

THE INAUGURAL AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL

OCTOBER 10TH & 11, 2009



Avoca Eco Living Festival
10th – 11th October

A WRITTEN REPORT OF THE PROCESS AND EVENT BY DIRECTOR AND CO-PRODUCER LYNDAL JONES

With

A REPORT ON COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT BY CO-PRODUCER MARGARET PILGRIM

STRATEGIES FOR ENGAGING WITH CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH ART AT *THE AVOCA PROJECT* BY LYNDAL JONES

20 EXTENDED INTERVIEWS WITH TOWNSPEOPLE TWO MONTHS LATER – A REPORT BY ANTHROPOLOGIST JAMES OLIVER

A VIDEO DOCUMENTATION OF THE EVENT MADE BY FILM MAKER BEN SPETH

THE AVOCA ECO LIVING FESTIVAL 2009

This report was commissioned by the City of Melbourne



Landscape Architecture students from RMIT University with their recycling project at the eco living shop they developed.
photo: S Porter, Pyrenees Advocate

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PROJECTS & EVENTS

Educational Projects

ECO LIVING TALKS PROGRAM

focusing on sustainability in houses and gardens.

OPEN HOUSES

2 houses: TATLOW HOUSE sustainable new-build & WATFORD HOUSE heritage sustainable “retrofit” with information available from residents.

ECO-LIVING SHOP

2 RMIT Landscape Architecture students set up a shop/eco display with The Wilderness Society & Parks Victoria.

Arts/Design Projects

ECO CUBBIES*

Primary School students with Artist Jill Orr - along the river bank set up by the school with parents group.

SUSTAINABLE GARDENS*

4 gardens in the town made sustainable and transformed by RMIT Landscape Architecture students led by lecturer and landscape Architect, Fiona Harrison.

A DWELLING PLACE*

artists Megan Evans and Gayle Maddigan create a large-scale video installation at the RSL Hall comprising images of over 80 local people as a community mapping project.

THE AVOCA PROJECT EXHIBITION

15 nationally recognized and emerging artists show environmental works in Watford House and grounds.

UTAKO SHINDO*

a Japanese artist looks at the town and its weather leading to a sculptural and photographic installation.

HERITAGE WALK WITH BLUETOOTH*

RMIT Media and Communication researchers with the Avoca and District Historical Society create before and after images of heritage (recycled) buildings for mobile phones.

MUSIC

A duo played on the floodplain on Saturday, local children provided trumpet music solos.

Trade

VINTAGE CLOTHING SHOP

High quality vintage (recycled) clothing collected and sold by Carol Wilkins and Helen Caruthers.

GARAGE SALES

over 20 garage sales at people’s homes throughout the town on Sunday morning as further re-cycling.

BUSKING

by local musicians – mainly children who made serious pocket-money .

*NOTE *long-term, process focused projects working with residents and the school.*

THE AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL 2009

PROJECT TEAM

LYNDAL JONES	Creative Producer, Coordinator with RMIT University . Lyndal Jones is a Professor in the School of Media and Communication at RMIT University and an artist represented by Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne. The Avoca Project is both a university research project and an international art project.
MARGARET PILGRIM	Co-Producer, Co-Event Manager, Coordinator with local groups and volunteers, leader of Avoca Business & Tourism light bulb initiative Margaret Pilgrim is a long-term office-bearing member of the Avoca Business and Tourism Committee and runs the community website
DONNA WARDLAW	Publicist
DANIEL NARBUTT	RMIT University Researcher, grant applications and speakers program
JEN RAE	RMIT University, Administration (2 weeks)

Regarding event management of the festival

The event was co-project-managed by Lyndal Jones and Margaret Pilgrim on a voluntary basis as a whole-of-town festival. After 5 town meetings it became clear that, while several people were prepared to engage with specific projects and tasks, there was no-one prepared or able to take on the task of event-management. Furthermore, the Event Manager attached to the Avoca Information Centre was unable to assist beyond providing some advice. Funding for this area of the program (from RMIT University) arrived too late for the team to find someone to take over this huge task. An assistant was therefore funded in Melbourne on a part-time basis for 2 weeks to contact all participants and arrange the travel/accommodation/payment logistics. Earlier, research assistance had also been provided through a grant from RMIT to support the grant writing.

