
Authorization(s): Stan Liacos - Director, City Futures
Karen Quinlan - Director, Bendigo Art Gallery

Responsibility Director: Stan Liacos, Director City Futures

Summary/Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council and the community with a post-event summary of the Golden Age of Couture exhibition presented at and by Bendigo Art Gallery between 7 December 2008 and 22 March 2009. The exhibition was potentially the largest and most ambitious event undertaken by the City of Greater Bendigo in recent times. By a wide variety of indicators, it may also have been Bendigo's most successful event.

Policy Context – Council Plan

Regional Prosperity – We will be a desirable visitor destination
Regional Prosperity – Identifying and supporting investment
Our Community – Building creative communities and economies

Background Information

The recent blockbuster exhibition The Golden Age of Couture was negotiated in 2007 by Gallery Director Karen Quinlan. The exhibition was developed by the Victoria and Albert Museum of London. Following the opening of the exhibition in London in 2007,
Bendigo Art Gallery secured the rights as the first venue of its worldwide tour with the exhibition dates 7 December 2008 to 22 March 2009.

The exhibition explored one of the most glamorous and remarkable decades in fashion history. Focussing on the post Second World War period, it looked at the work of Christian Dior and his fashion design contemporaries during the period when haute couture was at its height. More than 100 dresses were on display including daywear, cocktail and evening dresses made for society and royalty alongside photographs by Cecil Beaton and Richard Avedon and original Hollywood and documentary film. There were audio recordings, textiles and archival material such as bills of sales and letters. More than 95% of the dresses were from the V&A’s own fashion collections. The exhibition showcased the distinct characteristics of the London couture houses, their strengths in tailoring and the formality of court and debutante gowns. Several dresses made for the Queen and Princess Margaret and other aristocratic clients by British designers were also on display.

Bendigo Art Gallery was the exclusive Australian venue for this exhibition attracting a national audience and unprecedented national media coverage.

In attracting this major exhibition to Bendigo Art Gallery, our initial objectives were:

- To attract over 15,000 new visitors to Bendigo for the economic wellbeing of our region;
- To attract significant sponsorship support and income through entry charges to offset costs;
- To positively promote Bendigo far and wide;
- To provide residents the opportunity to experience an international standard exhibition locally;
- To engender an increased sense of local civic pride; and
- To consolidate the reputation of Bendigo Art Gallery as one of, if not the most, progressive gallery in regional Australia.

**Initial budget forecasts**

The 2008/09 budget made provision for anticipated direct costs of approximately $789,000, offset by anticipated income of $608,000, a net cost therefore of $181,000. There was an understanding in place that if the exhibition did not achieve forecast income, the Art Gallery Board would contribute $100,000 sponsorship support from its resources to offset Council’s entrepreneurial punt.

Forecast costs incorporated the exhibition licence/fee from the Victoria and Albert Museum of London, air freight, logistics and assembly, insurance, marketing and promotions, non-capital equipment, opening functions, purchase of retail stock and casual (exhibition-specific) staffing.

Forecast income incorporated ticket sales, sponsorship and shop sales.

These forecasts were well and truly favourably exceeded – refer below.
Promotional activities undertaken to the support the exhibition

A promotional campaign of unprecedented scale and quality for the City of Greater Bendigo was implemented to support the event. The purpose of the campaign was to:

- Raise awareness of the exhibition and of Bendigo generally;
- Encourage people to visit the exhibition and Bendigo generally;
- Profile a wide suite of other events on offer in and around Bendigo during summer; and
- Positively promote and position Bendigo as a progressive regional city.

Our promotional activities were many and varied and included:

- Extensive editorial media coverage secured locally, regionally and nationally – including The Age, The Australian, Financial Review, Herald Sun, Sydney Morning Herald, Canberra Times, MX Melbourne, ABC TV Stateline, ABC TV Sunday Arts, ABC Local Radio, ABC Radio 774 Victoria, Radio 3AW, Qantas Magazine, NZ Travel Magazine and a suite of other magazines and journals;
- Special commemorative 8-page lift-out in the Herald Sun newspaper (circulation over 500,000);
- Extensive print, radio and television advertisements locally, Melbourne, targeted parts of regional Victoria and southern NSW, Canberra and Adelaide;
- Tullamarine Freeway landmark billboard;
- Banners and billboards at Melbourne Airport;
- Window dressings at Myer Bendigo store;
- Tourism Victoria promotional material and web-site links;
- Banners at Bendigo entrance points and along View Street;
- Bendigo Advertiser Focus Magazine special edition;
- Tram advertising and billboards at key central Melbourne tram stops;
- Melbourne café Avant Cards;
- Targeted database mass email campaign and web advertising; and
- Word-of-mouth through industry contacts (e.g. art galleries, museums, fashion schools etc.).

The promotional campaign was planned and implemented as a collaborative effort between our Bendigo Art Gallery, City Marketing and Major Events, and Tourism teams.

Attendance and associated survey results

A total of 75,000 people attended the exhibition event, including 4,658 tickets sold from the Bendigo Visitor Centre.

Visitor Survey Forms were completed by 8,835 attendees, i.e. approximately 12% of attendees. This represents a good, statistically reliable, sample.

Of the total attendees, 91% were female and 9% male.
The typical age profile of attendees was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 16 yrs</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 – 21 yrs</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 – 30 yrs</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 40 yrs</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41 – 50 yrs</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51 – 60 yrs</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>60+ yrs</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 – 30 yrs</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>61+ yrs</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31 – 40 yrs</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attendees typically came from the following areas:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greater Bendigo (locals)</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other regional Victoria</td>
<td>28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metropolitan Melbourne and surrounds</td>
<td>45%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstate</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

92% of attendees indicated that the exhibition was the primary motivation for their visit.

44% of attendees had *never* visited Bendigo Art Gallery before, 16% had visited *once* before and 40% had visited *two or more* times before.

Attendees indicated that they had found out about the exhibition event as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Become aware from an earlier visit</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation of family and friends</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourist Information Centre(s)</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General interest in galleries</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising / Media / Publicity</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Attendees that indicated they had principally found out about the exhibition from media/advertising/publicity etc. indicated the following specific sources:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Print-media</td>
<td>68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Television</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radio</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Arts magazine(s)</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Myer</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tullamarine Freeway banner</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

32% of attendees indicated they used the gallery café upon their visit.

