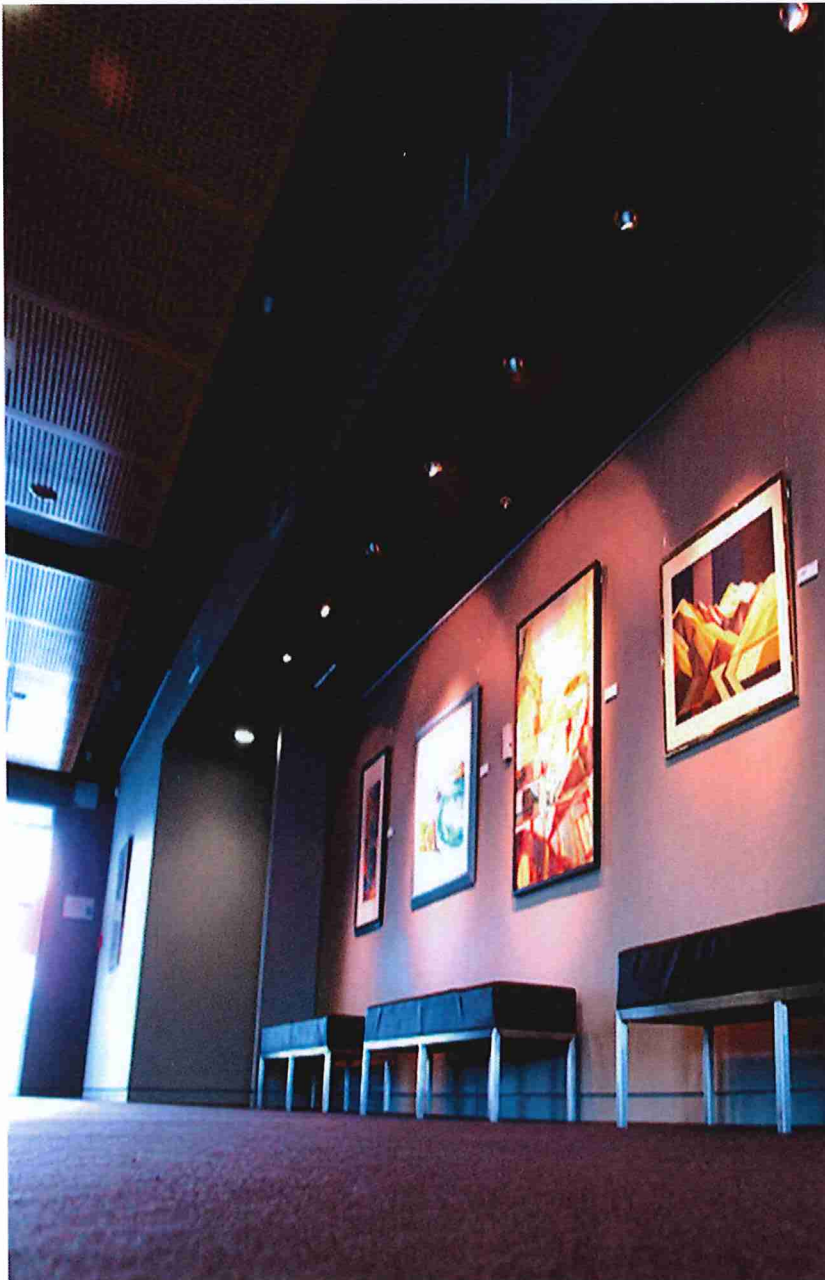


# Ashburton District Council Report

July – December 2023



ASHBURTON  
event centre



Roger Farr  
General Manager  
15.1.2024

6-Month Report July 2023 - Dec 2023.

Dear Mayor and Counsellors.

Thank you for the opportunity to present my report on the Ashburton Event Centre for the period July 2023 – December 2023.

**Venue Occupancy (includes pack-in and pack-out days)**

The Event Centre has experienced a high level of activity in all aspects of its operations during the past six months. There has been a steady increase in venue rentals throughout the year. The venue has been primarily used for community events, but there has also been a significant rebound in conference and meeting events compared to last year.

