



## Submission in response to the National Cultural Policy Paper

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### 1. About you or your organisation

The Performing Arts Touring Alliance (PATA) is Australia's peak body for the national performing arts touring industry.

- Its core purpose is to build strong, sustainable and accountable touring and presenting mechanisms across Australia that support our creative artists and companies, and facilitate meaningful engagement with audiences and communities in metropolitan, regional and remote Australia.
- It acts as a cohesive and objective voice for all major stakeholders in the performing arts touring sector, providing high quality and well-informed strategic advice and information from a national perspective.
- It is the key forum through which stakeholders can collaboratively and effectively address challenges and opportunities in touring professional performing arts nationally.
- Its aim is to be the primary source for benchmarking best practice, and capacity building research and tools, for the national performing arts touring industry.

PATA was established through the cooperation of a number of key stakeholders in the performing arts touring sector. In April 2009, a governing Council was established consisting of three representatives from each of the touring sub-sectors (producers, presenters and tour coordinators) as well as a national observer from each of these groups. An independent Chair was appointed and it is managed by an Executive Officer.

PATA celebrates the growth of this industry over many generations and, in particular, the last 20 years since the establishment of Playing Australia and the associated touring mechanisms that have developed as a direct result of that policy initiative. It seeks to build on this success by providing a truly national forum that will develop new services and improved practices.

## **PATA and the National Cultural Policy**

PATA's key message in relation to the development of a new National Cultural Policy is that performing arts touring benefits Australians by:

- Making high quality, professional performances available to diverse and distant communities,
- Leveraging the significant levels of Government and private investment made in developing and producing work and infrastructure, and
- Driving employment and economic benefits in our communities

We are fortunate in Australia to have an incredibly rich and diverse national touring environment. Touring contributes to the development of a vibrant and sustainable arts and cultural sector, and it plays a significant, and often powerful role, in supporting the cohesion, sustainability and creativity of our communities.

To that end the Playing Australia program has been the single most effective initiative in supporting the development of national performing arts touring in Australia. Its considerable impact has been achieved not only through major financial investment over many years, but also through its role in supporting the strategic development and growth of the sector. We propose not simply its continuance but increased support for its future growth and development.

## **2. Do you support the development of a National Cultural Policy, and why?**

PATA believes that a National Cultural Policy is critical to ensuring the growth and sustainability of our arts and cultural sectors and our creative industries, which in turn are integral to the development, health and sustainability of our society and our communities, our economy and our distinctive national identity.

An overarching and forward thinking cultural policy, supported by a highly focused, long-term strategic implementation plan, will act as:

- A stimulus for government, business and community investment and resources;
- A catalyst for increased and more effective partnerships across government and other sectors;
- A mechanism for more powerfully and efficiently engaging the three tiers of government;
- A framework for longer-term commitment and planning on the part of all stakeholders;
- A platform for supporting the development of our communities through more integrated provision of and access to arts and cultural activities, services, resources and experiences;
- An incentive for increased innovation and the creation on new ways of engaging with creativity; and
- A vehicle through which we can showcase to the world Australia as a richly diverse, highly innovative and culturally significant nation.

### **3. What are your views about each of the four goals?**

**GOAL 1: To ensure that what the Government supports — and how this support is provided — reflects the diversity of a 21<sup>st</sup> century Australia, and protects and supports Indigenous culture**

The key issues that PATA wishes to see addressed under this Goal include:

- Improved levels co-ordination between the three tiers of Government that will drive more effective and efficient use of scarce resources.
- Develop a specific strategy for touring to, and engaging with, remote areas of Australia.
- Increasing the diversity of work on offer for touring and engage more diverse audiences.
- New incentives to help make touring more environmentally sustainable.

#### **Aligning Government Efforts**

Support for the national touring of performing arts is provided through the three tiers of government:

- Federal Government – through the Playing Australia program and through some Australia Council for the Arts initiatives and programs
- State Government – through intrastate touring funding programs, core funding of critical Tour Co-ordination and Management services and support for artists and companies.
- Local Government – primarily through the development and management of performing arts centres and venues.

This is a complex ecology and we note that the Australia Council has recently commissioned a study designed to recommend ways to improve, simplify and make more transparent national touring processes. This study also aligns with PATA's underlying goal to achieve "more, better and easier" touring solutions.

The Australia Council study can be expected to point to changes that can enhance touring mechanisms. However without strong leadership via the new National Cultural Policy to improve the co-ordination of processes and investment across all three tiers of government real change will be hard to achieve.

