

"The most outstanding event Townsville has ever had."

North Australian Festival Of Arts
2019 REPORT

“When I saw the program I thought – they are taking on a lot, how is the town going to support this? ...what Townsville has achieved in this first year, Adelaide took years to get anywhere near. In a lifetime spent at festivals around the world, I have never seen the likes of it.

Congratulations Townsville.”

COL DAVIS, MELBOURNE

Owner of the Wonderland Spiegeltent

INTRODUCTION



WE HAVE CREATED SOMETHING VERY SPECIAL. AN ARTISTIC, CULTURAL AND LIFESTYLE CHANGING EVENT. A SEMINAL MOMENT IN OUR CITY. A LEGACY.

Northern Australia is an artistic and cultural melting pot of creativity – of artists and artisans, makers of music, dance, visual arts, spoken, sung and written words, and of 40,000 years of stories, songs and dance of the traditional custodians of this place. And yet “the arts” are very much the unheralded social fabric of way of life. They are misunderstood, undervalued, misconceived – but experienced and enjoyed by thousands in all its shapes and forms.

After the North Australian Festival of Arts – NAFA, the importance and recognition of the role of the arts in our community has been justified. People – young and old, locals, and visitors alike supported NAFA and the Northern Fringe Festival in droves. And they collectively clamour for more.

Over 103,000 people attended Council curated NAFA and Fringe programmed events alone. 23,000 tickets to shows and events saw a gross box office turnover of half a million dollars. A further 130,000 people witnessed *Strand Ephemera*, the North's Sculpture Festival held biennially and for the first time incorporated into NAFA. 3,300 people took part in *Festival of Stories* ticketed workshops, author events and children's activities. 12,500 attended Fringe Festival events programmed independently, HALO was viewed by an estimated 50,000* in Queen's Gardens.

In all this went over a quarter of a million experiences of the arts under the broad umbrella of NAFA.

Created to deliver on Townsville City Council's commitment to conduct an annual arts and cultural festival, and developed after the successful *Commonwealth Games Festival 2018*, NAFA built upon established arts festivals such as the acclaimed *Strand Ephemera* and *Australian Festival of Chamber Music*, created signature events such as *The Festival of Stories*, HALO and a *Northern Fringe Festival*, and brought Australia's largest tropical city to life for the month of July, where Townsville's winter is the perfect summer.

We were ambitious. “If we are going to get big let's start big” was the mantra infused and engendered in everything we did. And big it was. This was a festival for northern Australia – not just a Townsville Arts Festival.

We have established in one year, what has taken other cities decades.

NAFA presented local, national and international acts complimented by a month long curated arts and cultural program of music, dance, theatre, comedy, exhibitions, Spiegeltent circus and cabaret, a writers festival and much more. We hosted the inaugural Northern Fringe Festival running alongside NAFA. Featuring live acts, music, comedy, cabaret, freaks and funk the Northern Fringe – in the spirit of Fringe Festivals across the globe – was an inclusive and organic festival hosted in theatres, pubs, pop-up venues, laneways and venues right across Townsville. The arts community embraced it and the Northern Fringe will grow to become a welcome addition to the national Fringe Festival scene.

HALO cast an aura above the city illuminating the iconic Castle Hill and treating spectators to an immersive light installation experience developed specifically for Townsville in the beautiful Queen's Gardens.

INTRODUCTION



96%
OF PEOPLE SURVEYED
RATED THE FESTIVAL
AS GOOD OR
EXCELLENT

Strand Ephemera adorned our magnificent waterfront, with the sublime backdrop of the Coral Sea and Magnetic Island. Live performance including the sell-out Erth's Dinosaur Zoo, a children's puppetry show complimented the amazing sculptures along the Strand.

Festival of Stories informed, educated, and challenged participants in a series of workshops, author talks, children's and writer's workshops, panel discussions and keynote speakers.

NAFA provided an overarching branding and marketing umbrella to these new and existing events and was without doubt one of the most successful campaigns ever presented by Council and set new benchmarks for marketing of the arts in this city. NAFA wasn't just noticed – it dominated the city media and "look and feel".

Whilst the economic and tourist benefits of NAFA and all the associated components cannot be denied, the social benefit of the festival cannot be understated.

After the devastation of the unprecedented monsoon event of early 2019, when Townsville and the greater region suffered tremendous personal loss and hardship, and immeasurable damage to city infrastructure including our cultural facilities, NAFA and the Fringe Festival gave artistic and emotional renewal to our community.

A poignant example of this came from a lady attending the Spiegeltent one night who approached me to say:

"thank you for all of this, it has given me a reason to get out of my house again after the flood. It's been a rough six months".

Wonderful feedback, but you see the lady was wheelchair bound suffering multiple sclerosis. She lost her house at Idalia in the flood. She attended several shows during NAFA with her two children and their joy was reward enough for all of us who witnessed it.

NAFA came about due to the commitment and vision of Mayor Jenny Hill and her Council, with the support of the Qld State Government through Minister Enoch and Arts Queensland and corporate partners headed by CQUniversity and for this the city is indebted. But it is the artists, the performers, the circus freaks, the children performing in the park, the stand-up comedians in the pubs, the musicians busking, the community choir and massed drumming ensemble that made this festival such an outstanding experience.

...and the residents and visitors who came and proved that, as we hoped, it was indeed a festival with something for everyone.

In July 2019, Townsville sang, danced and laughed once more. And we will again.

Jeff Jimmieson
Major Events Director
Townsville City Council

"Fantastic. We enjoyed every event - and many congratulations to the Council and all others involved. "

NAFA, HALO AND THE NORTHERN FRINGE FESTIVAL

In April of 2018 as an adjunct to the Gold Coast Commonwealth Games, The Queensland State Government funded an arts and cultural festival in each of the four Games “event” cities – Gold Coast, Brisbane, Cairns and Townsville – known collectively and in each city as *Festival 2018*. This festival was intended to add cultural experience and enjoyment to Games visitors and the people of Queensland in what the Premier described as “a Games for all of Queensland”, showcasing the breadth and depth of artistic life across our state.

Townsville’s *Festival 2018* event, staged over the 12 days of the Games, was an outstanding success with attendances of near 100 000 people at the three locations staging performances, concerts, a towering visual art creation using shipping containers, and for the first time ever in Townsville, travelling festival Spiegeltents in which national, international and local acts performed.

The response to *Festival 2018* by the Townsville community was overwhelming in its support. The Festival was promoted as a festival the like of which had never been seen here before and it certainly delivered on that intent.

As an election commitment of the Council elected under Mayor Jenny Hill in 2016, council committed under its Corporate Goal # 2 - A City for People:

To enhance people’s experience of Townsville as a liveable and vibrant city by providing services that support the growth of an inclusive, knowledgeable, active, safe and healthy community by

2.3 Improving the vibrancy of Townsville by supporting the community’s access to, and participation in, a range of artistic, cultural and entertainment activities.

2.3.1 Events and Culture Policy: To establish a **Townsville Festival** as an annual event to develop an extended multi-focus festival of the arts.



Little Day Out:
Around the World

93%

AGREED JULY IS THE BEST TIME FOR THE FESTIVAL

Source: NAFA 2019 Feedback survey

Festival 2018 provided no better impetus and momentum to build upon that success and experience to stage the inaugural stand-alone festival in 2019.

Discussion on the best timing of such a festival was protracted and researched with the underlining considerations being:

- **Climate** – considerations of heat, weather including cyclones vs idyllic winter conditions.
- **Existing events** – cultural and sporting
- **Tourism potential** – Tourist season or shoulder period with considerations including available accommodation for visitors.
- **Budget** – considering that this decision was taken after the 2018/19 budget had been adopted and there was no specific provision for a festival identified.

A strong case was presented to the Mayor and Councillors recommending July as the ideal time to host the festival. The argument for this and for the timing of future festivals, addressing the above considerations was based on:

- **Climate** – July is well considered the ideal weather with cool but not cold nights and beautiful winter days free of the threat of weather extremes that come with the spring and summer months. The slogan 'July, where Townsville's winter is the perfect summer' became the catch cry of the festival promotion.
- **Existing events** – Townsville already has a busy event calendar over the winter months with sport (Supercars, Cowboys games, Running Festival and Triathlon) as well as cultural events including our signature arts event, the Australian Festival of Chamber Music (AFCM). Biennially Council stages the renowned Strand Ephemera seaside sculpture festival as well as an annual writer's festival. These existing events became the anchor points on which NAFA was built.
- **Tourism potential** – Winter is the prime Tourism season in the north. Events such as Supercars, Running Festival, Triathlon and AFCM already draw visitors to the city and a huge contingent of "grey nomads" fill the highways, caravan parks and campsites. Cruise ship visitation is increasing in this period. Whilst some including Townsville Enterprise prompted for a festival in the "shoulder" months it was argued that reputationally there was much to be gained in giving those visitors in July a much more culturally diverse experience of our city. Anecdotal evidence of the success of this approach comes from the unlikely case of

the 60+ Supercars corporate clients and team members who attended a Spiegeltent cabaret show on the Friday night of their event; Sam Pearce, Supercars Event Manager said:

"We took 60 of our team members and sponsors to the Bernie Dieter Little Death Club show at the Spiegeltent and had an absolutely fantastic night. Many of our guests commented that they had never experienced Townsville so well outside of the track. It was just like the Adelaide Supercars event when Adelaide Fringe Festival runs right next door to the track."

