

Access to the Arts

- 2.1 The 'arts' include a broad spectrum of activities, with the creative industries covering music, performing arts, film, television, radio, advertising, games and interactive content, writing, publishing, architecture, design and visual arts. However the focus of this inquiry has been on the live performing arts, and what can be done to help ensure that people in rural and regional communities have equitable access to quality live performance and arts engagement, and, where this is not possible, access to quality broadcasts of performances and online engagement activities.
- 2.2 Live performance arts encompass performances, productions, previews and concerts performed in front of a live audience. These can be further categorised based on the type of art form: ballet and dance; opera; theatre (script based drama, comedy, plays etc.); children's/family entertainment; circus and physical theatre; classical music; contemporary music; comedy, e.g. stand-up and other comedy performances, not comedy plays; festivals (either single or multi-category events); musical theatre; and special events.¹
- 2.3 This chapter begins by examining the benefits of the arts to Australian communities, with a focus on the importance of the arts to people living in rural and regional areas. It examines the benefits of live performance, touring and regional engagement, and notes the significant challenges facing performing arts companies in undertaking regional tours. The chapter also examines the scope and role of broadcasting and digital platforms for complementing the delivery of live performances to rural and regional communities, and innovative work being conducted to bring arts productions to broader audiences through the utilisation of cinema

1 Ernst & Young, *Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2014 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Survey Live Performance Australia*, 12 August 2015, pp. iv and 2-3.

and digital platforms. The chapter also highlights the significance of local arts productions for the social and cultural wellbeing of rural and regional communities.

Benefits of the Arts

2.4 The arts make important economic, cultural and wellbeing contributions to Australian society. The Australia Council for the Arts (Australia Council) made the following key findings in its 2015 *Arts Nation* report:

- The cultural sector contributed \$50 billion to Australia's Gross Domestic Product in 2012-13,² of which core arts (comprising performing arts, music recording and publishing and arts education) contributed \$4.2 billion.
- Australian governments spent \$7 billion on culture in 2012-13 (1.3 per cent of total government expenditure) – this included \$1.3 billion on core arts.
- Consumer spending is the main source of income to the arts, with Australians spending almost \$20 billion annually on cultural activities (with a quarter of that on arts products and experiences).
- Philanthropic support for the major performing arts groups have overtaken corporate sponsorship as the primary source of private sector support, with \$39 million in private giving and \$30 million in corporate sponsorship in 2013.³

2.5 In relation to the less tangible, but no less important, benefits of the arts to the Australian community, the Australia Council also found that:

- 85 per cent of people agree that the arts make for a richer and more meaningful life
- 90 per cent agree that 'people can enjoy both the arts and sport' and that 'artists make an important contribution to Australian society'
- 89 per cent agree that the arts should be an important part of the education of every Australian.⁴

2 A similar share of GDP to the USA and Canada. Australia Council for the Arts (Australia Council), *Arts Nation: An Overview of Australian Arts*, March 2015, p. 1.

3 Australia Council, *Arts Nation: An Overview of Australian Arts*, March 2015, pp. 1-2.

4 Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG), *Submission 26*, p. 8.

2.6 The Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG) submitted that new measurements on wellbeing 'show that the arts may be worth \$66 billion to Australia's wellbeing'. It argued that this is in addition to the economic value of the arts, and stated that:

Based on this wellbeing model, the amount of money required to produce an increase in life satisfaction equivalent to arts engagement is \$4,349 per person per annum.⁵

2.7 AMPAG also referred to the findings of a 2016 United Kingdom study prepared for the Arts Council of England, which suggested that 'arts and cultural activities could potentially help to tackle key social issues such as loneliness and isolation'.⁶

2.8 As illustrated in Table 2.1, a report prepared for Live Performance Australia found that in 2012 the Live Performance Industry contributed \$1,529 million to the Australian economy.⁷ Table 2.3 provides further information by states and territories for 2013-14. Despite lower consumer confidence which affected consumer spending during that year, the report noted that 'the arts and recreation industry recorded positive productivity growth in 2013-14, outperforming other market sector industries such as retail trade and accommodation and food services'.⁸

5 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 8.

6 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 10.

7 Live Performance Australia, *Supplementary submission 25.1*, p. 1, Table 1.

8 Ernst & Young, *Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2014 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Survey Live Performance Australia*, 12 August 2015, p. iv.

Table 2.1 Live Performance Industry Output and Value Add (2012)

Industry	Industry output (\$ millions)	Industry value add (\$ millions)	Source
Mining	\$237,416	\$132,955	ABS (2013) 8415.0
Manufacturing	\$397,705	\$102,146	ABS (2013) 8155.0
Publishing (except Internet and music publishing)	\$13,181	\$7,091	ABS (2011) 4172.0
Sports and recreation activities	\$12,773	\$4,653	ABS (2013) 8155.0
Creative and performing arts activities*	\$3,818	\$1,602	ABS (2013) 8155.0
Live Performance Industry	\$2,546	\$1,529	Ernst & Young
Film, television and digital games	\$2,194	\$930	ABS (2013) 8679.0
Venue-based live music industry	\$1,211	\$652	Ernst & Young
Heritage activities	\$758	\$353	ABS (2013) 8155.0
Library and other information services	\$208	\$199	ABS (2013) 8155.0

Source *Ernst & Young (2014), Size and scope of the live performance industry in 2012, prepared for Live Performance Australia, p.16.*

*The businesses that contribute to Creative and performing arts activities are classified in accordance with the ANZSIC industry definition and include performing arts operation (e.g. circus operation, dance and ballet company operation, musical productions and opera company operation), creative artists, musicians, writers and performers (e.g. artists, choreography services, costume designing, playwriting or screenwriting, set designing service and theatre lighting design service) and performing arts venues operation. The Live Performance Industry measure includes some elements of this measure but not all.

2.9 In its report *Size and Scope of the Live Performance Industry in 2012*, Ernst and Young broke down the contribution of the different arts categories to the live performance industry (see Table 2.2). It noted that in 2012 the contemporary music and musical theatre categories make the largest economic contributions to the industry in terms of revenue (32.6 per cent and 14.6 percent, respectively).⁹

9 Ernst and Young, *Live Performance Australia: Size and Scope of the Live Performance Industry in 2012*, 24 February 2014, p. 2.

Table 2.2 Contribution to the live performing arts industry in 2012, by category

Category	Contribution to revenue (%)	Category	Contribution to revenue (%)
Ballet and Dance	8.0	Festival (Multi Category)	1.7
Children's/Family	3.5	Festival (Single Category)	8.9
Circus and Physical Theatre	4.6	Musical Theatre	14.6
Classical Music	6.7	Opera	5.2
Comedy	4.1	Special Events	1.3
Contemporary Music	32.6	Theatre	8.7

Source *Ernst and Young, Live Performance Australia: Size and Scope of the Live Performance Industry in 2012, 24 February 2014, p. 3, Figure ESI: Industry contribution by category.*

Table 2.3 Live Performance Total Revenue and Attendances by State/Territory (2013-14)

State/Territory	Revenue	Share of Industry (2014)	Share of Industry (2013)	Change in Revenue from 2013	Tickets	Share of Industry (2014)	Share of Industry (2013)	Change in Attendance from 2013
NSW	\$547,173,799	36.3%	33.6%	10.0%	6,132,827	33.1%	32.7%	4.6%
VIC	\$450,034,039	29.8%	32.0%	-5.0%	5,318,537	28.7%	31.3%	-5.2%
QLD	\$203,918,468	13.5%	13.5%	1.9%	2,661,632	14.4%	12.9%	14.8%
WA	\$177,326,653	11.8%	13.1%	-8.7%	2,266,435	12.2%	12.0%	5.2%
SA	\$100,944,048	6.7%	6.3%	7.5%	1,614,267	8.7%	8.4%	7.8%
ACT	\$13,852,222	0.9%	1.0%	-8.3%	246,542	1.3%	2.0%	-29.8%
TAS	\$11,600,525	0.8%	0.2%	382.8%	185,011	1.0%	0.4%	146.3%
NT	\$3,114,197	0.2%	0.1%	45.9%	111,183	0.6%	0.3%	91.7%
Total	\$1,507,963,952	100.0%	100.0%	2.0%	18,536,434	100.0%	100.0%	3.4%

Source *Live Performance Australia, Supplementary submission 25.1, p. 1, Table 2. Sourced from Ernst & Young (2015), Ticket Attendance and Revenue Survey 2014, prepared for Live Performance Australia, p.vi.*

2.10 In 2014 there were 18,536,343 tickets for attendances at live arts performances, exceeding the sporting code attendances of 13,744,662 that year. Table 2.4 illustrates the 2014 attendance figures for five major sporting codes.¹⁰

10 Live Performance Australia, *Supplementary submission 25.1, p. 1, Table 2.*

Table 2.4 Sporting Code attendances in 2014*

Sporting Code	Attendance
Australian Football League (AFL)	6,974,498
National Rugby League (NRL)	3,375,941
Big Bash (Cricket)	823,829
Super Rugby	745,811
A-League (Soccer)	1,824,583
Total	13,744,662

* Both the Big Bash and A-League attendance figures are reported for 2014-15.

Source *Live Performance Australia, Supplementary submission 25.1, p. 1, Table 3. Sourced by Live Performance Australia from Australian Stadiums and Sport (2015), Australian Sporting Attendances, <<http://www.austadiums.com/sport/crowds.php>>.*

2.11 In comparing the live performance industry ticket sales to the previous year, Ernst and Young found that:

In 2014, approximately 18.54 million tickets were issued to live performance events in Australia. This represents an increase of 3.4% on 2013 when 17.93 million tickets were issued to events. Of the 18.54 million total tickets, the number of paid tickets was 16.47 million, a slight increase from 16.05 million in 2013. The remaining 2.07 million issued in 2014 were complimentary, sponsor and zero-priced tickets, a rise from 1.88 million in 2013.

