

Community Engagement Process

Town Hall 1: Information Session held at Centre Camp Burning Seed, Matong NSW

Friday 29-Sep-2017

Facilitators: Toni Bode, Alicia Boyd

Note Taker: Stephanie Selig

1. [Hand Signals](#)- intro from Toni about hand signals that can be used to indicate agreement, disagreement etc. to be used during the meeting
2. Exercise: form groups of 4-6 people
 - o Talk about something that has deeply inspired you at Burning Seed
 - o Tell your group about a moment when you were most proud
3. Intro of the Restructure Sub-Committee: The members of the committee presenting at Town Hall are Victoria Vickery (TechSupport), Toni Bode (BEAST), Alicia Boyd (Leash), Troy Reid and Stephanie Selig (serious). Two other members were not presenting: Shaye Harty (President) and Marty Bortz. Bios online [here](#).
4. Intro from Vic:
 - Currently, Burning Seed is run by a private entity called Red Earth City Pty Ltd (REC)
 - Given the growth of the festival, a need has emerged to create a not-for-profit (NFP) entity that is solely responsible for running the Burning Seed event.
 - This new entity would be able to take advantage of benefits afforded to an NFP.
 - The Burner community is currently faced with a choice between three different kinds of legal structures for NFP: an incorporated association; a company limited by guarantee; or a co-operative.
 - There are several other strategic choices to be made, including the makeup of the board of the new entity
 - To ensure the best outcome for the Burner community, the REC directors, in collaboration with the Town Council, have elected to embark on a community consultation process on the most appropriate legal structure, as well as the strategic issues mentioned previously.
 - The REC directors and Town Council have established a sub-committee of Burners with relevant skills to lead on the community consultation process., the Restructure Sub-Committee was formed in an open and transparent way
 - Consultation will begin at Burning Seed, and will run until mid-late November.
 - Consultation will involve the following mechanisms:
 - i. An online questionnaire
 - ii. Face-to-face consultations in Sydney and Melbourne
 - iii. A written submission process

- iv. An online consultation for Burners in other capital cities (pending levels of interest)
 - All Burners are welcome and encouraged to participate.
 - Following consultation, a report with recommendations will be provided to the REC directors and Town Council for endorsement and published with access available by the Burning Seed community.
 - Additional information will be provided through the [Burning Seed website](#), and on the [Burning Seed Facebook page](#)

- 5. Open Question Period: Questions from the attendees about the process of consultation
 - o Q: Is there an intended outcome of the process?
 - A: Outcome is a report that will go to the REC Directors and back to the community
 - o Q: Is this a plebiscite? Or a binding agreement or just advisement to them based on their knowledge that may contain knowledge we don't have?
 - A: Report will be summary of plebiscite and community feedback
 - o Q: Is the finding of the report binding to the directors or not?
 - A: The Terms of Reference that guides this process does not bind the directors, it is the Community Engagement process that we are reporting on
 - o Q: While the consultation process is going on, will we get a breakdown of the options?
 - A: We are preparing a summary of a survey of different regional burns and a summary of entity types and a clear definition of the type of entities available
 - o Q: In the options listed can the community suggest different options?
 - A: Yes there will be opportunity to provide feedback in the Town Halls and via email
 - o Q: Is the entity only going to cover Burning Seed or all burns in Australia?
 - A: Only about Burning Seed
 - o Q: What is the timeline for the process?
 - A: Will go from now til end of Nov, final report by end of March
 - o Q: Have you talked with other regional groups? Toronto in particular? Speaker concerned about preserving the culture not the structure.
 - A: Yes hearing the feedback and your voices and what you want us to keep in mind about culture this will shape our process. Steph (on the RC committee) has talked with Mountie from the Toronto community and their issues are not the same as ours and we have done a survey of other regional groups and the data will be shared as part of the Community Engagement Process
 - Q: follow on: has been to a few big burns and one big shift he has seen is that the focus is on the culture, process is important but the tail should not wag the dog, must not let culture drop off. Focus on nitty-gritty, must connect with the 10 principles
 - A: structure reflecting the 10 principles: is acute and specific feedback, "I want the structure to reflect Decommodification" than give that feedback and give thought to it when you participate in the Community Engagement Process

