

Management report to Council

Agenda item 6.5

Review of the Yirramboi First Nations Arts Festival 2017 and development of 2019 festival program

Council

Presenter: Kaye Glamuzina, Manager Arts Melbourne

29 August 2017

Purpose and background

1. The purpose of this report is to provide Council with a review of the 2017 Melbourne Indigenous Arts Festival (Yirramboi) and to seek endorsement for the vision and framework of Yirramboi 2019 and its resourcing and delivery.
2. In April 2016 Council endorsed the development and delivery of the 2017 Melbourne Indigenous Arts Festival and in principle support for the delivery of a 2019 festival. The third iteration of the biennial festival, named Yirramboi 2017, took place from 5–14 May employing a new and improved creative and development model delivering substantial gains for the Council led event.
3. The festival delivered significant uplift in the scale, depth and breadth of creative programming, the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island artists and creative sector workers employed, the participation of Indigenous and non-Indigenous audiences and the securing of external funding and key partnerships.
4. Yirramboi is Council's lead project in delivering Council Plan 2017–21 Goal 9: A city with an Aboriginal focus.

Key issues

5. The total cost of Yirramboi 2017 was \$1,247,820, \$208,952 coming from the operational budget in 2015–16 and \$1,038,868 in 2016–17. The amount in 2016–17 was a combination of operational budget of \$751,475 and external funding of \$287,393. The operational costs in 2016–17 included employee costs for one staff member.
6. Council's financial commitment to the festival is subject to annual budget processes and consequently, it is management's intention to bid for budget for Yirramboi 2019 within the 2018–19 budget round. In order for the festival to be sustainable a long term, rather than annual, commitment to operational budget is recommended. Financial security will allow for more profound opportunities for, and development of, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island artists, creative sector workers and projects as well as secure partnerships with a long term strategic view focus.
7. Yirramboi 2017's partners including Art Centre Melbourne, Wheeler Centre, Melbourne Recital Centre and Creative Victoria, among others, have expressed strong interest in making ongoing financial commitments to the festival. In addition there is interest from new organisations to contribute financially to Yirramboi 2019.
8. Polity Research and Consulting was engaged to review Yirramboi 2017 to understand the festival's value to audiences and stakeholders. The Executive Summary is presented as Attachment 2.
9. The vision for Yirramboi connects us to Melbourne's past, present and future led by First Nations people. The framework and vision for the festival in 2019 is in Attachment 3.
10. Management acknowledges that an arts festival could potentially contain controversial material. Councillors will be kept informed of any potentially controversial content as the festival programme is developed.

Recommendation from management

11. That Council:
 - 11.1. Notes the review of Yirramboi 2017.
 - 11.2. Resolves to proceed with the development of the 2019 Yirramboi First Nations Festival.
 - 11.3. Acknowledges management's intention to request dedicated funds in Council's 2018–19 budget process for Yirramboi 2019 equivalent to that allocated in 2016–17, that being \$751,475 and will provide Council options for further investment to ensure at a minimum the same level of festival as in 2017.

Attachments:

1. Supporting Attachment (page 2 of 12)
2. Yirramboi First Nations Arts Festival 2017 Review (page 4 of 12)
3. Yirramboi 2019 Proposed Vision and Framework (page 11 of 12)

Supporting Attachment**Legal**

1. No direct legal issues arise from the recommendation from management.

Finance

2. The expenditure for Yirramboi 2017 was \$1,247,820. This includes one Council staff salary cost. Costs comprised :

Venue Hire	\$140,925
Artist Fees/contracts	\$156,113
Event Production	\$158,851
Travel and accommodation	\$30,000
Elders Council	\$35,000
Other Contractors	\$185,310
Marketing, media and communications	\$116,621
Other Arts Melbourne programming	\$325,000
Employee cost	\$100,000

3. In the 2017–18 budget, \$418,000 has been allocated to cover the costs of the wrap up of Yirramboi 2017 and commencement of planning for Yirramboi 2019.
4. The projected total cost of Yirramboi 2019 festival to produce a festival equal to Yirramboi 2017 is \$1,747,820. Given expected revenue of up to \$300,000, this would mean Council's contribution would be \$1,450,000.

Conflict of interest

5. No member of Council staff, or other person engaged under a contract, involved in advising on or preparing this report has declared a direct or indirect interest in relation to the matter of the report.

Stakeholder consultation

6. The development and delivery of the 2017 festival was overseen by an Elders Council with representation from Kulin nation Elders. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island artists and arts organisation stakeholders were consulted throughout.
7. Polity Research and Consulting was engaged to review the 2017 festival conducting quantitative and qualitative field work and reporting. A sample of 118 people responded to a 15 minute online questionnaire and in depth interviews were conducted with six stakeholders. The review supports the continued delivery of the festival providing favourable assessment in the main with constructive feedback in areas to improve including external marketing and promotion.

