

# strength in numbers

## sharing information and resources

IN A SMALLER MARKETPLACE, IT IS LIKELY THAT ARTS ATTENDERS ARE ACTIVE ACROSS A NUMBER OF ORGANISATIONS, ARTFORMS AND EVENTS. THIS MEANS THAT SHARED MAILINGS, LOBBYING AND PLANNING MAKE A LOT OF SENSE FOR THE CUSTOMER, SAVE MARKETING DOLLARS AND GIVE STRENGTH TO THE ARTS COMMUNITY IN A REGION.

DESTINATION: **Townsville Qld**

COMPANY: **Professional Arts Working Group**



### Jam For-T

Joint Arts Marketing for Townsville representing

- Community Music Centre
- Cultural Development Office
- Dance North
- James Cook University -  
College of Visual Arts, Music and Theatre
- La Luna Youth Arts
- Museum of Tropical Queensland
- Perc Tucker Gallery
- Pinnacles Gallery
- Theatre Up North
- The Australian Festival of Chamber Music
- The Burdekin Theatre and Music Loft
- The Lab
- Townsville Civic Theatre
- Townsville Museum
- World Interplay '99
- Tropic Line Theatre Company
- Umbrella Studio
- Woomera Aboriginal Corporation

**Miles ahead met with a number of PAWG's member organisations, who, individually and collectively, are making Townsville a dynamic regional cultural centre.**

Whether an arts organisation is located in a capital city, major regional city or small country town, the audience for any particular event will depend on an individual's ability or willingness to pay, their interest in what is being offered and their ability and willingness to travel, both in time and distance. What can differ in the regions are the values that people have that might or might not compel them to come out in the wet season or along country roads, where they may very well run into kangaroos.

Lorna Hempstead, coordinator of the Professional Arts Working Group (PAWG) in Townsville, confirms this and relates her experience in the bush. "You are stuck in a place miles from anywhere so you make your own entertainment. Once you play social squash every Tuesday, you don't want to disrupt everybody else's squash because there's a one-night only show coming to town on Tuesday."

Although Townsville has a large regional population of 140,000 with a long history of artistic excellence and community support, PAWG, trading as Jam for-T (Joint Arts Marketing for Townsville), recognises that even the most highly motivated population can only support so much arts activity. So this membership organisation worked strategically towards developing a database that can grow audiences by providing them with an ongoing arts and entertainment information service that is based on personal preference from a selection of designated artforms.

Established as a pilot program in 1990 with two-year funding from the Australia Council, PAWG undertakes marketing activities under its trading name Jam for-T. It is currently run by a part-time coordinator and a membership of 18 organisations. Each member organisation pays an annual subscription, ranging from \$50 to \$2,600 determined by what they can afford. This provides the base to pay for ongoing activities. While there is little left to support new initiatives, PAWG and its member organisations, individually and collectively, have managed to make remarkable inroads into putting Townsville on the international map.

Collaboration in market research, promotion, lobbying and public relations takes place, as well as shared professional development, information, communication and research, offsetting the common difficulties of organisations in regional areas, such as overburdened schedules and small budgets. Tangible outcomes from their marketing objectives include a database of 15,000, a regular calendar circulated to the local and regional media and the recent coordination of Townsville's first international arts festival.



Tropic Line Theatre image

The early days of the PAWG in Townsville saw individual organisations fearful of letting go of their mailing lists. A simple exercise was devised by Lorna, the then General Manager of Dance North and chair of PAWG, to sort through the combined mailing lists of member arts organisations to look at the crossover in the arts/cultural area. Approximately 300 surnames were entered starting with B or H or P, and only one person was found to belong to one specific list. Although the closeness of this 'bush town' meant that organisations were well aware of each other's friends groups (a significant part of their mailing lists), this exercise confirmed that residents belong to a number of organisations, as a result of the limited selection of events and performances in any one artform. Competition was not for each other's mailing list, but for developing more performances and exhibitions to meet the demand of interested audiences.

In developing their entry form for the database, a number of categories were established, which required a ticking-off of boxes and a reply. Initially, they had a free-post number, but when research indicated that respondents did not mind paying for a stamp to be on their list, they decided to save the money.

PAWG's brochure for their mailing list is only available in Townsville; however, the database contains addresses for people outside of the area. Local organisations have learned that these people are important to mail to: PAWG's research revealed these people regularly visit Townsville for extended periods and have a keen interest in what is going on. (They may be on corporate guided tours or working in the Supreme or Magistrate courts. And further investigation of the mailing list has revealed that a number of people on the list with Brisbane addresses spend at least 50% of the year in Townsville on court work.) PAWG believes that the extra postage for ex-Townsville addresses is worth it, because the individuals have a link with the community that brings them there regularly and they have taken the time to fill out a form to keep themselves informed about what's on in Townsville.

Positive results from direct marketing can be achieved through the development of mailing lists from a regional arts organisation's membership, friends, visitor and client information. Accuracy of mailing lists is critical to avoid wasting valuable time and resources.

That the Professional Arts Working Group has clean databases is proven by their low return rate. They stress the importance of culling, and of insisting that organisations who use the list have a return address, either of the participating organisation or that of PAWG- and that they provide a stamp to use. The coordinator works closely with first-time users of the database list to help with decisions on distribution and relevance, based on sound knowledge of the region.

Returns are immediately deleted from the system. Originating organisations are sent a list of any changes. PAWG receives a handful of returns a fortnight after a mailing, and for a print label run of 700, a probable return rate is about 10 to 20. PAWG has found it more cost-effective to wait for the returns before mailing again.