Attendees typically travelled to the exhibition by the following means:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Car</td>
<td>79%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Train</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walked</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Economic and promotional benefits**
In association with Arts Victoria (Victorian Government), we are currently in the process of undertaking a professional economic impact analysis. This will not be completed for several more weeks, however, as an interim guide it would not be unreasonable to assume that the exhibition event directly contributed between $9 million and $10 million into our regional economy.

This broad conservative estimate has been calculated by multiplying the estimated 50,000 day-trip visitors from beyond Greater Bendigo by the Tourism Victoria assumed typical average expenditure for Bendigo-Loddon region day-trippers of $130 and adding this to the estimated 10,000 overnight visitors multiplied by the Tourism Victoria assumed average expenditure for overnight visitors to the Bendigo-Loddon region of $260.

It is important to note that these estimates do not account for the difficult-to-quantify albeit very significant positive promotional exposure and awareness-raising that the event provided Bendigo more generally. This is a powerful benefit and should not be under-estimated. It presents long-reaching benefits and opportunities for Bendigo if capitalised upon.

It would not be unreasonable to suggest that the value of the significant media coverage generated for Bendigo by the exhibition event would total into the many hundreds of thousands of dollars.

The specially developed www.bendigoevents.com.au web-site to which many of our promotions were directed had over 12,500 unique visitors, including 46,062 “page views” and an average view duration of over three minutes.

The Bendigo Visitor Centre on Pall Mall reported its busiest summer period in recent history. The Golden Age of Couture exhibition was clearly the significant contributor to this.

About 580 special promotion accommodation packages were sold out of the Bendigo Visitor Centre. This would represent only a small proportion of the total overnight accommodation stays in Bendigo as a result of the exhibition. It would be reasonable to assume that the event gave rise to several thousands overnight “bed stays” and these have been factored into the above indicative estimate of direct economic local spend.

**Financial results and collaborative partners (actual)**

Income specifically associated with the exhibition event totalled:

Tickets sales $850,000 (excluding GST)
Regional Development Victoria (State Govt) $100,000
Arts Victoria (State Govt) $ 75,000
Tourism Victoria (State Govt) $ 33,000
Myer Corporation $ 25,000
La Trobe University $ 20,000
Shop sales (gross) $148,000 (exhibition specific items only)

$1,251,000
Costs specifically associated with the exhibition event totalled:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cost Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Fee (Victoria and Albert Museum)</td>
<td>$216,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Freight, Logistics, Assembly etc.</td>
<td>$192,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marketing, promotions, media liaisons, signage</td>
<td>$195,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casusal (exhibition-specific) labour</td>
<td>$ 70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opening and various functions</td>
<td>$ 15,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-capital equipment and support</td>
<td>$ 59,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Designer</td>
<td>$ 24,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cost associated with VAM staff travel, accmo etc.</td>
<td>$ 28,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop purchases (exhibition specific items only)</td>
<td>$ 68,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>$867,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst we had initially projected a net financial lose to Council of staging the event, we actually achieved a net financial gain of approximately **$384,000**.

This is a separate consideration to the otherwise approximate $10 million economic stimulus that the event generated for our regional community.

**Areas for improvement / monitoring**

Whilst we understand the vast majority of attendees were reasonably to very happy with their visit to Bendigo Art Gallery and Bendigo more generally, we did nonetheless receive some, thankfully relatively few, adverse comments, formally and informally. In the main, these concerns related to:

- Some dissatisfaction with cafés and restaurants in Bendigo being so busy at times given the influx of visitors and with some cafes being closed at night and weekends;
- Outdoor queuing times of up to one hour for some people at peak times;
- The absence of an exhibition-specific bus link to and from the Railway Station;
- Shop stock running out on numerous occasions due to extreme demand; and
- Perceived low light levels within the exhibition for some people.

A fair assessment of these issues would suggest that many could not have been avoided. The exhibition quite simply surpassed even our most optimistic of visitor-number and publicity expectations. The relative low light levels were insisted upon by the Victoria and Albert Museum for reasons of artefact preservation and thematic exhibition design. Efforts were made to provide customer service for people waiting in long queues through the provision of coffee, tea and ice-cream at discounted prices.

For the forthcoming Archibald 2009 exhibition at the gallery, we will endeavour to have as many of these issues addressed as practically possible. Some issues may simply not be able to be addressed. The gallery can only hold so many people at any one time and the scale and nature of central Bendigo’s suite of hospitality sector is limited. It is also difficult to precisely anticipated visitor numbers on any one day.
Conclusions

The exhibition event was an overwhelming success. It well and truly surpassed all expectations and objectives initially set. It was potentially the largest and most ambitious event staged by the City of Greater Bendigo in recent memory.

One should not under-estimate the scale of the task undertaken and delivered. It was a major accomplishment. It was an ambitious, indeed “courageous” initiative for a community the size of Bendigo. The gamble however did well and truly pay off. In this regard, the visionary creative curatorial selection and delivery by Bendigo Art Gallery Director and team, together with the hard work of relevant staff at the gallery and also our tourism and city marketing and major events teams, and the unwavering rock solid support of the Art Gallery Board and Council should be acknowledged.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council acknowledge the overwhelming success of The Golden Age of Couture exhibition hosted by and at Bendigo Art Gallery and reaffirm its policy commitment of continuing to support the gallery in its mission of attracting, developing and presenting major exhibitions of national and international standard for the continued economic, cultural and promotional wellbeing of Greater Bendigo.

RESOLUTION

Moved Cr Fyffe, Seconded Cr Reade.

That the recommendation be adopted.  

CARRIED
Title: THE WHITE WEDDING DRESS: 200 YEARS OF WEDDING FASHION - POST EXHIBITION SUMMARY

Document Information

Authors: Stan Liacos – Director, City Futures
Karen Quinlan – Director, Bendigo Art Gallery

Responsible Director: Stan Liacos, Director City Futures

Summary/Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council and the community with a post-event summary of The White Wedding Dress exhibition presented at and by Bendigo Art Gallery between 1 August and 6 November 2011. The exhibition was one of the largest and most ambitious events undertaken by the City of Greater Bendigo. By a wide variety of measures it was a very successful venture and on a par with the Golden Age of Couture exhibition staged in the summer of 2008/09. The exhibition represents another impressive economic, cultural and promotional achievement by our Bendigo Art Gallery team working collaboratively with The Capital, Bendigo Tourism and Gallery Board.

