

## **Surry Hills Festival 2005 Report**

The 2005 Surry Hills Festival was an enormous success with 47,000 visitors attending. The overcast day may have contributed to a lower than previous years attendance.

Planning for the 2005 Festival began in mid 2004 with the preparation of the risk management plan, traffic control plan and statement of environmental effects. A Development Application was submitted to the City of Sydney Council in mid December 2004.

The Festival would have returned a profit of over \$12,000 if it were not for the unexpected imposition by the RTA of over \$9,000 in charges for the closure of Crown St. The RTA had not levied these charges for previous Festivals.

The Council of the City of Sydney were generous supporters of the Festival, making a cash grant of \$15,000 towards costs, and providing waste removal and site cleanup services. As well as this grant, sponsorship from local businesses remained at similar levels to 2004.

Staff from both the Council and the RTA provided a great deal of assistance in planning and organising the Festival.

As in previous years, the Festival site encompassed Crown St, between Foveaux & Devonshire Sts, and associated side streets as well as Shannon, Tudor and Collins Reserves. The entire Crown St length was utilised for market stalls, and owing to the increasing popularity of the Festival, market stalls were also placed in Collins St. In total, 200 stalls were allocated. Over 100 further enquiries were received up to the day of the Festival.

Fundraising efforts were concentrated on gold coin donations, and volunteers worked tirelessly throughout the day on this activity. More work needs to be done in this area if the SHNC is to raise significant funds from the Festival.

Problems in the area of cash control were encountered within the Festival office. New systems are necessary to meet Dept of Gaming & Racing regulations, and to build an audit trail for all funds raised.

Four formal areas of entertainment (as well as three informal areas) meant that over 50 performances occurred. This equates to over 250 performers playing & entertaining at no cost. The local community made a significant contribution with the Crystal Set, Sydney Gay & Lesbian Choir, Sydney Street Choir and the Barbarellas all participating. The Music Committee selected bands and soloists from over 160 demo CDs and also secured the services of Miranda Fair and Clara Iaccarino who both served as MCs on the main stage.

It proved to be a popular decision to move the Dog Show to Shannon Reserve, allowing the public and competitors more opportunity to see and experience this popular event.

Waste management at an event of this size is always an issue. Council provided 50 x 240 litre bins and trialled recycling at this event. The number of bins provided was inadequate and the recycling trial was a failure.

Children's activities were located in Collins St and included face painting, plaster fun, pony & amusement rides. Participating in this area was reported as quiet. Entertainment for children and seniors commenced on the Collins St stage at 10am and continued until 4pm. This greatly added to the atmosphere and success of this area. The area was well patronised throughout the day, although the owner of the amusement rides reported a quiet day.

85 volunteers were recruited, trained & allocated to positions. 23 were Surry Hills residents & 20 from the inner west. The volunteer tent was located on Crown St. Many volunteers did not attend either training session, leading to problems on the day. In addition, problems were encountered with volunteers who were under 18 years of age. The position of Volunteer Coordinator is vital to the success of the Festival.

The Information Tent was located on Crown St, adjacent to the Volunteer Tent. This was a good location and whilst giving the Centre a good degree of exposure, most enquiries were Festival related. Merchandise sales were slow and it is recommended that no merchandise be sold at future Festivals.

Liason with the local community could be improved. A letter box drop was conducted to all local residents and businesses, but many in the community failed to accept that the Festival was on. Many residents failed to heed the RTA's Clearway signs and had their cars towed off site in the early hours of Saturday morning.

Two umbrella events were held, "eat-art" (2-15 May) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Northcottshorts Film Festival. 235 people attended the finals of Northcottshorts on the evening of Wed 18 May.

Thanks to all the volunteers who assisted with the 2005 Surry Hills Festival, and especially to those who participated in Festival planning and coordinated the Entertainment, the Volunteers, the Dog Show and Administration functions.

**Adapted from the report of Festival Director, Mel Smith.**