

**STATS AND STORIES - CASE STUDY 2**

**ECONOMIC  
REGENERATION**

  
**DEAKIN**  
UNIVERSITY AUSTRALIA  
Worldly

# **SILVER BALL SCREENING FESTIVAL**

**THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA**

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*Cover image: Sunrise including the Fletcher Jones Water Tower on the day of the festival, Warrnambool, VIC. Photograph by Emma Charlton.*

## OVERVIEW

### STATS AND STORIES: THE IMPACT OF THE ARTS IN REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

**Stats and Stories: The Impact of the Arts in Regional Australia** is a ground breaking project funded by Regional Arts Australia and Australia Council for the Arts that calls for new ways to identify and respond to Australia's vast land, diversity and differences, including its challenges and opportunities in regional Australia, using the arts as the vehicle.

The Stats and Stories project covers five themes and five case studies. The five themes were developed from the literature on the regional impact of the arts. One case study is written on each of the five themes.

The five themes are:

1. Community connectedness
2. Economic regeneration
3. Social inclusion
4. Civic pride and community identity
5. Regional development

The five case studies are:

1. Animating Spaces
2. Silver Ball Screening Festival
3. In the Saddle; On the Wall
4. BighArt
5. First Coat

The research project was undertaken by academic staff at Deakin University in the Business School. The project was led by Professor Ruth Rentschler, and Dr Kerrie Bridson at Deakin University, as well as Associate Professor Jody Evans at Melbourne Business School. Research support was provided by Claudia Escobar, Emma Winston and Nick Cooke.

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Economic regeneration: Solving problems faced by the community in Warrnambool by widening opportunities, growing the local economy, and improving people's lives after industrial decline.

## INTRODUCTION

The Silver Ball Screening Festival is held annually in Warrnambool, a growing regional coastal city in the South West of Victoria, Australia. The Festival is named after the iconic Warrnambool former clothing factory, Fletcher Jones.

The Silver Ball is a large steel silver ball that stands 40 metres tall and can be seen on the Warrnambool skyline. It once operated as a water tower for the Fletcher Jones Factory.<sup>1</sup>

The theme of the Festival is 'keeping the ball in the air'<sup>2</sup> giving historic value to the Fletcher Jones clothing factory which operated in the city between 1948 and 2005.

The ball has become a cultural and historical icon for the local community and part of the Warrnambool landscape. The local community believes it should be preserved.<sup>3</sup> Emma Charlton, Festival Coordinator explains the impact the festival had on the Warrnambool region, saying:

*The festival addressed concerns around cultural history and cultural icons. Appropriately, the premises was sold during the week of the festival and it became a massive celebration of "it's going to live on". The following year has seen the new owner fix things. It has been quite significant.*

The festival is the culmination of a year-long project,<sup>4</sup> which involves a series of free workshops on animation, narrative, film art and documentary. The series of workshops are held by filmmakers for residents of Warrnambool between February and March.<sup>5</sup>

Participants and local Warrnambool filmmakers are invited to submit a finished product for public screening<sup>6</sup> on Warrnambool's CBD landscape – down laneways, out shop fronts, and onto walls and installations.<sup>7</sup>

The festival features 33 films,<sup>8</sup> some of which are screened progressively around the laneways of Warrnambool as a free event.<sup>9</sup> On the Saturday night there is a formal indoor screening at Lady Bay Resort, where 22 films are shown to judges for \$2,000 prize money.<sup>10</sup>

The Silver Ball Screening Festival is funded by Regional Arts Victoria, Warrnambool City Council and the F Project and supported by Deakin University, South West TAFE, Warrnambool Art Gallery and fourteen local businesses.<sup>11</sup>

The Silver Ball Festival project provides a platform for economic regeneration. It strengthens and empowers the local community to seed economic growth, drawing on the past to refashion the present for the future, in different ways.

First, the Silver Ball Screening Festival promotes place marketing by enhancing the perception of the place as a tourist destination. Second, it improves people lives, by attracting investment while tackling industrial decline. And third, it links to strategy and policy by providing a framework for action.