Event Days of Use (MYOB Report)	July – Dec 2023	July – Dec 2022
O Reilly Auditorium	63	70
Bradford Room	51	45
Green Room	31	90
Woodham Foyer	28	10

***O-Reilly Auditorium -***

Although bookings in the O Reilly Auditorium were down slightly in the same period in 2022, venue hire continued to show strong bookings during the reporting period. An exciting mix of events from touring performances to community competitions, stage shows, corporate events and school assemblies were staged, being enjoyed by 16,686 patrons.

**Performance Highlights**

Festival of the Spoken Word	Cabarnet 2 (Another Glass)
Wonderland Glow Show	Celtic Illusions
Tainui Kuru in Concert	Pooh Bear Live
Simon O’Neil in Concert	Stars in Your Eyes
Mid-Canterbury Dance Champs	Mid-Canterbury Children’s Theatre Lion King
Wakanui School (Peter Pan)	Ben McDonald (Ladies Night)
Hakatere Cultural Festival	Showtime Australia (Queen)
DKCM Entertainment (Rock Tenors)	Variety Theatre Ashburton (Popzilla)
Showtime Australia (Sweet Caroline Neil Diamond)	

**Bradford Room** – Corporate bookings for the Bradford Function Room have continued to increase during the reporting period, helped by the Electoral Commission's booking for the general elections where it was utilised as a voting venue.

**Green Room** – The Green Room use has dropped from 2022 figures. Weekly Yoga classes and AA Driving Courses have added significant numbers to the Green Room bookings.

**Woodham Foyer** – The Woodham Foyer continues to be popular for both business and performance groups. The Big Little Theatre Company made use of the space for their annual production this year and Business groups enjoy the open space with access to bar and catering facilities for corporate meet and greet events. The addition of staging and the drawing of the black drapes creates an intimate Black Box theatre space for the smaller events and Arts on Tour performances.

**Event Breakdown (performance/meeting days only)**

**Community Events** – Community events continue to be the predominant source of venue use, constituting a substantial 62% of the venue's overall occupancy. Throughout the six-month reporting period, there were a total of 88 events, collectively covering 108 days of use when packin/out and rehearsal days are added in. These community events encompass a diverse range of genres, including but not limited to competitions, educational programmes, performances, and celebratory occasions. This diverse array of events underscores the venue's role as a versatile and inclusive performing arts hub, catering to a wide spectrum of community needs and interests.

**Conference/Meetings** – Following two periods of declining bookings, conferences and meetings have experienced a notable resurgence. The rebound is particularly evident with the inclusion of several multi-day bookings, and a noteworthy highlight was the utilization of the Bradford Room as a Polling Booth for a two-week duration during the recent elections. These factors have collectively contributed to a highly successful period for the Bradford Room, keeping it on track to reach budget expectations.

**National Touring** – AEC hosted 7 national touring events within the 6 Month reporting period. Again, a varied programme of performances was received, ranging from

Simon O'Neil in Concert	Pooh Bear Live
DKCM Entertainment (Rock Tenors)	Ben McDonald (Ladies Night)
Showtime Australia (Neil Diamond Tour)	Showtime Australia (Queen)
Celtic Illusions	

**AEC Procured** – AEC continues to look for opportunities to bring new and diverse entertainment to the community through procured products deemed suitable for the Black Box Theatre located in the Woodham Foyer. With a reduction in funding from Creative New Zealand, the Arts on Tour events that have served us so incredibly well over the last fifteen years have meant a much-reduced programme is now offered. This has meant we now need to look to a wider network of performances in search of something of the same quality and price.

**CAPEX/Technical/Venue Upgrade (Update)**

Groundwork has continued to finalise essential items for the proposed upgrade to the venue's technical infrastructure. With an estimated cost of \$900,000, planning is underway looking at fundraising opportunities and grant applications.

A recent application to the Community Trust Mid South Canterbury secured \$25,000, kickstarting the campaign. While short of what was asked for, we acknowledge the Trust's funding and thank them for their continued support.

