

# Case study

## Transgender Seeking...

### Details

**What:**

Sunny Drake is a writer, performer, producer and educator who has toured shows to over 60 cities in Australia, the USA, Canada and Europe, with a focus on multi-disciplinary work by queer and trans artists.

In 2015, Sunny toured his one-person theatre show, *Transgender Seeking...*, to regional Queensland communities.<sup>1</sup> The work is a fast-paced take on dating in an age of social media and technology, and features highly interactive projections and sound. The show was performed in both traditional and non-traditional venues for theatre.

The tour also focused on skills building with regional artists and community groups. Workshop topics included video and multimedia in live performance, autobiographical writing and independent tour production. In addition, four workshops were held with LGBTIQ+ young people.<sup>2</sup>

**When:**

February and March 2015

**Where:**

Cairns, Nambour, Hervey Bay, Toowoomba, Townsville, Gold Coast



*Transgender Seeking, Sunny Drake.*  
Photo by Hillary Green.

**Key stats:**

- 6 communities
- 10 performances reaching 668 attendees
- 24 workshops reaching 601 participants

**Arts Queensland contribution:**

\$20,930 – Playing Queensland Fund

**Contact for further information:**

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**Links:**

Video trailer: [http://www.sunnydrake.com/#!\\_gq-video](http://www.sunnydrake.com/#!_gq-video)

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<sup>1</sup> The name of the work has since been changed to *No Strings (Attached)*.

<sup>2</sup> LGBTIQ+ – lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, queer and questioning.

## Outcomes

- Feedback from attendees was very strong, with 97% of the 155 people surveyed rating the work as 'excellent' or 'good'. LGBTQ+ audiences appreciated the relevance of the content to their own lived experiences. Other audience members enjoyed learning about transgender identities in an entertaining environment and were surprised at the extent to which they also related personally to the show's content.

*Heartwarming, hilarious, intimate and refreshingly confronting performance.*

*Even as a straight man I identified with the struggle to accept self and handle parental issues.*

*Well worth travelling four hours for.*

- Workshop participants gained new perspectives and skills in performance making, and young LGBTQ+ participants reported increased confidence to assert themselves.
- All six presenters indicated they would consider presenting work by Sunny again.

*The impact of Sunny's show and workshops will be felt long into the future in this community.*

- Non-theatre venues that presented the show found the experience challenging, but were pleased with the new skills and capacity they developed to deliver arts events in the future.



*Transgender Seeking, Sunny Drake.  
Photo by Hillary Green.*

## Learnings and reflections

Sunny reflects on the benefits of collaborating with local community groups to deliver the tour, including performances and workshops:

*Providing the community presenters with mentoring in how to present a theatre work was worthwhile as they were able to bring a very grassroots audience.*

*Workshops presented by community groups (separate from the performance presenters) also increased audiences for the show.*

The greatest challenge encountered was presenting content which some communities perceived as confronting:

*Whilst we were delighted with the audience response to the show and presenters also got introduced to new audience members, we ran into some challenges in terms of overall performance attendance ...*

*Transgender content was a new area for each presenter and some regional areas were more conservative than the presenters had anticipated.*

As a result of this experience, Sunny has made some changes to his marketing strategy:

*I have decided to rename the work to 'No Strings (Attached)' so that people don't immediately label it as only relevant to transgender communities. The show is more broadly relatable and some presenters found the work difficult to market because of the assumptions people had about who would and wouldn't enjoy the show. There are other aspects of the show that we would also have marketed differently – making sure that LGBTQ+ communities knew there was something special in the work for them, but that broader audiences would also enjoy the work.*