

COMMUNITY COLLABORATION IN CREATING SAFER EVENTS

Presentation by
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- We are presenting a model that we feel you may be able to adapt to improve your community in a range of situations - events, youth issues, peak holiday times.
- Why has Surf Coast Shire responded to events?
 - We made a decision very early in Surf Coast Shire's existence that we were not in the business of running events, but saw our role as facilitators and supporters to the community and private sector in running sustainable events.
 - We also were committed to sustainability and local culture and were not in the business of bidding for events and trying to attract those that do not reflect our communities.
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- History of the Community Impact Advisory Committee (CIAC)
- I'll begin by talking about Lorne prior to '93 and using Lorne as the example discuss how the Community Impact Advisory Committee (CIAC) evolved.
- The problems that existed and responses prior to '93 were extreme

There was a **Culture** in Lorne (and still is to some extent) that you went there to celebrate New Year's Eve. You weren't sure what to expect, or where you were to stay, but you went anyway because you're older brother or sister had been there. Some groups of people saw it as a time to settle tribal disputes and would go to Lorne armed with baseball bats, knives etc and continue the feud their elder siblings started years previous (Broady boy beating up the Frankston boys etc)

- Lack of accommodation and young people would have nowhere to stay
 - Arrive early and start drinking
 - Sleep in cars using foreshore and residents front yards as toilets and rubbish bins
 - Explosive mix of youth energy, drunkenness and unfulfilled expectations led to massive vandalism – shop windows smashed, street signs dismantled, cars vandalised, letterboxes pulled out
 - Fights, stabbings, rapes
 - Families wouldn't dare to walk out on to the streets
 - Police had a huge presence – police horses, booze bus, foot patrols
 - Police became targets and they could do little other than mop up the mess and move those most at risk
1. Police and the then Shire of Winchelsea began to do some research. Went to Phillip Island to learn about the Harm Minimisation Committee and local laws
 - No drinking in public open spaces
 - No camping in Cars
 - No Fires
 2. Out of desperation, the Lorne Harm Minimisation Committee was established. It was a coming together of key agencies (CFA, Shire, Police, SES, Foreshore Committee, hospital, Progress Association/key community representatives and the Department of Natural Resources and Environment).
 - * At this time the committee was approached by a local entrepreneur offering an alternative based on social change rather than a heavy handed authoritative approach. The alternative was a 3 day music festival – *Rock above the Falls*.

- The committee took the view that changing behaviour and the image of Lorne would not happen overnight. In fact it would probably be 3-5 years before positive results were obvious.
- The Harm Minimisation strategies introduced New Year's Eve 92/93 were:
 1. Introduction of local laws prohibiting consumption of alcohol in public places, camping in cars and lighting fires.
 - Establishing a safety refuge
 - Young women at risk
 - People lost
 - Remove drunks from hospital/streets
 2. Provision of overnight carparking in designated areas
 3. Distribution of information pamphlets re: behavior, local laws & parking. – Intimidating welcome to Lorne – Pamphlets distributed as people come into town – roadblock, booze bus, roadworthy check
 4. Fireworks at midnight.- said “party’s over – go home
- 5. Extra lighting

POST '93 EVOLUTION

3 years ago The Harm Minimisation Committee evolved into CIAC
Key features of the new approach were:

1. Promote a positive message/image.
2. Broaden committee's focus from New Year's Eve to events and peak periods (and their impacts)
3. CIAC represented a move toward social change rather than reacting to problems.

POST '93 STRATEGIES: - continue with harm minimisation

1. Provide an alternative to boredom and drinking with low key entertainment on the foreshore – focus, careful selection of music
2. Attract families and mix up the age groups by running a Twilight market on the foreshore.
3. Extensive media coverage to get the message into targeted areas so would-be visitors understand expectations regarding standards of behavior, planning accommodation ahead etc. were promoted in the home community.
4. CIAC works closely with The Falls

A little bit further along the coast is **Torquay**

Torquay has its own CIAC committee based on the same principles as Lorne and has seen a similar turn-around in behaviour on New Year's Eve
However, behaviour at Easter was Worse than New Year's Eve

3. Torquay at Easter - the evolution of Offshore

- ingredients and what happens and why ie youth celebration
- key strategies – buses, entertainment, parking, future plans
- Young people attracted to Torquay to attend the Rip Curl Pro Surfing Event at Bells Beach

