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Touring Victoria Evaluation

Reference No. 16276 • June 2008

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Introduction

This report assesses the effectiveness of Arts Victoria's Touring Victoria program in meeting its published aims:

- to provide regional Victorian communities with access to a diverse range of artistic and cultural experiences;
- to support the presentation of quality programming in outer metropolitan, regional and rural communities, and
- to build the viability of Victoria's creative industries through developing new markets and audiences for Victorian producers, creators and organisations.

The report also examines the impacts of funded activities for outer-metropolitan and regional communities, as well as the venues and the producers of exhibitions and performances.

The Program

Touring Victoria is a cross artform funding program that supports approximately 20 tours each year to various venues across the state. Venues range from small community town halls managed by committed groups of volunteers to large regional art galleries and performing arts centres operated by Local Government.

Touring Victoria delivers on the government's policy objectives to ensure equitable access to quality arts for people who live in outer-metropolitan and regional areas. For example, in 2005/06, 54 different regional and 17 outer-metropolitan communities each received between one and eight funded tours with 188 visits in total. Total attendance at all of these presentations was in excess of 80,000. Tours included theatre, classical and contemporary music, comedy, contemporary dance, craft, photography, ballet, heritage and visual art. The scale of tours and the experience of those developing them also varies, ranging from established theatre companies and well known musicians to emerging artists in comedy and contemporary music.

Regional touring involves two main players – producers and presenters. Producers create artistic shows or exhibitions and can be companies, collectives or individuals. Presenters are venues (such as Local Government owned performing arts centres or galleries) or other organisations that ensure a range of artistic programming comes to their town or local community. The words venue and presenter are used interchangeably throughout this report.

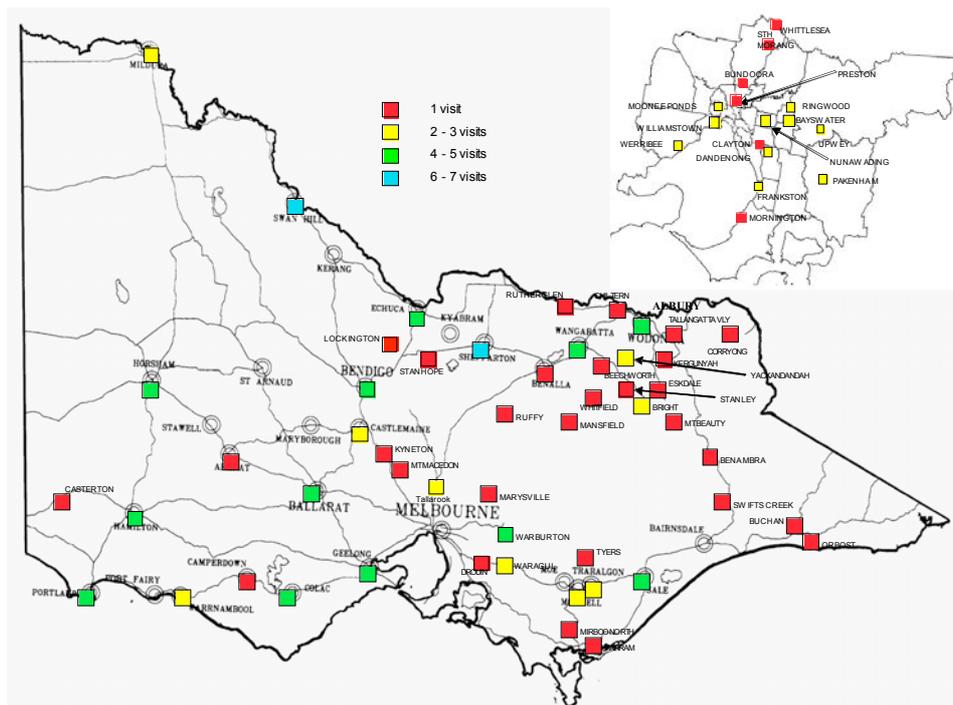
Some touring is undertaken on a commercial or self-presented basis where the producer hires the venues, stages the show and takes any risk/benefit associated with selling tickets. However the majority of touring, and virtually all that is funded through Government programs such as Touring Victoria, operates on a partnership model where the presenter pays a fee to cover some of the producers' costs, organises local marketing and takes the financial risk/reward.

Touring Victoria has other components that provide funding interventions at different points in the touring lifecycle, enabling it to address a range of needs in the sector. As well as the project based funding to producers which is the subject of this evaluation, the program also provides support to presenters to address some of the barriers that have been identified as limiting wider programming of tours. These support mechanisms include a Guarantee Against Loss (GAL) scheme that underwrites a proportion of any box office loss incurred by performing arts presenters, and an Indemnification scheme that offsets the potentially prohibitive cost of insurance associated with temporary exhibitions presented in Victorian galleries and museums.

Most of the performing arts product that is funded to tour by this program is developed and created in metropolitan areas, however there is regionally generated work that also tours. This is more often the case with tours in the visual arts where the originator is often a regional gallery.

The one-off project grants administered through Touring Victoria provide financial assistance to artists and arts organisations to offset the costs of touring performances or exhibitions within Victoria. Map 1 below illustrates both the breadth of destinations visited by exhibitions and performances funded through Touring Victoria across the state as well as the frequency of touring activity for those locations.

Map 1: Destinations of Touring Victoria Projects 2005-06



The Evaluation

The Touring Victoria funding program was evaluated through a telephone survey conducted with presenters and producers and in-depth interviews with relevant staff at a selection of presenting venues and touring organisations.

The survey was conducted with producers who had received a Touring Victoria grant and presenters who had received a funded tour at their venue between 2002 and 2006. The survey included closed, quantitative measures, as well as open ended questions, to build an understanding of the individual views of respondents about the value and effectiveness of the program.

