

GATEWAY MERREDIN 2021 POST EVENT REPORT





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Executive Summary

The report outlined below is a step-by-step analysis of the festival which presents information, data and important key-learnings throughout this report.

Data and modelling highlights that up to 1000 people were in attendance across the three day festival period and delivered an economic impact of more than \$248,000 worth of direct spending in Merredin.

The festival income totalled \$117,610 and was led by seed funding from the Shire of Merredin and was built upon from various sources including grants, ticket sales and sponsorship from more than 25 generous local businesses in Merredin.

A thorough breakdown of the event program will uncover that the festival delivered and/or supported 17 event opportunities alongside 16 community organisations in Merredin. Further to this, the report creates a framework to explain how each event was operationally delivered, and what level of planning and task responsibility was carried out by the Shire of Merredin alongside the community, to ensure the success of each event.

Gateway Merredin Festival attracted the support of 15 highly committed members of the Merredin community, and they played a vital role in working committees and/or performing volunteer duties throughout the festival weekend.

A post-event survey revealed 90% of respondents are likely to return next year, and 80% thought that the festival was either 'excellent' or 'good'.

With this being the inaugural year of the Gateway Merredin Festival, the latter portion of this report breaks down the processes, systems and learnings from the delivery of the festival. The areas reported include strategic planning, budget and finance, event management, program planning, team structures, supplier and stakeholder management and how the implementation of technology systems later in the festival delivery process achieved greater collaboration and cost efficiency.

Introduction

The Shire of Merredin, in conjunction with many community members and organisations successfully delivered the inaugural Gateway Merredin Festival from Friday the 24th September 2021 to Sunday the 26th of September 2021, inclusive.

Through extensive community engagement, the Shire of Merredin recognised the community's desire to create an annual event to showcase the rich culture and history of the town and region. After a lengthy period of Covid-19 restrictions, there was an urgent need to capitalise on grant funding opportunities in circulation once restrictions began to ease.

This urgency to react saw the creation of the commemorative weekend major event concept, building off the military and rail history of the region, and World War I and II.

Once festival planning was underway and the external working party from the Merredin community was in place, the evolution to the Gateway Merredin Festival – 'Troops, Trains & Treasures' theme took place and along with it, a significant natural expansion of the event program over time.

This report intends to provide evidence that Merredin has proved itself a worthy destination for a major festival event with the community capacity to deliver while outlining the information, learnings and analysis. This report will allow council to make an informed decision as to whether to proceed with the Gateway Merredin Festival concept in years to come.



Success Indicators

Overview

There was a range of both data-backed and anecdotal evidence to suggest that the Gateway Merredin Festival was a successful event, with respect to the theme and target audiences.

- 606 additional vehicles through the CBD, compared with the prior two weekends' average.
- 1454 extra visits by individuals through the CBD area, suggested by modelling.
- 641 tickets were sold and/or issued to the events across the entire festival.
- 354 tickets were sold to paid events put on the by the Shire.
- 148 people attended The Australian AC/DC Experience, 34% of the attendees were not from Merredin.
- 220 more visits to the Central Wheatbelt Visitors Centre, compared to 2020.
- 476 competition entries were received from more than 122 suburbs or locations across WA. This shows a willingness to travel to Merredin by audiences of all ages and demographics. From the accommodation vendors who chose to report directly, 5 suites and 15 rooms were booked directly for the festival and the remaining vendors, in most cases, stated they were fully booked to capacity for the weekend with many festival attendees staying at their premises.



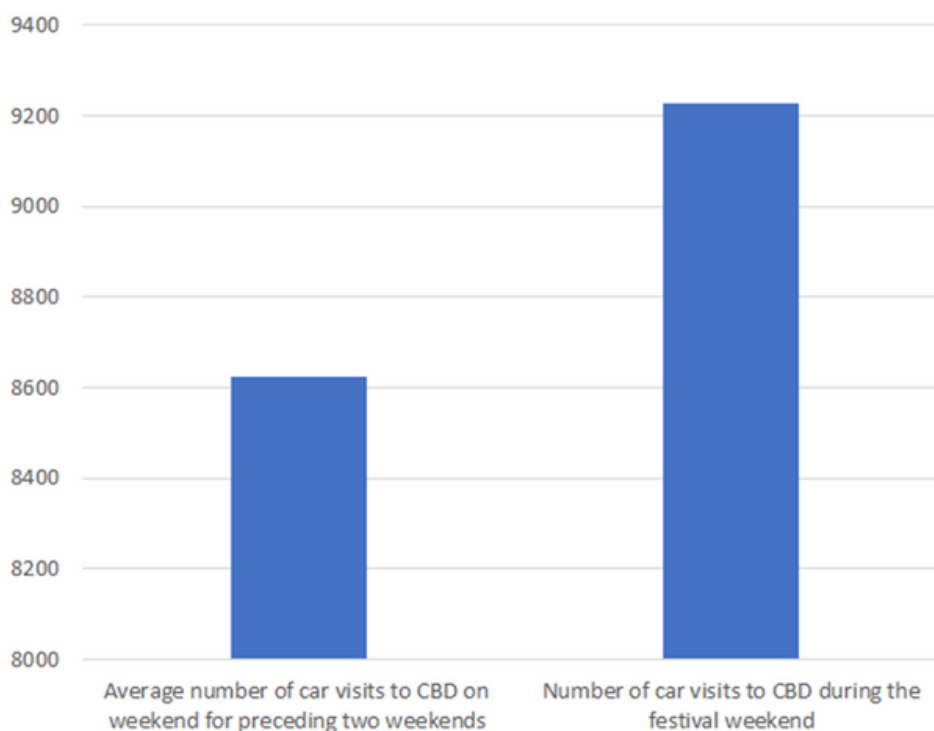
Attendance Figures

Overview

- The festival consisted of a variety of events, across multiple locations, with no absolute method available for tracking total attendee numbers.
- The table below suggests that a range of between 700-1000 people attended the festival.

Indicator	#
Tickets issued to all events (paid and free)	641
Increased CBD traffic (including repeat visits)	1454
Visitor centre visits - increase on previous year	220
Competition entries	476

Traffic Counter:



*the above graph does not consider the volume of local traffic, not in Merredin, due to the long-weekend and school holidays period.

Attendance Figures

Ticket Sales:

Event	Tickets sold	Ticket sales income (\$)
Watercolour workshop / Treasures Fly Tour	26	2,881
Bus tours (combined)	181	903
Australian ACDC Experience	148	4,726
Total	354	\$8,509

Accommodation:

Vendor	Comment
Merredin Tourist Park	At 100% capacity for the weekend, "very successful" event.
Merredin Motel	Fully booked for weekend, many festival visitors.
Olympic Motel	Already booked by contractors, but "heaps of inquiries".
Oasis and Plaza all Suites	Five suites booked for festival attendees over multiple nights.
Abby's Bed & Breakfast	Four additional rooms for festival suppliers over multiple nights.
Merredin B&B and Apartments	Eight additional rooms over multiple nights.
The Lodge at Little Rock	Three additional rooms for festival suppliers over multiple nights.
Barking Salmon Farmstay	Multiple rooms booked for people who attended festival events.





Overview

The 'Ultimate Gateway Experience' competition was a successful precursory exercise that has provided a data-backed basis to confirm the theory that there was a strong audience intent willing to visit Merredin for the Gateway Festival, either this year, or in years to come.

- There were 476 'Ultimate Gateway Experience' competition entries overall.
- Competition entrants represented more than 122 suburbs or locations across WA.
- This shows that the Gateway Merredin Festival generated widespread exposure across the state from a range of marketing activities, particularly social media campaigning.
- It validates that brand equity has been achieved to an audience with strong intent that can be capitalised upon.

Competition Entry Locations:



Limiting Factors

Overview

The date of the festival weekend presented several limiting and competing factors, some of which were not known about prior to confirming the festival date. The below are worthwhile considerations when assessing the overall success of the festival.

- Monday 27th of September 2021 was a public holiday in Western Australia.
- The final school holidays before harvest had commenced the weekend leading into the festival.
- The AFL Grand Final hosted at Optus Stadium, announced in the late stages of festival planning.
- The festival weekend coincided with many other competing events, some of which attracted sizeable funding from Tourism WA, including – Perth Royal Show, Shore Leave Festival in Geraldton, York Spring Festival, WA State Square Dance Festival in Kalgoorlie and Targa West Rally in Toodyay.

