

OUR CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS



Culture is a reflection of the values and attitudes we hold; the relationships we have with each other; with the environment, with the past and with the future



The Bega Valley Shire is alive with cultural celebrations and activity which enriches the lives of local residents, and attracts thousands of visitors to the area annually to share in our festivals, exhibitions, performances and creative spaces.

Festivals, exhibitions, and celebrations play a significant role in the life of a community. Where people have understood and used festivals and rituals to lift spirits, transfer knowledge and enhance neighbourliness, they have created community resilience. This means a robust community exists within the town, the community celebrates a bond and the town prospers.

The celebrations that have been sustained through collaborative effort over long periods have seen the strengthening of communities. This can be observed from the levels of community activities, economic growth especially in terms of cultural tourism and the quality of life and wellbeing of residents. In short, the resilience observable through festival making demonstrates the cyclical nature of change that has



been embraced without the destruction of the community. The Bega Valley has a number of signature arts and cultural festivals which celebrate the visual and performing arts, featuring local and visiting artists. Festivals pull the creative skills of a community together and open up new ways of cooperating and sharing ideas and resources.

Many of the festivals within the Bega Valley are themed and have drawn inspiration from their natural environment, but regardless of the theme or inspiration, all festivals rely heavily on volunteer workers to coordinate and manage these events, with succession planning and sustainability key issues.

MUSIC FESTIVALS

Merimbula Jazz Festival

The Merimbula Jazz Festival (<http://www.merimbulajazz.org.au>) has been held over the June long weekend for over 25 years, and attracts performers from interstate and overseas. For the entire long weekend, the town is alive with street parades, brass bands, soloists and street entertainment. One of the highlights of the festival is the 'Best Young Jazz Musician' award which is awarded each year to a musician to help develop their career.

Cobargo Folk Festival

The picturesque town of Cobargo is transformed every year in February as the folk world settles in for a weekend of music, dance, song, poetry reading and comedy. The Cobargo Folk Festival (www.cobargofolkfestival.com) is one of the regions 'flagship' festivals and has been a national focus of folk music performance and networking for 17 years. In 2012 the three day festival attracted over 3,000 local, national and international attendees and over 200 local, national and international performers. Key to the success of the festival has been its capacity to change and innovate in response to community interests, performer aspirations and audience expectations.

Four Winds Festival

The biennial Four Winds Festival (www.fourwinds.com.au) held in Bermagui has emerged as a nationally significant festival which offers its audiences the opportunity to hear some of the best Australian and international musicians playing fine classical and contemporary works in programs drawn from a wide diversity of musical and cultural traditions.



The festival also runs a schools program, special guest seminars and free public concert at Dickinson Oval which further supports the Shires broader appreciation and involvement in music. The Four Winds Festival has garnered considerable State and Federal financial support to develop their performance space and facilities, as well as assisting in establishing Four Winds as a professional arts organisation strongly supported by the community

Tathra Summer Music Festival

The Tathra Summer Music Festival, held in early January is a festival devoted to music, bands and singer song writers. It is a festival that is a major drawcard for the youth in the region and provides quality entertainment during what is Tathra's peak tourist season.

Candelo Festival

The Candelo Festival is a one day event brought together by the Candelo Arts Society. This biennial event is a day of celebrating alternative music, art, performance and local culture. It is designed to be run by and attended by young people

ART FESTIVALS

Bermagui Sculpture on the Edge

Sculpture at its best can be inspiring, challenging, engaging and controversial. Above all, it always brings a crowd. The Bermagui Sculpture on the Edge (<http://www.sculpturebermagui.org.au>) is held annually in Bermagui and includes a public symposium, an exhibition of large sculptural pieces in the magnificent settings of Endeavour Point Headland, Dickinson Park and Horseshoe Bay beach as well as an indoor exhibition of smaller sculptures.

In the six years since its inception, the event has grown from three to ten days, and in 2012 attracted 98 sculptures in three venues. The event is free to the public and attracts an audience of 7,000, a great number of





attendees are from Canberra and further afield. An important part of the festival is the workshops provided to local schools, this encourages local youth to explore their own artistic talents, and opens the world of sculpture to a new audience.