NOTE: for details on those who assisted with particular elements of the project, see 'Acknowledgements' in this report, and Margaret Pilgrim's report on community contributions (APPENDIX 1).



BACKGROUND

The Avoca Eco Living Festival was initiated through *The Avoca Project (TAP)*, a large-scale art, place and climate change project begun by Lyndal Jones as a 10 year project in 2005 at Watford House in Avoca, central Victoria. The aim has been to re-create the house as a large-scale sculpture; an image of resilience in the face of climate change that is simultaneously a local and an international art project, designed to influence those who live in the area and those who visit it either physically or virtually. This is simultaneously an RMIT University research project led by Jones, that investigates the ways art can address climate change through these projects.

Watford House (known locally as 'the Swiss House') was already important in the area for its distinctive story (of arriving in Avoca as numbered planks from Europe in 1850, then being rolled down the hill to its current site 20 years later...) and its survival as one of only 3 timber 'pre-fab' houses in Australia from that time. In 2005 the house was almost beyond repair and much of the initial work, involving many local trades people and volunteers has involved repairing it while also making the property a model of sustainability. Watford House, once stabilized was listed on the Victorian heritage register in 2008. It is also increasingly becoming that image of resilience envisaged in 2005.

The Avoca Project as an organization has now become a not-for-profit association and has registered to become a charity. As well as Jones' own development of the house itself as an artwork in collaboration with many other artists, a further aim, in this regional area where the effects of climate change are already visible as extended drought, is to provide a space where other artists might also address this issue.

British artist Jane Prophet, land artist Mel Ogden, sound artist Phillip Samartsis, and, in 2009, audio-visual Carl Michael von Hausswolff from Sweden have all created works on-site. Exhibitions in Australia (Ballarat, Sydney, Lismore, Melbourne, Launceston) and internationally (Tate Modern, London, DMZ Sth Korea) have also included works that feature the house and town. Artists who have stayed include Megan Evans who worked with the town in the aftermath of the 2009 Bushfires and then went on to develop a highly successful video project with indigenous artist Gayle Maddigan for the Avoca Eco Living Festival.

In 2007, TAP was one of 20 international environmental art projects nominated for the prestigious OISJ Prix Green, USA.

The development of an arts-based eco festival in the town was a natural extension of the above concerns and the expertise available through **TAP**.

THE AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL 2009

BACKGROUND continued

Unlike many other towns in the area, Avoca had done nothing as a whole community to address climate change. As a member of the Avoca Business and Tourism Committee, Lyndal Jones offered to lead an annual Eco Living Festival (initially over 5 years) as a framework to enable a range of climate change adaptation activities and opportunities... Margaret Pilgrim and John Quinn volunteered to be co-producers, although John later resigned on becoming the local councilor on the Pyrenees Shire Council. Despite the unevenness of attendance at the 5 town meetings about the project there was enthusiasm for the project to go ahead. To enable the festival to take place, 10 grant applications were completed, of which 6 were successful. (See below for details of funding.)

The festival was designed to focus, each year, on the following:

- 2009 HOUSE & GARDEN,
- 2010 THE RIVER
- 2011 THE SCHOOL, STREET & FARM
- 2012 PUBLIC PLACES (BUILDINGS, POOL AND SPORTING AREAS)
- 2013 TOWN & CONNECTIONS

FESTIVAL AIMS

1. To develop an important annual social event that addresses climate change actions and opportunities for, with, and increasingly, by townspeople
2. To provide clear information about ways to adapt behaviors, and for houses and gardens to become more sustainable
3. To create a final festival focus for a series of long-term art/design projects whose purpose is both environmentally educational and socially engaged¹
4. To promote the town for eco/arts tourism resulting in publicity for the town in Victoria and nationally, leading to increased pride and increased income
5. To connect with other towns in central Victoria with large environmental groups (e.g. BREAZE in Ballarat, MASG in Castlemaine, smaller groups in Ararat, Talbot, Maryborough etc) and become actively involved in the Central Victorian Solar City
6. To undertake systematic research at a whole-of-community level on ways to engage effectively with climate change, particularly at the behavioral level through creative projects.