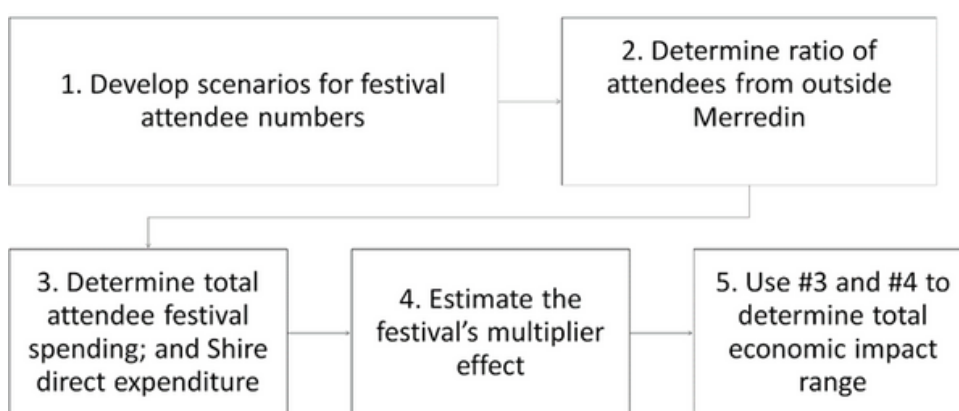


Economic Impacts

Overview

An economic impact assessment statement was prepared by FAR Lane to assess the local and broader economic impacts created by the inaugural Gateway Merredin Festival. A data-backed methodology was created, to provide the rationale for the results of their findings.

FAR Lane model:



(FAR lane) Figure 6. Attendees from outside Merredin

	Merredin attendees (%)	Non-Merredin attendees (%)
Survey results	66.7	33.3
Ticket data	64.0	36.0
Average	65.3	34.7

Source: Shire of Merredin's survey; and ticketing data.

- Data from survey results and ticket sales indicate approximately 35% of festival attendees were from outside the Merredin area.
- Anecdotal evidence suggests the number of people from outside of Merredin was considerably higher.
- The most popular ticketed events for people from outside Merredin were:
 - Troop Bus Tour (45%)
 - Treasure's Bus Tour (56%)

Economic Impacts

(FAR Lane) Figure 7. Attendee numbers – scenarios

# Of attendees scenarios	Estimated attendees from Merredin	Estimated attendees from outside Merredin (35%)
700	457	243
800	522	278
900	588	312
1000	653	347

Source: FAR Lane scenario modelling based on Shire of Merredin data.

- Data from ticket sales, increased CBD traffic, ticket sales and competition entries suggests a range of 700 – 1000 people attended the festival (as per Figure 5).
- FAR Lane's methodology therefore uses scenarios based on the following number of attendees: 700, 800, 900, 1000.
- Using the ratios that 35% of festival attendees were from outside the Merredin area (as outlined in Figure 6) gives the above attendee estimates.

(FAR Lane) Figure 8. Visitor Spending

# Of visitors scenarios	Attendees from outside Merredin	Total <u>trip</u> spend (@ \$344 per person per trip) for all non-Merredin attendees (\$)	Total Spend in Merredin by non-Merredin attendees (@ 60% of total trip spend) (\$)
700	243	83,558	50,135
800	278	95,494	57,297
900	312	107,431	64,459
1000	347	119,368	71,621

Source: FAR Lane scenario modelling based on data from the Shire of Merredin and Tourism Research Australia.

Assumptions:

- **Spend per trip, per person, is \$344** for domestic overnight camping/caravan trips in Western Australia (Source: Tourism Research Australia, noting that covers the entire trip and includes items that may not be purchased in the regions. Only applies for non-Merredin residents).
- **60% of trip spend for non-Merredin residents occurs within the Merredin LGA.**
- Combined, this gives us the above scenarios for Total Spend for festival attendees who are from outside the Shire of Merredin.

Economic Impacts

(FAR Lane) Figure 9. Merredin Residents' spending

# Of visitors scenarios	Attendees from Merredin	Total spend Merredin locals (40% of non-local attendee) (\$)
700	457	37,738
800	522	43,129
900	588	48,521
1000	653	53,912

Source: FAR Lane scenario modelling based on data from the Shire of Merredin and Tourism Research Australia.

- Spending resulting from the festival is assumed to be higher for visitors than for Merredin residents as locals are less likely to spend money on accommodation and meals.
- New spending by Merredin locals includes tickets, consumables and other items.
- Assumption: local festival attendees spend 40% of what visiting attendees would spend.

(FAR lane) Figure 10. Direct New Spending

# Of attendees scenarios	Total spend Non-Merredin attendees (\$)	Total spend Merredin attendees (\$)	Direct new spending for all attendees (\$)	Total Direct new spending (\$)
700	50,135	37,738	87,873	211,204
800	57,297	43,129	100,426	223,757
900	64,459	48,521	112,979	236,310
1000	71,621	53,912	125,532	248,863

Source: FAR Lane scenario modelling based on data from the Shire of Merredin and Tourism Research Australia.

- Attendees directly spent between \$87,873 to \$125,532 in Merredin during the festival.
- Total direct new spending for the festival is approximated between \$210,000 and \$250,000.

Economic Impacts

(FAR lane) Figure 11. Total Economic Impact

# Of visitors scenarios	Direct new spending (\$)	Total economic impact (\$)
700	211,204	248,798
800	223,757	263,586
900	236,310	278,373
1000	248,863	293,161

Source: FAR Lane modelling based on REMPLAN multiplier calculations.

- Multipliers are used to estimate the 'ripple effects' of economic spending in an economy as money changes hands after the initial transaction.
- FAR Lane have used a multiplier of 1.178 to determine total economic impact for the festival (Source: REMPLAN 2021).
- This modelling indicates a total economic impact is approximated between \$250,000 to \$295,000.
- This is a very strong result given the Shire of Merredin's total direct expenditure of \$26,700 on the festival.
- This gives a cost benefit ratio of approximately 1:10 ie. for every dollar spent by the Shire, \$10 of economic impact resulted in the Merredin economy.

Income – Funding, Sponsorship & Sales



Overview

The Shire of Merredin served as the primary, seed funding body for the inaugural Gateway Merredin Festival, and healthy funding from various external sources was acquired for the event.

Funding, sponsorship and sales were acquired from the following sources:

- Seed funding
- Grant funding
- Local business
- Cash sponsorship
- Prize sponsorship
- Media Sponsorship
- In-Kind Sponsorship
- Subsidiary Sponsors
- Ticket Sales

Income – Funding, Sponsorship & Sales

Cash Funding & Sponsorship Overview:

Funding Type:	Source:	Scheme / Level	Value:
Seed	Shire of Merredin	Level of seed funding injected	\$26,700
Grants	DLGSC / Lotterywest	Various grant schemes	\$59,250
Sponsorship	Local Business	Principal, Major, Event	\$22,850
Ticket Sales	Events and Tours	Various events, including vendors / Stallholders	\$8,810
Funding Total:			\$117,610

Local Sponsorship

Gateway Merredin Festival attracted generous sponsorship from a total of 25 local businesses, plus a locally elected official. Sponsorship included cash, prizes and in-kind donations which amounted to a significant contribution towards a highly successful inaugural festival.

Principal Sponsors

Principal sponsorship was the highest sponsorship level on offer in the Festival's Prospectus.

Sponsor:	Contribution Placement:
Hutton & Northey Sales	AFL Gameday Showdown
Collgar Wind Farm	Community Shuttle Bus
Merredin Freightlines	Street Eats

Major Sponsor

Major sponsorship was the second highest sponsorship level on offer in the Festival's Prospectus.

Sponsor:	Contribution Placement:
Eastway	General Festival Budget
Great Southern Fuels	Gameday Showdown
Liberty Rural	Street Eats
McKenzie Family Funerals	Gameday Showdown
Merredin Electrical Contractors	General Festival Budget
Merredin Energy	Illumination Lounge
Risen Energy	Buy from the Bush Market

Event Sponsors

Event sponsorship was the third sponsorship level on offer in the Festival's Prospectus.

Sponsor:	Contribution Placement:
Avon Valley Toyota Merredin	Buy from the Bush Market
Go Mad Discount Store	General Festival Budget
Hon Mia Davies	Buy from the Bush Market
Phillbourne Merredin (WA)	General Festival Budget
TransPlus	General Festival Budget
Walker Electrical Contractors	General Festival Budget
Wheatbelt Uniforms, Signs & Safety	Street Eats

Income – Funding, Sponsorship & Sales

Competition Prize Sponsors

Event sponsorship was the third sponsorship level on offer in the Festival's Prospectus.