Local and touring artists have many opportunities to showcase their works throughout the year with events such as the Merimbula Art Show, the Merimbula Art and Craft Show, and the Bermagui Easter Art exhibition.

CELEBRATING DIVERSITY FESTIVALS

Harmony Day

Harmony Day is celebrated in March each year. It is a day when all Australians celebrate our cultural diversity. The day is also the United Nation's International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. Through activities hosted by Bega Valley Shire Council, and events held through local schools, Harmony Day is celebrated as a day of community participation, inclusiveness and respect – celebrating the different cultures that make Bega Valley a great place to live. The 2012 Harmony Day event organised by Bega Valley Multicultural Social Group supported by Council brought together over 350 people representing 25 different nationalities.



CELEBRATING OUR TRADITIONAL OWNERS

NAIDOC Week

NAIDOC – National Aboriginal and Islanders Day Observation Committee is a celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures and an opportunity to recognise the contributions of Indigenous Australians in various fields. NAIDOC week is celebrated throughout the Bega Valley through various community events and celebrations. Council



contributes to these events through the Local Aboriginal Land Councils and through running activities and programs in the Council childcare centres.

National Sorry Day

National Sorry Day is an annual day of commemoration and remembrance of all those who have been impacted by the government policies of forcible removal that have resulted in the Stolen Generations. Sorry Day has been held annually on 26 May each year since 1998, and was born out of a key recommendation made by the National Inquiry into the Separation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families in the Bringing them home Report that was tabled in Federal Parliament on 26 May 1997:

Bega Valley Shire Council acknowledges National Sorry Day, and in 2010 an official Sorry day event was held at the Council with over 50 people coming together to celebrate including Councillors, Council staff, the BVSC Youth Council, representatives from three Local Aboriginal Lands Councils, and community members

The ceremony included the planting of 54 “footsteps” in front of the Council building as

a reminder of the 54 recommendations of the ‘Bringing them Home’ report. These footsteps together symbolised the Stolen Generations’ track home, with the first footsteps being planted by Uncle Ossie Cruse and Mayor of the time, Cllr Tony Allen.

CELEBRATING ‘OUR PLACE’ FESTIVALS

Tathra Wharf to Waves

The Tathra Wharf to Waves event has been successfully running since 2001 every January since 2001. Along with the scenic location and the festivity of the event the festival is also well known for supporting the Bega Valley community’s sustainable energy targets of 50/50 by 2020 and the 2007 Tathra Wharf to Waves was the first carbon neutral sporting event in Australia.

Merimbula Classic

The Merimbula Classic, a celebration of wind and waves, is the longest running wave sailing event in the world and has been a highlight for water sport lovers, and lovers of festivals for over 30 years. Over the years it has become a four day fiesta of fun both on



and off the water. Kitesurfing, wave sailing and sup (stand-up paddle board) surfing are contested, with plenty of bright colours, entertainment and festivity to bring out the best of the scenic beaches of Merimbula.

The Tathra Mountain Bike Enduro

The Tathra MTB Enduro is a mountain biking competition that pays homage to the early coastal pioneers and captures the best of beaches, the forests and the mountains.

Now in its third year the Tathra MTB Enduro has gained a cult following for its seaside single track, and its enthusiastic community spirit. The event encourages participation of all levels of mountain bike rider, with races styled to meet those needs.

From Tathra Beach, Ford's Farm and Thompson's Estate to the Kangarutha Wilderness and Boulder Bay the event offers a rare opportunity to race along the coastline, tracking through reclaimed farmland and the stunning Mimosa Rocks National Park. The Tathra MTB Enduro is staged by volunteers. It is a not for profit organisation with funds

raised used for renewable energy projects and the development and maintenance of mountain bike trails in the town

Bermagui Seaside Fair

The Bermagui Seaside Fair (<http://www.bermaguiseasidefair.com>) is the perfect time for locals, clubs and businesses to celebrate their town. Held in late summer, the Bermagui Seaside Fair is a multi-award winning tourist event attracting 10,000 people. The fair includes a traditional 'Blessing of the Fleet', a fancy dress street parade, over 100 market stalls, carnival rides, music and entertainment on two stages, quality arts and crafts and photographic exhibitions, kids novelty events and a fireworks spectacular. The Bermagui Seaside Fair is a classic example of a Bega Valley town celebrating their identity.