Arts Victoria provided contact details of 57 producers and 49 presenters (13 Galleries, 26 VAPAC venues and 10 Volunteer Organisations). Overall 40, 10 minute interviews were conducted with producers and 40, 10 minute interviews were conducted with presenters.

The in-depth interviews were conducted with 5 presenters and 2 touring organisations (National Exhibitions Touring Support (NETS) Victoria and Regional Arts Victoria) in order to provide additional insight to the quantitative stages.



The purpose of the research was to measure the effectiveness of Touring Victoria in meeting its aims and to examine the impacts of funded activities for outer-metropolitan and regional communities, as well as the venues and the producers of exhibitions and performances.

Executive Summary

The results of the evaluation, which included a survey of presenters and producers, demonstrates that funded tours deliver important benefits for all stakeholders.

Tours funded through the Touring Victoria program provide people living in outer-metropolitan and regional areas with access to a diverse range of cultural experiences; with 90 percent of surveyed presenters and producers agreeing that tours are successful in achieving this aim. Providing these communities with access to diverse cultural experiences has additional benefits for the community, including inspiring local cultural activity and improving the liveability of the community.

The program provides galleries and theatres in these communities with the ability to present a greater variety of shows and exhibitions. In this way touring exhibitions and performances contribute to preserving or strengthening the relevance of arts venues within the community by helping them engage with their audience and to build new connections. Venues and galleries reported that tours also help to develop the skills of their workers by exposing them to best practice and new work practices.

For producers of exhibitions and performances, the program plays an important role in extending the life of their creative works and in connecting them with new audiences. The program can also assist in extending the skills of performers and staff managing the tours, particularly when dealing with the challenges of unfamiliar venues and working conditions.

The first section of this report looks in detail at the impacts and benefits of Touring Victoria funded tours for Victorian communities. Section two considers the benefits of the program for the venues that host these tours, with Section three outlining some of the challenges these venues face when hosting a tour. Section four focuses on the experiences of the grant recipients - the producers and section five explores some of the challenges this group faces when producing a touring exhibition or performance. Section six summarises feedback on the funding program and possible areas for improvement as identified by respondents and section seven provides some general conclusions.

Section 1: Benefits to the Community

One of the major aims of Touring Victoria is to contribute to providing equitable access to a diverse range of quality cultural experiences for people living in outer-metropolitan and regional areas. The Victorian Government's arts policy *Creative Capacity+: Arts for all Victorians* states that regional or social background should not be a barrier to having access to arts and cultural activities.

Whilst some regional communities have access to the work of local visual arts practitioners, amateur theatre productions or to commercial theatre if they have an adequate venue, opportunities to see a range of professional product without the disincentives of cost and travel are often severely limited. These issues are especially relevant when people face economic pressures brought on by drought and cost-of-living increases.

Touring Victoria addresses barriers to being able to experience quality arts activities by supporting a wide range of performances, from small music groups to larger theatre companies. In this way a greater choice of artistic and cultural activities adds to the liveability of that town or area.

In terms of visual arts, the program funds art, craft and photography exhibitions from outside the local area to be presented in these communities. Local residents and local artists have the opportunity to visit historical and contemporary exhibitions without having to travel. Such exhibitions also provide a drawcard for galleries to attract visitors from out of town. Visual art exhibitions are usually within the gallery space for a period of up to three months and therefore audiences, including those that live some distance away, have more opportunity to plan a visit. This contrasts with the performing arts where most tours are only in a venue for a single evening performance.

Embers

Embers is a play commissioned by Wodonga-based Hothouse Theatre, following the devastating 2003 bushfires in North East Victoria. From exhaustive interviews with residents of the region including fire fighters, farmers, children, council workers and various volunteers, playwright Campion Descent fashioned a remarkable play of the bushfire and the people it affected. Embers had its world premiere in Wodonga in July 2006 and was then part of Sydney Theatre Company's season.

The production then toured in North East Victoria to 14 small towns in the fire affected areas. Destinations were Yackandandah, Kergunyah, Eskdale, Tallangatta Valley, Tallarook, Mansfield, Benambra, Whitfield, Beechworth, Rutherglen, Corryong, Stanley, Bright and Mt Beauty.