Rational behind each of the Priority Upgrades –

**Priority 1** – Essential to the operation of the venue at a level that assures that the itinerant hire and local performing arts groups benefit from a recognised standard of sound reproduction.

**Audio:**

Liner-Array PA System

- The current PA (sound system) when installed in 2008 was second hand meaning it could be as much as twenty years old.
- A failure in any part of the PA system would leave the venue with inadequate capabilities to operate at its current level.
- Sound systems have improved immensely over the life of the current system where Liner-Array systems are now an industry standard and are being installed in most modern venues.
- There is an expectation that AEC should meet the current industry standards for sound production.
- Sound production is a critical component in any event where sound reinforcement is required and normally the first criticism received when it is not of standard.

#### Mixing Console Allen and Heath SQ7

- In the time that AEC has been operating, the productions being produced by various community organisations and touring groups, have become more complex with a larger cast and live musicians requiring a mixing console capable of handling a larger number of microphones and auxiliary inputs.
- The current mixing console is now 11 years old and susceptible to failure.

#### Radio Microphones Sennheiser

- Microphones are subjected to a lot of wear and tear over their life.
- Critical to achieving quality sound enhancement.
- Pointless having a quality PA without having the same quality microphone.

#### Summary

The proposed audio package will ensure the AEC will have an audio system equal to recently built, similar-sized venues and capable of achieving a high level of quality and performance for many years to come. The Adamson Liner-Array system is recognised as being of excellent quality and has been installed in the Piano in Christchurch and a performing arts venue in Rotorua, both of similar size and capacity to the AEC.

**Priority 2** – Essential to the aesthetics of the venue at a level that assures the audience of a functional, comfortable well-maintained venue that encourages them to meet at a social level to be entertained or a corporate level for education and networking.

#### **Refurbishment:**

##### Paint and Décor. Interior & Exterior

- A refresh of the interior paint is required to keep the public areas and workspaces relevant to modern décor trends.
- Public areas are subjected to high traffic flows and the installation of trade display booths etc. causing superficial wear and tear.

##### Furnishing and Wall Covering

- Sound-absorbing fabric wall covering located in the Bradford Room, Variety Foyer and Woodham Foyer has faded and needs replacing.
- Carpets across the venue have worn or become faded due to exposure to the sun and high foot traffic.

#### Summary

Décor is essential to creating a welcoming vibe in our venue, where our audience or corporate delegates can relax in comfort. Our promoters recognise our venue as being one that provides attractive surroundings

and support for their audience members and the Corporate Event organiser recognises as venue as having a professional level of service and capability.

**Priority 3** – A need to continue the development of our technical capabilities and provide sustainability through eco-friendly LED Lighting practises.

#### Theatre Lighting

- Upgrade current lighting fixtures to LED reducing our energy consumption and maintenance.
- Upgrade our current lighting fixtures to intelligent lighting capable of performing more than one task and limiting energy consumption.
- Upgrade the theatre lighting rig to meet modern-day practises that benefit local and itinerant hirers.

#### Audio Visual

- Upgrade the current Audio Visual projector to an LED projector.

#### Summary

AEC believes it has a responsibility to limit its eco-footprint by using sustainable methods of operation. To provide up-to-date equipment that meets best practice standards and offers the ability for staff to become educated in the use of modern-day equipment and practises.