Policy Context

Community and Culture – 3.4 Develop the cultural and creative aspirations of the community to make a significant contribution to the region’s Social and Economic prosperity and quality of life for all.

3.4.1 Continue to develop and grow the Bendigo Art Gallery as a leader in contemporary Art
Report

The world premiere of *The White Wedding Dress: 200 Years of Wedding Fashion* showcased two centuries of glamorous and extravagant wedding dresses from London’s Victoria & Albert Museum’s acclaimed collection. The exhibition highlighted the histories of the dresses, revealing fascinating details about the lives of the wearers and offering an insight into their circumstances and fashion choices.

Beginning in the nineteenth century the exhibition traced the development of the “fashionable” white wedding dress and its treatment by key fashion designers and in doing so considered the effect of the increasing media focus on wedding fashions and the excitement generated by society and celebrity weddings. Comprising over 40 wedding outfits, the exhibition included a selection of accessories including wreaths, veils, hats, shoes, corsetry and lingerie. Reproductions of contextual material, such as wedding photographs, were also shown alongside exhibits to assist in telling the story of the wearer.

In addition, Bendigo Art Gallery staff curated an accompanying Australian component featuring costumes from 1822 – 2011 drawing on borrowed garments from various public and private collections.

The *White Wedding Dress* is the first in a series titled Bendigo International Collections supported by the Victorian Major Events Company (State Government).

The securing and staging of this prestigious exhibition was the culmination of many years of collaboration, trust and goodwill that has been developed over recent years between Bendigo Art Gallery and London’s Victoria and Albert Museum.

**Initial objectives and projections**

In attracting and presenting this prestigious exhibition, our objectives were:

- To attract at least 40,000 patrons/visitors to Bendigo for the economic and social benefit of our region;
- To attract significant sponsorship support and income through entry charges to offset costs;
- To positively promote Bendigo far and wide;
- To provide our community the opportunity to experience an international standard exhibition locally;
- To engender a sense of civic pride locally; and
- To consolidate the reputation of Bendigo Art Gallery as one of, if not the most, progressive and ambitious gallery in regional Australia.

The 2011/12 budget projections for the exhibition had made provision for anticipated direct costs of approximately **$840,000**, offset by anticipated income of approximately **$750,000**.
These forecasts were well and truly favourably exceeded – refer below.

Financial results (actual)

Revenue derived for the exhibition event totalled approximately $1,535,000:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tickets sales (income to Gallery)</td>
<td>$1,152,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tickets commission (income to The Capital)</td>
<td>$111,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Victorian Major Events Company (State Govt)</td>
<td>$90,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism Victoria (State Govt)</td>
<td>$40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop sales (exhibition specific items only)</td>
<td>$125,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (user fees and charges etc.)</td>
<td>$17,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Revenue</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,535,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Expenditure incurred directly for the exhibition totalled approximately 1,084,000:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition Fees (Victoria and Albert Museum)</td>
<td>$93,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition freight, logistics and associated etc.</td>
<td>$172,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising/Promotion/Marketing/Presentations/Publicity</td>
<td>$390,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual/part time staff (exhibition specific for the Gallery and the Capital)</td>
<td>$137,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Openings and various functions</td>
<td>$18,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exhibition design and build etc. (shared with other exhibitions)</td>
<td>$147,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shop Merchandise</td>
<td>$73,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment hire</td>
<td>$13,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credit Card Charges</td>
<td>$31,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>$10,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total Expenditure</strong></td>
<td><strong>$1,084,000</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In staging the event, excluding permanent management and staffing costs, we achieved a favourable financial result of approximately **$451,000**. This is significantly more favourable than originally budgeted. This is a quite separate consideration to the otherwise economic benefit that the event generated, estimated to be in the order of $6 million (refer below).

Sponsorships / Collaboration

In staging the exhibition, we received cash and/or in-kind support from:

- Victorian Major Events Company (State Government)
- Bendigo Art Gallery (Company) Board
- Tourism Victoria (State Government)
- Bendigo Tourism
- The Age newspaper
- Bendigo Visitor Information Centre (including volunteer ambassadors)
- V/Line
- Arts Victoria (State Government)
- The Capital – Bendigo’s Performing Arts Centre
Promotional activities undertaken to the support the exhibition

An ambitious promotional campaign was implemented to support the exhibition. The purpose of the campaign was to:

- Raise awareness of the exhibition and of Bendigo generally;
- Encourage people to visit the exhibition and Bendigo generally; and
- Positively promote and position Bendigo as a progressive ambitious regional city.

Our promotional activities were many and varied and included:

- Special commemorative 4-page lift-out in The Age newspaper;
- Extensive print, radio and television advertisements locally, Melbourne, targeted parts of regional Victoria;
- Tullamarine Freeway landmark billboard;
- Banners and billboards at Melbourne Airport;
- Tourism Victoria promotional material and web-site links;
- Banners at Bendigo main road entrances, along View Street and at Bendigo Railway Station;
- Bendigo Advertiser Focus Magazine special edition;
- Bendigo Advertiser features, editorial and advertisements;
- Bendigo Weekly editorial;
- V/Line initiatives and promotions;
- Tram advertising and billboards at key central Melbourne tram stops;
- Melbourne café Avant Cards;
- Targeted database mass email campaign and web advertising; and
- Word-of-mouth through industry contacts (e.g. art galleries, museums, fashion schools etc.).

The promotional campaign was developed and delivered as a collaborative effort between the management and staff of Bendigo Art Gallery and Bendigo Tourism.

Ticketing

The Golden Age of Couture exhibition held in 2008/09, whilst extremely successful, did nonetheless experience adverse customer service issues stemming from long queues and slow ticketing.

For the White Wedding Dress exhibition, an alternative approach was implemented, this time involving time-slot managed ticket entry and with tickets sold by the
experienced team at The Capital situated next door to the gallery rather than gallery staff.