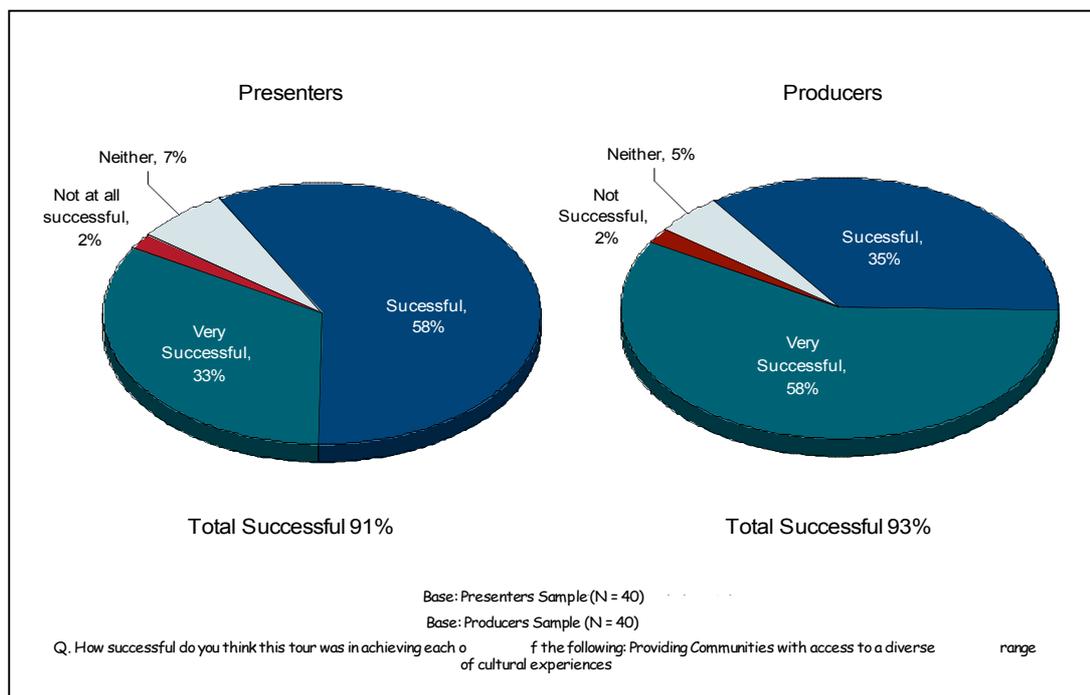


Hothouse Theatre's production of *Embers* by Campion Decent, toured in Victoria 2006, (Image: Jules Boag)

Access to Quality and Diversity

When surveyed about the success of tours in providing communities with access to a diverse range of cultural experiences, over 90% of both presenters and producers rated the tour they were involved in as being successful or very successful

Table 1: Success of the Tour – providing communities with access to a diverse range of cultural experiences



Respondents to the survey confirmed that touring exhibitions and performances contribute to the cultural life of regional and outer-metropolitan communities by providing people in those areas with greatly expanded opportunities to experience professional arts.

"For rural and remote areas, it provides access to arts experiences, particularly with the drought they don't have the money to travel to regional centres." PRESENTER

"Contributes to the breadth of the community's experience, awareness and knowledge." PRESENTER

Some groups within rural communities are unlikely, or unable, to travel distances to enjoy the arts. This includes the elderly and young people who don't have their own transport and those for whom the rising cost of petrol for a trip to and from the event, even at the nearest large regional centre, is prohibitive.

"(The program..) brings shows ... not normally accessible for the local population, particularly older people who won't drive ... We aim to put on affordable entertainment in the form of those touring shows" PRESENTER

Professional touring exhibitions and performances can facilitate a broader range of art-forms such as contemporary dance, multi-media installations or chamber music.

"Cutting edge work got to regional centres who would normally not see that material" PRODUCER

Artists and creators can bring cultural forms, ideas and values that are new and different to what is normally available to regional audiences. Depending on the individual and their reactions, these works may be challenging, inspiring, threatening, boring or entertaining. The range of responses to the art is highly personal, however the impact of the Touring Victoria program is that people living outside of metropolitan areas have improved opportunities to experience a range of cultural experiences.

"We got lots of positive feedback, the areas we went to weren't used to seeing a string quartet which is an intimate form of music making and audiences feel very involved" PRODUCER

Bringing People Together

Victoria has a large number of local volunteer run organisations (often referred to as Arts Councils) that present professional performances in their communities. Usually based in towns without a dedicated arts venue, the touring process provides these communities with a degree of self-determination as they choose shows that are appropriate and work together to make it a successful event.

"Because we have just an old fashioned hall for our local centre and the kind of show that took a bit of special staging, it brings community together, people help to get the show on the road." PRESENTER

A tour can provide additional and sometimes rare opportunities for local residents, who may be either geographically or socially isolated, to come together to socialise and be entertained.

"It brings people together at a social event. We are a fairly remote rural community, an hours drive from (the) nearest big theatre (and it) overcomes the tyranny of distance for our community to get cultural activities" PRESENTER

A show can offer members of the community a shared experience which may be discussed long after the tour has moved on.

"People networked and stayed for hours, they still talk about it" PRESENTER

Whilst entertainment has positive social benefits, more challenging works can also provide audiences with the opportunity to discuss issues of importance to them. In this way an exhibition or performance can be a catalyst for discussion by highlighting relevant community issues.

"It aired a number of issues which this community was concerned with and although there was some divided opinion about the author's view of some matters, everyone thought it was a good idea to present in a dramatic form" PRESENTER



The Gut Bucket Jug Band perform at Wesley PAC, Horsham, Café Concert Series, 2007, (Image: Mary Souness).

Inspiring Local Cultural Activity

Some tours inspired local residents to develop their own artistic or cultural projects thereby, generating grass roots cultural activity.

"It is important for the audience because they have developed their own musical networks due to the Cafe Concert Series and our arts council have built other programs that have stemmed directly from the Cafe Concert Series " PRESENTER

In one instance a touring production of a Shakespeare play was the catalyst for a group of school students who (as they claimed) had been 'unwillingly dragged along' to a production to create their own performance.

"..after seeing our show (a school group) demanded they do their own and copied our staging. That teacher wanted to work with us and has now gone on to a Victorian College of the Arts directing course" PRODUCER

In another example of a tour inspiring local creative activity, one regional gallery developed its own complementary exhibition using artists from the area and further developing the same theme as the touring exhibition. In this way local artists received the flow-on benefit of exhibiting their own work as part of a larger show, thereby reaching a broader audience.

In addition to the work of local artists, inbound exhibitions can also provide an opportunity for galleries, museums or historical societies to make use of, and reinterpret, their own collections.

It is often the case that museums and historical societies will develop a complementary component based on local material that explores the same themes or issues as the touring exhibition. This provides a hook for local people and increases the relevance of the exhibition. It provides a local context and allows residents to explore their own history and identity and how it relates to the bigger picture presented in the touring exhibition.



Andrew Fry displays the model he created, inspired by Callum Morton's exhibition Tomorrow Land, Get Into Art! Open day, 2006, Hamilton Art Gallery

Increasing Liveability

Tours add to the diversity of artistic and cultural choices available to local residents in regional areas and the outer suburbs. A greater variety of leisure and entertainment options, particularly of a professional artistic standard, contributes to the attractiveness of a place as somewhere to live.

