Summary

The International Children's Games (ICG) is a recognised member of the International Olympic Committee (IOC) and is the largest multi-sport youth games in the world.

It is a global youth event that combines sports, educational programs and cultural exchange opportunities. The Games brings together an alliance of cities and individuals from around the globe who have a common goal of forming friendships and peace through sport.

This prestigious annual event has a global audience including national and international teams of athletes, coaches, heads of delegation and city representatives; national and international supporters, volunteers and service providers; the local community such as schools, volunteers, sporting groups and coaches; communities from surrounding cities and local and national businesses such as sponsors and strategic partners; and finally local contractors and performers such as dancers, singers, musicians and event suppliers.

Lake Macquarie was the first Australian City to participate in the ICG in 2008 and the first city in the southern hemisphere to host the games, winning the bid to host the 48th Summer International Children's Games in December 2014.

During six days in December 2014, athletes participated in eight sports including swimming, gymnastics, athletics, football, sailing, water polo, golf and, for the first time in the International Children's Games, BMX.

Other associated events that maximised opportunities for promotion and participants and the community to socialise included: a torch relay involving local schools students, a theme song competition, dancing and singing auditions, opening and closing ceremonies, welcome reception for visitors, Aussie wildlife adventure and movie night, a beach event for athletes and VIPs, various VIP tours, and an event hub where participants and the public could enjoy activities and entertainment.

A key goal of the Lake Macquarie International Children's Games was to promote Lake Macquarie as a major event and tourism destination. By hosting this event in a successful manner, Lake Macquarie put itself on the international stage as a destination with outstanding facilities, tourism activities and event delivery expertise, elevating Lake Macquarie's profile nationally and internationally.

Lake Macquarie Tourism reported an increase of 44% in hotel bookings in December 2014 compared to the previous year.

The economic benefit of the event to the City and broader region is more than $5 million. This is based on the participation of 1500 athletes and an estimated 3000 supporters who travelled to Lake Macquarie from 78 cities in 30 nations from around the world.

Athletes, coaches, parents and supporters now have memories of the unique experiences of the Australian version of the Games, and have formed life-long relationships with other like-minded people from across the world. Staff and volunteers had opportunity to expand their skills and gain broader experience in a range of key functional areas. The awareness and reputation of Lake Macquarie City is a legacy that will continue to give new and returning visitors more enriching experiences and the people of Lake Macquarie pride of place and a boost to the economy.
Strategy development, communication and stakeholder involvement

An event of such prestige and scale needed more resourcing than your typical community event. To ensure the professional delivery of the Games, Lake Macquarie City Council employed an event director along with support staff internal and external to Council, to form the Event Team, which drove the planning and delivery of the event.

To increase their capacity to carry out the mammoth task of organising a six-day multi-sport event, associated events, international communication and registration and marketing and promotion, the Event Team developed a resourcing structure that included an overarching Organising Committee and 10 sub-committees responsible for overseeing key functional areas such as administration; ceremonies; events; health, security and emergencies; marketing and sponsorship; production; technical; transportation; volunteer coordination; and budget management.

The sub-committees reported to the event director who reported to the Organising Committee. These committees comprised specialist experts from within Council, technical experts from each sports discipline, government and non-government agencies, local businesses and the community.

The Event Team also formed strategic partnerships with sponsors and the media to ensure the event received funding and that the event gained high volumes of promotion and media coverage.

Event funding, budget and revenue

The budget, procurement and staff management were under the direct responsibility of the event director in consultation with Lake Macquarie City Council’s Manager of Community Planning.

The event was underwritten by Lake Macquarie City Council with a budget of approximately $2 million. The Event Team secured more than $80,000 in financial support from strategic partners, plus an undisclosed amount from Destination New South Wales (DNSW). Council’s Event Team also secured in-kind support from its strategic partners, estimated to be worth $862,687.

The Event Team worked so efficiently with the sub-committees, volunteers and strategic partners that the total expenditure of $1,855,000 came in under budget by more than $300,000.

A breakdown of the revenue, expenditure and budget is included in the attached Lake Macquarie Children’s Games 2014 Final Report.

Communication methods and distribution outlets

The marketing, communication, tourism and promotion was implemented between January-December 2014. The plan provided the framework for maximising visitation, developing community awareness and therefore increasing economic impact and community engagement for the region.

Using an integrated approach for marketing and communication, efforts were spread across advertising through strategic mediums such as billboards, shopping centres, on radio and the sides of buses. Other methods included the production of TVC commercials and online multimedia, and website content on www.idg-lakemacquarie2014.com, which was leveraged through social media.

There was a focus to create a strong online and social media presence because these platforms, used by the age group involved in the ICG, provided a way of engaging them, building excitement and presenting information. The ability to connect with participants from around the world in the lead up to the games through social media, enabled the Event Team to capitalise on the momentum and build the anticipation.

Facebook was the driving force with over 7000 followers at games week, and Twitter and Instagram also very popular.

The Media PR team received more than 60 enquiries relating to the ICG during July 2013 - December 2014. Council had 249 mentions in Australian media, and local
radio broadcasting 110 items, with TV accounting for 13 mentions, while the Lake Macquarie ICG has been mentioned in online blogs and websites 9 times. Internationally, the Lake Macquarie ICG was featured in media outlets around the world including the United Kingdom, Canada and New Zealand, about 24 times.