The cost of buying labels from the list varies for students, members and local non-profit and commercial organisations. They have found that commercial companies don't use direct mail, because they focus on television, radio and print advertising. Trust is important in a cooperative initiative, and PAWG has only had its list taken without further payment once. However, 'sleeper' names and addresses protect the list from theft and any offence is quickly resolved between PAWG and the offender.

The total database currently includes 15,000 names that are segmented into categories. A standard run for most artforms would be about 550 - 750 names in Townsville.

	member	commercial
under 300 names	\$25	\$50
300 - 600	\$40	\$70
600 - 1000	\$60	\$100

The coordinator uses discretion in pricing if the print run is, say, 603 names. Labels are usually hand-delivered in Townsville; if sent by mail, an Express Post bag is used and postage is included in the invoice. While many small organisations still find it difficult to afford these rates, some of Townsville's organisations may order ten runs a year.

Over the years, PAWG has developed many ways to increase the list. In the beginning, the regional electricity board included an application form into their billing envelopes to all residents in the region. Now, application forms are placed around Townsville at arts and cultural venues and, at times, in places like local hairdressing salons. An advertisement that could be faxed or mailed was placed in Townsville's inaugural International Arts Festival brochure in 1997. The program itself was household delivered by volunteers. Five hundred and fifty new names were added to the list.



Database marketing is about using information you have collected, which is normally stored in a computer system, but can be effectively recorded on index cards, about your clients and audiences. A database can be an important asset, but culling is essential to be cost-effective.

In designing your database, information that can be used for marketing strategies needs to be determined for your entries. Collecting information for your database provides you with a greater understanding of your target markets. Surveys and personal contact are just a few of the ways to get this valuable information.



# marketing information – systems and use

<b>DESTINATION:</b> Adelaide SA	
<b>COMPANY:</b> South Australian Country Arts Trust	

all of the theatres, by event type (dance, comedy, drama, popular music, classical music, etc.), by frequency (four or more visits a year) or by subscribers.

**Regular reporting will produce analyses of:**

- the average transaction level
- average houses (dollars, paid attendance, by price categories - full price, family price, concession)
- artform cross over (patrons of one event type who attend other event types)
- payment and booking methods
- booking patterns - who books what, how far out

**The outcomes include:**

- well-defined targets for small-budget marketing
- the possibility of identifying areas where people have the characteristics of a particular audience segment but who currently do not buy tickets
- ongoing customer analysis, to show how trends are changing (for example, fewer people buying more, more people buying less)
- mapping the success of campaigns aimed at younger audiences
- plotting the average ticket yield - and if this yield is being eroded, which discounting schemes are responsible
- the ability to predict more accurately average ticket prices for budgeting and cashflow analyses
- comparing campaigns with previous years, on a week-by-week or day-by-day basis
- measuring campaign results - sales are plotted on a graph against marketing activity
- producing reports by artforms, time of the year, financial reporting periods, etc.

All this . . . and all it takes is standardised input of information and good reporting software.

The box office is the first interface with an organisation's audience and is, literally, the "nerve-centre" of an organisation. As such, it is important that time, resources and support are given to ensure the operation accords with best principles in customer service and meets corporate requirements.



**Standardising information management for:**

- Middleback Theatre, Whyalla
- Chaffey Theatre, Renmark
- Northern Festival Centre, Port Pirie
- Sir Robert Helpmann Theatre, Mount Gambier

These four regional performing arts centres in South Australia are managed by the South Australian Country Arts Trust, a statutory authority established by the South Australian Government and funded primarily by Arts South Australia.

**To implement a program that would standardise information management across the four regional theatres, the Trust engaged consultant David Eedle of Dramatic Improvements. This program has been supported by the Audience Development & Advocacy Division of the Australia Council. Important issues for consideration were:**

- season programming
  - identification of audience segments
  - target marketing
  - plotting trends in attendance patterns
  - targeted sponsorship and partnership programs
- The Trust envisaged that the standardisation and reorganisation of the theatres' databases would:
- provide customer information and customer profiles
  - improve customer service
  - develop targeted direct mail campaigns to sell performances and support loyalty programs

Stage One of the project aimed to standardise information collection across all of the Trust's theatres.

*Miles ahead* joined David at the Northern Festival Centre for a one day training session with box office managers and staff from all four theatres.

His opening remarks emphasised the value of good information that can be easily accessed in terms of customer service. "Knowing a customer's history means you can be more personal in your dealings with customers. High involvement purchases bond a customer to your organisation. You can confirm the wisdom of a patron's choice of performance, extend their choice by recommending other shows that are coming up . . . and generally increase their comfort levels and familiarity with the theatre. Having that patron's buying history on the screen helps you feel more confident when dealing with a customer."

As a result of the training day, all box offices now record their information in the same way: each field is given a designated role - title, street name, suburb, postcode, etc.

**A myriad of other issues was discussed and agreed upon that day, including:**

- one record only for each purchaser (a preferred mailing address option will enable mailings to be directed to Mr and Mrs, or Mary and Joe - if they are a friend of the theatre). Should Mary and Joe each purchase tickets on different occasions, a way needed to be found to cross reference the mailing preference. The purpose of this is to keep the patron-buying histories pure - the history lives with the person making the purchase.

