

An Economic & Social Impact Study of Australian Agricultural Shows



Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies Inc.

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Executive Summary

The *Economic and Social Impact Study of Australian Agricultural Shows* set out to identify and measure the economic and social impact of Australian agricultural shows with the aim of providing valuable information to those who support the show movement through participation, sponsorship and volunteerism.

To learn about the impact of agricultural shows, this study completed a document analysis and gathered feedback from 1,900 people. The results have been collated and are detailed in this report. The findings present government and community stakeholders with a clearer understanding of how the show movement plays an important role in increasing social capital and economic development.

Findings

- Agricultural shows have been part of the Australian culture since 1822 and are strongly connected to local communities through volunteerism and the educational, competitive and cultural experiences they provide.
- Agricultural shows create tangible economic and social benefits for communities.
- There are 587 agricultural shows in Australia. Approximately 5.9 million people visit these shows annually.
- The number of visitors to shows in Australia could be in decline. However, Queensland agricultural shows have increased their visitor numbers by 13.7% over the past three years.
- Agricultural shows have an economic impact of at least \$965 million per annum.
- Agricultural shows create social impact by building social capital and increasing family happiness and wellbeing.
- The value of show volunteers in Queensland is estimated at \$84 million.
- Sponsors and exhibitors support an agricultural show for a variety of reasons; 76% said their expectations had been met. The most commonly cited reason for their support and participation is to promote and advertise their business or product.
- To increase the impact of agricultural shows, show societies need advice, training and support. In particular, discussions and actions need to be taken in the areas of:
 1. Building the capacity of show societies;
 2. Increasing financial management skills and revenue-raising strategies;
 3. Increasing community engagement;
 4. Promoting and enhancing youth participation; and
 5. Increasing strategic planning to ensure the popularity and sustainability of the show.

Considerations

The research found that despite the significant economic and social impact agricultural shows create, the show movement could be in decline. There are fewer shows operating and fewer people attending shows than 12 years ago. To reverse this trend, show societies may need to establish new and improved ways of attracting and engaging visitors and sponsors, marketing, fundraising, and conducting research. Achieving an optimal balance between tradition and transformation has never been such a critical and challenging task for show societies.

The importance of recruiting, supporting and retaining volunteers is evident in this report. Volunteers are a valuable community asset and without them the show movement will definitely cease to exist. Show societies need to review their volunteer recruitment strategies and engage younger people with a broad skill base if they are to once again become the ‘must-see’ cultural and recreational event of the year.

Future research

Agricultural shows create impacts in more areas than described in this report. Exploring some of the more detailed aspects of the show and looking at the longer term impacts was beyond the scope of the current study, so it is therefore recommended that future impact assessments collect more data over the period of a number of years. This will mean training show societies about how to improve their data collection approaches and establishing some standardised reporting methods so show societies collect the same information about their shows accurately.

More rigorous approaches to measuring, monitoring and managing the social and economic impacts of shows will provide further insights for show societies and strengthen the case for support with funders, sponsors and stakeholders.

1. Introduction

Anecdotal and historical evidence suggests that agricultural shows hold great meaning for Australian communities. However, their social and economic impact has not been fully established. In response to the lack of recent research about shows, The Australian Government's Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry funded this study to enable the Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Shows to begin exploring the impact of the show movement.

This study, *An Economic and Social Impact Study of Australian Agricultural Shows*, sets out to investigate:

1. The contribution of the agricultural show movement in Australia per annum.
2. The economic impact of the show movement.
3. The social impact of the show movement.
4. How the show movement engages stakeholders such as businesses, schools and families and what benefits this engagement provides communities.

This was a small-scale study that was fraught with complexity given the number of stakeholders and communities involved with the show movement. While completing the research it became evident that although agricultural shows share some common elements, each show society is unique and most rely on the goodwill of volunteers. This has resulted in a wide range of assorted, and often incomplete, data being collected and reported by show societies. While undertaking the study and consulting with stakeholders, it was identified that many impacts could not be easily quantified or identified within the given timeframes to conduct the study. Therefore, this report gives an overview of the impacts and highlights the need for a larger, more comprehensive impact study.

Background

The show movement is one of the oldest continuous events in post-colonial Australian society. The first show was conducted in 1822 on the site of what is now Parliament House in Hobart, nine years before the establishment of the Port Arthur penal settlement in Van Diemen's Land (Darian-Smith & Wills, 1999). Agricultural shows have been popular in every state and territory of Australia since then. Today, the Brisbane 'Ekka' attracts over 400,000 visitors each year while Sydney's Easter Show is Australia's biggest annual event, attracting close to a million visitors over 13 days. The smaller shows in rural and regional areas continue to be popular amongst locals and tourists as the Bream Creek Show in Tasmania (7,000 annual visitors) and Gayndah in Queensland (1,000 annual visitors) demonstrate.

Agricultural shows in Australia have proved to be remarkably resilient. Over the years the number of theme parks and events such as fairs, fetes, festivals and sporting events have increased. This means that the annual show is not always the highpoint in a family's calendar anymore. Despite this, shows still attract sponsors, exhibitors and competitors and many families who want to let their children experience the show.

Given the size of Australia and number of shows held across the country, the show movement offers great breadth and diversity in terms of the size of each event and the primary industry, competitive and cultural experiences they offer visitors and stakeholders. This diversity is inevitably reflected in the types

and scale of impacts that they generate. It is clear that as the size of the show increases so do their potential attendance, media coverage, costs, benefits and impacts.

Like many other events and festivals, agricultural shows have a range of economic and social costs and benefits. Some of these are tangible and evident during or soon after the event, and others are intangible and hard to measure or define, even long after the event has taken place. This may be the reason why there have been only a handful of studies about agricultural shows (e.g. Darian-Smith & Wills, 1999; Meyer & Edwards, 2007), and only one impact study completed by the Australian Council of Agricultural Societies (ACAS) over ten years ago attempting to quantify the economic and social impacts of shows across Australia.

Scope and methodology

The scope of this study was to identify the social and economic impacts of the show movement. The primary focus was on analysing quantitative data most recently collected by shows in 2011, and collecting and analysing qualitative data from a number of stakeholders in 2012.

The scope did not consider agricultural shows impact on variables such as the agriculture and tourism sectors, indigenous culture, the mobile amusement industry, or the wider economic climate. For this reason, this report does not detail an exhaustive list or a full appraisal of all the social and economic impacts.

This study was restricted by a four-month time scale and limited resources, so after conducting a literature review, it was decided that the impact assessment process would use a logic model and mixed methods approach to collect and analyse both qualitative and quantitative data about agricultural shows. Full details of the methodology can be found on page 20.

In total the study consulted with 1,900 people as shown in Table 1. The stakeholders consulted were:

- Directors of the Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies
- Show societies in Queensland
- Agricultural show peak bodies in Australia
- Australian teachers
- Agricultural show visitors, volunteers, showmen and competitors
- Agricultural show sponsors and exhibitors
- The Showmen's Guild of Australasia.

Table 1. List of stakeholders consulted.

Stakeholder Surveyed	No. of respondents
Show Societies and QCAS Directors	188
Visitors (face-to-face)	268
Visitors (online)	552
Volunteers	727
Sponsors and Exhibitors	108
Teachers	56
The Showmen's Guild	1

Challenges and problems encountered

The study commenced in late January 2012 and the report needed to be completed in early June. That gave a small research team a very short timeframe to conduct the study so the questionnaires were promoted using electronic bulletins, flyers and posts on social media sites. While there was a fairly positive response, it was felt that if more time had been available to complete the study, the research could have engaged more respondents.

Most shows are organised by volunteers who do not work full-time for their show society. This means that communication channels can be very slow. Therefore, the research team decided to use both email and telephone to contact show society members. This proved time consuming, but was necessary to ensure show society participation.

Similarly, sponsors and exhibitors had to be contacted by email and phone to encourage their participation. Many times it was difficult getting through to the right person who had the time to share their views and comments.

Another challenge was finding and understanding quantitative and financial data from show societies. Not all committees routinely submit their volunteer and visitor numbers, audited accounts or gate takings to their peak body. Neither do they record how much an average visitor spends at the show. Because of these issues, this study had to rely on sample and anecdotal data to measure the impact of a show.

While some of the challenges were overcome, it is recommended that show societies are supported for a minimum of 12 months to help them collect reliable data. This will enable future impact studies to more accurately report on the economic and social impacts in Australia.

2. Agricultural Shows

Introduction

A mix of exhibition, competition, festivities, commerce, education, arts and culture has popularised agricultural shows in Australia for nearly two centuries. The show has been many families' annual traditional outing for generations and as an institution is a fascinating culture that seems indignant about changing or dying. This section of the report outlines a short history of agricultural shows and show societies, and provides some information about another large organisation that is dependent on shows, The Showmen's Guild.

This section also provides information about the Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies. It describes the results of a survey developed for members of the Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies to explore what areas of support and development might preserve and strengthen the show movement.

Australian agricultural shows - overview

The Australian show movement began in 1822. The early societies were restricted associations that served the interests of the farming gentry, but their membership and activities were soon broadened to serve rural communities and their interests more generally (Darian-Smith & Wills, 1999). By the late nineteenth century, agricultural shows held in Australian cities were already large and influential. They became multifaceted events displaying a lively mix of competitive farming demonstrations, displays of commercial and domestic goods, educational and government promotion, and sideshows and amusements (Darian-Smith, 2008). As colonisation and farming shifted inland, so did the shows. History reveals that typically after a decade or two of a new settlement or country town, an agricultural society would be formed and a show organised (Darian-Smith & Wills, 1999).

Table 2. Australian shows and attendance in 2011

Australian State/Territory	No. of shows operating in 2011	Estimated no. of visitors in 2011
Australian Capital Territory	1	46,319
Northern Territory	6	89,000
Tasmania	23	272,000
South Australia	50	580,117
Western Australia	69	611,103
Victoria	115	1,500,000
Queensland	129	1,292,515*
New South Wales	194	1,529,461
TOTAL	587	5,920,515

* This is the visitor attendance recorded by 126 shows' as three shows data was not available for this report.

Today, there are 587 individual shows throughout Australia, 8% fewer shows than in 2000 when there were 617 shows (Australian Council of Agricultural Societies (ACAS), 2000). This decline may be due to:

- Show societies amalgamating with neighbouring towns.
- Declining rural populations.
- Fewer volunteers to help run the show.
- Rising insurance costs.
- Poor marketing strategies and community engagement.
- General economic recession and rising cost of living.
- People preferring to attend other events and festivals.

Attendance figures collected by show societies indicate that the number of visitors through the gate was 5.9 million people in 2011 (26% of the current population). This is 4.8 million less than in 2000, when research conducted by Australian Council of Agricultural Societies (ACAS) estimated that 10.7 million visited a show (56% of the population). Meyer (2005) believes this change may be due to a number of environmental, social and cultural factors, including:

- Changing rural communities and climatic conditions.
- High unemployment and the consequential out-migration of younger members of rural communities.
- A large untrained and ageing volunteer base.
- Unchanged event programs and an unwillingness or inability to change to reflect the demographic structure of the show communities and target markets.
- The competitive environment of other events and leisure pursuits.

In defiance of these challenges, some shows are managing to improve their attendance figures. The Royal Melbourne Show reports approximately 500,000 people attending in 2010, the strongest overall attendance since 2006 (The Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria, 2011). The Brisbane Ekka has also seen a continued growth in attendance figures from 252,004 in 2007 to 412,995 just five years later in 2011 (RNA, 2012).

A state that appears to be still attracting visitors is Queensland. Overall, 126 show societies report that 1,292,515 people visited a Queensland show in 2011. Although this figure does not allow for repeat visitors who visit more than one show, that is the highest recorded attendance in the past five years.

A comparison between attendance figures for eight Queensland city shows and 89 country shows over the past three years (2009–2011) indicates that city show attendance is on the increase by 9.6% (although average attendance was slightly down in 2011), while country shows in Queensland are on average improving their attendance figures (by 21.5% over 2009–2011). These results are shown in Figure 1.

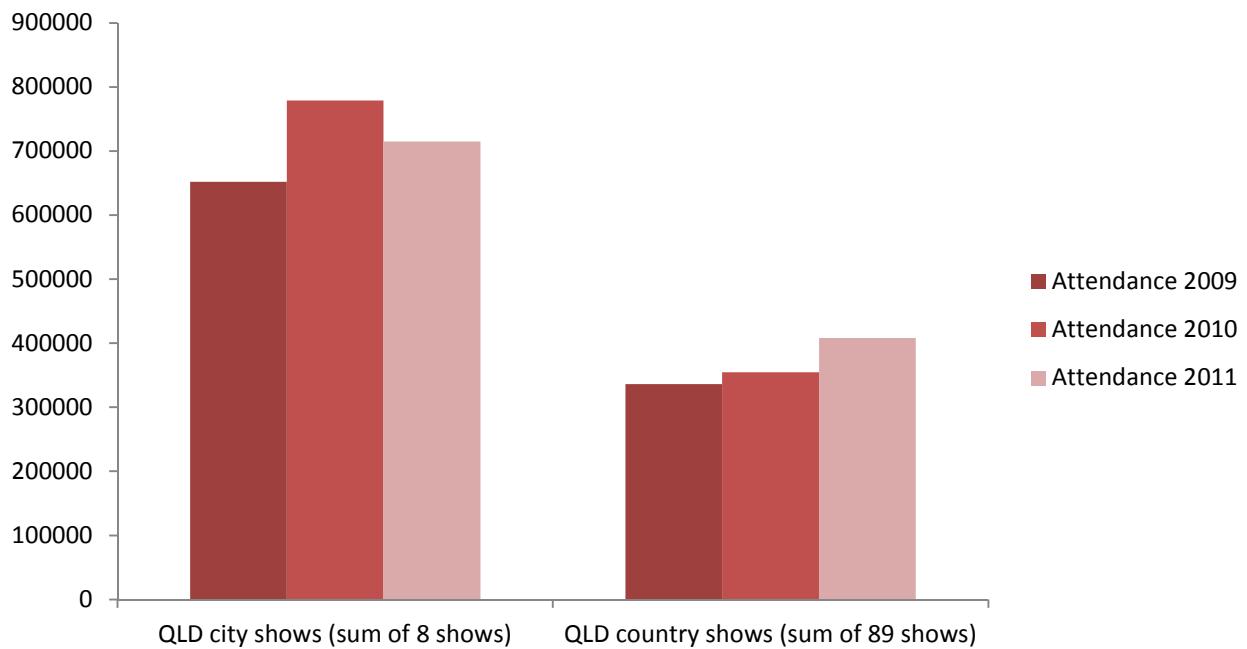


Figure 1. Comparison of attendance figures at Queensland city and country shows 2009-2011

Governance

Each Australian show society is governed independently by a voluntary management committee, with the exception of two shows in Queensland, which are managed by their regional council. Show society committee members typically include local residents, farmers, and members of the community such as business owners, professionals or government representatives.

