

Laura Festival 2007

Respect & Recognition



country



culture



people

Dirt, Dust and Deadly Dance Laura - a Cultural Cluster

By Festival Director Jeremy Geia

Welcome to another Laura Festival. Every two years this flagship event comes along and provides a great exhibition of community pride. There's a lot more to it than that - self esteem, confidence building among the younger generation - cultural development and friendships. Despite the one year break - people still insist on the regular phone calls and emails to see what's happening with the next Festival - the enthusiasm and support is honest and resolute, and evidence that this event will always be a major platform for the people of Cape York.

Which brings me to the next point of partnerships. I'm not too sure if you can imagine what goes on in the lead up to putting a festival together that involves so many different parties, protocols and so forth - but let me say this its extremely challenging at times, which means the satisfaction is also immense. Despite being some of the most disad-

vantaged people in the nation our mob continue to defy the laws of economics to attend and support the Festival, whether they be students, pensioners or on the CDEP - our mob are always at the forefront. So too, Arts Queensland - it has been a solid performer in this area and I would like to thank this department for really getting behind the event. In particular mention to the FNQ Indigenous Unit in Cairns - its ongoing support and belief in this Festival is priceless.

In terms of improving the Festival - its hard to make something perfect - but as long as we keep trying then things will get better. There were many positives from the 2005 initiative - we saw the introduction of Indigenous Seminars, Black Films, Karaoke and children's Activities. Once again activities outside the dance program will be diverse, interactive, fun and engaging. There were some shortfalls in 2005- I have been work-

ing hard to ensure they will be minimal this time round. It goes without saying that the Dance element of the Festival is the 'bread & butter' of this fantastic cultural cluster, which by the way is celebrating 25 years of Cultural Excellence - this 17th Festival will be another example of cultural capacity building and a fine exhibition of the real Aboriginal Industry - that is one that Aboriginal people truly own and operate. While its called the Laura Festival, the event is owned by those who have traveled for so many years to this special place - the Communities.



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Self Determination with Soul

Respect & Recognition can be used time and time again in so many areas - country, culture and people about sums it up.

Respect & Recognition goes to the town of Laura - a major player in the development and maintenance of the Festival - important families there are instrumental in making sure that the event is appropriate for the town and the people attending the Quinkan Dance Area. Locals help on many unseen levels including the welcoming of various parties, protocols - right through to the ground keeping of the Dance site.

Environmental health and looking after country - is one of the major factors in reducing ticket numbers and camping space at the dance ground. We want to make sure that the spirit of Laura remains intact, but realistic measures had to be made - this year we are once again reducing the numbers of tickets. As Director for the Festival one element of my job is to ensure quality control, and overall satisfaction for Communities, visitors and locals - reducing the numbers of tickets means that we look after country, have an intimate & Family feel to the event and make sure the focus is on culture and not capital. Let me say that the ticket prices will remain the same - despite common practice to up costs to match the Consumer Price Index - we will be keeping the same arrangements that were introduced in 2003. The core factor behind the Laura Festival is to have Aboriginal Nations conduct cultural & regional business in an environment that is appropriate and sound. Under the QRCC administration there is a real attempt to have the same spirit and ideology of the very first event that took place 25 years ago. The Festival is constantly reinventing itself to

make sure external influences don't hijack the event and erode the intent.

Indigenous enterprise has been a peripheral priority to the Festival in past years - but one we are looking to improve at the Festival and beyond. Community owned and operated food stalls, arts and crafts shops at the Festival is a push that I am personally campaigning for in the lead up to the Festival - It would make me very happy to see the financial reward spread to community groups.

Please remember that money you spend on tickets, merchandise etc. goes back to paying communities to perform and help alleviate some costs associated in getting to the Festival. Once again I would like to thank you for your support it truly is an amazing event and one that has amazing people.



** Jeremy Geia is the Director of the Laura Festival. However, this presentation is his own personal view and may not necessarily reflect those of other Bodies and Parties involved with the Festival.*