- linking the "sit withs" in a subscription back to the primary subscriber, so that each "sit with" is recorded
- staff completing profile details: for example, age, children, gender (from observation and chat)
- that anyone purchasing a ticket in the under-25 age bracket would be treated as a hero and mailed individually, whether or not they lived with their parents who were also patrons
- applying the interest codes (100 possibilities)
- developing the Tickex system, so that a patron's phone number could be the primary identifier

At the end of a six month period, Stage Two of the project will commence. Using the data collected and refined under the new system of information management, demographic and attendance profiles of the theatres' audiences will be compiled.

**What does this mean?**

Audiences can be geo-coded (this links addresses to the census collector districts - around 150 to 200 households) and a "lifestyle" or socio-demographic map produced based on Australia Post's Forty Faces of Australia.

The geo-coding can be based on all the usual census criteria - age, gender, income, education, employment, etc.- providing profiles for each of the four theatres or

“THE CRAFT FAIR HAS UNITED THE COMMUNITY IT STARTED A DIALOGUE BETWEEN PEOPLE WHO MIGHT NEVER HAVE REALISED WHAT THEY HAD IN COMMON WITH EACH OTHER.”

DESTINATION: Deloraine Tas	
COMPANY: Tasmanian Craft Fair	

Well-known watercolourist and Deloraine gallery owner Tony Smibert agrees. “The fair is having a lasting impact on Deloraine. This is a unique area, somewhere everyone can live with dignity, whether rich or poor. It is an area that has fostered creative ideas.”

Nominated Australian Community of the Year in 1997, another event that has had some influence is the **Yarns Project**, a community arts project involving many locals and resulting in a permanent textile display. “Our future lies in managing the success carefully and I think that can be done,” says Tony. With Rotary’s firm and committed leadership, there is every indication that this will be the case.

## building partnerships that work

On the first weekend of November each year, 30,000 people - mostly Tasmanians, but a sizeable proportion from the mainland - visit the historic rural township of Deloraine, located between Launceston and Devonport in northern Tasmania. The crowds are descending upon a craft fair that has grown to be the largest event of its kind in the southern hemisphere. With 500 exhibitors in 10 venues, the products on sale range from contemporary jewellery, glass and woodwork to cottage and folk crafts.

This is a craft fair run entirely by volunteers: The event is managed by the Rotary Club of Deloraine, and their organisation is remarkable. As Rotary president John Bennett explains: “Everyone in Rotary runs a business of one kind or another. People are used to making decisions and we have a definite structure, where responsibilities are clearly defined and allocated”. The skills that the Rotarians are applying to the business of marketing craft are of the highest order. John is just one example of the many successful local residents involved in the event (his family owns Ashgrove Farm Cheese, an award-winning fine food business).

The director is key to the event’s success, and a typical example of Rotary’s good planning is their system to address the issue of burnout. The director holds the position for two years. And in the second year, the incoming director understudies the current director. “There is room for new ideas and approaches to come through under this system and it also takes the pressure off families - it’s a pretty time-consuming involvement,” says John.

Evaluating each event and making changes as a result is another built-in element of Rotary’s processes. This includes listening to the artists who participate, many of whom live in or near Deloraine. From its early beginnings in 1980 as a promotional event, when just 30 local craftspeople exhibited, the fair now draws participants from all over the state and is increasingly looking at how it can develop a national and international reputation. Local artists remain an important core of the event, and the Deloraine Craft Art Professionals group is the key link with Rotary.

“Rotary has been the ideal group to organise this event,” comments Mary Phillips-McLachlan, who, with her husband Hugh McLachlan, owns the McLachlan Designer Jewellery Studio just outside Launceston. “The Craft Fair has united the community It started a dialogue between people who might never have realised what they had in common with each other.” While the McLachlans’ work is marketed in sophisticated outlets interstate, the fair showcases their work to Tasmanians and is valued as a significant annual marketing event.

Strategic partnerships or collaborations can be created for mutual gain and ongoing relationships.

“The best way to build mutual trust among collaborators is to get to work. Talking and planning are not enough.”


**How the Arts Can Prosper Through Strategic Collaborations**, Joanne Scheff and Philip Kotler, *Harvard Business Review*, January - February 1996

**The authors state that collaborative success builds on key elements that maximise benefits and minimise risk, including:**

- setting goals
- building consensus
- building trust
- communicating
- designing leadership and involvement structures
- committing adequate resources

“EVERYONE IN ROTARY RUNS A BUSINESS OF ONE KIND OR ANOTHER. PEOPLE ARE USED TO MAKING DECISIONS AND WE HAVE A DEFINITE STRUCTURE, WHERE RESPONSIBILITIES ARE CLEARLY DEFINED AND ALLOCATED”

# strategies for recognition

<b>DESTINATION:</b> Alice Springs NT	
<b>COMPANY:</b> Central Australian Aboriginal Media Assoc.(CAAMA) Music	

**“WE KNOW THAT THERE IS AN AUDIENCE OF PEOPLE WHO WANT TO HEAR OUR STORIES, HEAR OUR MUSIC, HEAR HOW WE PRODUCE THEM. WE NEED MORE EXPOSURE; IT IS NICE TO HAVE A LITTLE BIT, BUT WE NEED MORE.”**

*Richard Micaleff, Head of Music, CAAMA*

## Strategic steps

Increasing Aboriginal expression is a primary objective for the Central Australian Aboriginal Media Association (CAAMA). Beginning as Imparja Records in 1980, initial releases were made in the communities using a cassette recorder from the boot of a car. This initial, if somewhat antiquated, method of recording was a response to the huge demand from communities to have their music played on 8KIN FM CAAMA radio.