- o Q: Will the report be public before it gets sent to the board?
 - A: The report will be made public and sent to the board at the same time, at the end of the process around March
- o Q; Heard a rumour that BM America transitioned to not-for-profit and how is that going?
 - A: Yes they did transition two or three years ago to become the Burning Man Project, you can find out more info on [their site](#), they publish all their financial stats as per the U.S. NFP guidelines
- o Q: Is this a response to the flood? Is there a reason this is happening now or is it just a global conversation about what is happening in general now?
 - A: REC Directors have been talking about this happening for a couple of years, Tech Support got involved and got things organised and got the official RC committee formed.
- o Q1: There are 3 regional events, Seed, Modifyre, Swan; each is signed off by the local contact, Brisbane and Perth sign off on the latter two, who will sign off on Seed as it is different from other burns as it is inter-regional.
 - Q2 : Modifyre and Blazing Swan, they feed back into their local communities, what might that look like in terms of funding art and maker-spaces/
 - A: This is not a specific question about how the Community Engagement Process will work but is more part of what will be covered in the Sydney and Melbourne Town Halls. We have noted your Q and will include this into our planning.
- o Q: Toni (RC Committee): wants to return to the one first questions asked about why the REC Directors and RC Committee is here and about whether the report is binding we are an RC sub-committee
 - A: we are giving recommendations, we don't have any way to force anyone's hand. The people who are currently the caretakers of the organisation have no structure to say that they must follow the report. There have been concerns that there will not be enough participation, you must get involved, it won't happen unless you participate. No legal leverage to make the REC Directors do anything, we are operating in good faith and providing good information and hoping for the best outcome.
- o Q; Has had life changing moments here, has become a dj and got married here ,brought their parents (apologies to the Question asker, the note-taker missed getting your entire awesome list written down!), there are a good number of people here this year; wants to understand goals around profit and number of participants
 - A: we are asking what the community wants, how directors are appointed, how management functions, what NFP is selected, Q's about shaping the community. Want to get enough info from community to shape questions that are asked and get feedback.
- o Q: interested about preserving the culture of Burning Seed, curious about what the REC directors from preventing the decay of culture through plug and play?
 - A: Concerns about these camps are going to go into the constitution, ensuring elements of how we retain the culture feeds into how we manage the organisation.

- o Q: is this about the democratic future of the org or is it about process for things like insurance for Theme Camps or other organisational issues?
 - A; The Community Engagement Process and Restructure is more general, has been motivated by a need to move to a new structure, it can involve questions about org issues beyond just the REC structure, not trying to get it perfect, trying to make new mistakes next time.
- o Q: mentioned you are talking to other regionals? Are you talking with other local music festivals?
 - A: in terms of research into other structures we have just engaged with other burn groups and there are a few different structures that are available to us. We mostly focused on the other burn communities that are similar to our event, ConFest is similar to us but not as similar to other burns. Also we are all volunteers and are in touch through the regional burn network making it easy to ask them to share information.
- o Q: Coming to BS since 2011, everyone has participated so much to create what we create, this must be reflected in any kind of structure and let those people have their input. Disappointed that there are only 100 out of 4,000. Need to get input and how do we wrangle those others into this process and it isn't just a few in the process
 - A: we have been working to ensure that we do really comprehensively engage the community. Martin Bortz is the Project Manager for the Restructure sub-committee, he is a Community Engagement specialist that has come up with a comprehensive plan including Town Hall meetings and a survey. Aside from the logistics, there is a handful of burners who want people to engage, everyone who is here, must tell everyone that this is important. We need you to go back to your camp and ask "why were you not at Town Hall?", tell them about what we discussed and why it is important.
- o Q: Wants to acknowledge the 3 Red Earth City directors, do not want to throw out the baby with the bathwater, wants to know what is this "getting done" that TechSupport mentioned?
 - A: Original idea around engaging the community came from the REC Directors, has been decided by them, we as the RC sub-committee want to engage the community and provide a report. In 2015 the constitution was re-drafted to engage this community engagement process, provision was made but nothing happen and nothing was getting done, so the getting done is asking the questions and publishing the report.
- o Q: How is a Not-For-Profit organisation benefit the punters in the field differently than how it's already functioning?
 - A: not sure how it would affect those that are not organising the event, for the organiser, free services like legal advice, Slack, tax benefits etc. Community could benefit but the day to day it would not change much.
- o Q2: Why move locations? There is a deep-seeded connection, why would you move? Seems problematic
 - A: this is a separate issue, won't be addressed in the what type of entity is Burning Seed.