Sponsor:	Contribution Placement:
Avon Valley Toyota Merredin	Courtesy Car Hire x 3-days
Cafe 56 & Merredin Cinemas	Breakfast x 2 + 2 x Meal Deal Vouchers
Desert Eagle Helicopters	Scenic Flights x 2
Dimensions Café	Breakfast x 2
Merredin Motel and Gumtree Restaurant	Accommodation x 3-nights
Merredin Nextra Newsagency	Pamper Package
Wild Poppy Cafe	Breakfast x 2

Media Sponsor

A media sponsorship was obtained for the event, delivered as a value-match on advertising spend.

Sponsor:	Contribution Placement:
Triple M Radio	Kalgoorlie & Northam, Triple M Radio Spots

In-Kind Sponsors

In-Kind sponsorship was obtained from local businesses, organisations, and the Shire of Merredin.

Sponsor:	Contribution Placement:
CBH	Lighting Towers
Wheatbelt Uniforms, Signs & Safety	Street Eats, signs and print costs
Shire of Merredin	Design, print & miscellaneous office costs
Shire of Merredin	Traffic Management Plan / Assessment
Shire of Merredin	Culture Counts Surveys
Merredin Bed and Breakfast	Accommodation for suppliers
Merredin Tourist Park	Accommodation for suppliers



Income – Funding, Sponsorship & Sales



Key Outcomes

- The value of cash sponsorship obtained from the local business community, in challenging and uncertain times, supports the feedback provided in the strategic community consultation – calling for an annual, regional event to be created in Merredin.
- A considered communications plan was delivered to sponsors, in times of uncertainty, when the threats of Covid-19 posed a potential disruption to the event.

Key Learnings

- A clearer understanding of valuable and available event sponsorship assets was obtained by the successful delivery of the inaugural festival – branded event signage, premium website advertising via digital communications channels and more.
- There is room to improve the terminology and key sponsorship deliverables for each tier to improve the internal operational delivery for sponsorship commitments and reporting.

Sponsors Feedback

- Feedback from sponsors was positive and supportive of the overall narrative that Gateway Merredin Festival created a new, engaging event experience for locals and visitors.
- Sponsor feedback, consistent with general feedback, suggested a less sparse festival setup. Preference was given to a more compact and accessible festival zone with the opportunity to build a consistent atmosphere built around one festival precinct area.
- Principal Sponsors would be open to the festival adopting a naming rights sponsor, unless in direct competition with their service lines of business.

Festival Program Analysis

Overview

Gateway Merredin Festival delivered or supported a total of 17 unique event programming activations for attending patrons across the three day weekend. Nine different locations were used in close proximity to the CBD district and nearby surroundings.

Program Delivery Structure

Reflective analysis has determined that the event program was managed on a 3-tiered basis – Dependent, Co-Dependent, or Self-Sufficient. The inferred basis highlights the level of human resources invested, from both the Shire of Merredin (SoM) and the broader community at large, covering strategic and operational delivery of the festival.

Tier Type:	Delivery Basis:	Activations (#):
Dependent	Managed exclusively by the SoM.	8
Co-Dependent	Managed in-part, alongside community organisation/s.	5
Self-Sufficient	Managed exclusively by community organisation/s.	4

Program Key Learnings

- The instability of the Covid-19 pandemic caused continuous program planning disruptions resulting in the delay of the final program being set and many of the operational requirements.
- The locations used to facilitate the event program would be best suited to provide a review, with the view to compacting the area for festival activities, creating a greater atmosphere, greater accessibility to key events, as well as prime opportunities for patron data capture and improved monetisation of programmed events.
- The overall view is that more time should be spent on vision development early in the strategic planning phase in order to clearly define the program objectives for delivery.

Itemised Event Breakdowns

1 VIP Canapes with the Conductor

Merredin Railway Museum
Co-Dependent

About

'VIP Canapes with the Conductor' marked the first official event of the festival's long weekend calendar. The event was attended by invitation only guests and was designed with specific intention to acknowledge sponsors and launch the inaugural festival concept to the special dignitaries, councilors and sponsors who were in attendance.



Overview

The event was well presented and coordinated between the Merredin Railway Museum, Merredin CRC, Merredin Repertory Club, Shire of Merredin and the external working party. The costumery that was worn by the volunteer working staff was a feature of the event and the location was befitting of the Troops, Trains & Treasures theme. A strong sense of community pride was on display at this event, with multiple community groups working together collaboratively to achieve an enjoyable opening for sponsors and special delegates. This basis for this event was labelled co-dependent, as the SoM staff worked continuously to assist with areas such as catering, supply of equipment, run sheets and master of ceremonies, along with other budgetary and logistical support throughout the entire planning phase.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	TOTAL:
INCOME	
SoM	\$3,450
Grants	
Sponsorship	\$500
Ticket Sales	
SUB TOTAL	\$3,950
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	-\$2,950
Goods	-\$720
Materials	-\$450
SUB TOTAL	-\$4,070
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	-\$120
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$1,625
TOTAL	-\$1,745

Key Learnings

- Water bottles, or a station to replenish water bottles would benefit the attendees.
- The dress code needs to be clearly communicated to attending patrons.
- The successful collaboration between community groups meant that the SoM could have easily reduced the level of operational task load for this event, with more objectives planning and less natural development of this event over the course of time.

Itemised Event Breakdowns

2 Community Sausage Sizzle / Festival Opening

Bates Street Basecamp – Outside the Tivoli building

Dependent

About

The community sausage sizzle was a free event that formed a part of the festival's official public opening activities. The event activation was designed to provide a welcoming act of hospitality to both residents and travelling festival attendees, followed by the public opening ceremonies. It was supported by the Merredin Men's Shed, who kindly facilitated the cooking and serving of the food.

Overview

The event was very well attended and was a inclusive to the entire public, linking together both residents and visitors into the festival programming experience. Anecdotally, guests enjoyed the mingling environment despite it being a cold evening. Many who visited and enjoyed the sausage sizzle left prior to the festival's opening ceremonies. The opening ceremony was well conducted, with the highlight being a 'Welcome to Country' and didgeridoo performance.

Whilst there was generous help provided by the Merredin Men's Shed to deliver operational support on the night, this programmed event was planned and coordinated extensively by the SoM staff throughout the entire planning phase of the festival, making the basis for this event dependent.



Key Learnings

- Seating for seniors was limited and could be improved upon in future years.
- The sausage sizzle could have been better communicated to connect the entire series of the festival's public launch activities, including the opening ceremony, free WAYJO concert, and the Illumination screenings.
- Some form of outdoor entertainment at this activation would have served the crowd well, as well as opening the marquee spaces for seating and event ambiance, which were not utilised on the night of this event.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	TOTAL
INCOME	
SoM	
Grants	
Sponsorship	\$750
Ticket Sales	
SUB TOTAL	\$750
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	
Goods	-\$735
Materials	
SUB TOTAL	-\$735
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	\$15
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$935
TOTAL	-\$920

Itemised Event Breakdowns

3 Illumination: Our Story, Our Voices

Bates Street Basecamp – TJ Middleton Building
Dependent

About

The illumination activation was the ongoing highlight of the festival's event programming activities, as witnessed in the budget line. The visual arts storytelling, projected off the TJ Middleton Building, commenced just after sunset on each of the three days of the festival and it ran continuous sessions throughout the evenings. It celebrated Merredin's unique heritage, our local community, and honoured the contribution of our troops and nurses during the war years.

Overview

The illumination visual arts activation was well received by all, and this was supported by the continuous social media mentions throughout the weekend after patrons had attended a session. Originally planned to be a free, but ticketed event, it became clear that throughout the weekend it provided a far greater benefit to the overall experience for festival patrons, to simply allow people to congregate and watch the illumination art, as each session was happening. Attendance at each session grew as the festival weekend unfolded, further highlighting the success of the illumination project overall and the immense sense of community ownership and pride that was achieved by pursuing this outdoor visual arts installation.