This initiative proved successful by:

- Streamlining the management of patrons and avoiding extensive queuing;
- Relieving pressure on gallery reception and shop; and
- Engendering a spirit of collaboration among staff working across different parts of the organisation.

The Capital provided its ticketing service to Bendigo Art Gallery at a management fee of $1.60 per ticket (note: both venues are owned and operated by the City of Greater Bendigo).

Attendance and associated survey results

A total of 76,056 people attended the exhibition, comprising:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tickets sold to patrons:</th>
<th>74,088</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tickets sold to education groups</td>
<td>1,036</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Complimentary / Sponsors / Guests</td>
<td>932</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the 74,088 individual tickets sold, the following breakdown eventuated:

- Adults: 42%
- Concessional: 49%
- Family: 2%
- Students: 5%
- Membership based: 2%

Tickets were sold to people living in:

- Melbourne: 50%
- Regional Victoria (exc Greater Bendigo): 29%
- City of Greater Bendigo: 15%
- Interstate: 6%

In terms of method of payment, the following breakdown eventuated:

- Cash: 24%
- EFTPOS: 38%
- Web transaction and other Credit Card: 34%
- Cheque: 3%
- Invoice: 1%

On-line registered Visitor Survey forms were completed by 5,045 attendees, i.e. approximately 7% of attendees. This represents a reasonable statistically reliable sample.
From the survey results, an estimated 93% of attendees were female and 7% were male.

The estimated age profile of attendees was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age Group</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under 20 years</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 - 35 years</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36 - 50 years</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51- 65 years</td>
<td>31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>66 years plus</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey results indicate that the main purpose of attendees visiting Bendigo was:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>To visit the Gallery</td>
<td>74%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To visit tourist attractions</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To visit family and friends</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident of Greater Bendigo</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified / Other</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

40 percent of survey respondents indicated they had never been to Bendigo Art Gallery before. 26 percent indicated they had visited the gallery many times before.

Survey respondents indicated they had heard about the gallery/exhibition primarily from:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Advertising / Media</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Recommendation of family / friends</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Previous visit</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other / Various specific methods / Not specified</td>
<td>27%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In terms of how patrons travelled to the exhibition, survey respondents indicated:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mode of Transport</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>By private car</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>By train (V/Line)</td>
<td>15%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bus</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Survey respondents indicated that they had or would spend the following amount of time in Bendigo:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Day trip</td>
<td>56%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overnight</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Two nights</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resident / live here</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not specified</td>
<td>7%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Aside from visiting the exhibition, respondents indicated that the main other thing that they had or would do was:
Visit a café / restaurant I Bendigo 52%
Shop / retail in Bendigo 19%
Not specified 18%
Visit another attraction 5%
Other 6%

30 percent of respondents indicated they had or were preparing to visit the Gallery Café.

Economic and promotional benefits

In association with Tourism Victoria, we will be undertaking a professional economic impact analysis. This will not be completed for several more weeks, however, as an interim guide it would not be unreasonable to assume that the exhibition directly contributed over $6.3 million into our regional economy.

This conservative estimate has been calculated by multiplying the estimated (43,000) day-trip visitors from beyond Greater Bendigo by an estimated local day average expenditure of, say, $65 per person and adding this to the estimated 20,000 overnight visitors multiplied by an estimated average expenditure of, say, $180 per person.

It is important to note that these estimates do not account for the difficult-to-quantify significant positive promotional exposure that the exhibition provided Bendigo more generally. This is a major benefit and should not be under-estimated. It presents long-reaching benefits and opportunities for Bendigo if capitalised upon.

About 240 specific exhibition accommodation packages ($70,500) were sold by our Bendigo Visitor Centre. This would however represent only a very small proportion of the total overnight accommodation stays in Bendigo as a result of the exhibition. It would be reasonable to assume that the exhibition gave rise to several thousands overnight “bed stays” and these have been factored into the indicative estimate of direct economic local spend.

Areas for improvement / monitoring

Whilst we appreciate the vast majority of attendees were either reasonably to very happy with their visit to Bendigo Art Gallery and Bendigo generally, we did nonetheless receive some, thankfully relatively little, adverse feedback. In the main, these concerns related to:

- Some dissatisfaction from patrons with cafés and restaurants in Bendigo being either too busy at times given the influx of visitors or with some cafes being closed at night and weekends; and
- Having to purchase tickets next door at The Capital and not in the gallery itself.

Councillors will recall that we had encountered far more adverse issues with the Golden Age of Couture exhibition in 2008/09, particularly with regard to long outdoor queues and the city seemingly not being “ready” for the large influx of visitors on a day-by-day basis.
We believe that management and staff, and Bendigo generally, have made major improvements this time around, despite yet again hosting over 75,000 patrons. Major improvements this time include:

- Time managed ticket entry and ticketing by The Capital;
- Visual branding at main road gateway points, View Street and the railway station;
- Far more hospitality venues and shops in central Bendigo being ‘ready’ for the influx and participating through visual branding and special offers; and
- Having our highly valued volunteer Tourism Ambassadors pro-actively greeting patrons at the railway station and along Mitchell/View Streets providing outstanding personalised customer service.

**Conclusion**

The staging and promotion of the exhibition was another major event success for Bendigo. Relevant staff and our collaborative partners are proud of their achievements in this regard.

**Resource Implications**

Refer outline of revenue and expenditure – see above.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council acknowledge the success of *The White Wedding Dress* exhibition hosted by and at Bendigo Art Gallery and reaffirm its policy commitment of continuing to support the gallery and its Board in its mission of attracting, developing and presenting major exhibitions of national and international standard for the economic, cultural and promotional benefit of Greater Bendigo and region.

**RESOLUTION**

Moved Cr Fyffe, seconded Cr Phillips.

That the recommendation be adopted. **CARRIED**
Summary/Purpose

The purpose of this report is to provide Council and the community with a post-event summary of the Grace Kelly: Style Icon major exhibition presented at and by Bendigo Art Gallery between Sunday 11 March and Sunday 17 June 2012 (99 days).

The exhibition was one of the largest and most ambitious events ever staged by the City of Greater Bendigo. By a wide variety of measures, it was arguably the most successful major event ever staged in or around Bendigo in recent decades. It is difficult to identify any other stand-alone event that has had as major an impact promotionally, culturally, financially and economically for Bendigo than what this major event generated.