Show societies are supported by a state chamber or council that acts as a peak body. These peak bodies vary in size according to the number of shows that are active in their state or territory. Table 3 lists the state bodies and when they were established. Today, the largest is The Agricultural Societies Council of NSW Inc. (ASC NSW), which oversees 194 show societies.

Each state and territory capital city has at least one royal show, which are larger shows than their country counterparts. The royal shows belong to an organisation called the Australian Council of Agricultural Societies (ACAS). This organisation promotes and encourages the development and improvement of agricultural shows throughout Australia and provides scholarships to young people to develop careers in agriculture.

Table 3. List of peak bodies for show societies and date they were established.

State Body/Chamber/Council	Established
The Agricultural Show Council of Tasmania	1822
The Agricultural Societies Council of NSW Inc. (ASC NSW)	1822
The Royal Agricultural Society of Western Australia Inc.	1829
The Agricultural Societies Council of SA Inc. (ASC SA)	1839
Victorian Agricultural Shows Ltd. (VAS Ltd)	1840
Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies Inc. (QCAS)	1909
The Royal Agricultural Society of Northern Territory Inc.	1951

The state peak bodies support their show societies in various ways, such as administration assistance, training, lobbying, and facilitating the state and national competitions such as ‘Rural Ambassador’, ‘Showgirl’ and ‘Young Judges and Paraders in Sheep and Cattle’. The only state with an employed CEO is Queensland (QCAS).

The aims and objectives of the peak bodies include:

- To encourage the sustainable development of agriculture by staging events and competitions that support agricultural excellence and innovation (NSW).
- To educate the community about the importance of primary industry in the economy (SA).
- To serve and enrich the people of Western Australia by showcasing the resources and endeavours of its people (WA).
- To provide education in relation to the conduct of shows generally, the judging of exhibits, the conduct of competitions and the promotion of pastoral, agricultural, horticultural and industrial knowledge (QLD).

The state-based peak bodies are members of the Federal Council of Agricultural Societies (FCAS). This organisation has a number of roles but it was primarily set up to bring together the state bodies to enhance communication and collaboration between show societies.

FCAS and ACAS are represented on the board of The National Chamber of Agricultural Societies (NCAS), which supports and promotes Australian agricultural excellence and innovation through events, competition and education, not limited to agricultural shows.

Most peak bodies are also members of The Royal Agricultural Society of the Commonwealth (RASC), which is a confederation of over 50 leading national and regional agricultural show societies, agricultural associations and research bodies working in 20 Commonwealth countries around the world.

Funding

Agricultural societies are funded in a variety of ways including grants, sponsorships and member subscription fees. The biggest form of income is usually their gate takings on show day. Most show societies are also given a significant amount of in-kind support from volunteers, businesses and government, and without this might not be economically viable.

Membership rates vary from \$10 to \$115 per person. As an example, the RNA offers annual memberships for \$105 (Country Adult) and \$115 (City Adult). The membership provides the members

with a member badge and one transferable guest badge, enabling free 10-day admission to Ekka for the member and a guest.

RNA membership benefits include:

- Access to the Members' Grandstand and Bar
- Free use of the lockers during Ekka
- Reduced competition fees for most sections
- Discounted venue hire at the RNA Showgrounds for private functions outside of Ekka
- Free parking at the RNA Showgrounds for events outside of Ekka
- Use of members' facilities at interstate royal shows
- Regular 'Showbiz' newsletter
- Junior membership starting from \$45.00.

The RNA also offers corporate memberships at an annual fee of \$500. Businesses receive one member badge and four transferrable guest badges, enabling the business to reward staff and clients with unlimited visits to the show. In addition to the individual membership benefits, corporate members are provided with the opportunity to attend exclusive RNA corporate functions, allowing businesses to network with other organisations associated with the RNA.

Smaller show societies also have membership fees, although usually much cheaper in price and without all the benefits a city show can offer. Because of this, many show societies do not actively promote or advertise memberships. They tend to rely on grants, sponsorship and gate takings to fund their shows.

The Showmen's Guild

Since the early agricultural shows, entertainment has been provided for visitors in side-show alley by the mobile travelling industry. This industry has grown in strength and quality over the past 15 years, and now a group of 4,000 men and women travel throughout Australia for 12 months of the year visiting agricultural shows to provide show societies with amusements.

Today, the manually driven Razzle Dazzle, the wooden Helter Skelter, the petrol driven Horse-o-Plane and the Tent Show have been replaced with the very latest rides the market has on offer, each costing at least \$1 million (Pink, 2012). The young and young at heart are now catered for with cutting-edge, state-of-the-art rides and amusements and never before has the Australian public had such a choice and variety of modern world-class attractions (Durkin, 2006).

To support the number of showmen on the road travelling around shows and carnivals, the first Showmen's Guild was convened in Orange, NSW in 1908 and The Showmen's Guild of Australasia (the SGA) was registered in 1927 as an "Organization of Employers in connection with the Showmen's Industry". The Guild was established as a peak body for its members and its main role was to administer The Showmen's Guild Code of Conduct.

As a result of the growing numbers of showmen around the country there are now a number of guilds in Australia, including the Showmen's Guild of South Australia, Victorian Showmen's Guild, Showmen's Guild of Tasmania. The largest guild is The Showmen's Guild of Australasia (which operates in

Queensland, New South Wales and the Northern Territory) and has about 60% of showmen as members.

The role of the Showmen's Guild of Australasia includes supporting and educating its members on health and safety standards and legislation relevant to the amusement industry. This function has vastly improved the industry's standard of presentation, not only through investment but also through accreditation and auditing (Durkin, 2006), and helped showmen become experts in their business and a much valued and needed resource for agricultural shows.

The interdependence between shows and showmen is significant. Without the showmen, an agricultural show might find it hard to attract a large target market, and without the shows, showmen would be out of a job. For that reason, many show societies use the support of showmen and The Showmen's Guild to undertake special projects and promotions aimed at increasing visitors. In many ways they rely on each other to do a good job, and to bring a successful show to the community.

I have been part of the Showmen's Guild of Australasia basically my whole life. We are known to most show societies throughout Australia as the 'extended family'. In Queensland alone, we have about 300 trucks on the road at any one time, driving to a show as far north as Cairns and as far west as Mt Isa. Once there, our focus is to support the show society put on a successful and entertaining show. Agricultural Shows are definitely needed in their local area as they are a great asset to the community – they are the only event within a small rural town that bring a community together. (Pink, 2012)

The Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies (QCAS)

The Queensland Chamber of Agriculture was formed in 1900 by a number of rural industry groups. Over the years as more agricultural shows were established, problems started to develop with clashes between show dates. This prompted the need to create an independent group in 1909, which is now known as the Queensland Chamber of Agricultural Societies Incorporated (QCAS). When this incorporated body held its first meeting, there were 20 shows represented. The shows agreed to obtain permits from QCAS before announcing the date of their show. This avoided any unnecessary clashes and allowed travelling patrons, competitors and showmen to attend numerous shows.

QCAS has always been based in Brisbane and had governing directors come from shows all over Queensland. When membership reached over 100 shows in 1952, it became evident that the workload was getting too much for the Board of Directors. So it was agreed that 11 sub-chambers should be formed and representatives from each area would be nominated to the central Board. The Board of Directors and its sub-chambers have continued to develop the organisation over the years under the leadership of a number of passionate and experienced presidents and members who volunteer their time to continue the work of QCAS.

In 2009 when membership reached more than 125 shows, QCAS decided to appoint its first CEO to support the Board of Directors and the organisation. Appointing a CEO enabled QCAS to have a more visible and active role in the areas of training, marketing, fundraising and promotion. The CEO also plays an active role in facilitating the QCAS Next Generation Committee, which has 10 voluntary committee members and 100 members. This committee works to increase youth participation in the organising and

coordinating of local shows. This includes successfully sourcing funds to hold youth development workshops, helping to run various show competitions, providing assistance to individual shows, and helping young people attract sponsors and run new events at shows.

In addition to the organisation's core functions (see Table 5), QCAS also:

1. Runs QCAS state competitions such as QCAS Country Showgirl, Rural Ambassador, Young Judges and Parader Finalists. These competitions are held across the state throughout the year and the winners announced by QCAS during the Brisbane Ekka in August. QCAS oversees the competitions and sources the sponsors and judges.
2. Works with the Showmen's Guild to hold an annual "Think Tank" for show societies, providing them with an opportunity to network with show entertainment, talk to representatives from the Showmen's Guild, and learn more about how the Showmen's Guild can assist shows. The Think Tank day has been running for eight years with an average attendance of 150 people each year.

Queensland show societies

There are 129 show societies in Queensland and 128 are members of QCAS. Of these member shows, 11 are considered large shows as they take more than \$100,000 in gate takings and run for three or more consecutive days. The other 117 shows are small to medium sized. They run from one to three days and are supported by more than 13,500 volunteers every year.

This study found that most of the volunteers who manage the show societies are passionate and have a great sense of purpose. However, a majority are untrained and inexperienced in aspects of planning and staging events other than agricultural shows, and they lack the time and expertise to effectively carry out market research, visitor satisfaction surveys and even collecting statistics such as attendance figures (only 30% do this formally). Only 7% of shows compare the success of their show with other events in the community, and just 10% effectively engage younger people with the show.

Table 4. Estimated percentage of Queensland show societies formally undertaking elements of corporate governance and event management.

Percent of Queensland show societies formally undertaking...

Strategic Planning	15%
Marketing Plans	15%
Market Research	15%
Sponsor and Membership Engagement	15%
Youth Engagement	10%
Visitor Satisfaction Surveys	5%
Volunteer Succession Planning	5%
Volunteer Training and Development	2%

QCAS is concerned that these challenges are threatening the ability of agricultural shows to thrive in a competitive and evolving events industry. Therefore, in order to gather some information and feedback from show societies, this study developed a survey for show society volunteers to assess how satisfied they are with the current QCAS activities, and where QCAS needs to devote more of its time and energy to support them. The 128 member show societies in Queensland were invited to take part and 108 responded (84%).

Four statements were used to assess the show society's satisfaction with QCAS: for example, "In most ways, QCAS are doing a good job" and "In general, I am satisfied with QCAS". Respondents were asked to indicate their satisfaction on a scale from 1(strongly disagree) to 7(strongly agree). The results found that overall the show societies are very satisfied with QCAS and the support they receive. The mean score was 5.67 ($SD=1.04$) with 83.4% stating that they thought QCAS supported show societies either satisfactorily or excellently.

The eight different activities and services that QCAS provides in Table 5 were assessed to determine how important these functions are to show societies. The respondents were asked to indicate whether these activities were 1 (unimportant), 2 (of little importance), 3 (moderately important), 4 (important), or 5 (very important).

Table 5. Core activities of QCAS

Activity	Description
1	Activities that promote and protect the general interest and objectives of show societies in Queensland.
2	Activities that promote the general uniform principles in the working and general management of agricultural shows.
3	Education in relation to the conduct of shows generally, the judging of exhibits, the conduct of competitions and the promotion of pastoral, agricultural, horticultural and industrial knowledge.
4	Activities that represent the interest of societies in dealings with government departments and other entities on matters of important to the societies.
5	Training to show society members and volunteers.
6	Managing and sourcing insurance.
7	Organising show schedules.
8	Next Generation. (This committee encourages young people to participate in shows)

The results represented in Figure 2 show that show societies feel that all of the activities undertaken by QCAS are important and the two most important activities are managing and sourcing insurance, and encouraging young people to engage in shows (Next Generation).

