

ITEM-7 LMM 23/03/21 - NEW ANNUAL FACTS

MOTION

That City of Newcastle:

1. Notes that misinformation, incorrect figures and ill-informed commentary regarding our inaugural New Annual Arts Festival, as published in the Newcastle Herald, by Cr John Church;
2. Sets the record straight, noting that attendance to New Annual was well over 30,000, and that independent economic analysis indicates that the festival generated a \$14 million economic impact for the local Newcastle economy, a strong boost for local businesses, including a 12 per cent lift in accommodation bookings;
3. Notes that the \$1 million invested into New Annual was a lifeline for the recovery of the city's arts sector who were heavily impact by the COVID-19 global pandemic, with the City's investment supporting the employment of more than 500 artists and 250 event staff;
4. Calls on Cr Church to retract his factually incorrect letter in the Newcastle Herald, noting that Cr Church cannot both support the arts industry in this city and congratulate the artists and organisers of New Annual, while misrepresenting festival attendance figures and opposing funding for our amazing creative and performing arts industries in Newcastle.

BACKGROUND:

Thousands embrace inaugural New Annual in welcome boost for Newcastle's arts sector

Newcastle's inaugural New Annual festival has come to a close after 10 days of events, attracting over 30,000 people to more than 50 events and activities across the city in a showcase of Newcastle's arts and cultural community.

Involving more than 500 artists and 250 staff, crew and volunteers, Lord Mayor Nuatali Nemes said the festival had delivered an economic and confidence boost to the local arts sector and community, cementing Newcastle's status as a hub of creativity and culture.

New Annual marks a significant milestone in Newcastle's growth and identity, demonstrating the City of Newcastle's commitment to the arts and ability to deliver large-scale, multi event festivals.

Our vision was to create a landmark cultural festival with a uniquely Newcastle character that could become a mainstay on Australia's annual events calendar.

We are absolutely thrilled that locals and visitors alike have embraced New Annual, providing a vital shot in the arm for Newcastle's recovering creative arts and live music sectors, heavily impacted by COVID-19.



More than 28 ticketed COVID Safe sessions and hands-on workshops were 'sold out' during New Annual, which ran from 12-21 February, with tickets being snapped up at an increased rate as the festival progressed.

The event has proven popular with visitors from the surrounding regions as well as drawing people from around the state and further afield including Queensland and Victoria. It also coincided with improved vacancy rates among local accommodation providers, with industry figures showing a 12 per cent rise in bookings and 37 per cent jump in revenue during the first Friday and Saturday night of New Annual compared to last year.

Among the highlights was former Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard's inspiring talk, which was booked out within two days of going on sale, presented by the Newcastle Writers Festival as one of a number of new partnerships established as a result of New Annual.



Festival-specific shows commissioned by City of Newcastle with support from Create NSW were incredibly well received, including Catapult Choreographic Hub's mesmerising performances of *Acquist* in the Civic Park fountain and *Taylor's Run* by Curious Legends creating a new perception of the City's Summerhill Waste Management Centre.

During the course of the 10 days, several events needed to add more sessions as word of mouth spread, including *Fingers Crossed Creative*, whose eclectic and enchanting *Intergalacular Sci-fi Spectacular* made a dramatic impression at The Hangar in Civic Park.



In acknowledgement of the City's respect for Newcastle's First Nations, the Pavilion of Sand in Wheeler Place was a central hub through the length of New Annual, passing on local Aboriginal cultural learnings about weaving, dance and traditional net-making in what Guraki Advisory Committee Luke Russell said was an important element of the festival.

"The reception from the community of local indigenous people sharing their knowledge was overwhelming and humbling," Mr Russell said.

"It was the first time in 150-200 years that a traditional fishing net was made in Muluubinba again, contributed by all participants who attended, which is an amazing achievement."

Curious Legends artistic director Mitchell Reese said New Annual had been a lifeline for the company during COVID, as well a fantastic platform to showcase their work.

"Being part of New Annual has been hugely beneficial for our company, and in many ways, a lifeline during the COVID-19 pandemic," Mr Reese said.

"When COVID-19 hit, 90 per cent of our work disappeared overnight. City of Newcastle was one of the organisations that made a bid to support our company.

"Being a part of the festival not only meant work for our artists - many of which were struggling with the economic effects of COVID - but also a highly visible platform for our work to be showcased. Based on the vote of confidence City of Newcastle has shown in our work, we were able to leverage this project for additional funding through the Australian Government's RISE fund, allowing us to reinvent the show for national and international touring in 2022 and 2023.

“It’s been a wonderful experience all round, and we are extremely grateful to City of Newcastle for making this happen.”

Curious Legends are just one of the artists returning for the second New Annual, being held from 24 September to 3 October this year. The early October timeslot will become its ongoing annual date in the events calendar.