Relation to Council policy

8. The festival relates to Council Plan 2017–21 in particular:
 - 8.1. A Creative City Goal: *'Melbourne will be a place that inspires experimentation, innovation and creativity and fosters leaders of ideas and courage. It supports and values its artists and broader creative community. It will invest in the creativity of people of all backgrounds and ability in all pursuits. Melbourne's reputation will attract and retain pioneers in the creative arts and innovation sector and enable them to contribute to the city's prosperity'*.
 - 8.2. A City with an Aboriginal Focus Goal: Aboriginal culture, knowledge and heritage will enrich the city's growth and development. For the Wurundjeri, Boonerwung, Taungurong, Djajawurrung and Wathaurung people who make up the Kulin Nation, Melbourne has always been and will continue to be an important meeting place and location for events of social, educational, sporting and cultural significance.
9. The festival also reflects Art Strategy 2014–17 commitments: *'We will broaden our reach to and work with a diverse range of artists'* and *'We will encourage new and meaningful connections between artists, audiences and communities'*.
10. The festival reflects Council's vision for reconciliation in the Reconciliation Action Plan 2015–18.

Environmental sustainability

11. Environmental sustainability issues and opportunities will be considered in the development and delivery of the Yirramboi Festival in 2019.



Attachment 2
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29 August 2016



CITY OF MELBOURNE

YIRRAMBOI

First Nations Art Festival 2017

Review

*Audience and stakeholder perceptions regarding the Festival
experience and value*



1. Executive Summary

METHODS & AIMS

- This report outlines the results of the YIRRAMBOI Festival Survey for 2017, conducted to understand how the audience and program stakeholders perceived the Festival experience and its arts and cultural value. The findings will directly inform the City of Melbourne's planning for First Nations Arts festivals in future, as well as wider Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander initiatives.
- The project consisted of two concurrent phases: Quantitative (a 15-minute online survey with n=118 audience members, contributing artists and funding/venue partners); and qualitative (In-depth phone interviews with 2x each of artists, industry partners and venue partners).
- A total base sample of n=681 was supplied by the City of Melbourne for the online survey. The final sample of n=118 represents a response rate of 17%. The data is unweighted.
- Key stakeholders who participated in the interviews were purposefully selected by the CoM project team and invited directly. Interviews were conducted in strict confidence.
- Polity Research & Consulting worked closely with the CoM team to develop the interview guide and survey questionnaire. Polity then fully managed and conducted the qualitative and quantitative fieldwork and reporting, including project consulting, data analysis and recommendations.

ESSENTIAL THEMES

A number of key themes have emerged from across the Festival stakeholders:

- YIRRAMBOI has been an overwhelming success, enjoyed and lauded by all of the key stakeholder groups, from audiences to performing artists to Festival partners. The majority of respondents strongly agree they enjoyed participating in the Festival (81%), and were also very satisfied overall with the Festival shows/events (73%).
- Most of the respondents had not attended before, with only 14% having been to the First Nations Arts festivals in either 2012 and/or 2014. And encouragingly, 3



out of 4 respondents say they will definitely attend the Festival again in 2019. What is more, a majority of artist and partner respondents also feel they or their organisation will definitely get involved in some professional capacity.

- As with most of the YIRRAMBOI experience, the new initiatives (Blak Critics, KIN, Elders' program and Fire Talks) are widely seen as having been a great new addition to the program. Although levels of awareness and take-up of the various initiatives were mixed, they provided both useful and enjoyable new layers to the art experience. What is more, they are considered to have been an integral part in the Festival's cultural impact, infusing Yirramboi with greater Indigenous validity, visibility and respect.
- However, it is notable that many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander respondents were aware of the Fire Talks, Elders' program and Blak Critics' workshops but didn't attend. And while half of non-Indigenous respondents were aware of the Fire Talks, only 1 in 10 (11%) ended up attending.
- In every sense, YIRRAMBOI is widely seen as an important and valuable addition to the Melbourne calendar, with most (86%) saying it is very important for Melbourne to continue to host the Festival. For all key stakeholders, there is a widespread appreciation that the Festival represents a new level of contemporary arts and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultural commitment.
- There is clear evidence the Festival had a significant impact on the relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, having created the opportunity for a *shared* celebration that was fun, thought-provoking and meaningful. Significantly, 4 out of 5 respondents strongly agree they felt proud of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and cultures, after attending the Festival (81%).
- Both Australian Indigenous and non-Indigenous audience goers were mainly motivated *to see a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures*



and to see the creative work of First Nations artists in general. However, there were some notable differences between the two communities, in terms of why they attended and how they found the logistics of attending.