From this came music and television productions, a shop and a warehouse.

CAAMA receives funding from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) and all of its three enterprises or departments - radio, film and television, and music - earn income and are becoming more self sufficient. Music was 80% self supporting in 1997, which came about through increased income and economic streamlining.

CAAMA is a music label with three main objectives that relate to their different marketing strategies:

- One, the development of Aboriginal arts, which does not produce an economic outcome in the short term, but keeps CAAMA in touch with its constituency of musicians in remote areas
- Two, the promotion of Aboriginal culture through the production and sales of high-quality masters (developing the label and studio as commercial operations)
- Three, cultural and social responsibility to Aboriginal people

Its third objective of cultural and social responsibility to Aboriginal people includes a language maintenance strategy through the development of whole CDs or individual songs in language, which has realised positive financial outcomes, including growing international sales.

“Our bush tour strategy involves touring around the bush, encouraging bands to perform live, underwriting and helping festivals. That way we stay in touch with our constituency, measure talent development, market cassettes, talk to bands about their recording potential and just remain visible.”

As a leader in indigenous marketing operations, CAAMA recognises the difficulties of marketing with limited resources, especially in the music sector.

Admitting that they are known a little nationally, but virtually unknown internationally, organisational marketing strategies include branding the name of CAAMA Music beyond Central Australia.

CAAMA Music has approximately 400 artists on its label. They have ten CD products nationally and 40 cassette products.

Getting exposure in the live music scene is an essential ingredient for success for both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal artists in the music industry. The Australian music industry demands touring. CAAMA Music has found that their live touring engagements are limited because of the extra costs of \$3,000 to \$5,000 to get artists to the big cities.

Even when subsidy is available, there is still difficulty touring any artist from remote Australia. Professional development is essential for their marketing growth strategies to help community-based artists.

## Determining price

CAAMA's calling card is a niche in the market involving Aboriginal cultural identity. Resisting price-downward pressures, they are working on building up the market through establishing the brand name of CAAMA nationally and internationally as a quality music product that is unique - and enhancing the value of the product by marketing it at a premium price and not the bucket shop price that Australia is usually pressured to provide abroad. CAAMA concedes that this is a punt, as well as a commercial decision. At a lower price, they may be able to penetrate the market but they won't be able to establish a market price that will make enough money to develop a future for all of their artists.

Its local strategy focuses on its primary constituency and concentrates on the production of commercial cassettes for artists. Artists are recognising that this is part of a process of becoming professional musicians. If they decide to return to CAAMA to take their music a step further, they are then introduced to marketing concepts including costs, production time, touring and media relations. Artists who return to CAAMA become actively involved in the development of individual marketing strategies.

National marketing involves touring and procuring invitations to national festivals. For many of their artists, a big step is to go to Sydney to play in front of bigger audiences. The next steps are international touring and influencing the Australian music industry to look at Aboriginal artists in a different light and provide favourable press.

CAAMA handles its own distribution, but, until recently, also worked with national distributors. They found the smaller, independent distribution companies the best. (A distributor is usually orientated around a certain market sector and it is important to have a distributor that is the right match in size for your organisation, such as Mushroom or Shock was to CAAMA.)

**“WE HAVE A WIDE VARIETY OF ARTISTS FROM OUR COUNTRY ROOTS TO OUR INDEPENDENT, ASPIRING, COMMERCIAL POP ARTISTS...”**

We also have our language products, which we market as world music. We are aware of market trends for dance and techno, so we are looking at the potential of that sort of thing too.”

Nationally their market is mainly non-Aboriginal. Non-Aboriginals in urban centres tend to buy compilation albums (a mixture) and these people tend to be people who are also interested in reggae and world music, people who are concerned with environmental and social issues, who are interested in cultures and who want to hear great new music styles rather than commercial pop. Promotional strategies that make links with this market segment, in Australia and overseas, are of increasing importance to CAAMA Music.

Branding is about promoting distinguishing characteristics. It is about perseverance. Being successful in developing a brand requires more than an understanding of the product's value to the consumer. It is about developing a brand that has a role in their life.

Products have features and benefits; a brand involves values and relationships. Establishing a brand requires building on these values and relationships through marketing plans and promotional strategies that develop the public's relationship to a product and the importance of the brand.

Price becomes less relevant when the public is aware of the qualities and advantages of products and makes a preferential decision.

## Brand building is a long term process requiring:

- consistency - identifying benefit
- personality - the method and tone of communication
- presentation - the creative expression
- position - the consumer's view

Successful campaigns are built on insights that make the right connections with the type of product and its brand benefits - matching its enduring characteristics to the consumer.

Consumer insights provide the emotional values that a brand requires; relevance provides an intimate connection with the product. Perseverance is the key to ensure that a value is accumulated over time.

**IN METROPOLITAN CENTRES, VOLUNTEERS ARE USUALLY THE VALUED AUXILIARY TO PAID ADMINISTRATION. THE MILES AHEAD TEAM FOUND THAT IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA THE VOLUNTEER IS THE ESSENTIAL "MAKE-IT-HAPPEN" PERSON, WORKING DAY AND NIGHT TO GET EVENTS AND IDEAS OFF THE GROUND. EVEN WHEN AN ORGANISATION GROWS TO A POINT WHERE MANY PEOPLE ARE PAID, VOLUNTEERS STILL REMAIN VITAL TO AN ORGANISATION'S SURVIVAL.**

# volunteers making it happen

Mallacoota is one of the most isolated towns in Victoria, near the far south-eastern coastal border of New South Wales, with a population of 1,200, which includes many artists, a pristine natural environment and some interesting statistics: the presence of 40 or so abalone divers in the township gives it the highest proportion of millionaires per capita in the country. Omit their income, and the average family income is only \$15,000 - the lowest in the state.