The SoM was grateful to the Middleton family for the use of their building to project the illumination event, but the entire event experience was planned and delivered by SoM staff, which makes the basis of this event as dependent.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	<u>TOTAL</u>
<u>INCOME</u>	
SoM	\$3,450
Grants	\$45,100
Sponsorship	\$1,000
Ticket Sales	
<u>SUB TOTAL</u>	\$49,550
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
Labour / Services	-\$48,685
Goods	
Materials	-\$840
<u>SUB TOTAL</u>	-\$49,525
<u>TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE</u>	\$25
<u>PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME</u>	-\$2,880
<u>TOTAL</u>	-\$2,855

Itemised Event Breakdowns



Key Learnings

- Creating a closed session environment was a challenge, and potentially not required overall.
- Timing of the very first session threw out many of the proceeding session times on day one.
- Significant engagement with the indigenous history and art community was conducted by the supplier, which was witnessed in the artistic delivery of the illumination reel.
- The Shire of Merredin now has a reusable visual arts asset for use in other public venues.

Itemised Event Breakdowns

4 WAYJO Concert

Bates St Basecamp – Inside Cummins Theatre

Dependent

About

The WA Youth Jazz Orchestra activated the Cummins Theatre venue on the opening night of the festival. It provided patrons with a free sit-down concert, performing swinging period music, taking attendees back to days gone by with an eighteen-piece orchestra.

Overview

More than 150 tickets were booked on Trybooking prior to the event, and many more patrons flowed into the Cummins Theatre to experience the free WAYJO concert. This was a uniquely different experience for the entire community, and the quality of the performance was first class. The music style was well suited to the festival's 'Troops, Trains & Treasures' theme, and specifically attractive to the types of audiences who travelled to Merredin for the festival weekend.

This was a totally dependent event, having been planned and coordinated exclusively by Cummins Theatre management and staff.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	<u>TOTAL</u>
INCOME	
SoM	
Grants	
Sponsorship	
Ticket Sales	
SUB TOTAL	\$0
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	
Goods	
Materials	
SUB TOTAL	\$0
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	\$0
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$625



Key Learnings

- Improve promotion throughout the festivals marketing plan.
- Review start time to avoid collision with the illumination session and other competing activities that were happening on the night.

Itemised Event Breakdowns

5 Community Art Mural

Wheatbelt Visitors Centre – Precinct
Self-Sufficient

About

The community art mural was an activation entirely coordinated by Meridian Regional Arts Inc. One of the final installations to WA's newest public art trail, encouraging members of the community to participate in creating the mural, to celebrate Merredin's Rail, Water and Wildflowers.

Overview

The community art mural generated a fantastic hive of activity and was extremely well attended. Anecdotal feedback from participants during the day suggested a huge sense of pride and ownership was felt by members of the Merredin community, after having the chance to leave their mark on a piece of public art that will be there for years to come. Initially it was planned to run sessions across Saturday and Sunday of the festival, but participation numbers were higher than expected on Saturday, resulting in the completion of the mural on Saturday.

The SoM only assisted with pre-event marketing, and the inclusion of the event in the program, which on this basis, has been labelled a totally self-sufficient event.

Sponsorship & Funding

Funding and sponsorship for this event activation was sourced by Meridian Regional Arts Inc.

Key Learnings

- The location, accessibility, and weather are all things to be taken into consideration for future activations of this kind.
- This event has generated a unique and lasting public art legacy attached to the festival, as well as to the members of the Merredin community at large who participated. The self-sufficiency of this event, and the overall community impact that was achieved, creates the basis for a great prototype for future years event program vision development.



Itemised Event Breakdowns

6 Buy-from-the-Bush-Markets

Bates Street Basecamp – Marquee

Dependent

About

Buy-from-the-Bush-Markets was a relaxed, undercover markets area situated right in the heart of the Bates Street Basecamp area. Festival attendees had the opportunity to stroll through the various local and regional seller stalls to purchase unique goods. Later in the festival planning phase, the kid's zone activities became an additional attraction merged into the same time and experience and was located primarily at the North Merredin Primary School, right across the road from the markets marquee.

Overview

A consistent stream of patrons was witnessed visiting the markets across the entire trading period throughout the day. With stallholders being situated under a marquee and with a single passage of traffic moving down the centre, the steady flow of patrons was a real benefit to the overall success and patron experience. The Gateway Festival concept and brand certainly brought new stallholders and traders to town with unique offerings, compared to what would typically be on offer at local and surrounding markets days. Excellent feedback was received from the market stallholders on the day.

This event was planned and managed wholly by the SoM staff, forming the basis of being dependent. We do acknowledge, however, the event day assistance from the community organisations and volunteers who generously offered their time to achieve a successful event.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	<u>TOTAL</u>
<u>INCOME</u>	
SoM	\$100
Grants	\$2,500
Sponsorship	\$3,300
Ticket Sales	\$255
<u>SUB TOTAL</u>	\$6,155
<u>EXPENDITURE</u>	
Labour / Services	-\$3,635
Goods	
Materials	-\$2,500
<u>SUB TOTAL</u>	-\$6,135
<u>TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE</u>	\$20
<u>PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME</u>	-\$3,510
<u>TOTAL</u>	-\$3,490

Itemised Event Breakdowns

Key Learnings

- The visibility of the marquee could have been improved, as it was positioned behind the game day showdown marquee, limiting the view to festival patrons on Barrack Street.
- The pre-event communication, setup and pack up of the markets was well coordinated and the same process for managing stallholders should be keenly observed at future festivals.
- It would be ideal to consider extending the hours of trading for the markets concept, even trading across multiple days. This might further improve the number of quality traders that decide to attend the festival, as feedback was provided from some prospective stallholders that the distance to get to Merredin, versus the available trading time, made it a difficult decision to commit to coming.
- This event was a popular choice for sponsors, with multiple businesses choosing to commit their sponsorship dollars towards this event specifically.



Itemised Event Breakdowns

7 Treasures Tours – Flying

Roy Little Park – Merredin

Co-Dependent

About

The 'Treasures Tours' by helicopter offered scenic flights over Merredin for festival patrons and the flights were conducted by local aviation tourism vendor Desert Eagle Helicopters, with ticket sales managed by the SoM. On offer were breathtaking views from above, taking in the ancient granite outcrops, wildflowers, patchwork fields of hay, grain, and largest grain silos in the southern hemisphere, as well as the wind and solar farms that are unique to the area. The scenic flights created a fantastic addition to the overall Gateway brand and marketability of the inaugural festival.

Overview

The 'Treasure Tours' by air are a high impact experience that certainly brings an element of excitement and vibe to any events happening in Merredin. Flights were compressed back to two days of flying, as the initial bookings leading into the festival weekend did not seem viable enough to be operating across the entire three days. As is commonly the case with these types of tourism experiences, once the helicopter was seen and heard flying around the festival precinct, the visitation to Roy Little Park, the request for flights increased which led to more bookings and flights being conducted across the two days in operation.

A co-dependent basis is used for this event, as the SoM managed the marketing, ticket bookings and logistical support throughout the festival planning phase, however, it was one of the least labour intensive events that sit within the co-dependent category overall.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	TOTAL
INCOME	
SoM	
Grants	
Sponsorship	
Ticket Sales	\$1,260
SUB TOTAL	\$1,260
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	-\$1,175
Goods	
Materials	
SUB TOTAL	-\$1,175
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	\$85
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$680
TOTAL	-\$595



Itemised Event Breakdowns

Key Learnings

The target market audience for the 'Troops, Trains & Treasures' festival was potentially not the thrill-seeking adventurers, who are most eager for helicopter flying experiences generally.

The real time, visual nature of the scenic flights is a strong catalyst for driving bookings and it would be encouraged to have a promotional staff member, or team, roaming the crowd to drive immediate bookings for flights on the days when flights are being offered.

It could be beneficial to package this experience into a broader VIP, or high-end travel package for future years' festivals.



Itemised Event Breakdowns

8 Train, Talk & Walk Tours

Merredin Railway Museum
Self-Sufficient

About

The Merredin Railway Museum was celebrating 150 years of the steam train and opened its doors to festival patrons for the entire weekend. Guest Philippa Rogers, President of Rail Heritage WA, and author of *Troops, Trains, and Trades* gave her insight into Merredin's rich history and unique involvement to rail in WA during her 'Walk & Talk Tour' on the Saturday during the festival. A virtual tour was also put on offer for patrons to enjoy thanks to the Merredin Railway Museum.

Overview

The guest appearance and tour by Philippa Rogers was a significant coup for the festival long weekend, and this was evidenced by the exceptionally large crowd that attended her tour on Saturday. This set a precedent for the entire festival weekend as the Merredin Railway Museum enjoyed significant visitation through the museum all weekend long thereafter. The community impact of this event spread wide into many areas, including the general attending audience who were able to enjoy Philippa's vast knowledge and presentation, but most importantly, was the sense of pride that the volunteers of the Merredin Railway Museum felt, by being able to secure her visit to Merredin to attend the festival weekend.