A section of High Street Avoca



Watford House, December 2009



The Avoca River, Avoca, after rain 2009

THE AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL 2009

***THE AVOCA PROJECT* SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY**

On Community Art and Fine Art

The Avoca Project (TAP) rests on the proposition that artists need to engage in large numbers with the world-shaping issue of climate change in order to create a range of new images of possible futures. For the most part, to date, it hasn't occurred.¹ This project is undertaken in Avoca in the recognition that social change needs to be addressed from within specific contexts to reduce the sheer scale of the issue. The issue therefore takes work by 'fine artists' into the 'community art' arena.

Is it possible for art to engage socially and politically beyond the gallery? And, in so doing, to move beyond simple celebration and spectacle (like fireworks displays) to an art experience that is more thoughtful, more empowering?

While community art directly addresses place and social engagement, it appears to be a separate history from that of 'contemporary art'. Projects undertaken as community art are often underpinned by specialist 'community' funding bodies with some quite specific rules (ironically, developed at the bureaucratic level) regarding the necessary physical engagement of 'the community' in the physical creation of the work. As a result, there are also 'specialist' artists involved whose pre-determined focus on process can often be to the detriment of the final artworks made. Where the resulting artworks are successful they often reveal a reliance on spectacle or celebration as mentioned above.

On the other hand, artists moving away from galleries to undertake 'public' projects often talk of their projects as 'interventions' (i.e. they identify themselves as being outside the community). They become hit-and-run agents with works that respond to place through 'research about...' rather than research through embodied experience. Too often the resulting works become either expensive but slight 'brooches' (attractive framing devices) or patronizing responses to complex situations.

It should be noted that *The Avoca Project* over its five years in Avoca, has fallen into all these holes. What it offers, however, is a truly place-based engagement rather than intervention. By being of and in the Avoca town community, it has had the opportunity to learn from its mistakes. Artists are invited on the basis of the quality of previous works combined with their social skills. The numbers who can be involved is determined simply by the amount of water in the 90,000 litre tank at Watford House and the financial support that can be found to support the artist.

THE AVOCA PROJECT SOCIAL ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

Propositions that make up *The Avoca Project* Social Engagement Strategy

Proposition 1: that there are many different orders of ‘community’

The township of Avoca is a community-by-geography and is therefore composed of people with a wide range of differing values and interests, unlike ‘communities’ created as specific interest groups because of shared values. The idea is to create a range of projects for/with different groups that have already identified themselves as communities-of interest in the town, leaving the town-as-community to be the result of bringing these activities together.

Proposition 2: that the elite art/community art divide can be ignored

Projects undertaken through TAP brazenly include works by internationally acclaimed artists, artists with highly specialized social skills, amateur artists and enthusiastic others. Some artists across this entire range live and work in the area. Others (from anywhere in the world) who might benefit from this experience as well as create something extraordinary are invited to undertake informal residencies at Watford House. This proposition also involves working from an extremely broad idea of what constitutes art. It includes design, craft, play, performance, on-line projects and social events.

Proposition 3: it is important in this project to engage with, rather than to ‘intervene’

TAP as a long-term research project resists the idea of art as intervention. It seeks instead to engage (i.e. to act with rather than to act on from outside). Watford House, where the project is based, is a central part of the town story. Its repair alone has brought an increased sense of pride to many in the town. Jones’s presence on a regular basis at the house, providing occasional employment, working and socializing with other townspeople, provides a viable basis for developing a whole range of projects.