It was proven in survey analysis that festival goers were far more supportive of the event being staged in the cooler weather rather than in a stifling March or October.

- **Budget** – with no defined budget allocation for NAFA in the 2018/19 Council Budget, the basis of the NAFA programming relied upon existing budgets that were allowed for in that budget. This included budgets for Strand Ephemera, a writers festival (*Savannah*, later to be re-branded as *Festival of Stories*) existing Performing Arts content that had been postponed due to the flood damage at the venues, scheduled Gallery exhibitions as well as budgets for Council's support of major events including the Supercars and the Australian Festival of Chamber Music. Budget for additional programming and marketing of NAFA was drawn from community engagement programs including the marketing and communications budget.

Having presented this case to the Mayor and Councillors, the decision to proceed with NAFA in July 2019 was made in late December 2018, allowing only 6 months to program and produce the festival. This short timeframe was greatly compounded by the usual Christmas/New Year business shutdown in the city, to then suffer the devastation and disruption of the February natural disaster.

To achieve the content and support of the festival in this greatly compacted planning period was indeed one of the most outstanding achievements of the small Festival team and local arts community.



Spiegeltent, Strand Park

RECOMMENDATION 1

Planning and programming of NAFA needs to be done on a minimum three-year forward planning calendar, consistent with other major festivals and touring product programming matched to a five-year forward plan for the event.

HALO – the illumination project component of NAFA came after a meeting in Sydney with Anthony Basic and Giles Westerly, the Creative Directors of agb events, collaborators on the world acclaimed Vivid Festival that illuminates Sydney each year. AGB also produce the spectacular Parrtjima Festival in Alice Springs. At a presentation at AGB's Surrey Hills office, Townsville was proposed as an ideal location for such a project, utilising the iconic Castle Hill as an illumination landscape. A subsequent visit by Anthony, Giles and AGB Project Director Sam Elphick to Townsville attracted their enthusiasm and coincided with an opportunity via Future Cities to fund the concept consistent with the Castle Hill master plan with funding obtained from an Australian Government Building Better Regions grant. HALO was born, becoming an overarching attraction of NAFA.

NAFA therefore become the sum of many parts. Some existing, many new... but all outstanding. Something for everyone.

PROGRAMS BY AUDIENCE SUITABILITY

CHILDREN'S
23.56%

ADULT ONLY
28.27%

ALL AGES
48.17%

"Excellent. Great diversity, fantastic amount of free experiences and ticketed ones were very reasonably priced!"



TICKET SALES

23,000
TOTAL TICKET SALES

30.5% **FREE** | 69.5% **PAID**
AVG TICKET PRICE \$32

73.93% NAFA & FRINGE
14.34% FESTIVAL OF STORIES
11.73% STRAND EPHEMERA

\$530,600
GROSS BOX OFFICE

\$396,796.52 INCOME TO ARTISTS
\$77,341.50 VENUE HIRE REVENUE
\$56,465.88 BOX OFFICE & ADMIN FEES

TICKET SALES REFERRAL

23% Facebook **22%** Word of Mouth **17%** Not Specified
16% Printed Program **12%** Website **10%** Other



NON-TICKETED VISITATION

38,200

QUEENS GARDENS

5,000 JOE CAMILLERI
6,000 LOCAL BANDS
1,700 LITTLE DAY OUT
2,500 PIMLICO IN THE PARK
5,000 GLENN SHORROCK
5,000 AFCM IN THE PARK
13,000 GENERAL VISITATION

41,000

STRAND PARK

10,000 NOISE (DANCE NORTH)
4,000 SAN CISCO
1,500 SUPERCRUISE
500 SUNDAY BLUES FESTIVAL
25,000 GENERAL VISITATION

TOTAL VISITATION (NON-TICKED & TICKETED)

102,200 PAX

VENUES

FESTIVAL 2018 WAS CONDUCTED IN THREE PRIME CITY LOCATIONS – STRAND PARK, QUEENS GARDENS AND JEZZINE BARRACKS PARKLANDS.

These proved to be ideal for that purpose – centrally located on or close to the Strand where Commonwealth Games visitors and locals could access the venues easily. Queen's Gardens was a particular success with many local residents commenting that it was the first time they had visited the beautiful gardens in years – they rediscovered this city gem.

In planning NAFA it was therefore obvious to build in this success and utilise Strand Park and Queens Gardens as the two proven locations for the basis of NAFA and Fringe Festival events.

STRAND PARK

Home to most significant city events since the redevelopment of the Strand in 1997 (and for decades before as home of the annual Pacific Festival) The Strand and its centrally located "D" shaped parkland have become synonymous with big occasions in Townsville. The attraction of thousands of daily walkers and as a must-see tourist destination makes the park a Townsville icon.

For NAFA, Strand Park became the prime location for the full five week program with the magnificent Wonderland Spiegeltent from Melbourne returning to Townsville for an extended stay. The park layout was designed in true festival setting with a canopy of festoon lighting over a licensed Wonderland Garden as well as a towering thrill ride, The Aviator as the eye catching drawcard synonymous with festivals.

For the first two weeks of July, the Wonderland Spiegeltent was joined by the May Wirth Festival Tent, a 320 seat vinyl touring tent seen at festivals around the country including Adelaide Fringe. Programming of these two tents side by side for two weeks was challenging but gave the local performance groups the excellent opportunity to present their works in a fully functional festival arena style venue and the Spiegeltent with exceptional lighting and sound production.

Aviator &
Spiegeltent at Strand Park



Operational Outcomes

- The park was operational for 30 days plus 5 days build and 5 days bump out.
- In all, Strand Park hosted **92 ticketed performances, concerts and events. 52 of these (56.5%) were full houses.**
- In addition the eight performances of Dance North's Noise saw an estimated 10 000 people attend the free park event.
- The youth concert featuring San Cisco and Young Lions was attended by an estimated 4000 people.
- The Supercars Supercruise, driver signing and FOX television live broadcast was attended by estimated 2000 people along the Strand and in the park.
- In total an estimated 58,394 attended Strand Park NAFA and Fringe Festival events (not inclusive of Strand Ephemera).
- Despite 5 weeks of operation and 2 weeks of bump in and out, the park physically stood up well to the structures and traffic.
- The park became central to Strand Ephemera with the Spiegeltent used for workshops and the very popular sell out *Erth's Dinosaur Zoo* shows.
- For the second year Council presented its Supercars welcome event along the Strand with the Supercruise followed by the driver signing session again very popular despite the sporadic rainfall that day. Once again, we were able to negotiate for FOX Sports to broadcast their national Thursday night *Supercars Trackside* program live from the park, with exceptional national ratings on FOX.
- Sound is and will continue to be an issue however a very small number of complainants (2) were received from residents who reside as far as two blocks away from the park. Five weeks of programming was always going to be an issue to these people however contrary to the noise complaints, Council's Community Engagement Officers received anecdotal comments from residents in the immediate area saying how wonderful it was to have this event right on their doorstep.
- Parking similarly has been a restrictive factor of the site for years and this could be overcome next year.
- The vibrancy of the Strand, Gregory Street and city generally was a constant comment with traders including the Watermark and Longboards good examples of traders commenting that the month had been an outstanding trading success for them based on the number of people around the precinct.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Consideration should be given to maintaining the noise generating events to the indoor venues, with large outdoor concerts (San Cisco this year and Thundamentals in 2018) being held in another location, potentially the new North Queensland Stadium.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Implement use of park and ride service for the weekends and bigger events.



'Spartacus' simulcast at Jezzine Barracks

JEZZINE BARRACKS PARKLANDS (CROSSED BOOMERANG AMPHITHEATRE)

This location was used for one NAFA event, the collaboration with QPAC for the simulcast of the Bolshoi Ballet's *Spartacus*.

This event required a satellite relay along with big screen and PA system and minimal infrastructure. The site was ideal for this simulcast and 400 people attended. Bar and catering facilities were provided.



Pimlico in the Park,
Queen's Gardens Main Stage

QUEEN'S GARDENS

This beautiful botanic garden is a Townsville landmark and yet greatly underutilised or enjoyed by the general community. Daily walkers and occasional tourists who find their way to the park are few in number and whilst Council has for many years conducted the annual Eco Fiesta in the park, it is mostly used as a wedding and family gathering event space.

Festival 2018 certainly led to the park being rediscovered or enjoyed for the first time by many residents and visitors.

For NAFA, Queens Gardens was established as two distinct operating sites – one being the festival venue running for 7 days over two weekends, the second (the Paxton Street side of the park) being the venue for the HALO light installation and soundscape.

As a festival site, five performance venues were established running often concurrently. The central area of the park saw seating, food trucks, bars and open space all under a canopy of festoon lighting and tree illumination. This entire section of the park was licensed with security managing alcohol supply and restriction on the site.

