

National Indigenous Festivals Forum Report

**As at 1 May 2014
Report collated by Mark Stapleton and Ben Groatz
17 18 March 2014
Tandanya
Adelaide a/13519**

Opening and Welcome

Tandanya staff welcomed everyone to the forum and invited Uncle Stephen Goldsmith to provide a welcome to country.

The list of attendees and apologies is at **Attachment One**.

Process

Ben Graetz introduced himself and explained that Tandanya had asked him to help facilitate the forum.

Ben noted that the forum was to be a safe, confidential and respectful space. Everyone agreed to these protocols.

Introductions

The Forum began with personal introductions and an outline of what participants wanted to gain from the event (**Attachment Two**).

The Forum agreed to form a body to continue the network into the future called Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Festivals Australia. Participants drafted the following for confirmation at the next gathering.

Vision

Building a strong vibrant cultural festival sector

Purpose

Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Festivals Australia recognizes, represents, supports and celebrates the diversity of Australia's First Nations.

Other variations considered included:

- ATSI Festival, Australia – recognize, represent, support, heal, celebrate the diversity of Australian First Nations & Festivals
- ATSI Festivals Australia is culturally distinctive: They represent, support, heal and celebrate our communities
- ATSI FA recognize, represent, support, heal and celebrates the diversity of Australia's 1st Nation Festivals
- ATSI FA promotes the diversity of public expressions of ATSI cultures
- FOR ATSI Festival to be recognized as unique platforms to promote cultural diversity and artistic excellence
- Empowering national First Nations Festivals to promote health, well-being and empowerment through high quality presentation of its diverse cultures
- Celebrates a vibrant and sustainable Festival sector! Diverse
- Building strong cultural vibrant festival sector
- Promoting the diversity of public expressions of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures.

The body would include Indigenous festivals on the basis that Indigenous people control them. Thus at an annual conference would include an Indigenous producer who works with an Indigenous reference group even if she or he were employed by a non Indigenous organisation such as the Sydney Opera House *Homeland* program and the Melbourne City Council for the Melbourne Indigenous festival. The group agreed the body must be inclusive.

Objectives

Goal 1 – To provide advice and advocacy

Actions in support of this goal would include:

1. Festival sector survey
2. Develop a sector strategy and calendar of events
3. Provide a website
4. Monitor and evaluate the industry
5. Identify a spokesperson
6. Festival sector group buying power -preferred suppliers/sharing resources.
7. Identifying funding sources and distributing that information. Note: Where does advocacy fit?
8. Advocate that adequate financial resources are allocated to the ATSI Festival sector
9. To advocate the benefits of ATSI Festivals

Goal 2 – Share, exchange information, research collation & analysis

Actions in support of this goal would include:

1. Develop a mechanism to distribute information and materials (new and established)
2. Facilitate an annual conference gathering held either after an existing festival or in orbit with a mutually useful event such as the Australian Performing Arts Market.
3. Develop a shared festivals manual to include:
 - Collated research
 - Public liability information and tools including a risk management checklist
 - Workplace health safety forms
 - Artists contracts
 - Survey templates.
4. Physical office/physical presence at other festivals
5. Secretariat – proposal for part time paid position

Goal 3 – The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Festivals sector is strengthened by meaningful partnerships and networks

Actions in support of this goal would include:

1. To assist the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Festival sector to work collaboratively
2. To develop guidelines of what might constitute membership or inclusion in the body
3. Develop memorandums of understanding (MOU's) that provide an agreed structure to guide collaborative business
4. To act as a mechanism for developing a cohesive chorus of voices for the sector
5. How do we better influence the mainstream sector?
6. Collaborating with external people and organisations
7. Can the collective collaborate with external institutions to benefit the sector as a whole?
8. Discuss with BlakLines and other bodies how to best develop an MOU and strategy for a touring circuit.

Goal 4 – Facilitating employment, training and career pathways

Actions in support of this goal would include:

1. Draw from an existing or new database of professionals
 - Perhaps develop a website

- Produce and share a 'workforce' database eg lighting and sound technicians, security people, health providers etc
- Identifying the 'players'/current strategies.

Training

2. Create a matrix of training opportunities through already established and working programs

Career Pathways

3. Creating long term sustainable employment
 - Funding a pool of arts workers to assist in the delivery of different festivals
 - Share staff between festivals
4. Hold discussions with the Arts Ready providers to explore the festivals sector having its own production company.

- **Goal 5** – this draft goal is a subject For Further Discussion

To promote the integration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Culture into the mainstream Indigenous policy agenda eg. Link Festivals with Closing the Gap Key Area's

-Indigenous concepts of health and wellbeing

-Social inclusion

-Empowerment

Empowering National First Nations Festivals to promote health, wellbeing and empowerment through (high quality representation of its diverse culture).

Immediate action

Tandanya will set up a Facebook Page for all attending with administrator status.