We believe that the Local Government sector is a critical, but often undervalued, partner in national performing arts touring given it plays a foundation role in the creation, funding and programming of performing arts venues. The majority of performing arts tours presented away from the major capital city CBD venues are also presented in local government owned and managed venues.

With the continued investment by all tiers of Government in new and redeveloped performing arts related infrastructure we believe that there has never been a better time to strategically partner with local government. These partnerships should extend beyond the historical focus on capital investment we need new partnerships that can develop the capacity and expertise of management to more effectively coordinate their performing arts programs in relation to their audiences and the broader community.

With regards to capital investment we also note that the Federal Government is now actively engaged in funding new and improved performing arts infrastructure via the Regional Development Australia Fund. This new funding can now be added to the list contained in the

Discussion Paper outlining the Australian Government's investment in creative culture in Australia (pages 8 and 9).

At the highest level we believe that the new National Cultural Policy should take a strategic approach towards developing the performing arts touring sector. Audience and Presenter network development, complementary funding partnerships and giving momentum to the pursuit of artistic excellence require a level of leadership and vision beyond that offered by individual grant rounds.

### **Remote Touring**

PATA recommends the development of a new Remote Touring Strategy that will target isolated and distant centres that have limited access to traditional managed performance venues and/or are not well represented in current national touring processes.

It is well understood that Australia's geography and demography present special challenges in terms of community access and service provision. Touring live performances into, and out of, remote areas of Australia is no less a challenge in terms of logistics and management than any other endeavour.

The first step in developing a new approach must be to formally recognise that remote communities have special needs and requirements that are not being adequately met by the current mainstream touring support and co-ordination programs. Improvements will be achieved not simply through increased program funding support but through building new community capacity at the local level to engage with touring artists and companies and manage programs. Artists, technicians and tour managers will also need to be supported in terms of developing their skills in presenting work in remote areas and developing new and hopefully lasting partnerships.

We also envisage that these new levels of engagement will generate a two-way traffic with improved opportunities opened up for local artists to broaden their creative and economic horizons. We also imagine that funding under this initiative would enable more mainstream Playing Australia supported projects to be extended into remote areas than is currently the case.

### **Increasing Diversity**

Australia's touring programs should reflect our culturally diverse society as well as the rich diversity of work created by our performing artists and companies.

PATA believes that the new National Cultural Policy must:

- Increase the focus on the development of Indigenous performing arts works, and the professional development of Indigenous producers, for both national and international touring.
- Encourage more touring by Australia's Major Companies by providing improved security of supply. To date, presenters have been able to rely on programming works each year, often as part of their subscription seasons, produced by those major performing arts companies which have had "quarantined" Playing Australia funding. PATA and the Australian Major Performing Arts Group agree that there should be a rigorous evaluation of all applications including those from major performing arts companies.

Given the importance to the sector of the issue of security of supply we strongly recommend that consideration be given to introducing a new funding framework within Playing Australia that ensures balance between the needs for a competitive process within a strategically focused framework. This new approach should also balance special needs of our major companies with the core touring role played by the small to medium sector.

- Providing improved opportunities for communities to engage with touring artists. Playing Australia, quite correctly, emphasises the importance of developing the most efficient touring schedules possible (least time on the road for maximum reach). This emphasis on efficiency in terms of logistics needs to be balanced with a range of other desirable cultural outcomes that strengthen community capacities.

We propose the development of new, complimentary tour support initiatives that would offer the possibility of more diverse programming and advanced audience development and community engagement strategies. These new initiatives would prioritise support for projects that were designed to:

- Provide regional audiences with a wider range of arts and cultural product
- Increase participation
- Stimulate future demand
- Provide enhanced opportunities for local artists to also tour
- At the same time provide production companies with the opportunity to realise their ambition for a more meaningful connection with audiences and the broader community and
- Further enhance the opportunities for broader cultural outcomes such as social cohesion, tolerance and building healthier, more livable communities.

## **Sustainable Touring**

This National Cultural Policy must value our environment and embrace sustainable practices.

Touring by its nature uses fossil fuels and generates carbon emissions so we need to find the means to increase the amount, impact and reach of performance touring and at the same time reduce the impact on our environment.

We propose two approaches to this apparent dilemma:

- Each successful Playing Australia Tour proposal should address how it will reduce and manage its environmental impact against agreed targets.
- The purchase of Carbon Offsets should be an allowable item under Government arts funding programs, including Playing Australia. To ensure that this does not reduce the quantum of tours and performances on offer, or their reach, new funds should be allocated to enable this strategy to be effectively implemented. In addition the funding mechanism should be designed to encourage sustainable practices not simply offset out dated ones.