- o Q: Wants clarification around assets and profits from previous events get transferred? Will we be still in the same financial standing?
 - A: We are going to be engaging with people about this and it is a contentious issue, is a negotiation. We don't want the difficult questions to be un-asked.
- o Q: Questioner Is a statistician: we are gathering data and what are we collecting? How do we determine that it represents the community as a whole?
 - A: Survey and data analysis is still a work in process, want the report to show where and who are answering the questions. We do have an analysis specialist and a CE PM who specialises in this process. Have experience in reporting on colour and shape of the community engagement.
- o Q: questions about why we want to change is right in this room, we are going to have a process, engagement and a report that will land in the REC, it is entirely up to them as to whether the process is accepted, clear that nothing is happening, that is why change is needed. They are the directors, they own it and we need a far more engaged process.
 - A: Red Earth City Directors will be acting in good faith and putting out a statement to that effect
- o Q: Are we asking if there is a problem? People need a passion and reason to change
 - A: will add in a Mission/purpose to all comms so that it is clear as to why we are doing this
- o Q: whatever structure that we have it must be a democratic process, many burn communities have collaborative engagement which is an organic thing, when you have a legal tie to a thing that should be fun and organic, but we need it in order to be our most playful self

Introduction to the three Red Earth City Directors (Robin Macpherson (AHuman) , Phil Smart (Sherpa) and Richard Martin (King Richard))

Robin Macpherson: wants to talk with you, come have a chat anytime you see him.

- Been involved in things since going to Melbourne High in 1975, 40 years later, one thing that gives a buzz is that someone when they met you compared to meeting you now and the changes that happen. There are transformational opportunities at festivals like Rainbow Serpent, Confest and Burning Seed, processes and techniques shift with people and times, but it is the people and who they become; this is important
- We are going to listen, we are not bound, but do we have to dance and drink with you; I urge you to get the others not in this tent to get involved and have a voice and I can sleep well knowing that we heard you

Phil Smart

- Always envisaged this day happening; always expected we would be here. Seed became an LLC and ran as an NFP, planned from the beginning of the constitution that this would happen and come true.
- Always considered himself a custodian not an owner or a director, entity is a default between the external and what we do here.
- Wants to preserve culture, democracy and how we get involved: don't let the default world dictate how we operate, use it and do it

Richard Martin

- This is for you, you are our 'brainstrust', two very clear ways to look at it: a group of people do something behind the scenes, do it and dump it out or engage and talk to peers, use your brains and talk to us
- Pre-Seed campout at Homeland property with 30 people, call out came to meet up after to get a conversation happening, Neil Power came and expressed interest in being involved and Phil and Robin, only 4 out of 30 people stepped forward
- We do not benefit as directors even though it is registered as a 'for profit' company, it functions as a NFP
- Had active discussions about how to start; before REC company began had many phone calls and talks, created a [trust document](#)
- Time to get a process going that allows Community Engagement and gets more wider ideas into the mix
- We have to dance, play with you, we are not going to be rude, let's get smart and get proposals
- Hopes to see that it is not just Burning Seed, could be thinking about a group of entities related to Burning Seed
- three primary people that hold all the risk for Seed, let's expand what the possibilities are

Questions to the Red Earth City Directors (Richard Martin, Phil Smart and Robin McPherson)

- Q: Are you able to give us an indication of the KSC that will convince you one way or the other; is it a breadth of response or a conviction that enough are included? Give us an indication on what you judge the output on?
 - o A from Robin: it has been a journey in a way and I don't want to say here it is, that would be like showing a photograph and saying it is the whole story of the movie. Someone pointed out recently "what if we want to do this?" and would it affect Seed? "probably not"; means we can consider many things not just one thing. The criteria required is: ensuring the entity that is going to take it on and run with it and has thought through the permutation of what is required to actually run a festival.
 - o A from Richard: have to look at why and the reason for the change, have been strong voices against the ownership as three shareholders, means to me that what they want is broader and want to be part of ownership structures. Criteria requirements: if we are registering as a NFP which are all membership based, tend to err towards open structure. Aware that opening it up to politics might disarm the new entity. Need to think through the permutations.
 - o A from Phil : wants to be blown away by what we come up with. No perfect entity for what we do, need to make it up as we go along. Wants to see what the creativity can come up with, even with considering many entities. We should always be evolving, put creativity in at the start and then when new opportunities and challenges arrive and we must be nimble, as burners we are great at DIY

- Q: must be mindful that the CE process is not building the constitution; what is considered feedback and due process?
 - A: Question not answered
 - Q: What is the current Mission Statement and will the new entity follow them
 - o A: Richard: in [Nov 2015 rules of Committee Guidelines](#), added Town Council and purposes for Seed, the new entity will have a new constitution
6. Exercise: Give us feedback about what you want to see as part of the CE process. Papers distributed in order to get feedback
- Feedback written down by participants was collected, typed up and submitted to the Restructure Committee.

For further information on this process visit our [webpage](#) or email futureofseed@burningseed.com