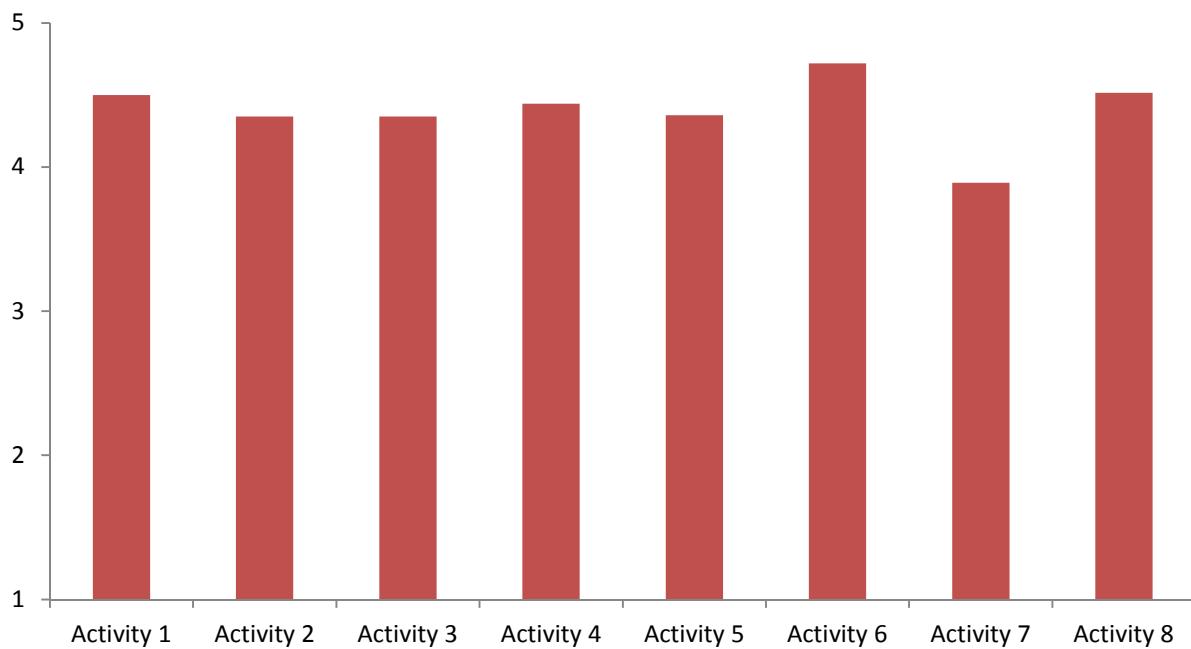


Figure 2. Results of show societies' assessment of how important QCAS activities are.

A total of 61 respondents offered suggestions and ideas about how QCAS could provide more support to their show society. The most frequently mentioned request (22%) was for increased training. A majority of respondents also indicated that they wanted more help to engage young people, gain funding through sponsorships and grants, and develop or improve their website and Facebook page.

List of areas where show societies want more support:

- Training
- Youth participation
- Sponsors and grants
- Website and social media
- Insurance
- Entertainment
- Marketing and advertising
- Handbooks
- Security
- Show management and compliance
- A list of judges
- Current show society details on QCAS website
- Volunteer management
- Information/communication
- Cleaning and waste
- Health and safety training and supplies
- Budgets
- Show dates and scheduling
- Lobbying and advocacy

The survey was also used to gather insights and ideas from show societies about how the show movement might be strengthened. Along with the comments made by volunteers (many who sit on show society committees), the comments from show societies were collated into more than 40 A4 pages of qualitative data. The comments were analysed to determine how show societies might improve the general success and development of agricultural shows. The show societies and volunteers identified five critical areas:

1. Build the capacity of show societies

- Increasing skills in the areas of governance, holding meetings, event management and health and safety.
- Increasing leadership skills, team building and role clarity within show societies.
- Developing youth engagement and succession planning strategies.
- Enhancing volunteer management, recruitment and retention strategies and skills.
- Improving the effectiveness of marketing, media relations and communications.

2. Increase financial management skills and revenue-raising strategies

- Increasing show societies' budgeting and fiscal management skills.
- Effectively sourcing increased funding, sponsors and grants.
- Increasing the number of other events and fundraising activities.
- Establishing ongoing revenue raising strategies.
- Managing insurance costs and insurance issues.

3. Increase community engagement

- Actively recruiting and retaining volunteers with a skill mix.
- Offering volunteers opportunities to develop their skills and employment prospects.
- Effectively engaging families and young competitors.
- Effectively engaging community organisations and service clubs.
- Promoting and supporting schools and youth groups to participate.

4. Promote and enhance youth participation

- Engaging schools to contribute and participate.
- Actively recruiting and retaining young people.
- Promoting and supporting young people to have leadership and governance roles.
- Promoting and supporting young competitors and young judges.

5. Increase strategic planning to ensure the popularity and sustainability of the show

- Promoting diverse and new attractions and competitions.
- Sourcing a mix of popular and new entertainment.
- Promoting the educational elements of the show.
- Developing a website and utilising modern technology and social media.
- Developing positive sponsor and government relationships.
- Conducting effective evaluations and impact studies.

Summary

The history of agricultural shows is long and rich. It is a large movement consisting of 587 shows and 10 peak bodies that work tirelessly to promote and sustain the culture and aims of agricultural shows.

This study found that the number of shows is declining and attendance numbers appear to be falling. This is a worrying trend for show societies who are aiming to preserve the agricultural show as an important cultural and recreational event in the community. Show societies may need to address the environmental, social and cultural changes in their community and become more efficient and effective at engaging the community.

Feedback from Queensland show societies found that on the whole they are satisfied with QCAS, the peak body for shows in Queensland. They were able to identify a number of areas where QCAS and show societies could strengthen and develop the show movement.

3. Understanding Social & Economic Impacts

Introduction

Social and economic impacts are the changes that occur in communities, groups or individuals, as a result of programs, policies, interventions or events. They include all the ways in which an individual or community experiences positive and negative changes to their lives, culture and quality of life.

The economic impacts of events often refer to the monetary and commercial outcomes generated by an event and the consequences this has for a community. Social impacts reflect how the event alters the way in which people live and relate to one another and their community.

Measuring economic and social impacts is particularly complex and difficult and there are a number of ways to complete impact assessments. As a brief overview of the issues, this section explores some of the literature related to impact assessments. It then explains this study's logic model approach and the methodologies used to capture some impacts of agricultural shows in Australia.

Impact measurement approaches taken in the literature

A search of relevant academic and industry literature was undertaken to provide some guidance about contemporary practice in evaluating the impact of agricultural shows. The search located a study that surveyed 338 show societies across Australia to gather general information about the role of agricultural shows in communities (Darien-Smith & Wills, 1999). Subsequently, Meyer and Edwards (2007) offered a case study of one show to gain an insight into volunteer-managed festivals and in particular the issues faced by agricultural show volunteers. Only one study was found about the economic and social impact of shows Australia-wide (Australian Council of Agricultural Societies, 2000). Conducted by consultancy firm Environmetrics, it was completed using document analysis and individual interviews with 10 rural show societies in five Australian states.

Apart from these studies, there is an obvious gap in research about the impact of agricultural shows in Australia. Looking further afield, there are some articles and industry presentations that address the role and impact of agricultural shows in the UK and the US, and a significant number of articles from academic fields such as tourism, leisure studies, and event and festival management address 'events' more generally, including rural and regional events and evaluation methods.

Examples of the overseas research include Gray (2010) who reports the results of a detailed anthropological examination of a small agricultural show at Teviothead in the Scottish Borders. Apparently small details such as the categories of exhibits, selection of judges, and the trophy presentation are read as strategies for responding to changing circumstances such as a reducing local population and the changing nature of agriculture and for asserting and redefining community in the face of these changes. Other examples are two industry studies from the US investigating the economic and social impact of agricultural shows (or 'fairs') in two predominantly rural states. Pierson-Jolliffe (2008) outlines the functions and benefits of agriculture-based 'fairs' along with entertainment-based 'festivals' in the state of West Virginia, and makes some suggestions about optimal business practices in administering and subsidising fairs and festivals. Ciccacerelli et al. (2001) attempt to calculate the economic impact of agricultural fairs in the state of Montana based on a survey about attendance, revenues and expenses sent to 36 fairs. This student project, however, yielded very limited results, given a low survey response rate and issues about compatibility between the data provided by different fairs.

The literature most beneficial to this study described the approaches researchers have taken to measure the impact of events and festivals, which might also be applied to agricultural shows. Taking a quantitative approach, Tyrrell and Ismail (2005) propose a method for estimating the attendance at, and through this the economic impact of, an 'open-gate' festival, based on gate counts and a brief random survey of festival participants. Most recently, Gibson, Waitt, Walmsley, and Connell, (2010) conducted a series of in-depth case studies and surveyed 480 festival organisers of non-metropolitan cultural festivals. They used the survey to gather quantitative data about issues such as the event aims, history, crowd size, stalls and stages, attendees, volunteerism, sponsorship, community attitudes and estimated economic impacts. They gathered some interesting information about festivals but acknowledged that the limitations included not being able to verify data, and the possibility that organisers had exaggerated their figures.

Reid (2007; Reid, 2011) discusses aspects of three non-show rural events in Southwest Queensland – the Goondiwindi Spring Festival, the Allora Blue Cow Country Music Festival, and the Inglewood Olive Festival – based on 54 in-depth interviews with event stakeholders in these three rural communities. Reid (2007) uses the findings from these interviews to propose an approach to assessing the social consequences of rural events that goes beyond simply characterizing consequences as positive or negative. For example, rural events can break down social barriers in rural communities, but as these barriers are often deeply entrenched a 'challenge for rural events is ensuring that the event is not overly representative of one of these social groupings, otherwise the event risks losing the support of community members from the other group' (p. 95). Reid (2011) analyses the same data, applying a stakeholder theory approach to rural event planning. Primary and secondary stakeholder groups for each event are identified, along with strategies to manage stakeholders. This article concludes that 'It is essential that rural event managers are aware and monitor relationships to ensure stakeholder satisfaction with the organization' (p. 33).

Small (2007) describes the use of factor analysis to refine the Social Impact Perception scale, which measures residents' perceptions of the social impacts resulting from community festivals. Wood (2005) describes the development and testing of relatively simple survey questionnaires to measure the economic and social impacts of two community events in Lancashire, in this way offering 'practical guidelines for undertaking the measurement and evaluation of some of the major impacts of local authority events' (p. 37). Edwards, Reid and Small (2005) discuss the use of focus groups as a means of pre-testing questionnaires used in assessing the social impact of events.

More complex instruments have been developed by researchers such as Carlsen, Getz and Soutar (2001) who identify a list of pre- and post-event criteria that industry experts and academics agree are important in evaluating events. They suggest a number of measures for evaluating the underlying elements of the criteria as the basis for developing a standardised model for evaluating tourism events. Gursoy, Kim and Uysal (2004) trialled a 17-item instrument to measure event organisers' perceptions of the impact of events on local communities, based on the four central categories of community cohesiveness, economic benefits, social incentives, and social costs. Their review of the literature on residents' perceptions of festivals and special events concludes that 'festivals and special events are likely to generate economic benefits for the local community, serve to build community cohesiveness, and generate social incentives for residents and businesses' (p. 173).

Fredline, Jago and Deery (2003) report on a project to develop a survey instrument to measure the social impact of events. They point out that 'specific events have a low likelihood of lasting more than a couple of years if they are not aligned to the social and environmental values of the local community' (p. 34). Their research, based on two city and one regional event in Victoria, identified 42 perceptions of specific event impacts, which were organised around six strong factors – social and economic development benefits, concerns about justice and inconvenience, impact on public facilities, impacts on behaviour and environment, long-term impact on community, and impact on prices of some goods and services – as the basis for developing a more compressed scale with approximately 10 to 12 items.

Getz (1989) promotes a community development approach. He emphasises the need to take account of different perspectives on special events, including the visitor experience and the community development perspective. Rogers and Anastasiadou (2011) agree, stating that there has been limited research on how communities feel part of and contribute to the festival experience. They propose a framework to increase community involvement in festivals, emphasising involvement of schools, volunteering opportunities, participation in decision making, accessibility, and business cooperation.

Woolcock and Narayan (2000) place an emphasis on the social capital perspective. They believe that this perspective, within a community development framework, is a crucial component of both the means and ends of economic and social development. Arcodia and Whitford (2006) also state that too much attention has been devoted to the economic rather than the social benefits of festivals. They argue that researchers should measure the social impacts because festivals are primarily social phenomena with the potential to provide a variety of predominantly positive social benefits including social capital (Arcodia & Whitford, 2006).

Key issues arising from the literature

The literature review established that there are a range of methodologies and approaches taken by researchers and event organisers. They are guided by the researcher's preferred research style, the aim of the research, and the time/budget that is available for the research.

In light of the literature, this study considered:

1. Involving stakeholders;
2. Collecting qualitative and quantitative data;
3. Taking a community development and social capital perspective; and
4. Attempting to measure both direct and indirect impacts.

Theory of change

Initially, a consultation with Queensland show societies and the Directors of QCAS helped to develop a logic model to illustrate the broad impacts that occur as a result of an agricultural show. The model describes the inputs and activities required to achieve the outputs, and what the changes are for the various stakeholders. The program 'logic' describes how this chain of actions ultimately leads to a series of cultural, social, environmental and economic outcomes and impacts for individuals, families, industry and the community. The Logic Model (page 22) identifies the key outcomes that, if measured, would support agricultural societies and funders to have strategic discussions concerning future funding and support to show societies.

The key outcomes are:

1. Increased community engagement.
2. A healthy competitive culture.
3. Increased revenue and economic benefits for the community.
4. Growth and sustainability of the show movement.

These outcomes can be measured using qualitative and quantitative methodologies and with a community development perspective.

Studying the impact of agricultural shows – methodology

Stakeholder Surveyed	Methodology
Show Societies and QCAS Directors	To develop the Logic Model, show societies were invited to participate online and QCAS Directors attended a one-day workshop. Show societies in Queensland were chosen as a purposive sample to represent show societies in Australia. A customised survey was developed and respondents were invited to participate online or via phone. The CEO of QCAS provided anecdotal evidence. A document analysis was completed to assess information about show societies in Australia.
The Showmen's Guild	A personal interview was conducted with President George Pink.
Visitors (face to face)	A random selection of visitors at four Queensland shows were consulted to gain information about the positive and negative impacts perceived by stakeholders. This pilot study was used to assess the 42 impacts as identified by Fredline, Jago and Deery (2003).
Visitors (on line)	Based on the work of Fredline, Jago and Deery (2003) and the pilot study, a survey instrument was developed to measure 26 possible impacts. Respondents to the survey included visitors, volunteers, showmen, sponsors and competitors who were asked to report their perceptions on whether these impacts had changed positively, changed negatively or had not changed at all. Stakeholders were also asked about the shows impact on their quality of life, and the community's quality of life. Their answers were collated in quote form. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods was used to engage stakeholders in the survey.
Volunteers	Using a number of standardised and validated items, volunteers were asked to respond to questions that measured: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Engagement with their show society• Organisational commitment• Recruitment practices• Performance• Supervision and support• Satisfaction with learning and development• Rewards and recognition

- Satisfaction with communication
- Workplace morale
- Role clarity

Volunteers were also asked about what was working well and how the show movement could be improved and made more sustainable. Their answers were analysed and collated in quote form. A combination of purposive and snowball sampling methods was used to identify volunteers to complete this survey.