#### ADC Light the Xmas Tree



					FINANCED BY			
ITEM	Estimated Quote	APATT	Grant	Grant	Regional Culture	Ashburton District	Braided Rivers	Grant
	Excl GST	Funding	Lion Foundation	Mid Sth Cant Trust	Heritage Fund	Council	Community Trust	Lotto
<b>2023 - 2024</b>								
<b>Priority 1</b>								
<b>Audio</b>								
Line Array PA Adamson FOH PA System	\$ 284,538.00	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 100,000.00	\$ 25,000.00			\$ 25,000.00	\$ 84,538.00
Mixing Consol SQ7 Allen and Heath	\$ 19,632.00	\$ 10,000.00						\$ 9,632.00
Radio Mics Sennheiser x 8	\$ 10,000.00	\$ 10,000.00						
<b>Networking</b>								
Master Control Infrastructure	\$ 22,918.00		\$ 22,918.00					
Main Auditorium	\$ 30,904.00		\$ 30,904.00					
Breakout Space 1 Large (Woodham Foyer)	\$ 10,727.00							
Breakout Space 2 Smaller (Bradford Room)	\$ 15,926.00							
<b>Lighting</b>								
Dimmer Control System	\$ 50,000.00	\$ 50,000.00						
	\$ 444,645.00	\$ 120,000.00	\$ 153,822.00	\$ 25,000.00			\$ 25,000.00	\$ 94,170.00
<b>Priority 2</b>								
<b>Refurbishment</b>								
Paint & Décor. Interior, Exterior	\$ 84,482.00					\$ 84,482.00		
Furnishing, Wall Cover	\$ 20,000.00	\$ 20,000.00						
Furnishing, Floor Cover	\$ 98,000.00					\$ 98,000.00		
	\$ 202,482.00	\$ 20,000.00			\$ -	\$ 182,482.00		\$ -
<b>Priority 3</b>								
<b>Theatre Lighting</b>								
Intelligent Lighting LED x 8	\$ 62,740.00							\$ 62,740.00
Maverick LED Wash x 15	\$ 123,260.00							\$ 123,260.00
<b>Audio Visual</b>								
LED Projector (O Reilly Auditorium)	\$ 40,000.00	\$ 40,000.00						
	\$ 226,000.00	\$ 40,000.00						\$ 186,000.00
	\$ 873,127.00	\$ 180,000.00	\$ 153,822.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ -	\$ 182,482.00	\$ 25,000.00	\$ 280,170.00
								\$ 417,992.00
								\$ 202,482.00
								\$ 226,000.00
								\$ 280,170.00
								\$ 846,474.00

### Service Level Agreement

Strong bookings have resulted in good progress towards achieving our Service Level Agreement. Touring events continue to be slower than usual with bookings for the current year down on normal numbers expected.

	Community Events	Conference Meetings	National Touring	AEC Procured
Jul – Dec 2023	88	44	8	1
Jan – Jun 2024	0	0	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>44</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>1</b>
ADC Service Level Agreement	130	55	20	10

### Repairs and Maintenance

There have been no major issues over the period other than general maintenance and scheduled compliance items requiring maintenance work. These include the cleaning and fireproofing of the stage curtains and legs which are required to be done every five years. These are made from a heavy wool surge material and while wool has a natural fire retardant, the dust and oil residue from smoke and haze machines soils the fabric creating a combustable surface. Building WOF has been signed off for another year.

### Financial Report July – December 2023

The six-month period July-December 2023 has continued the improving trend seen in the first half of the year. Income for the six months is up 7.2% against budget while expenses are down 3%. The increased income can be attributed mainly to an increase in the Bradford Room hire, Variable Charges for equipment

and services provided, bar sales and event ticketing revenue. Lower expenses can be attributed to a decrease in wage and salary costs due to currently not having a Technical Manager and a decrease in Variable Expenses.

### **Financial Highlights**

Notable Income Improvements against the budget –

Confectionary up 25% based on increased turnover.

Bradford Room Hire is up 26% based on increased rental.

Foyer Hire up 69% based on increased rental.

Variable Charges are up to 32% based on an increase in services and equipment provided.

Bar Income is up 31% based on increased turnover.

Event Revenue is up 39% based on increased ticket sales.

Notable Expenses against the budget –

Electricity is up 23% based on increased charges and consumption.

Operational Wages and salaries are down 4% due to a temporary staffing decrease.

Staff Training increase due to additional training – EWP Cert, Fire Warden Training.

Variable Expenses are down 40% based on a lesser amount of hired equipment from suppliers.

R&M increase based on Stage Drapes Fire treatment and repairs to refrigeration units.

### **Staff and Volunteers**

After 15 months of operating without a Technical Manager, I am very pleased to be able to report we have now employed Sean Mortimer. Sean comes to us with a great deal of experience having a BA(Hons) in Technical Theatre Arts and having spent the last two years working at the ASB Theatre Marlborough, a venue of similar size and operation to ours. Sean will start with us on 26.2.2024

Our volunteers have again given a combined 1096 hours to the successful operation of the Event Centre in this reporting period.