The event represents another impressive achievement by the Bendigo Art Gallery team working collaboratively with their colleagues at The Capital – Bendigo’s Performing Arts Centre and the Tourism Unit (which includes the Bendigo Visitor Centre). This collaboration also included the Bendigo Art Gallery Company Board, the Victorian Government, a suite of major sponsors and a range of international exhibition presenting partners.

The event was supported by over 100 volunteers – including Friends and Guides of the Gallery; Tourism Ambassadors roaming central Bendigo and Bendigo Train Station; and Bendigo Visitor Centre guides. The passion and selfless contribution demonstrated by these volunteers was exceptional and highly valued.
Policy Context – Council Plan

Community and Culture – 3.4 Develop the cultural and creative aspirations of the community to make a significant contribution to the region’s Social and Economic prosperity and quality of life for all.

3.4.1 Continue to develop and grow the Bendigo Art Gallery as a leader in contemporary Art

Report

*Grace Kelly: Style Icon* highlighted the spectacular wardrobe of Grace Kelly and examined her glamorous Hollywood image and enduring appeal. The exhibition featured dresses from such films as *High Society* as well as the gown she wore to accept her Oscar in 1955. It also explored the evolution of her style as Princess Grace of Monaco, from her extensive wedding trousseau to her haute couture gowns of the 1960s and 1970s by her favourite couturiers Dior, Balenciaga, Givenchy and Yves St Laurent.

The exhibition was organised by the Victoria and Albert Museum, London and the Grimaldi Forum, Monaco. Grace Kelly (1929-82) rose to fame as an actress in the 1950s, starring in films by Alfred Hitchcock and others. Her image was cultivated by the movie industry, which fed cinema-goers’ growing appetite for pictures of glamorous stars through magazines and newspapers.

*Grace Kelly: Style Icon* was the first in a series titled *Bendigo International Collections* supported by the Victorian Major Events Company (State Government).

The securing and staging of this prestigious exhibition was the culmination of many years of collaboration, trust and goodwill that has been developed over recent years between Bendigo Art Gallery and London’s Victoria and Albert Museum.

The exhibition was opened on Saturday 10 March 2012 by HSH Princess Charlene of Monaco in the presence of Victorian Premier Ted Baillieu; Federal Minister for Regional Development and the Arts Simon Crean and 600 attendees including gallery members, Victorian and Australian dignitaries including several international and ambassadorial guests.

Initial objectives and projections

In attracting and presenting this prestigious exhibition, our objectives were to:

- Attract at least 60,000 patrons/visitors to Bendigo for the economic and social benefit of our region;
- Consolidate the reputation of Bendigo Art Gallery as one of, if not the most, progressive and ambitious gallery in regional Australia;
- Attract significant sponsorship support and income through entry charges to offset costs and at very least break-even financially (excluding permanent staffing costs);
- Positively promote Bendigo far and wide;
- Provide our community the opportunity to experience an international standard exhibition locally; and
- Engender a sense of civic pride locally.

These objectives were well and truly exceeded – refer below.

**Financial results – Actual Income and Expenditure**

Income/revenue generated for CoGB by the exhibition event was approximately:

- Tickets sales (income to Gallery) $2,250,000
- Tickets commission and associated (income to The Capital) $282,000
- Sponsorships – Various $240,000
- Shop sales (estimate only - exhibition associated only) $340,000
- Tourism Unit – marketing contributions from industry $120,000
- Tourism Unit – commissions etc. $66,000
- Misc. / General – Various $20,000

**Total Revenue** $3,318,000

Expenditure incurred by CoGB directly from the exhibition was approximately:

- Exhibition Fees (V&AM and Grimaldi Forum) $277,000
- Exhibition freight, logistics and associated etc. $315,000
- Advertising/Promotion/Marketing/Presentations/Publicity $520,000
- Exhibition design, hire and build $230,000
- Casual/part time staff (exhibition specific only) $240,000
- Openings and various functions $60,000
- Shop Merchandise $165,000
- Internal General expenditure - Various $25,000
- Accommodation, travelling, parking, couriers etc $44,000
- Postage $22,000
- Visitor Services – special costs (inc. volunteer “hub development” support) $22,000
- The Capital – additional costs (software etc.) $16,000
- Security services $7,000
- Other / Misc. $18,000

**Total Expenditure** $1,961,000

Note: These estimates of income and expenditure are for the exhibition only. Figures are drawn from the financial accounts of Bendigo Art Gallery, The Capital and Tourism – all owned and operated by CoGB.
In staging the event, the City of Greater Bendigo achieved a *favourable* financial result of approximately $1,357,000.

This is significantly more favourable than originally budgeted. We had by and large budgeted across the three business units to make a modest loss, which would usually be the case with a public exhibition event such as this in Australia. This is a quite separate consideration to the otherwise major positive economic benefit that the event generated for our community, estimated to be in the order of over $15 million (refer below).

**Sponsorships / Collaboration**

In staging the exhibition, we received cash and/or in-kind support from:

- Victorian Major Events Company (State Government)
- Bendigo Art Gallery (Company) Board
- Tourism Victoria (State Government)
- Bendigo Tourism
- The Age Newspaper
- Radio 3AW
- V/Line
- Emirates Airlines
- Monaco Consulate
- L’Oreal Melbourne Fashion Festival
- Monaco Tourism
- Melbourne Airport
- Various food and beverage suppliers
- Mercedes Benz (Poyser Motors)
- Bendigo Advertiser
- Media outlets across Australia
- A range of local tourism attractions and accommodation venues.

**Promotional activities undertaken to support the exhibition**

An ambitious promotional campaign was implemented to support the exhibition. The campaign was a collaborative exercise between Bendigo Art Gallery, Tourism, The Capital and across the City Futures Directorate more generally.

The purpose of the promotional campaign was to:
• Raise awareness of the exhibition and of Bendigo generally;
• Encourage people to visit the exhibition and Bendigo generally; and
• Positively promote and position Bendigo as a progressive vibrant regional city.

