

SPOTLIGHT ON TONY MILLAR

HEAD OF MARKETING,
PERTH FESTIVAL



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Give us your bbq pitch. What do you do?

I'm incredibly proud to be working on Perth Festival – one of the largest cultural festivals in the southern hemisphere, which happens to be Australia's longest running cultural festival too. My job is to communicate with audiences all across the country about the incredible arts and culture we have right here on our doorstep in Perth.

Did you always plan to work in this industry?

In my school days in Belfast, what I always loved was writing and storytelling so marketing and advertising seemed to me to be the right space where I could get stuck into lots of creative writing and develop my skills. My four-year honours degree was in communications, advertising and marketing and after my third-year placement with a disability services organisation, I realised I didn't want to be working in a purely commercial world. I wanted to be making a difference to people and places. But first, I took a year off in 2001 to go backpacking, did the most amazing drive from Perth to Darwin and fell in love with Western Australia.

So, how did you get into tourism and events marketing?

On arriving back home in Belfast, my first job was with Tourism Northern Ireland's communications team. It was an amazing opportunity to help reinvent a brand for an emerging tourism destination and open it up to the world. From there, I hopped over to the National Trust to promote iconic cultural and heritage sites, many of which were filming locations for Game of Thrones, so that was a really exciting time.

When I finally made my way back to WA in 2016, I was lucky enough to land here just as the state was investing in a major new culture and heritage experience, the WA Museum. Working on that project gave me the best introduction to marketing our incredible state. And when the job came up here at Perth Festival, that seemed to be the ultimate combination of all the knowledge and skills I've picked up throughout my career.

How would you describe yourself?

I'm a big believer in the power of collaboration and inclusion, working with my team and the community to get as many

viewpoints as possible to achieve the best possible outcomes. That's how all the best creative ideas are generated. And I'm not averse to taking risks to realise good ideas – a little bit of risk taking is a good thing.

What do you love most about the industry?

Sharing the pride in place. Working with people who feel as passionate as I do about promoting WA's arts, culture and heritage. I especially enjoy going on a journey with our Indigenous artists to really understand the full richness of the oldest living culture on the planet. As an outsider, that's an incredibly special privilege for me.

What's the best part of your job?

Festival time is the best time! When you get to February and March, and Fringe has started in the city, and Perth Festival is in full swing, you see our streets and cultural venues buzzing with an amazing variety of events. All the hard work is behind us and we can really enjoy what we've worked so hard to create. I often get to experience things that I would never have gone to see otherwise and discovered that I really enjoy contemporary dance performances!

What's your best advice for anyone starting out?

See as much of the state as you possibly can. You can only really believe in what you're marketing if you've experienced it for yourself, as a tourist. You don't need to be comparing it to the east coast and overseas. WA has some incredibly unique experiences. Get out there and discover what you love most.

And what's next for you?

The next Perth Festival is the next big challenge for me! Beyond that, I guess the ultimate would be working on a project that has state-wide impact, showcasing everything that's so incredibly unique about Western Australia.

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