

# Council Report 2023



Roger Farr  
General Manager  
25.7.2023

Six Month Report January - June 2023.

Dear Mayor and Councillors.

Thank you for the opportunity to present the Ashburton Performing Arts Theatre Trust (APATT) report for the period January – June 2023.

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

Reporting on both the six months Jan – Jun 2023 and the Financial period July – June 2023

It has been a busy period across all areas of the Event Centre’s operations in recent months. Venue hires have continued to build throughout the year with the Bradford Room use standing out as having increased considerably in the second half of the year.

	January – June 2023	Total Bookings EOY 2023	Total Bookings EOY 2022
O Reilly Auditorium	62	129	74
Bradford Room	35	79	68
Green Room	71	161	85
Woodham Foyer	8	18	42

***O-Reilly Auditorium -***

It was great to see the Auditorium Hire come back strongly with 129 days of use for the twelve months to June 2023. This equates to a booking every 2.8 days, a notable increase from last year which was affected by post covid restrictions and cancellations. A longer-than-usual quiet period from January to March caused some concern however the final quarter of the year resulted in a very busy period for staff and volunteers.

***Bradford Room*** – Bookings for the Bradford Room have bounced back strongly over the last twelve months, finishing the year ahead of budget. There has been an increasing number of multi-day meetings and it is great to see the training seminars coming back from the agricultural sector.

***Green Room*** – The Green Room use has remained relatively steady over the period with a number of weekly bookings occupying the space. Weekly Yoga classes and AA Driving Courses have added significant numbers to the Green Room bookings.

***Woodham Foyer*** – Although quieter than 2022, 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 remain our biggest user of the venue, accounting for 68% of its occupancy with 264 events throughout the year. This is an exceptionally large increase and comes from additional weekly functions in the Green Room. The addition of the Jesus Christ Superstar and Glory Days seasons also added significant days of use for the auditorium.

Performance events make up the largest group of users with Variety Theatre Ashburton, Big Little Theatre Company and Mid Canterbury Children's Theatre combined accounting for approximately 60 days a year. Highland Dance, both local and national along with LDA and Danceworx are other multiday users of the venue annually. A good number of schools are now choosing to use the auditorium for their annual school production with the Christian School adding an educational element to their production, where the children work alongside AEC technicians to develop stage and lighting plans and operate the technical areas with our supervision. It is pleasing to see the community recognising AEC as an affordable option for their events, where they will be fully supported with technical advice and services to upskill those participating. The spin-off from this comes from having a pool of experienced operators for the larger community events.

**Conference/Meetings** – Conferences and meetings have bounced back again after two periods of declining bookings. A number of multi-day bookings in the Bradford Room have contributed to a successful year where the Bradford Room finished well ahead of budgeted predictions. We continue to receive great feedback from our clients for the venue and services we offer.

**National Touring** – AEC hosted fifteen national touring events in the last financial year with four of those in the current reporting period. Again, a varied programme of performances was received, ranging from

The Boss NZ Tour  
Stevie Nicks  
Tina Turner  
Swan Lake  
Abba  
Kevin Bloody Wilson  
A Celtic Christmas  
Simon O-Neil  
World of Musicals  
RNZB Tutus on Tour  
David Strassman  
NZSO  
New Zealand Highwaymen Tour

**ATEC Procured** – AEC continues to bring performances from Arts on Tour where we promote the performances as audience development. This is designed to bring in a new audience who may not have been in our venue and is generally of a lesser financial commitment, in an inviting welcoming atmosphere with smaller audience numbers, while retaining a high quality of performance across a wide range of genres.

AEC produced the very successful Jesus Christ Superstar in October 2022. This was a joint venture with Variety Theatre Ashburton, raising funds for upgrades to both venues.

### ***Technical/Venue Upgrade***

Much work has been done to identify those areas and systems in need of upgrading or replacing. An itemised list has been developed in consultation with industry professionals, looking at what is needed to ensure our venue remains relevant and capable of meeting the current industry standards now and into the future. The focus has been on the refurbishment of public spaces including wall and floor coverings, furniture, and house lighting. In addition to this, the Trust has identified essential technical infrastructure that requires replacement in order to future-proof the venue against possible failures that would result in a major disruption to our ability to effectively operate. This includes upgrading the PA sound system to what is now considered, an industry-standard Line Array system, and upgrading the Theatrical Lighting and Dimmer system to allow for the use of LED lighting in the O-Reilly Auditorium.



### ***Repairs and Maintenance***

Maintenance issues that have been addressed include the upgrade of our EWP (Elevated Work Platform) used for a number of jobs including the focusing of theatre lights by both community and touring event technicians, the replacement of lamps in the auditorium and many other jobs around the venue.



An upgrade of the venue's security system and security lighting has now also been completed.