Proposition 4: Poetic indicators of change can be created

Based on the use of the return of wild salmon to the river as indicators of success of the river’s health in the “Sustainable Seattle Indicators Project”, (now recognized by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements)², TAP is based on the creation of what Jones calls “poetic indicators of use” of power and water. These are being constructed as sculptural artworks to provide feedback models of energy and water use and provide another example of art as research. The idea of a recurring, developing, climate change festival became another manifestation of this idea.

Proposition 5: The “before” and “after” effect can be utilized to create awareness through art

“Before”: artworks are undertaken with/in the community to increase awareness of the specifics of the current situation. “After”: different possibilities are engaged with – again through a series of art projects. These ‘before’ and ‘after’ experiences are then evaluated through both further art projects and discussion.

Note: This has some parallels with theories developed by the Feldenkrais Method of movement education³ and Lawrence Halprin’s RSVP cycles of community engagement⁴ and form the basis of Jones’ educational philosophy.

Proposition 6: That the above way of working constitutes a “Systems Theory” Approach

What the above propositions have in common is that they are based on a ‘whole-of-system’ understanding of community, rather than being a response to particular issues or problems or even opportunities. They recognize that issues of climate change and of community are both part of a complex ‘closed-loop’ of cause-and-effect⁵.



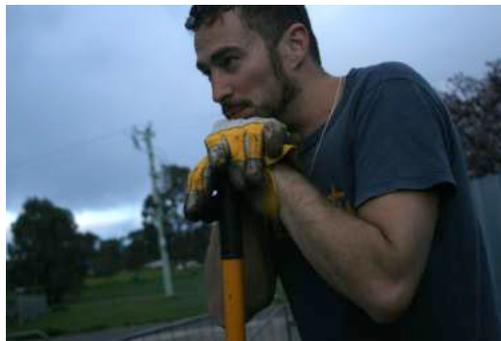
cubbies, talks, video installation



3 gardens



artworks at Watford house gardens cont.



photos 1,7 & 9 Jones; photos 2,3,4,5,6, Porter; photo 8, MacDonald



AIMS AND METHODS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL

Aim 1: to develop a festival that becomes a party

Background: There are many community climate change activities in towns large and small across Australia. However, Avoca, even though part of the Central Goldfields Solar City, had done nothing. Some agitation in the town seemed necessary. The Business & Tourism Committee agreed to support a festival over 5 years. Margaret Pilgrim offered to join Lyndal Jones in putting a festival together. After several community meetings it became clear, however, that they were the committee.

Method: The idea to run the festival as a party came from Simon Pockley (see acknowledgements) who mentioned this while advising us on the festival model the Apollo Bay Land care group had adopted. So we became a party, with hundreds of green balloons (that also inexpensively represent a tie to the black balloons of eco advertising), music and food. This party differed, however, from the Apollo Bay model because of its focus on long-term process-based projects that concentrated on art rather than direct information. (Interestingly, the talks session, central to the success of the Apollo Bay festival, was of least interest in Avoca – perhaps because it was such beautiful weather outside, perhaps because there was so little knowledge of opportunities for housing adaptation in this community that people there didn't identify it as of use to them.)

Aim 2: to create an atmosphere of hospitality by Invitations into peoples' homes

Method: The difference with this festival-as-party is that it was based on the notion of at-home simple hospitality - with hosts and visitors, open houses and a town open for people to fossic through to find events and activities. Furthermore, the focus on long-term engagement led to billeting of artists/designers. This became more directed still with the content of 'A Dwelling Place' being based on images of people in their homes.

Aim 3: To engage the 'lounge room' effect

An extension of the 'hospitality' theme, this effect is based on developing familiarity with the people who carry out the project, leading to increased involvement - in the same way that families will attend performances by their children, even if they go to no others. (This is the basis on which TV actors starring in plays for theatre companies bring in more audience. They have already been in people's lounge rooms.)

