

Community Conversation with Cygnet Folk Festival committee – summary

Anne Foale

9.4.2017

The evening began with a brief welcome by President Vallorie Hodges to the conversation and introduction to the current committee of Huon Folk Inc which runs the CFF.

As a segue into the conversation Dr Neil Cameron, Director of the Centre for Creative Communities and driver of the newly renovated South Hobart Living Arts Centre shared some of his wealth of knowledge about the importance and the value of festivals and community celebrations of the Arts. This was well received by the gathering of approximately 50 people.

In table groups the community representatives responded to the following questions.

Items in *red font arrived via email post the community conversation.*

WHAT WE LIKE ABOUT THE FESTIVAL...

- **That it happens/is here every January**
- Musicians and lovers of music coming together ... involvement and inclusion of local musicians... The quality of the music...bringing different music to Cygnet...the diversity of the music styles...like the world music
- It puts Cygnet on the map
- It connects community ... involves school children, school communities and others... wide community involvement .. it feels like community is supportive... community has so many opportunities to give[be involved] from yarn bombing and volunteering to hosting musicians
- The loyal returning volunteer base
- The atmosphere... outdoor ambience... good vibe ... town comes alive... especially like Loongana Park vibe... the location in the “capsule” of the town
- Parades and opening and closing ceremonies
- Free concerts as little tasters....that I can enjoy the festival by accessing some free events... street activities...
- More local people are coming along... like meeting all the new people in town
- Really like the billeting opportunities
- Family friendly atmosphere and concerts
- That it appeals to many different ages/demographics and musical styles/interests... but most people coming specifically for the folk music.
- The variety of venues
- Yarn bombing
- All the areas of the town remain clean and tidy
- The number of people around town feels right
- That community groups have an opportunity to generate income for their not- for-profit organisation... that it is a strong opportunity to support individuals in peak tourist time to help offset low winter incomes.
- The camping arrangements and provision of port a loos around town
- The market in Loongana Park

Questions from table groups for the committee

- How responsive can the HFI/CFF vision be each year based on community input and wishes?
- Does a regional committee run by locals differ from a larger urban festival committee in the way they work with artists?
- How much has the Arts and Music of the festival changed as the demographic has changed - ??? intergenerational changes???
- What percentage of musicians are local to Tasmania?
- Why can't patrons buy individual concert tickets?
- Why are there not more free public activities such as circus and busking?
- Is it true that programmed musicians/acts are not allowed to busk?
- If HFI/CFF runs at a profit, then what percentage of revenue goes back into the community?
- What is the relationship between the CFF volunteers working with the SES and the SES as a contracted volunteers group?
- What happens to the money collected from the car parking.
- How does HFI/CFF decide which community groups are volunteer contractors?
- Why are not-for-profits/community groups charged to hold stalls?
- Is/or can the stall charging schedule be made public?
- Is the Arts Council communicating with HFI/CFF?
- Are vendors happy with the arrangements for trading set up in the Willie Smith' paddock [next to the BP Service station]?
- How does the committee determine the number of food vans allowed in from outside the community and do they intend to regulate this in order to better support not-for-profit community food stalls... how?
- Does the HFI/CFF differ in how it relates to permanent businesses versus pop-ups?
- Can the HFI/CFF do anything about late night noise in the township?
- How are families catered for in the festival environment?
- How are the disabled catered for in the festival environment?
- Is it possible to have disabled toilets at Willie Smith's paddock and at Burton's Reserve
- Would it be possible to explore Childcare for the festival?

Suggestions gathered from the table groups

Theme - communication

- Communicate more regularly to local community and don't rely on the website to do this...Community engagement/projects throughout the year... have a list [email?] of interested community groups/businesses/individuals and keeps them informed during the year... a mid-year CFF progress meeting... a separate newsletter which is just for Cygnet community issues and updates... [bite-sized?]

Theme – local businesses and nfps vis-a-vis out of town food vans and vendors

- Be sensitive to local community groups... aim for win-win for all ...limit and reduce number of food vans attending the festival from outside the community in order to support the nfps community groups such as the Cygnet Primary School...recognise

that local business are doing extra on top of their normal load...discuss with local businesses sharing catering options...let businesses know in advance plans for additional food vendors...suggestion that local businesses could better utilize times before and after festival for trade benefits...support local initiatives and local fund raising...cost benefit analysis of local vs out of town food stalls ... have local community stalls identified on a map

Theme – parking and traffic – [much of the input here by SES]