"(The program) provides quality entertainment on a regular basis to improve the liveability of the city" PRESENTER

Venue managers also commented on how the increased availability of shows and exhibitions through the touring program improves social networks and community spirit.

"We provide professional entertainment that the community enjoys and it combats regional isolation" PRESENTER

"They are entertained and it adds to their sense of community, it enhances their wellbeing because they get out and they have a laugh" PRESENTER

Café Concert Series

The Café Concert Series celebrates music as an art form and features diverse musical acts touring amongst a circuit of small regional, mainly volunteer presenters. The groups are from Melbourne and regional areas and include a range of musical styles such as flamenco, jazz, Cuban, blues and gypsy. The bands tend to perform in smaller, more intimate venues ranging from small public halls to function rooms. The popularity of the series resulted in the circuit growing from 2 presenters in 2000 to 15 in 2008. Destinations have included Mirboo North, Ruffy, Marysville, Wodonga, Tyers, Horsham, Orbost, Stawell, Maryborough, Swifts Creek and Wangaratta.



Zulya & the Children of the Underground perform at Keppels Hotel Ballroom, Marysville, Café Concert Series, 2007, (Image: Mary Souness).

Section 2: Benefits to Presenters

A major aim of Touring Victoria is to contribute to the viability of the organisations with key roles in presenting arts and cultural experiences in outer-metropolitan and regional areas. The survey and interviews found that these presenters are major beneficiaries of the program.

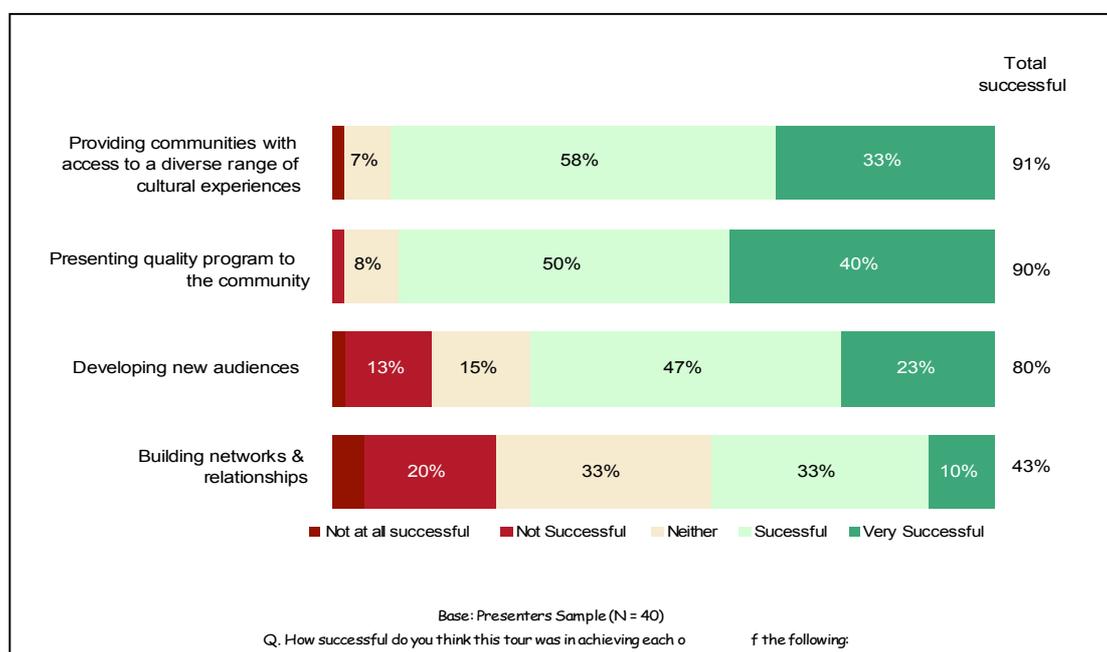
Of the 49 presenters who were invited to be part of the survey, 13 were Galleries, 26 were Performing Arts Centres and 10 were Volunteer Organisations. Presenters ranged in scale from large commercial performing arts centres through to small regional venues. A quarter of those who were surveyed presented less than 5 tours a year, half presented 5 to 20 tours and the final quarter presented more than 20 touring exhibitions or performances at their venue in a year. For around a third of venues, touring exhibitions and performances account for half or more of their annual program.

Larger venues (both performing and visual arts) tend to feature a higher proportion of commercial product and national tours originating outside of Victoria. However, local community performances can also play an important role. In this context Touring Victoria funded tours fill an important niche as they are seen to provide a much needed alternative to more mainstream, commercial and amateur product.

Smaller venues (both performing and visual arts), rely more heavily than larger venues on Touring Victoria funded tours to build a program and attract an audience to their venue. These funded tours are seen to offer a professional product that could not be accessed otherwise.

Results of the survey show that presenters consider tours funded by Touring Victoria to be particularly successful in helping them to present a quality program to the community and an effective means of building and developing new audiences. These results are displayed in Table 2 below.

Table 2: Success of the Tour - Presenters



Presenting Diverse, Quality Programs

Developing a yearly program of exhibitions or performances is one of the more complex tasks undertaken by a venue. Presenters are essentially the link between the producer of the work and the community, and are responsible for selecting what will tour to their venue as part of a program that will resonate, entertain, challenge and inspire.

Venue managers have to balance a number of different needs when choosing what to present. Some presenters feel pressure from local government to present programs that maximise any potential to break even or achieve a profit. However they also aim to provide a varied program that balances the needs and desires of a range of generational and social demographics within the local community.