This event was completely self-sufficient, with the entire planning and management being taken care of by the volunteers at the Merredin Railway Museum. The SoM simply assisted with the marketing and promotion of the tour event.

Sponsorship & Funding

The tours and venue activation were managed exclusively by the Merredin Railway Museum.



Itemised Event Breakdowns

Key Learnings

- Tour duration needed to be more closely monitored, to avoid patrons missing other tours on the day, which was the case.
- Better publicity for Philippa Rogers visit, which could have resulted in even greater festival attendance.
- This event provides another prototype example, whereby community ownership, pride and capacity has been built with very limited SoM resources that were required to deliver this unique and high-profile event to the festival experience.



Itemised Event Breakdowns

9 Bus Tours – Treasures/Troops

Barrack Street Pickup – Surrounding Area Tours

Co-Dependent

About

Two bus tours were offered to compliment the 'Troops and Treasures' parts of the festival's theme. A 1.5-hour treasures tour gave attendees the opportunity to experience treasured local infrastructure sites like the Merredin Airport, CBH silos, Collgar Wind Farm and Risen Energy. A longer 2.5-hour bus tour went winding through the Wheatbelt district exploring the rich historical landmarks that played great significance during World War I and II.

Overview

Both bus tours left at capacity, or near capacity, due to some patrons unfortunately missing the tour because of the overlap with the 'Trains, Talk & Walk' tour that ran overtime. Patron feedback received was overwhelmingly positive, suggesting that these tours were an extremely important asset to the festival program. It should also be noted that Rob Endersbee is an incredible knowledge base for local military history and he was the organiser and guide aboard both bus tours. This event certainly displayed the community capacity to deliver quality bus tours for tourists and brought to light the large interest in military, industry and agricultural history in Merredin.

With the ticket booking, marketing and logistical support that was provided by the SoM throughout the planning phase, this event was delivered on a co-dependent basis.

Key Learnings

- These tours were found to be overlapping with other event program activities which could be easily rectified during the program planning phase in future years. These tours were attended by the largest number of festival patrons who were not from Merredin, highlighting the strong connection between the festival theme, target audience and the attractiveness of bus tours for the tourism focused visitor. A suitable microphone for the tour guide would be better for narrating the tours more efficiently on the bus, while driving.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown



	TOTAL
INCOME	
SoM	\$1,250
Grants	
Sponsorship	
Ticket Sales	\$900
SUB TOTAL	\$2,150
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	\$800
Goods	\$1,370
Materials	
SUB TOTAL	-\$2,170
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	-\$20
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$1,470
TOTAL	-\$1,490

Itemised Event Breakdowns



10 Watercolour Workshop

Old North Merredin Primary School
Co-Dependent

About

This event was coordinated and conducted by local artist, Jessie Spring. The half-day art workshops ran across two days and were designed for beginners to immerse themselves in painting Merredin landscapes while learning the step-by-step techniques of water colour painting.

Overview

The Watercolour Workshops provided a uniquely different art experience, allowing people to learn the basics of painting and walkaway with a painting that resembled local landscapes around Merredin. With Jessie as the host, it further highlighted again the artistic talent that is on offer in the Merredin community and surrounding areas. A total of 22 pre-event bookings were made for the Watercolour Workshops, with several walk-in requests on the day across both sessions on the Saturday and Sunday. Feedback from participants was incredibly positive and enthusiastic. The workshops were conducted in a relaxed setting at the North Merredin Primary School, giving participants the opportunity to learn about the arts, sights and landscapes seen around Merredin.

The Watercolour Workshops were a classic co-dependent event where the workshop bookings, location and delivery support was provided by the SoM, and the event hosted and conducted by the artist.



Itemised Event Breakdowns

Key Learnings

- Utilising the local artistic talent from Merredin was a great way to showcase the strength of the arts within our town and region. Merredin is a great place to immerse yourself in the arts and this event empowered the local art community with the opportunity to partner with the SoM and other event organisers, to earn income and build their personal profile. This event was planned and managed seamlessly.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	<u>TOTAL</u>
INCOME	
SoM	
Grants	
Sponsorship	
Ticket Sales	\$1,620
SUB TOTAL	\$1,620
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	-\$380
Goods	
Materials	-\$665
SUB TOTAL	-\$1,045
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	\$575
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$410
TOTAL	\$165



Itemised Event Breakdowns

11 Street Eats – feat. Swingin’ at the Savoy

Bates Street Basecamp – Outside Cummins Theatre

Dependent

About

Street Eats was designed to deliver a variety of food experiences for festival patrons. It created a reason to stay and engage around the festival zone precinct during the afternoon hours between the Game Day Showdown and The Australian AC/DC Experience concert in the evening, inside Cummins Theatre. Live entertainment by Swingin’ at the Savoy, took attendees back to the fun and glamorous days of the swing era of the 1920’s-1940’s.

Overview

A healthy and receptive crowd, made up of mostly seniors, gathered to listen to Swingin’ at the Savoy performance. The mid-afternoon live entertainment created a fantastic festival vibe, for those who chose to come to the Bates St Basecamp festival precinct, in advance of the AFL grand final kicking off in the Gameday Showdown marquee. Approximately 80-100 people attended at its peak.

Seating was not considered for this audience in advance, so seating from underneath the Street Eats marquee was pulled out to accommodate the crowd where required. Street Eats was the hardest event activation to coordinate successfully across the entire festival weekend, and its success was challenged by the change in time and location of the AFL Grand Final, heavily impacting the time that was scheduled for Street Eats to be serving meals to event patrons. The timing resulted in Street Eats falling into the mid-afternoon time slot, while patrons were either in-between lunch or dinner, or pre-occupied with other event activations happening on the program – such as tours, community art mural or other workshops and activities.

The SoM was thankful to the volunteers and community groups who were on-hand to assist across the period of Street Eats, but the planning and delivery was totally dependent upon the SoM staff members.



Itemised Event Breakdowns

Key Learnings

- A review of the start and finish time for Street Eats would be beneficial to increase the amount of overall trading hours that are available to travelling food vendors and trucks.
- Consider the overlap between Street Eats and other competing event activations at the festival, to avoid reducing the attendance of patrons to Street Eats.
- Live entertainment in the mid-afternoon time slot certainly worked well for keeping audiences that were otherwise unoccupied, at the festival, until the Gameday Showdown, or the Australian AC/CD Experience concert kicked off.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	<u>TOTAL</u>
INCOME	
SoM	
Grants	
Sponsorship	\$5,250
Ticket Sales	\$45
SUB TOTAL	\$5,295
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	-\$5,370
Goods	
Materials	
SUB TOTAL	-\$5,370
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	-\$75
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$3,095
TOTAL	-\$3,170



Itemised Event Breakdowns

12 Gameday Showdown – AFL Grand Final

Bates Street Basecamp – Marquee

Dependent

About

Game Day Showdown was the center stage outdoor activity scheduled for Saturday across the festival zone precinct. The AFL Grand Final streamed live on a big screen to audiences underneath the marquee, with a licensed bar available for attending patrons.

Overview

The delivery of the Game Day Showdown event was an excellent side-step away from the heavily arts focused event program. It was an opportunity for the local community to come together hospitably, with the visitors who had travelled to Merredin, and enjoy arguably Australia's biggest sporting event of the year, the AFL grand final.

Eventually very well attended, the original kick-off time of the game coincided with other programmed events such as tours and workshops, meaning patron attendance continued to grow as the game unfolded. A situation that was totally unavoidable, as circumstances dictated.

The event posed continuous logistical challenges to the event programming in the weeks leading up to the festival, due to the uncertainty caused by Covid-19 and the location and time of the game.

The overall setup and use of the big screen technology worked seamlessly to stream the game and the bar, operated by the Merredin Repertory Club, was for the most part well-coordinated.

The planning and delivery of the Gameday Showdown event was entirely dependent on the SoM, and the unforeseen challenges to navigate, as stated above, placed a heavy burden at times on the amount of time and resources required on this event. The SoM thanks those people and organisations who volunteered their time to assist with delivery of the event on the day.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	TOTAL
INCOME	
SoM	\$50
Grants	\$4,000
Sponsorship	\$8,000
Ticket Sales	
SUB TOTAL	\$12,050
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	-\$9,050
Goods	
Materials	-\$2,500
SUB TOTAL	-\$11,550
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	\$500
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$3,980
TOTAL	-\$3,480

Key Learnings

- More openings for accessibility to the marquee, as some direct feedback on the day, suggested that some people perceived it as a private, closed-off event.
- More initial seating could have been available inside the marquee, as more seniors attended than expected.
- The proposed bar shutdown, prior to the finish of the match, caused some patron concerns.
- It would be worthwhile considering whether the weekend of the AFL grand final is the most ideal timeslot to host the festival.