The annual Mallacoota Festival - known as the Festival of the Southern Ocean since 1995, connecting it with other communities on the 38th parallel in the southern hemisphere - draws in the high visitor level of 6,000, which is unusual for an event that has retained a very strong community and youth arts focus since it began in 1980: visitor levels on this scale tend to be for more mainstream music festivals such as country, jazz, folk or blues. An original piece of theatre is written and performed by the community every year, an Australian first, and the festival is rapidly creating new links with the fields of marine science, ecology, ethnic cultures, trade and international relations.

Attendances are growing each year, attributed in the past largely to word of mouth, the large number of free events and the user-friendly reputation that the festival has gained. Recent publicity has focused on drawing in untapped new audiences from over the border in Canberra and New South Wales. Market research shows high levels of awareness in East Gippsland, where 65% of audiences come from, so the decision was made to serve these audiences with information and reserve more aggressive publicity tactics for new areas.

The festival has always relied on wide community support and volunteer labour, which comes from all quarters of the local population. As festival director Lindy Bartholomew explains, volunteers can make a direct link between their contribution to the festival and the benefits it brings to the community:

"Because we are an isolated town, the festival began with a strong impetus from parents who wanted to expose their kids to the arts in the community. That means that many of our volunteers are parents."

**DESTINATION:** Mallacoota Vic

**COMPANY:** Mallacoota Festival  
- Festival of the Southern Ocean



Others are local business people, who understand that the event is a major economic boost for the town. "The festival is the single most important event that helps to make businesses in Mallacoota viable. For example, turnover during this time makes it possible for businesses like the local deli and the gift shop to stay open all year round."

So, perceived benefit is one of the major drivers for volunteer involvement. Another factor is the contrast between Mallacoota's small population of 1,200 and the thousands of visitors who arrive for the festival. As Lindy says, "It's clear that it couldn't happen without help from locals". Help can be anything from working at the doors for events, being part of the production crew, helping with clean up or moving chairs from one venue to another with a trailer on the back of a car.

Volunteer burnout can and does occur. "It's something we're very aware of. We run a debrief each year, and that's an opportunity for people to get things off their chest. Volunteering is always a choice, but people do tend to come back again the next year, even if it has been stressful." Volunteer contributions are recognised, in terms of hours, in the festival's annual report, with credits noted for those who contributed more than ten hours.

Another element in managing a volunteer-run event of this scale successfully is structuring roles carefully. In addition to Lindy's part-time paid role, the Mallacoota Arts Council provides a volunteer management team. Positions such as sponsorship, publicity and performing arts and music coordinators, on which a great deal of responsibility rest, have defined job descriptions and receive a small honorarium. Someone from the management team is present at every event, overseeing the door takings and coordinating other volunteers.

A volunteer coordinator is appointed each year, a position regarded as a key management role. In 1998, the volunteer coordinator worked very closely with the events coordinator on box office and door taking management, developing training for both. As a result, the entire box office for 1998 was managed by volunteers.

Financially, the Festival of the Southern Ocean shows a turnover of about \$60,000, with grants of around \$20,000 and the remainder as box office. But it is clear that the event is much greater than those figures show, both in terms of the massive contribution volunteers make and the contribution it makes to Mallacoota. "Each year more and more people get involved", says Lindy. "Some wonderful things happen . . . like the guy this year who cycled all the way from Melbourne and arrived in the office saying 'what can I do to help?'. I sent him off to the Visual Arts Tent and he spent the whole two weeks working with the artists there."

## Volunteering . . .

The volunteer workforce is the backbone of a great deal of regional arts activity. Many organisations give volunteers position descriptions and training, recognising that the arts cannot exist without them. Increasingly, the value of volunteer-time is given a dollar value, so the volunteer too feels the importance of their contribution. Training, defined roles, adapting tasks to suit volunteers' availability, squeezing honorariums out of the budget or providing recognition and feedback opportunities are some of the ways that successful volunteer programs are managed. It's also important that volunteers can make connections between the organisation or event they are supporting and some personal feeling of community benefit. Most

crucial of all may be to maintain a feeling of openness and accessibility about an event to encourage new participation, and a feeling of choice for those who come back. Volunteer centres operate in most state capitals of Australia and organisations such as regional gallery associations have information about volunteer training and management.



Photo: Frances Andrijich

"LAST MONTH, IN WA'S FAR NORTH, A COMMUNITY RECOGNISED ITS HISTORY, CULTURE AND FUTURE WITH AN OUTPOURING OF SUPPORT AND SPIRIT. THE PEOPLE OF BROOME RECLAIMED THE SHINJU MATSURI FESTIVAL FOR THEIR OWN IN VIBRANT, COLOURFUL STYLE. . . BEHIND THE COMMITTEE WAS NEW SHINJU MATSURI PRESIDENT KEVIN FONG - DESCRIBED BY FELLOW ORGANISERS AS 'NOTHING SHORT OF A SUPERMAN'."

