

Grovedale Victoria

## NARANA CREATIONS

*Narana Creations* is a non-profit Indigenous cultural and educational enterprise dedicated to providing the visitor with a warm welcome and initiation into Indigenous culture. Located just out of Geelong at Grovedale, *Narana Creations* hosts an impressive retail outlet with Aboriginal art and craft, a modern café / dining area serving snacks and meals incorporating a variety of 'Bush Tucker' and interpretive areas. *Narana Creations* offers a range of experience programs including cultural tours to educate and stimulate visitors of all ages through their five acre lush Native Garden accompanied by an Indigenous interpreter. Through its connections with Juvenile Justice, *Narana Creations* is also a place where reconciliation is encouraged and demonstrated to the wider community while assisting young people with meaningful education and training activities. As an enterprise, *Narana Creations* has achieved national significance as an arts outlet

## The Story So Far . . .



*Narana CEO Vince Ross with Uniting Church President*

*Narana Creations* started out in a small shop in Geelong in 1992. It commenced when Vince Ross, now CEO, left his work in community development and social welfare with the State Government to join the Uniting Aboriginal & Islander Christian Congress (UAICC). UAICC is the Aboriginal arm of the Uniting

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Church. The UAICC is wholly controlled by Indigenous people and works with Indigenous people building self reliance and a new future. After four years in Geelong City, *Narana Creations* purchased a five acre property on the Torquay Road, and moved location.

On the new site, they have designed and built their existing complex, an Aboriginal Cultural Centre. The Centre aims to not just provide cultural tourism expression, but also to assist young Indigenous people reconnect with their Aboriginal roots and regain their self-esteem.

The first stage of development was the establishment of a retail area, soon followed by the meeting place and a ceremonial ground. A multipurpose building reflects Indigenous views of community and reconciliation - the building is known as Yingally Wor-Ark, meaning '*singing tree*'. *Narana Creations* now incorporates a modern café, open daily serving excellent coffee and light lunches. With the assistance of both State and Australian Government funding, they have recently completed construction of a conference centre and hope to expand their café's cooking operations to provide catering for meeting events.

*Narana Creations* have also established the 'Curragundi' ('*waterhole*') native garden, revegetated with 100% Australian plants and trees which shows the strong connection between Indigenous people and their land.

Located prominently on the Torquay Road, one of the main approaches to Victoria's famous Great Ocean Road, *Narana Creations* has quickly established itself as the major Indigenous Cultural Centre in the region. It is becoming a key tour bus destination, as well as a visitation site for school and social groups. With the ever-growing interest in Indigenous plants for both medicinal and cooking purposes, *Narana Creations* offers both entertaining and educational tours for a wide range of interests.

*Narana Creations* employs ten people, most of whom are Indigenous. Three, including Vince Ross the CEO are paid for through UAICC funding. The other seven are funded out of income received the centre.

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Visitation numbers continue to grow at *Narana Creations*. In particular, growth is occurring in the number of school groups, conferences and tour buses from Melbourne, particularly those on their way to the Surf Coast.

*Narana Creations* is currently celebrating its ninth year of operation and is reflecting on future developments. For Vince, his next goal includes the establishment of accommodation for Indigenous young people visiting *Narana Creations*, enabling the offer of a family or community stay.

As a business, *Narana Creations'* turnover continues to increase as their exposure, profile and reputation grows.



*Cultural Education*

## The Impact

*Narana Creations* is now a highly regarded and awarded tourism destination in Victoria. For three years running, *Narana Creations* has won the 'Best Indigenous Operator' award of Tourism Victoria, and have recently been added to the Tourism Hall of Fame of Tourism Victoria. It has been a finalist in the Australian Tourism Awards.

Of greatest importance to *Narana Creations* is their impact on the local Indigenous community. As Vince shares – *'The impact we have made on the local community is enormous, because we have created an organisation that not just sells Aboriginal art and craft but provides an opportunity for Indigenous people to make some choices about their future'*. *Narana Creations* aims to create increased employment opportunities built on the reconciliation process. *Narana Creations* is especially committed to providing a pathway for local Indigenous people's professional development.

