



DASSH Conference Adelaide 2024

Professor Anne Pender

Kidman Chair in Australian Studies and
Director, JM Coetzee Centre for Creative
Practice, University of Adelaide

COMEDY COUNTRY

Australian Performance Comedy as an Agent of Change

Comedy Country

Comedy Country is a large [Australian Research Council Linkage Project](#) that investigates the impact of performance comedy in Australia. Focussing on the artform and the industry in which it is situated, the project hypothesis is that since the 1950s, comic performance has not merely reflected a changing Australia but has been a powerful catalyst that has helped shape and transform Australian social, civic and cultural expression, as well as national and diverse identities.

Comedy Country engages with diverse forms of performance, including: stand up, sketch, situation, mockumentary, revue, burlesque, cabaret, and music. It also investigates the settings in which these genres are performed, notably live performance on stage, in cinema, broadcast on radio and television, in recorded media, and via digital streaming and social media.

The project examines representation, participation and themes around class, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and other modes of identity and belonging. Comedy Country also has a major focus on Indigenous comedy of all kinds across all media and performance, including in Indigenous languages where it subverts colonial violence and racist narratives.

The project brings together an interdisciplinary team drawn from three Universities, five leading collecting institutions, two major comedy festivals and a media production company.

About the project

Comedy Country mobilises the history of comedy to engage its present and future. It does so by addressing key questions:

- How has comedy contributed to widening inclusion and democratisation, and how can this continue as the industry evolves?
- How, in the light of current cultural, technological and industrial changes, can the nation's rich tradition in comedy speak to the present?
- How are we to address gaps in the archive such as Indigenous and LGBTQI+ voices, recognising their contribution to 'nation making' decolonisation and diversity?
- How can Australia's traditions of comic performance be adapted to emerging conditions?
- What policies and practices will ensure their continued vitality?

Comedy Country's chief investigators are [Professor Tony Moore](#) and [Professor Steve Vizard](#) from Monash University, [Professor Anne Pender](#) and [Professor Mark Carroll](#) from University of Adelaide and [Professor Mark Gibson](#) from RMIT University. Partner Investigators are [Susan Provan AO](#) (CEO of the Melbourne International Comedy Festival) and [Steve Thomas](#) (Creative Director of Roar Film).

The project's partner organisations have deep connections to the history and performance of comedy in Australia, they include: the [National Film and Sound Archive](#), [Melbourne International Comedy Festival](#), [Arts Centre Melbourne](#), [Adelaide Fringe](#), [Adelaide Festival Centre Trust](#), [History Trust of South Australia](#), [State Library Victoria](#), [State Library of South Australia](#) and [Roar Film](#).

The project also collaborates with the [Australasian Humour Studies Network](#), the largest network of scholars dedicated to the study of comedy and humour in Australia; and [Professor Maryrose Casey](#), a leading scholar of Indigenous Performance.

[Read more about the Comedy Country team.](#)



ARC Linkage Project: Comedy Country Partners



Australian Government
Australian Research Council



MONASH
University



MELBOURNE
INTERNATIONAL
COMEDY
FESTIVAL



STATE LIBRARY
VICTORIA



RMIT
UNIVERSITY

* ADELAIDE
* FRINGE *



Adelaide
Festival
Centre