Method: This means that the artists need to engage with residents over a substantial period of time. Megan Evans, for instance, had a residency at Watford House in January/February 2009 and became involved in the bushfire relief effort there. *The Dwelling Place*, that Megan and Gayle Maddigan developed for the festival, will be developed further in 2010 and 2011 because it was so successful as a result of this willingness to join in, combined with the extraordinary social skills of both artists.

Aim 4: to select artists and others with highly developed specific skills

Method: Introducing mature artists, writers and academics and climate change activists with high level social skills as well as experienced, high level practices enables the development of innovative, rich works underpinned by engagement with the site and/or the community.

THE AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL 2009

AIMS AND METHODS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF THE AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL (continued)

Aim 5: To create some cultural projects that require only a small, specific contribution and others that require only audiences.

Too often in country towns, the required high-level participation of local people in cultural events means that they don't have the same opportunities as those in cities to experience high quality, virtuosic art without traveling long distances. They don't therefore experience culture as part of what they know of that place. Furthermore, the same people (its always the same people) volunteer each time. They burn out.

Method: To provide a whole range of works, some community led, others participative with very specific, small roles and activities required and others where audiences simply experience international quality works.

Aim 6: To focus on recognition of wider gains by artists and others who undertake projects through *The Avoca Project*

This allows particularly for engagement with students and researchers from universities.

Method: For those artists and researchers taking part in projects, identification and discussion of personal reasons for involvement (exhibition opportunity, chance to 'escape' for a while, support to make work or try out ideas, sociability... (along with wanting to work with people in this small town) is essential. A thorough induction, ongoing discussion about ideas and, most importantly, careful selection of participants hopefully also undercuts any tendencies to patronize that might creep in.



Simon Pockley – the 'Baroquing' of the Shed
Photo; L Jones



Gayle Maddigan and Megan Evans opening
photo: S Porter



Fiona Harrison + RMIT students
photo; D. Keep

FESTIVAL OUTCOMES

A two-day social event for townspeople and visitors to the town.

Over 500 people engaged in a range of events over the weekend. 300 were recorded as visiting the video installation, 200 were estimated to have visited Watford House, 80 attended the talks program and many walked through the town to visit the range of events. A dinner at the St Ignatius Vineyard was attended by 70 and on Sunday there were 20 – 30 garage sales at private houses throughout the town. Several families brought bikes and rode to the different events. While there seemed to be many more visitors than townspeople visible at the festival events, it should be noted that there were many involved in actually running activities (including hosting their own open gardens, providing catering, playing music etc.) and several had been involved in the extended projects who didn't actually attend the festival itself. (See video documentation included of the festival.)

Connections made between townspeople who had not previously met

See Appendix 3: the study carried out by James Oliver- included with this report for in-depth conversations with 20 townspeople about the festival.

Some increased knowledge of sustainable practices

This is hard to measure at this stage, particularly as the most extended 'learning' was through the creation of the eco-cubbies at the school led by artist Jill Orr. It was immediately clear that the talks program was less successful however, simply in terms of numbers attending, than the more experiential events. Associated activities – in particular the provision of free light bulbs to households, the uptake of solar panels and the development of the Friends of the Avoca River were more subtle, direct responses to environmental concerns and willingness to engage. (See details in Margaret Pilgrim's outline of specific community benefits in APPENDIX 1).

Income to the town from visitors⁶

- food: coffee shops, vineyard, sausage sizzle, sandwiches, soup kitchen, Moonambel Hotel, Vic Hotel
- accommodation Mt Avoca, Motel, Cottages
- work created; promotion (Donna Wardlaw), Doova Mechanics, Builders/painters (Watford House), signage etc (Maryborough)
- garage sales 20 – 30 garage sales throughout the town
- busking local children
- vintage clothing shop returns to those who contributed clothing.

