

FutureNow is an independent body that provides industry informed advice to influence skills development strategies across the Creative, Leisure and Technologies sectors. Our work assists Western Australia to be prepared with the new order skills required by the evolving economy and our changing society.

The Events Industry represent a diverse range of business, community and social gatherings such as trade and consumer exhibitions, festivals, concerts, charity races and private weddings and celebrations. Events are a driver for visitor engagement and give people a time-specific reason to visit an area and are important way of supporting local businesses and the economy.

The events sector labour market, like many others across the economy, has been significantly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

What has happened?

The sector's current challenges

Industry report that the biggest issue facing the Events Industry in Western Australia in 2021 has been the continued uncertainty regarding border closures. As other states around the country moved to pandemic management of COVID 19, the operating conditions for concerts, music festivals, sporting events and other mass gatherings allowed for events to be held with confidence. The same rules and conditions applied across these states and as such the tours could proceed instead of cancelling. Western Australian did not have the same operating conditions and as such, instead of postponement, these events are tending to be dropped by promoters and event organisers completely, for example:

- **Ashes Test Cricket**

It had been planned for the fifth Ashes Test to be played at Perth stadium, however in early December, Cricket Australia announced that due to WA's border and health arrangements this would not be possible.

- **Music Festival**

Groovin the Moo (GTM) music festival which normally attracts up to 20,000 people to Bunbury in May, announced that they are not coming to Western Australia in 2022 due to interstate border restrictions.¹

- **Business Events**

COVID-19 restrictions impacted on materialisation throughout 2020-2021. Business events which were due to materialise in 2020-2021 that either postponed or cancelled included 128 events, representing 54,000 delegates worth a total of \$119million in Direct Delegate Expenditure and 195,577 room nights.²

The Event Industry, though the EIA leadership has been working towards resolving some of these issues with the state government.³ Due to the Western Australian hard border remaining in place rather than being removed on February 5th, many event organisers have been further impacted due to the lack of a new date for the border to re-open thereby allowing interstate and international artists into Western Australia to perform.

New Year's Eve

A multitude of New Year's Eve events including music festivals were cancelled after extended COVID restrictions were introduced on 31st December, including mask wearing, a ban on dancing, seated service and nightclub closures. This resulted in a loss of more than \$26.5 million as a result of 250 events being cancelled. The State government announced that it will implement a \$30 million compensation package to affected businesses. It will expand the 'getting the show back on the road' funding initiative to allow major event operators to recoup up to 75 per cent of their losses capped at \$150,000, though some larger events may be able to exceed the cap pending a government assessment.

Small businesses will be able to apply for a grant of up to \$12,500, while sole traders will be eligible for a \$4400 grant to assist with costs incurred from the health directions. Nightclubs forced closed were also eligible for a one-off \$20,000 grant.⁴

Skills transfer to other sectors

Live Production

Due to this uncertainty and fear of ongoing lockdowns, many industry people, particularly those with technical/production skills and Event Management professionals have left the sector to work in more secure industries, such as mining and recruitment.

In 2021, the Federal Government announced financial aid packages for the struggling Arts industry in the form of the SME (small and medium enterprises) Recovery Loan Scheme. Frontier Lighting who for 21 years had provided lighting and sound for major concerts and events like Tim Minchin, Jimmy Barnes, Pink and most recently the AFL Grand Final, failed to secure one of the low-interest government supported loans. This was seen by many in the Events Industry as a demonstration of the government and the financial sector's difficulties in gauging the extent of the plight of live production businesses. Frontier Lighting was placed into liquidation at the end of September.⁵

Where is the sector now?

The sector has been busy with small, short lead time events and activations. In addition, there have been some larger events staged:

- **AFL Grand Final**

Due to the lockdown situation in Victoria, and Western Australia's safe environment, Perth successfully hosted the AFL Grand Final at Optus Stadium with 61 118 spectators.

- **Dunsborough leavers**

In Late November, nearly 10,000 young people attended leavers events in Dunsborough, with all attendees requiring at least one COVID 19 vaccination.

- **Diggers & Dealers**

Although Covid-19 lockdowns impacted overseas and interstate delegates, WA signature mining forum, 30th Diggers & Dealers Mining Forum attracted more than 2400 delegates.⁶

Government Recognition

Fringe World and Perth Festival

The 2022 Fringe festival, which will run from January 14 to February 13, will be the third largest FRINGE in the world. The State Government will provide, through Lotterywest, \$3.6 million to FRINGE over the next three years to help support the event. The State Government will also provide an additional \$1.3 million through the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries for the 2022 Festival.⁷

A Lotterywest grant of \$7.7 million will assist local arts initiatives and avenues for Western Australian artists and creative organisations to join Perth Festival through its Connect program. The program provides opportunities for WA creatives to work alongside local artists, giving them access to professional development and elevate local cultural product offering.⁸

Regional Events

Federal Government Regional Events funding

The Cultural Tourism Accelerator Program is a \$5 million targeted measure announced by the Australian Government as part of the Regional Arts Tourism package. It is delivered through the Regional Arts Fund, an Australian Government Program that supports sustainable cultural development in regional and remote communities in Australia.⁹