Itemised Event Breakdowns

13 The Australian AC/DC Experience

Bates Street Basecamp – Cummins Theatre

Dependent

About

The Australian AC/DC Experience delivered a premium tribute concert inside the Cummins Theatre. The rock band experience brought with it authentic instrumentation and attire and played within days of the 40th anniversary of when the original AC/DC band played inside the Cummins Theatre.

Overview

More than 150 patrons attended the Cummins Theatre to enjoy one of Australia's finest AC/DC tribute bands. This high quality musical performance was the perfect end to the festival on Saturday evening, specifically for patrons who had been enjoying the Gameday Showdown close by. The community sentiment around this concert was excellent, particularly amongst the local patrons, because of the 40th anniversary of the real AC/DC performance which was emphasised by the band during their performance.

The performance did not disappoint, and this was highlighted by the feedback from those in attendance who requested more dance room and less seating to be allocated near the stage. The Tivoli Bar was open and available for drinks to be purchased, and was run by the Merredin Repertory Club.

This was a totally dependent event, having been planned and coordinated exclusively by Cummins Theatre management and staff.



Itemised Event Breakdowns



Key Learnings

- Exploiting the history of AC/DC playing in the Cummins Theatre could have been achieved in marketing promotion to increase ticket sales.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	TOTAL
INCOME	
SoM	\$2,000
Grants	
Sponsorship	
Ticket Sales	\$4,730
SUB TOTAL	\$6,730
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	-\$7,500
Goods	
Materials	
SUB TOTAL	-\$7,500
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	-\$770
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$1,015
TOTAL	\$1,785

Itemised Event Breakdowns

14 Sunday Church Service

Bates Street Basecamp – Cummins Theatre
Self-Sufficient

About

Cummins Theatre was transformed into a place of praise and worship on Sunday morning with an hour-long service coordinated by the Merredin Churches Fraternal. The skills and talents of the Merredin Christian community were a blessing with songs, skits, scripture readings and prayer time all playing a part in the service schedule.

Overview

Approximately 80 people attended to enjoy the Sunday Church service at Cummins Theatre. The service was a beautiful worship collaboration and highlighted the strength and many talents that exist amongst the faith communities in Merredin. The attendance numbers confirm that Merredin has a strong faith community, and they will support events that are facilitated in town that provide the opportunity to gather.

The Church service ran overtime slightly and was still running when the Vintage Parade began, with some patrons walking out of the front of Cummins Theatre to catch a glimpse of the parade as it passed.

A morning tea was served after the Church service, however, it is preferred that this morning tea not be offered in future years to encourage patrons to attend the Bush & Billy Morning Tea.

This event was completely self-sufficient and was coordinated by the Merredin Churches Fraternal, in conjunction with the Uniting Church.

Key Learnings

- The Church service ran over the advertised time and overlapped with the Vintage Parade.
- The serving of morning tea clashed with the Bush & Billy Morning Tea at the Merredin CRC.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	<u>TOTAL</u>
INCOME	
SoM	
Grants	
Sponsorship	
Ticket Sales	
SUB TOTAL	\$0
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	
Goods	
Materials	
SUB TOTAL	\$0
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	\$0
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$730
TOTAL	-\$730



Itemised Event Breakdowns



15 Vintage Parade

Bates Street to Merredin CRC

Co-Dependent

About

The Vintage Parade was a trip down memory lane, through the streets and carparks of the Merredin CBD district. With military and retro vehicles on display from Merredin's Military Museum, plus visiting vehicles joining the parade, there was a celebration of the unique history of automobiles and armored vehicles.

Overview

The Vintage Parade turned out to be the highlight event of the Gateway Merredin Festival weekend. There was no official way to count attendance at the Vintage Parade event. It was observed anecdotally, however, it is estimated that hundreds of people attended. Patrons lined the footpaths along the entire parade route from Bates Street and all the way to Barrack Street. The parade was a spectacle being led by a police escort, trailed by the array of military vehicles. The friendly drivers and passengers who were willing to engage with the crowd on their journey, waved and the sounded their horns. A highlight of the parade saw hundreds of patrons, including many families with children, joining the drivers alongside their military vehicles at the end of the parade route to share conversation and to take photographs.

The skills and community capacity of our military museum leaders and volunteers in Merredin are impressive, and many of the vehicles that rolled in the Vintage Parade were prepared and made ready by months of work in advance to enable the success of the parade.

The Vintage Parade was a co-dependent event. There was a high level of logistical support provided by the SoM to ensure that a safe, smooth and enjoyable parade could take place. Alongside the military museum, the SoM managed road surface assessments, traffic management, staffing, route creation, marketing and promotional support.



Itemised Event Breakdowns

Key Learnings

The festival uncovered the deep respect and connection that the broader Merredin community has towards its rich military history and local patrons.

Greater assistance could have been provided with stakeholder engagement and communications to assist the military museum with bringing more vintage vehicles into the parade.

The parade concept was an extraordinarily successful component to the festival experience, and highlighted that the target audience, specifically visiting audiences, had been reached. Attempts should be made in future years to foster participation from the Cadets program.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	TOTAL
INCOME	
SoM	\$150
Grants	\$250
Sponsorship	
Ticket Sales	
SUB TOTAL	\$400
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	
Goods	
Materials	-\$385
SUB TOTAL	-\$385
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	\$15
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$1,025
TOTAL	-\$1,010



Itemised Event Breakdowns

16 Bush & Billy Morning Tea

Merredin CRC
Self-Sufficient

About

Coinciding with the end of the parade route, a free bush style community morning tea was conducted on the lawn area at the Merredin CRC. Festival patrons were able to relax with a cup of tea and delight their tastebuds with a selection of menu items, all with reference to the agricultural roots of Merredin while honouring the 'Troops, Trains, and Treasures' theme of the festival.

Overview

Hundreds gathered to enjoy the free Bush & Billy Morning Tea, which was coordinated, prepared, and presented by the Merredin CRC and their volunteers. A carefully thought-out journey, from marquee to marquee, displayed the various menu assortments on offer, and the drink options that were made available. A traditional Bush Billy firepit was on display which topped off the fantastic presentation of this event.

A great sense of community pride was on display at this event, respect was paid to the military and rail themes of the festival, and Merredin's agricultural roots.

The Merredin CRC has a strong community capacity, with their volunteer base, to independently deliver events to a high quality, and with limited resources required from the SoM. This event was self-sufficient on this basis.



Key Learnings

- This was another event that served as the model and basis for which the SoM should be visioning and creating objectives to ensure the success of festivals in years to come.
- There could be a surcharge for enjoying this event in future years, to improve the overall financial viability of the festival, or to raise funds for the event partner.

Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	TOTAL
INCOME	
SoM	\$750
Grants	\$4,500
Sponsorship	
Ticket Sales	
SUB TOTAL	\$5,250
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	-\$1,365
Goods	-\$4,090
Materials	
SUB TOTAL	-\$5,455
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	-\$205
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$200
TOTAL	-\$405

Itemised Event Breakdowns

17 Outdoor Movie Night

Roy Little Park
Co-Dependent

About

An outdoor movie night was planned at Roy Little Park for military enthusiasts and their families to enjoy a screening of a popular and favourite military movie, which was not announced until the day of the viewing. Seating on the grass was encouraged and food trucks, coffee and ice cream vans were planned to be on location.

Overview

Due to the wind and weather conditions on the day, the outdoor movie night was re-located to the Cummins Theatre for a more pleasant experience for the patrons. The night was well attended with close to 100 people enjoying the movie night. Social media campaigns were deployed and street signage was put in place around Roy Little Park to notify guests to the change of location and event circumstances.

The turnout for this last event on the festival program showed that the Merredin community, as well as those who had travelled, were invested in the event programming.

This was a co-dependent event, having worked closely with Rob Endersbee and the military museum to host the event.



Sponsorship & Budget Breakdown

	TOTAL
INCOME	
SoM	
Grants	
Sponsorship	
Ticket Sales	
SUB TOTAL	\$0
EXPENDITURE	
Labour / Services	
Goods	
Materials	
SUB TOTAL	\$0
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	\$0
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$1,655
TOTAL	-\$1,655

Key Learnings

- Feedback suggested that it would have been better to advertise the movie title prior to the event.
- Advanced planning for the possibility of changing locations would be beneficial and would have saved man hours during the evening.