Ticket sales in 2014 generated total revenue of \$1.51 billion, up 2% on 2013, when ticket sales totalled \$1.48 billion. This increase in revenue occurred as a result of an increase in the total number of paid tickets, despite a decline in the average ticket price.¹¹

Importance of the arts to rural and regional communities

2.12 Evidence to the committee highlighted the importance of the arts to Australians, including to its rural and regional communities. However, it was also clear that people living in non-metropolitan areas do not have access to the same amount of core arts activities as metropolitan based Australians. In particular in the area of live performance, the challenges of distance and associated costs mean that rural and regional communities do not have access to the same extensive range as is available in the cities.

11 Ernst and Young, *Live Performance Industry in Australia: 2014 Ticket Attendance and Revenue Survey Live Performance Australia*, 12 August 2015, p. 6.

- 2.13 AMPAG contended that arts help ‘activate and build vibrancy in communities and can stimulate opportunities for growing tourism and associated economic activities’.¹²
- 2.14 AMPAG argued that while regional Australians placed similar importance on the value of arts engagement, survey findings revealed ‘more limited opportunities to attend and participate in the arts than for people in metropolitan areas’, with 74 per cent of people in metropolitan areas having attended at least one arts event in the previous 12 months, compared with 66 per cent of people in regional areas.¹³ It further outlined that regional attitudes to the arts differed only marginally from their metropolitan counterparts in respect to perceptions of the arts experience and opportunity:
- 66 per cent of people living in the regions agree that ‘there are plenty of opportunities to get involved in the arts’, compared with 75 per cent of people in metropolitan areas
 - 59 per cent of regional dwellers see the arts as having a big impact on ‘helping us manage stress, anxiety and depression’, compared with 55 per cent of people in metropolitan areas
 - 46 per cent of regional dwellers perceive the potential of the arts in ‘bringing visitors to our community’, compared with 42 per cent of people in metropolitan areas.¹⁴
- 2.15 The National Rural Health Alliance (the Alliance) stressed the importance of access to creative and cultural activity for the health and wellbeing of Australians living in rural and remote regions, and stated that:
- Leaders of the rural and remote health sector now accept the benefit of involvement in creativity and understand that the arts are major contributors to living healthy lives.¹⁵
- 2.16 The Alliance argued that despite the increasing recognition of the value of arts participation, rural and regional communities do not enjoy equitable access to arts opportunities. It stated that:
- The importance and success of arts and health was recognised by all Australian health and arts ministers in the 2014 endorsement of the National Arts and Health Framework. The framework commits Australian health and arts ministers to recognising and supporting the place of arts and health in improving the health and wellbeing of Australians. Initiatives have commenced in
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12 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 9.

13 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 8.

14 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 8.

15 National Rural Health Alliance, *Submission 44*, p. 2.

several jurisdictions but, as emphasised in the submission from our friends at Regional Arts Australia, there is still a gross inequity between metropolitan and rural and remote areas in terms of access to public resources. Regional Australians, who make up one-third of Australia's population, are provided with significantly less arts and cultural resources than are provided to metropolitan Australians. In some cases, this is as low as three per cent of available resources.¹⁶

2.17 Further, the Alliance called for programs for arts and health to be seen as 'an investment, meaning that the returns will be greater than the cost because it is beneficial on the community front, on the family front and on the personal front to be involved and engaged in arts and health'.¹⁷ It argued that the need for resilient communities has never been greater in rural and remote regions given the significant mental health challenges that occur outside of cities. Statistics indicate that the rate of suicide is 66 per cent higher in the country than in major cities. The Alliance stated that art performs the following key functions in community life:

- art in its various forms is used as a means of communication on health and health-related issues;
- art is itself therapeutic and is widely used to complement treatment and management; and
- art is widely used as a force for community development, to sustain communities and develop their capacity to deliver health-promoting lifestyles.¹⁸

Benefits of live performance

2.18 Groups emphasised the importance of access to quality live performance by people in rural and regional communities. The challenges and rewards of performing arts groups delivering live performances to, and engaging with, rural and regional communities was succinctly and well expressed in Opera Australia's observation that:

... regional engagement is expensive, challenging and resource hungry. However, audiences across Australia are enthusiastic, the impact is profound and the hard work is worth it.¹⁹

16 Mr Gordon Gregory, Chief Executive Officer (CEO), National Rural Health Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 1 March 2016, p. 2.

17 Mr Gordon Gregory, CEO, National Rural Health Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 1 March 2016, p. 3.

18 National Rural Health Alliance, *Submission 44*, p. 2. See also National Rural Health Alliance, *Mental Health in Rural & Remote Australia*, Infographic, available at <www.ruralhealth.org.au/factsheets>, accessed 19 February 2016.

- 2.19 Live Performance Australia stressed the significance of live production to ‘the social and economic fabric of rural and regional Australia’, and outlined the benefits of access to, and participation in, live production in these communities as follows:
- Live productions are important for stimulating economic activity in rural and regional communities. Economic activity is generated when audiences attend live productions, whether they be locally produced or touring productions. Live productions also help attract tourists to rural and regional communities, thus spurring economic activity for local businesses (i.e. hospitality and accommodation) in these areas.
 - Live productions provide career development and job opportunities for rural and regional residents. They provide opportunities for local professionals to develop and broaden their skills, particularly when touring companies engage with the local community and workforce to present the show.
 - Live productions provide opportunities to bring local communities together and help alleviate feelings of isolation. Live production also provides a mechanism to engage young people, disadvantaged groups and minority groups so that they can share their experiences and take pride in their cultural background. Literature suggests that there is a positive link between community connectedness and engagement, and health, wellbeing and education outcomes.
 - Live productions contribute to the livability and vibrancy of rural and regional communities, making these locations more attractive to visit or live.²⁰
- 2.20 Live Performance Australia also noted that the small to medium arts performing arts sector ‘makes a particularly important contribution to the cultural life of regional centres and smaller cities, often being the main arts organisations operating in these areas’.²¹
- 2.21 The Australian Ballet commented that it ‘sees real value for rural and regional communities having access to diverse and vibrant live performance productions, high quality broadcasts and digital content’.²²

19 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 2.

20 Live Performance Australia, *Submission 25*, p. 2.

21 Ms Evelyn Richardson, CEO, Live Performance Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 2.

22 The Australian Ballet, *Submission 16*, p. 1.

2.22 In relation to regional engagement with schools, Musica Viva highlighted that:

... the return on investment that you see when you go into a regional school is incredible, particularly when you see children who have seen a live performance for the first time. I think the challenge is in terms of not just access to the arts but also access to the very highest quality of art form so that every child has that same opportunity as you would if you were in a metropolitan region.²³

2.23 Similarly in the theatre context, the Bell Shakespeare Company stressed the important of live performance, stating that:

When John Bell founded the company 25 years ago he had a vision that every Australian should be able to access high-quality theatrical productions, no matter where they are. This is a vision he had from day one. We are fulfilling that vision to this date. Every year we reach over 35 cities and towns throughout Australia, playing to over 50,000 people. In addition, our schools program, our in-theatre school shows, our schools' residencies and our scholarships reach over 80,000 children throughout Australia. Combining those two programs, we hit over 90 per cent of all federal electorates nationwide.²⁴

Touring and regional engagement

Major performing arts companies

2.24 The touring of live performances, sometimes accompanied by educational activities, is a key way in which rural and regional communities can experience high quality live performances and engage with Australia's artistic professionals.

2.25 The Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG) submitted that there is significant demand for touring productions to regional areas. It outlined that the major performing arts companies (MPAs) reached close to four million people during 2015 through their performances and arts

23 Mr Michael Sollis, Artistic Director, Musica Viva, AMPAG, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 12.

24 Mr John Henderson, Deputy General Manager, Bell Shakespeare, AMPAG, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, pp. 12-13.

programs in metropolitan and regional areas. AMPAG further described MPAs' reach as follows:

Paid attendances at MPAs performances, workshops and seminars in regional and remote Australia totalled 235,000 in 2014-15, with 'live reach' totalling 319,000.

In 2014 MPA companies estimated that 10 million people watched or listened to a broadcast or screening of an MPA company performance. The Australia Council estimates the MPAs as a group reached 16 million people in 2014-15.²⁵

2.26 MPAs engagement with regional communities include:

- touring of mainstage works and performances specifically developed for regional touring
- touring performances that include regional or remote performers' participation
- live engagement arts education in regional and remote schools and community centres
- television and radio broadcast of MPAs
- online arts education and behind the scenes.²⁶

Table 2.5 List of Australia's Major Performing Arts Companies

■ Adelaide Symphony Orchestra	■ Orchestra Victoria
■ Australian Brandenburg Orchestra	■ Queensland Ballet
■ Australian Chamber Orchestra	■ Queensland Symphony Orchestra
■ Bangarra Dance Theatre	■ Queensland Theatre Company
■ Bell Shakespeare	■ State Opera South Australia
■ Belvoir	■ State Theatre Company of South Australia
■ Black Swan State Theatre Company	■ Sydney Dance Company
■ Circus Oz	■ Sydney Symphony Orchestra
■ Malthouse Theatre	■ Sydney Theatre Company
■ Melbourne Symphony Orchestra	■ The Australian Ballet
■ Melbourne Theatre Company	■ Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra
■ Musica Viva Australia	■ West Australian Ballet
■ Opera Australia	■ West Australian Opera
■ Opera Queensland	■ West Australian Symphony Orchestra

Source AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 40.

25 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 5

26 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 5.

- 2.27 There are broadly two models for delivering performances:
- A company tours the show to different locations, which will generally involve booking venues, promoting the event and selling tickets for each show. With this approach the company takes the risk that it may not be able to sell sufficient tickets at a given location and a performance could run at a loss.
 - A presenter or promoter in a given location pays a company for a performance. The presenter then takes responsibility for promoting, marketing and supporting the performance.
- 2.28 The committee heard from a number of MPAs that expressed great passion for their work and stressed the importance of delivering live performances and other educational and engagement activities to people in rural and regional communities.
- 2.29 Opera Australia believes ‘opera is for everyone’ and described the importance of rising to the ‘challenge of bringing opera to as many people as possible, regardless of where they live by having an on-the-ground presence in real terms’.²⁷
- 2.30 Sydney Dance Company ‘cultivates social cohesion by advancing equity of access to education and to Australia’s vibrant dance culture’, opportunities which it argued enriches communities’ cultural wellbeing and improve the liveability of regional Australia. It aims to visit each state and territory every two years.²⁸
- 2.31 The Australian Ballet commented that ‘the appetite for live production in regional communities is high’, and that the training activities undertaken with schools and young professionals ‘leave a lasting impact on local professionals who gain access to the full calibre of talent’ of the company.²⁹
- 2.32 AMPAG highlighted the importance of the regional engagement that the MPAs deliver that go beyond the delivery of quality live performances. It stated that:
- What the majors bring into regional centres is very particular. There is quite a sizzle factor, plus they come with other layers of engagement that they can do at schools, workshops and so on. They do not want their whole program to be major works. The venues want to be able to program a year that has diversity. The MPAs work as tent poles.
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27 Opera Australia, *Submission 48*, p. 1.