*The West magazine, September 13, 1997*

# putting the community in the driver's seat

"An indigenous multicultural Australian" and a "Broome boy" with years of experience working in government and for accounting firms, Kevin Fong "comes out of the back room when needed". His strong sense of community and professionalism are put into action when he is "out front", whether as managing director of Goolarri Media Enterprises or President of the Shinju Matsuri Festival.

Kevin will be the first person in Broome to tell you that his community is full of individuals making things happen. The Shinju Matsuri Festival in 1997 is a testament to that, achieving a program of 73 different events, involving all community groups, including the first-time participation of the Saam Karem Torres Strait Islanders Corporation.

However, Kevin took on the role of President when this historic community cultural event was in danger of being discontinued because the community felt it had been taken away from them and had no interest in being involved.

An important cultural event for the Broome community groups, Shinju Matsuri's timing is tied to the moon and the tides. Literally translated from the Japanese, Shinjui Matsuri means the Festival of the Pearl. Based on traditional Chinese, Malay and Japanese celebrations of respect for their ancestors, the Festival developed over the years as a cultural tourism initiative, bringing people to the town and giving the community a boost. Over the years, the timing changed, and commercial events took precedence over community ones.

The objectives for the 1997 festival included a rekindling of community spirit and an opportunity to showcase the region's cultural diversity to its new residents and visitors. Strategies developed by the committee included contact with the cultural "gatekeepers" to get their permission and blessings, and consultation with all segments of the community.

One of Kevin's grandfathers was a head pearl diver and he remembered the stories of the Aboriginals and Asians who were literally thrown into the deep without any diving equipment. To rekindle the original spirit of the festival, Kevin recommended a dedication ceremony including a plaque for the divers who had created the industry. Speeches rekindled memories and set the theme in Broome for community control. Plans for an indigenous statue to stand alongside the others in Chinatown are underway for the 1998 festival.

The festival name was registered for the first time and a new logo developed to reflect a contemporary feel that was artistic and marketable. Festival results were impressive and included:

- Aboriginal smoking ceremonies that recognised traditional owners and a carnivale of nations with flag-flying
- an inaugural youth event designed by youth in community
- \$160,000 worth of sponsorship

In 1998, in association with the Olympic Arts Festivals and as part of its second festival, *A Sea Change*, the Shinju Matsuri Committee is organising an outdoor concert at the Broome Lighthouse.

DESTINATION: Broome WA	
COMPANY: Shinju Matsuri	



Photo: Frances Andrijich

# reviewing and evaluating your track

Brambuk Living Cultural Centre lies on the edge of the Wimmera District at Halls Gap in the Grampian/Gariwerd National Park. Architect Greg Burgess worked closely with the five Aboriginal communities of South West Victoria over more than four years to plan a building, made of mudclay bricks, stone and bark poles, which represents the myths and legends of the area. Surrounded by a garden of over 6,000 plants, the roof swoops over the organic structure like the wings of a giant cockatoo. Visitors are invited to interpret the images conjured up by the structure.

**Brambuk, which has won cultural tourism as well as architectural awards, has the aims of:**

- reconciliation and education
- provision of training and job opportunities for Aboriginal people in the hospitality industry

Each community sends a representative to sit on the board and the staff of 28 is led by general manager Tim Chatfield.

Forty thousand people visit Brambuk each year, a significant proportion being f.i.t.s (free and independent travellers) from all over the world. With assets of over three million dollars, Brambuk's activities include cultural programs and tours, retail, conference facilities, a backpackers' hostel, and the broad responsibility of being the traditional custodians of the area.

As one of the traditional custodians, Tim's relationship to Brambuk is complex. Involved in its early planning when he was 15, Tim was employed as Cultural/Education Officer in 1990. In 1995, the opportunity arose to become general manager (the board decided to recruit an Aboriginal person). "There needs to be a balance between our traditional responsibilities for this area and the need to run a thriving business here, and we are doing that. We've been a role model for the Victorian Tourism Office as a leading cultural centre and we've won awards." But eight years since it opened, Tim feels it is time to evaluate Brambuk's commercial operations. "To keep growing we need to make changes. So we're drawing in a bit at the moment, holding off on things like major advertising campaigns."

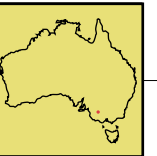
Change management for Tim is a case of getting the details right and moving slowly but strategically. "An example is our admission pricing structure. We ran a very successful, innovative system for a long time, where visitors paid \$4 entry and redeemed \$2 in the shop or cafe. It was a great marketing strategy but we decided to try something different, try a new angle at the end of 1996". Now visitors enter free of charge and pay a fee for any cultural programs or tours they want to do. "The change worked. Visitor numbers increased by 20% and sales figures are up by 15%."

**"BRAMBUK HAS NEVER BEEN STUCK IN MAINSTREAM FUNDING AND WE HAVE BEEN A VIABLE, LEADING ROLE MODEL IN RECONCILIATION PROCESSES. BUT WE ARE ALWAYS AWARE OF THE BALANCE WE HAVE TO MAINTAIN BETWEEN OUR BROADER RESPONSIBILITIES AND THE COMPETITIVE MARKETPLACE OUT THERE."**



**DESTINATION:** Halls Gap Vic

**COMPANY:** Brambuk Living Cultural Centre



'Trial, evaluate, trial again' is the approach. And benchmarking is important: If the National Park's Visitor Centre gets 180,000 visitors, then Brambuk has something to strive for.