*Top: Jude Stewart, Johan Diedricks, Jason Eldridge & Sid Sprague Hanging lanterns, Warrnambool, VIC. Photograph by Emma Charlton.*

*Bottom: Projection point with lanterns and audience Patloch Lane, Warrnambool, VIC. Photograph by Rhonda McDonell.*





Warrnambool economy has been transitioning from product based to services and tourism based economy.

## BACKGROUND

### WARRNAMBOOL, VIC

Warrnambool City Council is a municipality which spans the coastal region to the hinterland of southwest Victoria. It contains the city of Warrnambool on the coast, which has a population of 33,300.<sup>12</sup> In recent years Warrnambool's population has grown rapidly and is expected to reach 50,000 by 2036.<sup>13</sup>

Warrnambool is a major employment base with significant dairy and meat processing factories along with a range of industries, which service agricultural enterprises. It is also an educational centre, with Deakin University a major player, along with schools and TAFE.

Tourism is another major driver of the city's economy with the city positioned within the Great Ocean Road region and home to the award winning Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village, Australia's largest and most awarded maritime heritage precinct.<sup>14</sup>

It is also a drive through location for Port Fairy Festival<sup>15</sup> audiences. Each year more than 700,000 people visit Warrnambool.<sup>16</sup>

Warrnambool economy has been transitioning from product based to services and tourism based economy.

Warrnambool City Council has activated a strategy aimed at the revitalisation of the CBD,<sup>17</sup> transforming it into a cultural hub that attracts locals and visitors.<sup>18</sup>

### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND – KEEPING THE BALL IN THE AIR

Warrnambool was home to the Fletcher Jones clothing factory and gardens since 1948. The factory and its founder, Sir Fletcher Jones, made a strong impact amongst the community over the years, especially due to his emphasis on workforce participation and share distribution.

The factory employed 6,000 people at its height and brought migrants from the ports onto the region. It closed down in 2005, part of the clothing and manufacturing decline in Australia.

Since the factory closed down, the local artists of Warrnambool have developed a sense of connection with the former factory and the way it functioned. They have recognised Fletcher Jones' collaborative approach to his business and used it as a model to work together.

Inspiration taken from the factory has initiated the development of successful arts projects, markets, fundraising initiatives achieving the development of an arts space and continuous programs. In the short documentary, A story beginning with F, Chelsey, a local artist, expresses the way the arts community was inspired by Fletcher Jones and the factory:

*The artists were inspired by Fletcher and his approach to business and the resonance he left in the community with people that worked with him and their families...His generosity and kindness.<sup>19</sup>*

*Fletcher Jones & water tower, Warrnambool, VIC.  
Photograph by Emma Charlton.*

There wasn't a key arts event during the winter months.

## ORIGIN OF SILVER BALL SCREENING FESTIVAL

In 2012 seven Warrnambool locals started a film group called the F Project Cinema (FPC), which screens two films a month and features films from Australia and abroad.<sup>20</sup> The F Project Cinema is an offshoot of the F Project Collective, an artist run initiative established in 2008.

The F Project aims to encourage and support contemporary artists, contemporary arts practice, creative exploration of social issues and engagement with the community through arts projects that contribute to individual and community development.

The event was scheduled for May, during winter with early dark nights and also in response to Warrnambool's May Racing Carnival, the largest country (non metropolitan) racing carnival in Australia that attracts tens of thousands of visitors to the city.

Charlton advised that the Silver Ball Festival Project is also part of the F Project Collective and the F Project Cinema.

She mentioned how the Festival was conceived, saying:

*The Silver Ball Screening Festival was conceived in part as a response from the arts community to contrast this sporting event. That's why it was scheduled one weekend before the Carnival.*

One of Warrnambool's major community events is the Wunta Fiesta, a festival that provides a celebration of music, food and fun for people of all ages showcasing the best that Warrnambool has to offer.

This event takes place at the end of the tourist season in January,<sup>21</sup> though there wasn't a key arts event during the winter months.



Top: Murray Adams, Replica Silver Ball Projection Point. Photograph by Damian White (The Standard).

Bottom: Dylan Ledner, Nic Downes & James Russell Construction Zone – The Artery, Warrnambool, VIC.



The festival worked with the community to address a community concern linked to a cultural icon and the history of place.