Community Engagement

Organisations Overview

A significant community engagement outcome was achieved by the Shire of Merredin during the planning and delivery of the inaugural festival.

The following sixteen community organisations were involved and were integral to the success of the festival, with each organisation engaging in the following ways:

- Worked directly with the Shire of Merredin.
- Worked in collaboration with other community organisations in Merredin.

#:	Organisation:	Type:	SoM Funded:	Type:
1	Meridian Regional Arts Inc.	Self-Sufficient	Non-funded	Organiser
2	Merredin Youth Committee	Managed	Funded	Volunteer
3	Merredin Community Garden	Managed	Funded	Volunteer
4	Merredin Community Resource Centre	Managed	Funded	Organiser
5	Merredin Police	Self-Sufficient	Non-funded	Volunteer
6	St John Ambulance	Self-Sufficient	Funded	Organiser
7	State Emergency Services (SES)	Managed	Non-funded	Volunteer
8	Merredin Repertory Club	Co-Dependent	Funded	Organiser
9	Merredin Museum & Historical Society Inc.	Co-Dependent	Funded	Organiser
10	Merredin Military Museum	Co Dependent	Non funded	Organiser
11	Merredin Men' Shed	Managed	Non funded	Volunteer
12	Merredin Volunteer Fire & Rescue Service	Co-Dependent	Funded	Organiser
13	Merredin College	Co Dependent	Non funded	Volunteer
14	St Marys Primary School	Co Dependent	Non funded	Volunteer
15	Merredin Fine Arts Society	Self-Sufficient	Non-funded	Organiser
16	Merredin Churches Fraternal	Self-Sufficient	Non-funded	Organiser

Community Volunteers

The three-day delivery of the Gateway Merredin Festival would not have been possible without the engagement of the additional volunteers from within the Merredin community who involved themselves and offered up their time to ensure the successful running of the festival.

Volunteers were sought by two primary means:

1. Word of mouth, via internal and external working party members.
2. Promotional material, delivered via the Shire of Merredin social media and newsletters.

The following community members volunteered their time to assist with running the festival:

#:	Volunteer Name:
1	Darci Corby
2	Julie Crook
3	Stephen Crook
4	Bob Gray
5	Yvonne Gray
6	Jonty May
7	Olivia Mellor
8	Cynthia West

Community Engagement

Local Community Impact

Gateway Merredin Festival had a lasting impact on the local and regional community, as was evidenced by the post-event survey results and positive sentiment displayed in social media posts after the event.

Gateway Merredin Festival also achieved a significantly high net promoters score, which is considered the 'Gold Standard' in customer experience metrics.

Below is a snapshot of the post-event survey results and the net promoter score that was achieved:

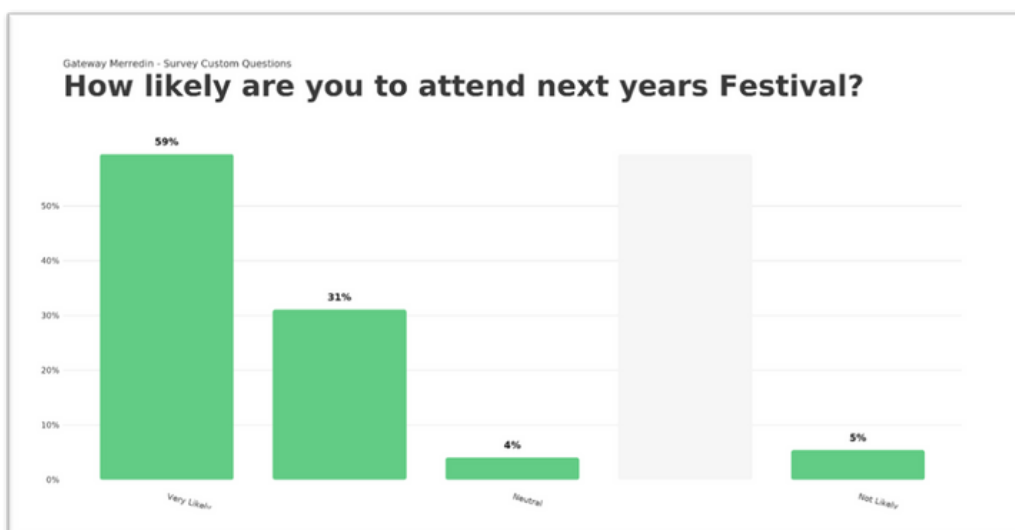
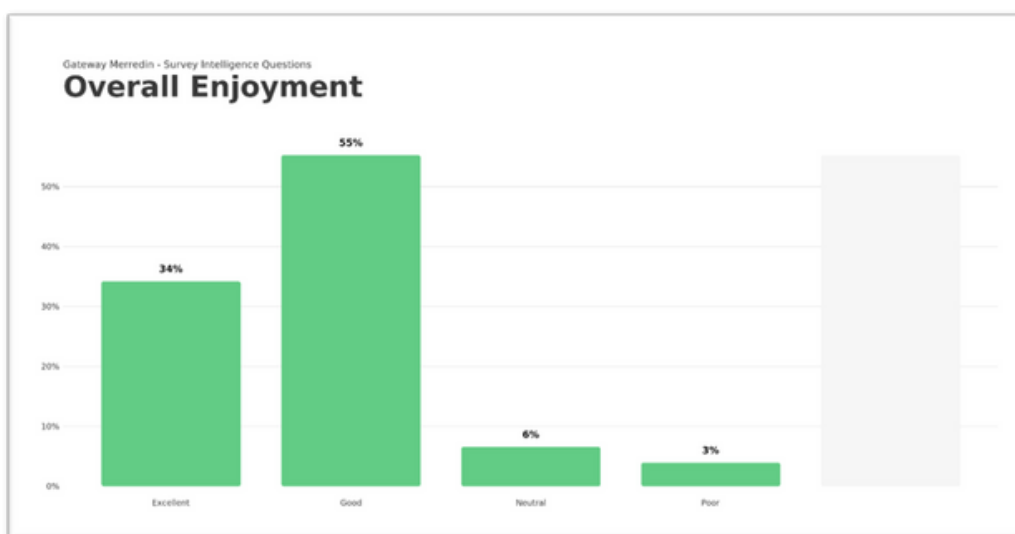
- 66% of the post-event surveys completed, registered as being from Merredin.
- 80% of survey respondents thought the festival was 'excellent' or 'good'.
- 90% of survey respondents said that they would likely return the following year.
- **Net Promoter Score of 45.**, with 50. Or above considered to be excellent.

*Net Promoter Score (NPS) is the likelihood of attendees promoting the festival to their friends and colleagues. Explained further on the FAR Lane Economic Impact Report, slide 24.

The graphic below is a cloud of prominent words used when inputting survey responses:



Community Engagement



Economic Impact & Local Business

Economic Impact Overview

Gateway Merredin Festival generated a substantial economic impact directly to the businesses within the Shire of Merredin as well as an even larger ripple of total economic impact at large. Economic Impact Statistics.

Using data from the Shire of Merredin and Tourism Research Australia, scenario modelling by FAR Lane, plus calculations from REMPLAN 2021, below are some of the key visitation and economic impact statistics:

- Between 700 – 1000 people attended the inaugural Gateway Merredin Festival.
- Up to \$248,863 in total, direct new spending in Merredin, from Gateway Merredin Festival.
- A total economic impact of up to \$293,161 generated against a SoM spend of \$26,700

Local Business Engagement

A large emphasis was placed on engaging with the local business community in Merredin, from the onset of the strategic planning process, to the delivery of the inaugural Gateway Merredin festival.

The following list of engagement activities were adopted to ensure that the local business community within the Shire of Merredin, felt a sense of ownership across the event and was well informed along the way:

- An affordable sponsorship prospectus was created, supported by a detailed marketing plan.
- Email direct communication was sent to all businesses within the Merredin Shire.
- Door to door visits to the businesses in the CBD district down Barrack and Bates Streets.
- Local business updates were provided, specifically in response to situations that were likely to affect their business, or their sponsorship investments.
- An official response from the CEO regarding the prospect of the festival being delayed by the Covid-19 situation in Western Australia.



Economic Impact & Local Business

Local Business Sentiment

The immediate uptake in sponsorship across all levels suggested a strong and positive sentiment for the festival concept among the broader Merredin business community. Post-event, we generated substantial positive feedback from the business community through face-to-face visits with major event sponsors.