Tim is aware of the impact that the changing government environment is having on services for Aboriginal people, as well as the structural issues that attracting investors may raise. "Brambuk has never been stuck in mainstream funding and we have been a viable, leading role model in reconciliation processes. But we are always aware of the balance we have to maintain between our broader responsibilities and the competitive marketplace out there." Brambuk works hard on achieving this balance, by firmly adhering to its guiding values, cultural and commercial, and by making sure that staff and board understand the importance of both.

Because it has always been thus, is not necessarily a reason to continue thus! It is easy for organisations to travel the tramlines of the past, without realising that a different approach may radically improve performance. A regular process of review is essential, and healthy "why" brainstorming, held with as many people in an organisation as possible, to review various aspects of the operation are vital. Radical change is rarely advisable, unless it has been carefully researched, trialed and evaluated.

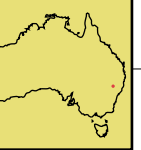
Trialing and research are often difficult for organisations when money is tight. Simple issues, such

as performance times, can easily be researched by surveys. More complex matters might require holding customer focus groups, ringing other similar organisations for their views or, if possible, short-term trialing of an idea. Internal sales and enquiry records provide vital information about usage of price, response to promotions, etc., and should form a part of the review process.

# diversification for greater market share

DESTINATION: Glen Innes NSW

COMPANY: Glen Innes Arts Council



**“PEOPLE WON’T GO TO ARMIDALE FOR THEIR LEISURE REQUIREMENTS - THEY WANT IT HERE. THERE ARE A LOT OF RETIREES HERE AND FOR YOUTH THERE ARE VERY FEW OPPORTUNITIES, EXCEPT TO RELOCATE,”**

Regional Arts Development Officer for the North West Arts Program, Jack Ritchie, has worked with Glen Innes Arts Council on a smart scheme to raise income that will subsidise other activities and upgrade facilities. Glen Innes Arts Council is a small, vital group of volunteers in the inland town of Glen Innes (pop. 6,000), which regards itself as the Celtic capital of New England. Operating since 1944, it produces two plays and one musical performance each year and imports another two or three. A resurgence of interest in seeing films on the big screen in a social context is bringing in new dollars and a whole new set of contacts for the council.

The Chapel Theatre, a converted church, is the venue for film screenings and other theatrical productions. Recently, the council raised sufficient money to pay for a \$60,000 refurbishment, assisted by an \$8,000 New South Wales Ministry for the Arts grant, installing state-of-the-art cinema seating.

“The local Arts Council invested an extra \$7,000 because they wanted to use wool, because this is such an important local industry,” Jack said. They have also been able to purchase a modern projector to replace the historic carbon arc model, install a computer lighting board and build a small orchestra pit. The screen is flown. Underneath the seating, they have installed a canteen, serving soft drink, popcorn and all those necessary adjuncts to a night at the flicks.

When they purchased the deconsecrated chapel in the 70s, it was a rough and ready venue. A couple of farmers guaranteed the loan in 1986 to provide the equipment necessary to start showing movies. “They put on *Crocodile Dundee*, and it was an immediate success.”

While Armidale is a one hour drive away - “if you are prepared to sit on 100 kms an hour” - there is a strong sense of community in Glen Innes. “People won’t go to Armidale for their leisure requirements - they want it here. There are a lot of retirees here and for youth there are very few opportunities, except to relocate,” says Jack, himself a local boy who has returned after his stint in the city.

The film program combines art house with commercial releases such as *Babe* - which packed out. They run new screenings on Friday, Saturday and Sunday. To accompany the showing of Peter Greenaway’s *The Pillow Book*, local artists produced work based on body forms and calligraphy. Occasionally, they run double bills in a “festival” format, and recently ran a weekend of Australian cinema including *True Love and Chaos* and *The Castle*.

**“CINEMA ENCOURAGES ATTENDANCES TO OUR OWN THEATRICAL PRODUCTIONS, WHICH ARE MOSTLY AUSTRALIAN WORKS - POPULAR MECHANICALS, DAYLIGHT SAVING, HOTEL SORRENTO, FOR EXAMPLE.”**

The Chapel Theatre is still run completely by volunteers. There are four volunteer projectionists and there is a roster of those who staff front of house, the canteen, etc.

Movie tickets are sold through local newsagents, and Jack says the marketing is the usual mix of posters and a few advertisements. If something is a bit slow, there will be a quick ring around to muster interest. The cinema program attracts around 10,000 attendances each year.

Never underestimate a regional arts audience . . . with arts councils operating in nearly every rural community of Australia, there is great potential to work in an innovative and effective way at a local level, using cultural events to reach and entertain audiences that might not otherwise experience the arts.

Active as umbrella organisations, arts councils make significant contributions to their communities throughout Australia, working with regionally based professional officers, professional and semi-professional artists and interested volunteers. Their operations and responsibilities include managing arts and craft centres, community galleries and cinemas; producing directories of artists, arts and craft businesses and venues, and regular newsletters promoting cultural events in their district or shire; and establishing, running or expanding and diversifying arts festivals. For example, in

Albury-Wodonga, the arts council stages successful operas, with audiences growing from 250 to 650 in two years.

In New South Wales there are 135 distinctly rural councils, of which 98 have a population base of less than 15,000. It is unlikely that they will have an operating cinema; however, 60 councils still attended a forum that Glen Innes Arts Council ran about the concept of a cinema-led recovery. Their particular interest was in the problems related to youth and providing entertainment outlets.