## ACHIEVEMENTS

### PLACE MARKETING

The Silver Ball Screening Festival has enhanced the image of the Warrnambool region. It has built on one of the place's strengths; its community.

Vibrant communities, such as the one in Warrnambool, are open to new ideas and diversity and are able to communicate the identity of the place through street life and successful use of natural and human resources. Charlton explains the significance of the festival for the Warrnambool region, saying:

*It's a great marker of direction, but more importantly it's unique, and it ties this town to places abroad and events in the past! Having an event like this meant that people stopped, looked up, looked around. There were lots of conversations that happened between people who didn't know each other beforehand. It redefined the space and for me that was just fantastic – it was so exciting.*

Left: Sarah Gubby, South West TAFE.  
Photograph by Emma Charlton.  
Center: Emma Charlton, Festival Coordinator.  
Photograph by Leanne Pickett (The Standard).  
Right: Helen and Des Bunyon, Workshops at Deakin University.  
Photograph by Emma Charlton.

### ENCOURAGING INVESTMENT AND GROWING THE ECONOMY

The Festival was financially supported by government investment and private sector sponsorship. Local businesses such as Capricorn Records, the Independent Traders Market and Wines Patisserie hosted silent films in their windows.<sup>22</sup>

Charlton told us it also engaged and received support from the local bank, local newspaper and a total of 14 businesses that provided power and in some cases vouchers and prizes. Deakin University also provided support by lending the computer labs for the development of the films.

Charlton explains that the support from Warrnambool City Council and local businesses indicates their interest in developing the region's 'strong arts community'. She goes on to say:

*Warrnambool is a really creative place at the moment – it's just buzzing. The council is really keen on revitalising the CBD and the businesses. It felt like people were ready to see their place differently.*

Event-related spending is one of the major economic benefits that the arts provide in regional areas. Arts event and festival attendees generate significant income for theme-related local businesses.

Arts events actively contribute to the economic environment of regions by encouraging attendees to interact with people, local businesses and institutions.<sup>23</sup> Charlton discusses the economic impact the Silver Ball Screening Festival had on Warrnambool, saying:

*There was a lot of engagement between the arts and local businesses. We wanted people to not only engage with the films but also the industry. It was reported that there was an increase in visits to businesses, people went out for drinks, for dinner. Many business owners said they had the busiest nights they had ever seen.*

The arts are key in promoting regions and significantly contribute to local spending.<sup>24</sup> The way the Silver Ball Screening Festival was conceived involved the whole community, which activated the local economy during the festival.



## WIDENING EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES

The Silver Ball Screening Festival employed almost 10 people including local filmmakers, carpenters and technological professionals. FPC provided administration as in-kind support.

The Festival engaged 60 volunteers ranging from six to 80 years old, who dressed up as Charlie Chaplin to guide people.<sup>25</sup> Charlton discusses how the festival has expanded employment opportunities for an emerging industry in the region, saying:

*There have been employment opportunities for the filmmakers involved as graphic designers and video makers. Also, volunteers gained confidence, a sense of community and developed technological skills for video projection.*

*It was great to see people learn a lot of skills in filmmaking, storytelling and participating in a community arts event.*

The festival engaged 20 people in the workshop program ranging from nine to 70 years old. They told their stories and created films. Investment in the arts sees opportunities for arts workers, artists and volunteers, contributing to the livability of a regional area.<sup>26</sup>

For example, increased opportunities for volunteers sustains a region's workforce by encouraging more people to move towards employment within the region.<sup>27</sup>

*Charlie Chaplins – Tonia Wilcoz, Fiona Howland, David Mitchell, Kirsty Hawkes, Amy Haldane and Kiri Hawkes, Warrnambool, VIC. Photograph by Aaron Sawall (The Standard).*

## COMMUNITY STRATEGY AND POLICY

The project aligned with the overall City strategy to enliven the CBD and position it as a cultural hub. It activated the local economy with the local community.

This internal approach to economic regeneration can be utilised as a stepping-stone or pathway towards an external approach with a tourism focus that brings visitors into the place.

Charlton discusses the link between the aim of the festival and the Council's strategy, saying:

*The Council is very much interested in revitalising our CBD. We always knew we wanted to have the festival in the laneways, which sat quite nicely with their desire to bring more energy into the CBD.*

Having a strong, active and vibrant arts community that has strong feelings for its history of place and cultural icons connects arts projects and activities to regional Council strategic plans. Thus, arts projects and Council economic development plans coalesce.

