

Wangaratta **festival** **of jazz & blues**

Strategic Plan
2019 - 2024



*"Jazz to me is a living music.
It's a music that since its
beginning has expressed
the feelings, the dreams,
hopes of the people."*

Dexter Gordon



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues is a unique musical experience presented annually in Wangaratta in Victoria's North East. The festival is managed by a not-for-profit independent organisation led by a highly skilled Board with the support of contract staff. It has a substantial and very loyal audience with almost of 80% of the audience made up of repeat attendees and the Festival enjoys support from a range industry, community and artistic stakeholders.

After dealing with considerable challenges during the 2018 Festival, the Board made the very difficult decision to place the event into recess for twelve months and return in 2020 with a 30th anniversary Festival. The recess has enabled the Board to take some time to strengthen its strategic position, review the organisational structure, reinvigorate relationships and most importantly plan a bold and exciting 30th Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues.

The strategic vision is to present a jazz and blues music event that is loved by audiences, sought out by musicians and valued by the local community. The goal is to consolidate and build on our existing strengths including the Festival's strong brand, unique festival style and loyal audience base and to develop a viable and sustainable event. The Board is facing current challenges head and is focusing on increasing the diversity and size of income streams, audience development, stakeholder relationships and ensuring the structure of the organisation is the most appropriate for the Festival.

Based on audience feedback and stakeholder consultation, one of the Festival's key strengths is its artistic credibility with diversity, excellence and sector development embedded within the program. As part of the planning process the Board has developed programming principles that reflect these strengths and ensure the program can be leveraged to not only maintain current loyalties but to build audiences both young and old.

The Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues is at a crossroad. But rather than continue on its current trajectory the organisation has demonstrated its maturity and depth – taking stock, reviewing its structure, making tough decisions and creating new pathways and opportunities. Looking forward to the 30th Anniversary milestone, this strategic plan positions the organisation and the event to realise its vision and honour the Festival's legacy.

VISION

A jazz and blues music event that is loved by national audiences, sought out by musicians and valued by the local community.

PURPOSE

To present a sustainable world class jazz and blues experience in Wangaratta that:

- Showcases and nurtures artistic excellence through high quality performances.
- Provides economic benefit for Rural City of Wangaratta and surrounding regions through visitor attraction and investment in cultural and tourism-based activities.
- Supports the development of the jazz and blues industry through networking, experimentation, professional development, audience development and the National Jazz Awards
- Fosters wellbeing, vitality and connectedness through cultural activities centred around music performance of jazz and blues.

OUR VALUES

Excellence

We aim to be the best at what we do as a Board, as a Festival as a community.

Collaboration

We actively seek to bring people together to share, create and develop long lasting and productive relationships.

Creativity

We value artistic expression in all its forms and encourage innovation and experimentation.

Sustainability

We work as a team to ensure a strong, well-organised and financially successful organisation.

Inclusion

We value and respect diversity and the breadth of knowledge, skills and vibrancy it brings to our organisation and the Festival.



ABOUT US

Established by a group of locals in 1989, the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues is recognised internationally as the foremost jazz and blues event in Australia. The Festival showcases internationally acclaimed musicians from around the world alongside Australian greats and emerging talent, attracting large audiences and industry enthusiasts from all over the country. It is held on the weekend preceding the Melbourne Cup public holiday annually in Wangaratta in Victoria's north east and can attract up to 25,000 visitors.

Unlike other similar festivals around the world, the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues brings together a plethora of talent to perform and collaborate in the one location over a short time frame. Venues across Wangaratta come alive for the weekend from the well-appointed Wangaratta Performing Arts Centres and event marquees to pubs, halls and churches setting the stage. Audiences can enjoy a serene formal music performance or kick up their heels and dance to the infectious jazz and blues beats on offer.

The program deliberately includes jazz and blues of all styles including original, contemporary, traditional, mainstream, experimental and improvised. The nature and Artistic principles of the event have focused on celebrating diversity within jazz and blues music, growing audiences and encouraging collaboration and development within the industry itself. Its 29 Year history have seen it develop exceptional brand recognition and exceptional audience loyalty – all of which it will continue to build on in 2020.

