



SAFETY FIRST: DREAM FESTIVAL TO RESUME IN 2022

After consulting with the DREAM Festival sponsors, the Committee, the stallholders, and community, Dubbo Regional Council (DRC) has made the decision not to proceed with the DREAM Festival for 2021 due to the current COVID-19 situation across Western NSW and Dubbo. The decision to cancel this year's event has been difficult; however, Council and the committee members felt it was the safest option, as the situation with lockdowns and restrictions across regional New South Wales is quite dynamic and evolving.

Manager Regional Events Kim Hague said the DREAM Festival continues to grow in popularity, and it wouldn't be fair to the community to proceed with an event that wasn't able to provide a full program offering.

"Everyone has been very understanding of the current situation, and being Council's first year running the festival, we wanted to maintain the integrity of the DREAM Festival which committee members have built over 11 years of successful operation. We've spoken to our sponsors, including Macquarie Credit Union, and stakeholders, and everyone is understanding about this difficult decision," said Ms Hague.

Each year, the DREAM Festival attracts more than 5,000 overnight visitors, and sees an additional 17,000 people from the Dubbo Region and surrounding areas attend over the 10 day event. This level of visitation is estimated to provide an additional \$5.5 million to the overall Dubbo Region economy. However, with restrictions extended, it would be difficult to draw crowds of a similar scale.

“DREAM is one of the biggest events on the Dubbo Region calendar, so to have a scaled-back event would no doubt be disappointing for the thousands of people who choose to attend each year. We also have a number of school groups who participate in workshops throughout the festival period, and with no clarity around how much longer learning-from-home is in place, it also would have made it difficult to run these workshops.”

“We are considering ways we can deliver an alternative to the DREAM Festival, similar to what we did with the Chalk Walk last year. We will continue monitoring restrictions, and consider a different cultural event as restrictions start to ease. We may even bring the DREAM Festival forward in 2022 if restrictions and planning allow for it.”

In terms of the event industry, the ongoing cancellation of events such as the DREAM Festival have a significant impact on the industries that sustain events, including retail, hospitality and accommodation and the creative arts sectors. These industries make up a combined 20.5% of the Dubbo Region's employed workforce, which is why it's so important that as a region, we continue to support our local events industries and those businesses and employees that make these events possible when the restrictions lift.

“This is yet another blow for our regional events industry, and the

community has been so excited to participate in the DREAM Festival, so this was definitely not an easy decision to make. However, we know it's for the best because the safety of our community is the most important thing, and going ahead with the DREAM Festival would put so many people at risk," said Ms Hague.

All stakeholders and sponsors have been contacted about the festival's cancellation, and they are now looking forward to the event returning again in 2022.

Image caption: Despite being launched in June, the DREAM Festival will be cancelled for 2021, following the latest outbreak of COVID-19 in the region.

ENDS



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