## CHALLENGES

*The biggest challenge was to source the funding for the festival says Charlton. She goes on to say:*

*The committee was persistent and managed to secure a budget to develop the arts activity. The budget is not large, totalling \$25,000, with funds being provided by Warrnambool City Council, F Project cinema, Regional Arts Victoria, private sponsorship and in kind services of volunteers and sponsors.*

Another challenge was negotiation with the Council and local businesses. Warrnambool City Council doesn't have an Arts Officer and the communication of time requirements versus permit timelines was an issue.

The Creative Warrnambool Network emerged in 2014, responding to the need of a centralised calendar for arts and cultural events and as a meeting place for emerging and established networks within the region.

There are currently conversations taking place between the Council and the network to explore issues including: development of a shared vision for a Creative Warrnambool; establishment of a common set of cultural development priorities — a 'whole of community' cultural plan for Warrnambool; building support for collaborative events; marketing the outcomes of the network and its members and so forth.<sup>28</sup>

*James Russell, Making projector boxes  
Photograph by Emma Charlton*







## FUTURE OUTLOOK FOR ART AND ORGANISATION ACTIVITY

The Council is still interested in developing activities to activate the CBD laneways.



The Silver Ball Screening Festival has become ‘a springboard for the development for new projects and ideas’ says Charlton. There is currently a proposal to run similar festivals, taking stories from Silver Ball Screening Festival to be screened at the factory.

Montgomery also has plans to build a cafe and has made a public commitment to keeping (and restoring) the iconic silver ball and gardens.

He acknowledges the impact the restoration has had on the Warrnambool community, saying:

A different committee would run the new festival. The Council is still interested in developing activities to activate the CBD laneways so there might be activities resonating the conceptual framework of the Silver Ball Screening Festival.

*Warrnambool has a beating heart again, and it is round, silver and sitting on top of three red legs.<sup>32</sup>*

The new owner of the Fletcher Jones factory, Dean Montgomery, is an Australian businessman based in China who has been running and owning companies for 15 years in Australia and Asia.<sup>29</sup>

In other words, economic regeneration will continue in Warrnambool, building on the learnings from the Silver Ball Screening Festival, so that the problems faced by a community in transition are addressed by a range of means, including through the arts.

His plans for the factory are strongly linked with increasing Warrnambool’s tourism appeal. He has announced he will open a classy motor museum in the eastern end of the factory.<sup>30</sup>

The economy will grow and people’s lives will improve as the city transitions from factories to leisure.

Montgomery explains:

*While it is very early days, with so much to be done, such a museum has the capacity to again put Warrnambool on the map as a must-visit destination, just like the Birdwood National Motor Museum has done in the Adelaide Hills.<sup>31</sup>*



Top: Sam Artz, *The Making of Legobool*, Timor Walk, Warrnambool, VIC.  
 Photograph by Jo Grant  
 Center: Bubble eye giant paper lantern, Ozone Carpark, Warrnambool, VIC.  
 Photograph by Jo Grant  
 Bottom: *The House that Andrew built*, Ozone Walk, Warrnambool, VIC.  
 Photograph by Jo Grant

## END NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Hughson, C 2014, *Silver Ball Film Screening*, Colleen Hughson, retrieved 25 November 2014 <<http://colleenhughson.com.au/silver-ball-film-screening>>.

<sup>2</sup> Altmann, C 2014, *Silver ball to light up the silver screen*, Bluestone Magazine, retrieved 25 November 2014 <<http://www.bluestonemagazine.com.au/2014/04/27/silver-ball-to-light-up-the-silver-screen>>.

<sup>3</sup> Altmann, Op. Cit.

<sup>4</sup> Altmann, Op. Cit.

<sup>5</sup> Altmann, Op. Cit.

<sup>6</sup> The F Project Inc 2014, *Silver Ball Screening Project*, retrieved 25 November 2011 <<http://fproject.org.au/node/38>>.

<sup>7</sup> Charlton, E 2014, *Silver Ball Screening Festival*, ABC Open, retrieved 25 November 2014, <<https://open.abc.net.au/explore/62571>>.