THE AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL 2009

FESTIVAL OUTCOMES (continued)

Increased knowledge of the town and district through visitation

Of the 500 who came to the festival, approx 310 were visitors to the town. Of these approx 90 stayed overnight. The festival was advertised in local papers and briefly on 3LO. With further advertising as a campaign, I believe we will double those figures in 2010. This is appropriate. The town at that stage did not have the facilities to do more.

Development of Relationship with RMIT University

This relationship, through Professor Lyndal Jones in the School of Media and Communication has led to the beginning of an on-going reciprocal benefit to both the town and the university. RMIT on one hand provides expertise, equipment and a strong connection to cultural activities and research knowledge that is often not available in a regional community. Avoca, on the other hand, provides a specific connection to social issues such as climate change that enables quite specific measures to be undertaken and evaluated. Because it is such a small town (1000 people) it can become a 'laboratory' for experiential practices with a community quite open about giving feedback. Through projects undertaken, this small town and it's capital city can be seen as a continuum of such issues thereby underpinning the importance of establishing a research relationship between city and small regional town.



Carol Wilkins & Helen Caruthers vintage clothing shop. photo: S.Porter



starting the heritage walk. photo: M Berry

FESTIVAL OUTCOMES (continued)

Friends of the Avoca River

Since the festival a 'friends of the Avoca River' has formed with 109 members as of 1/2/2010. This group is already working on the development of processes around improving the town's relationship with the river with plantings, a fish-ladder, a walking track along the river. This is a direct outcome of the festival plan providing a focus and the festival itself providing impetus. This project was initiated and continues to be supported by Margaret Pilgrim. (Further details from Margaret Pilgrim's report, APPENDIX 1)

The Light Bulbs Project

This was undertaken in conjunction with the festival – initially with information supplied by the MAGS group in Castlemaine who the local Bendigo Bank as sponsors. This project was initiated and developed through the Avoca Business and Tourism Committee bringing income to the community groups who installed the light bulbs and providing free light bulbs to many households in the town. (Further details from Margaret Pilgrim's report)

Opportunities for Artists through Exhibition

A number of curators/directors of cultural institutions were present at the event. Two artists have further work as a direct result of exhibiting at the festival. (NOTE: The festival included several very young artists, artists working in the region and, most importantly, it strongly featured indigenous voice and images.)



Avoca River, eco-cubbies by primary students with Jill Orr and plantings by students as the first activity of the Friends of the Avoca River group
Photo: Sandra Porter, Pyrenees Advocate

THE AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL 2009

FUNDING

Direct Funding

• Arts Victoria	video installation	\$28,000
• Artist in schools		\$ 6,500
• Pyrenees Shire	Speakers program, insurance/in kind	\$10,000
• RMIT University	Vice Chancellor's fund -Artists fees,	\$ 5,000
• RMIT University	DSC -Artists fees/ publicity,	\$ 5,000
• RMIT University	Design Institute (GPK) – Research Support,	\$ 5,000
• RMIT University	Design Institute (ITA) Sound Study	\$ 5,000
• City of Melbourne	report	<u>\$ 4,500</u>
		\$69,000

In kind funding

• RMIT University (in kind)	LJ research time, Fiona Harrisson Technical students, marketing students, auditing, speakers, Equipment	\$40,000
• Ballarat University	2 artists (in kind)	\$ 5,000
• TAPinc	accommodation, equipment,	\$15,000
• Icon inc	Logos (in kind through TAPinc)	<u>\$ 3,000</u>
		\$ 63,000

TOTAL FUNDING \$132,000

Extended Volunteer time

- Lyndal Jones, Margaret Pilgrim, and households that billeted students
- Note also, token payments only were made to speakers and artists with some RMIT researchers volunteering their time

Contributions of time were also made by the local CFA, The Wilderness Society, Parks Victoria and other community groups (including members of the Avoca Business and Tourism Committee, Lyn Mather and Joanne Weston).

