



MEDIA RELEASE - DRAFT

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MINISTER APPLAUDS DISNEY ON 15 YEARS OF *THE LION KING*

Minister for Tourism and Major Events, George Souris, today congratulated the producer, cast and crew of one of the most popular musicals in history, *The Lion King*, on a remarkable 15 years on Broadway, almost a year ahead of its return to Sydney in December 2013.

"I commend President of Disney Theatrical Group, Thomas Schumacher and the various casts and crews of *The Lion King* over the past 15 years who have captivated audiences on Broadway and around the world, including here in NSW," Mr Souris said.

Since its Broadway premiere on November 13, 1997, *The Lion King* has become a worldwide phenomenon, with 19 productions around the globe having been seen by more than 63 million people. It is the highest grossing and fifth longest-running show in Broadway history and is one of only six productions in theatre history to play for ten years or more both on Broadway and the West End.

"It has been almost a decade since *The Lion King* musical premiered in Australia at the Capitol Theatre Sydney to enormous success. After opening on 16 October 2003, the Australian production held 720 performances over 91 weeks and played to an audience of more than 1.3 million people.

"I anticipate when *The Lion King* returns to Sydney in December next year, regular theatre-goers from NSW, interstate and overseas will welcome the return of this fantastic musical. It is also certain to attract a new generation of audience".

Mr Souris said, "There is no doubt major musical productions drive tourism, enhance the cultural life of the city and generate economic benefit for the people of NSW.

"We expect the 2013 production will attract 50,000 visitors from interstate and overseas generating \$36 million in new money for the State.

"Securing internationally popular, high quality Broadway and West End productions such as *The Lion King*, in addition to Australian and World Premiere musicals including *The Addams Family* and *Strictly Ballroom*, cements Sydney's position as Australia's cultural capital and premier city for major first run musicals."

Managing Director of Disney Theatrical Productions Australia, James Thane, said: "We are thrilled at the way Sydney audiences have embraced our productions of *The Lion King*, *Beauty and the Beast* and *Mary Poppins* over the last 15 years at the historic and beautiful Capitol Theatre. Not only does the Capitol feel like a second home to us, but our Sydney-based theatrical operation is significant as one of three international offices including New York and London.

"The personal commitment of Minister Souris and Destination NSW to reach the widest of audiences around Australia and the Asia Pacific region is most impressive."

Based on the 1994 Disney animated film of the same name, with music by Elton John, lyrics by Tim Rice and a musical score created by Hans Zimmer, *The Lion King* is the winner of more than 70 major international awards, including six 1998 Tony Awards and the 1998 GRAMMY Award for Best Musical Show Album.