The five performance venues were:

1. Queen's Garden Main Stage

The dominant large open free stage playing to the open park space with capacity of 5000. Headline artists performed on this stage and it was also the venue for the annual Australian Festival of Chamber Music free Sunday concert featuring international Festival artists accompanied by the 1RAR Band and the Barrier Reef Orchestra. This stage also hosted the opening night concert by legendary Australian musician Joe Camilleri and the Black Sorrows and also the closing concert by Glenn Shorrock, a collaboration with the Qld Music Festival.

This stage also hosted one of the most pleasing outcomes of the Festival – the annual Pimlico High School musical presentation which is held annually at the Civic Theatre with participants from the whole school. As the theatre was closed for flood repairs, this event was facing cancellation until we offered the stage and park to revise what was *Pimlico Presents*, re-worked to *Pimlico in the Park*. Over 2500 students and family attended this event to outstanding success.

Producer Claire Davies, Pimlico State High School:

Thank you all so much for everything you did to make Pimlico in the Park happen. You are all amazing and I feel really blessed to have had an event at all, let alone one so excellent, where my staff, students and I all felt so supported – my Grade 12s in particular can't thank you enough".



2. The May Wirth Festival Tent

A 320 seat capacity in the round style tent which was used for ticketed events including the headline comedy act, Gold Logie Winner Tom Gleeson who sold out three shows. *Photo © SkyReefPhotography*

3. The Empire Theatre

A 220 seat hex tent which featured one man plays, music, circus and children's music workshops conducted by the 1RAR Band.

Photo © Aaron Ashley

4. The Starlight Move Haus

A creation of the festival team, this marquee with clear roof gave an outstanding venue for dance performance of all genres. Bush dancing, cheerleading, Latin dancing – the venue was a free space and a popular hit with festival goers.



5. The \$5 Lucky Dip Teepee

Another brainchild of the festival team, this unique teepee structure was intended to be a \$5 admission for a mystery 15 minute show however the shortage of stand up comedians (due to the huge success of the Comedy Generation's 15 Fringe events!) meant that talent for the teepee was largely limited to solo musicians. Regardless this proved popular with free admission and provided a secluded intimate performance space and chill out zone away from the noise of the festival site.

Apart from these venues the festival site in general provided a great location for sitting, relaxing and having a glass of wine pre-show. It also was the venue for the hugely successful *Little Day Out* conducted by La Luna Youth Arts which attracted 1700 children to a 'round the world day of cultural music and arts.

“Culturally rich and exciting.”

Operational Outcomes

- The park (Festival site) was operational for 7 days plus 5 days build and 5 days bump out. (not including HALO work).
- Queen's Gardens hosted 71 ticketed and free events with 21 full houses in tent venues.
- Festival Stage events (free) saw 17,200 attendances at events: Joe Camilleri (4000), AFCM (5000), Pimlico in the Park (2500), Little Day Out (1700) and Glen Shorrock (4000)
- The park saw estimated visitations of 43,806 for festival events and a further estimated 50,000 to witness HALO
- Whilst the park provides a beautiful festival setting much like the *Garden of Unearthly Delights* at Adelaide Fringe, its limitations are listed below.

Lighting in the general streets surrounding the park (Gregory, Paxton streets and Kennedy Lane) is very poor and concerns for pedestrian safety exist.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Better lighting and traffic (pedestrian) control around Queen's Gardens is needed.

Whilst the lush lawns in the HALO side of the park are in excellent condition, the ground in the festival side of the park is very sandy and dry with many exposed dirt patches. This gave rise to continual dust requiring daily hand watering of the site which was ineffective.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Increased watering, ground preparation and the greater use of terra-plas matting would greatly improve access and retard dust.



Queen's Gardens

As a botanic garden, tree roots and falling branches are hazards.

Falling possums and occasional snake sightings also provided some alarm, and light entertainment.

Pathways inside and outside the park are in a poor state in places with several reported trips and falls.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Investment should be ongoing on the upgrade of these footpaths and walkways.

Council's arborist advises that many of the older trees in the gardens are facing terminal disease and aging.

RECOMMENDATION 7

A full audit of the site in this regard should be undertaken, not just for NAFA but for general public safety. Perhaps alternate locations for Eco Fiesta held just prior to NAFA may be considered to reduce wear on the park.

HOTEL OCCUPANCY FOR JULY 2019 WAS UP 8.6% ON 2018



The gardens are a popular wedding and function venue, booked as was the case this year many months in advance. We worked with existing bookings to assist and accommodate them (including a family reunion of 140 people!)

RECOMMENDATION 8

It is strongly recommended that any wedding bookings in future years be limited to the raintree lawn (if at all) and that hirers be advised of the festival's presence and footprint.

There is lack of knowledge that the parks need to be booked for events such as this. There were two instances of irate people arrive to hold children's birthday parties - one believing she had "booked a bench" and the other stating that Council told her she didn't have to book her child's birthday party (complete with jumping castle, face painter and 20 children). There were occasional complaints about the closure of the park by residents who seemed to enjoy almost exclusive use of the park for their daily dog walk.

RECOMMENDATION 9

More lead time, greater publicity and community engagement of the closure and purpose needs to be undertaken in future years.

There is limited event infrastructure in the park such as 3phase power, water points and toilets.

RECOMMENDATION 10

Future capital improvement of the park for this and other events should be considered in the long term.

Noise spill or "bleed" was not an issue despite the proximity of the venues in the park other than for the video presentation of Opera which proved to be not ideal in a festival tent setting. These were two shows rescheduled from the closed Civic Theatre. Noise complaints resulted in refunds for patrons at the first show and the decision was made to cancel and refund patrons for the second scheduled show. Opera buffs require concert hall or lyric theatre conditions.

RECOMMENDATION 11

It is recommended that opera and fine music performance be scheduled only in theatre settings in the future.

PROGRAMMING



Programming for NAFA was challenging given the short timeframe from event approval in late December to the event some seven months later, with milestones such as securing and contracting acts, confirming content for publication, marketing programs and collateral, ticketing build and on sale dates, media buying and general community awareness all being excessively compacted.

This condensed timeframe for programming led to little time for collaboration and consultation with stakeholders in the arts community collectively and consequently many pre-existing content and remounts of previously staged works formed a large part of the final NAFA program.

RECOMMENDATION 12

Programming of NAFA must be strategically developed at least three years in advance to maximise the accessibility of acts and productions, to give ample planning for event venues and logistics, to give local arts companies time to secure and create works and to establish an event planning calendar of achievable project management milestones.



THE SIX MONTH LEAD TIME PLACED TREMENDOUS PRESSURE ON THE VERY SMALL FESTIVAL TEAM AND PARTICULARLY THE MARKETING, DIGITAL, AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS TEAMS - ALL OF WHOM CARRIED OUT BUSINESS AS USUAL RESPONSIBILITIES IN THEIR NORMAL ROLES WITHIN COUNCIL WHILST DEVELOPING AND DELIVERING AN EXCEPTIONAL MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS PLAN FOR THE FESTIVAL.

1002 ARTIST JOBS | LOCAL **884**
GREATER QLD **0**
NATIONAL **118**

9 VENUES
46 DAYS
191 SHOWS
400+ PERFORMANCES

1,293
JOBS CREATED

210 STAFF, CREW AND
CONTRACTOR LABOUR
APPROX. 79,728 HOURS ACROSS 46 DAYS

81 SUPPLIERS & VENDORS | LOCAL **47**
GREATER QLD **14**
NATIONAL **20**

90% LOCAL STAFF AND LABOUR

23.56% SOLD OUT SHOWS | **58.64%** FREE PERFORMANCES | **48** ARTS ORGANISATIONS | LOCAL **35**
GREATER QLD **4**
NATIONAL **8**
INTERNATIONAL **1**

SHOWS BY GENRE



CABARET
12.57%



COMEDY
4.19%



WORKSHOPS & TALKS
24.61%



THEATRE
12.57%



DANCE
9.95%



CIRCUS & PHYSICAL THEATRE
12.57%



MUSIC
20.94%



EVENTS
2.62%

PROGRAMMING



A Mermaid's Tale

PROGRAM CREATIVE PRINCIPLES

On setting out to program NAFA and the Northern Fringe Festival, the team developed a set of guiding principles based on the desire to achieve the following outcomes:

- **The name of the festival** - the *North Australian Festival of Arts* was deliberate to establish the festival as truly having a north Australian footprint, and to strengthen Townsville's status as the arts and events capital of Northern Australia, recognising it as Queensland's "second capital" and the largest northern regional city across the continent.
- **Local content** was to be in our foremost consideration. NAFA was to be a showcase of the depth and calibre of local (Townsville and regional) arts organisations, companies and arts practitioners. This was achieved to wide acclaim of the local arts community who enjoyed the unprecedented venues, branding and marketing saturation provided by NAFA and Fringe.
- **Indigenous art and culture, youth and emerging artists** were to be a focus. This was achieved through successful collaborations and financial support of the indigenous community (*Big Eye Theatre* and traditional owner dance groups), support of the *Mabo Legacy Exhibition* with Umbrella Gallery and enabling Pimlico High School to resurrect their annual *Pimlico Presents* major musical production, cancelled due to the Civic Theatre closure, reworked as *Pimlico in the park* to generous acknowledgment of the students for our role in this.