Sponsors and Exhibitors	A customised online survey was developed to consult with sponsors and exhibitors. These stakeholders were asked about their reasons for investing in shows, and what their investment and return was. A purposive sampling method was used to identify sponsors and exhibitors.
Schools	A customised online survey was developed for teachers who are considered expert witnesses of the shows impact on children and young people. A purposive and snowball sampling method was used to identify teachers.

In total, 1,900 respondents participated in the research and provided information to assess the impacts and understand the challenges and issues faced by agricultural shows in Australia.

Limitations

The limitations of the methodologies used in this study include:

1. Show societies do not collect annual statistics consistently or accurately.
2. The small timeframe limited the study's scope and also the number of respondents who could participate.
3. Using online surveys means that respondents are typically people who have computers and are comfortable completing online questionnaires, meaning many older stakeholders and those who do not have access to a computer may not have participated.
4. It was not logistically possible to verify all the data provided by show societies and state peak bodies.

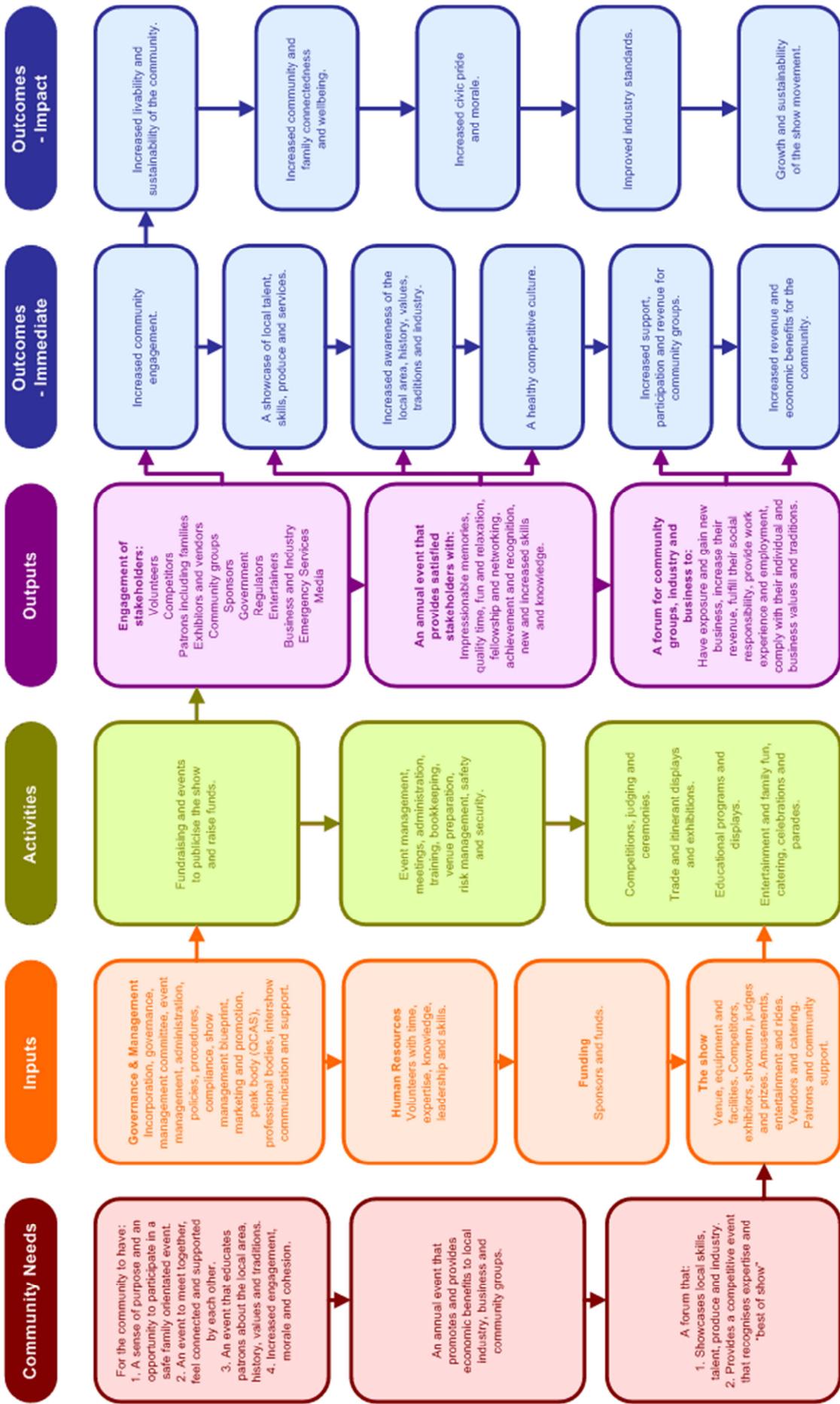
Summary

There are a wide range of approaches to impact assessment. This study used a logic model approach to capture some of the changes that are assumed to occur as a result of an agricultural show. A mixture of qualitative and quantitative data was then collected and analysed to provide some evidence about what changes take place for different stakeholders.

The limitations of the research meant that this study became a preliminary and basic exploration of the impacts. More data collection and consultation are needed to further explore and verify the conclusions made in the report.

Queensland Shows

An agricultural show aims to increase community sustainability and wellbeing by enhancing economic activity, social and emotional bonds.



4. Economic Impact

Introduction

This study aimed to explore some of the economic impacts that agricultural shows have on Australian communities. These impacts are typically the broad economic benefits that accrue to an economy (Crompton, 2006).

The economic impacts of an event can only be calculated accurately with reliable data collected from those people who attend, work and benefit financially from the event. In the case of agricultural shows, most show societies do not collect any of the critical data needed to calculate the economic impacts of their show. Therefore, this study had to use a sample of show data, previous research and anecdotal evidence to form some conclusions about agricultural shows.

To gain some specific feedback about agricultural shows, consultation with a number of sponsors and exhibitors who attended a show in 2011 or 2012 was conducted. In total, 108 sponsors and exhibitors provided information about their involvement and the economic benefits to their business. This section describes the results.

Given the limitations of collecting and analysing economic data, the conclusions in this section are estimated, but they do give some important indications about the economic importance of agricultural shows.

Attendance

For much of their history, agricultural shows have been an eagerly anticipated once-a-year cornucopia of sights, sounds and tastes, and a premier site for mass entertainment (Scott & Laurie, 2008). But over the years, the variety and frequency of festivals, cultural and sporting events have increased, making agricultural shows now one of many recreational activities that people can participate in.

While the vast majority of Australians (85%) visit at least one cultural venue or event per annum (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010), research in 2007 about cultural festivals found that in at least three states of Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and New South Wales, sporting and community events are more common than agricultural events. In these states 36.5% of festivals are sports-related, 15% are community-related and 13.1% are agriculture-related festivals (Gibson et al., 2010). The study found that festivals have proliferated in recent years and concluded that this is both a sign that the sector is growing and becoming more sophisticated, and that the general public increasingly see festivals as a fun way to use their leisure time (Gibson & Stewart, 2009).

To assess if agricultural shows have been able to maintain the community's interest and participation, this study analysed attendance figures collected by the agricultural society peak bodies.

The analysis revealed that Queensland shows have been slightly increasing their attendance figures, by 13.7% per annum, during 2009–2011. This is the equivalent of 28% of Queensland's population attending a show. Queensland country shows have had an increase in attendance of 21.5%. And, despite Queensland city shows having a slight drop in attendance in 2011, over the past three years they have increased their attendance by an average of 9.6%.

Only attendance figures for 2011 were collected from the other states. Combined with Queensland's 2011 data, the results estimate that the number of Australians and visiting tourists who attended a show in 2011 was 5.9 million, the equivalent of approximately 26% of the population. This figure represents a significant decrease in the number attending shows from 11 years ago when research found that 10.7 million visitors attended the show (Australian Council of Agricultural Societies (ACAS), 2000), the equivalent of 56% of the population in 2000. The ACAS research found that more people visited an agricultural show than the cinema. This does not appear to be the case anymore, yet it is still one of the major recreation and leisure activities Australians can participate in annually compared to other similar activities.

Figure 3 below compares agricultural show attendance to the attendance at other cultural experiences and events (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2010).

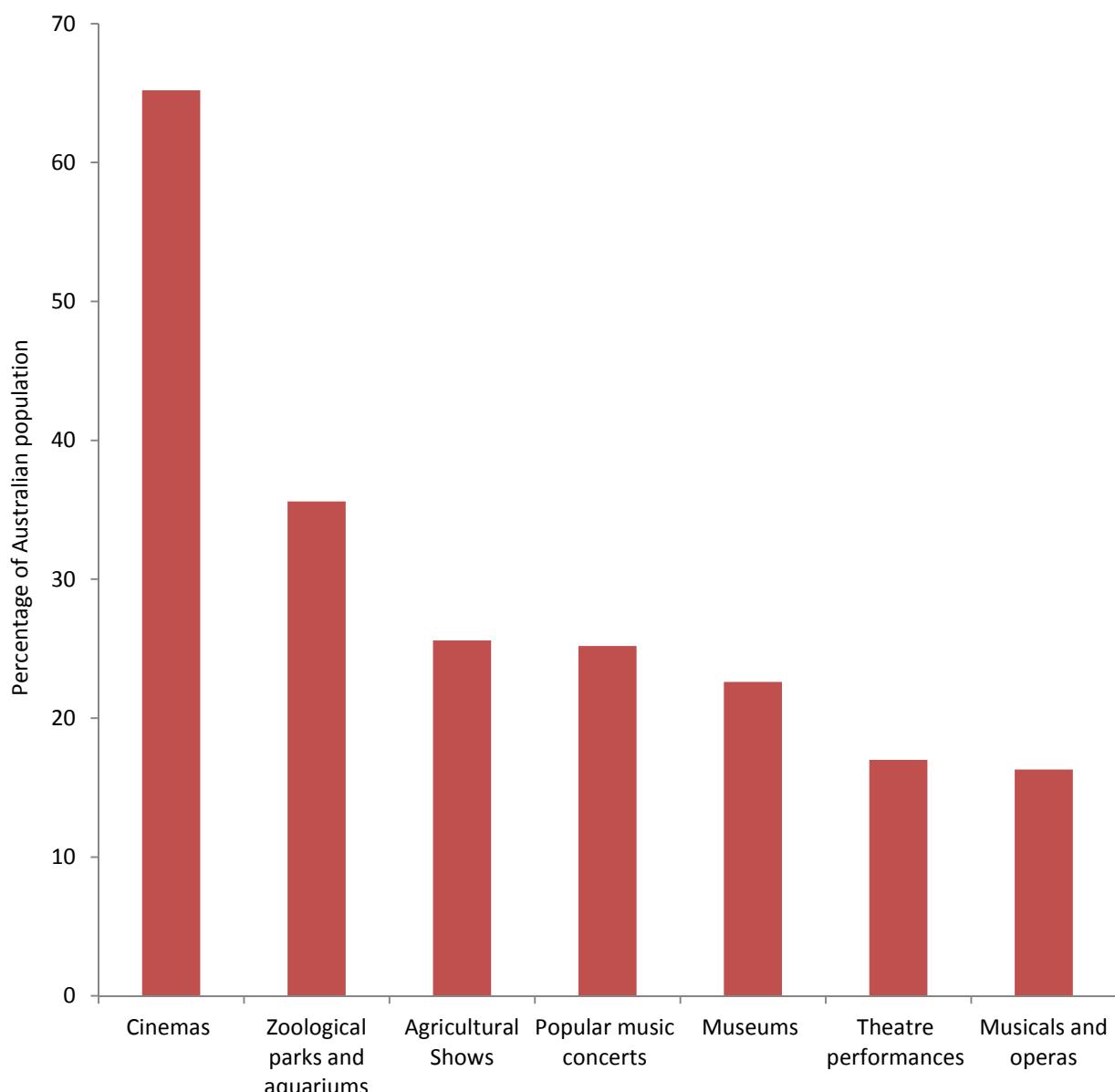


Figure 3. Percentage of Australian population that visit agricultural shows compared with other cultural and recreational events.

The results indicate that the drop in attendance figures at agricultural shows compared to other events might mean that show societies must continually offer a wide range of experiences for all age groups, at a price they can afford, in order to keep attracting people who have disposable income to spend on leisure, recreation and cultural events.

The Economic Impact

The economic impact has been calculated by:

1. Calculating the mean net income of a show using data from seven shows in Queensland.
2. Estimating the average spend of a visitor to the show.
3. Using the Queensland sample to average the impact to the Australian economy.

The sample shows were five larger shows with an income of over \$100,000 and two smaller shows with incomes of \$58,000 and \$64,000. Their income was derived from attendance fees, donations and sponsorships and this income was spent on employee costs, food and beverages, maintenance, prizes, entertainment and insurance. The 2011 audited accounts indicate that the two smaller country shows operated at a loss and the five larger shows made a surplus.

The mean income for the sample shows was calculated and used to establish what the mean might be across all 129 shows in Queensland. This mean was then used to calculate what the average income would be in all 587 Australian shows. With a multiplier of 1.5, the results in Table 6 show that agricultural shows are generating an economic impact of at least \$965 million per annum.

Table 6. Calculating the economic impact of agricultural shows in Australia.