New Annual fast facts

- Over 140 individual events with 30 ticketed shows and more than 20 free activities.
- More than 500 visual and performing artists took part in New Annual, including five key commissioned acts from the Newcastle region with support from Create NSW.
- 28 ticketed events were sold out over the course of the festival, with four additional sessions included in the program due to demand.
- Former Prime Minister, the Hon. Julia Gillard’s leadership talk, presented by the Newcastle Writers Festival, sold out in two days.
- Initial results received from the Australian Accommodation Monitor Reports show a positive trend on the first weekend of the Festival. When compared to the corresponding period last year (prior to any COVID restrictions), the first Friday and Saturday night of New Annual saw an increase in hotel accommodation occupation (up 12%) and accommodation revenue (up 37%) over the two days.
- Over \$1 million has been invested by City of Newcastle since 2019 towards founding and developing New Annual to focus support behind generating growth opportunities for the Newcastle arts and culture sector.
- City of Newcastle secured three grants from the NSW Government for the event, including \$86,096 to commission five local works for New Annual.
- New and enhanced collaborative partnerships with local organisations including Newcastle Writer’s Festival, This is Not Art (TiNA) festival, Big Picture Fest, The Olive Tree Market, and Micro Theatre festival.
- From the full program launch on 12 January to the event close on 22 February, New Annual received 497 mentions through media including TV, radio, online and print media.
- New Annual will return to the city from 24 September to 3 October 2021.

ATTENDANCE

The quoted attendance figure of 23,215 in Cr Church’s letter was for attendance at free events only.

The 30,000 attendance figure that has been stated is a conservative estimate and is comprised from the following:

- 23,215 attendees to free events around the City
- 3,547 attendees to events that were sold via City of Newcastle’s ticket platform
- 33 third party events, of which 18 were sold out, with total numbers still being reported

Since the completion of the festival further data has been provided from the third party events, the following numbers have since been confirmed:

- The Hangar – 7 shows, 1 sold out – 2,200
- Art Cart – 4 sessions, 4 sold out – 120
- Clay Sketching – 2 sessions, 2 sold out – 60
- Lost in Translation – 1 session – 25
- Makers & Traders + Big Picture Fest Walking Tours – 4 sessions, 2 sold out – 44
- OMG WTF – 2 shows, 2 sold out – 120
- Paco Lara – 2 shows, 1 sold out – 120
- Pepper Creek Ponies – 1 session – 30
- Wax Lyrical – 2 shows, 2 sold out – 120
- Podcast Festivals Workshops – 350
- Timeless Textiles – 250
- Total confirmed: 3,459

Confirmed Festival Total: $(23,215 + 3,547 + 3,439) = 30,201$

These figures also do not include un-ticketed events such as crowd favourite Chalk the Walk, as the attendance count was based only on known sales and verified attendance and not on anecdotal figures, as well as some third party events such as Micro Theatre for which data is still outstanding. This would place attendance at well more than the 30,000 quoted in the report.

Noting weather and COVID-19 restrictions also put a cap on attendance, which makes the 30,000 more impressive.

NEWCASTLE MUSEUM

Museum reporting an increase of 32% and 48% compared to the period before and after the period respectively.

- 4176 period before the festival
- 5520 through the festival
- 3710 after the festival

2325 on the first weekend of New Annual which was our highest weekend visitation since Christmas. February is traditionally the slowest month for the Museum.

We also had a change in visitation patterns. The exhibition Sea, Space & Beyond encouraged specific disability visitation.

We had 12 booked vision impaired/disability groups come to the museum to explore this unusual targeted art exhibition as part of New Annual.

We had amazingly positive feedback from vision impaired visitors who were happy to be able to have a meaningful cultural experience and we have enhanced our stakeholder relationships with this section of the community.

The TINA launch was our second New Annual visitation change with a diverse group of young creatives, many visiting the Museum for the first time. This launch led to the booking of the museum for a music video shoot and a fashion photography shoot.

OLIVE TREE MARKET

Supported through the ESP for New Annual, to enable them to re-establish post COVID shut downs. Both through a \$20,000 sponsorship made from \$10,000 of CN and \$10,000 from NSW Government Summer Fund

The uplift in sales at both events had a major positive impact for local artists, designers and creators.

Art, Design, Maker, and Creator Creative Small Businesses

From a sample of 10 stalls, the average takings were \$1,807.75. For each market (average number of stallholders being 81), the creative small business incomings were \$146,427.75 per market x 2 markets.

TOTAL: \$292,855.50

Activations with engaged performers and cultural industry professionals totalled \$10,000.

This entailed bands and soloists, street and circus performers, indigenous installations and workshops, sound design, photography and design artists over the two market days.

BUDGET

The \$1 million budget is a total capture of expenditure from CN sources since the 2019 inception of the project.

Includes project funds, supporting grants and sponsorships (SBR and ESP mainly), venue contributions, and staff time.

The quoted 500 artists, 250 support staff (all external to CN), and CN staff were fully funded from the \$1 million budget.

ACCOMODATION DATA

Results received from the Australian Accommodation Monitor Reports show an increase in hotel occupancy rates of 12% and accommodation revenue of 33% across the two weekends of the festival compared to the corresponding period last year (prior to any COVID restrictions).

Key dates for the weekends, when compared to Feb 2019 (pre-COVID):

Friday 12/2	Occ up 12%	Revenue up 25%
Saturday 13/2	Occ up 18%	Revenue up 45%
Fri 19/2	Occ up 9%	Revenue up 34%
Sunday 20/2	Occ up 12%	Revenue up 33%

ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

For a submission for a federal grant for 2022, REMPLAN analysis was conducted based off the employment figures. Based off the 500 artists and 250 event staff the festival returned:

- \$14.1m in total economic impact (including all direct, supply-chain and consumption effects) over the two week festival period
- \$5.8m in total economic impact (including all direct, supply-chain and consumption effects) extrapolated for employment contributions over the rest of the year