For Indigenous young people, *Narana Creations* has opened many doors, through connections with local sporting clubs such as Bell Park Football Club. Here young

## BUILDING THE FUTURE THROUGH ENTERPRISE Stories of Successful Enterprises and Entrepreneurs

Indigenous people have lined up with other skilled players to experience a sporting experience at a level above what they have generally been used to.

Vince strongly believes *Narana Creations* has contributed greatly to changing cultural and social perceptions towards Indigenous people in the surrounding community. This is evidenced by the linkages they have made with local senior citizens groups, best demonstrated by a group of nearby non-Indigenous retirees offering to assist young people at *Narana Creations* to learn basic woodworking and wood turning skills. To further local linkages, *Narana Creations* is beginning to establish a series of cross-cultural training courses which it hopes to offer to local businesses and educational institutions.

In Vince's words – *'Narana Creations represents a place where Koori and non-Koori people can benefit . . . We must never forget that as custodians of our Koori heritage, we have a responsibility to maintain its integrity, but that doesn't mean we can't share it or profit from educating the wider population. The experts on our culture are our people. Given the level of local and international interest, the opportunities are endless. At Narana Creations, we have established the facilities to give our people the opportunity to educate non-Kooris about our people and culture. We feel this process will assist our people to gain a more equitable share in the wealth of the nation.'* (Koori, Business Network, 1999, p15)



*Working on the garden*

*Narana Creations* contributes strongly to the local and regional tourism industry - *Narana Creations* is an active member of groups like Geelong Otway Tourism and the Aboriginal Tourism Marketing Association (ATMA). *Narana Creations* is committed to developing cultural and Indigenous tourism for the benefit of the local and broader community. Dee

Stanton of the Koori Heritage Trust summarises the professional standing of *Narana Creations* – *'Narana Creations has proven itself to be a most professional and approachable Indigenous organisation and one that is extremely knowledgeable and helpful about Aboriginal culture'*.

## Success Factors

*Narana Creations* have identified four key factors in regard to their success as an economically and culturally developing business.

### *People First and Profit Second*

*Narana Creations* prides itself on total respect for all the people they deal with, Indigenous and non-Indigenous. This is exemplified by their policy in purchasing art and craft. *Narana Creations* does not take items on consignment involving payment of the artists only after sale, but purchases products outright at the beginning, as this immediate cash flow is often essential to the livelihood of these crafts people. This arrangement has encouraged many Indigenous artists to utilise *Narana Creations* as their primary outlet when marketing their products. The organisation has built respect for its people focused policies.

### *Creative Partnerships and Networking*

*Narana Creations* has strived to build creative partnerships with a cross section of community cultural and tourism enterprises. This has encouraged local social and corporate groups to support the business. Networking with key regional tourism bodies and links with complimentary tourism product in the region has also substantially broadened its market and profile. Their connections through the Uniting Church have enabled *Narana Creations* to draw upon an extensive range of professional business contacts and advisers.

#### **SUCCESS FACTORS**

- People First & Profit Second
- Creative Partnerships & Networking
- Unique Range of Cultural Products
- Outstanding Customer Service

### *Unique Range of Cultural Products*

With its Indigenous connections throughout Australia, strengthened through the work of its parent body UAICC, *Narana Creations* has been able to assemble a unique range of cultural products, from interstate as well as from by local artists. This has given *Narana Creations* a national reputation for unique and quality Indigenous art and craft.

### *Outstanding Customer Service*

The organisation prides itself on its professional attention to customer service and detail. Customer service standards are monitored daily.



*Making a Table*

## Advice to other people contemplating the enterprise option

After nine years as CEO of *Narana Creations*, Vince Ross has often reflected on what other Indigenous people and groups could learn from Narana's success. He suggests:

- *'You need a clear vision and someone to follow that vision through. You need to "dream, draw, dare & deliver".'*
- *You must set goals that are achievable and work through those in stages.*
- *Invite the wider community to partner with your vision.*

## Building The Future Through Enterprise – Stories of Successful Enterprises and Entrepreneurs

- *At a very practical level you need a good consultant/ planner/ builders / financial backing and reliable volunteers to support the project.*
- *Remember others have gone down the road before you and they know the pitfalls,  
so don't make the same mistakes*
- *Never be afraid to ask for help'.*

### For Further information

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