Estimated mean income of sample shows		\$192,902
Estimated mean income of Queensland shows	129 shows	\$24,884,376
Average spend of Queensland visitors (129 shows)	\$88 per person	\$116,449,447
Subtotal (Direct impact Queensland)		\$141,333,823
Direct impact (Australia)		\$630,800,650
Direct and indirect impact (Australia)	Multiplier 1.5	\$964,685,513

The multiplier includes the indirect benefits such as subsequent rounds of re-spending that are distributed through the greater economy. These indirect benefits are economic benefits for local suppliers and business in industries such as, accommodation and tourism. To calculate the exact multiplier for agricultural shows, significant research would need to be undertaken beyond the scope of this study. This calculation has used the multiplier of 1.5, which is an accepted value and is a fair comparison to the research conducted in 2000 (Australian Council of Agricultural Societies (ACAS), 2000; Bond, 2008).

The estimated impact:

- Does not include the resource sharing, in-kind and non-monetary donations provided to show societies because this study could not identify any show society that routinely records and calculates this figure. This (presumably large) intangible amount could therefore not be included in this impact equation despite the economic benefits for shows and the community.

- Does not include the benefits to shows provided by thousands of volunteers who donate their time as well as many other non-monetary resources such as fuel, machinery and equipment. This study found that Queensland volunteers donate at least \$84 million just in donated time, so it is assumed that volunteers Australia-wide donate significantly more (which should ideally be considered in future impact studies).
- Does not include the impact on, or by, the mobile travelling industry.
- Does not include sales made by exhibitors or profitability for businesses that sponsor agricultural shows.
- Cannot identify the percentage of non-local travellers and tourists who come to the area because of the show. It might be presumed that they bring new money into the local economy and possibly push the indirect impact higher due to their use of accommodation, local restaurants and other tourist attractions.
- Does not include the transfer of expenditure or remove the incidences of non-economic impact and negative impacts including things such as traffic congestion, vandalism, environmental degradation and disruption of residents' lifestyle. This study could not quantify these impacts but did conclude that they are short and minimal.

The average visitor expenditure was calculated using previous research (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2011; Chouguley, Naylor, & Montes, 2011; Walo, Bull, & Breen, 1996) and anecdotal evidence. This study estimated that on average people spend \$88, a figure that reflects rising costs influenced by the show's insurance and entertainment costs and the showmen investing heavily in new attractions, accreditation and auditing (Durkin, 2006). Spending an average of \$88 in 2011 indicates that people are now spending approximately 9.8% of a week's disposable income on food, rides and purchases at the show. This is in contrast to the \$30 they were spending in 2000, just 4.17% of a week's disposable income (Australian Council of Agricultural Societies (ACAS), 2000).

A positive economic generation of \$965 million should be encouraging for show societies. However, Meyer and Reid (2005) suggest that this could be further enhanced if show societies conduct research on their target markets and develop innovative ways of managing and marketing their show. This might necessitate show societies facilitating some action research and adapting to the changes in rural demographics, the agricultural industry and leisure trends (Meyer, 2005).

Sponsors and Exhibitors

Corporate sponsorship is a well-known marketing tool used by government and businesses in Australia. Many businesses recognise that sponsorship provides them with an effective means of advertising their product/company and improving their company's image, prestige and credibility by supporting events that their target market finds attractive.

Despite the growing popularity of sponsorship marketing, many show societies find sourcing sponsors and exhibitors a major challenge and 15% state that they need more help in this area (see page 14). Volunteers reported in the volunteer survey:

- Sponsorship is very hard to obtain, which means the few regular volunteers spend too much of their own time in between shows raising funds.
- We need help with sponsorship programs to encourage more businesses to provide more money to allow us to provide a better show.

- As we are a small show we need sponsorship from our community, which is hard when our town has two other big events run in the same month that also depend on sponsorship.
- We need more active members throughout the year – to help in other areas such as sponsorship, schedule compilation, trade sites etc. The society is really run by two people who are expected to do everything.
- Our society needs help with sponsorship and marketing opportunities.
- Money is tight and sponsorship is harder.

Perhaps the potential for shows to capitalise on the growing trend of businesses to sponsor events should be taken seriously. Meyer (2005) suggests that a more professional approach to show programs and marketing strategies could be the tool that show societies need to ensure the long-term viability of the show movement.

To understand more about agricultural show sponsors and exhibitors, and to gain some insight into the economic impact of sponsorship, this study contacted 98 sponsors and 116 exhibitors by phone and email and invited them to participate in an online survey about their involvement and the economic benefits to their business. The response was positive and 108 surveys were completed.

The names of sponsors and exhibitors were collected by attending three shows and examining the websites of show societies around Australia. The names of sponsors and exhibitors are often made public as it is common practice for show societies to offer incentives to sponsors and exhibitors such as:

- Advertisement in show guides and/or member books.
- Advertisement on the show's website.
- Signage at the show.
- The opportunity to give away product, samples or advertisement at the show.
- A site location at the show.

The largest number of respondents to the survey were exhibitors representing a business (52%) followed by sponsors (48%). Of these sponsors and exhibitors, 50% were based in New South Wales, 35% were from Queensland, and 15% were from Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania. Of the respondents, 81.4% had most recently participated in a show in 2012.

The majority of respondents identified themselves as from the retail and hospitality sector (42%), the other respondents stated they were from manufacturing and wholesale (24%), agriculture (19%), and finance and insurance (5%). The remaining 10% were from a wide range of sectors including education, entertainment, mining, travel, community services and media.

The respondents represented small (63%), medium (23%) and large (14%) businesses and government departments. The average number of employees in their workplace was 5-19 employees.

The respondents stated that on average they participate in one to three shows a year (59%). The other 41% are involved in more than three shows every year and of these, two respondents (1.9%) stated that they participate in more than 10 shows per year.

The survey revealed (Table 7) that there are a range of motivations for the sponsors and exhibitors to participate in shows. Most respondents stated that they wished to promote their business or product, increase sales and revenue, and educate the public about their products and/or services. Thirty-seven people (34%) said they wanted to support the show but only 15 (14%) stated that corporate social responsibility motivated them.

Table 7. What motivates businesses to sponsor or exhibit at an agricultural show.

Reasons why businesses sponsor or exhibit at an agricultural show	Frequency	Percent of all respondents
Promote our business or product	77	71
Increase sales and revenue	59	55
Educate the public about your products and/or services	44	41
Support the community or show	37	34
Increase brand loyalty	32	30
Enhance our business's credibility	31	29
Change or strengthen brand image	29	27
Build new or deeper community networks	24	22
To provide samples or demonstrate a product	23	21
Target a niche market	15	14
Promote our corporate social responsibility activities	15	14
Entertain clients	7	6
Develop employee's skills	5	5
Recruit, retain or motivate employees	2	2

This research did not ask how the respondents evaluated the outcomes for their business but it did ask them to state if they felt or knew that their expectations and goals have been achieved or met by participating in the show. The results reveal that 76% of respondents feel that their expectations and goals had been met, 14% were not sure, and 10% said that they did not feel that their expectations or goals had been met. Individual comments included the following:

- It put our brand front of mind for the future.
- Hopefully it will increase website sales.
- I hope with the exposure and constant chat that those who didn't buy will think of doing so in the future. Also old clients have been reminded that I'm still here!
- 1500 hours of staff time used at the show. It is good having the opportunity for face-to-face contact and to get the road safety message to in excess of 1/4 million people.
- It increased brand awareness and helped raise funds and awareness for a charity.
- It helped us build a database and start our branding in NSW.

These comments suggest that sponsors and exhibitors want the widest exposure possible in both print and electronic media, on websites, and at the event itself.

The respondents were asked to state the investment that their business or department had made by sponsoring or attending the show. They were then asked what the economic return had been. The survey found that the average investment that a sponsor or exhibitor made by participating or supporting the show was \$100–\$1,000 and the average economic return they received was \$1,000–\$10,000. This demonstrates that many businesses can see tangible economic results within 12 months of a show.

It should be noted that nine sponsors and 11 exhibitors could not say what the economic benefit had been or were unwilling to state what it was. Some sponsors and exhibitors stated that they did not participate with an economic outcome in mind and were more interested in the intangible benefits like brand recognition, credibility and image.

This study has identified that there is an economic benefit for sponsors and exhibitors, but further research is required to assess the size of that impact on the local economy.

Summary

There is a well-developed body of evidence which has found that events have the potential to generate positive economic impacts for the community (EventImpacts, 2012), and this study confirms that agricultural shows are still generating a significant amount of impact on communities in Australia. However, the scope and timeframes for this study mean that there are many economic costs and benefits of agricultural shows left unexplored in this section. The estimated \$965 million economic impact does not take into consideration the contribution that volunteerism has on the economy, and questions still remain how shows impact on industry and agriculture, tourism, the employment rate and general cost of living.

To address some of the limitations, and given the complex nature of economic impact assessments, agricultural show societies around Australia may need to form a research committee to collect accurate and relevant data that accounts for the impacts of an agricultural show in the local economy. If show societies are helped to measure the economic value of their show, they will be able to make more strategic decisions and gain evidence with which to lobby government and attract sponsors.

5. Social Impact

Introduction

This study aimed to explore some of the social impacts that agricultural shows have on communities. Social impacts refer to social capital and quality of life issues such as safety, trust and sense of purpose. Social impacts also describe the changes to individual and community connectedness, health and wellbeing.

Given that this study had to be completed in four months, the challenge was going to be collecting information from a geographically and socially diverse sample of stakeholders that participate in shows for a wide range of reasons. It was decided that the best way to consult with a number of distinct stakeholders who attend or participate in shows should be via three online questionnaires.

1. A total of 552 people voluntarily participated in a general impact survey. They represented show visitors, competitors, judges, volunteers, show society members, showmen, exhibitors, sponsors and tourists.
2. A total of 727 volunteers completed a survey designed for show volunteers.
3. Teachers were consulted via a survey specifically designed to consult with schools about the impact of the show on children. A total of 56 schools responded, representing more than 3,715 children and young people who participate in a show.

This sample is a snapshot of important stakeholder groups who know the show movement well and have participated in shows for many years. The surveys captured their enthusiasm for the show movement and the role they play. It gathered important information about what positive and negative impacts shows have on these stakeholders individually and collectively, and collected some important feedback about how the show movement could be supported and developed.

This section of the report explains the findings of the surveys in turn and then concludes with an overview of the findings in the conclusion.

Community Outcomes

A wide range of stakeholders from the community participate in agricultural shows. These include competitors, judges, showmen, exhibitors, entertainers, volunteers, businesses, government, professionals, community groups, service groups, schools, families and children. Establishing the impact of the show on all these different members and segments of the community is complex, given that so many people are involved on different levels and for different purposes.

It was not appropriate to assess all the possible positive and negative outcomes of the show as the survey would have been too large, so a core set of 26 factors were identified, mainly relating to the social impact of an agricultural show on the individual and the community as a whole. A face-to-face survey was conducted at four shows in Queensland and a larger online survey was promoted Australia-wide via social media sites, electronic bulletins and 4000 flyers given out at four shows. The assurance of confidentiality and a \$250 prize draw were used to encourage people to participate.

The online survey gathered some key demographic information about the respondents and then asked them to rate whether the 26 possible factors had increased, decreased or not changed as a result of the show. Respondents were given a scale of -1 to -3 to represent any negative change, 0 to represent no change, and +1 to +3 to represent any positive change occurring. During analysis, the results were transposed into a 1-3 scale for ease of reading.

The survey also asked respondents to choose the one outcome that they felt had changed most positively. Four open-ended questions then allowed respondents to provide answers about how these positive and negative outcomes had affected their own and their community's quality of life.

Of the 552 respondents to the online survey, 26.1% were male, 73.9% were female and 11.1% did not state their gender. The respondents' average age was 32 years and the large majority lived in Queensland (79.9%). The other 20.1% were people living in New South Wales, South Australia, Victoria, Northern Territory and Australian Capital Territory.

Respondents were 'visiting the show with family and friends' (50.7%), volunteers (33.8%), competitors or judges (8.1%), persons representing organisations, businesses or exhibitors (5.6%), showmen (.4%), school students (.2%) and tourists (1.3%). Most of these respondents had achieved Year 12 schooling level or a tertiary education certificate, and 44.9% had achieved a higher level of tertiary education. A total of 56.1% of the respondents said that they had taken a child to the show.

The findings of the survey in Table 8 found that the impact of an agricultural show is a positive one. Indeed there are a large number of positive outcomes for the community and stakeholders who participate. The three factors that change most positively are a family's fun and wellbeing, the promotion of local produce, and the community's participation in local community events.

The negative factors, also shown in Table 8, that cause some negligible negative impacts, are noise and traffic congestion, disruption and stress for local residents, damage to the environment, crime levels and rowdy and delinquent behaviour.

A total of 53.5% of respondents indicated that they thought it was family fun and wellbeing and the community's participation in local events that changed most positively out of all the 26 possible outcomes.

Because shows offer families an opportunity to be together and have fun, it is likely that they contribute positively to stronger family relationships, reducing stress and improving the parent-child relationship. This is critically important as family happiness and wellbeing is well known as the community's most important resource, reducing activities such as crime, antisocial behaviour and domestic violence, which are known to cost the Australian economy billions of dollars annually (Australian Institute of Criminology, 2003; McKeown & Sweeney, 2001).

Table 8. Impacts of an agricultural show.

