



PATA Council Communiqué
August 2012

Dear Colleagues,

The National Cultural Policy, the Australia Council's National Touring Framework Study and the Review of the Australia Council have generated an unprecedented suite of opportunities to profile and articulate the impact, benefits, challenges and future directions of national performing arts touring in Australia.

In particular, the National Touring Framework report provides the national touring sector and relevant government agencies with the research, rationale and recommendations to initiate and drive significant changes in the national touring landscape. For more than a decade, the sector has consistently highlighted its concerns around issues and functionalities that are impinging on our collective capacity to foster a more dynamic, sustainable and diverse touring environment.

A groundbreaking development was the sector's agreement in 2009 to create the Performing Arts Touring Alliance (PATA) to function as a coordinating body to provide the sector, key stakeholders and government with a coordinated, central voice for advocacy, policy development, strategic advice and benchmarking. As an alliance of sector representatives, PATA has played a leadership role in bringing to the table the different and divergent voices in the sector to address key issues and priorities through collaboration, discussion and where possible, consensus and resolution.

The long-standing call for a more cohesive touring sector, the recommendations of the National Touring Framework, the role of PATA and the fact that a number of key stakeholders are currently undertaking their own strategic reviews and possible restructures, are all catalysts for driving the momentum for change.

The sector now has the opportunity and the responsibility to embark on its next evolutionary phase. If it does not do so now, it may not for at least another decade.

At its meeting on 19-20 July in Melbourne, the PATA Council invited a number of organisations involved in national touring, including APACA, RAA, AMPAG, Arts on Tour, Performing Lines and Critical Stages, to present an overview on their strategic planning. Common to all is a strong commitment to achieving:

- increased capacity for the sector to undertake a diversity of touring models;
- an empowered and skilled-up sector able to negotiate, coordinate and implement their own touring activities;
- deeper, longer term engagement with communities and audiences;
- wider diversity of touring models and mechanisms; and
- broader opportunities and increased benefits to artists, audiences and communities.

The PATA Council discussed at length the recommendations for key reforms outlined in the National Touring Framework study. Representatives from the Australia Council and the Office for the Arts participated in this discussion, and the PATA Council fully supports the Australia Council's commitment to implementing a program of meetings and conversations with State and Federal government agencies to discuss harmonisation of tour funding programs. Extensive discussion also addressed options for simplified application processes; quick response programs; multi-year projects focused on developing community engagement and audience development; and the critical need for data collection and analysis.

The PATA Council noted that, as the sector has changed considerably over recent years, improving the processes and mechanisms for product selection continues to be a critical issue to be addressed, and with some urgency. To facilitate the sector's strategic response to the various recommendations in the National Touring Framework study related to product selection, PATA will convene a gathering before the end of the year of critical stakeholders in national touring to determine solutions and agreed outcomes.

PATA will continue to liaise closely with sector stakeholders and government over the coming months to provide an informed, objective and cohesive forum for discussions and negotiations as new strategic directions are identified and adopted by the sector.

As significant transitions and developments take place in the national performing arts sector, and recommendations and proposals for the provision of a centralised resource responsible for national tour coordination and management services are tested, the sector itself will need to consider what the value, purpose and future context of PATA should be.

We welcome your feedback and comments, and look forward to keeping you advised on PATA's activities and the sector developments over the coming months.

Karilyn Bronwn
Independent Chair

Greg Randall
Executive Officer