After twenty-nine annual Festivals, the Board chose to have a one year recess in 2019, to review the organisation's structure, strategic focus and to renew and develop industry and community partnerships. The recess provides a unique opportunity for the Festival and its supporters to regroup, reflect and determine the shape and nature of the 30th Festival in 2020 and beyond.

Our Audience

The majority of our audience is over 55 but it is getting younger!

In 2016 85% of the audience was over 55. In 2018 this has reduced by 6% and is down to 79%. The festival is focusing on increasing the under 55 audience numbers over the next five years aiming for an increase of 10 – 15% in this age group.

Both genders enjoy Jazz + Blues.

Men and Women attend the Festival in roughly equal numbers.

Our Audience is loyal + they keep coming back.

Over the last three years an average of 56% of attendees have attended 6 or more festivals. 20% of attendees have attended three or more times. Our 2018 audience surveys suggest 82% of attendees plan to come back in the future.

The Festival attracts strong metro and interstate audiences.

Whilst locals are important to the Festival and represent an audience share of 25%, Interstate and Melbourne Metropolitan attendees are the largest audience number averaging 56% of the audience share.

They come for the music but enjoy the wine and food too!

The majority of attendees come because they are passionate jazz/blues fans (46%) but an average of 39% also come because they see it as a “nice weekend with good food, music and wine”

Looking forward, the Festival will be focusing on building new younger audiences without alienating its traditional fans. A key strength identified through the research is the diversity of the Festival’s program and an acknowledgement that there is not one but many different audiences to please and attract.

The programming principles detailed later in the plan have been developed to attract new audiences through diversity and broader music styles influences and/or informed by Jazz and Blues without diluting its existing strengths.