**GOAL 2: To encourage the use of emerging technologies and new ideas that support the development of new artworks and the creative industries, and that enable more people to access and participate in arts and culture**

The NBN offers a range of opportunities to the performing arts touring sector in terms of extending and improving partnerships and connections between audiences and artists. We have also identified that there is a risk that opportunities for communities outside of the central cultural precincts of our major capital cities to experience live performance could be diminished.

A proposal to “solve touring” by projecting High Definition live and recorded performances into suburban, regional and remote Performing Arts and Entertainment Centres was first proposed to the industry back in 1990. In fact the reaction by the sector to this notion was to press for the establishment of what we now know as Playing Australia (1992). The fundamental and very human desire to experience and participate in live performance remains strong in our communities whether you live in Mosman - Sydney or Mossman - Far North Queensland.

The NBN provides a conduit that needs content pumped in at one end and the means for consumption provided at the other. It is also (most crucially) interactive, connected and fast. These basic features offer real opportunities to our stakeholders beyond the simple “simulcast” variety.

To make the NBN work for our sector requires:

- Appropriate content to be developed – the potential to extend and expand an audiences experience is significant as are the learning and participation opportunities. An audience, following a live performance can immediately interact with the author, designers, directors etc. wherever they may be. They can also interact with other communities, schools and audiences engaged in the tour this taking the experience beyond the transaction of buying a ticket, seeing the show and going home.
- Appropriate infrastructure installed, operated, maintained and replaced in a wide range of venues – most of which will be owned by local government.
- Assistance to develop new, fair and efficient legal frameworks to manage the complex intellectual property issues that are already evident in the area of live performing arts and new media

**GOAL 3: To support excellence and world-class endeavour, and strengthen the role that the arts play in telling Australian stories both here and overseas**

Australia’s place in the world and the stories that we have to tell, including those of our Indigenous and culturally diverse communities, are of increasing interest to international audiences.

The touring of performing arts works nationally plays a critical role in the development and ‘road-testing’ of works which are then selected by international presenters for touring on the world stage. The creative businesses and their employees who generate this content need experience and continuity of work in order to achieve excellence and world class standards.

An actor of the stature of Geoffrey Rush helped hone his craft touring regional Queensland and Victoria in the 1980's for companies like Melbourne Theatre Company and performing in towns such as Nhill and Wangaratta. Great artists, technicians and companies do not spring from the womb fully formed, they need the type of challenges and experiences that live performance and touring offer.

A healthy and vibrant domestic performing arts touring sector is a key requirement in terms of being able to achieve the aims of this Goal and the National Cultural Policy should explicitly acknowledge this fact.

#### **GOAL 4: To increase and strengthen the capacity of the arts to contribute to our society and economy.**

##### **Locally Made – Globally Successful**

Australia's success in a globalised and connected world in terms of creative endeavour is not simply about telling *our* stories – it is also very much based on our abilities to *tell* stories.

The most successful live concert tour in the world in terms of number of tickets sold in 2010 was created in West Melbourne and managed out of Sydney. It sold 2.1 million tickets compared to Bon Jovi with 1.9 mill, 1.8mill for AC/DC and 1.6mill for U2 according to the industry reference journal, "Pollstar".

The show was "Walking with Dinosaurs" produced by Australian company, Global Creatures and made by their Melbourne based subsidiary company, Creature Technology.

The point of this example is that its success has its direct roots in the work of earlier subsidised performance companies "Handspan Theatre" and "Company Skylark". Individuals who worked, and toured, with these earlier entities developed the skills, craft and artistry required to make "Dinosaurs". Sadly these companies are no longer with us having been defunded some years ago. We can however use this as an inspiration to find better ways to nurture and develop the skills and talents of our creative talent than can directly benefit "the economy and society".

##### PATA supports:

- The establishment of a new taxation incentive scheme (similar to film and TV production) that will help drive new private investment into our industry. Let's put in place a regime that encourages the development of our IP and performance related creative industries as a rule, not an exception.

##### **Developing Talent**

All levels of Government continue to invest in developing and maintaining performing arts related infrastructure. Optimal utilisation of these resources is hampered through shortages of skilled staff and management to program, market and operate venues and further challenged by poor staff retention rates in regional areas.

Whilst well designed, located and equipped venues are a great community resource they will quickly become dark, lonely and potentially dangerous places without skilled and talented people to run them. If we have the right people in place then they can in turn help open up new possibilities for young people through employment opportunities and skills development at the local level. They don't have to go to Sydney to start to learn how to mix sound for a band, light a show, start up a Festival or market a concert at professional standards if the right people are employed locally.