Our promotional activities were many and varied and included:

• Special commemorative lift-out in The Age newspaper
• Extensive print, radio and television advertisements locally, in Melbourne, select parts of regional Victoria and select major cities in Australia;
• Tullamarine Freeway landmark billboard;
• Banners and billboards at Melbourne Airport;
• Tram shelters in central Melbourne;
• Train Station billboard signs at major railway stations in Melbourne;
• Tourism Victoria promotional material and web-site links;
• Banners at Bendigo main road entrances, along View Street and at Bendigo Railway Station;
• Bendigo Advertiser Focus Magazine special edition;
• Local media features, editorials and advertisements;
• V/Line initiatives and promotions;
• Melbourne café Avant Cards;
• Targeted database mass email campaign and web advertising; and
• Word-of-mouth through industry contacts (many and varied).

Ticketing

Following the success of the White Wedding Dress exhibition in 2011 at which “time entry” ticketing handled by The Capital was first introduced for Bendigo Art Gallery, we decided to repeat the exercise, albeit this time with some refinements and enhancements. Once again, the initiative proved successful by:

• Streamlining the management of patrons and avoiding extensive queuing;
• Relieving pressure on gallery reception and shop operations; and
• Engendering a spirit of collaboration among staff working across different parts of the organisation.

The Capital provided its ticketing service to Bendigo Art Gallery for a management fee. Both venues are owned and operated by the City of Greater Bendigo.

Attendance and statistics
A total of **152,706** people attended the exhibition, comprising:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Tickets Sold</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tickets sold to patrons through The Capital</td>
<td>143,041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tickets sold to patrons through The Gallery</td>
<td>613</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tickets sold to education groups through the Gallery</td>
<td>1,148</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Capital - Complimentary</td>
<td>395</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gallery - Complimentary/Sponsors/Guests</td>
<td>1,749</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Special Grace Kelly Functions sold through the Gallery and opening event</td>
<td>5,760</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**152,706**

An analysis extracted from data retrieved from the 36,000 on-line ticket sales through The Capital concluded the following residency profile of our attendees:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Melbourne</td>
<td>52.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional Victoria (exc Greater Bendigo)</td>
<td>29.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bendigo (3550 -3556)</td>
<td>10.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interstate</td>
<td>8.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

It is important to acknowledge that many “local” visitors most likely purchased their tickets directly from the box office (rather than on-line) and in effect the “locals” estimate of 10% is likely to be under estimated. Based on anecdotal observations, we suggest the proportion of patrons who attended but who live in Greater Bendigo was more in the realm of between 15 to 20%.

To this extent, the estimate of the number of “outside” (tourist) visitors who travelled to Bendigo is approximately 125,000. This is more than the entire population of Greater Bendigo! This figure is most important in estimating local economic impact.

Information supplied by V/Line indicates that an estimated 20,000 – 25,000 of patrons travelled to and from Bendigo by train.

**Economic and promotional benefits**

In association with Tourism Victoria and the Victorian Major Events Company, we will be undertaking a professionally conducted economic impact analysis. This will not be completed for several more weeks; however, as an interim guide it would not be unreasonable to assume that the exhibition *directly* contributed an estimated $15,000,000 into our regional economy.

This conservative estimate has been calculated by multiplying the estimated 75,000 *tourist day-trip* visitors by an estimated local day average expenditure of $88 per person and adding this to the estimated 50,000 *overnight tourist* visitors multiplied by an estimated average expenditure of $185 per person (source: Compelling Economic – REMPLAN Economic Model).
It is important to note however that these estimates do not account for the difficult-to-quantify yet significant positive promotional exposure that the exhibition provided Bendigo. This is a major benefit and should not be under-estimated. It presents long-reaching benefits and opportunities for.

Over 1,300 advertised “accommodation packages” (with gross sales of $356,000) were sold by our Bendigo Visitor Centre. This would however represent only a very small proportion of the total overnight accommodation stays in Bendigo as a result of the exhibition. It would be reasonable to assume that the exhibition gave rise to over 50,000 overnight “bed stays” (be that in either registered accommodation venues or with family and friends). These have been factored into the estimate of direct economic local impact.

The volume, quality and nature of editorial press coverage generated as a result of the exhibition was arguably unparalleled for Bendigo. The specific line-by-line list of press secured in all forms of mainstream media – nationally, regionally and locally – literally runs for several pages. Our publicity advisor believes it would not be unreasonable to assume an economic value of several million dollars generated from this positive publicity through city branding (awareness raising) and increased tourism, as well as indirectly through reputation, goodwill and progressive resident attraction.

**Areas for improvement and monitoring**

Whilst we appreciate the vast majority of attendees were reasonably to very happy with their visit to Bendigo Art Gallery and Bendigo more generally, we did nonetheless receive some, thankfully relatively little, adverse feedback. In the main, these concerns related to:

- Some dissatisfaction from patrons with cafés and restaurants in Bendigo being either too busy at times given the influx of visitors or with some cafes being closed at night and on weekends;
- Venue over-crowding at times;
- The gallery being quite literally “sold out” on some weekends due to popular demand;
- Having to purchase tickets next door at The Capital and not in the gallery itself (i.e. perceived double-handling).

Councillors will recall that we had encountered far more adverse issues with the *Golden Age of Couture* exhibition in 2008/09, particularly with regard to long outdoor queues and the city seemingly not being “ready” for the large influx of visitors.

We believe that event staff, and Bendigo businesses and residents generally, made major advancements this time around, despite hosting literally double the number of visitors. Major improvements this time include:

- Time managed ticket entry and ticketing by The Capital;
• Visual branding at main road gateway points to Bendigo, View Street and the railway station;
• Pre-event business community briefings;
• Far more hospitality venues and shops in central Bendigo being ‘ready’ for the influx and participating through visual branding and special offers; and
• Having our highly valued volunteer Tourism Ambassadors pro-actively greeting patrons at the railway station and along Mitchell/View Streets providing outstanding personalised customer service.

Conclusion

The staging and promotion of the exhibition was another major, indeed extraordinary achievement for Greater Bendigo. Exhibition and marketing management and staff, our 100+ volunteers and our many collaborative partners are proud of their achievements in this regard.