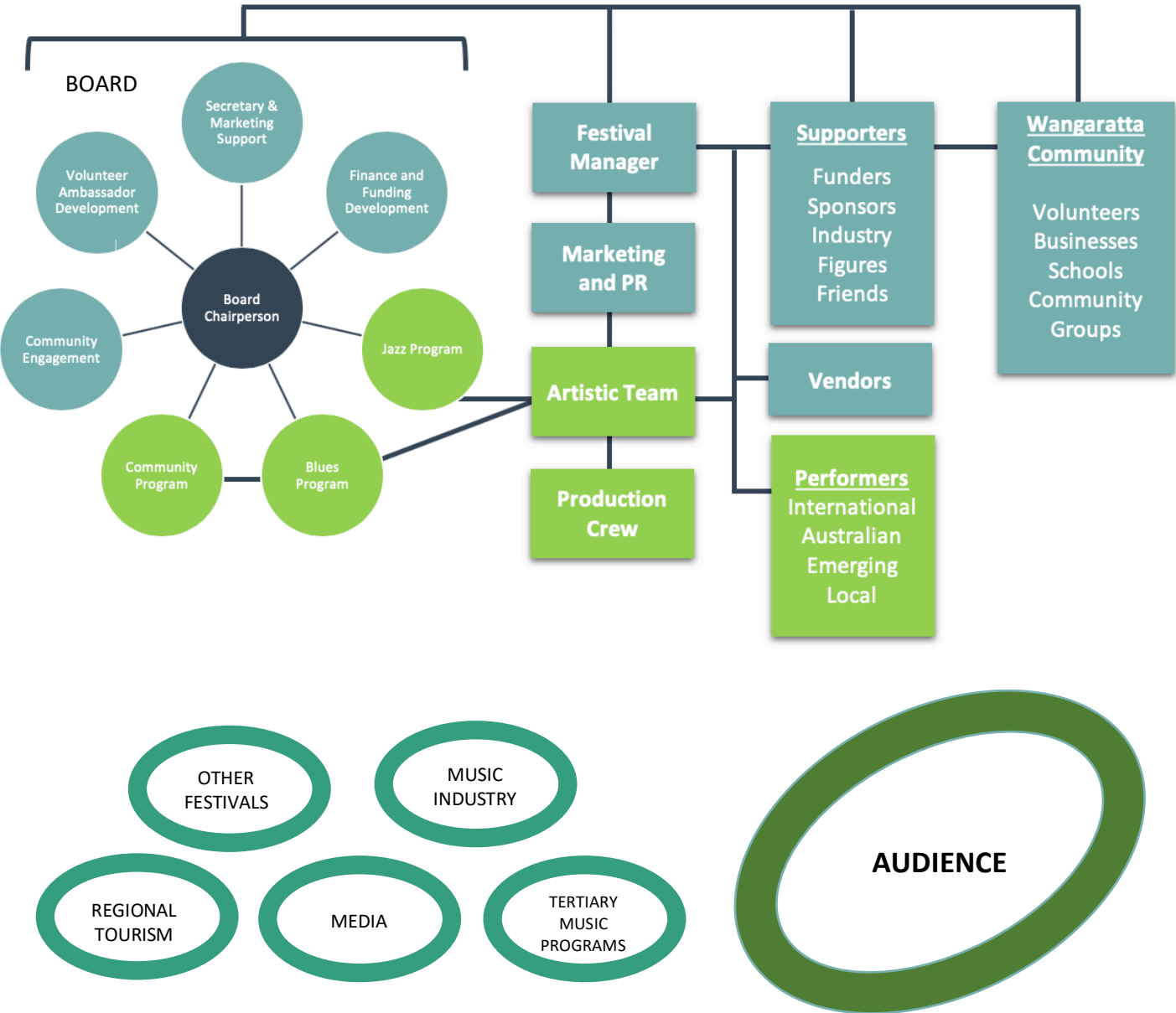


Our Organisation

With the support of specialist contractors, the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues is managed by a volunteer Board of industry professionals and community leaders. It is an independent, non-profit organisation that focuses not only providing a high-quality music experience but also nurtures the Jazz and Blues industry in Australia and grows the region’s cultural economy.

The festival exists within a rich cultural ecology and has partners, supporters and patrons on a local, regional and national level. An ambitious Board with expertise that reaches into networks across Australia, it focuses on positioning the festival within the context of excellence and sustainability. The Board is very hands on with each member managing a portfolio that directly relates to an operational facet of the event. Together with the Festival’s General Manager, the Artistic Direction team, production crew and marketing specialists a professional, safe and exciting event is presented each year.

Organisational Structure



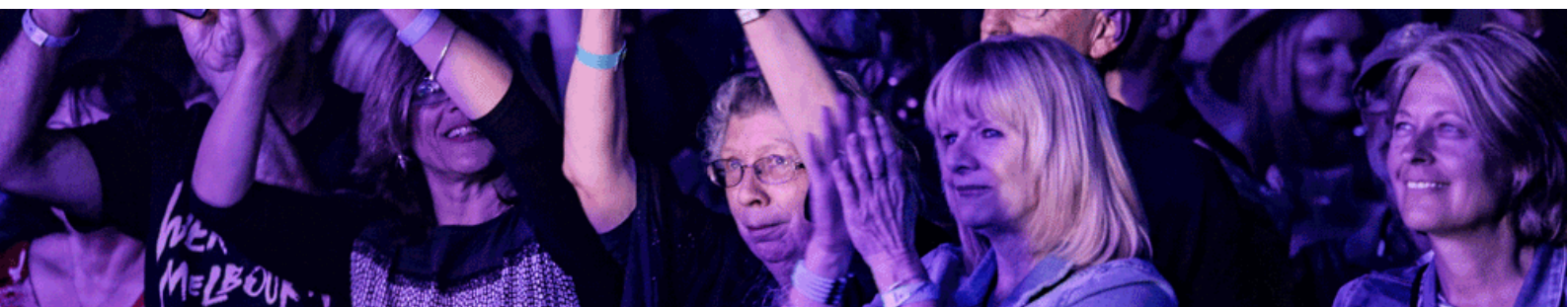
Our Stakeholders

Strong and productive relationships with stakeholders is a strong foundation for the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues. Along with the event's exceptional artistic legacy it also has a legacy of attracting strong support from a range of individuals and groups throughout its history.