Tours allow venues to stage exhibitions and performances from outside their local region and this adds significantly to the depth of the programming they can deliver. A richer and more diverse program ensures that they are able to more effectively engage with the community.

"We are able to present to our audiences an exhibition of excellence" PRESENTER

The venues surveyed believed the involvement of Arts Victoria in assessing tours for funding had a positive impact on their appeal. These tours are viewed as offering a pre-packaged professional solution for the venue which takes a lot of the pain out of programming.

"Usually of high quality, experienced and well known" PRESENTER

"I think the touring exhibitions are curated and presented really well, the bases are covered such as media releases, installation, production etc" PRESENTER



Yanagai! Yanagai! Melbourne Workers Theatre, Toured in Victoria 2006, (Image: Ponch Hawkes)

Building Audiences

A recurring theme in the survey and interviews with venues was feedback that a diverse program, by catering to a wider market, helps the venue to attract new audiences.

"People came who hadn't come to our venue before and it was good exposure" PRESENTER

The subsidised cost to venues of funded tours is attractive in choosing product that may otherwise be unaffordable or represent an unjustifiable financial risk. In this way tours help to strengthen the position of venues by assisting them to deliver quality programming.

"It's an opportunity to take a risk and attempt to get more new patrons to the venue" PRESENTER

Extending audiences in turn assists venues to engage with a broad cross section of the community.

*"From an audience point of view it was hugely appropriate. It got people into our hall that have never been to theatre before...
It touched the heart of the rural community" PRESENTER*

A program with a wide choice of options improves perceptions of the venue within the community, making it a more vital social and cultural hub.

"It presents us as a sophisticated contemporary organisation that values creativity and artistic endeavour" PRESENTER

Developing Skills

Presenters in outer-metropolitan, regional and rural communities can face a number of challenges. Smaller venues and volunteer presenter groups in particular, struggle with limited infrastructure, expertise and personnel. Having a small number of staff, many of whom are volunteers, can make putting on a professional show or exhibition a difficult task.

In taking on a tour there can be aspects that fall outside the expertise of staff and volunteers. They may be unfamiliar with the requirements of hanging certain types of works, stage management, completing condition reports or handling crating. However, tours can provide an opportunity for staff to build skills and learn from other professionals involved in the tour, thereby providing unexpected benefits.

"We learnt about technical issues and the sharing of expertise" PRESENTER

Being involved in a tour can expose volunteers and arts workers to an informal knowledge exchange, and hands-on experience of best practice. Presenting new or different types of shows may require new skills in areas of technical operations, administration and marketing.

"Good experience for in-house technical staff because it was a dancing program and our marketing staff had to find new audiences" PRESENTER

Easing the Workload

A number of tours funded through Touring Victoria were seen to provide venues with useful resources that help to relieve the burden on venues by providing a complete package for the show.

"Marketing and publicity materials make it a quality product to promote" PRESENTER

"We do not have sufficient funding or staffing to curate exhibitions of that order" PRESENTER

Touring exhibitions and performances are also often supported by professional education materials. Particularly in relation to exhibitions, support material may include text panels, catalogues, room brochures and website information to ensure exhibitions are presented in the most meaningful way.

"It exposes our staff to professional programs and therefore increases their skills ... venue occupancy and audiences"
PRESENTER



Chunky Move, I want to dance better at parties, toured in Victoria, 2004

Section 3: Challenges for Presenters

Whilst 90% of presenters believed Touring Victoria was successful in enabling them to present a quality program of events, some venues expressed their desire for larger productions with bigger casts. Suggestions were made for greater availability of larger Victorian theatre, circus or opera productions.

"Productions of the correct size and scale just aren't available" PRESENTER

These types of productions are seen by some venues as draw cards for a bigger audience which they would like to include in their program.

At the other end of the scale, smaller venues are often limited by size and resources and therefore seek smaller, contained productions or exhibitions that are more easily adapted to their capacity.

"For regional venues more thought into technical aspects so they can be adapted to suit regional venues" PRESENTER

Despite positive feedback about the professionalism of the touring product and associated materials, some venues experienced particular challenges in marketing touring productions, which they believed impacted on audience numbers.

"The production itself was excellent but the show was not marketed well" PRESENTER

It appears that this is often the result of inadequate communication and differing understanding or expectations between metropolitan producers and regional presenters. This applies to how a tour should be marketed in terms of both images and materials, and marketing and promotional strategies.

A promotional image suitable for a show presented in Melbourne might not work in a regional context to adequately communicate what a show or exhibition is about and therefore attract audiences to attend. Publicity material may need to be tailored to a regional audience, for example, not assume that the audience has any prior knowledge of the show or creators.

