

# BROADENING THE EXPERIENCE

This was year three of our ten-year program to create a competitive and compelling visitor experience, in a customer-focused workplace that strives to be an international benchmark.



Towards a More  
Compelling Experience

## KEY OUTCOMES 2007/08

The principles in our *Commitment to our Customers and customer feedback* again informed our planning and direction. Online measurement of overall customer satisfaction this year rated at 78%, short of our 85% target (81% in 2006/07), with results being carefully analysed and built in to future strategy.

**Helping to deliver on our customer promise to ‘warmly welcome’** we restructured procedures during performance times, creating a more open feeling to the southern foyers and improving general access.

**A new 5-star front-line customer service team**, providing a welcome service to customers and raising awareness of the wide range of performances, experiences, products and services on offer at Sydney Opera House, was created in September 2007. The Host Team now operates two crucial customer service hubs, the Information Desk at Box Office and at Stage Door, as well as hosting the *High Tea in Guillaume at Bennelong* and providing critical customer support and feedback.

**Creating cultural change towards a house-wide service culture**, a new Customer Service Group was created, chaired by the Customer Service Manager and comprising decision-makers from all parts of the organisation. Meeting six times a year, the Committee’s major brief is to evaluate customer service and feedback, site presentation, strategy and policy. With participation from external experts and members of the general public, the Committee will use both professional and customer perspectives to help drive our approach and development in this critical area.

**Facilitating easier access to our site and services**, a number of projects in the third year of our Access Strategic Plan contributed to ongoing improvements organisation-wide. The Accessibility and Western Foyers project reached stage three, accessibility improvements to the Playhouse commenced, which will result in increased wheelchair seating and lifts on entry and an Access Masterplan was drafted. Funding was allocated to both enhance customer experience in the Drama Theatre and reduce costs for presenters, with the installation of a permanent captioning system; and we successfully removed significant access barriers to our website for people with disabilities, with the increase in compliance with Priority 1 and 2 of the W3C Web Content Accessibility Guidelines.

**Promoting positive community attitudes about people with disabilities**, we again collaborated with Accessible Arts to host in the Utzon Room, *AART.BOX 07* Exhibition, a collection of works by artists with a disability and under the age of 25. This year the program was expanded to include a free artist talk and it attracted a capacity audience of 350 people. In partnership with Vision Australia and Sydney Theatre Company, three audio described theatre performances were provided this year and special discounted Access Tours were offered to people with disabilities for the week of 29 November 2007.

**Rewarding staff for access achievements** is one way we improved staff awareness and skills in accessibility, with 23 awards presented to staff and external partners, to mark our celebration of International Day of People with Disabilities. During the year, we undertook a raft of initiatives in this area, including a new Staff Access Guide to help translate the principles of accessibility into staff behaviours. Access awareness sessions were integrated into regular staff orientation programs, the new Host Team received tailored disability training from an outside provider and internal training was delivered as part of the pilot Manager Orientation program.

**Three years since the Independent Tourism Review** and the creation of our ambitious vision for visitor experience, overall visitor participation has increased by 33% (82,705 people) and our tourism margin has increased by 276% to \$2.49m (up from \$0.9m in 2004/05). In a climate of little or no growth in inbound tourism and sharp falls in the two major markets of the UK and USA, launch of a new product at a premium price helped us to increase overall guided tours revenue by 10% to \$560,000.

- **A compelling audio-visual journey** celebrating the creative genius of architect Jørn Utzon and the story of the genesis of Sydney Opera House, *The Essential Tour* was launched in October 2007. Narrated by celebrated actress Rachel Griffiths, featuring never-before-seen footage and using the building itself as the storytelling canvas, the tour enables visitors to witness the unfolding drama of how this globally lauded masterpiece came into being against seemingly impossible odds.
- **More responsive and cost-effective engagement** with tour operators in the USA, UK and Asia resulted in greater exposure in international tourism brochures, keeping us well placed for a future upturn in tourism from the first two markets. This exposure and our first visit to India as part of the India Travel Mission helped generate an increase of 17% in our Asian Language Tours to 90,278 people (up from 77,000 in 2006/07). Our *Backstage Tour*, launched in 2005, also recorded a pleasing increase of 13% to 1,944 visitors (up from 1,720 in 2006/07).

**Successfully tackling some major international events**, our new functions operator, Opera Point Events, helped this part of our operations produce an increase of 10% in contribution to revenue, exceeding its financial targets and eliciting very good customer feedback. The logistical challenges of APEC and FIFA were well executed and preparations for World Youth Day are well in hand. Business contribution from Guillaume at Bennelong increased by 14% and the restaurant received two chef’s hats from the Sydney Morning Herald Good Food Guide. Opera Bar’s popularity with local and tourist patrons continued unabated, its financial contribution increasing by 7%. The affects of the drop in tourist numbers primarily impacted the sidewalk outlets, whose contribution fell by 16% this year.

**Our Sydney Opera House retail stores are being challenged** with less sales this year (down 14% on 2006/7). Strategies to improve this performance include the review of operating efficiencies, as well as a greater integration of the stores into the wider commercial offering through cross-selling from the tours business and better leveraging of the customers already onsite. The retail stores will continue to be under pressure next year due to the climate of little or no growth in inbound tourism.

**Increasing community access to Sydney Opera House and to the arts**, one initiative was The Balnaves Foundation Open House Program, created in April 2007, which has resulted in some 2,500 people enjoying programs through subsidised \$5 tickets. With most of these patrons visiting for the first time, some 1,000 enjoyed the major dance spectacular *Edward Scissorhands* in the Opera Theatre. Direct assistance, in the form of donations of tickets for raffles or subsidised tickets to performances and tours, was given to over 30 organisations, from local public schools and kindergartens to pioneering organisations such as Midnight Basketball and Legs on the Wall.

## The Year Ahead

- Study into the feasibility of expanding language tours to more Asian and European cultures.
- Further developments in Accessibility, including evaluation of results from our Access Strategic Plan, followed by a new three-year plan; development of a new summarised *Access Guide Brochure*; new program to celebrate International Day of People with Disabilities.
- Continuation and development of community access initiatives, such as the newly developed Balnaves Foundation Open House Program, through which we will offer 1,000 seats to community groups for the *Christmas at the House* and the return season of *Le Grand Cirque*.
- New online customer initiatives, including ‘select your own seat’ and promotional offers.
- Research into an enhanced digital strategy.

### 5 YEAR GUIDED TOURS TRENDS

Year	People
07/08	329,619
06/07	328,224
05/06	270,040
04/05	246,914
03/04	244,890