Darwin Festival Economic Impact Moves Territory Arts Ahead

Arts Minister Marion Scrymgour released a new economic impact study today, showing the Darwin Festival provided an economic benefit of $1.2 million per year to the Northern Territory economy.

Ms Scrymgour said the Territory’s flagship arts event would receive an additional $250,000 in funding per year from the Northern Territory Government.

“The new study shows that with over 70,000 attendees last year, the Festival had the largest per capita attendance of any Australian capital city festival,” she said.

“The Festival’s dramatic growth over the last five years has been generated entirely through box office sales and corporate sponsorship, a strong reason why the baseline funding has been increased.

“In the last five years, the Darwin Festival has grown from a $490,000 event with 26,000 attendees, to a $1.6 million event with over 70,000 people attending.

“Our home grown Darwin Festival can mix it with the best in the nation. As well as its artistic and community benefits, it delivers significant economic return to the Territory through tourism and local spending.”

The economic impact study into last year’s Darwin Festival— conducted by the NT Treasury and Charles Darwin University—is the first significant study of its type for a large arts event in the Territory.

Ms Scrymgour said the additional NT Government funding would sustain the Festival, allowing it to consolidate its growing local, national and international reputation.

“It will directly benefit the 1000 artists a year involved in the Festival, and the myriad arts organisations that get the chance to showcase their work,” she said.

General Manager of the Festival, Anne Dunn welcomed the funding announcement, saying it would secure the quality of the program, allowing the increasing expectations from the Darwin audience to be met.

“The NT Government funding is recognition of the importance of arts in our community, and along with the support of corporate sponsors and the public, will allow the Festival to continue to deliver outstanding events and experiences to Territory audiences.”

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Festival facts: the 2007 experience

- 65 distinct events/shows
- 112 performances
- Approx 1000 artists involved including about 750 Territorians
- Darwin Festival presented 32 distinct events; co-presented or invested in another 14 events with local artists or companies; 19 events were “umbrella” presentations, that is, presented by a third party through provision of marketing and media assistance. Each “umbrella” event is supported to the value of $1500 through design, distribution and publicity support
- 34 per cent of the program was Indigenous or cross cultural with indigenous content
- 54 per cent was sourced from the NT
- 11 per cent involved Territory and interstate partnerships
- 30 per cent of the program was from interstate
- 5 per cent was sourced internationally
- The Festival had 53 people on its payroll (FTE 8 positions); 72 per cent locals
- 80 per cent of the Festival budget was spent locally—the Festival actively works with local suppliers in invest in equipment that keeps them competitive with interstate suppliers
- As a percentage of capital city population, Darwin Festival has highest attendance rates of all capital city Festivals in Australia
- The Darwin Festival has the third lowest level of Territory/State funding as a percentage of overall budget at 33 per cent