### **Ashburton Performing Arts Theatre Trust**

At the recent Annual General Meeting of the Ashburton Performing Arts Theatre Trust, two long-serving Trustees retired. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge George Brown and Noel Johnson who between them have given 56 years of service to the Theatre Trust, both George and Noel can be very proud of the legacy that is the Ashburton Event Centre, and their contribution to the Performing Arts community of Ashburton.

In my role, I hear numerous times how lucky we are to have such an amazing facility in our town, and it is because of people like George and Noel, who were passionate about the performing arts and were willing to jump the many hurdles placed in front them during the early days of design, fundraising and building the venue that we have in our community today.

**Noel**, was President of the Ashburton Operatic Society back in September 1993 when he signed a cheque to purchase the ageing Regent Theatre from Pacer Kerridge Odeon for the sum of around \$45,000. In 1998 the Ashburton Regent Charitable Trust, which later changed its name to the Ashburton Performing Arts Theatre Trust, was formed with both Noel and George and the other trustees being tasked with planning and fundraising for the construction of a performing arts venue in our town.

**George**, from 1993 – 2023. Thirty years of service to any organisation does not go unnoticed. Since joining the Trust in 1993, George has played a huge part in the success that the Event Centre has become today. His financial knowledge and support have been invaluable to the successful operation of the Event Centre.

At a personal level, I'd like to take this opportunity to thank both George and Noel for their advice and support over the years. Having your experience to draw on, has certainly made my job so much easier.

With the retirement of both George and Noel, two further Trustees were elected to the Trust.

Standing Trustees as of 13/12/2023

Jim Lischner

Jane Argyle

Brent Gray

Faye Johnston (Secretary & VTA Representative)

Yvonne Harrison (VTA Representative)