We need to invest in the professional development and support of the people who take up the challenge of connecting their communities with the arts and creativity.

### **Connecting our Resources**

A key theme of PATA's submission has been to encourage greater co-operation and co-ordination between Australia's Governments. Connecting the Education sector to the Arts and Cultural industries is another PATA priority. Where do key opportunities exist?

- The "Building the Education Revolution" has delivered new facilities around the nation that can be used by communities for performing arts related purposes, including touring.
- The NBN will open up new opportunities for young people to learn and interact not least in the arts. Arts Centres and schools should be connected at the local level to form cultural hubs that share resources and ideas. This is not as easy as it sounds, as it requires new connections across Governments to be developed and/or strengthened.

The National Cultural Policy can put in place a framework to help build these new alliances.



## 4. What strategies do you think we could use to achieve each of the four goals?

### Goal 1:

- **Playing Australia** is a highly successful initiative that continues to stimulate growing, and often unmet, demand for performing arts touring from an expanding and diverse population.

In 2004 the Playing Australia fund was \$5.8M. This has been increased to \$6.3M in 2011 representing a percentage increase of 8.6%. By comparison, over the same period, the average price of fuel increased from \$0.91/litre to \$1.45/litre, an increase of 59%. Similarly, GDP per capita in the same period has risen by 33.5% and inflation has grown in excess of 20%.

It is clearly apparent from the above figures that the Playing Australia fund has decreased in real terms and that additional investment is required if the industry is to keep up with the increasing cost of travel/transport.

PATA (in agreement with the Australian Performing Arts Centres Association's submission) recommends:

- Increase the Playing Australia Fund by \$2M immediately and then by CPI annually.
- Instigate a bi-partisan agreement to undertake an extensive and openly consultative review of the Playing Australia program every five years as a minimum.

- **Remote Touring Strategy** - PATA recommends the development of a new Remote Touring Strategy that will target isolated and distant centres that have limited access to traditional managed performance venues and/or are not well represented in current national touring processes. An initial allocation of \$1million per annum should be made available without impacting other tour related funding, such as Playing Australia, for this purpose.

- **More Diversity in Programming** –

- We support the development of new, complementary tour support initiatives that would offer the possibility of more diverse programming and advanced audience development and community engagement strategies.
- Increase the focus on the development of Indigenous performing arts works, and the professional development of Indigenous producers, for both national and international touring.
- Encourage more touring by Australia's Major Companies by providing improved security of supply.

- **Sustainable Touring** - Increased resources provided through the Playing Australia program to support Carbon Offsetting as an explicit item within funding applications and provide increased funds to recognise this initiative. This should be part of a broader initiative to help make touring more sustainable.

## Goal 2

**Content for the NBN** - PATA agrees with ArtsPeak's and, it appears, general industry consensus that the NBN budget includes one percent of its funds to providing the arts and cultural sector with the resources to create broadband content and capacity.

We ask that our concern around reducing live performance touring on the incorrect basis that somehow the NBN will deliver a suitable alternative be addressed.

## Goal 3

PATA recommends:

- That the National Cultural Policy should explicitly acknowledge that a healthy and vibrant domestic performing arts touring sector is a key requirement in terms of being able to achieve the aims of this Goal.
- That there should be an increased focus on, and resources made available for, the development of Indigenous performing arts works, and the professional development of Indigenous producers, for international touring.
- We would support moves to create a significant annual funding program to support the international touring of Australian performing arts.

## Goal 4:

PATA recommends:

- The establishment of a new taxation incentive scheme (similar to film and TV production) that will help drive new private investment into creative industries, including live performance.
- Developing skilled staff and management to program, market and operate the facilities that we have developed or will build in the future.
- Improved connections at the local level between the Education and Arts and Cultural sectors.
- The Federal Government lead a new strategy to improve the alignment of arts and cultural policy funding between the three layers of Government, with special emphasis on engaging with Local Government.

## 5. How can you, your organisation or sector contribute to the goals and strategies of the National Cultural Policy?

As the peak organisation representing all stakeholders involved in the national performing arts touring industry, PATA would take an active role in assisting in the development of a National Cultural Policy through the provision of advice, information, networking and broader stakeholder and industry liaison.

PATA is also well positioned to directly manage and facilitate initiatives and programs that would contribute to the development of a more cohesive and effective national touring framework in Australia.

*ENDS*