- A ring road around the town would solve some of the parking issues... no parking at all in the main street...no standing areas needed in some spots [eg bus could not get around the turning circle]... good idea to have a fee but it led to more traffic turning around and possible collisions ...more shade [*does this mean for the volunteers at carpark??*] more local paddock parking, Cygnet Primary school perhaps, recreation ground, ...should the festival run buses from Hobart just for festival patrons
- Keep the festival at the current size – it seems just right ... [erroneous perception that it was much bigger a few years ago]
- Don't be misled by the notion that bigger is better – prefer a high quality experience to a small audience ... don't want a runaway train that takes over the town
- Retain vision around sustainability and containment
- Aim for Zero Waste Policy but be realistic about how zero waste products are recycled
- Cater for music and activities in natural surrounding environments
- More acoustic/unplugged music
- More opportunities for local musicians [not just Tasmanian but Huon Valley]
- More great dance sessions throughout the Festival especially late at night
- Sound at Willie Smiths could be improved....better lighting in the paddock ... more conversation ... programming for Sat night Willie Smith's tent to be considered [not sure what aspect????]
- Have something at the Youth club [?] good venue... increase opportunity for Youth Music Community to engage...cater to a cross section of demographics
- Facilitate more street activity – circus acts, buskers, carnies[?] “no sit down after 9:30”??... more busking opportunities...more acts like acrobatics and busking
- Open Loongana Park earlier so as to have activities and music on Friday during the day
- Coordinate with other groups to have additional events on on the same weekend – eg Art exhibitions
- Expansion of Children's precinct especially for 1-5yos – could community group contribute to this?
- Spaces for visiting musicians to play together ie sessions space...
- Bring back the truck stage in the carpark
- Have small sponsorship opportunities – say \$50
- *Change the date of the festival to March or April to avoid the hot days in early January*
- *Provide better ventilation in venues or at least have an open door and open windows policy during hot days*
- *Have a broader range of music – too much traditional Irish music!!*

Suggestions which are actually concerns

- No entertainment in the park after 7pm
- Too much noise spill from workshops [into other workshops or outside??]... noise spill from Balfour House and noise going into the early morning
- No toilet and water backstage at Willie Smiths for the artists.
- If there is a town evacuation people will head to their cars and lead to panic and chaos
- Caravans/campervans in the camping area can be a fire hazard – should they be in a different area to the tents
- RSL didn't know they were not a programmed venue in 2017 – communication issue!
- *Control noise spill – the hideous doof doof music from Balfour House on Friday night had a very negative impact on the general atmosphere and in particular venues.*
- *There is too much expected of volunteers – can't do six hours.*

Summary of conversation which followed on from the table group inputs.

Those items marked with * require timely follow-through and feedback to the community

- *Review traffic management via a formal and professional traffic management plan – this to include disability parking.
- *Communication – to find a way to communicate more personally to the local community than just through the website and the current newsletter – we have the beginnings of an email contact group and could expand on this. Commit to another “Community Conversation continued...” progress meeting, later in the year, to report back on some of this issues raised on April 3rd.
- *Communicate and clarify how stall fee structures work and seek alignment between CAC and CFF stall arrangements. Consider and communicate policy around nfp local groups and the relevant fee structure that is fair and equitable and in line with the CFF aspiration to where ever possible find mutual benefits for all stakeholders with a bias towards local groups.
- *Seek partnership with Cygnet Community Childcare Centre [Angela Conley director@cygnetchildcare.org.au] regarding possible provision of childcare facilities.
- *Broadly disseminate in the local community information about community contract volunteer arrangements and how mutually beneficial contracts can help deliver the festival and earn community funds for nfp groups.
- Review how Willie Smiths' paddock works.

Discussion during the conversation also covered

- CFF catering to a cross section of all demographics [but noting the CFF is a FOLK festival so it should be clear that there will be a bias towards FOLK music]; supporting buskers but noting that there can also be problems with buskers that need to be managed – eg creating traffic or other hazards because of location, noise spill into programmed venues or private businesses, amplification [should not be

any]. A suggestion was made that the CFF consider contracting someone to be a busker manager/facilitator/co-ordinator.. Busking by programmed acts has not been banned by CFF as had been suggested – to the contrary, CFF encourages musicians to busk if they feel so inclined.

- How to work more closely with local businesses – especially food establishments – about who, where, when and what are the “outside” vendors coming into town. The consensus being to limit this to what will make available reasonable offerings of a range of food options for visitors in the town at the times when patron demand is high or reasonable. The concern will be to not negatively impact on the local businesses and community groups which have traditionally supported the festival goers but at the same time make enough food options available for the large influx of visitors.
- The vision of the HFI/CFF is to encourage and support folk musicians especially the young and the local musicians.. To this end approximately 50% of programmed musicians at any given festival are local [Tasmanian] and many of these from the Huon Valley. The festival always features a Youth blackboard venue and nearly always also a Youth song writing/performing competition and often associated scholarships to attend the National Folk Convention.
- The committee is aware of the popularity of a great “session” venue and share the angst of trying to find a suitable venue that works for musicians and patrons alike, however recognising that by its very nature the coming together of a “session” tends to be more organic than organised.
- The issue of noise spill and noise generally for residents and business owners in the centre of town had quite a bit of air time. FF venues and programmed music always finishes before or at midnight – there is difficulty in controlling music and noise that continues in fringe areas and in licenced venues although police and security are doing what they can.