Impacts	Mean	SD
Family fun and wellbeing	1.38	1.26
Promotion of local produce	1.35	1.37
The community's participation in community events	1.30	1.39
Promotion of the local area, history, values, traditions and industry	1.29	1.30
Promotion of local schools	1.19	1.32
Promotion of local talent	1.17	1.23
Promotion of local services	1.16	1.33
Civic pride and morale	1.16	1.34
Promotion of local community groups	1.13	1.31
Revenue for local business	1.13	1.34
A healthy competitive culture	1.11	1.31
Sustainability of agricultural shows	1.05	1.34
The local economy	1.04	1.32
Numbers of tourists/visitors visiting	0.97	1.31
Sustainability of the community	0.85	1.24
Industry standards	0.62	1.18
Work experience and employment	0.50	1.17
Promotion of local government	0.47	1.26
Overall cost of living	0.36	1.18
Traffic congestion	0.34	1.37
Noise	0.22	1.27
Disruption and stress for local residents	0.16	1.26
Damage to the environment	0.16	1.22
Crime levels	0.13	1.20
Promotion of federal government	0.10	1.19
Rowdy and delinquent behaviour	0.04	1.31

SD = standard deviation

The survey's qualitative questions allowed respondents to expand on their answers and provide further detail about how these outcomes have affected their quality of life. Answers included:

- My daughter and nephew wait all year for our day at the show. I have been going with my mum every year since I was little and have carried on that tradition for my kids.
- It gives us quality time together and creates bonding for our family.
- I know more about local groups and organisations than I did prior to the show.
- It gave me an opportunity to see animals that I don't see every day.
- The show provides me with an opportunity to spend time with my family and friends in a wholesome and safe environment. We are able to participate in games and activities we wouldn't normally have access to.
- What an opportunity to dress up and mingle whilst checking out the talent and variety of local produce and talent. The day is uplifting.
- I volunteer because you can see the visible enjoyment the show gives to people.
- I look forward to the camaraderie and happiness and meeting so many interesting people.

- The enthusiastic response and participation of and by the community brings the community together. This makes a person feel part of something special.

Historical and anecdotal evidence suggests that the show may be successful at creating a positive experience for families because of its ability to:

1. facilitate friendships and romances
2. promote and maintain family traditions
3. educate children and visitors
4. allow visitors to get close up and personal with animals and primary produce
5. celebrate achievements and culture
6. showcase products and performances
7. provide an opportunity to relax and have fun.

To gain further insight into the impact of shows on family life and wellbeing, more exploration is needed in future impact studies.

Respondents to the survey were also asked about the impact of the show on their community's quality of life. Answers included:

- It is one of four social events that our town has a year. Most people do not see each other as they are working on their properties. The show is the one time of year everyone enters in the competitions and makes an effort to come to town to help and visit the show.
- The rides and shows are fun and different for the kids. The animals are educational for the kids. They like to touch them. The kids have a good time.
- My grandkids start to appreciate where food comes from and have a wonderful time with the animals – that makes us all feel good.
- There is increased community morale due to civic pride and increased awareness about the history of the area, as well as community involvement, which leads to a greater sense of self-worth within the community. Local businesses might not particularly flourish during this period, but their involvement as sponsors is remembered by many within the show community and they are rewarded justly so.
- The show brings people together as one, working together, thinking together and having fun together.
- I was a fruit and vegetable farmer but now a beef producer, so it is a chance for me to catch up with other farmers in the beef industry, talk about the industry, see where it's heading, what improvements are being discovered. Quite often there are new ideas on display to help in whatever industry you are in.
- There's a feeling of pride in the community's achievements. People working together to showcase their community.
- The show generates financial revenue for the community and promotes and reminds locals to support locals.
- It's an opportunity to promote our community's culture, skills and produce. It also boosts the local economy.

Further research is also needed to explore in more depth how the show impacts on the community's quality of life but all the hundreds of comments provided by respondents indicate there are diverse social and economic impacts on many levels and for many people.

The survey gathered fewer comments about negative impacts. However, it is important to acknowledge that notwithstanding the many positive impacts, there are people who are adversely affected by the show and these negative impacts can cause a lot of stress and frustration for individuals, families and communities. The comments from respondents about negative impacts include:

- You are required to be more vigilant about the crime rate and the traffic when the show is in town. Devious people know that most people around town will attend the show at some time and they prey on those that are not home. This means you need to ensure you lock up properly. Traffic congestion is always a problem at show time but it is to be expected. There are a lot of vehicles coming and going.
- Extra traffic causes congestion and therefore frustration.
- I hate the traffic congestion and parking issues created plus public transport effects.
- Long hours and the stressful atmosphere takes me away from my own family.
- The cost of the rides and show bags is my only negative as this is costly when you have a family of four children. But we do save up for it and the children earn their own pocket money also.
- The only issue is that the crime rate tends to increase (but it is minimal).
- Some families with a number of children cannot afford to either take their children or have to impose fairly strict spending guidelines which then in some cases leads to them not being able to attend the show because of affordability.
- It can bring out crowds of young people that can become rowdy.

It was the issues concerning affordability and the cost of attending the show that discouraged and concerned most of the visitors interviewed at the shows. Visitors can spend a lot of time travelling to the shows, taking time off work, spending money on rides, food and show paraphernalia. Additional costs to tourists and showmen include accommodation and living supplies. But these financial impacts are obviously benefits for the show and businesses that rely on the visitors, tourist and travellers custom.

- So, it might be noisy for a day, and some things might have had to change for the day. But even these 'negative changes' are far outweighed by the benefits to the community.
- The oval might look like a bit of a paddock after a show, but it soon comes right.
- There is only minor inconvenience, connected with traffic and possibly noise. But no worse than any similar event, such as local footy or other festival in the town. On the balance of things, it is a very small price to pay for such a great event.

Children and Young People

To understand the impact of an agricultural show for children and young people, a survey was developed for schools. The survey aimed to gather data concerning the personal and social impacts for children from the perspective of the teachers who encourage and support them to get involved. It was agreed that these expert witnesses would be best positioned to comment on the impacts the show has on children and young people.

Teachers from both state and private schools in Australia were asked to voluntarily respond to an online survey. Respondents were asked questions about their school and the numbers of students that participated in the show. They were then asked both quantitative and qualitative questions about the different ways the show benefited and supported students.

Fifty-six schools participated in the survey. Most respondents (52.5%) are involved in one show and of the others, 30% are involved in two to five shows, and 17.5% are involved in more than six shows per year.

The respondents stated that an average of 20–50 students within their school participate in shows. They are involved in the show in a number of ways, with 54.5% involved in school competitions and 34.5% showing cattle, horses or chickens. Some schools encourage their students to also enter young judges and handlers.

Respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1 (unimportant) to 5 (very important) how important a number of possible outcomes were for their school. Their answers were calculated to give the mean result and are shown in Table 9. Schools stated that the most important reason they participated in the show was because it helps their school feel part of the community. They also stated that they participate because it is fun and enjoyable for their students; it promotes their school, and develops students' life skills.

Table 9. The outcomes important for schools involved in agricultural shows.

The outcomes important to schools	Mean	SD
It helps our school and students feel part of the community	4.28	.76
It is fun and enjoyable	4.09	.80
It promotes our school	4.07	1.03
It develops students' life skills	3.98	.94
It is educational	3.89	.85
It develops students' leadership skills	3.79	1.01
It assists classroom and curriculum activities	3.76	.89
It is a different/unusual experience for students	3.72	.95
It is tradition	3.65	1.10
It encourages families to attend the show	3.58	.98
It increases our students' health and wellbeing	3.40	1.03
It helps our students enter/win competitions	3.17	1.13
It helps our school enter/win competitions	3.06	1.09

SD = standard deviation

Respondents were then asked which specific skills improve as a result of students participating. They were asked to tick all that applied from a list of 11 options. The results shown in Table 10 indicate that the schools feel the key skill that students gain from participating is confidence/self-esteem. All the skills received at least one vote, suggesting that students gain many varied skills from participating.

Table 10. What life skills children and young people develop by participating in agricultural shows.

The life skills that children and young people develop at shows	Frequency	Percent of all respondents
Confidence/self-esteem	42	75
Responsibility	35	63
Eye for detail	28	50
Leadership skills	25	45
Maturity	21	38
Public speaking	19	34
Inspiration	18	32
Goal setting	17	30
Career Planning	11	20
Writing skills	11	20
Other	2	4

Respondents were asked which changes occur as a result of their school participating in the show. A total of 64% of respondents could specify changes. Their comments included:

- Students tend to do better in school oral presentations.
- Students often improve academically due to better self-confidence.
- Increased knowledge and understanding of industry and community.
- The relationship between staff and students improves.
- Sense of pride in contributing to a significant community event.
- It gives students a sense of purpose to attach to work done at school.
- Encourages them to attend the show and participate in community events.
- They have a sense of belonging to the community as they are part of the district being spotlighted.
- Improved attention in all classes.
- Increased confidence in addressing an audience.
- Enhances community-school relationships and school-industry relationships.
- Students that don't achieve academically can often achieve well with their show entries/participation.
- The community gets to see our students in a positive light; we link with many other primary producers who are willing to support our rural education program through the shows.

- Many of the school leaders have participated in the show team, which has assisted the students to develop responsibility for themselves, the animals and others through mentoring programs.
- The students have motivation to do their best both in and out of the classroom.
- Students participate in a team and develop a team outlook. Group responsibility, meeting challenges, interacting with people from other schools and in other age groups are important factors in personal growth.
- More confidence, better time management skills, better teamwork, able to communicate with the public.
- Students develop employability and life skills that can be difficult to demonstrate in the school setting.
- Students also develop greater responsibility for their work and have the opportunity to work in a more vocational context.
- Personal development, confidence, cattle-handling skills.
- Students gain valuable hands-on and practical experiences.
- Being a suburban school, shows make agriculture more fun and interesting and adds more elements to it rather than just being a 'subject'. If the school couldn't participate in the show I think there would be less students studying agriculture for the HSC and being interested in agriculture as a whole.

While an agricultural show might be only one day of the year, many of these children and young people spend many weeks, even months, preparing for the show and entering competitions. The accumulative effect of planning, practising and competing can result in obviously large personal and social benefits for many children and young people.

The impacts that have been identified by teachers should not be underestimated. Research has identified that children with low levels of confidence and life skills are more likely to develop high-risk behaviours with long-lasting health and social consequences. Conversely, there is a growing body of research demonstrating the beneficial effects of participation in extracurricular activities. Participation in out-of-school activities has been positively linked to both academic and non-academic benefits. These include lower rates of depression, reduced problem behaviour in areas such as delinquency and substance use, higher test scores, school engagement and educational aspirations (Fredricks & Eccles, 2006).

The literature points to extracurricular participation giving young people the opportunity to build interpersonal competence and formulate educational plans for the future, skills that are critical to adult educational attainment (Mahoney, Cairns, & Farmer, 2003). Further research indicates that extracurricular participation links young people to supportive peers and adults and helps to contribute to their identity as valued members of the school and community (Eccles, Barber, Stone, & Hunt, 2003).

The evidence points to agricultural shows being an important part of children's growth and development, their identity, educational achievements and personal success in life. Having the opportunity to feel a valued member of the community helps to promote school engagement, civic engagement and volunteerism during adolescence and into the early adulthood years.

Competitors

When Sir Thomas Brisbane, member of a lauded Scottish family, took over as Governor of the colony of New South Wales in 1821, support for an agricultural society gathered strength (Anderson, 2003). He, and the leading male citizenry of the day, had already witnessed or been associated with the establishment of cattle shows, wool fairs and ploughing matches that had become commonplace in Britain from the mid-eighteenth century. They believed that ‘people’s learning’ and self-improvement both addressed anxieties about colonial status, and confidently promoted social stability and patriotic unity (Fennessy, 2007). This opinion ensured that, like agricultural shows throughout Britain and its settler colonies, displays, competition and judging were the primary purposes of show.

As the event has evolved in Australia over the years, competition still remains at the heart and soul of the show and a key community engagement strategy. Competitions and exhibitions of livestock, and the presentation of excellent and abundant rural produce, remain a focus in an attempt to affirm the importance of traditional rural and primary industries in the life and economy of the country and state (Scott & Laurie, 2010). Nowadays, anyone can compete at the show, but show societies particularly like to promote the competitive show culture to measure and encourage the development of agricultural advancement and the best breeding animals (Fader, 2006).

The common classes/categories that are offered today at agricultural shows include:

1. Beef cattle
2. Dairy cattle and dairy goats
3. Horses, show jumping, farriers and blacksmiths
4. Sheep and sheep dog trials
5. Fleece breeds
6. Poultry, pigeons, birds and eggs
7. Dogs
8. Dairy produce
9. Agriculture, fruit and vegetables, apiculture
10. Horticulture
11. Woodchop and sawing
12. Cookery
13. Fruit wines
14. Creative art and craft
15. Quilting
16. Painting and drawing
17. Photography and sculpture
18. Bush poetry
19. Schoolwork
20. Young judges

Over the years, an individual’s decision to enter show competitions has depended on the cost of entry fees, the ease of submitting entries, the encouragement of family and friends, the desire to participate in the show, their chances of winning and the prizes on offer (Scott & Laurie, 2008). But such is the tradition of competing, a show can attract competitors from far and wide with some competitors and exhibitors spending many months on the road travelling from show to show to parade, compete and celebrate with their colleagues and friends.

Preliminary research and historical data (e.g. Anderson, 2003) indicates that the competitive nature of shows provides the community with the opportunity to:

1. promote itself;
2. promote and celebrate ordinary members of the community as well as leaders in their field;
3. support and improve agricultural and industry excellence and innovation;
4. celebrate the interdependence and mutual appreciation between city and country life; and
5. uphold (post-colonial) country values.

Every show society considers the healthy competitive culture an important element of the show that can be mutually rewarding for competitors and visitors to the show. Many believe that competition is fun, and sometimes it can increase productivity and improve management practices. However, this judgement has not been researched by show societies and should be studied to determine what the real impact of competition is on productivity and industry advancement.

