

# **MAD Potters**

## **Report of Committee 2023**

### **Our beginnings**

Having started a MAD Potters FB group on 26 August 202, MAD Potters was established as an incorporated group on 15 February 2022.

At the first meeting at which we decided to incorporate it was also agreed that we should investigate the ins and outs of a Community Pottery Studio and a Mansfield Pottery Festival, a first for Mansfield district and the North East of Victoria.

### **Council in support of MAD Potters**

Conversations with Mansfield Shire Council proved productive and we are hopeful that premises to establish a Community Pottery Studio will become a reality at some stage.

Council was interested and were in full support of our 'Mansfield Pottery Festival' idea and from December 2022 until our inaugural Mansfield Pottery Festival on the Saturday of the Labour Day weekend we pulled together an five hour event that attracted over 50 potters from all around Victoria with an estimated 2000 people coming to enjoy the event in the median strip in High Street. Locals and visitors alike were thrilled with the event which as so friendly and different from anything seen in Mansfield.

### **Marketing**

The success of attracting so many potters to our Festival was in response to our social media campaign underpinned by professional graphic design by Nicky Sanders.

Kirstie-Lee Smith managed the social media campaign where we steadily gained online presence made up specifically of potters and we now have over 700 followers on Instagram and 192 followers on Facebook. Our Social Media campaign ran parallel to our other marketing campaigns of emailing pottery groups, working with local tourism marketing through Council and print media. We were lucky to attract the attention of the AGE Newspaper thanks to Lynn, our letter-writing Secretary. The Good Weekend ran an article on our Festival and networked it to the Brisbane Times and Sydney Morning Herald. Positive feedback from participating potters about our marketing has been very gratifying to know we are hitting our targets, supporting potters and providing a new event where potters can sell their work and engage with the public.

We also had segment on a Melbourne radio station with radio host Richard Stockman.

### **Festival happenings**

Fiona Wareham ran a 'clay play' event during the Festival where over 50 children got to get their hands into the clay and make small works to take home. The clay play table was crowded with enthusiastic kids and parents loved that this free activity provided a new opportunity for their children to engage with pottery. Art to Go bags, which contained a pot to take home and paint, were a big seller. We had four different types of Art to Go bags which came complete with a pot, brushes, paints and instructions. Art to Go bags will be an ongoing fundraiser for our group.

The Mansfield Steiner School brought a wheel and what was going to be used as a demonstration by the ceramics teacher but turned into a line of kids who wanted to have a go on the wheel themselves. Sometimes magic happens if you let it!

Live music and inexpensive food and drink offering at the Festival made the whole day accessible and easy going. Friendly committee members assisting potters to set up and make sure all was ok was a hit with potters on the day.

### **Festival Sponsors**

Council has played an important role in the success of the Festival, providing us with banners, and advertising at no cost to us. Two Council officers also attended our Festival on the day to help. Council has since nominated our event to the Australian Event Awards.

Walker Ceramics agreed to be our Festival sponsor and provided clay for the clay-play and demonstrations. They have agreed to sponsor the Festival again in 2024.

Although not an official sponsor the Australian Ceramics Association were happy to share all of our social posts and we in turn tagged them in all of ours.

### **Funding**

Bendigo Bank has now granted us \$4090 to purchase two pottery wheels for us to use at the Festival and will be used at our Community Pottery Studio when established.

### **What now**

We are now working on the 2024 event. Most stall-holders have been confirmed and we are looking at more Festival activities to run over the Friday night, Sunday and Monday of the Labour Day weekend in addition to the flagship event of 50 stalls on Saturday 9 March. These events include a Pottery Exhibition and Opening Event with other groups and businesses offering pottery workshops.

We are also working on an alternative venue 'wet weather' venue at the Sporting Complex to ensure that regardless of weather, the Festival will go ahead no matter what.

The Committee that ran the Festival was made up of nine people who each brought specific skills and worked together to achieve an event that made all of the community and us very proud.

### **2023 Festival Organising Committee:**

Karen Pirie (President), Lynn Taylor (Secretary), Linda Junghenn (Treasurer), Kirstie-Lee Smith, Marly Brown, Amanda Hudson, Fiona Wareham, Nicky Sanders, Rob Mackenzie