NOTE: While the Arts Victoria funding for the Community Mapping Project and for Jill Orr were known about early in the year, the organisers only received funding from the Pyrenees Shire and RMIT University 4 weeks before the festival. (Late applications were made to both bodies when funding was not received for applications made to Sidney Myer Fund, Harold Mitchell Foundation and the Federal Jobs Fund and the Victorian Eco Living Fund. This meant that publicity was late and under-funded and no events manager was available once the funding was received.

PROJECT OUTCOMES

Because the town did not have the structures in place to work immediately as a whole community, it was felt that process-focused projects would allow different interest groups to become involved over time.

This proved to be correct. The 2 screen video installation which was preceded by weeks of taping images of people in their homes – all looking directly at the camera, smiling, welcoming, was extremely moving as both a process and event. People began knocking on the door and phoning, wanting to be involved. In a town completely silent about its indigenous past, Gayle Maddigan was able to talk about spirituality, of indigenous relationship to place in a way that left everyone, already totally engaged by this large-scale expression of warmth and deep hospitality, deeply affected.

There was also a barbecue after the event, hosted by the RMIT students for those who had billeted them, that continued the interaction between these groups, providing the impetus for further culturally based projects between Avoca and RMIT University.

The success of the engagement of the Ballarat University Art School will hopefully also lead to further engagement between Avoca and Ballarat.



The opening of the community mapping project 'A Dwelling Place' where Megan Evans thanked those who welcomed the artists into their homes to create the work, and Gayle Maddigan, an indigenous artist from Bendigo, spoke of the importance of connection to place that can be learnt from the aboriginal people of the area.

Photos: S. Porter

THE AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL 2009

SUMMARY / OVERVIEW

Description

- An eco living festival focusing on process-oriented art activities by professional artists working with local residents
- Importantly, this is combined with works by professional artists (through *The Avoca Project*) and other educational and trade activities by / with local people
- Based on a strong partnership with RMIT University supported by the Art School at Ballarat University. This was essential for eco/art expertise, for knowledge-exchange and to provide a strong youthful element

Funding

- Major funding from Arts Victoria, RMIT University and the Pyrenees Shire Council, supported by *The Avoca Project* with direct funding \$69,000; estimate of in-kind funding \$63,000 **Total funding was \$132,000**

Participation

- Visitor attendance at festival approx 500 (380 visitors, 120 residents from the district)
- Further, long-term local participation through the primary school (a grade 6 activity with parents involved in installation of cubbies), *A Dwelling Place* video project (80 families) and 4 RMIT University garden projects (including billeting of students by 10 families and provision of 4 gardens)
- Direct engagement in the festival through trade (special vintage clothing shops, eco shop etc), catering, busking and the 25 garage sales
- Widespread participation in associated activities under the eco-festival 'umbrella'. These include a town-wide light bulb project (with clubs benefiting from installing bulbs and households receiving free bulbs), installation of solar panels, and development of the Friends of the Avoca River (110 members in February 2010) leading to extensive tree-plantings

SWOT ANALYSIS

Strengths

- Volunteer expertise of Lyndal Jones and Margaret Pilgrim
- Expertise and quality of the work of the artists working with community groups
- Development of recognition of need to make requests highly specific to enable participation
- Partnerships with organizations (TAP, AB&T, RMIT University) leading to access to expertise to support local activities and knowledge base
- Now an understanding in the community of what an eco-festival might be and an interest in the next one (i.e. forward publicity)

SWOT ANALYSIS continued

Weaknesses

- Lack of funding for project manager and publicity
- Previous lack of a model for this type of festival in Avoca leading to lack of knowledge of how to contribute
- Reliance on too small a team to lead
- Reliance on print media for publicity

Opportunities

- For growth of a reputation as a town for an annual eco-living festival with associated cultural and industry development
- For strong connections with Central Victorian Solar City and eco groups in the area leading to strong inter-connections between towns
- For increased connections within Avoca between 'local' and those more recently arrived
- For increased involvement by townspeople in planning and implementation of festival elements

Threats

- Lack of funding if diversification does not occur through transfer of funding application skills
- Burn out effect on volunteer leadership if project management and publicity tasks remain unfunded and thus unsupported professionally
- Reduction of interest from other communities/individuals if the significance and innovation of the arts-oriented nature of the project is not understood and developed further.