Interestingly, the competitors and judges who responded to this study's online survey did not overwhelmingly indicate that it was the competition that had the biggest positive impact on the community. Less than a quarter (21.5%) stated that the promotion of local talent or produce increased because of the show, with just over a quarter (27%) stating that it was the participation in a community event that had the most positive impact. The other respondents stated that they thought there were a range of benefits such as civic morale and pride and the promotion of the local area, history, values, traditions and industry.

The comments from competitors and judges included:

- I love being able to present my skills to my peers. Both the traditional – is my pumpkin bigger than yours – and the things outside of the box, but still highly contested – butter cake by a gentleman. And win or lose, it's great to be part of it.
- I love going to shows, there is always a competitive spirit when you are in the ring but also a lot more people are interested in agricultural shows these days to see what is happening in the industry that we cannot live without.
- I enjoy the meeting of other competitors each year showing cattle. I volunteer each year for the show society doing lots of different things and it makes me proud of our town and how it brings people together.
- The show creates pride in my animals, I have a quality herd and I command a higher price at sale time.
- I spend more time with animals that I love preparing and showing off. Meeting new people and seeing the majority of townsfolk all in the one day. Yes, it's very positive for my ego if I win, but it is a special reminder of my childhood where it was a family outing for me every year.
- I am part of a family that produces food off their farm and the promotion helps to keep the produce getting sold.
- My two daughters and I have competed at the regional agricultural shows for a number of years. We love the competition, the atmosphere and the unique environment that the shows have to offer. We catch up with friends from last year and get to travel around our great country.

- As a local business owner, I am able to showcase my products and talents at the local show. It provides great advertising and a sense of community.
- I breed dairy goats so local shows promote dairy goats and they're our window to the public.
- We have entered many competitions at the Bellarine Agricultural Show over the last couple of years. We all come home with prizes for cooking, art, making creatures from horticultural products and gum boot throwing. This is tremendous for our kids' self-esteem, and encourages them to take pride in their skills. A very important event for our family.
- It is the focus for the year, whether it be craft or horses. It gives us something to work towards, and to compete in a friendly way with others.

The views and comments from competitors indicate that agricultural shows maintain and support a healthy competitive culture. The impact for individuals and the community may well be:

- Learning and growth
- Personal satisfaction
- Self-esteem and confidence
- High morale and pride
- Economic growth and innovation.

If the show movement wishes to sustain this culture and continue to make competition an effective approach to community engagement, then the benefits of competition may need to be promoted in more effective ways. A greater range of awards and prizes would provide increased incentives for more competitors to get involved and more young people might be enticed to learn the skill and art of judging.

Volunteers

Agricultural shows have a long history of involving volunteers from every part of the community. Volunteers are involved in:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Event organising and governance • Judging / Stewarding / Pencilling • Fundraising • Entertainment • Bars • Timekeepers • Grounds maintenance • Building maintenance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Site sales • Sponsorship • Marketing, media and advertising • Security • Gates • Professional duties such as veterinary, accounting and legal services |
|--|---|

In Queensland, all the shows rely heavily on volunteers, which in 2011 meant more than 13,500 volunteer opportunities. Some of these volunteers provide time regularly and frequently throughout the

year and some just volunteer on show day. A few volunteers such as judges and QCAS members support more than one show in the state but the majority volunteer at their local show.

For this study 727 volunteers were surveyed, of whom 86% were frequent volunteers. In total the volunteers stated that they contributed 164,301 hours of volunteer time per annum, an average of 226 hours per volunteer. Brown (1999) suggests that these hours do have an economic value as volunteers are, on average, as productive as members of the paid labour force. Therefore, using the average Australian hourly compensation rate in 2012 of \$27.6 (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012) to estimate the value of this sample groups volunteer time, these volunteers are worth \$4.5 million to the economy.

Using the same calculation method (average hourly wage x average volunteer hours) the amount that 13,538 volunteers provide to the Queensland economy alone is over \$84.4 million indicating that shows are deeply embedded in local economies through volunteerism (Gibson et al., 2010).

Previous research has found that using volunteering as a route into the labour market is a regularly reported benefit for many volunteers in non-profit organisations. But for volunteers with agricultural shows, it appears that 61% are involved because they were either invited to volunteer or because they have a family tradition of volunteering. The other 39% volunteer because of publicity about the show, because they are a competitor, or simply because they want to use their time to help and support the community.

The impact of volunteering usually depends on a person's age and motivation for volunteering. The common age range of volunteers at agricultural shows is thought (anecdotally) to be 45–75 years old, but in this study's sample the mean age was 38 years. Table 11 shows that more than half (54%) of volunteers said that the main reason they donate their time is because they are actively helping their community.

Table 11. Reasons why people volunteer for agricultural shows.

What is the main reason you volunteer?	Frequency	Percent
I am actively helping my community	378	54
Volunteering is personally rewarding	120	17
I am making a difference	40	6
It is a tradition for my family	35	5
It gives me an opportunity to develop my work and/or profess	27	4
I like to help people	23	3
I like spending time with other volunteers	19	3
Volunteering makes me feel useful	18	3
Volunteering makes me feel good and happy	15	2
I am learning about my community	13	2
Not sure	4	1
It fulfils my moral or religious principles	3	0
Volunteering helps me forget about my own troubles	2	0
It fills my spare time	2	0
It is a tradition for my workplace	1	0
Totals	700	100

These motivations imply that the impact of volunteering on most show volunteers is intrinsic and social. Volunteering helps people make positive connections with others and gives them satisfaction that they play an important role within their community. This is so important to them that it can often mean that volunteers do not ever want to quit their role within the show society. In our sample we identified that 90% of volunteers enjoy what they do and do not intend resigning from their volunteer role in the near future.

- Can't wait for next year!!!! Count me in!!!!
- I have been secretary for the last two shows and it has given my life a purpose, quite a pleasant change.
- It is a great team effort and everyone gets on well with each other.
- A very small band of people have the show at heart – I get a great deal of satisfaction of seeing a show going ahead and the community at large having a great time.
- What works well is our sense of community.
- Belonging to any organisation can be very rewarding. You can establish lifelong friends and you have to have an outside interest away from your regular job.
- My husband has exhibited or worked every show here for the past 60 years; I have only volunteered for the past 45....enjoyed every minute of it.
- I live and work in the area and my 20-year involvement has been a satisfying activity to personally contribute to our own local show, which is an important focus which enriches community spirit.
- Volunteering for our show has been a most rewarding and enlightening experience over the years.
- Volunteering is a personal sacrifice of time and finances, but brings with it an increase in community spirit, friendship and networking.
- As I am Secretary I get great personal satisfaction from seeing the show run successfully and plenty of 'warm fuzzies' from watching the buzz that the show creates in the community but I must say it is also exhausting, time consuming and, whilst not exactly stressful, certainly adds a certain 'edge'! In this role I have also made connections and work with people I wouldn't otherwise have.
- Being part of a show society is very rewarding. We are like a family and are all there for the same reason. To hold a great show annually, to protect and upkeep a treasured icon in Luddenham. The satisfaction of volunteering. Watching the faces on kids at show time. Hearing the compliments from individuals re: our show. Many locals and outsiders say this show is getting better and better every year, which it is. We keep our traditional country entertainment with modern ones thrown in.

In order to gain some more information about volunteers and show societies, this study asked volunteers 34 questions about a range of workplace engagement and performance-related constructs. Volunteers were asked to rate on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) their satisfaction relating to:

1. Engagement with their show society
2. Commitment to their organisation

3. Recruitment practices
4. Workplace performance
5. Supervision and support
6. Satisfaction with learning and development
7. Rewards and recognition
8. Satisfaction with communication
9. Workplace morale
10. Role clarity.

The results shown in Figure 4 demonstrate that respondents revealed that overall they are satisfied with all of these ten elements of volunteer recruitment, support and management. Most importantly, they believe that the show gives them work that is full of meaning and purpose and they are able to use their skills and abilities to do meaningful work. The volunteers have good role clarity and for the most part are given the support and guidance they need to accomplish their volunteer activities. The results suggest areas that the show societies need to develop and improve on are recruitment of volunteers, providing feedback, training and development.

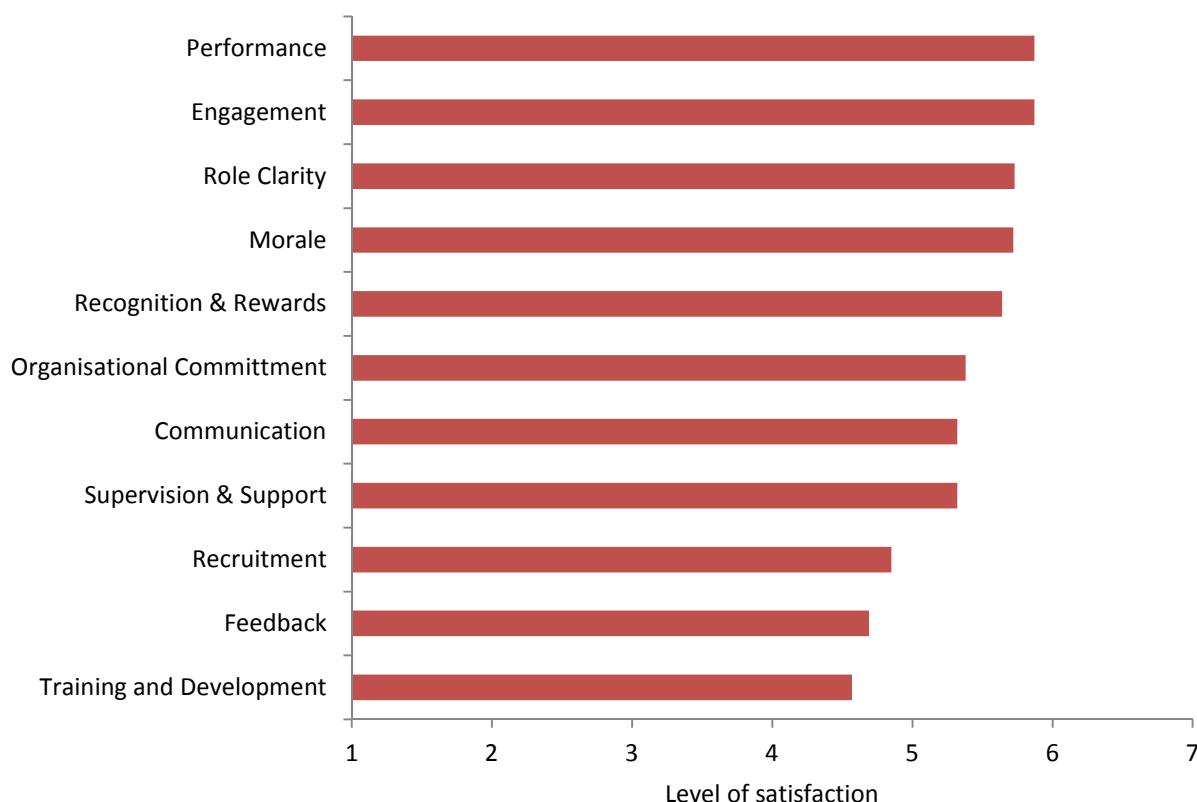


Figure 4. Show volunteers' engagement and workplace satisfaction.

- We have a good president who communicates well with people willing to complete roles to run a successful show.
- We have approximately 40 workers for the four days leading up to the show and on cleaning-up day we have 80–90 people helping us and they sit down to a hot lunch as a thank you.

- I believe all shows can always improve and each year we try to improve and make it better than the year before. We listen to the volunteers and have a suggestion book that is available to everyone.

These findings suggest that agricultural shows are increasing personal satisfaction and social capital, which is derived from connections outside the family and in the local community. Onyx and Bullen (2000) state there are eight key factors associated with social capital:

- participation in local community;
- proactivity in a social context;
- feelings of trust and safety;
- neighbourhood connections;
- family and friends connections;
- tolerance of diversity;
- value of life; and
- work connections.

Their research found that social capital can be generated anywhere when the conditions for its production are satisfied, that is, wherever there are dense, lateral networks involving voluntary engagement, trust, and mutual benefit (Onyx & Bullen, 2000). Social capital is difficult to quantify but if agricultural shows are providing people with an opportunity to volunteer and engage with their community in a meaningful way then we can safely assume that the impact is positive and multifaceted.

The findings of this research, however, also revealed that there are some negative impacts for volunteers and areas that show societies find more challenging. These are their recruitment practices, the feedback they give to volunteers, and the training and development provided to volunteers. These results were consistent with the feedback from show societies themselves who stated that they would like more training and development from QCAS (see page 14). The show societies also recognise that their recruitment practices are not as successful as they would like, as often it is left to a handful of people to do all the work and it is increasingly difficult to engage young people in the planning and management of the show.

Contrary to the positive benefits of volunteerism, comments made by a few of the volunteers indicated that they felt burnt out, disillusioned and stressed due to the heavy responsibility of organising the shows, especially when there are not enough volunteers involved. Of the 727 volunteers consulted in this study, 8.2% said that they intended to cease their volunteering role within the next 12 months. It is probable that some are leaving because of the negative impacts that volunteering is having on their life.

- Finding younger committed volunteers who then are prepared to become committee members can be quite difficult. Our committee consists of 27 and all but three are 55 years through to 78 years.
- I personally love this society and show, but mind you, the work can be quite consuming several months prior to a show and more so three months prior and can affect family life because of it, especially if both parents are involved. If only more people (especially ones with admin ability) could come and relieve the pressure for some of us.

- Unfortunately this show looks like closing down. The community want to keep the annual show but have no interest in helping unless they are paid. Our volunteers are all over 50 years of age (most are between 70 & 80). We are worn out.
- There is a reluctance to volunteer because of strained relationships between some long-time committee members and potential volunteers. Also there is competition for volunteers from numerous other community-based groups.
- I enjoy my volunteer position and I love working to improve our agricultural community. However, disharmony within the committee itself has caused major issues and tension which makes one think about leaving.