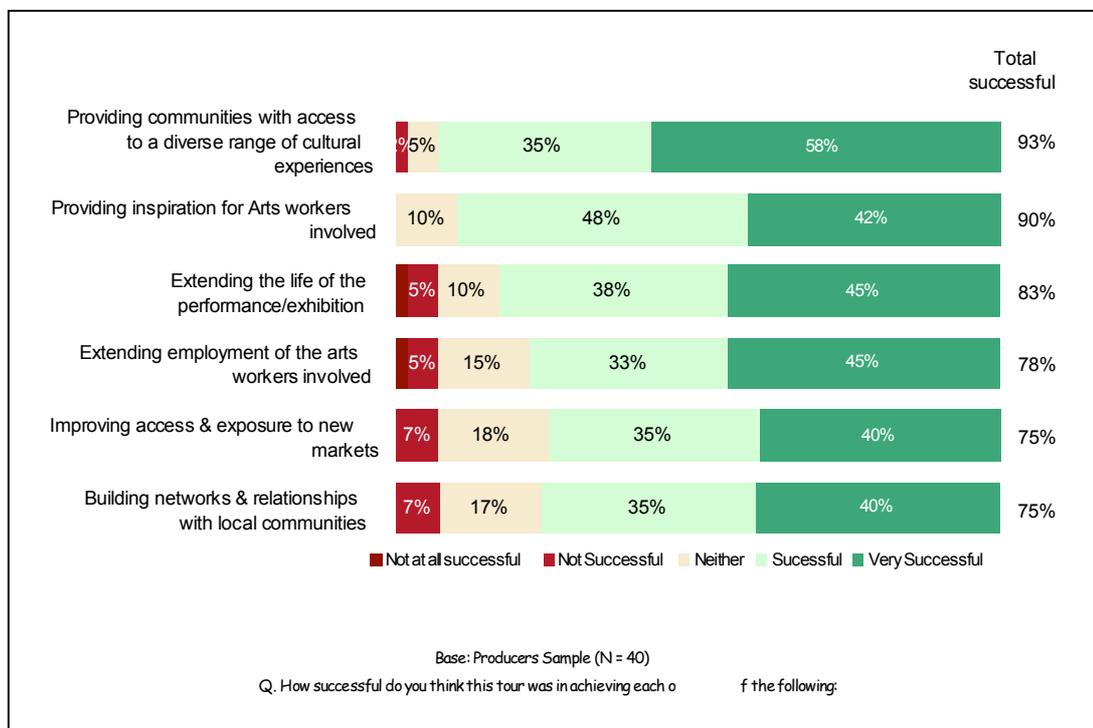
Additionally, most regional presenters rely more heavily on direct marketing relationships with their audiences than is the case for producers in metropolitan areas.

Section 4: Benefits for Producers

Producers of performances and exhibitions, whether they are individual artists, theatre companies or galleries, experience a number of benefits from being funded by Arts Victoria to tour their work. A tour extends the life of the exhibition or performance; it provides employment for the arts workers, and exposes the artists or organisations to new markets and audiences across Victoria. Having an opportunity to access new markets in turn contributes to the careers and viability of these individuals or organisations.

The surveyed producers were asked to consider the success of the funded tour in enabling a number of important objectives. The survey results are displayed in Table 3. Producers considered Touring Victoria funded tours to be particularly successful in providing communities with access to a diverse range of cultural experiences.

Table 3: Success of the Tour - Producers



Building Profile and Developing Markets

Surveyed producers noted that a tour often helps to raise the profile of the producing artists and arts organisations. In some instances this led to further work opportunities.

"Has raised the profile of artists who have got further paid work, everybody on the tour has increased their profile, showed them in a different kind of light" PRODUCER

By travelling to new towns, suburbs or locations the experience of touring exposes the artists or producing companies to expanded markets both in terms of venues and audiences.

"In terms of industry contacts, venue contacts, reputation, it did us a lot of good as a company" PRODUCER

If the exhibition or performance was perceived as successful by the venue and connected with the audience, the venue is likely to want to book them for future shows

For some musicians, as well as reaching new audiences, touring has the additional benefit of providing more opportunities to sell CDs and merchandise after their shows. For independent bands in particular, live shows can be one of their best chances to make CD sales and are a vital mainstay of connecting with audiences.

For producers, touring enables them to make contacts that can facilitate future tours as well as providing marketing opportunities.

"We build up relationships with cinemas and arts venues to promote our own Melbourne event as well as touring event" PRODUCERS

Expanding Skills and Expertise

Touring can require a different skill set to that of regular performances or exhibitions at familiar venues. In some instances it poses the challenge of tailoring works for presentation in spaces that were not specifically designed for staged performances, such as old churches, community halls or re-modelled factories. These situations encourage arts workers to stretch their skills and develop innovative solutions.

"Working on a tour blows your experience level through the roof, it stretches people to be really creative" PRODUCER

Even with a tour to established, fully professional venues, producers are faced with a variety of stage sizes, backstage access issues, technical equipment and even stage rakes. Whilst ideally these are known and considered as part of pre-tour planning, sometimes such challenges are only discovered on the road and require considerable adaptability from both touring crew and performers.

"It hones their skills in a very difficult situation" PRODUCER

Inspiration for artists

Performances in smaller venues often provide both artists and audiences with the chance to meet and talk and these interactions are appreciated on both sides. Tours can energise a performance as it evolves to suit changing audiences or to adapt to different venues.

"(The tour was..) inspirational for us and (an) opportunity to meet people in the wider community and share our knowledge"
PRODUCER

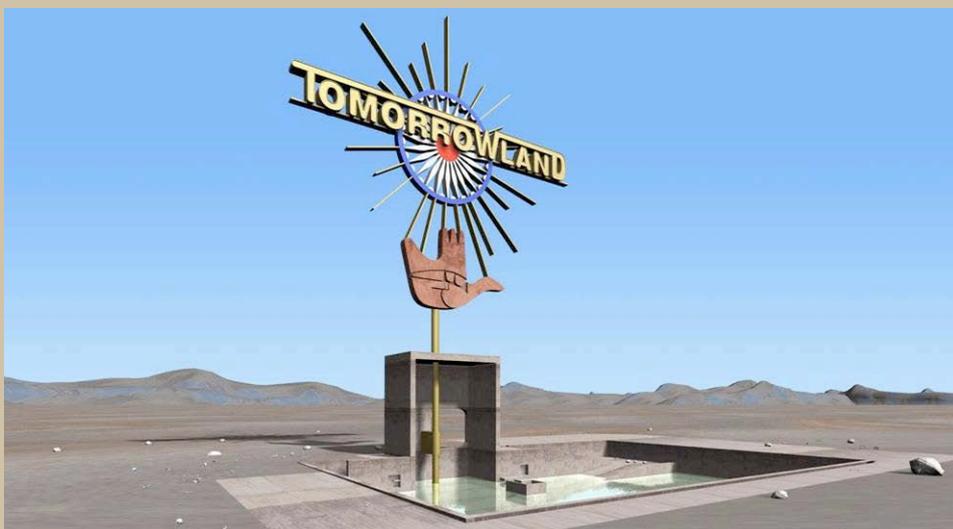
Tours to localities that have limited access to live arts experiences offer opportunities to contribute something quite unique and highly valued by these communities.