- Secondary to local content, we looked to establish **collaborations** with Queensland based arts companies. To this end very successful collaborations occurred with the Queensland Music Festival, Opera Queensland and QPAC (Bolshoi Ballet Simulcast) thus bringing these high calibre performances to our regional audience, made possible by NAFA.
- Our programming intent was to bring **national and international, world class performances** to our city. The Adelaide Fringe Festival was unashamedly used as an exemplar of what Townsville might ultimately strive for. Experienced Adelaide promoters were engaged to bring award winning (Adelaide and Edinburgh Festivals) cabaret and circus shows, all staged within the magnificent Wonderland Spiegeltent and other well known festival theatre tents. Other festivals were researched, and Adelaide visited on three occasions where Adelaide Fringe Director & CEO Heather Croall was gracious in her assistance and encouragement of our plans.



- A consistent guiding principle was that whatever we presented – it had **to be in the best** possible setting, with the best possible staging, audio visual and lighting technology, the equal of any expectation for a festival such as Adelaide. We wanted to deliver new and exciting experiences for our patrons, particularly local residents who we believed we needed to educate and excite about what the festival was and would become.
- **A line up not to be missed, a festival for everyone.** This became a marketing strap line based on our true desire to cover all of the artistic bases and interests, no matter how diverse. We believe this was achieved. We wanted to bring shows, performers and acts to the region not normally seen as part of our regular performing and visual arts programming. We wanted to challenge expectations.
- Finally – the ambitious yet seemingly achieved stated intent that "**if we are going to get big, we may as well start big**". Programming of the first NAFA and its co-existing Fringe Festival became a wildfire of enthusiasm, offers, collaborations and ideas. From the initial Fringe Festival information evening in March there was no doubt that the local arts community would embrace, pick up and run with the concept. In the end, no idea, show, or act was turned away.



Justine Clarke

PROGRAM CREATIVE DIRECTION

NAFA did not have a Creative Director as would any other such established festival, a point queried by some within the artist ranks in the city. The festival was designed and directed by the Manager of Special Projects of Council, an experienced events and arts producer. The title of that role has subsequently been changed to Major Projects Director with a defined position description setting out responsibilities in regard to NAFA.

For the inaugural NAFA the intent was to engage the creative support of a collective of leading arts practitioners in Townsville as a creative, consultative team. This approach was successful in planning for Festival 2018 providing a sounding board for ideas and programming over the year leading into that Festival.

The short lead time into NAFA as identified earlier coupled with the unavailability and commitments of the key arts leaders due in many cases to their focus on their own productions, meant that this approach was reduced to one-on-one discussions about ideas.

RECOMMENDATION 13

It is recommended that greater and earlier consultation be had with leading arts practitioners collectively in programming future Festivals.

RECOMMENDATION 14

As NAFA develops into the future with a five year plan of growth, consideration may be given to the appointment of guest Creative Directors to program certain aspect of the festival (e.g. Visual Arts, Dance, Music) and ultimately the festival may look to engage an overall Creative Director.

RECOMMENDATION 15

In the immediate future of the festival, creative direction will continue to vest with the Major Events Director and his team, consulting with leading arts practitioners as described above.

REPORTING & ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

The planning and delivery of NAFA in the first year was led by the Manager of Special Projects, reporting to the General Manager of Community Engagement, Director of Planning and Community Engagement and then to the CEO of Council.

Regular briefings were held with the Mayor and less frequent briefings were provided to full council.

The role of Major Events Director now reports to the General Manager of Future Cities and then to the CEO.

RECOMMENDATION 16 & 17

As governance of the project, it is recommended that a small Project Leadership Team (PLT) of senior executives be formed to oversee this project, and that regular formal progress reports be given to council via the Community and Cultural Development Committee.



Wearable Art, Strand
Ephemera Block Party

“It’s immersed Townsville in the Arts, in a way that’s never been successful before - but NAFA was well-attended from day one and I believe opened a lot of locals’ eyes.”

RESOURCING THE FESTIVAL TEAM

The **festival team** comprised the Special Projects Manager with a temporary position of Festival Production Manager filled on secondment by a Senior Theatre Technician, Lachlan Welsh who had performed the same role for Festival 2018. These two staff were assisted by three (reduced to two) business support staff on loan from the Customer Contact section of Council. These staff continued to perform their normal BAU throughout the planning period for the festival.

This small team oversaw the entire project working collaboratively with teams across Council including:

- Marketing and Communications
- Future Cities
- Community Engagement
- Digital
- Events & Protocol
- Venues
- Performing and Visual Arts
- Libraries
- Construction Maintenance and Operations
- Infrastructure, Planning, Assets & Fleet
- Mayor’s Office
- Executive Office

An **Operational Team** representative of these internal stakeholders was established and met weekly (with exceptions) to discuss a set agenda of planning items. This greatly enhanced cross council participation in the planning.

Three External Stakeholder Engagement meetings were conducted (two pre event and one post) as an operational requirement to comply with Police and Office of Liquor & Gaming Regulation event permits. These meetings were attended by:

- Police (District Office and Strand Police Beat Officers)
- Office of Liquor and Gaming Regulation – Regional Manager
- QFRS and Qld Ambulance
- Event Caterer and Liquor Licensee
- Relevant Council staff

The workload on the festival team as well as the additional workload on all other sections of council who at the same time maintained their BAU commitments led to extreme demands on staff. Deadlines were stretched to the maximum and turnaround and response times were delayed in order to prioritise tasks, both for NAFA and BAU.

Whilst the year long and longer planning process going forward will alleviate a considerable amount of this stress, the following recommendations should be considered.

RECOMMENDATION 18

The Festival Team be resourced with a permanent business support role year-round.

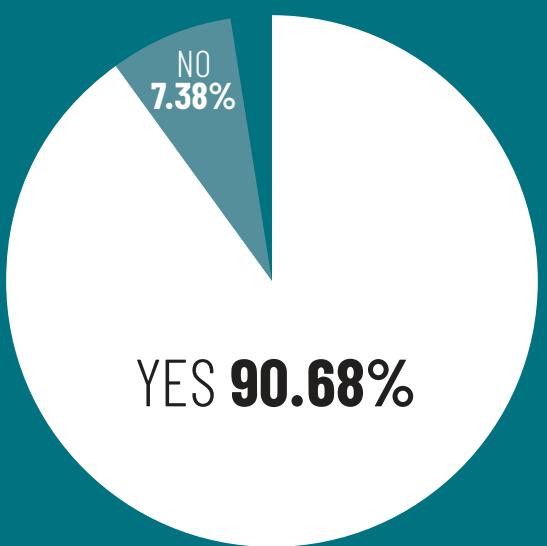
RECOMMENDATION 19

The role of the Festival Production manager be re-written to more accurately reflect the functions of that role as they have developed over Festival 2018 and now NAFA, to include more responsibility and involvement in programming and event management.



FOLLOWING YOUR NAFA EXPERIENCE, ARE YOU MORE LIKELY TO ATTEND ARTS AND CULTURAL EVENTS IN THE FUTURE?

*1.94% of people surveyed did not specify.



RECOMMENDATION 20

The Festival Team be located in a dedicated Festival Office, ideally with a shop front location where the NAFA will have a familiar presence in the community year round providing a suitable location for the daily community and arts groups meetings that occurred and also provide for the expansion and contraction of the team with casual staff in the lead up and during festival. This office would also house the growing amount of festival collateral, records and assets that have accumulated already.

RECOMMENDATION 21

Investment in utilising and growing the experience of events and venues staff as well as casual staff gained over NAFA and Festival 2018 be continued, however dedicated roles need to be filled by a consistent staff member (eg site manager or tent boss) avoiding the daily turnover of rostered staff requiring handover and training.

RECOMMENDATION 22

Whilst we were able to draw upon the staff resources of the Civic Theatre team including their Ticket Shop box office and FOH staff (with little support available from the theatre technical staff) this was possible due to the present closure of the theatre for repairs. Future years may not avail us of these resources and additional ticketing, FOH and technical staff may have to be recruited casually for the festival.

“Loved the variety, easy accessibility and energy of the whole experience.”



The use of labour hire recruitment is suggested to aid and attract the recruitment of experienced festival casual staff a pool of which travels the festival circuit.

The relatively late inclusion of HALO into the NAFA program added considerable workload to the team, principally the Production Manager. Whilst HALO was managed by the City Placemaker of the Future Cities team, logistical procurement and management and daily liaison with the agb events team in the lead up and during NAFA was added to the production manager's tasks stretching that role with potential detriment to both events.

RECOMMENDATION 23

If HALO is to continue and/or if it is to become a responsibility of the NAFA team, assistance to the re-defined Production Manager's role must be considered, with experience in event/technical production.



CREW
nafa-tsv.com.au

NORTH AUSTRALIAN FESTIVAL OF ARTS // NORTHERN FRINGE FESTIVAL

When developing the NAFA concept, Adelaide and other leading festivals around the world were obvious inspiration and Townsville has particular similarities to Adelaide, if not in population but certain features were consistent.