<sup>8</sup> Hughson, Op. Cit.

<sup>9</sup> Altmann, Op. Cit.

<sup>10</sup> Neal, M 2014, *Laneway flick-fest a ball*, The Standard, retrieved 26 November 2014 <<http://www.standard.net.au/story/2264348/laneway-flick-fest-a-ball>>.

<sup>11</sup> Charlton, E 2014, *Silver Ball Screening Festival*, Op. Cit.

<sup>12</sup> Warrnambool City Council 2013, *Annual Report 2013-2014*, retrieved 26 November 2014 <<http://www.warrnambool.vic.gov.au/sites/warrnambool.vic.gov.au/files/documents/council/Annual%20Reports/annual%20report%202013-14%20-.pdf>>.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid

<sup>14</sup> Flagstaff Hill 2014, *What is Flagstaff Hill Maritime Village?*, retrieved 3 December 2014 <<http://www.flagstaffhill.com/about-us/history-of-flagstaff-hill>>.

<sup>15</sup> My Port Fairy 2014, *Port Fairy Folk Festival*, retrieved 2 December 2014 <<http://www.portfairy.com.au/viewlisting.php?view=307>>.

<sup>16</sup> Collins, P 2013, *Draft strategy suggests residential development at Fletcher Jones factory site*, The Standard, retrieved 27 November 2014 <<http://www.standard.net.au/story/1811454/draft-strategy-suggests-residential-development-at-fletcher-jones-factory-site>>.

<sup>17</sup> Warrnambool City Council 2013, *Annual Report 2013-2014*, Op. Cit.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid

<sup>19</sup> Charlton, E 2014, *A story beginning with F*, testimonial by Chelsey, retrieved 25 November 2014 <<http://vimeo.com/87870839>>.

<sup>20</sup> The F Project 2014, *F Project Cinema*, retrieved 26 November 2014 <<http://fproject.org.au/node/4>>.

<sup>21</sup> Warrnambool City Council 2014 *Wunta Fiesta*, Warrnambool City Council, retrieved 3 December 2014 <<http://www.warrnambool.vic.gov.au/wunta-fiesta>>.

<sup>22</sup> Neal, Op. Cit.

<sup>23</sup> Curtis, DJ 2011, *Towards a culture of Landcare: The arts in community capacity building for natural resources management*, *Journal of Environmental Assessment Policy & Management*, vol. 13, no. 4, pp 673-696.

<sup>24</sup> Cohen, R, Schaffer, W & Davidson, B 2003, *Arts and Economic Prosperity: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts Organizations and Their Audiences*, *The Journal of Arts Management, Law, and Society*, vol. 33, no.1, pp. 17-31.

<sup>25</sup> Charlton, E 2014, *Silver Ball Screening Festival*, Op. Cit.

<sup>26</sup> Baycan-Levent, T 2010, *Diversity and Creativity as Seedbeds for Urban and Regional Dynamics*, *European Planning Studies*, vol. 18, no.4, pp. 565-594.

<sup>27</sup> Centre for Economics and Business Research 2013, Op. Cit.

<sup>28</sup> Healey, Maureen 2014, *Art Express: Bulletin 199*, Warrnambool & District Artists Society Inc, retrieved 2 December 2014. <[http://www.warrnambool.org/artsoc/WADAS\\_Newsletter\\_199\\_August\\_September\\_2014.pdf](http://www.warrnambool.org/artsoc/WADAS_Newsletter_199_August_September_2014.pdf)>

<sup>29</sup> Volume Group 2014, *Leadership*, retrieved 3 December 2014 <<http://www.volumegroup-asiapacific.com/executive%20team.html>>.

<sup>30</sup> Bluestone Magazine 2014, *Motor museum to revive Fletcher Jones*, retrieved 3 December 2014 <<http://www.bluestonemagazine.com.au/2014/05/26/motor-museum-to-revive-fletcher-jones-site>>.

<sup>31</sup> Altmann, Op. Cit,

<sup>32</sup> Altmann, Op. Cit



*Replica silver ball with projection,  
Ozone Walk, Warrnambool, VIC.  
Photograph by Jo Grant.*



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