28 Sydney Dance Company, *Submission 21*, p. 5.

29 The Australian Ballet, *Submission 16*, p. 2.

They work as a core around which the rest of the program is built. They build awareness of the venue. They get people coming in, where they can market.³⁰

- 2.33 Opera Australia, as Australia's national opera company, presents more than 700 performances each year, reaching more than half a million people. In 1996, Opera Australia introduced its internal producing unit specialising in Regional Touring, Primary Schools Touring and Community Engagement, and since that time, the unit's touring and engagement activities have included:
- touring to 110 different venues
 - presenting 549 high-quality performances
 - travelling 282,851 kilometres around the country
 - 612 people presenting on the touring parties (more than 32 people as part of the creative team and hundreds more as principal artists).
- 2.34 Opera Australia highlighted that it has never cancelled a single regional tour performance in 20 years and that each touring production is 'specifically commissioned and purpose-built' for the regional tour to ensure that the production meets the demands of touring and retains flexibility to perform in purpose-built venues and unconventional spaces.³¹
- 2.35 Opera Australia's performance menu includes both more traditional operatic performances and musicals. The committee notes that there has been some debate about Opera Australia's work as to whether some of its more modern performances constituted 'opera', for example when voices were amplified for *The Rabbits* and the Sydney Harbour performances, or in the different style of the more progressive recent production *The Divorce*.
- 2.36 Opera Australia's evidence reflects that it has welcomed debate that challenges audiences' conceptions of what constitutes opera. In discussion with the committee, Opera Australia observed that:
- It is a very interesting debate, and we had similar debates when we premiered a show called *The Rabbits* last year, which was written by Kate Miller Heidke, who is a very talented young singer and performer. *The Rabbits* was amplified and people said,

30 Ms Bethwyn Serow, Executive Director, AMPAG, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 17.

31 Opera Australia, *Submission 48*, p. 2.

'If it is amplified is it really opera?' and our response was, 'Yes, it is opera. It is sung through, it is composed and it is performed by an orchestra with a chorus and opera singers.' Similarly, opera in Sydney Harbour is amplified because of the nature of being outdoors. *The Divorce* was written by a composer who is very well regarded, Elena Kats-Chernin, and Joanna Murray-Smith was the librettist. We say it is an opera. I guess the debate could rage on and on and on. One could argue that *Les Miserables* is an opera. Or is it a musical? We perform operas and musicals, and we like the fact that there is a debate about what opera is, and it is good if we can challenge the definition again and again. I would worry that if we were stuck in a 19th-century form with opera we would be part of the past rather than part of the future.³²

- 2.37 Opera Australia emphasised that both its more traditional opera and its musical offerings are important parts of its program. It explained that having the different style of performances in its repertoire allowed for cross-fertilisation of talent, commenting that:

I think that sort of cross-fertilisation of talent is a very important factor in this debate. In fact, the opera audiences have an incredibly voracious appetite for the musicals. Musical like the *South Pacific* season ... and *The King and I* were very well attended by our subscribers and also brought a new audience to us. It is healthy, I think, for the future of the form that we stretch it and challenge and expand as much as we possibly can.³³

- 2.38 Opera Australia noted that musicals like *The King and I* provide opportunities for operatically trained voices. It also remarked that musicals like *The Sound of Music*, while not an Opera Australia production, did feature two of its singers, and provide an opportunity for 'people outside the opera world to hear operatic voices in that environment, because it blows them away'.³⁴ Opera Australia further observed that the musicals tour concurrently with the operatic productions, and add to, rather than detract from, its activities. It outlined the arrangements for these complementary activities as follows:

We have a musical which tours and we typically will have a Sydney season of about eight weeks. That show will tour to places like Brisbane and Melbourne and hopefully Adelaide and Perth as

32 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 2.

33 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 3.

34 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 3.

well. Those tours are concurrent with our opera season, so if we were to use ensemble opera singers then we could not use those singers in our Melbourne and Sydney seasons, because the tour of the musical would be taking place in Brisbane and Melbourne at the same time we would be in Sydney or Melbourne. So it is a concurrent tour which actually adds activity rather than replaces our operatic activity.³⁵

2.39 The Australian Ballet each year typically delivers 200 performances in cities and regional areas across Australia. It submitted that its reach and activities each year included:

- 275,000 people reached through theatre performances
- 22,000 reached through audience engagement activities
- 10,000 reached through international touring
- engaging 20,000 students and teachers in schools across Australia
- performing for over 10,000 people in regional communities.³⁶

2.40 The Australian Ballet provided a snapshot of its touring and regional engagement activities as follows:

Each year we follow a very busy schedule of performing in the capital cities of the country on main stages, and through a regional which can be either one tour that is approximately six weeks long through regional Australia or sometimes split it into several portions. We have an education program that also targets regional Australia and connects with about 120 schools around the country each year. We particularly select what we call marginalised schools – they could be marginalised because of their geographic location or through some other socioeconomic marginalisation.³⁷

2.41 The committee heard that the Sydney Dance Company aims to visit each state and territory every two years, a cycle which allows the company to maintain a presence in host communities and build relationships with venues. It acknowledged the benefits of National Touring Status under Playing Australia funding, and stated that it has:

... been very successful in leveraging philanthropic and foundation support for education activities that run alongside our

35 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 3.

36 The Australian Ballet, *Submission 16*, p. 1.

37 Ms Libby Christie, Executive Director, The Australian Ballet, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 37.

touring, as part of national touring status, as well as those that run before our touring. This year, for example, we are planning a pre-tour tour, sending two dance educators out ahead of the main stage tour to engage the local community a bit more deeply and engage the students, getting them ready for the main stage production that is coming. Then there is a follow-up engagement by the company dancers themselves, sending follow-up workshops out to the schools and, importantly, into the performance venues themselves, making them rich and active hubs.³⁸

- 2.42 The Sydney Dance company also highlighted the value of its regional engagement activities, commenting that:

In advance of going to regional centres such as Bunbury – which we will be going to in the next few months – we send out our education program to engage with schools and also to engage with dancers in those regional areas. It is incredibly important in Australia. As you are all aware, it is rare for the dance community to have the opportunity to meet with major companies; it is a very rare thing. There are dance schools in Bunbury, as there are in Geraldton, as there are in Darwin, who will never, ever get the opportunity to see world-class contemporary dance except when we visit, and that is the truth. Our ability to deliver that benefit, in all areas of Australia, has only been made possible by national touring status. It has lifted our ability to do that – incredibly.³⁹

- 2.43 An important element of access to the arts for rural and regional communities is helping to ensure that Indigenous communities have access to the arts and that Indigenous people are able to share and enjoy performances reflecting their culture.
- 2.44 The Aboriginal Resource and Development Services noted the importance of Indigenous media and arts in regional and remote areas in contributing to the rich diversity of wider Australia and providing ‘improved opportunities for non-Indigenous Australians to learn about Indigenous culture and worldview which in turn will help to achieve greater understanding and equality between all Australians’.⁴⁰

38 Mr Dominic Chang, Producer, Sydney Dance Company, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 18.

39 Ms Chrissy Sharp, Acting Executive Director, Sydney Dance Company, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 18.

40 Aboriginal Resource and Development Services, *Submission 33*, p. 2.

- 2.45 Opera Australia indicated that an important element of its regional touring is its Indigenous community partnerships. It also highlighted the related activities which significantly enhances its regional engagement. It outlined that:

Beyond touring, Opera Australia has deepened the company's connection with the communities visited. When working on specifically Indigenous collaborations, we use opera to give voice to the shared experiences and common history of Indigenous communities, resulting in original works performed with and for the communities they were created in. These communities have included Tennant Creek, Northern Territory; Alice Springs, Northern Territory; and Yarrabah in Queensland. These collaborations have produced large-scale events including *Bungalow Song* in Alice Springs and the award-winning *Yarrabah! The Musical* in Queensland. Through live streaming, they have reached traditional remote communities for the first time.⁴¹

- 2.46 AMPAG also provided information about the work of the Bangarra Dance Theatre, which develops and delivers cultural education and creative learning to young Indigenous people in urban, regional and remote areas. AMPAG noted that in 2016 the program would travel to regional Victoria, Yarrabah in Queensland and Broome in Western Australia.⁴²

Impact on communities

- 2.47 AMPAG observed that the MPAs' contribution 'is not only realised through tickets, hits and turnover', and emphasised that it is important to also recognise the qualitative characteristics of the MPAs' work. It stated that:

Most MPA companies work in regional, remote and at risk communities, connecting with constituents and making a lasting impact – not only with performances that stir the heart, spirit and mind, but with a legacy of cultural infrastructure that is greatly valued in regional and remote communities.⁴³

- 2.48 Opera Australia described the impact on the community of this type of engagement, for example, what it does through its regional programs and

41 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 1.

42 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 27.

