Introductory Notes

Hello and welcome to the Audio Introduction of ***Housework***, by celebrated South Australian playwright Emily Steel. The world premiere season of ***Housework*** is presented at the Dunstan Playhouse by State Theatre Company of South Australia, in association with Adelaide Festival Centre.

The Audio Described performances will take place on Saturday, 15 February, with the touch tour at 1pm before the performance at 2pm, and on Monday 17 February, with the touch tour at 5.30pm before a 6.30pm performance, followed by a post-show Q&A.

The performance runs for approximately 2 hours and 15 minutes, including a 20 minute interval.

**CONTENT warning**

The performance contains coarse language, adult themes, sexual references and the use of herbal cigarettes.

***Housework*** focuses on the electorate office of the passionate Ruth Mandour, a first-term Member of Parliament. Kelly, an excitable junior employee, works with Anna, a brilliant but overworked Chief of Staff. Anna has to juggle new policy proposals, a sick media advisor, a husband at home with their daughter, and which pastries the Minister might like for breakfast.

Kelly is thrilled to unexpectedly get the chance to travel to Canberra with the Minister and Anna. What ensues are sex scandals, betrayals, culture wars, the price of power, motherhood and Machiavellian manipulation.

1. Set & Lighting description

The stage has been transformed into a parliamentary Chamber with a series of evenly spaced ceiling-height pillars, covered with white marble tiles, each measuring roughly 1m x 1m. Above the pillars is another row of marble tiles. The scene is reminiscent of the iconic square tiled interior in Canberra’s Parliament House. Behind the pillars at the back runs a corridor which characters use to cross back and forth and exit and enter the Chamber or other settings. The stage wall at the back is covered with the same white marble tiles.

The floor features grey mottled floorboards, reminiscent of a corporate office space. In the centre of the Chamber, a large modern redwood table approximately 5m long and 1.5m wide, on three solid pedestal legs, sits parallel to the audience. The table features discreet rectangular drawers with black handles along all edges.

When the audience enters a full black garbage bag sits near the front right corner of the table. At the back of the stage on the left side are a cluster of three office chairs on wheels. The entire scene is lit with harsh fluoro lighting which hangs in rectangular panels from the ceiling, adding to the sterile office atmosphere.

To the front right corner of the stage is a dark rose coloured armchair with a grey suit jacket strewn over it. To the left side of the armchair is a standard lamp with a black decorative stand and grey silken shade. When the characters are in Canberra, the armchair and standing lamp are accompanied by a sofa to complete their apartment lounge setting

During scene changes, the lights go down and minimal set changes are made. The office chairs are wheeled to and from the table as required for different scenes. The large table is slowly rotated on its central leg.

In the Chamber, the table sits perpendicular to the audience, with the Government on the left and the Opposition on the right. During scenes in both Ruth’s Electorate office and her Parliamentary office, it is parallel to the audience and a pool of light on the left end delineates her office areas. During the Canberra apartment scenes it is also parallel to us, and the right end is used as a kitchen bench. For the scene in the Chinese restaurant, the table sits at a slight angle. Pools of light are used to delineate areas, including outside parliament and the Opposition offices. The corridor at the back is sometimes dimly lit and sometimes lit very brightly.

1. Characters and Costumes

In this fast-paced performance, costume changes between scenes are often as simple as a change or removal of a jacket and the addition of a neck scarf.

All the actors play a main character and double in other minor roles. The characters are split into Our Side, (the Government) Their Side (the Opposition) and other roles.

**Our Side**  
**Ruth**, first-time Government MP, is in her 40s. She is short, of medium build, with long dark wavy hair, worn loose over her shoulders. When we first meet her she wears a mid-length jacket in a mottled pattern of pink, black, beige and white, over a long-sleeved white blouse with ties knotted in a bow beneath her neckline. She wears a fitted black skirt and black patent-leather mid-heel court shoes. Travelling to Canberra Ruth wears a multi-coloured jacket with horizontal stripes and wheels a medium-sized mustard suitcase with a large orange handbag slung on her arm. In Canberra Ruth wears a jacket patterned in red and green swirls and, the next day, a plain, burnt orange jacket.

**Anna**, Ruth’s Chief of Staff, is a mid-40s woman of medium height and slim build with brown, shoulder-length wavy hair, parted in the middle and worn loose. The first time we meet her she wears a purple thigh-length tailored jacket over a white, long-sleeved blouse, with metal-grey tailored pants and low-heeled slingback pumps. An ID card on a lanyard hangs round her neck. Her abrupt manner displays the long-suffering impatience and exhaustion of an overworked manager. Travelling to Canberra Anna adds a mid-length, pale-pink trench coat and wheels a small black cabin bag with a large, beige handbag resting on top. In Canberra Anna wears a stylish short pale-yellow jacket.

**Ben**, Ruth’s Media advisor, is of medium height and build. He has short, brown wavy hair, and wears a buttoned-up pale-grey business suit with matching waistcoat, a white shirt and dark red tie with smart black shoes. His ID tag on a lanyard is tucked into his jacket. He has a confident manner, although he’s not well when we first meet him.