The event resoundingly met its ambitious objectives by:

• Attracting well over double the number of patrons compared to our initial projections – 152,706 patrons compared with 60,000;
• Absolutely re-consolidated the reputation of Bendigo Art Gallery as one of, if not the most, progressive and ambitious gallery in regional Australia;
• Attracting an estimated 125,000 “tourist” (out-of-town) visitors to Greater Bendigo in a 99-day period providing our region with significant sustained economic, promotional and social benefits – i.e. more than our entire population;
• Having attracted significant sponsorship support and income through entry charges which helped ensure we delivered a successful business outcome as well as a successful cultural promotional and economic outcome;
• Having positively promoted Bendigo far and wide and in turn significantly lifting our profile across Australia;
• Having provided our community the opportunity to experience an international standard exhibition locally in their “own back yard”; and
• Having engendered a sense of civic pride locally (a feature that should not be underestimated).

Resource Implications

Summary of exhibition-specific revenue and expenditure – refer above.

Bendigo Art Gallery recorded a significantly better than budget financial result in 2011/12, largely as a result of its successes with The White Wedding Dress and Grace Kelly: Style Icon.
The Gallery had been budgeted to operated a financial subsidy of some $1,480,000. It did however conclude with an operational subsidy of $315,000. i.e. a $1,165,000 “better than budget” result.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That Council acknowledge the success of the *Grace Kelly: Style Icon* major exhibition hosted at and by Bendigo Art Gallery and reaffirm its policy commitment of continuing to support the gallery (in association with their colleagues at Tourism, The Capital and over 100 community volunteers) in their mission of attracting, developing, promoting and presenting major exhibitions of national and international standard for the cultural, promotional and economic benefit of Greater Bendigo.

**RESOLUTION**

Moved Cr Fyffe, Seconded Cr Phillips.

That the recommendation be adopted. **CARRIED**
The purpose of this report is to provide Council and the community with a brief post-event summary and evaluation of the inaugural Bendigo Writers Festival presented within the View Street Arts Precinct between the 10th - 12th August 2012.

The festival appears to have been a success as measured by the responses from audiences and participants; the level of marketing and media coverage received; the higher than anticipated ticket sales; and the level of satisfaction of sponsors and the primary stakeholders.

The festival event was supported by select staff from The Capital, Tourism, Major Events, The Bendigo Weekly, La Trobe University and over 30 volunteers whose passion and professionalism contributed significantly to the success of this inaugural event.

As an inaugural event, the festival was projected to achieve only a modest attendance. The response significantly exceeded expectations for all involved.
Policy Context – Council Plan

Community and Culture – 3.4 Develop the cultural and creative aspirations of the community to make a significant contribution to the region’s social and economic prosperity and quality of life for all.

3.4.2 Support a diverse and vibrant arts, music and cultural program that challenges community thinking and encourages appreciation and participation.

Report

The Bendigo Writers Festival was initially presented to the City of Greater Bendigo as an event concept by Rosemary Sorenson, long-time writer for The Australian newspaper, and now journalist with the Bendigo Weekly, as an opportunity to mark the National Year of Reading.

This event concept was progressively developed and supported by a number of Bendigo organisations. The City of Greater Bendigo collaborated with La Trobe University in becoming the founding presenting partners for the event. The Bendigo Weekly were an additional major sponsor and print media partner with ABC Central Victoria coming on board as another media supporter. Other major sponsors included Bendigo TAFE, The Wheeler Centre and Bendigo Tourism. Host supporters were The Capital, Bendigo Art Gallery, Central Deborah Goldmine, Pondalowie Cellar and Store, Golden Dragon Museum and the Bendigo Wine Growers Association, the Heathcote Winegrowers and individual moteliers who provided accommodation free of charge for our writers.

Held over three days, the event included up to 100 writers and presenters, many from across Australia. Highlight writers included Leigh Hobbs, Ita Buttrose, Don Watson, David Marr and Gideon Haigh and Margo Lanagan. There was also a strong contingent of local writers including Jess Anastasi, John Charalambous, John Holton and Lauren Mitchell.

Events included a schools-based program which was fully subscribed by primary and secondary schools from Bendigo and the region. Saturday and Sunday in particular incorporated a packed program of panel discussion, workshops, keynote presentations, performances and readings. All were well attended and seemingly well received by audiences.

Initial objectives and projections

In developing and presenting the event, our initial objectives were to:

- Create a literary event to reinforce the positive positioning of Bendigo as a regional cultural destination to a wide audience;
- Develop an event that highlighted the key assets of Bendigo and View Street specifically;
- Attract sponsorship support and income through entry charges to offset costs;
- To attract visitors to Bendigo;
• Explore the opportunities for a recurring event for Bendigo in a relatively quiet time of year;
• Provide our community the opportunity to experience an event of excellence and national vision “in their backyard”; and
• Engender a sense of civic pride locally.

In our view, these objectives were well met.

Financial Results – Income and Expenditure

Income/revenue generated by and for CoGB by the event was approximately:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Revenue</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Box Office</td>
<td>27,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponsorships (various)</td>
<td>40,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL REVENUE</td>
<td>67,500</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staffing (event specific)</td>
<td>6,700</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equipment Hire</td>
<td>1,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Performance Fees and Programming</td>
<td>23,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Advertising / media / marketing</td>
<td>50,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hospitality and associated</td>
<td>5,200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</td>
<td>86,900</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NET COST</td>
<td>-19,400</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These costs do not include ticketing and venue rental fees incurred that would otherwise have been charged by The Capital. These costs were considered contributions to the event given CoGB was a presenting partner.

Note: Excludes permanent staffing costs (which are provided for generally and are not event-specific).

In staging this inaugural event, the City of Greater Bendigo achieved an unfavourable financial result of approximately $19,000. This was generally in line with budget forecasts and is considered a solid base to work from.

Promotional activities undertaken

• Strong editorial support was provided through local media primarily the Bendigo Weekly, ABC Central Victoria and Bendigo Advertiser;
• Quality design was developed through local designers which was used on all marketing materials including brochures, programs, advertisements, banners and t-shirts;
• Publicity undertaken locally and into Melbourne (particularly The Age); and
• Regional television commercials aired extensively on WIN TV throughout the prominent Olympics coverage.
• Social media (i.e Facebook and Twitter) promotions and updates from event organisers writers and participants.

Attendance and statistics

• 2,050 tickets were sold over the festival with participants attending over 50 events including workshops, panel sessions, book launches, performances, readings, and keynote sessions across five venues;

• 640 primary and secondary students and teachers attended writing and illustrating presentations, workshops and book launches as part of Text Marks the Spot on Friday 10th August;

• Up to 100 writers and presenters took part in the festival; and

• Up to 30 volunteers participated in the event.