43 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 5.

children's chorus, as 'quite profound'.⁴⁴ Similarly, The Australian Ballet commented that:

For us, it is not just about performing in regional centres, and bringing the best of the national company's performances to regional audiences, but about connecting with those kids and those families who support those kids who love ballet. We know that by being in regional Australia many of the dancers who now find themselves inspired in the company were first introduced to the Australian Ballet, then aspired to do more with their dance classes and finally became dancers in the company.⁴⁵

2.49 Opera Australia observed that, in its experience, sales were highest when the venues are engaged and enthusiastic.⁴⁶

2.50 Regional Arts Victoria reflected on the limited opportunities for people in small communities to develop relevant technical and marketing skills when they may only be supporting eight to 10 performances a year. For example, in the Sydney Dance Company's 2015 visit to country South Australia, it hired an additional technical as the venues had advised in advance that it did not have the technical skills to support the performances.⁴⁷

2.51 Regional Arts Victoria saw this as example of areas in which arts groups could directly assist local people in developing skills in technical support and marketing. It noted that:

In our Victorian touring forum that we hosted with the Victorian Association of Performing Arts Centres in 2015 – I think it was the second year we had done that – collaboration around things like technical and marketing expertise was something that they were looking for, not just from outside their communities but in wider communities around their own. The ability to cluster some of their resources and expertise was something that came through loud and clear in what they were looking for and hoping to have facilitated by organisations like Regional Arts Victoria in the future.⁴⁸

44 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 5.

45 Ms Libby Christie, Executive Director, The Australian Ballet, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 37.

46 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 8.

47 Mr Dominic Chang, Producer, Sydney Dance Company, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 19.

48 Mr Joe Toohey, General Manager, Regional Arts Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 10.

2.52 The Sydney Dancy Company indicated that its work with local people on these skills has been positive. It stated that:

We bring our show collateral and our marketing collateral to them and work with them. They know their audience and they know their community, but they are grateful that they do not have to start from scratch. Similarly, we have been quite active in upskilling the technical side of theatres in regional areas.⁴⁹

Touring challenges and funding arrangements

2.53 It was clear from the evidence received that MPAs face a number of challenges when undertaking tours in regional Australia. Key challenges included the:

- high costs
- revenue constraints
- venue infrastructure constraints
- travel distances
- need for longer (multi-year) planning to effectively delivery performances and associated activities.

2.54 The committee received evidence about the high costs of regional touring. For example, Live Performance Australia commented that:

High costs make commercial tours unviable, limit the ability of subsidised companies to tour and restrict the ability of local venues to program and present works created by local and regionally based companies or touring companies. Touring live productions is inhibited by the huge costs involved, including accommodation, travel allowances, weekly salaries, payment of more non-performing travel and rest days, and freight and transportation. The company has to provide every person on the tour – cast, crew and company management – with travel allowances of approximately \$1,000 per week per person to cover meals, incidentals and accommodation, in addition to their weekly wage.⁵⁰

49 Ms Chrissy Sharp, Acting Executive Director, Sydney Dance Company, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 19.

50 Ms Evelyn Richardson, CEO, Live Performance Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 1.

- 2.55 The committee heard that the MPAs play a significant role in subsidising regional tours and activities and that they receive some government funding support that help make the tours possible.⁵¹
- 2.56 Opera Australia advised that each year it ‘invests’ several hundred thousand dollars in regional touring due to the high costs of staging and presenting. It stated that:
- The amount that we are able to charge the venues for every show is also high – as far as the venues are concerned – but not high enough to cover the costs, and we receive funding from Playing Australia, but that is not enough to bridge the gap. We understand that investment is required from Opera Australia, and we acknowledge that.⁵²
- 2.57 In a country the size of Australia, it is inevitable that distance would pose a challenge for accessing live performances. As noted by The Australian Ballet, ‘touring the company physically around the country is a huge endeavour and quite expensive’.⁵³
- 2.58 The Australia Council plays an important role in managing the National Framework for Governments’ Support of the Major Performing Arts Sector (the MPA Framework), playing strategic and leadership roles in relation to the government’s policy, and administering government funding to Australia’s 28 MPAs (see list at Table 2.5) on behalf of the Australian and state governments, with funding levels agreed by federal and state arts ministers at the Meeting of Cultural Ministers forum.⁵⁴
- 2.59 The committee notes that the reform of the Australia Council grants model, arising from the 2012 review, led to the streamlined suite of grants programs introduced in January 2015. The new model allows greater flexibility for applicants, including removing the previous restriction on funding competitions and eisteddfods. In discussion on the subject at the public hearing on 8 March 2016, the Australia Council outlined that:
- When we went through the process of renewing our grants program and launched our new grants model, the only eligibility criteria for applying to the Australia Council is that you need to be an Australian citizen or resident if you are an individual applicant
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51 See, for example, Ms Bethwyn Serow, Executive Director, AMPAG, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, pp. 11 and 17.

52 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 4.

53 Ms Libby Christie, Executive Director, The Australian Ballet, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 38.

54 Australia Council, *Submission 47*, p. 17.

or, if you are an international organisation, you can apply to the Australia Council if there is a direct benefit to an Australian artist and you do not owe the Australia Council money, because you have not acquitted a past grant. Then you have to be able to make the case in your application against the published criteria.⁵⁵

2.60 The Australia Council advised that under the current arrangements competitions could apply for funding provided that ‘the competition that applies can make a case against the criteria for assessment’.⁵⁶ The Australia Council also elaborated on the changes more broadly, observing that:

... it is important for the record to remind the committee of the reform that we undertook. In simple terms, 2½ years ago we had 154 grant categories with a range of criteria with closing dates right across the year. The sector found that confusing and exclusive. There were some small categories and some large categories. We have streamlined that down to four categories and three closing dates to provide the greatest access and opportunity for all artists wherever they live, whatever practice they are doing and whatever activity they are actually doing to apply. Having an open and accessible grants program has been our goal, and we have succeeded in that. It is also scalable. So, again, should additional funds become available, we have the resources and the model to expand it. With the additional resources that the minister made available to us last year, within one week that \$8 million had been applied to a grant round that was being processed at the time and those funds were distributed the following month.⁵⁷

2.61 The new Catalyst program is funded for \$12 million a year. It aims to complement, not duplicate the work of the Australia Council, but should also have the flexibility to provide funding for things that might fall in the gap. Catalyst includes three streams of activity:

- partnerships and collaboration
- innovation and participation

55 Mr Frank Panucci, Executive Director, Grants and Engagement, Australia Council, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 35.

56 Mr Frank Panucci, Executive Director, Grants and Engagement, Australia Council, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 35.

57 Mr Antony Grybowski, CEO, Australia Council, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 35.

- international and cultural diplomacy.⁵⁸
- 2.62 The Ministry for the Arts administers the program and gives priority to small-to-medium organisations and regional projects, with assessment criteria judged on the basis of quality and innovation.⁵⁹
- 2.63 The Department of Communications and the Arts advised that it has been promoting awareness of the new Catalyst program through social media, its website, word-of-mouth and through stakeholder networks.⁶⁰ However, Live Performance Australia asserted that there was a lack of clarity about the Australia Council and Catalyst funding arms, and stated that:
- ... with funding programs, the greater clarity that you can give to each funding pot, if you like, means you have less likelihood of duplication. If companies are looking for funding for a particular purpose, it is counterproductive, in terms of the time and energy that goes into the applications, to have to go to two or three different funding pools.⁶¹
- 2.64 Most regional touring tends to rely on, to varying extents, some level of government funding.⁶²
- 2.65 Opera Australia indicated that its per-seat subsidy from government was lower than other opera companies and the symphony orchestras in Australia. It stated that:
- The per-seat subsidy is probably the most sure comparative figure across all art forms. I am not sure how we rank against theatre, and I believe that we have a lower per-seat subsidy than the contemporary dance sector. The major difference with Opera Australia is that our reliance on box office is very high, and in any one year box office contributes over 70 per cent of our total income.⁶³

58 Ms Sally Basser, Executive Director, Ministry for the Arts, Department of Communications and the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 March 2016, p. 1.

59 Ms Sally Basser, Executive Director, Ministry for the Arts, Department of Communications and the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 March 2016, p. 1.

60 Ms Sally Basser, Executive Director, Ministry for the Arts, Department of Communications and the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 March 2016, p. 3.

61 Ms Evelyn Richardson, CEO, Live Performance Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 7.

62 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 15.

63 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 2.

2.66 AMPAG advised that the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra had the highest subsidy. Most MPAs operate somewhere along the spectrum from around 9 per cent to over 50 per cent, depending on the company. AMPAG noted that the average subsidy to MPAs was 29 per cent.⁶⁴ Further, it explained that:

MPAs do subsidise their tours and have further mitigated the cost gaps by providing marketing support for regional venues; attracting philanthropic support for engagement activities, such as school performances and workshops; developing alternative ways of accessing their work, including self-presenting and corporate sponsorship to provide regional community broadcasts; partnering with ABC TV and recording with ABC Radio; developing interactive digital assets, including arts education resources; and providing training opportunities for regional arts educators and artists to build capacity within their own regional community. They also create opportunities for regional schools, performing arts teachers and performers to attend city-based engagement workshops and performances.⁶⁵

2.67 The Australian Ballet noted that it raises income from ticket sales, sponsorship, philanthropy and government funding. However, it advised that in 2015 its average regional ticket price for a regional performance was 40 per cent less than received for a metropolitan performance.⁶⁶ It also explained that its funding is provided under the three year quadripartite agreement with Australia Council, Arts NSW and Creative Victoria, making up 20 per cent of its total income. It further observed that the funding arrangement does not require the company to perform in rural and regional Australia but to 'demonstrate commitment to engaging with audiences in regional communities'.⁶⁷

2.68 A number of groups called for increasing government funding for the arts generally, including for regional touring and engagement.⁶⁸ More specific recommendations relating to funding included incorporating a regional funding component into MPAs' core funding.⁶⁹

64 Ms Bethwyn Serow, Executive Director, AMPAG, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 17.

65 Ms Bethwyn Serow, Executive Director, AMPAG, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 11.

66 The Australia Ballet, *Submission 16*, p. 3.

67 The Australia Ballet, *Submission 16*, p. 4.

68 For example, see: AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 36; Ms Bethwyn Serow, Executive Director, AMPAG, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 16; Ms Evelyn Richardson, CEO, Live

- 2.69 Key stakeholders also stressed the importance of multi-year funding (through the National Touring Status arrangements) to aid in longer term planning of tours and regional activities.⁷⁰ Recommendations for changes in this area included lifting the funding gap for National Touring Status funding,⁷¹ and extending the program and making it available to a greater number of performing arts organisations.⁷²
- 2.70 In discussing the benefits of Playing Australia's National Touring Status arrangements, the Sydney Dance Company observed that:

One very important, somewhat minor rule but a very important rule for us with national touring status, as opposed to program-by-program funding, is the ability to take a transfer rather than a tour. Under the project-by-project funding, there is a rule that you must have a pre-existing product, a pre-existing production, and that is the production that will get funded to tour. With national touring status, Playing Australia has trusted us and our brand to work with our presenters – although some presenters will still want a tried and tested thing. For example, we have a rich touring history with regional WA and Queensland; they trust us. Two years ago, I was able to ring up and say, 'Listen, Joel,' in Bunbury, 'do you want our main stage work? It is one big national tour. It is what we are premiering in Sydney, Canberra and Melbourne and we want to bring it to you.' 'Bring it on,' they said. That is a really important point for us with national touring status.⁷³

Performance Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, pp. 2 and 6; and Terrapin Puppet Theatre, *Submission 50*, p. 2.