ATTACHMENT ONE
Attendees and apologies

Attendees

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Mandy Brown mandy.brown@countryarts.org.au

Apologies

Wayne Barker KALACC
Rhoda Roberts *Boomerang* Sydney Opera House *Homeland*
Hetti Perkins *Corroboree*
Denise Bowden Yothu Yindi Foundation
Jodie Bell Goolarri Media

ATTACHMENT TWO

Aspirations by theme

Sharing, empowering

- Want to share what I've done
- What is the future for festivals?
- Can our festivals 'Close the Gap'?
- How can we be more strategic?
- How to have Influence/support at the States/Territories level when in trouble
- Sharing (information, ideas, stories, people, advice)
- Not re-inventing the wheel
- Do we need to become an alliance, a network, a movement
- What is the definition of an Indigenous festival for Indigenous people (and what definitions and assumptions do others have)?
- Facilitate dialogue, training, sharing

Workforce development

- Facilitate dialogue, training, sharing
- Opportunities for professional development of young people
- How to create professional development for artists
- Professional development for arts workers
- Images for promotion
- Business cards
- Simultaneous 'Showcasing' and 'Development' of people and work
- Discussion about how to have human investments ___ sharing
- How can we set up career pathways

Production and Touring

- Basic ways to cost save
- Headline Acts
- Risk assessment model – develop a useful document to share with useful how to tips
- How to plug in to other festivals including mainstream
- Exchanging artists – creating touring circuits
- Networking – sharing performers – touring circuit
- How do we bring lessons into other geographic contexts for any and all festivals
- What is the potential relationship with regional/city
- At least another opportunity for a Playwright/Storyteller festival with the aim to provide in confidence workshops (on scripts) and opportunities for touring and script development
- Production of a mobile facility for staging events in locations with out infrastructure. A discussion about capital investment that can be shared between communities or producers (eg. Toilets, water supply, power etc)
- Is there any infrastructure that can be shared?
- An exploration of when should events be ticketed in certain circumstances:
 - Is this good for monitoring?
 - Is this good for valuing arts?
- How do we promote responsible behavior by First Nations and other people around events?
- To gain recommendations for touring overseas

- Gain data for overseas Indigenous festivals
- International/Cultural Exchange

Organising

- How can we advocate as a group
- Agree to follow up when we put our names to actions (and if we cant do so to speak up to find another volunteer)
- A body to get the 'word out'
- Getting to know people in the sector. For almost everyone this has to be done through face to face interaction
- Gain momentum
- To see where industry is headed
- How to transform a loose coalition into a more structured, useful 'train'
- Local/regional/interstate
- What are the successful partnerships models
- How can we get funding better
- Looking for information
- How do we get the best outcome for as many communities as possible?
- The value of 'regional centres of culture'
- How can we be recognized/be able to speak etc... especially when our work is done from within a bureaucracy?
- Being mindful of the distribution of funding resources
- Drawing on community resources/services -Engaging Council of Ideas
- How to make the invisible recognised, particularly when working cross cultures?
- Ambassadors
- What are the different models
- What are the capacities for 'product' in festivals.

Yellamundie Festival (NSW)

- At least another opportunity for a Playwright/Storyteller festival
- The aim is to occur January 2015 and if not sufficiently funded, in 2017
- The aim is the provision of in confidence workshops (on scripts) and opportunities for touring and script development

Brewarrina (Festival of Fisheries)

- Fish Traps\Fishing Competitions
- Dance
- Circus
- Mentoring
- Health well-being

There are a number of International Festivals (o/s)

Indigenous Arts Festival (visual) (SA) Sept 2015

- Adelaide curated by Nici Cumpston

KALAC Festival September 2014

- Full time position
- Traditional culture
- Dance/Visual Arts/ Story

M ___ Festival

Survival Day 26 January

- Most capital cities have an event eg Yabun in central Sydney

Melbourne Indigenous Arts Festival (VIC)

- Produced through Melbourne City Council with only Council funding – no state government funding
The inaugural event was staged in 2012 over one weekend. The 2014 event spanned 12 days across a few venues in the city. The event is based on partnerships across the existing arts/cultural institutions. It now includes readings, dance, music performance

Garrmalang Festival (NT) May

- Darwin Entertainment Centre is about to stage a new event, which is to be multi arts.

Nurlu Festival (WA)

- 'Towards home' partnership with Cicada
- Through Goolari
- Music

A Taste of Broome (WA)

- Annual program run in May - September 2014 to coincide with the Tourism Season
- 1940-now
- Produced by _____
- Ticketed event
- Music/Dance
- Theatre
- Food

Black History Month in Brisbane

- Teaching and learning through professional development
- Exhibitions (eg)
- NAIDOC dance (eg)
- Musgrave Park day
- Cultural Market in the mall, once a week, every Wednesday for the last 3 years to finish June 2014
- Clancestry at Queensland Performing Arts Centre.

GARMA festival

- Dance
- Visual
- Ticketed event

ATSI Songlines the heart of Australia Theatre

- Advocate for our artform
 - Boldly
 - Accountability to our people's and our land
 - Culturally
 - Ethnicity
 - Morally