Feedback

Anecdotally, feedback received was generally very positive.

Some specific emailed responses are included below:

Congratulations on a swinging, humming, buzzing festival. And congrats to all the volunteers and other good folk who made it happen. You’ve re-invented Bendigo for us city folk - Janine Burke, author

To those involved with the development of the idea of the inaugural Bendigo Writers Festival and all aspects of its organisation, my heartfelt congratulations. It was a fantastic weekend in many ways. The quality of the speakers, the organisation, the helpful volunteers, and the number of participants that were attracted to the event all added up to something that definitely needs to be repeated. Well done everyone! - Pat Schotz, comment via feedback Bendigo Writers Festival website.

Thanks for a fabulous festival. Highlights for me were Margo Lanagan and Alex Miller, and the concert with Arnold Zable and the woman with the fantastic voice. I will certainly come again - Kathy Haas, comment via feedback on Bendigo Writers Festival website.

You must by now be convinced that your Festival was an outstanding success, and also highly enjoyable - Judith Armstrong, author

I want to thank you for the opportunity to participate in the Bendigo Writers Festival. It really was very enjoyable as a presenter, panellist and audience member - Clare Kennedy, writer and reviewer

Well done on everything and THANK YOU for trusting me with one of your big-name writers (Alex Miller). I was thrilled to talk to him - Fiona Parker, ABC Central Victoria

Thank you for organising such a great event. Another score on the calendar for Bendigo and great to have an all Australian cast. I had a Sunday pass and was glad to be able to dip in
and out of sessions - Anita Lowe, comment via feedback on Bendigo Writers Festival website.

I just wanted to tell you that I had a really wonderful time on the weekend and thank you very much. I thought it was a really great first Bendigo Writers Festival. It could not have been better organised. Great venues too with the lovely cafes across the road. I really enjoyed the two events that you had arranged for me which were really terrific, and with great responses from the audience from both sessions. A very lovely opportunity yesterday to speak about my writing with Jennifer Jones in our session, and to do a reading. So thank you very much for inviting me, and to all of the people involved for a really fantastic festival and opportunity to have a good time in Bendigo. - Alexis Wright, author

Congratulations on such a successful festival. We had a wonderful time. There was such a fantastic atmosphere- I hope you were able to soak up at least some of it! The lunch set-up in the gallery looked amazing, and the Capital was splendid. Thank-you for your attentions Jacoba, in sourcing sandwiches, coffee, helping with the banners etc- you were wonderful. And Rosemary, it all went so smoothly, which is a testament to all your hard work these past few months. Well done! I do hope you’re feeling suitably elated. Please pass our thanks on to Di Dempsey too, who did a great job interviewing Ita. I look forward to working with you all at some stage in the future - Lucy De Kretser, The Wheeler Centre

Just wanted to thank you for including Central Deborah in the Writers Festival this year, it has been great working with you both. I hope that the writers enjoyed it as much as we enjoyed having them here and that they were able to take advantage of the tram tickets we sponsored - Evonne Everingham, Central Deborah Gold Mine

Congrats on the festival, I think it must have been a great success from what I saw - Sue Mooney, Bendigo Library

Just a quick note to congratulate you on such a wonderful start to the festival. We all know how hard it is to get these these going, from scratch, and I think you’ve done an extraordinary job. Well done and thanks so much for having me - John Hunter, publisher

I guess you are a mixture of exhaustion and exhilaration - but you deserve to be very proud of the first writers festival -it felt very professional and I had a great time at my gigs - sue (Gillett) and sofia (Ahlberg) were terrific and the winebar (Pondalowie) had an alert and warm crowd - Ross Donlon, poet

Just a short note to congratulate you on a fantastic event. And to thank you for inviting me to be a part of it. I was honoured - Julie Millowick, academic, La Trobe University.

A big thanks to you and everyone associated with the Festival. It was a fantastic event and I can’t remember the last time I enjoyed myself so much - Andrew Grimes, author

Congratulations on such a successful event. You really did Bendigo proud. Congratulations to all the people who made it happen - Deb Allan, comment via feedback the Bendigo Writers Festival website

Simply to say that the Festival was a great success for me: I learned something from every session - even the ones I was in! I thought they went really well, and people I spoke to afterwards confirmed my impression. It was an honour to be invited to contribute. Thank you for your attention and concern - John Flaus, writer and film critic
Everyone I've spoken to was mightily impressed and entertained and can't wait for the next one - Alex Miller, author

Thanks for all your hard work in making last week end such a success. I thought the festival had a really good vibe. Pretty amazing actually, especially seeing it was the first for Bendigo - Maureen McCarthy, author

The local writing team are literally on cloud nine – so many of their events were well attended and professionally presented. I feel so honoured to have been a part of it - Ian Irvine Bendigo TAFE

Conclusion

The feedback from this inaugural event has been very positive and there appears to be a strong momentum from attendees and stakeholders to support an annual Writers Festival in Bendigo.

The financial commitment was considered a modest yet sound investment basis for an inaugural event positioning itself in an otherwise crowded “festivals” market and we feel that the net cost of the event would reduce over time as the event hopefully grows momentum and awareness.

The event strongly reinforced the brand proposition that Bendigo is credibly building around quality regional cultural experiences and the success of this event can be partially attributed to feeding off the great successes of the international exhibitions held in recent years at Bendigo Art Gallery and other major events in our community.

The timing and placement of this event in winter means that we have a cultural event in Bendigo in an otherwise relatively quiet time on the annual event calendar which all goes well for further developing economic opportunities for the hospitality, retail and related tourism sectors.

Resource Implications

Summary of event-specific revenue and expenditure – refer above.

It is recommended that Council budget in the order of $25,000 (net cost) next financial year to support this emerging major event.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Greater Bendigo City Council acknowledge the success of the inaugural Bendigo Writers Festival and commit in-principle to support it as an annual on-going event for the cultural, promotional and economic well-being of Greater Bendigo.

RESOLUTION

Moved Cr Fyffe, Seconded Cr Reynard.

That the recommendation be adopted.
CARRIED