



Progress report on Glasshouse Venue hire – July 2011

For 32 Years the Port Macquarie and District Dance Eisteddfod has been held in the September / October School Holidays.

Unfortunately, the 2011 Dance Eisteddfod has been decimated due to a double booking accepted by the Port Macquarie Glasshouse.

The Glasshouse accepted a booking for a conference on what is traditionally the PMDES Dance group weekend and without the society's knowledge cancelled the booking previously made for dance.

An attempt was made to relocate group weekend to Taree, however this proved unsuccessful.

Attempts were also made to re-schedule group weekend to other dates around the same period, however we found that when taking into consideration other commitments of dance studios, the clash of Higher School Certificate and HSC Trials, we found the dance schools (both local and afar) would be unable to support group weekend at any other time and that the first weekend in September school holidays was the only time that all dance schools and students found acceptable.

The building of the Glasshouse was a controversial project, and the hundreds of parents and relatives connected to children involved in the performing arts supported the project from day one.

Port Macquarie Council's ongoing support was promised when the old Civic Centre was demolished and during the construction phase. Council promised that the new facility would be available for future events, a state of the art building which would be our new "home".

Sadly the Council has withdrawn the support it had promised. The Glasshouse accepted another booking despite accepting a previous booking for 2011 Dance eisteddfod. Furthermore The Glasshouse has informed the Eisteddfod Society that future years are also in danger as they will give preference to the higher paying corporate events rather than a community run organisation such as ours.

The Glasshouse does not appear to be interested in providing a venue to the children who deserve a first class performance space. The Glasshouse is not interested in old promises of support from a bygone era. The Glasshouse is not interested in allowing the Community access to a facility funded and supported by the Community.

The PMDES does receive a discounted rate for hiring of the Glasshouse, although we have always been of the understanding that this was one of the building's primary purposes.

In view of this however, the society believes that any financial activity generated by the competitors and their families during this event negates any loss incurred by the building itself for discounted rates, and should be factored in to any decision about community hire of the facility.

The committee now has proof that our event is the most significant boost to retail activity in this area. Financially the PMDES Dance Eisteddfod is worth more to local businesses than any other function on a yearly basis (and that includes the Triathlon and Christmas holidays). Studies by local businesses have proven what the committee already knew, that the Eisteddfod families come here, stay here, eat here and shop here.

We are hoping that this knowledge will encourage the Glasshouse management to accept our bookings for future years, instead of making future eisteddfod bookings the lowest priority.

Where to from here

The PMDES is not a fly-by-night organisation asking for hand-outs. We are in fact a 32 year old institution in this area which has for the last 3 decades, worked to foster and encourage young people in the Hastings area in their chosen field of the performing arts.

The Glasshouse was built and funded by the Community, and promises were made that community organisations such as ours would have access to this state-of-the-art facility. We need Council and Glasshouse management to honour those commitments.

We have re-submitted our dates for the next 5 years, and negotiations with Council and The Glasshouse continue.

The PMDES cannot afford to pay full corporate rates for the hire of The Glasshouse, however now we have demonstrated that families and competitors attending the Port Macquarie Eisteddfod boost the local economy in many other ways, we are hoping that this will be factored into the pricing structure for our community booking discount in future years.

Moving forward all we need is for Council to grant the following two requests :-

1. **Allow us to have access to the Glasshouse on the dates nominated by us** *(Due to our longevity and reputation we don't believe that this is an unrealistic request).*
2. **Continue to make it affordable for future events** *(We believe that community discounted rates should consider any additional financial activity generated in the local area by those attending our event)*

The PMDES Dance Eisteddfod has grown over recent years to become one of the most prestigious eisteddfods in Country NSW. Unfortunately the 2011 event will not be prestigious in any way shape or form, however we are hoping that with support from the Glasshouse and Port Macquarie Council, that we may be able to recover from our devastating setback this year and rebuild to a bigger and better event in future years.

Regards

Karen TOMS,

President PMDES 2011