- Townsville like Adelaide has a vibrant arts scene, with high participation rates particularly by young people.
- Whilst Adelaide is the South Australian State Capital, Townsville is similarly a large although provincial city, recognised as the “second capital” of Queensland and is the largest population centre and economy in northern Australia.
- Whilst climatically different, the Townsville winter of warm days and pleasant evenings, is not unlike Adelaide in February/March where the mild summer nights encourage their large festival crowds into the outdoor venues, streets and parklands.
- Townsville’s Queen’s Gardens bears a strong resemblance to the Adelaide parklands where *Gluttony* and the *Garden of Unearthly Delights* draw over 3.2million visitations over their month of Fringe Festival events.
- Adelaide to some extent suffers the similar restraints of distance as Townsville in terms of sourcing suppliers, artists, infrastructure etc.
- Adelaide has for many years hosted their annual Supercars event (previously the Clipsal 500) simultaneously and adjacent to the Fringe Festival. This was an early concern when planning NAFA in July (when Townsville hosts its round of Supercars) but again Adelaide was used to negate that concern.

Adelaide as the second largest Fringe Festival in the world behind only Edinburgh therefore became the template on which much of NAFA and the Northern Fringe Festival were built.

Like Adelaide two separate but simultaneous festivals were envisaged – an Arts Festival and a more organic, community driven Fringe Festival. The intention was that Council would program NAFA whilst venues, promoters, artists and arts companies were invited to register Fringe events which Council would promote and (if required) ticket through its existing Box Office business.

As the programming of NAFA and the interest in Fringe grew, it is a fair assessment to say that the definition of what was NAFA and what was Fringe became very blurred. Council programmed some content in venues that were no doubt better described as Fringe events (e.g. the *Bernier Dieter* cabaret shows) whilst Fringe produced events were encouraged into NAFA venues, clouding the definition.

At the same time NAFA became the higher profile word in all of the branding and media recognition whilst Fringe was in the background, despite hosting some 74 Fringe registered events with estimated attendances of 12 500 .

Ultimately the patron does not really concern themselves under which hat a particular event sits – they are drawn to and attending a certain show or artist.

RECOMMENDATION 24

Greater definition and separation of the NAFA and Fringe programs must occur earlier for marketing and promotional purposes and to better establish Fringe and elevate NAFA to a more traditional arts festival, curated and presented by Council, possibly reducing the amount of NAFA content and growing the Fringe Festival program.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATIONS

Townsville City Council's Marketing team created the brands and facilitated the marketing and communication activities for the inaugural North Australian Festival of Arts featuring the Northern Fringe Festival.

This campaign was achieved over four months - a limited time frame with pressures to perform and also conduct business as usual.

The overarching brand 'North Australian Festival of Arts' was given the tagline 'A line up not to be missed, a festival for everyone' reflecting the brief that the Festival team gave. Sub-brands already established included Festival of Stories and Strand Ephemera. Halo branding was created by AGB Events.

Marketing Position

To cement The North Australian Festival of Arts as an annual, month long celebration of artistic, cultural, and lifestyle events in Townsville, and to promote The North Australian Festival of Arts as the overarching brand, with over 400 events comprising of The Northern Fringe Festival, Festival of Stories, Halo and Strand Ephemera.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Create and establish a new brand and sub brands as required
- Establish an annual arts and cultural festival that was owned by the local market
- Celebrate arts and culture within Townsville
- Showcase the depth of artistic talent and cultural experiences available to North Queensland
- Attract visitors to the Townsville region
- Deliver an event concept that has community and social impact
- Bring the community closer together after the recent unprecedented monsoon
- Create world-class marketing for world-class experiences

To achieve the objectives that were set, an integrated marketing campaign consisting of five phases was implemented. This campaign encompassed targeted and mass marketing tactics.

Phase 1 – NAFA overarching introduction of brand/tagline

Phase 2 – Sub-brand introduction

Phase 3 – Weekly marketing of events

Phase 4 – Event coverage

Phase 5 – NAFA Wrap up

When establishing the advertising mix, there was always a crucial link to the Townsville City Council brand without overpowering the advert. This gave the audience the knowledge that Townsville City Council was leading this campaign from the outset.

The campaign targeted a diverse audience due the different nature of the events overall. Primarily the Townsville local area and north triangle (Cairns, Mt Isa, Mackay) were targeted in addition to domestic Queensland. The National market was targeted with associated advertising with International audiences reached through artists featuring within the festival and international tourist regional stays.

Reach was achieved through different mediums including: television, radio, activations, print, digital, outdoor signage, social media, affiliate and direct marketing. The amount of different mediums used within the campaign created multiple touch points for the advertising to achieve cut through.

DIRECT MAIL

Twelve Electronic Direct Mailouts (EDMs) were sent out to Council's databases during June and July with an average open rate of over 31% and click throughs over 3.5% (above industry standard). Click throughs increased throughout the campaign.

14 JUNE: NAFA Comedy

5,000 Recipients | 32.0% Opens | 3.2% Clicks

14 JUNE: NAFA Comedy

8,000 Recipients | 2,566 Opens | 273 Clicks

21 JUNE: NAFA - Festival of Stories Kids

15,000 Recipients | 3,749 Opens | 235 Clicks

29 JUNE: The Northern Fringe Festival

15,000 Recipients | 4,114 Opens | 757 Clicks

8 JULY: NAFA - Kids

15,000 Recipients | 27.5% Opens | 3.1% Clicks

12 JULY: NAFA - HALO

15,000 Recipients | 31.8% Opens | 2.1% Clicks

12 JULY: FESTIVAL OF STORIES WEEK 2

4,000 Recipients | 27.6% Opens | 0.7% Clicks

17 JULY: NAFA FOR ADULTS

15,000 Recipients | 27.9% Opens | 3.1% Clicks

19 JULY: FESTIVAL OF STORIES WEEK 3

4,000 Recipients | 25.3% Opens | 0.5% Clicks

19 JULY: NAFA WHAT'S ON - STRAND EPHEMERA

5,000 Recipients | 35.4% Opens | 1.8% Clicks

26 JULY: NAFA - WRAP UP (LAST WEEK OF EVENTS)

15,000 Recipients | 27.1% Opens | 2.4% Clicks

5 AUGUST: NAFA FEEDBACK SURVEY

5,000 Recipients | 31.5% Opens | 5.7% Clicks

ACHIEVEMENTS

Brand building, recognition and awareness: Building the brand within such a short time frame was challenging and rewarding, it is however the beginning of an evolution.

It can be difficult to accurately track and measure the return on investment regarding brand awareness however positive brand awareness was reached through pre promotion, conversation and engagement:

- Public announcement – Townsville Eats
- Activations
- Outdoor signage and city dressing
- Website
- Social media takeover and content sharing through local influencers
- Collateral – Outdoor and print
- Sales and attendance at community events.
- Website traffic, direct traffic coming from typing nafa-tsv.com.au
- Increased customer loyalty, audience returning to see more events
- Increased word of mouth, through engagement online and sharing of online content

An overwhelming achievement was the indication people were directly visiting the nafa website, sharing content through social media and return purchasing. This showed that the community bonded with the brand to make repeat purchases with little to no forethought - which then bridges the gap between trust and loyalty.

THE CAMPAIGN WAS ABLE TO ESTABLISH TRUST WITH THE COMMUNITY THAT CREATED POSITIVE ASSOCIATIONS AND BUILT INVALUABLE BRAND EQUITY THAT ALLOWS THE NAFA BRAND TO BE RECOGNISED IN 2020.

Public feedback received at activations on the teaser / full program were positive with the public making comments on how they had already engaged with the website or noticed signage across the city. All event signage and collateral included the call to action to visit the NAFA website to drive ticket sales.

The number of ticket sales and website visits prove this consistent messaging was very successful.

ACTIVATIONS

Activations in the lead up to and during the festival created excitement and allowed us to collect feedback and shape the communications for our audience (ie: people loved the programmes and allowed themselves to be drawn into a conversation with us about the festival). Activations took place on 31 May at Townsville Eats (5-8pm), 15 June at Stockland Northshore, 22 June at Stockland Aitkenvale, 29 June at the Neck of the Woods Fringe launch event, additional activations took place at a Cowboys home game and the June Townsville Eats event.

The intangible benefits of the NAFA marketing campaign included: improving and enhancing Townsville City Council brand awareness; exposing consumers to the local arts industry; and strengthening stakeholder relationships.



Marketing staff at a NAFA activation

WEBSITE STATS

NAFA-TSV.COM.AU

During the period of 13 May to 28 August 2019

- Pageviews 63,160
- Unique Pageviews 46,635
- Google searches 25,461
- Direct traffic 17,800
- Facebook link 9,045
- Avg. Time on Page 1:40 minutes
- Catalyst days: 13 May, 5 July & 19 July
- Average visits (July): 1316 per day

WHAT'S ON

NAFA events saw a total of 172,358 views during July, average for this website sits around 70,000.

SOCIAL MEDIA

What's On Townsville Facebook Page
NAFA takeover throughout July 2019.

FANS 25,125
ENGAGEMENT 22,321
PAID REACH 205,033
ORGANIC REACH 253,998
TOTAL REACH 411,576

**PRIMARY AUDIENCE ENGAGED:
FEMALES AGED BETWEEN 32-44**

Please see social media report
for full details.

