and lyrics to:

- speak out about an issue or injustice
- share personal or community experiences
- question, challenge or inspire change

Music has been used across cultures and history as a powerful way to express ideas and bring people together.

Part 1: Exploring protest songs

Using the Songs of Protest Timeline, listen to or read about one or more protest songs.

Song title: _____

Artist: _____

1. What issue or idea is this song responding to?

2. Whose voice or perspective is being shared?

Personal Community Cultural Political Other:

3. When and where was the song created? Why does this context matter?

Part 2: How music communicates meaning

Answer the questions below about the song you explored.

Lyrics

- What words, phrases or ideas stand out to you?

Genre / Style

- What musical genre is this song? Why do you think the artist chose it?

Mood / Emotion

- How does the song make you feel? What musical elements create this feeling?

Message

- What do you think the artist wants the audience to think or do?

Part 3: Planning your own song of protest

You will begin planning ideas for your own song. This does not need to be finished.

1. What issue, idea or experience do you want to write about?

(It could be personal, local, cultural or global.)

2. Why is this issue important to you?

3. Who is your audience?

Part 4: Musical choices

Which genre would you like to work in? (circle one)

Hip Hop Pop Folk

Why does this genre suit your message?

Part 5: First ideas

Use the space below to brainstorm. You might:

- write key words or phrases
- draft a chorus or verse
- sketch ideas about rhythm, beat or mood

(There are no wrong ideas – this is a starting point.)

Reflection

One thing I want the artists to know about my idea:

This worksheet prepares you for the Songs of Protest workshop, where professional artists will help you develop your ideas further.

Appendix 3

Songs of Protest – English Student Worksheet

1. Explore a protest song or spoken word piece

Title / Artist / Performer: _____

- What issue, idea, or story is being expressed?
- Whose perspective or voice is being shared?
- How does the historical or cultural context influence the message?

2. Analyse language and performance

- Key words, metaphors, or phrases that stand out:
- How does the language convey meaning or emotion?
- Performance aspects: (vocal delivery, rhythm, expression, tone)
- What is the intended effect on the audience?

3. Plan your own protest piece (song or spoken word)

- What issue, idea, or experience do you want to communicate?
- Who is your audience?
- Which form will you use? (circle one)

Song Spoken Word

- Key words, phrases, or images you might include:
- Rhythm, structure, or performance ideas:

4. Reflection

- What have you learned from the protest songs or spoken word pieces you explored?
- How can listening to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander voices influence or inspire your own work?
- One thing you want the artists to know about your idea:



Artists from Black History Month 2025
Photographer Lewis James Media

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander SONGS OF PROTEST TIMELINE

This list was created and developed by the First Nations and Creative Learning teams at QPAC.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protest and Cultural Voice in Music A Timeline by Decade

1960s Laurel Robinson, Beverly Briggs, Naomi Myers (The original Sapphires), *Ngarra Burra Ferra* (based on the traditional Aboriginal hymn “Bura Fera”).

1980s

1982 Goanna, *Solid Rock*: Invasion, dispossession, sacred land

1988 Joe Geia, *Yil Lull*: Aboriginal pride and resistance

1988 Yothu Yindi, *Treaty*: Call for treaty and sovereignty

1990s

1990 Archie Roach, *Took the Children Away*: Stolen Generations

1990 Aunty Ruby Hunter, *Down City Streets*: Urban Blak experience

1991 Kev Carmody & Paul Kelly, *From Little Things Big Things Grow*: Wave Hill Walk-Off

Early-Mid 1990s Mop and the Dropouts, *Brisbane Blacks*: Urban Blak experience

1993 The Mills Sisters, *Old Tl*: Torres Strait Islander heritage

1993 Archie Roach & Ruby Hunter, *We Won't Cry*: Deaths in custody, grief, resilience

1993 Yothu Yindi, *Tribal Voice*: Cultural survival, Self determination

1994 Kev Carmody, *Cannot Buy My Soul*: Anti-consumerism, Aboriginal spiritual values

1996 Warumpi Band, *Blackfella/Whitefella*: Unity on Aboriginal terms

1996 The Tiddas, *Mission Song*: Mission life, intergenerational trauma, Blak women's voices

Mid-Late 1990s Seaman Dan, *Are You From T.I.*: Torres Strait Islander Identity, belonging

1997 Archie Roach, *Held Up The Sun*: Survival, resilience, opposition to oppression

2000s

2002 Shakaya, *Stop Calling Me*: Agency and representation

2007 Xavier Rudd, *Land rights*: Land rights and Indigenous sovereignty

2008 Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu, *I Was Born Blind*: Cultural survival

2010s

2013 A.B. Original, *January 26*: Invasion Day critique

2014 Mau Power featuring Archie Roach, *Freedom*: Aboriginal Pride, Blak Experience

2016 A.B. Original, *2 Black 2 Strong*: Systemic racism

2016 Emily Wurramara, *Black Smoke*: Connection to nature and culture

2019 Baker Boy, *Cool As Hell*: Youth pride and language

2019 Thelma Plum, *Better in Blak*: Blak pride

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Protest and Cultural Voice in Music A Timeline by Decade

2019-2020 Nooky, Birdz, Urthboy, Thundamentals, L-Fresh the Lion, Tasman Keith, Ozi Batla, Kayla Truth, Coda Conduct, Hau, *Change The Date*: Opposition to Australia Day/Invasion Day

2020s

- 2020** J-Milla, *Unlock the System*: Deaths in custody, Police brutality
- 2020** Miiesha, *Damaged*: Intergenerational healing
- 2020** Ziggy Ramo, *Black Thoughts*: Colonial legacy
- 2021** Fred Leone + Birdz, *Bagi-la m Bargan*: Struggle against colonialism, sovereignty, justice
- 2021** Greg Dodge, *Aussie Fifty Dollar*: Reclaiming Indigenous icons and stories
- 2021** King Stingray, *Get Me Out*: Country, Freedom Cultural Grounding
- 2022** Emma Donovan, Emily Wurramara, Fred Leone, Deline Briscoe, Flewnt, Bumpy, DRMNGNOW, Bryte, Tani Walker, Jamahl Ryder, Dobby, Kee'ahn, Miss Genius, Candice Lorrae, Optamus, *Forever 15*: Aboriginal deaths in custody, police brutality and racism
- 2023** Jungaji, *Pilbara Man*: Mining impacts, land, cultural survival
- 2023** Jungaji, *Gummy Bamarra*: Honouring cultural roots (Gugu Yalanji language)
- 2023** Jungaji, *Wakka Wakka Woman*: Indigenous matriarchs, women's resistance
- 2023** 3%, *Our People*: Unity, Survival, Voice-era solidarity
- 2024** Emma Donovan & Kee'ahn, *Take No More*: Invasion Day critique, power, truth
- 2024** Barkaa, *King Brown*: Incarceration and resistance
- 2024** Kobie Dee, *Father's Eyes*: Death in custody, family grief
- 2025** Jungaji, *Renaissance Rambler*: Activism across generations

This timeline were created by the First Nations and Education teams at QPAC.

This timeline is a living document, celebrating the voices and contributions of artists over time. While every effort has been made to include as many as possible, we recognise that some may not yet be represented and apologise for any omissions.