## a reliable product makes a difference in the tourist market

From its roots as an Aboriginal clan and a tribal group in a community 80 kms south of Alice Springs, the Pwerte Marnte Marnte Corporation recognised the opportunity to get involved in the tourism industry and has established the Aboriginal Arts and Culture Centre. They are one of five Aboriginal-owned businesses in Alice Springs, and currently the biggest private employer of Aboriginal people, employing 16 staff.

Two per cent of the tourism income that comes into the Northern Territory is from sales of Aboriginal product. The Pwerte Marnte Marnte Corporation aims to increase this and to reap more rewards for their community and others from the growing market for Aboriginal cultural products.

"We see our organisation as being leaders, being innovative and, above all, as being capable to follow through with our innovations. We have sound business strategies. We have a solid community base; we have a solid cultural base. We have access to our own land. We have a retail outlet; we have a very successful Internet site. We have networks within the tourism industry. We also want to incorporate the involvement of other community groups because we feel that we can do things together."

Ask Paul Ah Chee, manager of the Aboriginal Arts & Culture Centre, what has been a milestone for their organisation and he will tell you that it is seeing their community plans in action - having a centre open seven days a week, 365 days a year. The Aboriginal Arts and Culture Centre, 1997 winner of both the Northern Territory Brolga Award and Australian Tourism Award,

achieved the goal the community set itself of winning these tourism awards three years ahead of schedule. While Paul acknowledges that the awards were an important achievement, he also adds that they are a testament to the community's philosophy and commitment to quality outcomes.

The award was given to the Aboriginal Arts and Culture Centre for its training, quality of retailing and tours, profitability, community involvement and feedback from customers. A submission was prepared by trainees doing a small business traineeship under the direction of the training coordinator.

The Pwerte Marnte Marnte Corporation is committed to training opportunities. Paul stresses the importance of training to implementing strategies for growth that will successfully take the product from manufacture to retail or distribution. Working with the Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs and with financial assistance from a Commonwealth Department of Tourism grant of \$50,000, they have developed a training centre for Aboriginal tour guides. Local government is positive about their training programs and employment opportunities, and the projection of a positive image of Aboriginal culture.

**"WE SEE OUR ORGANISATION AS BEING LEADERS, BEING INNOVATIVE AND, ABOVE ALL, AS BEING CAPABLE TO FOLLOW THROUGH WITH OUR INNOVATIONS. ...WE ALSO WANT TO INCORPORATE THE INVOLVEMENT OF OTHER COMMUNITY GROUPS BECAUSE WE FEEL THAT WE CAN DO THINGS TOGETHER."**

Networking is recognised as essential, and they are members of the Central Australian Tourism Industry Association and the Northern Territory Tourist Commission. Their links with the Northern Territory Tourist Commission have been strengthened by the recognition that they have a reliable and winning product. Winning an award recognised by an industry has already helped their business. Paul also acknowledges the growing expectations as a result of a higher profile.

Paul advises people not to be afraid of dreaming, but not to get caught up in dreams either. "I'm thinking of things now that are probably five years down the track. You've got to have the thought to pull together a plan, then put strategies in place towards achieving that plan. Then it becomes a step-by-step process. But you know where it's leading to and you can measure it and say we're getting a bit behind on this - it's supposed to be up in three months time, it was supposed to be up three months ago. At the end of the day, you've got to make it happen and that's what we do. We're doing a ten year development plan for a new horticultural program that is happening on our homelands about 80 kms south of Alice Springs. We're looking at developing a tourism venture down there for special interest groups. It's all tied into the outlet because that's our public face. Our plans are aggressive. A lot of opportunities are opening up now. We may want to grab at them all, but we have to set priorities, otherwise you'll just get out of control."

**DESTINATION:** Alice Springs NT

**COMPANY:** Aboriginal Arts & Culture Centre



### How the tourism industry works . . .

At the hub of the wheel are the attractions. Without these, there would be no reason for anyone to visit. It is worth noting also that the attractions include many activities specifically related to the arts industry . . .

. . . A close look at the arts wheel shows that the central cog is the practitioners, who are the creative hub of the arts industry . . .

. . . Naturally, to achieve any success, the practitioners need interaction with all or some of their fellow travellers in the industry, for example, actors need an agent, a publicist, perhaps a radio interview, or a theatre or restaurant in which to perform . . .

. . . Networking is the key to success in any business, but particularly so in the tourism industry where there are so many potential partners.

- domestic tourism accounts for more than 75% of Australia's total tourism market
- in 1995, total direct expenditure by visitors (domestic and international), was \$28 billion, generating 500,000 jobs across a range of industries (6.2% of total jobs in Australia)
- total domestic tourism expenditure is forecast to reach \$23 billion in 1999-2000 with domestic tourism growth expected to average 2% per annum.
- international tourism is forecast to grow by 8.95% per annum to the year 2005
- tourism generates more than \$46 billion for the Australian economy annually

From *The Art of Netting Tourists*, a self help guide, produced by Arts and Recreation Training Victoria in 1997, to assist arts and entertainment businesses take the first steps into cultural tourism.

The significance of the backpacker market in Australian tourism has recently begun to attract attention. Since the early 1980s, it has grown considerably, such that in 1995 227,300 international backpackers visited Western Australia, with domestic (inter- and intra-state) backpacker visitors constituting an additional group. Recent Western Australian Tourism Commission research shows that almost half of the backpackers visiting Australia indicated that "Aboriginal Culture" was one of the features that motivated them to visit.