Bemboka Banquet

The Bemboka Banquet is a biennial community initiative of the Bemboka Show Society, which is famous for the fact that 90

per cent of the food served is sourced within 15 km of the Bemboka Post Office. The event requires a huge amount of community planning and input many local farmers planning their harvest to meet the needs of the banquet.

Following the success of the Bemboka Banquet and further highlighting the importance of local food production for sustainable communities, the first Cobargo 30km dinner will be held on Friday 15th March 2013. Everything except the salt, pepper, flour, tea, coffee, sugar, salad vinegar and jelly will be grown or produced within a 30km radius of Cobargo and the chefs, cooks, dishwashers and waiters will all be local to the area as well. Locally grown and produced quality wines, locally made

beer will complement a range of dishes on a menu put together with consideration for local seasonal fruits and foods.

Eden Whale Festival

Centred around Snug Cove and the spectacular Twofold Bay with events throughout the bay, the unique Eden Whale Festival (<http://www.edenwhalefestival.com.au>) is an annual celebration of the southern migration of the humpback and other whales past Eden. It commemorates Eden's whaling and maritime history, especially the Killers of Eden story featuring Old Tom, the famous leader of the Killer Whale pod, who worked alongside humans in the hunt for whales in Twofold Bay. The festival is free and features a popular street parade, displays, demonstrations, arts and crafts and live music.

TRADITIONAL FESTIVALS

Australia Day

Bega Valley celebrates Australia Day each year with Citizenship ceremonies for new Australian citizens. A local award is also given for citizen and junior citizen of the year, which is run through local nominations. The 'official' events are held by Bega Valley Shire Council, and considerable work and planning is put in to ensure the day offers something for all of the community. The activities held on Australia Day celebrate the opportunity and benefits of our strong local communities throughout Australia

Traditional rituals

The 'Blessing of the Fleet' is a tradition that began centuries ago in the Mediterranean fishing communities. The tradition is a blessing from the local priest to ensure a safe and bountiful season. It is a tradition and celebration that is now carried in many coastal communities around Australia, and is often a part of a bigger festival. A blessing



of the fleet is held in Bermagui during the Bermagui Seaside Festival and in Eden during the Eden Whale Festival.

Recognising our agricultural origins, and celebrating our agriculture industry, a blessing is also held each year in the Bega Valley. A blessing of the herd is to celebrate the traditions of farming and to honour the livestock and keep them safe and healthy for the year ahead.

SHOWS AND FAIRS

The Bega Valley has a strong history of annual local and district Agricultural Shows. Links within the community with the Royal Easter Show are strong and interest in the ring events, livestock judging, competitions and displays of produce and arts and crafts are still strong. In terms of cultural heritage, Agricultural Shows are a direct link between the past and the present as they showcase the essence of that individual rural community. As communities change and their social, economic and cultural interests broaden, local shows have the opportunity to reinvent themselves to remain connected with their changing community. Major shows within the Bega Valley include the Bega Far South Coast National Show which is held in February of each year. This is the largest show in the region and in 2012 introduced a gourmet food category for judging including cheese and oysters, demonstrating a response to the growing trend of gourmet local food products. The Cobargo Agricultural Show was first held in 1889 and remains a much celebrated event, also held in February each year. The Candelo show was first held in 1883 and the Pambula Show was first held in 1909, both of these shows are still popular today and draw a crowd from across the region.

Version 1: December 2012



CULTURAL SETTING REPORT

The Cultural Setting Report is available via the Council website www.begavalley.nsw.gov.au. Hard copies are available on request.

CONTACT

Bega Valley Shire Council
02 6499 2222
council@begavalley.nsw.gov.au