



**Australian Government**

**Playing Australia**

## **ROUND 34 - COMMITTEE ASSESSMENT REPORT**

This report provides information on the assessment of applications submitted to Playing Australia in Round 34 which closed on 15 June 2009.

### **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 Environment, Heritage and the Arts, the Hon Peter Garrett AM MP, who approves the allocation of funds under the Program.

### **GENERAL COMMENTS ON THE ROUND**

Under Round 34, 32 applications sought \$4,291,643 from Playing Australia.

The Committee recommended and Minister Garrett approved 19 applications for funding, totalling \$3,047,137. This funding will provide support for 1012 performances over 189 weeks to 220 individual venues across Australia with a potential audience of 372,289 people.

The Committee noted that it was a competitive Round and extended thanks to all the organisations which submitted applications to Playing Australia. The Committee noted that applications were received representing companies from all States and performances in all States and Territories. There was a wide range and diversity of art forms, and a diversity of touring models.

The Committee reminded producers of the importance of inviting Committee members to performances.

### **ISSUES ARISING FROM ROUND 34 APPLICATIONS**

#### ***Committee Assessment***

The Playing Australia Committee is now assessing applications on-line which has streamlined processes considerably.

#### ***Tour Coordination Costs***

The Playing Australia Guidelines state that funding will not be provided for tour coordination costs which relate to the components of tours within the applicant's home State. The Guidelines also require applicants to provide sound justification for any other requests for tour coordination costs. The Committee recognised that applicants in this Round responded positively to the Guidelines in relation to requests for tour coordination costs and, in most instances, calculated the specific requirement and provided support for requests.

The Committee did, however, wish to state that across all applications in this Round \$126,650 was requested in tour coordination costs, which continues to represent a significant proportion of the funds available. This issue will be further discussed by the Committee in future meetings.

### ***Itineraries***

The Committee was pleased to note that most applicants in this Round put considerable effort into developing efficient itineraries.

The Committee reminds applicants that it will give preference to applications with efficiently constructed itineraries which minimise net touring costs as this enables the largest possible number of tours to be supported within the funds available in each round.

### ***Intrastate Touring***

The Committee noted that funds are continuing to be sought for the intrastate components of tours and reminds applicants that Playing Australia funds are not intended to replace state/territory or local government funding for intra-state destinations.

### ***Travel Calculator***

The Committee was pleased with the high number of applications submitted with a completed Travel Calculator. The Committee stressed that this template is part of the application form and must be included as part of any submission for funding.

### ***Budgets***

The Committee flagged that it looks favourably on applications that have obtained funding support from sources other than Playing Australia. The Committee was pleased to see that some applicants are taking a realistic approach towards the capacity of the Program and are looking at other sources of funding. This enables Playing Australia to fund more tours.

Because of the competition for funds, the Committee noted that applications that present realistic, accurate and cost effective budgets are also regarded favourably. Considerable amounts of surplus funding are being returned to the Department at acquittal which means that fewer tours are being funded.

The Committee noted that it may be useful for producers to check with presenters when preparing their applications to see if the presenter has arrangements in place with local providers of accommodation that would reduce costs.

### ***Venue Production Priority Response Rate***

The Committee noted the 80% response rate from venues to the Department's request for production priorities for Round 34. Again, this is a pleasing increase from the last round, with Round 33 receiving a response of 70%.

The information received from the venues is of considerable assistance to the Committee in making its final recommendations. As Playing Australia is in large part a demand driven program, the Committee continues to encourage a greater response from venues.

### ***Value Adding Activities***

The Committee continues to encourage value adding activities, such as workshops and masterclasses, where such activities do not impact upon the overall efficiency of the tour itinerary.

### ***Guarantee Against Loss (GAL)***

The Committee reminds applicants that at the present time GALs are no longer offered under the Playing Australia program, as they have not been a cost-effective measure to improve the touring of performing arts.

***Program Guidelines***

Providing the Committee with electronic access to applications is one element of a review being conducted by the Secretariat of the administration of the Playing Australia program. The review will result in processes, guidelines and templates that are clearer and more straightforward. One change that is being considered is moving the closing date for the December Round each year from 15 December to 1 December. The Secretariat will liaise with the sector on this proposal.

***Capital City Performances***

The Committee discussed the fact that tours in Round 34 often included numbers of performances in capital cities. The Committee reiterated that it is an objective of the Playing Australia program to increase opportunities for high quality professionally produced performing arts to tour to remote and regional areas and that unless there are exceptional circumstances regional tours will always have a higher priority for funding.