- For example, non-Indigenous audiences were also more widely motivated to experience something unknown and unique. And non-Indigenous audience goes more often considered the venue's reputation as part of their buying decision. This may reflect how, for them, being in a comfortable and familiar location was just as important as the content.
- Nevertheless, in three key respects, both groups were in unison. Firstly, word-of-mouth (49%) was by far the most prevalent way all audience goes first heard about the Festival. Secondly, the Festival program information was largely unsatisfactory, which highlights the one key area where Yirramboi has underperformed, since (thirdly) Yirramboi media were the most prevalent influences (72%) on ticket buying decisions.
- The majority of respondents (63%) believe the Festival was very successful in supporting the development of Australian Indigenous artists. Crucially, this view is most prevalent among the performing artists themselves (69%).
- And importantly, Australian Indigenous respondents are much more likely to believe Yirramboi successfully supported the development of both local and First Nations artists from overseas, than non-Indigenous respondents.
- The vast majority of artists (86%) and partners (92%) feel the Festival had a positive impact on their personal/professional development.
- As a key marker of the Festival's career value, the majority of artists (55%) indicate they've had new (unconfirmed) work opportunities arise, such as residencies, collaborations and co-productions. Some artists (28%) have also begun discussions around national and international tours.



THE 4 KEY PRINCIPLES FOR THE FESTIVAL

Indigenous Leadership: First Nations leadership is widely recognised as having been a central theme, and organising principle, of YIRRAMBOI. For many respondents (74%), the Festival was very successful in showcasing the leadership of Indigenous artists, producers, directors etc.

- Stakeholders also saw there was clear cultural leadership that permeated and enriched the Festival as a whole. This was evident in the tangible level of cultural celebration, respect and safety throughout the Festival, that has rarely been seen before.

Visibility & Dialogue: As a platform for 'opening-up' First Nations visibility and dialogues, the success of YIRRAMBOI is again clearly evident. The majority of respondents (76%) feel the Festival was very successful in creating new cultural ideas and dialogues.

- A key driver of this perception was the Festival's sheer scale and "critical mass" of events. Importantly, artists and partners widely believe these new 'conversations' have positively impacted on public attitudes and knowledge. And it is telling that non-Indigenous artist/partners are more likely to see these positive impacts, which reflects how profoundly their own mainstream perceptions were affected.

New Works & Ideas: YIRRAMBOI has also been very successful in driving new works and new ideas, both in an Indigenous contemporary arts sense and a cultural sense. The majority of respondents (67%) strongly agree the Festival had a unique program, and the vast majority (73%) also strongly agree they learnt something new about First Nations contemporary art, peoples and cultures.

- Based on the success of the new initiatives, the Festival has changed conversations around 'what Indigenous art consists of', how Indigenous art can



best be facilitated, and what Indigenous cultures themselves are about. For key stakeholders, this sort of 'paradigm shift' has been one of the most critical outcomes of the Festival.

International & Intercultural Collaboration: There is a keen appreciation among key stakeholders that YIRRAMBOI had a clear local and international focus, and sought to include strong collaboration opportunities. In particular, there is a sense that the Festival facilitated a shared, intercultural experience in terms of ceremony and community:

- However, of the 4 key principles, this is the one area where the Festival experience has been more varied. Specifically, there was less sense of 'exchange' and collaboration artistically. And this is the only area of Yirramboi where some key stakeholders felt a bit 'left out'.

CONSIDERATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS SUMMARY

The most important and universal area for improvement is in the Festival's promotional literature and activities. *All* stakeholders would like to see a much earlier and much wider marketing campaign in 2019, and a much more user-friendly program guide.

Another issue for venue partners in particular, was the suitability of shows for their artistic focus and typical audiences. Although this year was the first, and many new things were being tried, there is some feeling that too much control was ceded to the Council's team.

As such, some partners are keen to be more involved in decision-making and planning for 2019, and to be involved much earlier in the process. This includes in the Festival's marketing strategy, the development of shows and in a more rigorous framework regarding risks and responsibilities.



