



An Australian Government Initiative



COMMITTEE ASSESSMENT REPORT ROUND 28

This report provides information on the assessment of applications submitted to the Playing Australia Committee in the 28th funding round, which closed on 15 July 2006.

BASIS FOR DECISIONS

The Playing Australia Committee assesses applications with regard to the objectives and assessment criteria contained in the Program Guidelines, and in competition with other applications.

The Committee makes recommendations to the Minister for the Arts and Sport, Senator the Hon Rod Kemp, who makes the final decision and approves the allocation of funds under the Program.

COMMENTS ON THE ROUND

Under Round 28, 35 submissions sought \$4,847,969. The Minister approved 23 submissions, totalling \$3,043,668. This represents a 63% success rate.

As in previous rounds, the Committee placed an emphasis on tours that concentrate on regional and remote destinations, and Members noted that the majority of recommended tours will include performances in regional/remote areas.

The increasingly strong competition for funding has reinforced Playing Australia's policy priority of funding regional and remote applications over capital city tours.

Range of Applications

The Committee was pleased to see a number of new applicants and submissions from regional-based producers. Round 28 submissions reflected a good response to Playing Australia's emphasis on regional and remote touring. The Committee was also pleased with the range of diversity in art form.

Presentation of Applications

- The Committee encourages the submission of:
 - Applications which include **efficient itineraries**, with economical, sequential tour dates;
 - Applications that include the entire tour itinerary, even when Playing Australia support is only sought for a particular section. This enables the Committee to identify any potential for cross-subsidisation;
 - Focussed applications which convey information succinctly and give a clear understanding of the production; and
 - Applications which address ways in which the tour can provide greater value to communities, for instance through the conduct of master classes, workshops or interaction with local youth.

Itineraries

- The Committee continues to notice inefficiencies in itineraries. Applicants should be seeking to make tours more efficient. Any gaps, such as extended down-time periods in the itinerary **must** be clearly explained in the ‘Arrangements for Tour’ section of the application form.
- Continuous tours are preferred. Significant breaks in an itinerary, that are not associated with unavoidable travel, are **not** ideal and may not constitute a ‘tour’.
- Venue confirmations must reflect the current round with no additional clauses being added by applicants. Use of incorrect forms will not be accepted.
- Regional access continues to be a key priority for Playing Australia. In the case of applications with itineraries that are heavily capital city/metropolitan based, the Committee will be looking for an explanation as to why such an application should be considered.

Budgets

- The Committee strongly encourages applicants to contact the Playing Australia Secretariat to discuss any budgetary queries.
- Budgets **must not** be amortised.
- If an applicant budgets for fully refundable airfares as part of Net Touring Cost, a rationale must be provided in the ‘Notes to Budget’ section of the application form.
- It was noted that a number of applications included high freight costs. Applicants are encouraged to provide a detailed explanation of freight costs in the ‘Notes to Budget’ section of the application form.
- Budgets must clearly show other income, including notional allocations from core grants, local government and sponsorships.
- Generally, the ‘Notes to Budget’ section of the application form should contain details of;
 - Royalty arrangements, including a full breakdown;
 - If income from other sources is confirmed, and if not, when it is expected to be confirmed;
 - An explanation of any particularly high or low items in the budget;
 - Rates used to calculate travel allowances, accommodation, per diems, transport and freight costs, to verify and clarify estimations; and
 - Pre-Production costs, and if any income from other sources is to be contributed towards Pre-Production costs.
- The Committee stressed the importance of submitting accurate budgets. It has been noted that a significant amount of unexpended funds are being returned at acquittal. While this does demonstrate efficient touring, it should be noted that unexpended funds are not returned to the program. Therefore, initial accurate budgeting will help to ensure program funds are maximised.

Value Adding Activities

- As per the Playing Australia guidelines, support may be considered for ‘value adding’ activities associated with tours to **remote** areas, such as workshops and master classes for artists and technicians, or for communities that do not have current access to particular skills development opportunities.

- Such value adding activities **should not** be a separate activity that coincides with a tour. Rather, such activities should be incorporated into a tour, to fill unavoidable travel down time for example, and should not be unduly disruptive to the overall touring itinerary.
- If the value adding activity actually does add an extra cost to the tour, it is essential that the application explains its importance and details the additional costs.

Venue Production Priority Response Rate

- The Committee was disappointed in the low response rate from venues regarding the Department's request for production priorities for Round 28. Of the 72 requests to venues, only 41 responses were received – being a 57% response rate. This is a significant drop from previous rounds.
- The Committee stressed the importance of receiving venue production priorities. Such information is of great assistance to the Committee in its deliberation process.
- As Playing Australia is largely demand driven, venues' priorities are most certainly important. The Committee strongly urges venues to provide a response to such future requests.

Tour Coordination Costs

- The Committee reiterated that, as per the current Playing Australia guidelines, Tour Coordination Costs **may** be supported, where the scale and complexity of the tour is considered to warrant this and where, in the Committee's view, it contributes to national touring infrastructure.
- The Committee also stressed that Tour Coordination Costs will not be automatically funded. Applicants will need to provide sound justification for Tour Coordination Costs in the 'Notes to Budget' section of the application form.
- The Committee confirmed that Tour Coordination Costs will continue to be capped at a maximum of \$1,500 per week.

Acquittals

- The Committee pays close attention to grant acquittals, which are required to be provided as a condition of funding. Acquittal material informs the Committee about the applicant's management capacity, its commitment to the project and the project's outcomes in the context of Playing Australia's objectives.
- The Committee has noted that there has been an increasing lack of venue data provided at acquittal – particularly the number of performances, box office income, attendance and average ticket price.
- While the Committee understands that grantees have difficulty in obtaining this information from some venues, it stresses the significant importance to **both grantees and venue managers** of providing this data. Not only may failure to provide this information impact on satisfactorily acquitting the project, but also this information provides an important source of core data for the program. As such, the data will assist Government in maintaining support for the program.
- It should be noted that acquittals are only deemed satisfactory when all necessary information is provided and the acquittal provided is complete. As such, an incomplete acquittal may affect a grantee's eligibility in subsequent funding rounds.