69 Opera Australia, *Submission 48*, p. 10.

70 See, for example: Mr John Henderson, Deputy General Manager, Bell Shakespeare, AMPAG, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 13; Ms Chrissy Sharp, Acting Executive Director, Sydney Dance Company, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 18; Ms Bethwyn Serow, Executive Director, AMPAG, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, pp. 11 and 17; and Ms Evelyn Richardson, CEO, Live Performance Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 2.

71 Opera Australia, *Submission 48*, p. 10.

72 Sydney Dance Company, *Submission 21*, p. 12.

73 Mr Dominic Chang, Producer, Sydney Dance Company, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 18.

Small to medium arts groups

2.71 In addition to the major performing arts companies there is also ‘a vibrant performing arts touring sector operating across Australia working independently from the majors’.⁷⁴ Regional Arts Australia submitted that:

The Performing Arts Touring Alliance (PATA) brings together a range of national organisations such as the Australian Performing Arts Centres Association, RAA and other key interest groups. Performing arts showcases produced both at a state and a national level provide opportunities to build intrastate and interstate performing arts tours. Much has happened in recent times to enliven and modernise this sector. However, it is evident that as much as 90% of performing arts product is generated in metropolitan Australia and a minimal amount is produced in the regions for metropolitan tours. This means that regional Australia is often a net receiver of cultural product produced elsewhere, with limited capacity to produce and tour local work. Recognition needs to be given to the regional production companies working in this space. Examples include Jute Theatre, Dance North, Artback NT and the Sandtracks project, which works in the cross border regions of SA, WA and the NT. They all produce work that builds regional audiences in places where the majors rarely go because it is just too expensive for them to step off the bitumen.⁷⁵

2.72 The committee received evidence from a number of small to medium art organisations, which shared some of their experiences, concerns and innovative approaches to delivering tours and arts experiences to people in non-metropolitan areas. For example, Tasmania’s Terrapin Puppet Theatre has tours throughout Australia and internationally. It is a regional company that tours regional areas and employs regional people. However, it indicated that as is the case with ‘most regional companies, Terrapin struggles to secure a significant level of private and corporate support; a source of income which is more readily available in capital cities where major corporations are based and high-net-worth individuals reside’.⁷⁶ It observed that it would be difficult for regional companies to exist without substantial government support.⁷⁷ Other submitters echoed these funding concerns for the small to medium groups.⁷⁸

74 Regional Arts Australia, *Submission 27*, p. 3.

75 Regional Arts Australia, *Submission 27*, p. 3.

76 Terrapin Puppet Theatre, *Submission 50*, p. 1.

77 Terrapin Puppet Theatre, *Submission 50*, p. 1.

78 See Ms Jacqui Dawborn, *Submission 51*, p. 1.

Broadcasting and digital platforms for performances

2.73 While the value of experiencing high quality live performances should not be underestimated, there is also an important role for broadcasting and utilising new technology and digital platforms in delivering arts performances to people in rural and regional communities. These services should complement, rather than replace, live performance delivery to these communities.

Broadcasters and arts performances

2.74 The Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) charter provides that one of the ABC's functions is to 'encourage and promote the musical, dramatic and other performing arts in Australia'.⁷⁹ The ABC Arts section works in conjunction with arts organisations across the country. In 2015 the ABC launched the Arts Channel on iView, and in 2016 will provide content commissions with a regional focus, including:

- *Slam TV* – a multi-platform documentary series of six episodes of five minute showcasing inspiring and challenging contemporary poets, writers and performers exploring their diverse cultural backgrounds, creative influences and the complex topics explored in their work
- *Arts News* – containing various regional content
- *On Assignment* – four episodes of six minute duration on photography
- *24 Frames* – a collection of short dance films featuring 24 artists, with 12 episodes filmed over a three year period.⁸⁰

2.75 The ABC also indicated that it is creating an Arts Reference Panel that will provide expert advice to the ABC Board and assist in developing a new pan-ABC Arts strategy. It outlined that regional perspectives would be represented, as:

Panel members will consist of arts industry leaders from across Australia, including regional areas. Regional Arts leaders invited to participate include Dalisa Pigram from the Marrugeku Dance Co. in Broome, Warwick Thornton from the Northern Territory, Stephen Williamson from the Araluen Arts Centre in Alice Springs, and Scott Rankin from Tasmania.⁸¹

79 *Australian Broadcasting Corporation Act 1983*, s. 6(1)(c).

80 *Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC), Submission 9*, pp. 16-17.

81 *ABC, Submission 9*, p. 17.

- 2.76 In relation to ABC arts programming, AMPAG commented that the ABC has invested in high quality unique work in partnership with MPAs including the new opera from Opera Australia, *The Divorce*, but submitted that there has been a decline in certain services, including that:
- ABC TV programming of arts content has declined between 2013–14 and 2014–15.
 - In 2015 ABC Radio reduced the number of orchestra and opera recordings it will undertake.⁸²
- 2.77 In expanding on the latter point, AMPAG observed that this does not affect all MPA classical music companies, and that while the long-term impact was yet to be known, the reduction in the national broadcast of these performances, by extension reduced regional audiences' access to classical musical performances.⁸³
- 2.78 The ABC advised that the reduction in certain content was due to 'cost, audience trends and a reduction in internal production capacity'.⁸⁴ The ABC submitted that ABC Classic FM is Australia's only dedicated classical music channel that is capable of serving city and regional audiences, and is a 'leading national venue for Australian classic music performances'.⁸⁵ Each year ABC Classic FM broadcasts 295 recordings.⁸⁶
- 2.79 Opera Australia maintained that the ABC plays a 'vital role in ensuring equitable access to high calibre arts access for all Australian audiences, artists and arts workers'.⁸⁷
- 2.80 Some MPAs have established relationships with the ABC for the broadcast of their performances. For example, Opera Australia highly values its relationship with the ABC, and emphasised that:

Opera Australia has a long-term relationship with the ABC to record and broadcast our works, utilising the ABC's multiplatform media channels. These date right back to the Esso Nights at the Opera simulcasts, and now extend into cinema and digital engagement. As a result, we are able to reach metropolitan, regional and remote Australians who may otherwise not have the chance to experience our work firsthand...In summary, working

82 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 19.

83 AMPAG, *Submission 26*, p. 19.

84 ABC, *Submission 9.1*, p. 1.

85 ABC, *Submission 9*, p. 13.

86 ABC, *Submission 9.1*, p. 1.

87 Opera Australia, *Submission 48*, p. 10.

closely with the national broadcaster is very important to us as the national opera company, to allow access, through the ABC, on television, radio or digitally.⁸⁸

- 2.81 However, the committee heard that the recording and broadcast of live performances come with its own challenges, such as the productions costs and rights issues associated with the broadcasts. For example, Opera Australia, when expanding on its experience with *The Divorce*, observed that:

Just on the money side, broadcast is, of course, very expensive. The up-front costs are very high and very difficult to fund. To be honest, the challenge we face as an opera company is that a lot of the agreements we have with performers and musicians are based on the live performance scenario and we have to kind of tweak them and twist them a bit to suit a broadcast platform. That was a challenge for *The Divorce*, so I would welcome some kind of flexibility in the structure so we are able to do more broadcast projects in the future.⁸⁹

- 2.82 In relation to radio, the ABC noted the important role that its radio networks play in the arts, for example, with ABC Radio covering regional performers and giving them 'unrivalled access and exposure to national audiences'.⁹⁰ It also noted that its triple j network supports up to ten tours or festivals each month, with 37 or a possible 120 partnerships a year including regional towns. In its submission, the ABC outlined the benefits of its One Night Stand annual free concert, which in 2014 was held in Mildura:

The initiative was of significant benefit to the Mildura community by: bringing a major cultural performance to a region; supporting local artists; 'exposing' the life and people of the region to a national audience; encouraging young people to get involved in their community in planning and putting on the event; providing a huge economic benefit to the region over the weekend of the concert and enhancing future tourism through promoting awareness of that particular region.⁹¹

88 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 2.

89 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 4.

90 ABC, *Submission 9*, p. 11.

91 ABC, *Submission 9*, p. 12.

2.83 The Special Broadcasting Service (SBS) charter⁹² covers points in relation to services to inform, education and entertain, and to reflect Australia's multicultural society, but does not specify any functions for the broadcaster in relation to broadcast of the arts. In its submission the SBS noted that it has a 'long history of providing support for the arts' through a range of initiatives across various platforms including:

- promotional support for key arts and performing arts companies
- partnerships with major film festivals
- support for local and international arthouse and independent cinema across multiple platforms
- initiatives to support early career Australian film and TV professionals.⁹³

2.84 It also advised that it has launched a new arts programming strategy aimed at delivering high quality arts programming to a broad audience, and supporting growing arts companies through providing on air promotional support to them with commercials for ticket sales. It noted that:

In October 2015, SBS launched a new Monday to Friday arts programming strip carried on SBS television. This followed the cessation by Foxtel of SBS's arts subscription TV channel STUDIO. The TV programming strip is between 2.00 and 3.00 PM Monday to Friday and delivers a range of local productions and high quality international programming including music, theatre, and photography and more. Programming includes The Century of Cartier Bresson and the global classical music phenomenon of Andre Rieu, amongst others.⁹⁴

2.85 The committee also heard that SBS's National Indigenous Television channel also broadcast Opera Australia's successful *Yarrabah!* performance.⁹⁵

2.86 Commercial and community broadcasters also provide services in relation to the broadcasting of certain arts content and promotion of community arts activities. They can also play a useful role in supporting arts in

92 *Special Broadcasting Services Act 1991*, s. 6.

