



3 February 2016

**To the Committee Secretary, Standing Committee on Communications and the Arts**

PO Box 6021  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA  
Canberra ACT 2600

**Re: Inquiry into broadcasting, online content and live production to rural and regional Australia**

The Performing Arts Touring Alliance (PATA) is Australia's national peak body for performing arts touring, representing producing companies, presenters, venue managers and tour coordinators who provide communities in rural and regional Australia with a wealth of performing arts experiences. PATA's Council includes representatives from the Australian Performing Arts Centres Association, Regional Arts Australia, Australian Major Performing Arts Group, Theatre Network Australia, and independent producers. It engages an independent Chair and part time Executive Officer.

Many children in rural and regional Australia owe their first live theatre, dance, or music experience to touring activity by PATA members.

PATA wishes to draw to the attention of this Inquiry several important points about touring live performing arts productions to rural and regional Australia:

1. There is insufficient data available about performing arts touring in Australia – there is no national measure of how much touring happens, where it happens, or what impacts it has on rural and regional communities, or on the arts companies and artists who tour.

Touring to rural and regional Australia has been an important and dynamic part of Australian culture for decades. Data on this energetic touring scene does exist - but in fragmented and siloed form, for example from the funding of tours by Playing Australia and State Governments, and within the Live Performance Australia and APACA ticketing and attendance figures. It is not in a form that provides a cohesive national picture. It cannot currently be analysed or interrogated to determine touring trends or impacts.



2. In the absence of reliable national data about the scope, nature and impact of touring live performing arts productions across Australia, it is impossible to make informed, evidence based decisions and policies about this activity.
3. Performing arts touring is greatly under resourced. We understand that Australia Council 'National Touring Status', awarded to several companies to provide greater ability to plan their touring further in advance, will not be continued from the end of the current round, due to funding cuts to the Australia Council. This is definitely a retrograde step. Touring success requires adequate advance planning.
4. Despite the lack of hard data, PATA members are aware of strong anecdotal evidence that suggests regional performing arts touring has deep economic, social, educational and creative impacts throughout the communities in which it occurs.
5. PATA has applied to the Catalyst fund for support to initiate a national Performing Arts Touring Measurement and Evaluation Framework in partnership with other organisations working in this area, to address the lack of data.
6. Further information in support of the points above is contained in the attached.

We would welcome an opportunity to discuss this submission in more detail with the Committee Chair.

Yours sincerely

RACHEL HEALY  
Independent Chair, PATA

MERRYN CARTER  
Executive Officer, PATA



## **Submission from PATA**

### **Inquiry into broadcasting, online content and live production to rural and regional Australia**

PATA was established in 2009 as Australia's peak alliance for performing arts touring. PATA's Council includes representatives from the Australian Performing Arts Centres Association, Regional Arts Australia, the Australian Major Performing Arts Group, Theatre Network Australia, and independent producers. It engages an independent Chair and part time Executive Officer.

### **PATA's member organisations reach over 15 million people annually**

PATA member organisations represent over 15 million audience attendances annually, across Australia. PATA Councillors are: John Oster, Executive Director Regional Arts Australia (RAA); David Barrett, Unit Manager, Cultural Facilities City of Marion; Nicole Beyer, Executive Director Theatre Network Victoria; Lee-Anne Donnelly, Producer Far and Away Productions; Annette Downs, Producer Tasmania Performs; Rick Heath, Executive Director Australian Performing Arts Centres Association (APACA); Anne-Marie Heath, former General Manager City Recital Hall Angel Place; Tim McGarry, Creative Director & Producer Monkey Baa Theatre Company; Britt Guy Performing Arts Touring Manager Artback NT; Peter Owens, Manager Arts and Heritage Rockhampton Regional Council; Steve Saffell, CEO Country Arts SA; Bethwyn Serow, Executive Director Australian Major Performing Arts Group (AMPAG); Sandra Willis, Executive Director, Touring & Outreach Opera Australia, plus Chair Rachel Healy and Executive Officer Merryn Carter.