- 1. Lack of accommodation.
- 2. Lack of night time entertainment.
- 3. Lack of daytime entertainment if event moved down to Joanna in search of better surf. Coming from a perspective of valuing youth culture and wanting to build upon the existing coastal interest CIAC approached The Falls organiser to put forward a proposal that would meet the needs of Accommodation and entertainment.
- Key features of event
 1. Lock in the cars.
 2. Search for alcohol – restricted bar hours to help modify and regulate alcohol consumption.
 3. Bus patrons to Bells Beach and township of Torquay.
 4. Provide low key entertainment out at Bells.
 5. Market and skateboarding at festival site (alcohol becomes only one component of what's on offer).
- Community have really embraced the event
- Tourist and Traders report record sales (up 30-40%).
- Police report little or no vandalism/crime
- Roads quiet like a midwinters night
- No major traffic concerns/accidents
- Torquay a buzzing, vibrant town filled with young people.

Work of the committee is starting to address the ways in which we as a community value young people and starting to challenge the perceptions of groups of young people together.

Future Plans

- Main retail street to become a mall with cafes spilling out
- More community involvement outside festival site with theatre and artists
- Churches to conduct a service for Easter on site
- Huge screen to link Bells and Offshore (and Joanna)

Council have just issued a 3 year permit for 20,000 people for Offshore, however the future of the event relies on the outcomes from VCAT hearings

4 . Torquay at Easter – Bells Beach

Bells Beach is the premier surf beach in the state and is the only coastal reserve currently managed by Council.

In 1995 we set up an advisory committee, comprising representatives of the key players with an interest in the reserve to advise council on how the reserve could best be managed. The members were drawn from community, surfing, environmental and traders associations.

One of the major impacts on the reserve, which as you can see is quite small, was the annual surfing competition – the Rip Curl Pro and Quit Classic. The event has been run at Bells Beach for over 30 years and is the longest running professional/international surfing event in the world. In peak conditions – when the surf is great and the sun is shining we can generally expect between 10-20,000 spectators on the beach. It may not sound like massive numbers but in a confined space, with limited parking and spectating areas, dangerous cliffs, significant coastal heathlands and a history of neglect the challenges were major.

Add to this picture an event with great prestige and potential but limited financial viability due to difficult sponsorship and media contracts and a reliance on gate takings which are subject to the vagaries of the changeable Easter weather.

The strategies:

Over the past three years we have worked to improve the quality and viability of this event. The key factor has been ensuring that the event reflects the location – ie that it is environmentally sustainable and high quality. Council again took the lead in negotiating change.

- Council has part funded a business plan in conjunction with Tourism Victoria.
- We have developed a set of environmental measures such as bunting off vegetation, restricting public access areas, employing an on-site ranger to liaise with the event organisers, recruiting environmental management students to keep people off cliffs and on tracks, no on-site camping and large scale non-surfing entertainment.
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The most significant development occurred two years ago when the Rip Curl Pro was linked via the CIAC and Lynne to the Easter music festival. The financial stability this gave the Rip Curl Pro enabled council to argue for improved management before, during and after Easter.

5. Why this model has worked and continues to evolve Focus is town based and local – not shire wide or regional. The committees are focused on the town or geographic district.

- We involve community leaders and “doers” – people who can make recommendations on behalf of their organisation and advocate on behalf of the committee’s vision and strategies.
- The approach has been collaborative right from the start – no one agency dominates or has more power than another, including community representatives.
- The process has been facilitated, by the shire, and this ensures the network stays focused and communicating openly.
- The committee addresses a broad range of issues from litter collection after an event to street lighting in dark, unsafe areas.
- The committee is solution focused and recognises the value of events rather than stop them happening. Members are prepared to articulate this too.
- Development of a shared vision and partnerships recognising everyone has a role in contributing to change.

5. Conclusion: How could you use this information?

- These are not new problems or particularly innovative solutions.
- What is new and innovative about the approach is that it is based on shared responsibility for decision making. No one agency is more important than the other – they just play different roles.
- The focus is on seeking solutions – not worrying about problems.
- The essential ingredient is a shared vision
- One agency, in this case the council, has to act as the “glue”. Doing the liaison, continuing to work to keep partnerships active and healthy, making sure communication is fluid.
- And a willingness to try things which may be different, accepting that not everything you try will work.