"It was well-received and appreciated and that rubs off on the people who produced it and performed in it." PRODUCER

Tomorrow Land

Tomorrow Land is an exhibition of digital images and architectural models by one of Australia's most highly regarded contemporary artists, Callum Morton. For this show the artist produced a series of images and 3D works merging modernist architecture with familiar designs for multi-national fast-food outlets and b-grade, sci-fi thriller movie sets. The works blur the lines between 'high architecture', theme parks and tacky commercialism and explore modernist designs in our environment.

The exhibition was originally curated for the artist's representation of Australia at the 11th India Triennale in 2005, and the regional Victorian tour was the first time the exhibition was seen in Australia. The tour was coordinated by National Exhibition Touring Support (NETS) Victoria, and included public talks by the artist and educational activities for students. In addition to other states, the tour visited regional Victorian destinations of Mornington, Hamilton, Ballarat and Sale.



Callum Morton, 'Tomorrow Land', Digital Print, 2004

Section 5: Challenges for Producers

There are several stages in organising a tour and each of these components have unique challenges for producers.

Before applying for funding from Touring Victoria, producers are required to develop an itinerary for the tour and secure bookings from the presenting venues. Time and effort is invested in developing relationships with venues, establishing trust, generating interest in the tour and converting this into a commitment.

In developing a tour the aim is to achieve an itinerary that flows from venue to venue and is efficient in terms of time and cost. This is a significant organisational task as the tour also has to fit in with host venues existing programs. Producers described the challenges they faced in the following ways:

"Scheduling and timetabling with venues to get the logistics of the tour right, particularly with venues, sometimes a venue will want to drop out or change dates at the last minute" PRODUCER

"To make it work geographically so that it's a reasonable amount of funding to allow the tour to happen from beginning to end" PRODUCER

Once a tour itinerary is developed producers can then seek funding from Touring Victoria and other funding bodies. Receiving funding from Touring Victoria gives a green light for the tour to go ahead, as it covers many of the direct touring costs such as travel, accommodation and freighting without which the tour would be unlikely to proceed.

Securing Adequate Funding

Producers must attempt to accurately budget all tour related costs, sometimes as much as a year in advance. Funding is usually sought to cover the actual touring costs whilst artistic, marketing and administrative expenses are built into a sell-off fee that is charged to the presenters. Producers often need to balance presenters can pay and the levels of available funding to minimise costs, whilst covering all items required to make the tour viable.

"Keeping the costs low for the presenter" PRODUCER

"To obtain decent performance fees but still remain competitive in the market" PRODUCER

Ready for Market

Development of marketing materials and resources for a touring exhibition or performances can also be a challenge for producers as it is not usually their area of expertise, particularly when it comes to the requirements of marketing and promotion in regional communities. In addition, some producers expressed concern about the management of publicity by the venue. This can be a frustration for producers as they rely heavily on this publicity to bring people to the exhibition or performance.

"Lose control over quantity and quality of marketing and publicity" PRODUCER

It is important to note however that the presenter (who is usually taking the financial risk) also has a vested interest in ensuring attendance in order to meet their own cultural, audience development and financial goals.

As outlined in the following section, some producers thought that funding through Touring Victoria should be able to be utilised to offset a wider range of costs including those associated with marketing and publicity.

Whilst Touring Victoria helps to alleviate the burden of touring costs, producers are faced with many challenges when touring which fall outside the auspices of the Touring Victoria funding program.



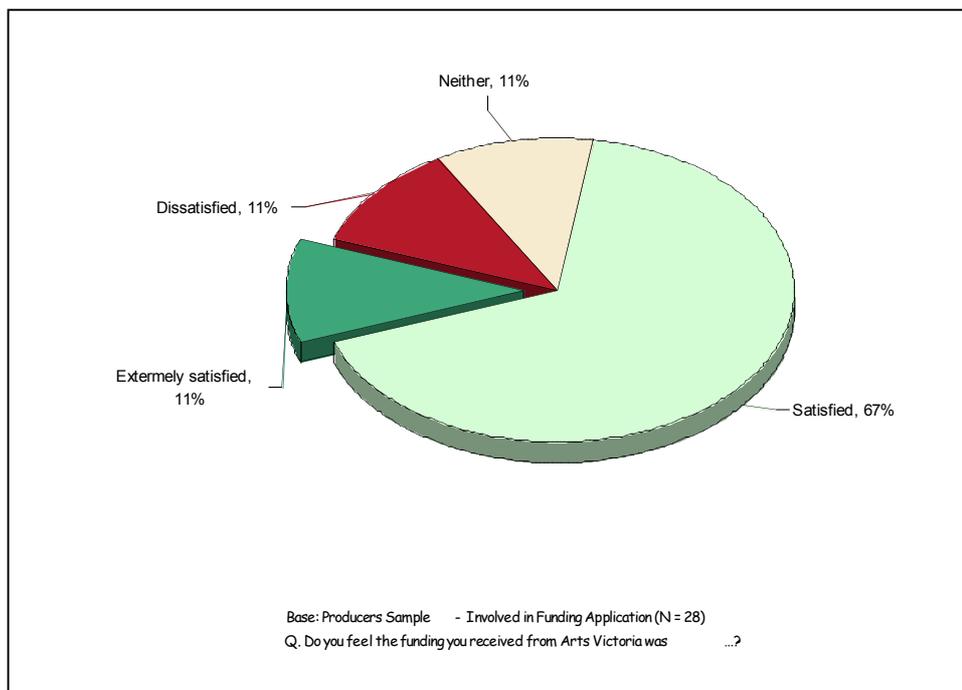
Chamber Made Opera's production of Phobia, toured in Victoria 2003. (Image: Jeff Busby)

Section 6: Suggested Program Improvements

In addition to the impacts and outcomes of Touring Victoria funding, producers and presenters were asked for their opinions about various aspects of the program, such as the application process and possible improvements.