Jane Kelly

Sue Prowse

Jo Castelow

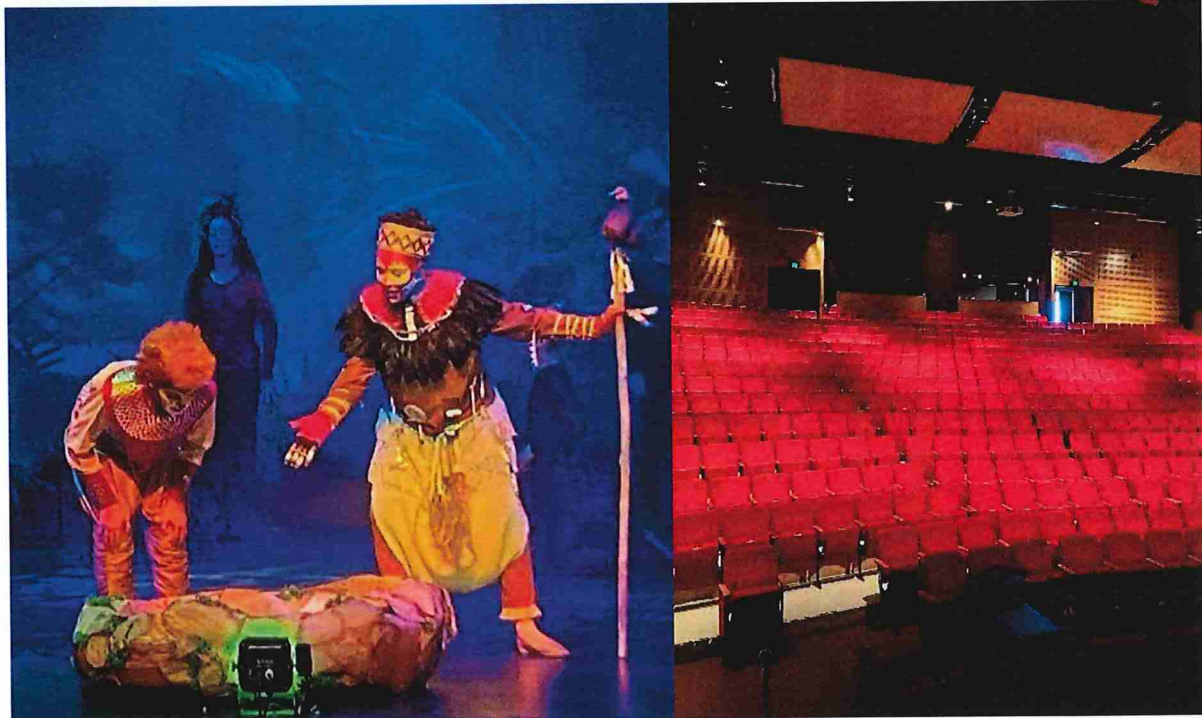
Jane Brady

Roger Paterson

The position of Chairman and positions on the Management Board will be finalised following a meeting on 25.1.2024

### **Summary**

The Ashburton Event Centre's ½ year report shows a continuing trend of improving bookings resulting in a strong financial position being achieved throughout the reporting period. With staff levels returning to normal in 2024, we will again be able to focus on marketing our off-site technical hire. Work on the venue upgrade will continue with a strong focus on raising the capital needed.



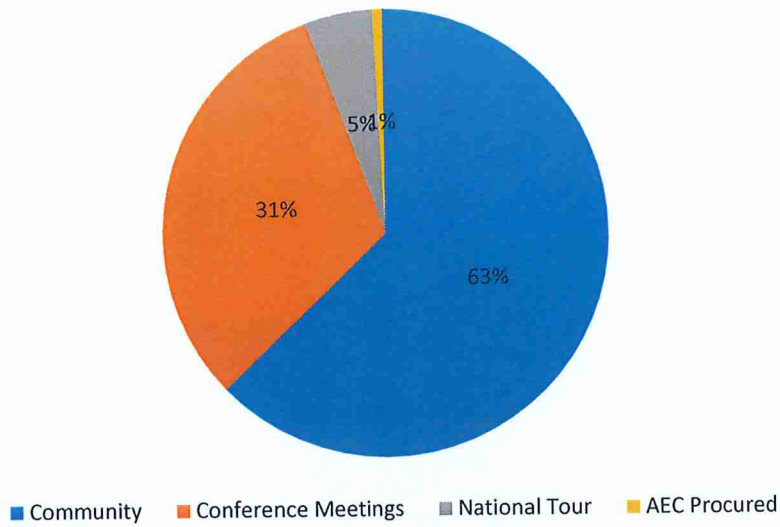
Lion King Junior Mid Canterbury Children's Theatre