Support from government and its agencies has been critical and the Board has always maintained strong relationships with federal, state and local government partners and supporters. Local businesses, community groups, service clubs and individual community members have fronted up time and time again over the last three decades providing cash sponsorship, in-kind services and support and volunteer labour. Schools from primary through to tertiary have contributed through community programs, workshops and performances and ensuring that Wangaratta looks and feels like Australia's "Jazz Capital". Philanthropic support has ensured the success of the National Jazz Awards and the Jazz Art Prize at the Wangaratta Art Gallery and the commitment of locals to participate in activities such as the Diddley Bow Event and the Horns of Death with Spiderbait has been outstanding.

Most importantly, the festival has been hugely supported by the music industry and associated media outlets. From ABC radio and industry publications to the world famous and young and emerging musicians, Jazz and Blues people, media and business have put up their hand, time and time again to be part of the Wangaratta Festival of Jazz and Blues. Mostly because they love it – and repeatedly testify to the unique capacity of the Festival to provide a place for collaboration, networking and a chance to see their musical peers and heroes in action – all in the one place on the one weekend!

Like all major cultural events of this nature, the Festival would not have survived without the support of its stakeholders and the Board is committed to reinvigorating and strengthening existing stakeholder relationships and developing new ones that are authentic, sustainable and mutually beneficially.



PROGRAMMING PRINCIPLES

A strong and entertaining program is the foundation of the Festival. The following principles guide the development of content for the festival to ensure our vision is realised.

- **Relevance**

- We listen to our audiences and make sure we understand their needs.
- We interrogate the state of play within the industry, learn about industry trends and respond accordingly.
- We present a program that is commercially attractive and supports the overall viability of the festival through strong box office sales.

- **Inventiveness**

- We look to interpret jazz and blues in new ways and to ensure our program is new, fresh and out of the box.
- We look to engage with audiences and artists in ways that pushes the boundaries.
- We provide opportunities for experimentation and collaboration.

- **Diversity**

- We embed a range of styles and musical genres within in our program offering up a program that covers a broad spectrum of tastes.
- We look outward at music genres that are influenced by or emulate jazz and blues styles and heritage.
- We create a program that suits all tastes – old, young, traditional, contemporary.
- We offer a balance of headliners with new talent that translates into strong box office revenue and aim to bring a gender balance to our programming.

- **Excellence**

- We showcase professional, highly respected artists who have experienced national and international renown.
- We encourage new and emerging artists to develop a professional practice and to engage with mentors and experience artists whenever possible.
- We provide platforms for artistic development and exploration with a focus on high standards.



OUR GOALS

All that we do relates directly to the realisation of our vision and achieving our purpose of being artistically strong, economically valuable and culturally engaging for locals and visitors. The following goals provide focus for the work we do that will ensure we achieve this aim.

Goal 1

A diverse + celebrated festival

What this looks like...

- A Balance of headline, emerging and new talent
- A showcase of innovation and unique firsts
- A varied and accessible program including traditional, contemporary, experimental and complementary genres
- Opportunities for artists to share, collaborate and develop partnerships
- The festival is a sought-after gig amongst music professionals
- A program capable of attracting high yield visitors to the region

Goal 2

Strong networks + engaged audiences

What this looks like...

- Loyal ticket holders that attend annually
- Continuous and responsive feedback loops with audiences and stakeholders
- Diverse local, regional, metropolitan and interstate audiences
- An attractive value proposition and an influential brand
- Strong and effective networks and mutually beneficial partnerships
- Commitment and buy-in from the Wangaratta Community

Goal 3

A strong, respected + sustainable organisation

What this looks like...

- A strong, independent, viable entity respected by jazz and blues communities world-wide
- An informed, influential and connected Board and capable Staff and Contractors
- A Board that focuses on strategy and sustainability and the resources to adequately fund the operational needs of the organisation
- A strong cohort of support from sponsors, donors, partners, audiences, local businesses and volunteer ambassadors.
- Diverse and consistent income streams including ticket sales, sponsorship, funding, merchandise and vendors
- Consistent, safe and appropriate operational procedures and logistics
- A culture of strategic thinking, continuous improvement and experimentation