**Service Level Agreement**

While initially concerned with how quickly the events industry would bounce back post-Covid, I’m extremely happy to report that after a sluggish start to 2023, we have exceeded all except the National Touring events recognising the limited opportunities currently available to host these events. Community events continue to be the backbone of our events calendar.

	Community Events	Conference Meetings	National Touring	AEC Procured
Jul – Dec 2022	81	33	10	4
Jan – Jun 2023	113	38	3	7
<b>Total</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>11</b>
ADC Service Level Agreement	130	55	20	10



**VTA Presents Wizard of Of Oz**

**Financial Report – July 2022 – June 2023**

Note - Auditors Report due 29th November 2023.

The financial year July 2022 to June 2023 at the Ashburton Event Centre can be characterised by an average start to the first two quarters, a slower-than-normal period during the third quarter January to March, with a strong finish in the final quarter from April to June. Overall unsurprisingly, the end-of-year bookings for the O Reilly Auditorium and Bradford Room surpassed those of 2022, demonstrating substantial growth

against a period of disruptions to bookings during the previous two years. Despite the challenges, income from venue hire exceeded expectations. The bar and catering services have rebounded to pre-2020 levels, and equipment and services hired to external events continued to generate additional revenue. Community events have experienced remarkable growth, with an increase in events compared to the previous years. Many of these are events affected by COVID restrictions in previous years but are now being reintroduced.

However, national touring events have been slow to return, and new opportunities are yet to emerge. Conference and meeting events picked up pace in the latter part of the year, meeting the budget projections.

It has been great to see a number of multi-day conference events coming back. This is great for not only our venue but also the wider business community and hospitality sector.

Lastly, the AEC procured events has continued to provide quality, affordable entertainment from the Arts on Tour stable of performances, offering a diverse range of entertainment. It is very frustrating to hear that Government funding cuts may restrict the availability of these performances in the future.

### **Financial Highlights**

1. Slow start during January to March, with lower activity levels.
2. April to June saw significant improvement with strong bookings across all areas of the venue.
3. End-of-year bookings for the O-Reilly Auditorium and the Bradford Room exceeded 2022 figures, indicating notable growth.
4. Income from venue hire exceeded conservative budget projections, possibly due to COVID restrictions.
5. Bar and catering services recovered to pre-2020 levels, contributing to increased revenue.
6. Equipment and services hired for events outside the venue continued to be a reliable income source.
7. Community events witnessed substantial growth, with 194 events under the Community Rate Card, compared to 155 in 2022.
8. National Touring events saw a slower return, with regular promoters contributing but limited new opportunities.
9. Conference and meeting events rebounded after a slow start in the first quarter of 2023, meeting budget expectations.
10. AEC procured events remained stable, with Arts on Tour events providing diverse and affordable entertainment while contributing to fundraising efforts.

Notable Income Improvements against the budget –

O-Reilly Auditorium up 6%  
Bradford Room up 7%  
Green Room up 61%  
Woodham Foyer up 24%  
Variable Charges up 11%  
Event Revenue up 48%

Notable Expense Increases against the budget

Compliance Fees up 13%  
Advertising up 37% (JC Superstar)  
Plant and Equipment up 844% (Foyer Rnd Tables x 8)  
R&M up 205% (Security system Upgrade, 2 x Projectors, Video Camera, Power Tools, Lectern, 60" TV)

### **Staff and Volunteers**

It has been a very challenging year for both staff and volunteers. With a very busy schedule of events in the April – June period, volunteers were kept busy both ushering and working behind the scenes. A special mention to both David Wilson and Brian Johnston for the many hours you have given towards the success of the venue over the last six months. Also of note is Kerry Marshall and Yvonne Harrison who continue to

lead a team of 22 volunteers, ushering at every event. A combined 761 hours were given to the successful operation of the Event Centre in this reporting period.