As illustrated in Table 4, producers were generally satisfied with the funding application process and their experience with the Touring Victoria program.

Table 4: Satisfaction with Funding Application Process



Three quarters indicated they would not change anything about their experience; however there was a small number who expressed frustration at delays in notification and the process of completing the application.

"Gap between the closing date for applications and notification date seems too long" PRODUCER

There were those who saw applying as a straightforward process, with the application form doing its job effectively.

"Once I had the programming, the application was straight forward" PRODUCER

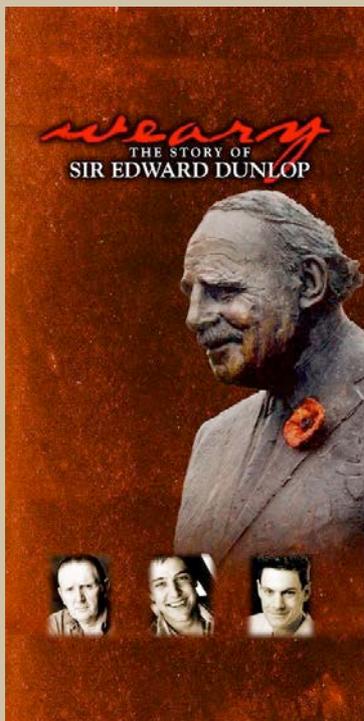
Some viewed Arts Victoria program staff as a source of information and guidance in developing application and touring more generally.

"Officer was really helpful... They've become almost the only resource I have in terms of professional contact as we have no other infrastructure... more advice on what to do, how to capitalise, mentoring" PRODUCER

The application process is vital in identifying quality projects suitable for touring. The process is both reassuring for venues (as it indicates that tours that receive funding are rigorously assessed), as well as providing a useful framework of support and guidance for producers to help them plan for tours.

Amongst the small number of producers who indicated that they would like to see some changes to the program, the most common issue was flexibility in the term of the funding. They would prefer funding that could be extended over years or multiple tours or productions.

"Flexibility for program that involves multiple tours over calendar years" PRODUCER



Weary: The Story of Sir Edward Dunlop

Playwright Alan Hopgood, director Roger Hodgman and composer David Bridie combined to bring to the stage the story of Sir Edward 'Weary' Dunlop. His experiences as a life-saving surgeon during World War II, and specifically on the Burma-Thailand railway, have become the stuff of legend.

After being presented in Melbourne and interstate during 2005, *Weary* was remounted for a tour to 13 Victorian destinations in 2007. Destinations were Hamilton, Colac, Geelong, Frankston, Dandenong, Wangaratta, Wodonga, Warrnambool, Mildura, Bendigo, Warragul, Sale and Benalla.

Flier for Weary: The Story of Sir Edward Dunlop, toured in Victoria, 2007

Greater flexibility in the scope of the funding was also raised, with a desire that more funding be available for pre-production or other areas not currently covered.

"More funding for pre-production and technical staff" PRODUCER

Some producers thought there was a shortfall in covering publicity costs. As detailed in Section 4 Challenges for Presenters, marketing and promotional materials for audiences in non-metropolitan areas, especially for shows that originated in Melbourne or other capital cities sometimes have considerable scope for improvement.

Overhead costs such as administration are not generally covered by funding and tended to be taken up by the organisation responsible for the tour, often by extending their existing infrastructure.

"More funding to assist with producing more brochures" PRODUCER

"(More funding for)...production of an education kit and supplementary material to the catalogue" PRODUCER

Access to information and support about various aspects of touring was also a concern for some producers. Some expressed the need for additional assistance in developing the tour, constructing budgets and preparing the application.

Mentoring, providing guidance to applicants, professional development training and partnership opportunities for successful applicants (such as providing applicants with a mentor who has previous experience staging tours) may help to assist producers through the process.

"More Professional Development courses through Arts Victoria" PRODUCER

"Information about where we could go to exchange experiences" PRODUCER

"Published marketing material like a touring pack once funding has been established" PRODUCER

Arts Victoria funds a number of key service bodies (NETS Victoria in the visual arts, Regional Arts Victoria in the performing arts and Museums Australia in the heritage sector) to deliver these type of services to their respective industry sectors.

Section 7: Conclusion

The evaluation of Touring Victoria demonstrates that touring exhibitions and performances deliver benefits for audiences, venues and producing artists and organisations. At a community level tours to regional and outer-metropolitan areas offer audiences new and diverse cultural experiences that stimulate their cultural and social life. Tours can inspire local cultural activity and present art-forms and performers that may never otherwise visit those communities.

For presenters tours play a crucial role in helping to maintain the continued vitality of their venue, by enabling them to present a diversity of cultural product and connect with different groups within their community. For producers, tours expose the artists and arts workers to new audiences, assisting them to build their profile beyond a metropolitan market and expand their professional skills.

By helping to build audiences, strengthen touring networks, and create new opportunities for artists and organisations involved, the Touring Victoria program makes a significant contribution to the viability of the creative arts Victoria.

The research also identified a number of challenges for venues and producers including demand for larger productions, adapting shows to size and capacity of the venue and the need for greater expertise and support in developing marketing materials suitable for regional tours.