The survey provided volunteers with an opportunity to share their ideas about what would improve their experience of volunteering. Hundreds of comments were collated, along with the comments gathered from the survey completed by show society members, to identify what could be done to improve their experience of volunteering and strengthen the show movement generally. The conclusions are outlined on page 15.

This study has clearly identified that volunteering is an important part of many people's lives that fosters social capital. Without volunteers, the show movement would not survive and therefore they need ongoing support and training to ensure they remain committed to their role.

Summary

The evidence points to agricultural shows having a wide-ranging positive impact on individuals and communities. The respondents who participated in this study strongly agreed that the show improved their quality of life, connectedness and sense of purpose. They are a classic example of the community/social economy at work (Gibson-Graham, 2008).

The findings suggest that the show is a wonderful place for children and young people to gain many valuable life skills and leadership skills. The show is helping children and young people to feel connected with their community, which is an important part of their growth and development, identity and education.

The findings also suggest that over the years the show has developed a healthy competitive culture, which has positive impacts on the community. The economic impacts of this component of the show need to be studied, but theoretically it is likely that the competitions help to support economic development and industry standards.

The show does have downsides and there are negative impacts, especially for those volunteers who take on the responsibility of organising the event year after year, giving much of their personal time and energy. Show society members and volunteers all recognise that the recruitment and retention of volunteers is important if the show movement is going to survive. Building the capacity of show volunteers and promoting the participation of young people are areas that need to be focussed on over the next few years. Overall, this research confirms that volunteerism creates significant economic and social impact by noticeably increasing the community's social capital, skills and wellbeing. Agricultural shows provide volunteers with an opportunity to be involved with a community event and build their social networks. It is clearly a valued and important part of their life.

6. Community Engagement & Development

Introduction

Since the nineteenth century, agricultural shows in Australia have been sites for cultural and economic interchange (Scott & Laurie, 2010). They have been events that have engaged all members of the community to cooperate and compete as a means of expressing, and forming, a sense of communal identity (Darian-Smith & Wills, 1999).

This section illustrates the many ways in which agricultural shows engage with their community. The emphasis is to highlight how agricultural shows make important contributions to individual and community wellbeing through fostering social capital.

Community Engagement and Development

Community engagement is an approach to developing a community and building sustainable and healthy communities and regions. Community development is defined as a set of values and practices that play a special role in overcoming poverty and disadvantage, knitting society together at the grass roots, and deepening democracy (Community Development Foundation, 2006). The Community Development Foundation (www.cdf.org.uk) explains that community development is a structured intervention that gives communities greater control over the conditions that affect their lives. It builds up confidence within the community to tackle problems and become strong and resilient. Strong communities are places where local government, community organisations and individuals work in ways that make a positive contribution to the economic, social and environmental health and sustainability of the community.

Community development has been described as a distinct 'process of change and development that takes place in communities' (Henderson & Thomas, 2002) while Pitchford (2008) describes it as a process (not a one-off intervention) that is done with (not for) communities to achieve change within and for communities to problems that they themselves identify.

Whether show societies realise it or not, community engagement and development has been an ideal mechanism for agricultural shows to instil civic pride and solidarity, showcase talent and innovation, and gain support from competitors, sponsors and volunteers. Previous research about shows in Australia and other parts of the world which has established that:

1. "Shows play a vital role in bringing the community together. They exemplify and promote the strong sense of identity held by many communities and provide a mechanism by which threats to this identity can be combated." (Australian Council of Agricultural Societies (ACAS), 2000)
2. "There is no doubt that agricultural shows have a very special place in Australian history and culture...agricultural shows will continue to be a key place of work and play, and important sites of identity, for Australian communities." (Darian-Smith & Wills, 1999)
3. The Ekka "is part of the annual rhythm of the community. Across the history of the show, competition has been intrinsic, a fundamental element designed to encourage Queenslanders to strive to produce their best." (Scott & Laurie, 2008)
4. "Shows redefine community in the face of population and agricultural changes." (Gray, 2010)

Agricultural shows, like other festivals, create the sense of community and celebration because they engage not just individuals and families but schools, community organisations, government and businesses, in this way helping to extend a sense of community and identity.

Examples of community engagement include:

- Queensland shows engaged with more than 2200 schools, training organisations and community groups in 2011. They are engaged as volunteers, exhibitors, competitors, sponsors and visitors.
- QCAS runs state competitions:
 - Queensland Country Life Miss Showgirl
 - Marsh Rural Ambassador
 - Dark Rich Fruit Cake
 - State Ute Muster Series
 - Natural Fibre Creations & Kids-in-Natural Fibre
 - Young Judges & Paraders
 - Quilts Across Queensland
 - High Points Horse of the Year
- All shows receive state government funding and 80% receive funding from their local council. Most shows involve their state MPs and local councillors on show day.

This study consulted with a wide range of stakeholders involved with agricultural shows to understand more about what happens when they are engaged with their show.

Volunteers were asked the question “What’s working well?” Their comments included:

- The sense of community and friendly structure.
- Team work, the interaction with the community, participation of competitors, resulting in a well-attended family show.
- A sense of community, and supporting local families.
- The cooperation at show time between the committee, council and locals.
- Great group of people, fun, social.
- All the committee communicates well and work well together and are happy to do the most menial job.
- Everyone helps and gives feedback.
- With only a handful of older people, we have a successful show every year. The same people from the community join us on show day without being asked.
- We have a great group of section heads who invite, encourage and teach new volunteers and welcome them to become part of a great team.
- Good support from other voluntary organisations that run food, bar, gate etc.

When asked the question "How does the show improve your quality of life?"

Visitors said:

- It's nice to support the local farmers, it's great being out in the community.
- It's something fun to do with anyone in my family.
- The show taught me more knowledge of agriculture and production. And also I like the art and craft which is very creative.
- I love the promotion of local/national produce, farms and farmers. Keeps us aware and conscious of buying Australian. I loved the stockman's ride and the outback pyro-musical fireworks as it endears patriotism and promotes Australian history and culture. It's a fantastic example for our kids – highlighting what is truly important versus lollies and show bags.
- What an opportunity to dress up and mingle whilst checking out the talent and variety of local produce and talent. The day is uplifting.
- It's lovely to meet up with friends you haven't seen for a while and catch up on all the happenings.
- It's another family experience that adds a positive value to our lives. It's a fun thing to do as a family.
- My grandkids start to appreciate where food comes from and have a wonderful time with the animals – that makes us all feel good.
- The show is a magical event full of experience and wonder. It's where I can be myself and have fun with my friends.
- I get a lot of enjoyment going to the show.
- Basically it was best time I've ever had.
- My family looks forward to the show in the same way we look forward to Christmas. It is very exciting and fun. It's a wonderful chance to catch up with friends.
- We love the fireworks, but we especially love the social side, catching up with friends and hanging out with mates (both me and son). We love to see things we would not normally see all year like wood chops, the sideshow alley and all the rides. It is good clean family fun. I get things ready for the show months ahead.
- It gives me an opportunity to sample local products and thereby improve my diet and also spread the word of the product to my friends and work colleagues.
- It's an annual excuse for my husband and I to spend time together and go out instead of doing things round the house.
- It's really great to see everyone. It's a get together for fun. I learn a lot about other people in my community, get great ideas for recipes, creative endeavours and have a good laugh at people competing in fun activities and watching the entertainment. It's really heart-warming. And my whole family enjoys the show on all levels.
- Upon reflection I can say that my personal quality of life is uplifted significantly. My children are seeing where their food and clothing comes from; they see the amazing talents that local people have and can share with others. I feel better after going to any

Ag Show – people, genuine hardworking and talented people, are still the backbone of our country.

Competitors said:

- We love the show, we enter lots of art and craft categories. My young son also competes, it is a family affair.
- We attend many Ag shows for competition as a family and it enables us to spend time together.
- I have grown up attending local shows all my life. I have competed at many different levels, as a kid in most of the horse events. Happy memories of being in the parades or watching them...meeting friends as I grew up and wandering around the show.. taking my children as they grew up as competitors and just to socialise at the show...costing heaps of money when the kids found they were old enough to not fit under the too small sign...volunteered with the SES to raise much needed revenue at the show and as an amateur photographer and winning classes with my photos. : -)
- It is stimulating to see the competitors and exhibitions. It motivates me to do more when time permits.
- The personal skills developed through the healthy competition at shows.
- Aiming to do one's best with exhibits 'rubs off' as aiming to do better with many other things in life too.
- When show time comes around it sparks a light-hearted competitiveness between residents as we all try to outdo each other with our entries.
- As a volunteer I feel I am helping my community and as an exhibitor I can learn from my experience of competing with my peers win or lose.

Teachers said the changes for children and young people include:

- It helps with their self-esteem, confidence, responsibility and community spirit.
- Students become self-confident and feel part of the greater community.
- They have increased pride in their work and school as a result of being 'on show'. They have a sense of belonging to the community as they are part of the district being spotlighted.
- It gives students a sense of purpose to attach to work done at school. It allows students to feel as if they are a contributing part of the wider Tableland community.
- The relationship between staff and students improves, the self-esteem and leadership skills greatly improve. Students tend to do better in school oral presentations. Students often improve academically due to better self-confidence.
- They become included in the community.
- They grow in confidence and also gives them identity and self-esteem within the school.
- They have increased confidence, association with like-minded peers in a positive environment, increased sense of responsibility and maturity.
- There's a sense of pride in contributing to a significant community event.

Research confirms that many of the behaviours associated with participation in shows, such as engaging with communities, volunteering, and working with family, friends and neighbours, among others, constitute a real strength that directly contributes to resilience (Hayes, Qu, Weston, & Baxter, 2011). The evidence collected for this study suggests that agricultural shows engage families and this interconnection of families with their communities supports the development of strong and resilient societies.

Most of the comments gathered in this study were positive about shows and the community development approach. However, it also identified that, while minimal, there are some negative impacts as well, which can be quite harmful for individuals and events as a whole. These include damaging power imbalances, lack of role clarity or leadership, and lack of rewards or recognition. It can also include stress, anxiety and conflict leading to frustration and disappointment.

Negative impacts were predominantly reported by a small number of volunteers.

- As the secretary of the show, the decline has a huge impact on my personal life. It creates stress and concern as I try each year to summon up the town's interest.
- The negative aspects are as a volunteer when fellow town people criticise your work or are reluctant to assist. Internally I find the power struggles draining and people taking constructive criticism or feedback to heart and becoming offended.
- It's increased workload in an ever-demanding life.
- The only complaint that I have regards the show is the nastiness that usually erupts between the office staff and stewards. This fight for control leaves me with no desire to help again with either party.
- We will have less to spend on other activities because it is an expensive day out. Many of the toys/hats/wig/inflatables were broken by the next day, poor quality items for sale.
- Too many rowdy teenagers with rude obnoxious behaviour made some parts of the day a frustrating experience.
- It is a huge strain on myself to come up with the funds for the show. The entry alone costs a fortune so now I only go every few years.
- I did find the crowds a bit overwhelming. It would have been very easy to say I can't be bothered waiting in this queue and go. The only reason we stayed is because it costs so much to get in the gates, so you feel you have to stick around to get value for money.

To minimise these negative impacts, Russell (2008) recommends that community engagement initiatives such as shows have a strong team of people who show commitment to and have an in-depth knowledge of the local area, can generate a high level of trust and confidence between members, and can exercise influence in other decision-making arenas. In the case of shows, this might be with sponsors, schools or government.

Social Capital

Communities around the world have been exploring and developing their understanding of ‘community wellbeing’ for many years because there are many tangible benefits of wellbeing, such as decreased crime, violence and poverty. Today, community development principles and practices are being used to achieve these outcomes and build the health and wellbeing of communities.

In particular, it is now understood that life is easier in a community blessed with a substantial stock of social capital (Putnam, 1995). Social capital describes the social networks, norms, and trust within a community that help people to work together for the betterment of the community. It involves civic engagement, associational membership and the development of social networks (Cooke & Wills, 1999). Social capital is an important concept to understand, because it relates to community trust and cooperation, and hence to efficiency and economic growth (Pugno & Vermey, 2012).

This study found evidence that agricultural shows foster social capital by developing community resources and creating social links between groups and individuals in order to create more harmonious communities. They are run by non-profit entities and volunteers who encourage interaction between community organisations, businesses and government. Because they are annual events, and often have ongoing activities throughout the year, the impact of these social interactions and friendships can be large and wide-reaching.

The ways that agricultural shows foster social capital include:

- Holding an annual show for the public
- Promoting volunteerism
- Having show society “membership”
- Having committee meetings
- Planning and staging competitions, parades and exhibitions
- Planning and staging fundraising activities and events
- Asking for and accepting in-kind donations and gifts
- Maintaining the show grounds and letting the community use it throughout the year for other events
- Working collaboratively with showmen, exhibitors and businesses
- Involving schools, colleges, playgroups etc.
- Involving churches and religious organisations
- Involving cultural, community and service organisations in the show.

All of these events, interactions and networks promoted by agricultural shows assist people to live and work together, talk and take action on issues that are of social, political and civic importance. While these may be incidental in some cases, being involved in an agricultural show is very likely to develop a person’s social relationships and have an impact on their life satisfaction in a positive and relevant way.

As one survey respondent said:

- People always enjoy a fun atmosphere and seem to be happier, more friendly and want to be more involved in what is going on in their community. This impacts on us all.

Summary

The survey respondents' opinions and feedback suggest that shows have all the ingredients of a successful community development approach. They are creating and improving social capital and are an excellent example of community engagement.

This study has been a useful insight into the social impact of shows, but further research into how this engagement fosters social capital would be beneficial. More extensive impact studies might help show societies realise the true significance of staging an agricultural show and the benefits this has on their community's wellbeing and economy.

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