STRATEGIES

Goal 1

A diverse + celebrated festival

Strategies

1.1	Engage an experienced and highly skilled artistic team with strong connections to the music industry and a clear understanding of the Festival's strengths and positioning.
1.2	Implement artistic programming guidelines that ensure broad appeal, audience growth and provide a balance of genres, unique firsts and diverse talent.
1.3	Present 30 th Anniversary Program that is exceptional, reflective of the Festival's legacy and conveys a celebration and reinvigoration.
1.4	Foster partnerships with national and international festivals to leverage international acts and promote the Australian Jazz and Blues industry.
1.5	Develop industry programs for skill and capacity development of artists.
1.6	Research industry trends and understand the Festival's position within the broader ecology and ensure the development and delivery of a point of difference.
1.7	Ensure the look and feel of the venues and the CBD is vibrant and dynamic.
1.8	Foster local participation through programs that are relevant to the needs and tastes of the local community.



Goal 2**Strong networks and engaged audiences****Strategies**

2.1	Invest in staff resources to develop strategic relationships with a range of stakeholders – locally and further afield.
2.2	Develop a marketing plan that utilises a variety of contemporary media channels with a year-round presence.
2.3	Develop and implement audience development programs to attract younger audiences and increase loyalty.
2.4	Create and implement feedback and engagement loops for Festival stakeholders including audiences, sponsors, volunteers, funders etc.
2.5	Engage with influencers across arts, festivals, funding, tourism and music.
2.6	Develop a consistent and accessible ticketing model that aligns with a value proposition and encourages both local and younger audiences to attend.
2.7	Engage with relevant commercial businesses and re-invigorate / establish strong long-term relationships.
2.8	Ensure programming / artistic principles encourage a strategic approach to building diverse new audiences.



Goal 3**A strong, respected + sustainable organisation****Strategies**

3.1	Develop a strong cohort of sponsors across a range of levels including premium, secondary and minor.
3.2	Attract highly-skilled and effective staff/contractors through the development of a supportive working environment and competitive remuneration.
3.3	Develop and implement a fund-raising strategy that includes the development of a donor circle to support industry development, new works, experimentation and collaboration.
3.4	Develop a long term financial plan that is fiscally responsible and includes a diverse array of income streams including ticketing, private donors, sponsor and public funding.
3.5	Develop a skills-based board that is informed, skilled and connected to relevant networks and conduct reviews including Organisational Structure, Operations and Strategy.
3.6	Lower the cost per attendee ratio – increasing audience numbers without increasing overheads.
3.7	Develop standard operating procedures and risk management strategies across all areas of the event including production and artistic development.
3.8	Work closely with the Wangaratta Community to encourage long-term buy-in through a reinvigorated volunteer ambassador program and relationships with local businesses, community groups and schools.
3.9	Review and evaluation of operational and governance structures with a view to continuous improvement of the Management of the Festival
3.10	Transition of the Board from a “hands-on” operational focused group to a more strategically focused skills-based Board concentrating on leadership, strategy and sustainability.
3.11	The development of a succession plan that encompasses both Board, Staff and Artistic Direction recruitment and transitions over time.



RESEARCH + EVALUATION

In developing this strategy, the Festival Board has invested in reviewing audience data and consulting with stakeholders to better understand their position overall as well as their strengths, weaknesses and opportunities.

The festival collects feedback every year from its audiences with an average of 250 – 300 surveys completed each year. Over the history of the festival this has provided a rich source of data which reflects strengths and long term trends in audience preferences and behaviour. It has guided decision making and programming in the past and will continue to do so in the future. The Board also aims to do further market research that will inform programming, marketing and strategic planning into the future.

In addition to the analysis of audience feedback, the Board has undertaken direct consultation with key stakeholders including representatives from the Rural City of Wangaratta Council, Volunteer Staff, Contractors, Performers, Sponsors and representative from Tourism and Local Business. Both one-on-one interviews and broader e-surveying were undertaken as part of this process. The information collected as part of this process has informed the development of this plan and further business planning and structural reviews of the Board.

To ensure it is a successful and sustainable organisation moving forward, the Board is committed to building a culture of feedback, review and continuous improvement. Measurable KPIs will be articulated within its annual business plans that directly align with the Goals outlined above.