**Kelly**, in her early 20s, is Ruth’s enthusiastic and excitable junior staffer. She is of medium height, a slim build with shoulder-length blonde hair pulled into a half-up ponytail. Her clothes are more student than smart office attire. She wears a faded denim jacket over a white t-shirt and a narrow scarf is looped loosely round her neck. She wears pale-grey wide-leg pants with white sneakers. For the flight to Canberra she swaps her narrow scarf for a voluminous red scarf with black dots, wears a beige backpack and wheels a small pink cabin bag covered with cartoonish stickers. In Canberra, Kelly is ready to go to Parliament House in her usual casual attire, denim jacket over a pink loose   
t-shirt. But Anna hastily lends Kelly a tailored pale-pink three-quarter length jacket, a white blouse and some dark low-heeled court shoes. Kelly clips her ID tag to her belt. In Act II Kelly returns briefly to wearing her casual denim and t-shirt attire, then back into the jacket and shirt she borrowed earlier from Anna.

**Paul**, Minister for Science, is middle-aged with greying short-cropped hair. When we first meet him he’s in a white open-collared shirt with rolled up sleeves. Later we see him in full grey suit and pale blue tie. He is confident and charming. Smooth. A silver-haired fox.

**The PM**, Jennifer to her friends, is tall, elegant and of slim build. She wears a buttoned white tailored jacket, over a pale green blouse, with black tailored pants, low heels, and her dark hair coiffed in a French roll. She has a confident, brusque manner.

**Their Side (the Opposition)**To denote doubling as members of the Opposition, the actors remain in their ‘Our Side’ costumes’ but add red-framed spectacles and adjust their voice tone, timbre, pitch and their manner.

Sarah is an Opposition MP, Mim is Sarah’s advisor and Duncan is a Strategist for the Opposition.

**Others:**When the audience enters,the **Cleaner** is using a small, cordless vacuum, wearing it like a backpack, and listening to music on cordless earbuds as she vacuums the Chamber in time to the music. She eventually removes the vacuum pack and begins dusting and wiping furniture. She is tall and slim, with black hair pulled back in a pony tail. She wears a blue short-sleeved t-shirt with collar, black pants, white sneakers with ankle sox, and wears an ID on a lanyard round her neck .

The Cleaner does the same vacuuming and dusting routine during interval, until the start of Act II.

**The Protestors** wear a variety of weather-proof jackets, beanies or baseball caps, woollen scarves and all carry placards.

**The Speaker of the House** wears a buttoned up dark grey jacket, a white shirt and black tie. He is very formal, vocally and physically.

**The Waitress** wears a white, long-sleeved collared shirt and a black apron tied round her waist over black trousers. Her dark hair is tied back in a pony tail.

**The Journalist** wears a black, belted, thigh-length trench coat and her black hair is pulled into a loose bun. She wears black-rimmed glasses and holds a microphone.

1. Cast & Creative Team

**Franca Lafosse** plays Kelly, the junior staffer, and Opposition Advisor, Mim  
**Sunitra Martinelli** plays the PM and non-speaking roles as the cleaner and a waitress  
**Renato Mussolino** plays Paul, Minister for Science, and also the lead protestor  
**Emily Taheny** plays Chief of Staff Anna Cooper and Opposition MP, Sarah  
**Benn Welford** plays Ben, Ruth’s Media Advisor, and Opposition Strategist, Duncan, as well as the Speaker of the House  
**Susie Youssef** plays Ruth Mandour, the first-time Minister, and also the journalist

**The Creative Team are:**

Writer Emily Steel  
Director Shannon Rush  
Designer Ailsa Paterson  
Lighting Designer Nigel Levings  
Composer/Sound Designer Andrew Howard  
Dramaturg Tahli Corin

1. Venue & Access Details

**Getting to the Venue**

The production takes place at the Dunstan Playhouse at the Adelaide Festival Centre.

Adelaide Festival Centre is easily accessible by public transport, including the tram (stop at Railway Station), trains, buses and a free bus service that operates on a loop throughout the city and North Adelaide, with stops on the corner of King William Road and North Terrace.

There is an accessible drop off area located off Festival Drive under the Riverbank Footbridge, with a lift to the promenade level.

You can enter the Dunstan Playhouse by foot from North Terrace, Adelaide Railway Station, Adelaide Oval, or King William Road.

From North Terrace, walk down the laneway alongside SkyCity Casino. From King William Road, you can walk over Festival Plaza (there’s a lift and escalator down to the Dunstan Playhouse promenade level) or along the Walk of Fame from Elder Park.

Assistance in the venue is offered by venue staff.

This completes the audio introduction for Housework. Your Describers are Hen Vaughan and Kay Jamieson.

For more information on audio described performances please contact Access2Arts using the email address [audio.describer@access2arts.org.au](mailto:audio.describer@access2arts.org.au) or speak to us after the performance.