

GREEN CIRCLE REPORT

The Green Circle is an initiative created by Arts on Tour (AOT) and Theatre Green Book Australia (TGBA). Facilitated by TGBA's Grace Nye-Butler, the 6-month initiative aims to support the Circle, Sydney Dance Company, Bell Shakespeare, Griffin Theatre Company, Bangarra Dance Theatre, Belvoir Street Theatre, Performing Lines and Monkey Baa, to achieve Baseline standard across at least 2 of the 3 areas of Productions, Operations, and Buildings.

WHY THE GREEN CIRCLE?

The Green Circle brings together leading theatre and dance organisations to apply the internationally recognised and newly developed Theatre Green Book Australia V2 framework across their productions, operations, and buildings. Designed to generate collective action, this Green Circle has run as a six-month program of workshops, information sharing, resource development and peer support. Organisations commit to adopting environmentally sustainable practices and are given the space and support to trial and embed these practices in real contexts.

This shared structure has created accountability, catalysed inquiry, and ensured that sustainable approaches become integrated within the creative and operational life of each company. Importantly, the Theatre Green Book Australia V2 allows practices to be tailored to the unique needs, capacities, and business models of each organisation, recognising that there is no one-size-fits-all solution. At its core, the Green Circle is about building confidence and momentum. By providing a collaborative platform and a clear framework, the program equips organisations with the tools, knowledge, and motivation to implement eco-literate theatre making. Together, these companies are setting a benchmark for sustainable practice in the performing arts sector and demonstrating that systemic change is both possible and achievable.

THE PROCESS

The Green Circle unfolded over six months through a series of four meetings. Each gathering combined facilitated discussion, practical tools, and guest speakers, creating a pathway for organisations to trial new approaches and develop tailored sustainability strategies suited to their own operations, productions, and buildings.

The program design focused on collaboration and problem-solving, with sessions addressing both local challenges and international examples of best practice. Alongside structured workshops, The Green Circle created curated resources and practical templates that organisations could immediately adapt to their workflows. This combination of shared learning and applied tools ensured continuity, maintained focus, and supported tangible progress over the course of the program. By embedding these structured touchpoints across the six months, the Green Circle created an environment where ideas could be tested, refined, and implemented in real time. This staged approach has allowed companies to not only plan for change but also to actively integrate sustainability into their day to day practice in a deliberate and quantifiable way.

GREEN CIRCLE IMPACT AND PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK

Has the Green Circle helped you and your organisation to adopt sustainable practices and address your sustainability goals?

100% of participants answered Yes

How has it helped?

“Framework, guidelines and structure. The support has been amazing. It’s so great to come together with the other theatre companies in Sydney and unite to do this.” BELVOIR

“The connection and conversations with other companies and the opportunity to identify similar challenges across organisations.” MONKEY BAA

“Our involvement with the Green Circle has been invaluable. Connecting with other theatre companies has expanded our insights into what’s achievable and shown us that the roadblocks we once saw to reaching baseline goals are, in fact, possible to overcome. The Green Circle has also gained real momentum within our core staff, helping bring everyone on board with sustainability conversations – including those who were initially hesitant.” BELL

“The main way the Green Circle has helped is having a platform to share knowledge amongst us all and to understand that we’re all facing the same struggles, just on different scales. The obvious question is then how to overcome these struggles, with tips and tricks that help us reach the goals we’re all aiming for.” BELL

“Enhancing the ability to think 'outside the box', collaborating with other organisations has broadened the possibilities to bolster SDC’s sustainable practices.” SDC

“We all have our own company constraints and outcomes that we are chasing, but hearing from others and seeing the "movement" was beneficial. Being able to hear and see what other organisations are doing and feeling and struggling with has been the most valuable outcome.” SDC

“The production management focused templates have been easy to use and thoughtful.” GRIFFIN

“Green Circle has given us impetus to assess our current practices and tools to improve into the future.” BANGARRA

“Green Circle has helped to focus our collective energies into more streamlined manner. Hearing from people from the UK, who have already implemented these processes. My favourite thing that was said on this was "there’s no Green police, just give it a go and if you fail, try again". BANGARRA

“The team meetings have been very beneficial, especially.” PERFORMING LINES

Improvements:

“Only barrier for me was not being able to be in the room.” SDC (on tour!)

“It's always a struggle to push more constraints onto a workflow that is already underfunded.” SDC

“More time, more touch points (but this is an internal company and workload problem)” BELL

“Shorter, more targeted meetings, and online chats would be a great sideline project to be supported.” PERFORMING LINES

Achievements & Outcomes

- Belvoir: Basic Green Book sustainability benchmarks
- Monkey Baa: access to information and knowledge of our peers provided forward momentum in smaller practices across our organisation
- Bell: Having our Production Manager as part of the Circle has seen him championing sustainability with other creatives and opened up conversations and influence we just wouldn't have had otherwise
- Bell: a larger meaning and tangible goals for our company through this level of involvement and working as a group.
- SDC: expanding my network and resources that will assist future endeavours
- SDC: an understanding of the progress and struggle from the other GC orgs.
- Griffin: awareness of other organisations' practices and more drive to achieve sustainable results particularly when compared to our peers
- Bangarra: it has probably just sped up the improvement process. Sustainability and cutting emissions has been a long-term goal for the company, but GC has focused us to move ahead
- Bangarra: Along with the production department really focusing on what we can improve, we've also bought together various departments to look at what they're doing and what they can improve on. We've asked everyone to consider their own personal practices as well as those of the company.
- Performing Lines: better understanding of the tools available to measure impact.