PRINTED COLLATERAL & CITY DRESSING



- 3,000 double sided DL flyers promoting Fringe and NAFA were produced to hand out as an information flyer.
- 8,000 Teaser programs were printed and distributed at the launch of NAFA at Townsville Eats in June.
- The What's On and School Holiday guide publications for July became another source of NAFA events with an increased distribution.
- 25,000 NAFA programs were printed and distributed at various activations, and an additional 25,000 through the Townsville Bulletin as a lift out and at the box office on location. The programs were the primary collateral provided to the community.
- A marketing kit was created to assist in promoting community Fringe events
- Banners, tricorflutes, flags and ground stickers were installed across the city at key locations to promote the events as a city wide dressing initiative.
- To brand the event sites, scrim, flags, posters, light boxes and banners were created.

GLOSSARY

Direct Traffic: The result of people intentionally typing in your URL and visiting your website. This number tells the story that the marketing is prompting people to visit your website. This is an important metric, as the audience today discover brands through social media, advertisements, or by typing in keywords related to your brand or product. When your audience goes directly to your site, it means they were aware of your brand beforehand.

Reach: The number of users who have come across a particular content on a social platform, either organically or through paid advertising.

Engagement: Times that people interact with the content, ie: like, share or retweet.

Impressions: The amount of times your advertisements have been shown.

Click Through Rate (CTR, Clicks): The actual clicks as a percentage to the amount of impressions.

**All percentages should be viewed in relation to the industry benchmarks.*

PAID ADVERTISING

COMMERCIALS

PRE PROMOTE TVC:

Markets – Intrastate, Drive and Local

HEADLINER TVC:

Markets – Drive and Local

RADIO:

30 sec pre-promote – Triple M, Hit FM, 106.3, Power FM, Live FM, 4K1G

30 sec headliner – Triple M, Hit FM, 106.3, Power FM, Live FM, 4K1G

Weekly live reads (6 week block) – Triple M, Hit FM

Outside broadcast – ABC

Live crosses – Triple M & Hit FM

Weekend Sims – Triple M, Hit FM

Markets – National, Drive and local

PUBLICATIONS

NEWSCORP

- Townsville Bulletin including 25,000 program inserts
- Drive market editions: Burdekin, Ingham, Atherton, Cairns, Mackay

Partnership with NewsCorp offered a flexible way to ensure advertising for the different events was agile and packaged advertising kept costs down.

Sponsored over \$86,000 of free advertising.

NATIONAL MAGAZINES

- **Jetstar, Qantas and Virgin inflight magazines;** July editions

TOWNSVILLE MAGAZINES

- **DUO** full page adverts; April, May, June and July editions
- **PakMag** full page adverts; April, May, June and July editions
- **Success** full page adverts; April, May, June and July editions

CAIRNS AND MACKAY MAGAZINES

- **Core** double page spread; June/July edition
- **Tripping** double page spread; June/July edition

DIGITAL MARKETING

QANTAS:

Markets – National and international

Qantas National Content Article: The Ways to Spend a Weekend in Townsville

- 5,194 page views on the article average time spent on page of 2:11 indicating good audience engagement
- EDM promoting the article sent to an audience of 3.3 million subscribers (international market inclusive)

Campaign Results

– Display Impressions:

- Queensland section sponsorship over delivered by 93,159 impressions achieving 372% of target

- Solid CTR of 0.08% which is above the industry standard of 0.05%

NEWS XTEND:

Website banner display advertising, specific to Queensland market

- **148,899 Impressions**

- **0.09% Click Through Rate (average benchmark for Arts and Recreation Services 0.10%)**

Over 28,748 visitors returned to the website after seeing a display advertisement within 30 days from the re-targeting audience pool. **This included multiple page views from the same visitors.*

Following this, it was noted 4,976 NAFA page views were received from the re-targeting pool.

YOUTUBE ADVERTISING:

Destination targeted with specific videos to the area.

Melbourne:	Sydney:	Adelaide:	Brisbane:
88,901 Impressions	40,734 Impressions	38,755 Impressions	41,308 Impressions
11,657 Interactions	18,186 Interactions	16,622 Interactions	17,854 Interactions
13.11% CTR	44.65% CTR	42.89% CTR	43.22% CTR

SUPPORTING EVENTS

HALO

As part of the Townsville2020 clear vision for our city, a long-term concept plan for activation of Castle Hill was completed. A series of projects were identified for immediate delivery, including lighting of the rock face of the hill in a 'vivid' style light show.

Delivery of these projects, one being Halo, were enabled by successfully receiving \$1.965m under an Australian Government Building Better Regions grant.

Townsville City Council commissioned AGB Events, the creators of Sydney's Vivid Lightwalk, to create and produce this new experience for Townsville. Like other light experiences that AGB Events have designed around the world, Halo is established as a new canvas for captivating the imagination of the public.

Painted onto Castle Hill in the late 1960s is an image featuring the iconic British TV show, The Saint. This image of a stick like figure features a man who has a fluorescent halo on top. Although somewhat faded, the image and story of how 'The Saint' appeared on Castle Hill, is now part of Townsville modern Folklore.

This iconic image has crept into Townsville's popular culture, implying that Castle Hill is the Halo that rests above the City of Townsville.

Halo illuminated Townsville through a series of light art installations and lighting treatments in Queens Gardens and Castle Hill, over 17 fantastic nights.

Castle Hill, the natural 'halo' that hovers above Townsville, came to life and the most prominent feedback is that people would like to see this be a permanent feature.

Key Statistics:

- Halo ran from Friday 19 July, nightly through to Sunday 4 August 2019 – over 17 fantastic nights.
- The show ran for 5 mins, every 20 minutes, from 6pm through to 10pm. With smaller light shows within Queens Gardens between main shows.
- Queens Gardens came alive with several lighting installations including the iconic 'Halo Chandelier'.
- Early estimates predict crowds ranging from 2,000 to 10,000 across each night (detailed data on attendee numbers anticipated by end of September).
- Significant attendance from all age groups.
- Comprehensive stakeholder engagement ahead of installation of four temporary light towers in the suburb of North Ward was exceptionally successful, with no complaints received during the event.
- Well targeted media campaign saw a comprehensive program of communication, and resulted in a great Townsville Bulletin front page on July 18 and numerous articles throughout the event.



Key Media Statistics:

- Halo was the most popular event on 'What's on Townsville' for both July and August.
- Halo was the most popular post in July, reaching 34,417 people.
- During the event social media reached over 26,000.
- The Halo page had over 18,000 views with the average time on the page being 3:25mins.



FESTIVAL OF STORIES

Townsville's Festival of Stories 2019 was a repositioning of the previously successful Savannah Writers Festival presented by Cibilibraries Townsville bringing local, national & internationally renowned authors, presenters & storytellers to Townsville to entice people to explore, challenge & enjoy storytelling in all its forms. Usually stand-alone, Festival of Stories this year joined many other art sectors to be included in the inaugural North Australian Festival of Arts (NAFA).



Festival of stories was well supported with 3054 people attending 49 events and programs over the month of July. This attendance comprised 1746 (57.17%) adults and 1308 (42.83%) children (under 18) and equated to over 88 hours of program delivery, a great presentation of literature to the wider community of Townsville.

A post event survey was conducted of Festival of Stories attendees which saw 144 responses, of those 144 responses a resounding 77.5% of respondents stated the festival met or exceeded their expectations. Below are a few Highlights/ Comments from the surveyed attendees.



"EXCEEDED MY EXPECTATIONS, MY TWEEN NEPHEWS NEVER SHOW ENTHUSIASM FOR ANYTHING THAT ISN'T VIDEO GAMES AND THEY HAD A GREAT TIME DESPITE THEIR EFFORTS NOT TO ENJOY THEMSELVES. WE HAD A GREAT CONVERSATION ON WHAT THE BOOK MEANT AFTER THE EVENT."

SUPPORTING EVENTS



STRAND EPHEMERA

**THE NORTH'S SCULPTURE
FESTIVAL HELD BIENNIALY
WAS STAGED OVER TEN DAYS
AND NIGHTS FROM FRIDAY
26 JULY - SUNDAY 4 AUGUST
2019, IS TOWNSVILLE'S HIGHLY
POPULAR OUTDOOR SCULPTURE
EXHIBITION OF STATE AND
NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE.**

This event was established by Townsville City Council to provide regional artists an opportunity to showcase their talent within a national arena, with a focus on works being 'ephemeral' for the short-lived exhibition of around 10 days encouraged artists to use inexpensive materials.

This year **Strand Ephemera** reached over 130,000 visitors during the 10 day display period. The exhibition was supported by a multitude of engaging public programs, and featured a selection of curated works alongside those competing for the major \$10,000 prize.

Strand Ephemera has garnered significant support from the private and corporate sector within Townsville and attracts visitors locally, nationally and internationally.

Strand Ephemera sees the 2km promenade along the beach lined with sculptures as part of the inaugural North Australian Festival of Arts (NAFA) alongside Townsville's own Fringe Festival, The Northern Fringe.



**“I love how ‘alive’
Townsville was!
Queens Gardens was
magic, the Strand
alive with the arts.”**



COUNCIL ENGAGED SEVERAL APPROACHES TO SURVEYING AND ANALYSING THE NAFA AND FRINGE FESTIVAL OUTCOMES. QUESTIONS WERE FRAMED USING THE CULTURE COUNTS FORMAT AS USED DURING FESTIVAL 2018.