Here is a highlight summary of the feedback we received from local businesses:

- Great opportunity for the town and platform to build from annually
- Would be pleased to be involved again and to provide business premises if suited to future events
- The Shire provides a neutral balance of business and community outcomes, raising the profile of the town at large, rather than a specific business or organisation.
- The Shire is seen as an adequately resourced organisation to provide the administrative support for an event of this scale.



Festival Delivery

Strategic Planning

A detailed and thorough strategic planning process took place prior to council approving the Gateway Merredin Festival to be featured on the annual event calendar. The following documents were produced to support the successful delivery of the festival:

- Event Prospectus
- Marketing Plan
- Grant Applications

Budget and Finance

Below is a summary view of the Gateway Merredin Festival budget.

	EVENT PROGRAMS	COMMUNITY SHUTTLE	GENERAL / UNALLOCATED	TOTAL
INCOME				
SoM	\$11,200		\$15,500	\$26,700
Grants	\$56,350		\$2,900	\$59,250
Sponsorship	\$18,800	\$3,300	\$750	\$22,850
Ticket Sales	\$8,810			\$8,810
SUB TOTAL	\$95,160	\$3,300	\$19,150	\$117,610
EXPENDITURE				
Labour / Services	-\$80,860	-\$3000	-\$20695	-\$104,555
Goods	-\$6,915		-\$455	-\$7,370
Materials	-\$7,340	-\$1,405		-\$8,745
SUB TOTAL	-\$95,115	-\$4,405	-\$21,150	-\$120,670
TOTAL - INCOME + EXPENDITURE	\$45	-\$1,105	-\$2,000	-\$3,060
PLUS / LESS ESTIMATE ON ADMIN TIME	-\$23,835	-\$420	-\$41,460	-\$65,715
TOTAL				-\$68,775



Festival Delivery

2.Administrative Time and Self-Sufficient Event Modelling

When comparing the bottom-line for each individual event, there is a significant reduction in the expenditure and or the profit/loss, for the events that were delivered on a self-sufficient basis, according to our learnings and reflective analysis.

The general unallocated budget line includes all SoM administrative time that was committed to things such as strategic planning, stakeholder and supplier management, marketing, building systems and processes, implementing technologies for project management, and meetings, both internal and external working parties across the entire period.



Festival Delivery

3. Local Procurement

Sourcing local suppliers was of the highest priority for the goods, materials and labour that was required to deliver the Gateway Merredin Festival. It states as a simple fact that a portion of the loss that has been incurred in this first year's budget, is directly attributed to the added margins that have been paid in favour of continuing to support the local business economy as desired.

By implementing the learnings from this report and with the creation of a dedicated business plan for the festival in future years to come, there is no reason to suggest that the SoM cannot continue to support local businesses as the highest priority, and possibly even increase the level of spending within the local business community.

Event Management

Program Planning

The program planning for the festival originated from the following methods:

- A series of pillar events or experiences, aligned to the festival's theme.
- An evolution of added events, inspired mostly by the internal and external working parties.

Programming Challenges

There were several challenges that occurred which made it difficult to secure the inaugural festival's programming plan. Below are specific examples of those challenges:

- The challenges posed by the fluid nature of the Covid-19 pandemic situation.
- The continued introduction of creative event ideas, beyond the time threshold for planning.

Key Learnings

There are several changes to the festival's program scheduling that would achieve improved results:

- Set a clear and demonstrable strategic framework that details the SoM's involvement.
- Develop an 'expression of interest' process to lead early community engagement efforts.

The above improvements would provide the following outcomes to the festival delivery and SoM:

- Increased community involvement and ownership of the festival's brand and delivery, ensuring a heavier focus on self-sufficient event delivery.
- Improve the financial viability of the festival, relying less on council backed seed funding.

Team Structure

There were two primary 'teams' consisting of working parties that were in operation throughout the planning and delivery of the festival, and they were:

1. Internal working party – Shire of Merredin Staff
2. External working party – Community Members / Shire Delegates

Event Management

1 Internal Working Party

The internal working party consisted of eleven contributing Shire of Merredin staff members who played various roles within the planning and delivery phases of the festival, and the impact on core business for each individual varied, depending on their type of involvement and for what length of time they were involved for.

2 External Working Party

The external working party was made up of selected community members, who offered their time on a volunteer basis for the festival planning. Typically, the working party members were residents or representatives from the community, commercial, industrial or government sectors, or having personal skills and attributes, to ably assist with the festival's planning and delivering requirements.

Promotion and recruitment for external working party volunteers, happened in the following ways:

- Shire of Merredin monthly newsletter.
- Shire of Merredin social media accounts.
- Advertisement in the Merredin Phoenix Newspaper.

Interested volunteers were directed to a page on the Shire of Merredin website and requested to complete an expression of interest form to be considered for a placement on the external working party.

The external working party was made up of community members from the following organisations:

Organisational Involvement:	Time on working party:
Meridian Regional Arts Inc.	In perpetuity.
Merredin Museum & Historical Society Inc.	In perpetuity.
Merredin Military Museum	In perpetuity.
Dimensions Café	In perpetuity.
St Mary's School	Partial Involvement.
	Partial Involvement.
Local young artist	Partial Involvement.

Event Management

Event Management Processes

The festival's event management process relied heavily upon working party meetings that were held separately between the attending members of the internal and external working parties.

Working party meetings were presided over by a Shire of Merredin staff member.

The working party meetings achieved the following key management outcomes:

- An assembly of the working party, to discuss set agenda items and new business.
- Discuss the progress of actionable items and make decisions based upon outcomes.
- The recording and distribution of meeting minutes for tracking the festival planning.
- Larger ownership, buy-in and true local impact from a large cross-section of community representatives. This created authentic and localized voice and relevance to the stories told through each unique event.



Event Management

Documents and Procedures

The lengthy planning, management and delivery process of the Gateway Merredin Festival saw a host of documents and procedures created, to ensure that smooth and efficient delivery of the festival took place.

The following is a comprehensive list of documents and procedures that were created and followed throughout the planning and delivery of the festival.

Technology Systems

The use of Microsoft, Adobe and Canva software (SaaS) was used for the strategic and operational management of the festival, in-line with the SoM's software licensing agreements.



Event Management

Supplier and Stakeholder Management

The management of suppliers focused heavily upon local business procurement where possible, with more than 58% of all reported invoice details being attributed to local businesses.

Key Learnings

A greater effort should be sought to consider and integrate regional shires into the festival planning and event delivery process, leading to greater collaboration, larger working committees and enhanced promotional reach for future festivals of this nature.

A dedicated stakeholder engagement strategy should be considered for future festivals, to improve the overall level of communication delivery to key stakeholders, and to streamline the management of relationships more efficiently according to their needs and importance.



Event Management

Report Summary

This report outlines important evidence to suggest that the SoM administrative staff, alongside a committed Merredin community, were able to deliver a successful three-day festival across a very competitive long weekend.

Despite being up against various obstacles and challenges, Gateway Merredin Festival validated the following key facts:

- Visitors are prepared to travel to Merredin for a festival.
- Significant economic development took place for local businesses in Merredin.
- The SoM has developed valuable building blocks for successful festivals in years to come.
- The Merredin community has the capacity and commitment to deliver a festival of this size and scale.

Ensuring that a successful festival was delivered for the community in the inaugural year, the below comments outline important lessons learned:

- A clear vision, scope and business plan should be agreed to early by all relevant parties to avoid a naturally evolving festival program over time.
- A clearer framework is necessary to ensure the support and delivery of self-sufficient events on the festival program, led by community organisations in Merredin.

It should be clear by reading the above summary and more detailed report, that there is a great pilot to move forward with for the Merredin community. With a range of areas to streamline and save costs, increase the operating income of the event and improve the festival experience, there is a high probability that the Gateway Merredin Festival should become a highlight on the annual tourism calendar in Western Australia.



Merredin, Njaki Njaki Noongar country, is home to people from many cultures and backgrounds.

Discover the stories that shaped the architecture of our town and its integral involvement in expanding the Western Australia that we know today, at our inaugural Gateway Merredin Festival.

With a skyline that has changed little since the early 1920s, unearth the layers between the trees, paddocks, bricks and mortar, the blood sweat and tears, and the multicultural influences that formed this unique part of our State.

In 2021, our Troops, Trains and Treasures will whisk you away into the rich tapestry of WA's history and Merredin's unique involvement in this; with fun and delights to be discovered by all the family!



Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries
Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development