How would you rate the Theatre Green Book Australia as a tool for driving sustainability goals in your organisation?

90% of participants rated The Green Book as helpful or very helpful.

What do you like about it, what works?

- Accessibility. It doesn't feel out of reach
- The Green Book represents a simple first step into the foray of sustainability in our industry
- Easy to read, relatable and most importantly, achievable, which makes it so much easier to put into practice
- Provides guidelines for streamlining practices
- I think an organisational shift from no sustainability expectations to an expectation of 40-60% reused materials in sets is difficult to achieve in practice as it requires a significant shift in design and production mindsets, as opposed to a more gradual or progressive implementation. However, I believe the relative urgency is necessary and understandable in context of the waste produced by our industry.
- Useful in setting baseline goals. Challenging trying to achieve said baseline goals.

- Lays out really clear guides for each step in the process and for various departments.
- A greater buy-in from the Senior and Artistic Directors from the orgs would be the most significant impact we could see.
- Well laid out, nice to look at – a lot of thought and process has gone into ensuring it can be applied to orgs on a large scale.

New sustainability strategies introduced this year by Green Circle organisations:

- 50% reused/recycled on build
- In the design process:
 - 1) embedding environmental considerations into our contracts; and
 - 2) including repurposing of existing assets into the design pipeline
- Monitoring and tracking of specific production elements through Circulate was really gobsmacking. I have used Circulate primarily for travel so when breaking down every step of the process to calculate the water usage and waste of making “mud” was huge. This awareness will impact future creative ideas.
- ‘Don’t be a Mug’ campaign
- Introduced 60L Recycle Smart bin into administration earlier this year for soft plastics, batteries, e-waste and other items (disposable coffee cups etc). Have expanded to add a 240L bin in loading dock for company-wide recycling - communicated to company to bring in small amounts from home.
- Bangarra already have in place “Care for Country” as a key principle, but this has really pushed us to look at the choices we make in our every day, as well as in our builds. We looked at how we’re creating set pieces and looked at particular materials. As such, when we built *Illume* and the build of a large set element - an oversized trumpet shell. We discussed various methods of building it, but decided on 3D printing in a recycled black ABS. This really helped us to ensure that we’re overachieving in our goals of 50% of everything onstage is from recycled or reused sources.
- Looking to include Green Baseline in contracts a RFQ
- We didn’t make any great impact sadly in the creative process, but our audiences did, with complaints for one of our shows about dropping so much visible plastic that it spilled out into the audience. These complaints led to us reducing the drop to less than half the quantity, and brought an environmental awareness to decisions made by the Artistic team.
- Ramping up our goals for re-using and recycling set and prop items in all our shows has led to a stronger conversation in the design process at the White Card stage.

What are your sustainability and environmental goals in 2026?

- Operations and Building
- Working towards a broader impact in future in all areas
- Focussing on pre-production planning and what creative modifications can be discussed/ modified to make a tour or long season more sustainable whilst maintaining the Director’s vision
- Having just completed a GHG audit with Pangolin Associates our Green Team will meet to implement their recommendations

- With the newly formed Green Team looking at further ways across the organisation we can reduce emissions, eg. digital programs & tickets, 100% green power, specific production build tracking
- We are working with The Australian Ballet on a new work and we're hoping to assist them into thinking along the same lines as we are. We are also remounting shows, which will include very little rebuilds.
- We are looking at each department and what we can change operationally to move towards more sustainable options.
- Keep working on environmental goals in production, especially with new budgets etc.
- Continuing to build our policies and contracts with more of a Green focus.
- Focusing on how we make our national tour and mainstage shows last longer and remount easier. We are also looking at how we can reduce our waste.

WHAT'S NEXT?

GC participants advocated for the following environmental resourcing and initiatives:

Sector Environmental Strategy	% GC participants:
Online library and shared storage space to share set, costumes, and production resources	90%
Eco literacy workshops designed for performing arts	60%
A workshop that builds to Theatre Green Book standards	60%
More training to use and implement the Theatre Green Book	50%
Funding to support hiring a Sustainability Manager	40%
More widely available resources for the industry to use – e.g. templates, lists of recommended suppliers etc	20%
New budget line to account for cost of environmentally sustainable practices – both in materials and time/labour	10%
Strategies to engage Artistic Teams - funding incentive?	10%
Strategies to drive companies to do better - funding/tax incentives?	10%