

Record sales, attendance for arts and entertainment but growth is slower



Ed Sheeran in concert at Sydney's ANZ Stadium. Picture: Christian Gilles

- **EXCLUSIVE**

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The arts and entertainment sector clocked a record year at the box office in 2018 with total revenues hitting almost \$2.2bn, but the industry says weak consumer confidence and wages growth may dampen future gains.

Tours by international acts such as Pink, Ed Sheeran, Bruno Mars and Taylor Swift helped push ticket sales for contemporary music beyond \$1bn for the first time. Sales of \$1.092bn were up 32 per cent on the previous year and accounted for half of all earnings in the live performance sector.

In a year that saw a revival of *Evita* featuring Tina Arena and the 10th anniversary tour of Australia's biggest-earning musical, *Priscilla Queen of the Desert*, box office takings for musical theatre were down 4 per cent, to \$400m.

Comedy was the third-biggest earner with \$125m, and Tasmania was the fastest-growing state for comedy shows.

Industry body Live Performance Australia, which compiles the annual Ticket, Attendance and Revenue Report, says total revenues increased by 14.8 per cent and attendances by 14.1 per cent, but growth was slower than the previous year.

LPA chief executive Evelyn Richardson said economic headwinds might affect future growth, with consumers more careful with their money. "If you have a lot of great shows in the market, when you have an economic environment where people are a little more hesitant and worried, then they will make decisions about whether they will go to one event or three events," she said.

Revenue increased for multi-category and contemporary music festivals, children's and family shows, opera, theatre, dance and special events, the last category driven largely by events associated with the Commonwealth Games.

Ticket sales for circus and physical theatre dropped almost 80 per cent, mainly because *Cirque du Soleil* did not tour here.