O-Reilly Auditorium



## Event Days of Use Breakdown Jul-Dec 2023

### Event Breakdown July-December 2023

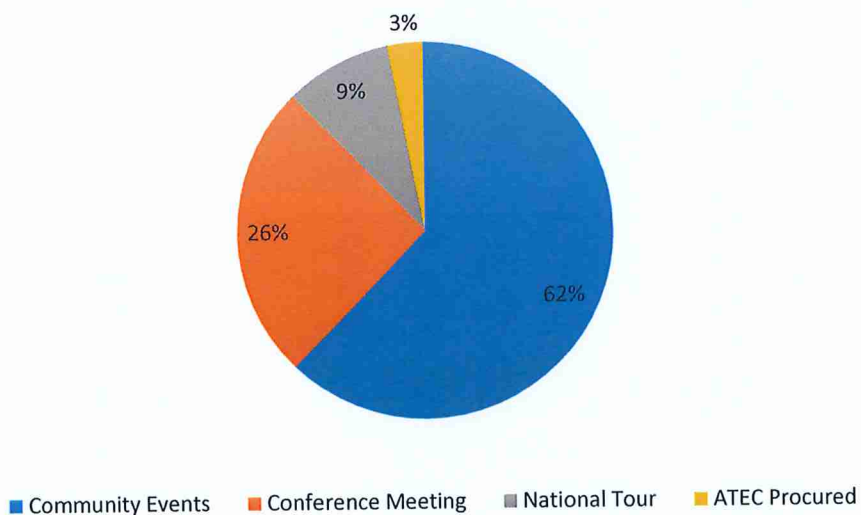


#### Event Breakdown

Community	88
Conference Meetings	44
National Tour	7
AEC Procured	1

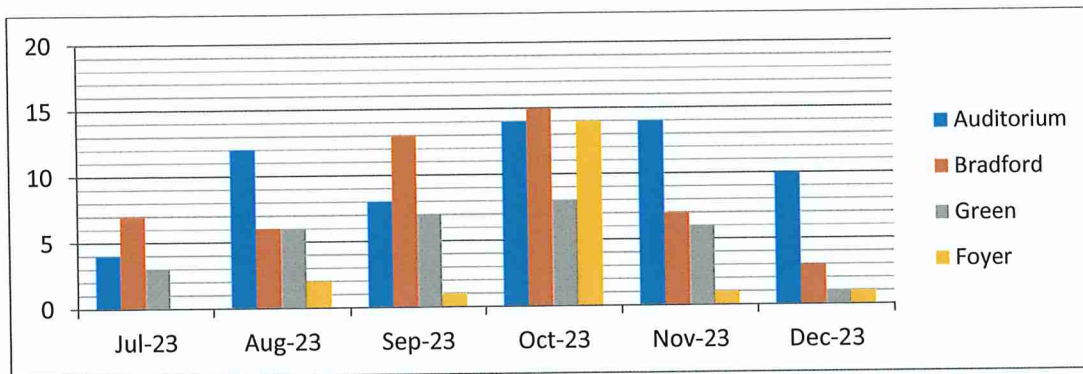
## Event Days of Use Breakdown Jul-Dec 2022

### Event Breakdown July- December 2022



	Event Breakdown Jul-Dec 2022
Community Events	81
Conference Meeting	33
National Tour	10
ATEC Procured	4

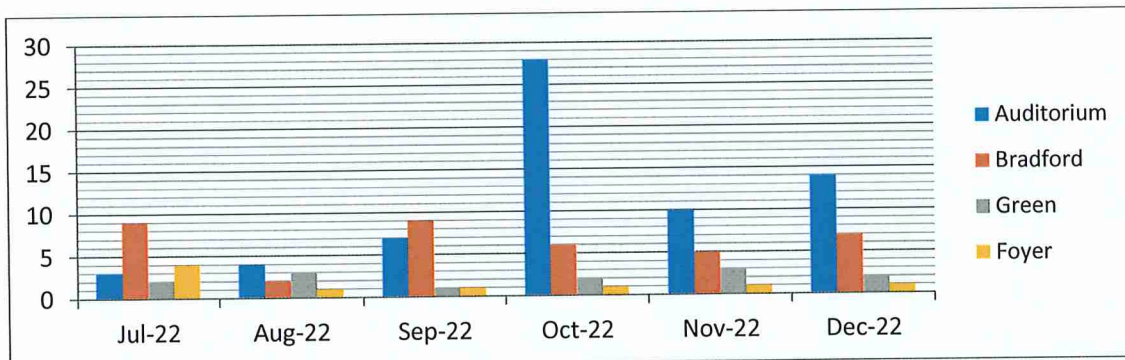
## Venue Days of Use Breakdown July – December 2023



	Auditorium	Bradford	Green	Foyer
Jul-23	4	7	3	0
Aug-23	12	6	6	2
Sep-23	8	13	7	1
Oct-23	14	15	8	14
Nov-23	14	7	6	1
Dec-23	10	3	1	1

Total	62	51	31	19
Average Per Mth	10.5	8.5	5.1	2.6

## Days of Use Breakdown July – December 2022



	Auditorium	Bradford	Green	Foyer
Jul-22	3	9	2	4
Aug-22	4	2	3	1
Sep-22	7	9	1	1
Oct-22	28	6	2	1
Nov-22	10	5	3	1
Dec-22	14	7	2	1

Total	66	38	13	9
Average Per Mth	11	6	2	2

Cabernet II Another Glass



Mid Canterbury Choir Tainui Kuru in Concert.

