



Australian Contemporary Circus: Guide for Insurers

Overview by TNA

Updated February 2025

About Theatre Network Australia

TNA is the [national peak body for the Australian Circus and Physical Theatre \(CaPT\) sector](#)ⁱ. TNA services a wide range of performing arts including dance, circus and live art, and is the leading industry development and advocacy organisation for small to medium and independent performing arts. Theatre Network Australia (TNA) has [630+ current members](#)ⁱⁱ from across the national performing arts sector.

Types of Activity in the Contemporary Circus Sector

The Australian contemporary circus sector* is made up of companies and individuals that carry out activities falling into the following general categories:

- Operating a permanent building, venue or structure as owner or tenant
- Operating a temporary building, venue or structure as owner or hirer
- Teaching or coaching circus
- Supervising or working with minors
- Creating or producing circus
- Designing/building/maintaining/storing equipment, sets or structures for use in circus activities
- Performing circus
- Presenting (providing opportunities/space/resources for) circus performances
- Running a business or organisation related to circus

**Note: “contemporary circus” has been used in this context to make it clear that “classical” or “traditional” circuses are not included in this overview. Although that part of the industry is an important segment of the wider Australian circus sector, these companies are not well-represented in TNA’s membership, and we are not best placed to advocate on their behalf.*

Sector Size

The individuals and companies that make up the circus sector can be broadly grouped, while bearing in mind that each of these entities may engage in any, or all, of the activities listed above:

- Youth circuses and training organisations
- Presenting, producing and/or performing companies
- Independent practitioners:
 - Performers
 - Riggers, designers, and fabricators
 - Teachers/trainers/coaches
 - Producers, technicians and other circus practitioners

Of TNA’s 630+ members, 121 Company Members and 64 Indie Members practice or present circus. TNA engages with a further 201 companies and 189 individual practitioners that practice or present circus but don’t hold current TNA memberships.

	TNA Members	Non-members who TNA engages with	Total
Youth Circuses and Training Organisations	22	45	67
Organisations that Produce and/or Perform Circus	21	76	97
Presenting Organisations that Program Circus	78	80	158
Independent Practitioners	64	189	253

Beyond this network, a [2023 survey of the Australian circus sector](#)ⁱⁱⁱ by TNA found that Australian companies engage upwards of 370 circus artists, 351 entertainment riggers and 492 circus trainers. A significant proportion of these individuals operate as sole traders rather than direct employees, and in many cases are required to secure their own insurance. Additionally, [Performing Arts Centres Australia](#)^{iv} (PAC Australia) have over 250 members that present a wide range of performing arts including circus and physical theatre.

Sector Turnover

The contemporary circus sector comprises predominantly small to medium companies and sole traders, with only three circus organisations receiving secure multi-year Federal funding through Creative Australia or Office for the Arts.

Turnovers for the sector at large are modest, with most companies reporting turnovers under \$750,000 in TNA's [2023 Salary Survey Report for Small to Medium Organisations](#)^v. Of the 17 respondents from the circus sector, only 18% of organisations reported turnovers higher than \$1.25m.

Turnover Bracket	No. of Organisations	%
under \$250,000	5	29%
\$250,000-\$749,000	4	24%
\$750,000-\$1,249,000	5	29%
\$1,250,000-\$2,499,000	1	6%
\$2,500,000-\$4,000,000	2	12%
Total	17	

Current Insurance Challenges for the CaPT Sector

In 2024 TNA conducted a survey of the Australian sector to understand the challenges currently faced. The survey received 30 valid responses from Australian-based circus practitioners and organisations – key insights are below.

Key Stats – CaPT Insurance Survey 2024
10% of respondents reported they are not insured at all and at least 37% underinsured or not covered for key activities. This is a total of 47% not adequately insured .
Only 1 respondent was covered for Child Molestation Insurance (up to \$5m)—of several that work regularly with children and young people.
Of 17 covered for rigging, only 2 have policies that cover rigging higher than 11 metres .
73% reported premium increases in the last three years. Of these, 45% report increases of 100% or more .
Only one third of respondents reported feeling confident/satisfied with their current coverage.
67% are subject to legal, contractual or funding requirements to hold certain types of insurance.
70% report unaffordable premiums .
37% report reduced coverage, policy withdrawal or refusal to renewal .
30% report they are unable to secure new coverage for some or all of their activities .
30% have found brokers difficult to get hold of , or have been ghosted during the enquiry process.

ⁱ <https://tna.org.au/our-work/programs/capt/>

ⁱⁱ <https://tna.org.au/our-people/members-list/>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://tna.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/TNA-ANZSCO-Review-Submission.pdf>

^{iv} <https://paca.org.au/membership/members/>

^v <https://tna.org.au/our-work/research-resources/research-reports/>