Tourism WA Regional Events Funding

The Regional Events Scheme (RES) is an annual funding round for smaller and developing regional events across WA. In 2021-22, 62 events have been awarded funding.¹⁰

The Shore Leave Festival

A popular regional event has received support from Tourism WA from 2022 to 2024. The Shore Leave Festival is anticipated to bring more than 2,000 out of region visitors to the Geraldton area and generate more than \$2.7 million for the local economy over this time.¹¹

Business events

Business events in Perth will start to recover in late 2022 with 56 national and international events scheduled for the upcoming year. Perth has won the right to host an international science conference and a performing arts congress in 2024. The conferences are expected to attract hundreds of delegates from around the world and will inject more than \$3 million into the WA economy. The Conferences were secured by Business Events Perth, funded by the State Government through Tourism WA.¹² Business travellers spend up to five times more than leisure travellers, so the return of the conference industry will provide a much needed boost to WA's tourism industry, supporting local jobs and business.

Where to from here? - Emerging Industry Developments

The events sector has adapted

Western Australia moved to Phase 5 COVID restrictions on 23 June 2021, which meant the removal of most of the number restrictions at events.

The COVID Safe (Phase 5) Directions (external site) require all events anticipating over 500 patrons to complete either a COVID Event Plan or COVID Event Checklist.

All events must continue to be registered with the Department of Health, adhere to the contact register requirements and conduct their event in accordance with the completed COVID Event Plan or Checklist.¹³ Event managers have had to understand these protocols and communicate them to their patrons.

The Event sector's prospects and areas of opportunity

State Government Response - Western Australia is a safe destination

The West Australian government through Tourism WA has positioned WA to market itself internationally as the safest place from the Covid-19 pandemic. Western Australia now has a new brand – of safety, stability and strength, and that will be used to brand WA to the world. The new campaign is titled “Western Australia - It's like no other”.¹⁴

Representatives from the tourism industry met with Tourism Minister David Templeman, Parliamentary Secretary Jessica Shaw and senior Tourism WA executives including the newly appointed Managing Director of TWA, Caroline Turnbull to have their say on practical initiatives to ensure the success of tourism in the State. They conducted extensive state-wide industry consultation around the reset strategy for the tourism industry and as part of that process received feedback on workforce issues.

On the 1st of December the state government announced several new marketing campaigns to attract overseas visitors and workers to the state. Of note to the events sector is:

- An immediate additional \$9 million funding boost to attract blockbuster international events to Perth and WA.
- \$15 million to target business events to attract international conferences to Perth, an essential initiative to support CBD hotel occupancy as well as the hospitality industry.¹⁵

What will it take for recovery and future growth?

The skills needs of employers across the sector have evolved over the years as they have continued to stay innovative and up to date with business and consumer demands, and technological advancements. While the sector is navigating a recovery from the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, ensuring the supply of a skilled workforce is essential to support this recovery.

National SIT Training Package

In November, Draft 2 of the Tourism, Travel, Hospitality and Events, Training Package was released for stakeholder review. It has been more than six years since the Training Package Products for the

Events industry were formally and comprehensively updated.

Delivery of large-scale events requires a workforce skilled in areas of crowd control, transport management and logistics, management of facilities and infrastructure, risk management, and security, including processes for dealing with terrorism.

Organising business events entails a range of distinct skills and knowledge areas. Employers are trading in a highly competitive marketplace, competing against both local and international organisations. It is therefore fundamental that the skills of the workforce support industry's need to deliver these high-quality and professional business events. Because demand is so strong, the need to update existing Training Package Products is fundamental to ensuring that the supply of business events products and services is supported by a skilled workforce. Employers across the industry are currently struggling to find workers equipped with the range of skills required to support and/or organise an event.¹⁶ Industry has voiced that the existing Training Package Products do not sufficiently cover these skills areas. It is anticipated that the new Training Package will be endorsed by early 2022.

How will the events sector get there?

Skills and Training Options

FutureNow Career Pathways Project

A suite of occupational and pathway guides and a website (<https://www.thecareers.guide/>) were produced by FutureNow to present career pathways information to prospective learners interested in employment in the Tourism, Hospitality and Events field. These were co-developed by Tourism WA and FutureNow and were used during the Skills West expo in August 2021.

FutureNow and TWA have also collaborated on a career promotion program through the appointment of a Hospitality, Tourism and Events Career Advisor. This will involve visits to a number of High schools to promote careers in these industries.

The overarching aim of the projects is to impact the decision makers in a young person's life to consider occupations in this sector.

Department of Training and Workforce Development

The Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) are currently working with the Education department to appoint 70 Career Practitioners in 2022 and are working on a year 9 Career Taster program in an effort to assist students with career choices earlier in their school journey.

Lower Fee Courses

As a means of removing barriers from undertaking training the following course was offered 50% off the fees during 2021

Half Price Courses
Certificate III in Events

Please get in touch with FutureNow

FutureNow is continually seeking broad input from stakeholders and representatives in the Western Australian accommodation sector. If you would be interested in providing your perspective on this snapshot or related workforce matters for your sector, our Creative Industries Industry Manager would love to hear from you:

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