

Case study

Laughter in the Outback

Details

What:

Barcoo shire in Western Queensland is home to approximately 340 people living over a vast area of 61,974 sq km. It is one of the many local councils in Queensland affected by drought.

Distance, time and drought conditions can limit opportunities to attend and participate in community events in Barcoo, impacting on the wellbeing of individuals as well as the overall community. Attempts to provide opportunities to socialise such as afternoon teas are often attended by women with few men attending.

With this in mind, the Windorah Development Board hosted a free-event, which would also attract male residents, to lift community spirits and promote healthy socialisation in the community. The Board secured comedy entertainer Mandy Nolan to travel to Windorah to conduct a comedy workshop, *Dry Humour – Breaking the drought with laughter*, and a stand-up comedy show.

The three-hour workshop and event were well received and the evening stand-up comedy show attracted over 100 attendees. Dinner was also provided on the night by the Rotary Club of Longreach followed by a dance.

Tourists who were staying in the area attended and audience members travelled from Jundah (97.6km from Windorah) and Quilpie (246.5km from Windorah) to take part in the show.

When:

May 2016



Laughter in the Outback. Image provided by Windorah Development Board

Where:

Windorah

Key stats:

- 7 participants
- 15 volunteers
- 100 attendees (approx. a third of Barcoo's total population)

Investment:

\$4270 – Regional Arts Development Fund

The *Regional Arts Development Fund* is a partnership between the Queensland Government and the [Barcoo Shire Council](#) to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.

Contact for further information:

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/windorah/>

Outcomes

- The comedy night provided an opportunity for residents to socialise and connect with others affected by the drought conditions. The use of humour gave attendees the opportunity to experience a positive event as a community.

The whole of shire was able to get involved in the “Laughter in the Outback” workshop. The opportunity for men especially, in these drought times was very well received. It gave everyone the chance to have a night of comedic relief and forget about the tough times for a few hours.

- The comedy workshop supported participants to drop down their guard, try something new and to look at challenging situations in a positive light.

The writing workshop [allowed] them [participants] to express feelings and ideas that otherwise may have been bottled up and become unhealthy.

- Specific advertising aimed at the male local population was used to encourage attendance. The event attracted approximately 60 men, a group that is often not involved with arts community events and are more at risk of suffering isolation.
- The event attracted attendees from three towns as well as tourists, providing increased business for accommodation providers and restaurants in Windorah.
- ABC Queensland filmed the *Laughter in the Outback* workshop for the [evening's news broadcast](#). Following the broadcast, there were many remarks and comments from people who live outside the shire as to what a great project it was.



Laughter in the Outback. Image provided by Windorah Development Board

Learnings and reflections

The *Laughter in the Outback* project has been considered a success in providing an outlet for locals facing challenges due to isolation and the drought.

The Windorah Development Board had the following advice for others regarding undertaking similar project:

“Just get out there and put on a show for the whole community to help with depression and alleviate stress.”