Communication for the coordination of teams and all the events occurred directly through a highly systemised resourcing structure between the Organising Committee, event director, and members from the 10 sub-committees.

Worth viewing

Video: icg-lakemacquarie2014.com/opening-ceremony
ICG website: icg-lakemacquarie2014.com

Delivery of the event and its results

The largest event Lake Macquarie City has been host to, the International Children’s Games took place from 6 December to 11 December 2014.

During six days, more than 1000 athletes participated in eight sports including swimming, gymnastics, athletics, football, sailing, water polo, golf and, for the first time in the International Children’s Games, BMX. Athletes from each sport competed over a three-day period.

The Games were considered a success, based on the participation levels, the feedback and the fact there were no reports of major incidences or discrepancies. Lake Macquarie City Council, the teams and the Games received extensive and positive media coverage.

Lake Macquarie Tourism reported a 44% increase in bookings in December 2014 compared to December 2013.

Apart from the Games itself, there were many other events including the Blacksmiths Beach Party held on Tuesday 9 December. Teams from all participating countries enjoyed time playing in the sand, eating meat pies and watching the entertainment in the park. Visitors had opportunity to get up close and personal with Australian Native animals while they took in the beauty of the natural coastal setting. The Project Team received extensive positive feedback for this event. The Beach Party gave everyone an opportunity to meet and mingle in a fun, relaxed social setting while getting a taste of Australian food and an appreciation for the natural environment.

Innovation and legacy elements

One of the primary objectives of the Lake Macquarie International Children’s Games was to create a legacy that would outlast the event itself. The benefits of successfully hosting this special event are far reaching, and will continue to give in varied ways, now and into the future.

The involvement, training and upskilling of many people from across the City has provided Council with a database of eager and experienced volunteers for future events. These people can use their expanded skillset and experiences to advance their careers and in every-day life. Their involvement in the Games has been a pathway for volunteers seeking skills in event management, media, production, physiotherapy and marketing.

The ICG is more than a sporting competition. It provides an opportunity for young people and international cities to build relationships, develop deeper cultural understanding and promote the ideals of peace and tolerance through sport. This legacy is at the core of the Lake Macquarie International Children’s Games and the foundations laid will bring benefits for years to come.

The relationships Council developed with members of the sub-committees remain invaluable to Council and the local community. The strength of these networks remains, and is a good foundation for capacity-building for future major events and projects in Lake Macquarie.

The quality of the website has set a new standard for the
International Children’s Games and gives upcoming host cities a great template to work with. Alkmaar, Netherlands has adopted Lake Macquarie’s web format for the 2015 Games.

The City now has improved infrastructure, sports equipment, events framework and the reputation and capacity to host future large-scale events, and importantly, the success of the 2014 International Children’s Games gave Lake Macquarie the opportunity to showcase itself as a destination locally, nationally and internationally.

**Sustainability and accessibility elements**

Waste management was a high priority for Council, considering that multiple events, each with hundreds and sometimes thousands of participants and spectators could potentially produce significant volumes of waste.

To minimise the cause and impact of waste, the Event Team invested in re-usable water bottles and set up hydration stations at key locations and events. This minimised the use of disposable drink bottles.

The Event Team needed to cater for, on multiple occasions, thousands of people, so the use of some packaged food was unavoidable. To minimise the impact of packaged food on the City’s waste stream, the Event Team sourced healthy meals and negotiated with suppliers the use of biodegradable products. In addition to this, temporary waste and recycling stations, with simple graphic signage, were placed at each event location.

All the facilities used for the Games were chosen strategically to not only cater for the type of event being held, but to ensure that it was accessible to people of all abilities.

The event transport schedule optimised travel routes and patterns to reduce road travel.

**Evaluation methods and results**

Numbers and statistics are an effective way to evaluate events, however the fact that the Games and all of its associated events were well received, ran smoothly and received positive feedback from participants, volunteers and the media – it is safe to say that the Lake Macquarie International Children’s Games 2014 was a success.

The event gained international media coverage; positive feedback from participants and volunteers; participation by 700 volunteers; 1500 competitors and coaches from 78 cities and 30 nations; delivered under budget; and set a new standard for future Games hosts.

A survey of Games participants and attendees, conducted by Destination NSW, revealed a high level of satisfaction with their experience in the Lake Macquarie International Children’s Games. Eighty-nine per cent of respondents rated their experience at the Games as very good or good. After attending the Lake Macquarie Games, 95 per cent of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that they would encourage their family and friends to attend the International Children’s Games.

Participation levels, media coverage, advertising, website visits, social media engagement, budget, incidence, administration and feedback were tracked, measured and reported in the Lake Macquarie International Children’s Games 2014 Final Report, which has been submitted as part of this award nomination.

The Final Report, not only provides an evaluation of the Games, it acts as an operating manual for future hosts, giving clear timelines, functional area descriptions, and organisation milestones.

“I’ve had the opportunity to be at 21 International Children’s Games, I started coming in 1993, and there has been no city that has done the job that Lake Macquarie has done. You should be so proud of your volunteers, so proud of the organisers, you’ve done a great job,” Greg Maycheck, Team Hamilton, Member of the ICG Committee.