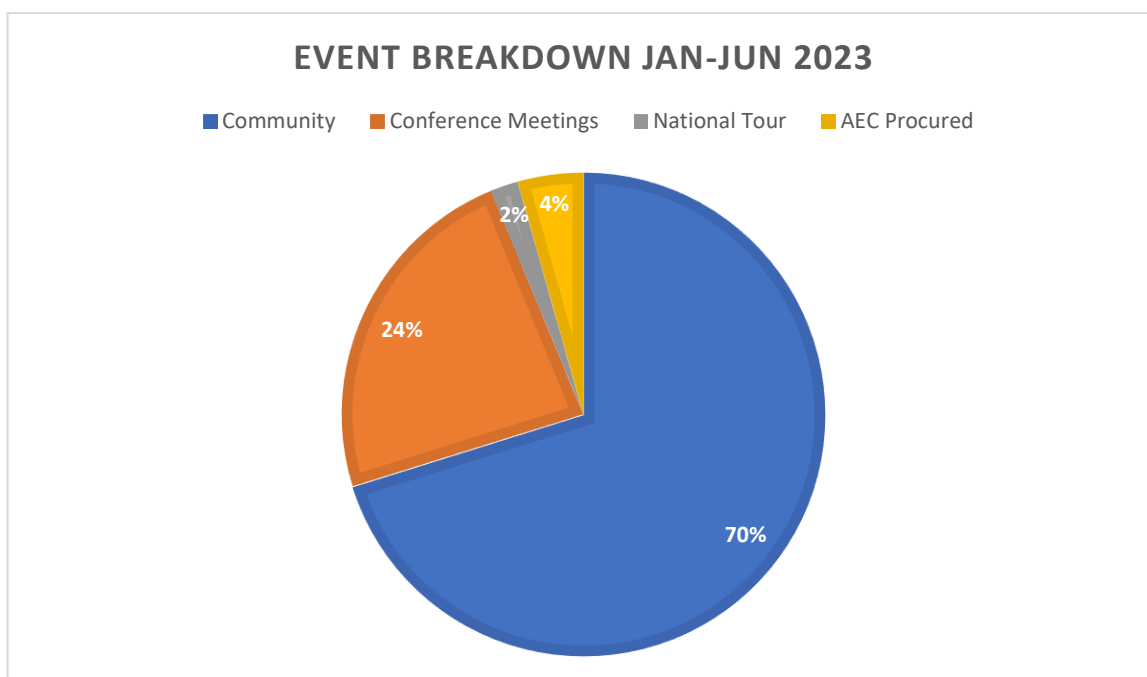
With the loss of our technical manager in October 2022, followed by our remaining technician in June of this year, the hunt has been on to find replacements in a market where a huge number of venues are currently seeking skilled venue technicians. The industry was decimated over the Covid period, with many leaving the industry for other jobs. Advertising and personnel approaches through a number of channels have seen little response with most applications coming from off-shore.

This has left us in a difficult position trying to maintain the level of service our clients have come to expect. It has placed a strain on the remaining staff as we try to continue to operate without letting our clients down.

**Summary**

The Ashburton Event Centre's financial year from July 2022 to June 2023 demonstrated resilience and adaptability. Despite a sluggish start in the first quarter, the Event Centre experienced substantial growth in bookings, particularly in April to June. Income from various sources, including venue hire, bar and catering, and equipment and services hire, exceeded expectations. The centre's commitment to the community was evident through a remarkable increase in community events, catering to a diverse range of activities. While national touring events were slower to return, the Arts on Tour events and other procured performances proved to be valuable contributors to the centre's success. Overall, the financial performance during this period reflects the centre's ability to overcome challenges and capitalize on opportunities, positioning it for continued success in the future.

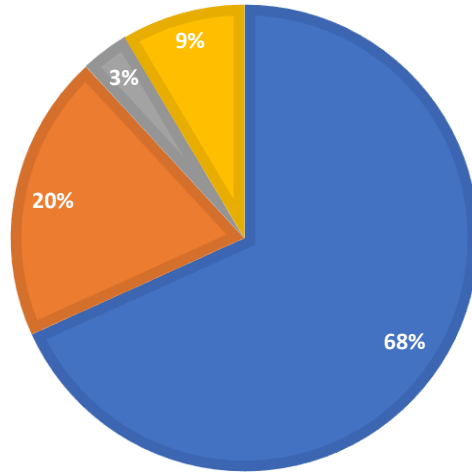
**Event and Days of Use Graphics**



	Event Breakdown
Community	113
Conference Meetings	38
National Tour	3
AEC Procured	7

### EOY EVENT BREAKDOWN JUL-JUN 2023

■ Community ■ Conference Meetings ■ National Tour ■ AEC Procured

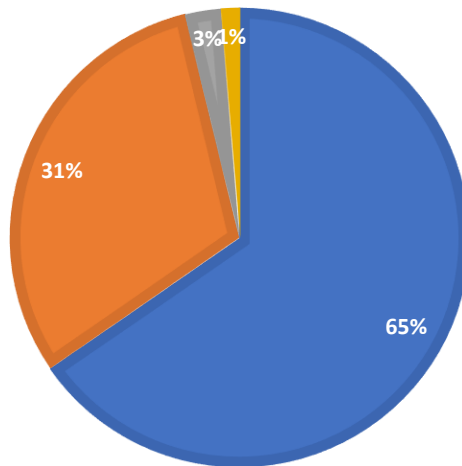


	Event Breakdown 2023
Community	264
Conference Meetings	77
National Tour	13
AEC Procured	33