### **Insufficient data available about performing arts touring in Australia**

Both sides of politics espouse access to the arts by all Australians, including those in regional areas, however, no data or aggregated research exists that describes or analyses the size, composition, or economic value of Australian performing arts touring.

No aggregated data is available on the scale, value and dynamism of Australian performing arts touring. While Playing Australia, Live Performance Australia, state agencies, and regional arts organisations are all responsible for aspects of performing arts touring, there is no research that describes the whole picture. This gap leaves the sector, governments and funding bodies vulnerable to creating policy without an evidence base, unable to measure or illustrate the impact of funding programs or policy changes.

If future policy decisions are to arise from a stronger source, a dispassionate assessment of touring, and its social, cultural and economic value, particularly in regional and remote areas, is vital. PATA's Measurement and Evaluation Framework would include an estimate of the economic contribution of touring in terms of gross output, value add and employment. It



would cover the range of touring in Australia, including touring by small-to-medium organisations, major companies, commercial activities and pro-am initiatives.

### **Local communities benefit from touring live productions**

A better understanding of the value of touring in each Australian community will provide greater opportunity for engagement by local government, local businesses and audiences. This will in turn build new opportunities for artists and arts workers but the major beneficiaries of a robust national touring sector will be the broader communities whose lives are enriched by a greater variety of cultural experiences. A national measurement and evaluation framework for performing arts touring will help capture and describe the value and impact of touring for audiences and communities across Australia, in economic, social and cultural terms. Stronger illustration of the scope, value and impact of touring will help attract further investment in performing arts touring from local communities as well as all levels of government and the private sector.

### **Touring live productions increases employment**

Further investment in touring from all levels of government and the private sector will result in more work for actors, musicians and support crew in touring productions and provide wider exposure to their work across Australia. For independent artists and small to medium organisations, who it is estimated make up the current majority of touring work in regional Australia, more touring can provide more secure personal and organisational income streams.

For government stakeholders and the sector as a whole, measuring, monitoring and evaluating the value and impact of investment in touring activity will provide evidence for future investment and also a basis for future policy development.

### **Investment in touring live productions builds a wider audience**

Investment in touring live productions across Australia ensures a wider audience is able to access a greater variety of styles and types of work in regional Australia. (Touring more contemporary and challenging works requires a greater investment by local, state and federal governments and private sector partners, due to the higher risk of box office revenue targets not being met.)

Having a data set such as the framework proposed by PATA that illustrates the scope, value and impact of touring, available across the sector for all stakeholders to use to make their arguments for greater investment, should result in more support for a more diverse range of touring works. Building audiences for some styles of performance takes time, which requires presenters and producers to commit to working together over multi-year periods, which requires investment over multi-year periods. A measurement and evaluation framework, when



established, will enable presenters and producers to track audience growth over time, strengthening their case for multi year support and investment.

In addition to our concern about the lack of adequate national data to support informed decision making around touring, PATA is working on four other areas recently discussed by the sector as important ingredients in a healthy performing arts touring sector.

In May 2015, PATA's National Touring Forum identified five future focus priorities for the national performing arts touring sector:

**(1) Programming**

The range of work available for touring and whether it meets community/presenter needs; how it is selected by local presenters.

**(2) Marketing**

Marketing of live performing arts touring events is under resourced at the local level. Appropriately skilled human resources and technical support are both lacking in many communities presenting touring programs. All levels of government (local, state and federal) should address these needs.

**(3) Community engagement**

Activities to engage communities more deeply than attendance as audience members are being called for by many local presenters, and being offered increasingly by those producers of touring shows able to resource this activity. More support for community engagement is required from all levels of government.

**(4) Local government**

The role of local government in supporting touring performing arts events is crucial. Most regional performing arts centres that present live touring productions are owned and managed by local government. Increasing the effectiveness of programming, marketing and community engagement depends largely upon local government support.

**(5) Measurement and evaluation of touring.**

and as described above, PATA is now working on developing a National Touring Measurement and Evaluation Framework and is seeking a contribution from government through the Ministry for the Arts' Catalyst Fund for the first phase of this project.

**3 February 2016**

**Merryn Carter**

**Executive Officer, PATA**