93 Special Broadcasting Service Corporation (SBS), *Submission 43*, pp. 10-11.

94 SBS, *Submission 43*, p. 11.

95 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 5.

communities by providing free air time to promote tours and regional activities.⁹⁶

- 2.87 The Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA) highlighted the sector's role is catering to the needs of communities not adequately serviced by the other broadcasting sectors.⁹⁷

Cinematic and digital platforms for arts groups

- 2.88 The committee heard that alternative and innovative ways of bringing the arts to broader audiences, through cinematic and digital platforms, was particularly important for rural and regional communities. For example, the Alliance see a role for digital media and information technology capacities and platforms in helping to ensure that people in rural and regional communities have access to the arts.⁹⁸

- 2.89 Opera Australia indicated that while its live performances come with very high costs, at least with broadcasting of performances they could typically aim to break-even.⁹⁹

- 2.90 The Australian Ballet also commented that due to the costs and challenges of regional touring, it has been looking at alternative ways for distributing its content. It stated that:

The digital environment that we are now operating in is of incredible value to us. It is wonderful that the NBN is being rolled out to regional Australia so comprehensively, because that means our audiences in regional Australia can connect through high-speed digital connections. We are increasingly recording in digital quality the performances that we give to main stage audiences.¹⁰⁰

- 2.91 The Australian Ballet advised that given the scale of its *Sleeping Beauty* production, it would not have been able to take that to regional Australia, and so has recorded it and are in 'the process of negotiating distribution

96 For example, Mr Grant Johnstone, Head of Content, ACE Radio, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, pp. 27-29.

97 Community Broadcasting Association of Australia (CBAA), *Submission 35*, p. 1.

98 Mr Gordon Gregory, CEO, National Rural Health Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 1 March 2016, p. 4.

99 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 4.

100 Ms Libby Christie, Executive Director, The Australian Ballet, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 38.

agreements with cinemas so that it can be broadcast through regional New South Wales, regional Australia, and in fact around the world'.¹⁰¹

- 2.92 Live Performance Australia expressed interest in exploring broadcast options. However, as flagged by Opera Australia when discussing challenges associated with broadcast of *The Divorce*, it also noted the challenges to be addressed when seeking to record and broadcast live performances. Live Performance Australia outlined that:

Our companies also look internationally. We are trying to learn from our colleagues internationally, particularly in terms of digital broadcast through cinemas or through regional areas. The technology, the licensing and the broadcasting arrangements are expensive, so all those things have to be negotiated and worked through. We are very much in the early trialling stage of this new technology. I think it will take us at least another 10 years to see how that plays out. Companies are certainly focused on looking at how they can leverage it, but you need significant resources to explore it as new channels.¹⁰²

- 2.93 Live Performance Australia noted the Sydney Theatre Company's recording and screening of *The White Guard* performance a number of years ago, which was not a financial success for the company. Live Performance Australia noted that in the context of broadcast rights arrangements:

STC would have to obtain the rights to actually undertake such a venture and then they would have to have the ability to exploit that product. The way the rights work is that they may have only had a certain period of time to exploit that. Also they may have had only a certain area within the world to exploit that material. The rights issue is a minefield because those that hold the rights can actually control what can be presented when and where. We are not privy or that close to that.

...

101 Ms Libby Christie, Executive Director, The Australian Ballet, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 38.

102 Ms Evelyn Richardson, CEO, Live Performance Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 3.

[Performers]...may get residual rights every time it is played, et cetera, they may get some royalty, the same as with the creatives. It can be quite complex.¹⁰³

- 2.94 The Australian Ballet similarly noted the challenges associated with broadcast and distribution rights, and stated that:

I would have to say that understanding how to negotiate distribution rights with media companies is something that most arts companies are not particularly skilled and expert at, and in the past we have probably been somewhat naive in some of the content distribution deals that we have done with media companies. It is expensive for us to record a production like *The Sleeping Beauty* – several hundred thousand dollars – so if a media company comes to us and says they will record it for us but we have to give them all the distribution rights, in the past we have said okay – we would rather have people seeing our productions than not. So, we have often given away rights. I think we have learnt over the last couple of years that we need to negotiate with a view to the value of our content, but it has taken us quite some time to develop and access the skills and expertise to do that.¹⁰⁴

- 2.95 The London National Theatre Live and the New York Metropolitan Opera broadcasts to cinemas of live theatre productions and operas, respectively, are examples of how screening live productions in cinemas can work. These companies broadcast their performances to nation and international cinemas, including to Australian cinemas. Research from the United Kingdom suggests that the digital revolution confirms the importance of the live performance for audiences, whether that be in a theatre or cinema. A report by the National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA) concluded that the research:

... suggests an appetite for cultural experiences that are live, going against the prevailing logic of 'consumption on demand', where individuals are free to choose the place and time where they access content, but do so detached from the unique circumstances where it was produced in the first place.¹⁰⁵

103 Mr David Hamilton, Director, Workplace Relations, Live Performance Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 4.

104 Ms Libby Christie, Executive Director, The Australian Ballet, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, pp. 38-39.

105 National Endowment for Science, Technology and the Arts (NESTA), *Beyond live: Digital innovation in the performing arts*, Research briefing: February 2010, p. 2.

- 2.96 Further NESTA research found ‘no evidence of cannibalisation on theatre attendance at a broad spread of English venues since the National Theatre Live programme was instituted in 2009’, and concluded that the National Theatre Live broadcasts had complemented and encouraged audiences to try live performances.¹⁰⁶
- 2.97 The committee heard from the Australian National Theatre Live (ANT Live) about its new business to record, produce and screen Australian theatre performances to cinemas and locations across Australia. ANT Live’s aims are:
- To enable all Australians to enjoy, criticise and participate in the development of our artistic heritage and to give everyone an equal opportunity to share great Australian stories and witness great Australian performances without the restrictions of time, money or distance.
 - To inspire, encourage and promote artistic achievement at every level of our society and in every location, be it in major metropolitan centres of the bush.¹⁰⁷
- 2.98 ANT live noted that it will operate on the principles of the National Theatre Live and Metropolitan Opera performances that screen in Australia, but with a different business model, focusing on a smaller scale and on Australian theatrical talents.¹⁰⁸ ANT Live advised that it will launch with screenings in Melbourne and Sydney in April 2016 the David Williamson play *Emerald City*.¹⁰⁹ In describing its planned operations and reach, ANT Live outlined that:

Essentially we have discovered a whole new digital distribution system that did not exist five years ago, and we are trying to take advantage of that opportunity. The film industry tends to lock up cinemas and write contracts that commit them to showing certain films a certain number of times. We have discovered these arts centres and community halls and RSL clubs have something similar, and are able to do deals. It is really just a question of us ringing them up and doing a deal with them.¹¹⁰

106 NESTA, *Estimating the impact of live simulcast on theatre attendance: An application to London’s National Theatre*, Nesta Working Paper No. 14/04, June 2014, p. 14.

107 Australian National Theatre Live (ANT Live) website at: < <http://www.antlive.com.au/>>, accessed 16 March 2016.

108 ANT Live, *Submission 52*, pp. 1-2.

109 Mr Grant Dodwell, Director, ANT Live, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 14.

110 Mr Peter Hiscock, Director, ANT Live, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 19.

2.99 This has considerable potential for bringing quality Australian theatre performance to people in rural and regional communities who may not otherwise have been able to access those performances. ANT Live also indicated there was scope for it to cater more specifically to certain communities with particular shows. For example, it has been contacted by a CEO for cinemas in Northern New South Wales and South East Queensland who are interested in filming the Indigenous play *Stolen* in certain cinemas. ANT Live also suggested that there could be a value add to such screenings to rural and regional communities, and described that:

The vision is, with certain productions in certain remote areas, to say: okay, can we take the writer or the director or even two of the actors into that region while the digital tour is happening and have them do a workshop with the students, or a lecture from the director or the actor to the students so that it is not just a stand-alone digital experience but that we follow that up with a live experience to go with it.¹¹¹

2.100 ANT Live advised that it had successfully negotiated contracts for the residual rights in relation to a number of performances. It commented that:

We have sorted that with the national performance committee, through the MEAA. That was the 18-month process of sitting down and saying: 'What would be fair recompense? When would the residual kick in? What investment is required from us before we start paying residual payments?' On each contract for each play there is a starting point, and that is the start. And once we get agreement with all of the artists, then we say: 'Okay; cameras up. Let's do it.' We have a template contract in place, and we negotiate from that point.¹¹²

2.101 ANT Live further explained that it was an agreed Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance actors' equity guideline and involved one agreement:

That is our standard contract. Everyone is paid. We have paid everyone – crew, cast. Cast get an up-front payment. They also get a payment for metro screenings, which is all worked. It is up to an agent to negotiate more if they wish, depending on the status of the particular actor and the worth of publicity et cetera. That is part of our negotiation.¹¹³

111 Mr Raj Sidhu, Director, ANT Live, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 15.

112 Mr Raj Sidhu, Director, ANT Live, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 17.

113 Mr Grant Dodwell, Director, ANT Live, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 19.

- 2.102 ANT Live also flagged the possibility of partnering with performance groups, and suggested that rather than individual MPAs keeping a small production inhouse, which could cost around \$160,000 a year and only comprise a producer, marketer and director, it could work with ANT Live a few times a year on the recording and screening of particular performances.¹¹⁴
- 2.103 In evidence to the committee, the Department of Communications and the Arts acknowledged the merit in arts groups exploring options for partnering with broadcast or film partners to record and broadcast performances. It observed that:
- Most companies, of course, do not film their productions; they leave that to broadcasters or others to provide. But I think it is a really interesting model. I am not saying it should replace live performance, but it is a fantastic adjunct if you can get those things done.¹¹⁵
- 2.104 Some MPAs are particularly taking the initiative to engage more extensively with the developing technologies and platforms. For example, The Australian Ballet shared its dream with the committee of being able to make their dance programs more available online and to have a live online education stream. It is currently in the process of scoping a project to ‘raise the roof’ at its Southbank headquarters in Melbourne. The project would include building new ballet and orchestral studios, and a recording and broadcast studio, so that The Australian Ballet can record its work and use the recordings for content distribution and as part of its education programs.¹¹⁶
- 2.105 The Sydney Dance Company also aims to develop a digital delivery strategy that would include online delivery of workshops and professional dance resources. It maintains that this would broaden the range of high quality educational opportunities for engagement with rural and regional communities. Much like other groups, it sees these digital initiatives as complementing rather than replacing physical tours.¹¹⁷

114 Mr Raj Sidhu, Director, ANT Live, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 24.

115 Ms Nerida O’Loughlin, Deputy Secretary, Department of Communications and the Arts, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 15 March 2016, p. 4.