### (Comparison) EOY 2022

### EOY EVENT BREAKDOWN JUL-JUN 2022

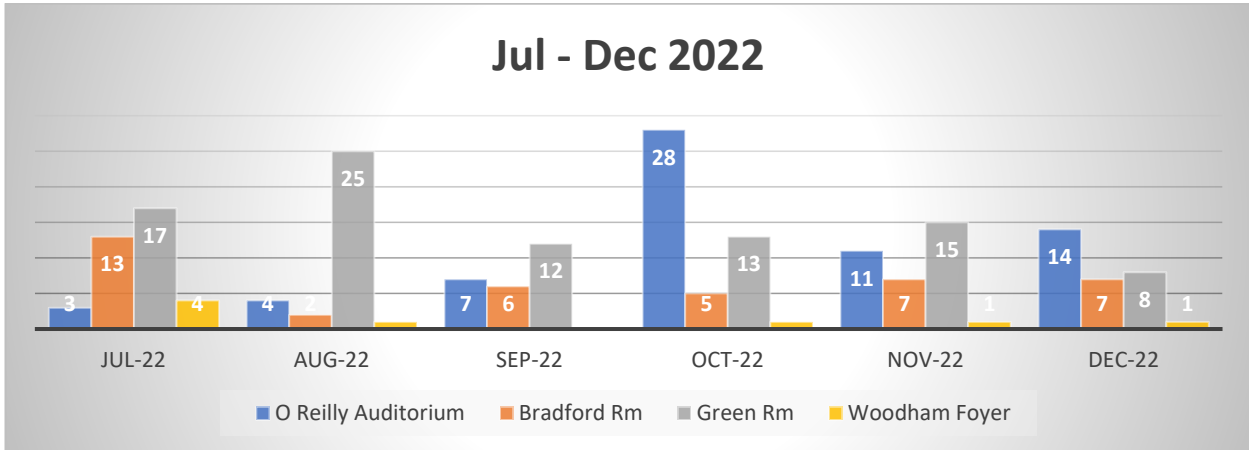
■ Community ■ Conference Meetings ■ National Tour ■ AEC Procured



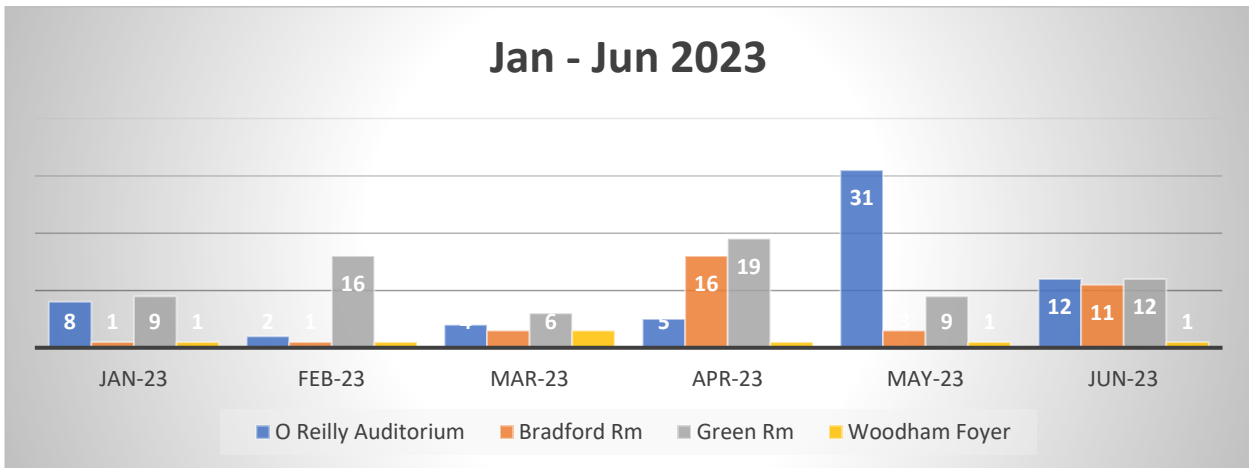
	Event Breakdown 2022
Community	155
Conference Meetings	73
National Tour	6
AEC Procured	3



**Days of Use (Includes Pack in and Pack out days)**  
**EOY Jul – Jun 2023**



	O Reilly Auditorium	Bradford Rm	Green Rm	Woodham Foyer
Jul-22	3	13	17	4
Aug-22	4	2	25	1
Sep-22	7	6	12	0
Oct-22	28	5	13	1
Nov-22	11	5	15	1
Dec-22	14	7	8	1



	O Reilly Auditorium	Bradford Rm	Green Rm	Woodham Foyer
Jan-23	8	1	9	1
Feb-23	2	1	16	1
Mar-23	4	3	6	3
Apr-23	5	16	19	1
May-23	31	3	9	1
Jun-23	12	11	12	1



	O Reilly Auditorium	Bradford Rm	Green Rm	Woodham Foyer
EOY Total 2023	129	79	161	18
EOY Total 2022	74	68	85	42

