



29 January 2013

To Whom it May Concern,

AMPAG is the representative body for the 28 not-for-profit Major Performing Arts companies in Australia.

The majority of our members employ over 100 employees each year. Employment type varies and includes casual, part-time, full-time and contract.

AMPAG members as major employers in the live performance sector are required to lodge employment statistics. As not-for-profits with federal and state government funding underpinning specific aspects of their operation, the companies are also required to report to the federal cultural agency the Australian Council and their state government arts agency.

AMPAG strongly recommends government institutes consistency in how the employment of women in the workforce is measured and categorised between government agencies. It is important that in collecting this data, government understands the broader employment environment and cultural and social influences as well as the predominance of particular influences in different fields of employment.

There are few theatre companies outside the major performing arts companies in a position to employ over 100 people per annum year on year. AMPAG's theatre company members produce work for 'Mainstage'. Employment on mainstage productions is coveted and an area that creative professionals work towards—in a sense it is the domain primarily of recognised and proven creative talent. The actual creative employment opportunities for main stage productions each year are very small.

The Australian theatre sector is highly sensitised to the current lower proportional representation of women as directors and writers, particular within the subsidised sector. In 2009 the theatre sector hosted a forum to consider ways to address the low participation rate of women in key creative roles. In response the Australia Council developed a self-monitoring and reporting tool that considered participation of women directors and playwrights in discrete areas of development.

Understanding the influencing factors is critical. The State Theatre Company of South Australia will perform nine plays in this year's season, two of which are written by female writers. However if we remove the classic plays predominately written by

men from another era the result is very different —two of the four contemporary plays are written by women.

This year the AMPAG theatre companies will produce 80 plays of which 31 will have female directors. However some of these plays are co-produced and so are counted in more than one company's seasonal report. In addition many companies plan for a minimum number of plays in their season to be directed by their artistic director—therefore the gender of the artistic director can have a disproportional impact on the figures reported.

AMPAG recommends the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency avoids duplicating requests for information in this area. A copy of the Australia Council's Creating Pathways reporting tool is new, with the first reports lodged earlier this month. See Pathway tool outline attached.

It would be useful if data requested from the sector was consistent with that being researched by the Australia Council or vice versa. Therefore, AMPAG recommends coordination between federal departments to minimise double handling of information and to avoid the need for the companies to report twice on what is essentially the same activity.

We anticipate the Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency reporting will take a more macro view than that outlined in the Australia Council Creating Pathways approach. The reasons for the gender disparity in the creative roles of director and writer for the theatre sector are complex. The number of available positions year on year is limited. This means every appointment of a writer, director and artistic director in Australian theatre has a significant impact on gender results. It is therefore useful to report on actual numbers rather than percentages alone, which if reported in isolation can create a distorted impression on changes in employment behaviour. For example, the Bell Shakespeare Company is producing four plays this year, one of which will be directed by a female. As a proportion this equates to 25 per cent of the company's directors this year being female. One additional female appointment would lead to the proportional representation jumping to 50 per cent. However, the conditions affecting change may be better understood if we understand that the company only has four opportunities a year.

AMPAG encourages streamlining of reporting processes where possible with retention of a text-based entry for observations of influencing factors affecting gender balance as an optional area for additional comments.