116 Ms Chrissy Sharp, Acting Executive Director, Sydney Dance Company, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, pp. 20 and 40.

117 Sydney Dance Company, *Submission 21*, p. 12. See also Ms Chrissy Sharp, Acting Executive Director, Sydney Dance Company, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 20.

2.106 While digital platforms and broadcast, including cinematic broadcast, options are important developments in delivering arts to rural and regional Australia, and should be explored, it was clear that these are valuable complements to, but cannot replace, live performance.¹¹⁸ For example, AMPAG argued that:

... these alternative ways to access live performance do not replace the real value and impact of live performance with high production values in your own community. It brings communities together, generates economic activity and stimulates ideas and a community sense of direct contact with other regions and major cities, and the MPAs are committed to regional engagement.¹¹⁹

Local production

2.107 Some submitters also noted the significance of local productions for arts engagement and enabling people in rural and regional communities to find and express their own voices, beyond the at times passive consumption of visiting productions. For example, the Alliances stressed that:

Given the diversity of the rural and remote communities out there, I also agree with promoting the importance of enabling communities to find their own expressions. I think there is an expression that says, 'If you've seen one rural community, you've seen one'. That is very true and adds weight to enabling communities to find their own expression, giving them that capacity, and helping them create a vibrancy and engagement within the community.¹²⁰

2.108 Creative Regions similarly emphasised the value of local production in addition to touring. It outlined:

... the social and cultural importance – the pride established and the contribution to national culture – in having a new work reflect regional stories; the economic development potential in terms of flow-on benefits to local businesses from making creative work

118 See, for example, Ms Evelyn Richardson, CEO, Live Performance Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 2.

119 Ms Bethwyn Serow, Executive Director, AMPAG, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 11.

120 Mrs Jennifer Freeman, Website Content Manager, National Rural Health Alliance, *Committee Hansard*, Canberra, 1 March 2016, p. 3.

(our company has a net benefit of \$8 for every \$1 of government investment); the value to schools in having professional artists working in their communities; benefits to volunteer and amateur artists' networks in accessing professional artists in their own communities; the benefit of increased participation in the arts. There are so many reasons to consider a greater investment in making new work in the regions to balance work touring to the regions.¹²¹

- 2.109 Regional Arts Victoria also reflected on its experiences and observed that while 'local productions are high impact', their 2015 member survey revealed that in consuming arts, people in the local arts sectors were also looking for inspiration. Regional Arts Victoria stressed the importance of local people having access to visiting professions, and stated that:

As much as they were excited by local work, working with artists and arts companies from outside of their community did provide inspiration for the work that they might either develop themselves or that they might want to participate in in some other way.¹²²

- 2.110 People in rural and regional communities benefit from both experiencing high quality professional performances and from exercising their own creativity by engaging in local production and arts activities.

Conclusions

- 2.111 The live performance industry in Australia each year reaches millions of people, enriching their lives and providing a host of community and health benefits, as well as contributing millions of dollars to the economy. In 2012, the live performance industry generated \$2,546 million (value adding \$1,529 million to the Australian economy) and employed 18,964 people. As a group, Australia's major performing arts companies reached 16 million people in 2014-15, through live performances and broadcasts or recordings of their work. In 2015, the major performing arts companies delivered live performances and arts programs to close to four million people in metropolitan and regional locations.

121 Creative Regions, *Submission 8*, p. 2.

122 Mr Joe Toohey, General Manager, Regional Arts Victoria, *Committee Hansard*, Melbourne, 22 March 2016, p. 10.

- 2.112 The committee notes that the level of attendance at live performances does not decline at times of reduced consumer confidence and general declines in consumer spending, and so can be seen as an important cultural activity. In particular, the committee notes with interest the figures from Live Performance Australia showing that in 2014 tickets issued for attendances at live arts performances exceeded tickets for attendances at major sporting codes in a similar period, with 18,536,434 tickets for attendances at live arts performances in contrast to 13,744,662 for five major sporting codes. In Australia, which prides itself on being a sporting nation, the tickets numbers for attendances for live arts performances reflect that the arts are also highly valued.
- 2.113 Access to arts experiences, in particular live performances and regional engagement opportunities with performing arts companies, can provide significant social, wellbeing and economic benefits to rural and regional communities.
- 2.114 Touring is one of the key ways in which people in rural and regional communities can access quality live performances without having to visit a capital city or larger metropolitan area, which may be at a considerable distance and expense. The committee appreciates that Australia's geography, with its often vast distances between rural and regional locations and metropolitan areas, places significant challenges on people trying to access quality live performances and for groups delivering these performances to rural and regional communities. The committee recognises that regional engagement activities delivered by the major performing arts companies also positively impact on, and are highly valued by, people in these communities.
- 2.115 The committee notes that key barriers to regional touring include the high costs associated with moving the shows over often considerable distances, venue infrastructure constraints (as locations often do not have venues that can accommodate major shows), and revenue constraints (as it is generally not possible to sell enough tickets or at a high enough price to recoup the costs of a tour).
- 2.116 The committee heard that regional touring does not tend to be undertaken by major commercial providers, as these providers get the best return from keeping a show in a capital or major city. Rather, regional touring is generally undertaken by Australia's major performing arts companies and some small to medium arts groups, and is usually subsidised to some degree by the company. These touring and regional engagement activities typically receive some level of government funding support, in particular through the Playing Australia funding program, which is administered by

the Australia Council. The Department of Communications and the Arts administered Catalyst and Creative Partnerships Australia programs are also key sources from which arts groups can seek funding support for delivering arts programs and events in rural and regional Australia.

- 2.117 The committee also acknowledges the important role played by the small to medium arts organisations, including regional based groups, in delivering live performance and arts activities to rural and regional Australia. These groups provide valuable employment opportunities, including for people in non-metropolitan areas, and through their shows and activities provide perspectives that enrich people’s cultural experiences.
- 2.118 The committee notes that a number of submitters raised concerns about the amount and types of funding that is available to the arts groups delivering services in rural and regional Australia. As is the case across the board with agency and program funding, groups are increasingly operating in times of financial constraint. In this context, the committee believes it is worthwhile to reiterate Aurora Community Television’s comment that 21st century innovation is sometimes just about being cost-effective and doing more with less.
- 2.119 The performing arts groups do an outstanding job of delivering tours and regional engagement activities to rural and regional communities. There is demand for these shows and engagement, and they are highly valued by people in these communities. The committee commends these groups for their high quality performances and their innovate approaches in delivering services to rural and regional Australia, including streamlining touring productions, building relationships with vendors and communities, leveraging philanthropic relationships, and embracing new technology and digital platforms to complement physical touring activities.
- 2.120 The major performing arts companies, including Opera Australia, The Australia Ballet, Bell Shakespeare, Music Viva, the orchestra companies, and the many state based companies delivering opera, dance, theatre and music, play a crucial role in shaping and reflecting Australia’s cultural identity. Australia’s major performing arts companies are:
- Adelaide Symphony Orchestra
 - Australian Brandenburg Orchestra
 - Australian Chamber Orchestra
 - Bangarra Dance Theatre
 - Orchestra Victoria
 - Queensland Ballet
 - Queensland Symphony Orchestra
 - Queensland Theatre Company

- Bell Shakespeare
- Belvoir
- Black Swan State Theatre Company
- Circus Oz
- Malthouse Theatre
- Melbourne Symphony Orchestra
- Melbourne Theatre Company
- Musica Viva Australia
- Opera Australia
- Opera Queensland
- State Opera South Australia
- State Theatre Company of South Australia
- Sydney Dance Company
- Sydney Symphony Orchestra
- Sydney Theatre Company
- The Australian Ballet
- Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra
- West Australian Ballet
- West Australian Opera
- West Australian Symphony Orchestra

2.121 Australia's major performing arts companies recognise the importance of enabling everyone, regardless of how far they may live from a major metropolitan centre, access to the very best Australia has to offer; providing people with the opportunity to be culturally enriched by high quality operatic, musical, dance and theatrical performances. The committee was impressed by the strong commitment by many of the major companies to ensuring that people in rural and regional communities do not miss out on these culturally enriching experiences. These companies are committed to their touring and regional engagement activities and work hard to overcome the challenges inherent in reaching communities across the vast Australian continent.

2.122 The committee notes that while regional tours often run at a loss, with groups regularly subsidising their touring activities, they tend to regard it as an 'investment' rather than a loss. The committee feels strongly that governments must see it in a similar light, with government grants and subsidies to these groups for regional touring and engagement playing a crucial role in assisting groups to deliver arts to the regions.

Recommendation 1

- 2.123 **The committee recommends that the Australian Government, through the Australia Council for the Arts and its other funding programs, continue to provide funding to Australia's major performing arts companies, including, but not limited to, Opera Australia, The Australian Ballet and Bell Shakespeare, to assist these groups to continue to deliver quality productions and regional engagement activities to communities in rural and regional Australia.**

The committee notes that in 2014 there were 18,536,343 tickets for attendances at live arts performances, exceeding the sporting code attendances of 13,744,662 that year. This is a 3.4 per cent increase on 2013 attendances at live arts performances.

- 2.124 The committee believes that in providing funding support to these groups for regional tours and activities, wherever possible, it should be structured to allow groups the flexibility to undertake necessary longer-term planning so they can better capitalise on existing demand and relationships in regional areas. The National Touring Status arrangements under the Playing Australia program, which provide three year funding for groups that have attained that status, have been very beneficial to these groups. Being able to undertake multi-year planning has helped these groups to better leverage vendor, community and sponsorship relationships and put worthwhile touring programs in place. The committee strongly encourages the government to retain initiatives like the National Touring Status arrangements that allow groups greater flexibility in planning their regional touring activities, which are generally sizable undertakings.