-  **ONLINE SURVEY OF PATRONS**
-  **PAPER ON SITE SURVEYS**
-  **BOX OFFICE DATA BASE SURVEY**
-  **ANECDOTAL REPORTS AND COMMENTS**
-  **INDEPENDANT SURVEYS CONDUCTED FOR STRAND EPHEMERA, HALO AND FESTIVAL OF STORIES**
-  **THIRD PARTY SURVEY CONDUCTED BY DANCE NORTH**

This survey was advertised through wrap-up video and social media.

RESULTS SUMMARY

TOTAL RESPONDANTS: 1084

AGE RANGE

Didn't Say **0.74%**
20-29 **9.32%**
30-39 **25.46%**
40-49 **23.80%**
50-59 **21.59%**
60-69 **12.55%**
70+ **5.16%**
Under 20 **1.38%**

Following your NAFA experience, are you more likely to attend arts and cultural events in the future?

No Response **1.94%**
Yes **90.68%**
No **7.38%**

GENDER

Female **79.06%**
Male **19.65%**
Didn't Identify **0.18%**
No Response **1.11%**

Was attending a NAFA event the primary reason you came into the local area? (Out of town respondents)

No Response **12.27%**
Yes **27.77%**
No **59.96%**

RATING

No Response **1.38%**
Average **2.21%**
Good **22.97%**
Excellent **72.79%**
Poor **0.46%**
Very Poor **0.18%**

LOCATION

No Response **2.40%**
Townsville Area **91.79%**
Queensland **3.32%**
Interstate **2.31%**
Overseas **0.18%**

Was July a good time to have this festival in Townsville?

No Response **1.29%**
Yes **93.93%**
No **5.07%**

How many people are you attending with?

AVERAGE OF 5 PEOPLE

How many nights are you staying in Townsville or surrounds as part of this visit? (Visitors Only)

AVERAGE OF 11 NIGHTS

Continuing the commitment to conduct an annual arts festival and building on the success of NAFA in 2019, the Festival will again occur in July 2020. The community appetite for the festival is proven and strong. July is undoubtedly the optimum time of year for the festival for the reasons expressed earlier in this report, backed up by public survey results.

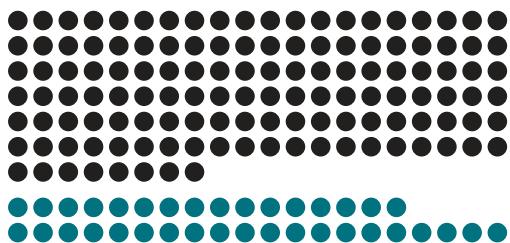
Recommendations have been expressed throughout this report and listed in the schedule following however some general observations and recommendations should also be made.

The only concern or in any way negative feedback came from some fearing that the success and size of NAFA would negatively impact other events, notably the Australian Festival of Chamber Music. Despite this early concern, AFCM reported a successful and well attended event. Discussions have already occurred with the AFCM management team on greater collaboration and inclusiveness next year, particularly in that festival's 30th anniversary.

Other concerns initially feared that the programming of NAFA would take away audiences from already planned shows and events however these were again allayed as shows such as *Alice Through the Looking Glass* by TheatreINQ (with an extended season required) *Heathers the Musical* by Townsville Choral Society and *Jesus Christ Superstar* all enjoyed strong if not sell out seasons. By having a year to plan and program, closer involvement with local arts groups will enable the NAFA and Fringe Programs to consider these community based shows and work to avoid clashes of shows and genres.

NUMBER OF FRINGE performers

Paid 128 | Volunteer 36 | Total 164



NUMBER OF FRINGE support staff

Paid 18 | Volunteer 37 | Total 55



“Like a fine whiskey; the taste left you wanting for more and wondering why it had been so long for this to happen.”



The Northern Fringe Festival was an overall success particularly given the short lead time and education process on what a fringe festival was. The appetite was proven and events such as the Neck of The Woods Festival, Comedy Generation shows, Sonic Alliance and Neighbourhood Live House at the Old Magistrates Court were stand out successes. Several venue owners in the city and many artists and performers have approached me since or during the festival asking how they can be involved next year. Now they “get it”.

Ticketing for the Festival and Fringe is a potential area for improvement and growth with existing systems and technology adequate at best but not best practice. Investment in this area, matched by increased income for Festival should form part of future planning.

The ambition to provide free events is admirable and should remain a programming principle however for free events inside venues with limited capacity all must carry some form of

ticketing charge. Shows without this led to apparent sell outs, only to have many no-shows on the day leading to confusion and disappointment of people potentially missing out whilst the venue wasn’t in fact full. A ticket charge adds a degree of commitment to the purchaser and also stops over ordering.

Whilst survey data was collated, no form of economic benefit analysis was undertaken. The focus of the festival team was to create and deliver the festival within a very condensed timeframe. There were no resources for economic analysis. There was little to no involvement from Townsville Enterprise or Tourism and Events Queensland and discussions have already commenced with the later to seek support for future years. This will be much easier to achieve now that we have established the product and have hosted a senior executive from TEQ at the later stages of NAFA and HALO. As the festival directorate will now sit with the Future Cities office our council, greater resources will be available to undertake economic data collection next year.

NAFA should align with and have a presence on the national festival scene. Membership of festival and industry associations and networks is vital to the growth and recognition of the festival to achieve true significance on the national and international stage. This ambition is achievable.

The success of NAFA in its first year has opened the opportunity for greater corporate and government support. Sponsorship in the first year resulted from personal relationships and trust as we were selling an unproven concept. We now have a proven product to market and this needs to be managed by the festival team with the objective of locking in long term partnerships in a defined hierarchy of sponsorships, partnerships and collaborated co-productions.

The overarching recommendation going forward is to develop a five year plan for NAFA and the Northern Fringe Festival to ensure its growth, quality and continued benefit and enjoyment of our community and region, and to form minimum three year partnerships with government to ensure ongoing investment in the arts and events in our city through support of NAFA.

SCHEDULE OF RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Planning and programming of NAFA needs to be done on a minimum three-year forward planning calendar, consistent with other major festivals and touring product programming matched to a five-year forward plan for the event.
2. Consideration should be given to maintaining the big noise generating events to the indoor venues, with big outdoor concerts (San Cisco this year and Thundermentals in 2018) being held in another location, potentially the new North Queensland Stadium
3. use of park and ride service for the weekends and bigger events.
4. Better lighting and traffic (pedestrian) control around Queen's Gardens is needed.
5. Investment should be ongoing on the upgrade of these footpaths and walkways.
6. Increased watering, ground preparation and the greater use of terra-plas matting would greatly improve access and retard dust.
7. A full audit of the site in this regard should be undertaken, not just for NAFA but for general public safety. Perhaps alternate locations for Eco Fiesta held just prior to NAFA may be considered to reduce wear on the park.
8. it is strongly recommended that any wedding bookings in future years be limited to the raintree lawn (if at all) and that hirers be advised of the festival's presence and footprint.
9. Greater publicity and community engagement of the closure and purpose needs to be undertaken in future years.
10. Future capital improvement of the park for this and other events should be considered in the long term.
11. it is recommended that opera and fine music performance be scheduled only in theatre settings in the future.
12. Programming of NAFA must be strategically developed at least three years in advance to maximise the accessibility of acts and productions, to give ample planning for event venues and logistics, to give local arts companies time to secure and create works and to establish an event planning calendar of achievable project management milestones.
13. It is recommended that greater and earlier consultation be had with leading arts practitioners collectively in programming future Festivals.
14. consideration may be given to the appointment of guest Creative Directors to program certain aspect of the festival (e.g. Visual Arts, Dance, Music) and ultimately the festival may look to engage an overall Creative Director.
15. creative direction will continue to vest with the Major Events Director and his team, consulting with leading arts practitioners as described above.
16. it is recommended that a small Project Leadership Team (PLT) of senior executives be formed to oversee this project.
17. and that regular formal progress reports be given to council via the Community and Cultural Development Committee.
18. the Festival Team be resourced with a permanent business support role year-round.
19. the role of the Festival Production manager be re-written to more accurately reflect the functions of that role as they have developed over Festival 2018 and now NAFA, to include more responsibility and involvement in programming and event management.
20. The Festival Team be located in a dedicated Festival Office, ideally with a shop front location where the NAFA will have a familiar presence in the community year round providing a suitable location for the daily community and arts groups meetings that occurred and also provide for the expansion and contraction of the team with casual staff in the lead up and during festival. This office would also house the growing amount of festival collateral, records and assets that have accumulated already.
21. Investment in utilising and growing the experience of events and venues staff as well as casual staff gained over NAFA and Festival 2018 be continued, however dedicated roles need to be filled by a consistent staff member (eg site manager or tent boss) avoiding the daily turnover of rostered staff requiring handover and training.
22. additional ticketing, FOH and technical staff may have to be recruited casually for festival.
23. If HALO is to continue and/or if it is to become a responsibility of the NAFA team, assistance to the re-defined production manager's role must be considered, with experience in event/technical production.
24. Greater definition and separation of the NAFA and Fringe programs must occur to better establish Fringe and elevate NAFA to a more traditional arts festival, curated and presented by Council, possibly reducing the amount of NAFA content and growing the Fringe program.