Artwork by Kim Donaldson at Watford House during festival

Photo: K. Donaldson

THE AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL 2009

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

In Avoca

Pat Tacey and Deborah Hicks for hosting and co-ordinating the eco-cubbies project at Avoca Primary School
Children from the Avoca Primary School and their parents for installation of the cubbies
Alan Murphy and Marilyn Tatlow for opening their house as an example of a sustainable, new build residence
Carol Wilkins and Helen Caruthers for the Vintage clothing store
Ian Driasma for use of his sound system and making his shop available to RMIT students
Councillor John Quinn for ongoing support, letter writing, introducing the opening speaker at the festival
Helen Collier & Lucy Doran for co-ordinating the student billeting
The 4 households who provided gardens for the RMIT students (details in Margaret Pilgrim's report)
Lyn Mather and Joanne Westin for sorting out the insurances and providing ongoing advice
Sandra Porter (Pyrenees Advocate) for regularly reporting on projects and supplying most photos in this report
The community groups who provided catering and music (details in Margaret Pilgrim's report)
Sylvia Diaz & family / St Ignatius Winery for the generosity of the Saturday night dinner
The staff of the Avoca Information Centre for expert advice, equipment, use of space
Pam Burns, Pyrenees Shire office for advice re Pyrenees Shire funding
Tony and Elizabeth O'Shea, Avoca Historical Society for working with Pauline Anastasiou on the mobile technology project
Arthur and Glenys for use of their shop
All of those who participated in the video work 'A Dwelling Place'

From RMIT University

Professor Margaret Gardner, Vice Chancellor and Professor Colin Fudge, Pro Vice Chancellor, Design and Social Context for providing funding that enabled the artists to be paid.
Associate Professor Ralph Horne for ongoing advice and a series of public talks in Avoca including for the talks program at the festival
Adjunct Professor Alan Pears, for volunteering his time and expertise for the talks program at the festival
Fiona Harrisson for leading and co-ordinating the Landscape Architecture program
Rebekah Naim and Penny Johnston and their students in School of Media and Communication for technical and promotional work
Marco Cher- Abard for vital technological assistance

From Ballarat University

Jill Orr for engaging the School of Art at Ballarat University and their sustainability/art project with this festival and her work with the primary school
Ash Keating and Utako Shindo for extending their residency project at Ballarat School of Art to incorporate the Avoca festival.

The Avoca Project

Simon Pockley for his ongoing support and wide-ranging skills without which either The Avoca Project itself or the festival would have occurred.
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The volunteers who helped prepare the house and garden over many months including Helen Drew and Melinda Rackham for last-minute preparations
Ben Speth for video documentation and vital technical assistance
James Oliver for his extended interviews associated with this report

THE AVOCA ECO-LIVING FESTIVAL 2009



Kevin Harrington Local resident and actor (Seachange, Underbelly) who officially opened the festival.
Photo: Agent



David Glenn from Lambley Gardens in talks program
Photo S. Porter



eco cubby installed on floodplain
Photo L. Jones

Notes

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- ¹ Arts practitioners working on climate change projects internationally is the subject of a journal article by Lyndal Jones, to be published in 2010
 - ² www.sustainableseattle.org/Programs/RegionalIndicators/
 - ³ Feldenkrais, M. 1981 The Elusive Obvious Meta publications USA
 - ⁴ (Halprin, L. 1970 The RSVP Cycles: Creative Processes in the Human Environment)
 - ⁵ The approach to systems theory comes particularly from the influential research writings of Umberto Maturana and Francisco Varela on this topic.
 - ⁶ We would be happy to expand on these details if required