Recommendation 2

- 2.125 **The committee strongly recommends that the Australian Government maintain adequate levels of funding for the Australia Council for the Arts' Playing Australia program.**
- 2.126 The committee heard evidence that the major performance companies that have attained National Touring Status have benefited from these arrangements, as they allow the company greater flexibility to develop their regional touring programs and capitalise on existing relationships.

The committee believes this could lead to better value for money in the provision of these grants, as the evidence suggests that these arrangements are providing greater certainty and enabling groups to realise significant planning efficiencies.

Recommendation 3

- 2.127 **The committee recommends that the Australia Council for the Arts, through its Playing Australia program, retain and extend the National Touring Status arrangements, to additional companies, which in accordance with evidence taken results in greater certainty and planning efficiencies.**
- 2.128 The committee also observed during the conduct of the inquiry that the live performance industry comprises an array of art forms, including: ballet and dance; opera; theatre; children's/family entertainment; circus and physical theatre; classical music; contemporary music; comedy performances; festivals (either single or multi-category events); musical theatre; and special events. Groups in the live performance sphere add to Australia's cultural life.
- 2.129 The committee feels it is important that this diversity be reflected in the Australian Government's grants programs for the arts. It is worthwhile reiterating Opera Australia's reminder about the importance of challenging interpretations of what constitutes a given art form. For example, when people seek to delineate between operatic and other musical theatre performances. Opera Australia comments on this point focus on the debates that surrounds amplification of opera performances and its extended repertoire that includes musicals:

The Rabbits was amplified and people said, 'If it is amplified is it really opera?' and our response was, 'Yes, it is opera. It is sung through, it is composed and it is performed by an orchestra with a chorus and opera singers.' Similarly, opera in Sydney Harbour is amplified because of the nature of being outdoors. *The Divorce* was written by a composer who is very well regarded, Elena Kats-Chernin, and Joanna Murray-Smith was the librettist. We say it is an opera. I guess the debate could rage on and on and on. One could argue that *Les Misérables* is an opera. Or is it a musical? We perform operas and musicals, and we like the fact that there is a debate about what opera is, and it is good if we can challenge the definition again and again. I would worry that if we were stuck in

a 19th-century form with opera we would be part of the past rather than part of the future.¹²³

- 2.130 In examining the discussion paper for the National Opera Review currently underway, it seems that in calculating the opera audiences other musical performance offerings of the major opera companies are not counted.

Recommendation 4

- 2.131 **The committee recommends that the Australian Government, when assessing the effectiveness of its funding for the industry, take into account the dynamic and changing nature of the arts. For instance, the Chief Executive Officer of Opera Australia explained how he sees the legitimate changing nature of repertoire in the following ways:**
- *The Rabbits* was amplified and people said, 'If it is amplified is it really opera?' and our response was, 'Yes, it is opera. It is sung through, it is composed and it is performed by an orchestra with a chorus and opera singers.' Similarly, opera in Sydney Harbour is amplified because of the nature of being outdoors. *The Divorce* was written by a composer who is very well regarded, Elena Kats-Chernin, and Joanna Murray-Smith was the librettist. We say it is an opera. I guess the debate could rage on and on and on.
 - One could argue that *Les Misérables* is an opera. Or is it a musical? We perform operas and musicals, and we like the fact that there is a debate about what opera is, and it is good if we can challenge the definition again and again. I would worry that if we were stuck in a 19th-century form with opera we would be part of the past rather than part of the future.
 - Having the different style for performances in its repertoire allows for cross-fertilisation of talent. Musicals like the *South Pacific* season, are were very well attended by our subscribers and also brought a new audience to us. It is healthy, I think, for the future of the form that we stretch it and challenge and expand as much as we possibly can.

123 Mr Craig Hassall, CEO, Opera Australia, *Committee Hansard*, Sydney, 8 March 2016, p. 2.

- 2.132 In addition to the importance of the experience for the audience – and participants in cases of local participation in shows or in associated activities – the local performers and technical staff also benefit from the major groups visiting their communities. Not only do these tours inspire and open opportunities for local performers, other local people involved in the technical support and marketing areas for shows can also benefit from learning from touring professionals. The committee encourages continuing these local skilling practices, and for groups to consider formalising, for example mentoring arrangements with local people and groups such as Regional Arts Australia or specific major performing companies that may already have existing links with a given community.

Recommendation 5

- 2.133 **The committee recommends that the Australia Council for the Arts, through its Playing Australia program, explore ways to encourage and formalise mentoring arrangements between performing arts companies or related peak body groups, and the presenter groups and individuals in rural and regional communities involved in the delivery and support of live performances in these communities.**

Recommendation 6

- 2.134 **The committee recommends that in evaluating the effectiveness of funding for the major performing arts companies, the Australian Government, should highlight and encourage the important educative role that these companies play. The committee notes for instance, the interaction with schools by The Australian Ballet and Bell Shakespeare, which has reached tens of thousands of students and teachers. These groups bring excellence to the one third of Australians who live in rural and regional communities.**
- 2.135 The committee notes the new funding program for the arts, Catalyst Australian Arts and Culture Fund, which is administered by the Ministry for the Arts, aims to complement rather than duplicate the work of the Australia Council. Given the Catalyst fund's important role in addressing some of the gaps in areas of arts funding, it is vital that the program operates effectively in supporting innovative projects and initiatives by arts and cultural organisations. While the committee appreciates that the Catalyst fund is new, it is important the Department evaluate and report

on the effectiveness of the program, so that the Government, key stakeholders and the public can be confident that Catalyst is fulfilling its role.

Recommendation 7

- 2.136 **The committee recommends that the Department of Communications and the Arts evaluate and report on the effectiveness of the new Catalyst Australian Arts and Culture Fund. An assessment should be included in the Department's annual report and separate publication made available on the Department's website, from time to time, to heighten awareness of the fund.**
- 2.137 The committee recognises that volunteers often play an important role in supporting regional performances and activities, and commends the work of these dedicated people, who make valuable contributions to the cultural life of their and other communities around Australia.
- 2.138 The committee was pleased to hear about the innovative work being done by existing groups in the digital sphere, which is an important avenue for companies to enhance access to the arts by people in regional areas. It looks forward to seeing groups continue to progress in this area, for example with The Australian Ballet's ambitious 'raising the roof' project in which it is scoping building its own studio at its Melbourne headquarters.
- 2.139 The committee was also very interested to hear about the entrepreneurial Australian National Theatre Live (ANT Live), which follows the examples of the London's National Theatre Live and New York Metropolitan Opera's cinema screening, in aiming to screen quality Australian theatre performances to cinemas, clubs and venues across Australia. It is clear the digital initiatives and services are an important complement to the delivery of live performances. Based on the evidence received during the course of the inquiry, the committee sees the importance of Australian groups pursuing digital opportunities, particularly in areas that will help to expand access to quality Australian performances to wider audiences.

Recommendation 8

2.140 **The committee recommends that the Australian Government consider, as parts of its grants programs strategies to promote and support digital developments for arts delivery and engagement, providing funding and support for innovation in this area by:**

- **existing major companies, for example, The Australian Ballet’s ambitious ‘raising the roof’ project in which it is scoping building its own studio at its Melbourne headquarters, and**
- **emerging groups with innovative models, for example, Australian National Theatre Live, which is a new enterprise aiming to record, produce and screen quality Australian theatre performances to cinemas and locations across Australia.**

2.141 The committee also notes the Australia Council’s more streamlined new grants model that has simplified the eligibility criteria for grants. In particular, the committee commends the Australia Council for removing the restriction on providing grants for competitions and eisteddfods. Competitions are an important element in the professional life of artists, serving as a worthwhile platform for the artists and for the community to enjoy both up and coming artists and established professionals, including taking Australia’s best into the international sphere. The committee believes competitions and eisteddfods should also be eligible under the Catalyst fund. Given that the fund is new and that the guidelines at this time seem to be fluid, the committee strongly encourages that as the Department of Communications and the Arts further develops its criteria, it should ensure that it allows for funding of arts competitions and eisteddfods.

Recommendation 9

2.142 **The committee commends the Australia Council for the Arts for removing the restriction on providing grants for competitions and eisteddfods, and notes that competitions are an important element in the professional life of artists.**

The committee recommends that in its application of the Catalyst fund, the Department of Communications and the Arts similarly ensure that the criteria allows for grants funding for arts competitions and eisteddfods.

- 2.143 While during the course of the inquiry the committee heard much about the important role of broadcasters in delivering news services to Australian communities – which will be covered in detail in the next chapter – broadcasters’ services in delivering the arts should not be overlooked. For example, the committee was pleased to hear about, and commends, the SBS for its role in delivering the arts to audiences across Australia, through its regular arts programming and the broadcast of special events such as Opera Australia’s very successful production *Yarrabah!*, which involved the participation of people in non-metropolitan Australia, and was broadcast on SBS’s National Indigenous Television enabling significantly wider audience access to this unique performance.
- 2.144 The committee also notes ABC’s recent broadcast of *The Divorce*, which had a cumulative reach of 1.1 million viewers when broadcast on ABC1 (including a regional viewership of approximately 311,000 people), and a further 126,000 on iView. It recognises that companies like Opera Australia value their ongoing relationship with SBS and ABC in providing an avenue to broadcast its works to a wider audience.
- 2.145 Further, in relation to promoting and marketing regional performances and activities to specific communities, after hearing from various groups, the committee feels that arts groups and local presenters are missing out on opportunities for free services by broadcasters to promote shows and activities. The committee encourages groups to utilise free air time provided by commercial and community broadcasters, in particular on radio, to promote performances or engagement activities to people in the local community and region.
- 2.146 Developments in technology and associated digital platforms have opened up further options for enabling people in rural and regional communities to access quality arts performances and engagement activities delivered by the arts groups. The committee believes these options, for example online platforms and cinematic broadcast, are valuable complements to live performance and should be explored, but can never replace experiencing a high quality live production.