TESTIMONIALS

Hi Jeff,

I thought it best to send a brief report on the Festival as a whole, as witnessed by us firsthand.

Firstly, wow! What five weeks we had the pleasure to be involved in. From the level of commitment and investment that you and your committee invested into this event was nothing short of astonishing and the outcome was nothing short of epic as witnessed by the large numbers of sold out shows throughout the five-week festival.

I can honestly say that in over 30 years of being involved in the event industry throughout this country, I have never witnessed a NEW event work as well as NAFA did this year. In fact I would add that any event organizer or committee would be ecstatic if their event reached your level of success after five years, let alone after one year like you have achieved.

The way the two sites in Queens Gardens and Strand Park co-existed together was also a massive achievement on your behalf. The fact that there was next to no confusion with the public of what shows they were making their way to and at what venue that particular show was programmed for was a great result.

As we all know the largest Fringe Festival in this country is the Adelaide Fringe Festival. That Festival is now the number two in the world and the economic value to the state of South Australia is huge. One of the great pleasures of visiting the Adelaide Fringe for me is walking around the gardens and experiencing the level of excitement and anticipation of the public as they queue at the tents waiting for the next show. Also when the show breaks and the numbers flow out of the tents and all the banter of the public discussing the show they have just seen, then making their way to the next show. To take in this atmosphere in an amazing feeling and unless you can experience this firsthand yourself it's hard to fathom.

On the second night at Strand Park I was sitting outside in the garden enjoying the atmosphere and witnessing firsthand the two venues working hand in hand together and the level of excitement of the public as they both queued for their show, or had just finished watching one show then making their way to the next queue to watch the next show.

It was at this point I thought back to what I had felt at Adelaide then it dawned on me the feeling of excitement and anticipation in the garden that night at the Strand Park had that same Adelaide feel about it.

What a massive achievement to you guys and I cannot talk in more glowing terms of the event as a whole. You have now set the foundations for an event that will just continue to grow to even greater heights in the future. You have set the bar very high Jeff and we really look forward to being involved in what now deserves to be an annually event that will attract not only an Australian audience but also a worldwide audience.

Yours sincerely,

Colin Davis

Wonderland Entertainment and Leisure Pty Ltd



PUBLIC RESPONSES:

"A wide range of activities and events that entertained, provoked thought and cheered my soul."

"Superb."

"Fabulous for the whole family."

"It was great, do it again next year!"

"Love it, can't wait to see more."

"So good to see this in Townsville, it should definitely become an annual thing."

"Loved it. Great variety of acts/performers. Good mix of free and paying events."

"Absolutely loved it!! Please bring it back yearly!"

"Wow"

"Brilliant"

"Absolutely fabulous!"

"I was impressed by the variety & the quality of the theatre. The Ephemera was excellent. Halo light show was impressive."

"Sensational"

"All the events were of exceptional standard and it was fantastic TCC came up with this concept. I do hope it continues year on year."

"Equal to if not better than anything I have seen in the capital cities."

"The most outstanding event Townsville has ever had."

"Been blown away by what I have seen."

"Makes me feel proud to be a Townsvillean!"

"Unlike anything Townsville has seen before."

"Very organised and nice."

"Good family fun."

"Superb! A great opportunity for Townsville residents to see excellent musical acts they ordinarily wouldn't be able to see."

"I have experienced Sydney and Brisbane Festivals (as a visitor and volunteer) and Vivid and I think NAFA is on par - if not better!!! :) 5 Star *****!"

"Excellent - We need more of this! How can we get behind it?!"

"Amaaaaazing!!! Thank you. So much local talent."

"It was a good afternoon out with the children."

"Absolutely love it and seeing Townsville come to life."

"Great. Very relaxed."

"It has been a fantastic opportunity to expose our children to some different cultural/arts activities."

"Awesome. Many diverse acts, something for everyone."

"Loving the diversity and number of events and that on at several times, so more chance of seeing them."

"So. Fkn. Great."

"Colossal by nature; a well received experience important for the Townsville community and continuation of the arts thriving."

"An excellent culmination of local and visiting performances."

"Absolutely brilliant! So much to see and do."

"Absolutely love all the things I've been to. Bring it on again next year!"

"Excellent. I hope it will be an annual event. Fantastic for our city. Best time of the year for tourism as well."

"Makes Townsville feel alive and has a great vibe!"

"Quality, exciting, worthwhile and engaging."

"I wish it could happen on an annual basis. Loved it!"

"It has been wonderful. So much to see. The only down side is trying to fit it all in. Looking forward to the event next year already."

"NAFA including Fringe Ephemera and AFCM has been a wonderful opportunity to access such a wide variety of performance arts particularly."

"Family friendly fun that has opened our eyes into the world of art."

"Fantastic. It is great to have some culture and different experiences in Townsville which are not sport related."

"Fantastic diversity of events to enjoy."

"Very organised and amazing."

"AMAZING, how good is it to have THIS in Townsville!"

"Great variety of events."

"San cisco and young lions were great. NO youth need to see Australian music so they are confident to chase that dream."

"Absolutely moving, profound, grateful."

"Brilliant, has been the highlight of the year."

"Brings a vibrant atmosphere to the city, so much to see and do, great to see the community out supporting it."

"We've loved the kid friendly events wave been able to attend."

"Fabulous, desperately needed and long overdue. Well done TCC."

"Bloody fantastic! Please do it every year!"

"Absolutely incredible!!!"

"NAFA has been a life affirmingly fantastic experience and has left me absolutely buzzing."

"Amazing and exciting to see in our local city. Vibrant atmosphere."

"It has been wonderful to see the strand park and flinders street come alive."

"This was a really special and uplifting event."

"Warms the soul."

"Wonderful, simple yet elegant."

"Good to see something new bought to Townsville."

"Love the fun & creativity of it. Well done."

"Wonderful for our struggling city."

"Been blown away by what I have seen."

"It has been a wonderful experience. All the performers are of top quality & most enjoyable."

"The most outstanding event Townsville has ever had."

"Amazing - so much variety celebrating creativity and the Arts (more to Townsville than sport)."

"Equal to if not better than anything I have seen in the capital cities."

"All the events were of exceptional standard and it was fantastic TCC came up with this concept. I do hope it continues year on year."

"Fantastic. We enjoyed every event - and many congratulations to the Council and all others involved."

"NAFA experiences were vibrant, varied, and entertaining; it was great to see so many people out and about."

"I had a fantastic time visiting many of the opportunities that would given to explore the wonderful arts provided."

"Absolutely loved it!! Please bring it back yearly!"

"Loved it. It was a great, fun packed month. I hope it continues as an annual or at least biannual event."

"Excellent, so much to talent and so many people!"

"Amazing such a large variety of performances and shows."

"Incredible."

"Eye opening"

"Exquisite"

"Really great, so much to see and do. Felt really lucky to be living in Townsville for this."

"The type of festival Townsville needs."

"This year NAFA has been wonderful. A great amount of wonderful performances and activities. Great curation and well organised."

"Absolutely loved it with my whole family."

"The single best event Townsville has ever held!"

"This is fantastic - so good for Townsville."

"Much needed, long overdue, draw card for the city, loved it."

"AMAZING! Felt like we were in Melbourne or Sydney, it didn't feel like "small town" events."

"Thrilling"

"So great to see so many out enjoying this festival as a community."

"Wonderful variety of both family, young adult and adult experiences."

"Vibrant, fantastic, amazing."

"Enriching, optimistic, fun and thought provoking."

"NAFA brought a great vibrancy to the town."

"Unique and amazing."

"Diverse, exciting and thrilling."

"NAFA was a beautiful and lovely addition to the surrounds of Townsville at such a great time of year!"

"An absolute feast for the senses! Such a treat to have this on your doorstep."

"It was wonderful - very special for the region."

"Exciting, wonderful atmosphere and very proud of my Townsville."

"My NAFA experience is once I will remember for a long time."

"it was fantastic and a great asset to Townsville to encourage tourists."

"It was amazing, it really made the city come alive and thrive."

"An excellent arts festival that spanned over a month to allow working people to attend and experience the events."

"Awesome. One of the best things to happen to Townsville."

"Outstanding! I wish we could have events like this more often."

"We attended mostly Fringe Festival events which were AMAZING, hilarious and an exceptional."

"The most wonderful thing that has happened in Townsville in a very long time - Since the Pacific Festival back in the 70's."

"It brought a great atmosphere to town."

"Amazing! Very proud of Townsville for bringing this event to the North."

"Excellent! The best thing in Townsville for years!"

"Loved the variety, easy accessibility and energy of the whole experience."

"INCREDIBLE!!! The community vibes were amazing. I've never been more proud of Townsville."

"Amazing, the energy it brought to Townsville was infectious and I attended more than I thought it was. I would have gone to the Pimlico in the park every weekend if it was on. The Mozart circus was incredible. Everything was organised and presented well."

"It's been a real gift to Townsville."

"As an ex-Townsville resident, I was absolutely thrilled to see a festival of this calibre, it's just what the city needs!"

"You guys did a fucking awesome job. Townsville feels alive."

**ALL QUOTES WERE
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EVALUATION SURVEY.**

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