Overall, YIRRAMBOI has been an incredibly successful event, and apart from a few 'teething problems', there isn't much that needs to change. And certainly, the Festival has set a new bar for itself, much of which all stakeholders will wish to see repeated in 2019. However, based on the evidence, the following key recommendations stand out:

- ▶ Dramatic improvement is needed in the Festival's marketing and program information. It may be valuable to engage experienced expertise in this area.
- ▶ Start marketing considerably earlier, and enlist as many key Indigenous and non-Indigenous artistic and general community networks as possible.
- ▶ Planning and preparations with key partners should begin now, or as early as possible, for 2019. This is especially critical for venue partners.
- ▶ One area of the Festival program that can be improved is the International artistic exchange/collaboration structure, to give more possibilities for participants to actually get involved and connect with each other.
- ▶ One area of the Festival program that 'must' be retained is the private, First Nations Opening Ceremony. This was a very powerful, moving and respectful moment for all participants, and set down a key marker for this Festival.
- ▶ One of the most significant and unique aspects of Yirramboi has been the Indigenous leadership and 'ownership' central to all facets of the program. However, some mainstream stakeholders have become a bit concerned this approach may have been too alienating, and are likely to ask for a more mainstream character to their participation in 2019.
- ▶ Accordingly, a key decision facing the Yirramboi team will be whether to hold on to this approach, or to relax it? And if so, by how much? Discussions in this regard should also start earlier, rather than later or not at all.

YIRRAMBOI 2019

PROPOSED VISION AND FRAMEWORK

“Yirramboi, a world vaulting festival of work by First Nations artists in Melbourne”

- John Bailey, Spectrum *The Age*

MELBOURNE CONTEXT

Melbourne is a sophisticated city, a city of complexity and diversity grounded in a rich history of community engagement, activism and connection. World renowned as a city of culture, Yirramboi is an exemplifier for the best of what Melbourne is and can be. Drawing on the ancient knowledge of the Kulin Nations, reaching out across the continent and to First Nations people around the world, Yirramboi is a place of pride and celebration.

Yirramboi is a unique contemporary event celebrating the power and creativity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island people. In a city with a busy calendar Yirramboi provides a point of difference, creating a connected experience where First Nation perspectives are shared through creative platforms and every person is enriched on the journey.

The festival can deliver uniquely and profoundly on the City of Melbourne Plan's, Goal 9: A city with an Aboriginal focus. The development and presentation program will set the agenda for ongoing activity between festivals.

CREATIVE VISION

YIRRAMBOI is a gathering place to share the ambitions and aspirations of the world's oldest living culture. An aspiration that welcomes everyone to participate in the future vision of our city: a vibrant cultural hub that honours its past, stands collectively in the present and dreams together into the future.

Creativity has been an essential part of life, on what we now know as Melbourne, for more than 60,000 years. Art is life. Through the rivers that sustain us, to the trees that provide and to the earth that protects us, creativity can be found in every living being. It's from where the stories come. Each story has a song, each song has a dance, each dance paints a picture and each picture ties us to place, how we belong to it and how we connect to each other.

YIRRAMBOI is the very essence of creative and cultural responsibility that offers us all the opportunity to gather, to connect and to dream.

Approved vision delivered in 2017	Proposed vision proposed 2019
Deeply engage with local Kulin Nations of South-eastern Australia and develop and show work	Deeply engage with local Kulin Nations of South-eastern Australia to govern, develop and deliver Yirramboi 2019
Celebrate over 60,000 years of continuous cultural practice and knowledge and bring it into a contemporary context	Celebrate more than 60,000 years of continuous cultural practice and knowledge and bring it into a contemporary context connecting the Past, Present and Future
Be a gathering of nations: a coming together of local, state, national and international first peoples.	Be a gathering of nations: a coming together of local, state, national and international first peoples.
Have the potential to occupy a much-needed place as <u>the</u> leading Australian contemporary Indigenous arts festival	YIRRAMBOI is <u>the</u> leading contemporary Indigenous arts festival locally, nationally and internationally
Principles guiding programming: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aboriginal Leadership - New Work, Visibility and Dialogue - Collaboration and Exchange. - Create a legacy through commissions 	Principles guiding programming: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Aboriginal Leadership - New Work, Visibility and Dialogue - Collaboration and Exchange. - Create a legacy through new commissions - Industry development opportunities
	Lead delivery of Goal 9: A city with an Aboriginal focus by a whole of CoM approach to development and delivery

OVERSIGHT

It is proposed that a Reference Group of Elders and an internal Steering Group support the development and delivery of Yirramboi 2019. The Reference Group established in 2016 will continue: the Steering Group will be established to reflect a whole of Council approach.

The Reference Group of Elders established for the Festival comprises representatives of the Kulin Nations of Melbourne and surrounds. The role of the Elders Council is to endorse the vision of the festival, advise on cultural protocols across all levels of the festival's development and delivery, and directly engage with the planning of the opening and closing events. The Elders Council will meet quarterly, with additional meetings closer to the festival.

The members are:

- Aunty Di Kerr – Wurundjeri Elder
- Aunty Carolyn Briggs - Boon Wurrung Elder
- Aunty Fay Muir - Boon Wurrung Elder
- Uncle Larry Walsh – Taungurung Elder
- Aunty Fay Carter – Dja Dja Wurrung Elder