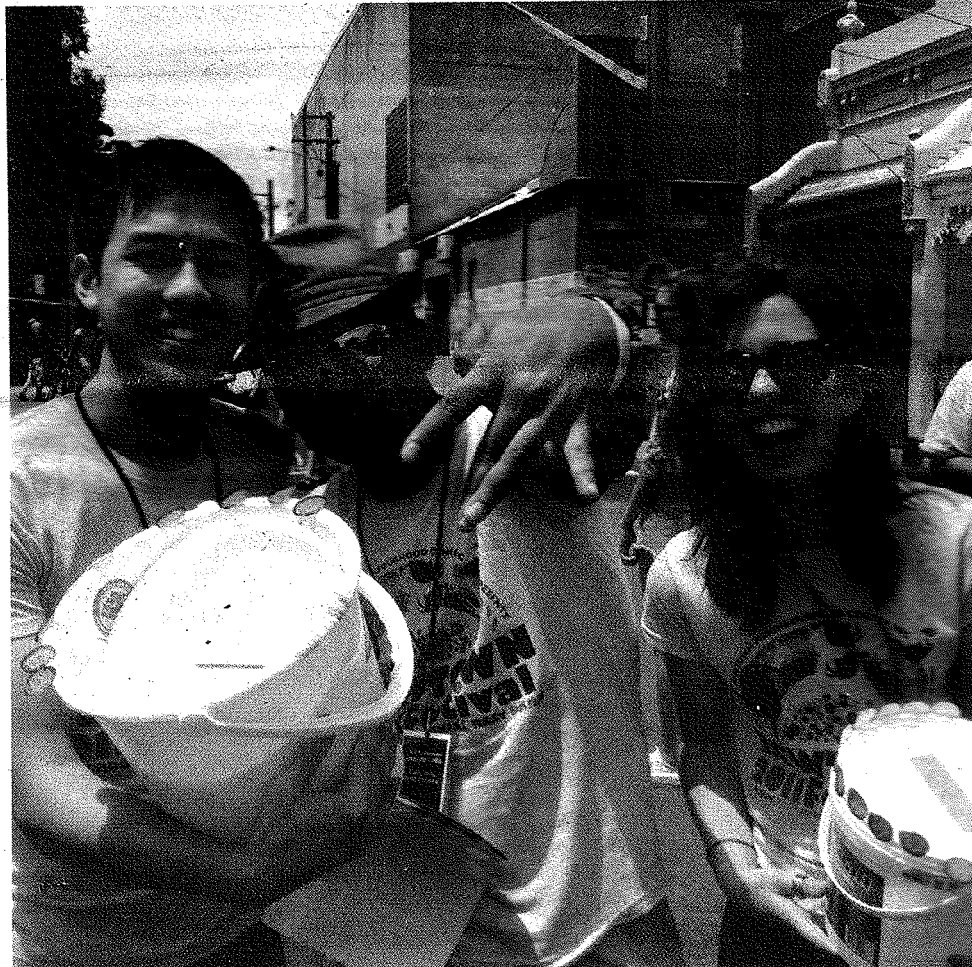


Festival in big danger

An announcement will come soon, says community centre CEO



Volunteers for the Newtown Festival, which may no longer be held.

BY LOUISE BOURKE

Newtown Neighbourhood Centre chief executive Lisa Burns hopes to confirm the future of the Newtown Festival, the suburb's biggest community event, by the end of next month.

Ms Burns is currently in discussions with local groups, partners and sponsors to try to find a funding model to allow this year's festival to go ahead.

Ms Burns has previously warned that the festival may not return in 2012 due to poor profits.

"What a lot of people don't get is that the Festival is the primary fundraiser for the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre," she said.

"The festival is run by the centre. We made 50 per cent less in 2011 than the previous year, so it's a big worry."

Rising overheads, occupational health and safety requirements and factors such as inclement weather have contributed to the downturn in revenue in recent years.

Ms Burns believes that more community involvement with the centre, which provides frontline services in Newtown and further afield in Canterbury, Leichhardt and Merrylands, will save the festival.

"We're asking people to become involved with the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre and help us by volunteering - one of the criticisms of last year's festival is that there weren't enough buckets to collect donations. Also, give us your ideas on how to make it work."

Planning department approves Metro

The NSW Department of Planning has recommended that the Marrickville Metro expansion proposal be approved, angering many local residents and the council who have campaigned against it.

A report, prepared for the department, will go to a Planning Assessment Commission (PAC) meeting on February 13 where a final decision on the Part 3A development application will be made.

The report acknowledges the concerns of residents and Council, but states "the likely impacts of the proposed expansion of Marrickville Metro will not be as severe as

has been projected."

Marrickville Mayor and president of the Chamber of Commerce, Morris Hanna, said the expansion will have a long-term adverse effect on the local community, particularly the shopping strips of King Street, Enmore Road and Marrickville Road.

The PAC meeting will be held on Monday, February 13 from 1pm-8pm at the Petersham RSL Club.

Members of the public can register to speak by contacting Sera Taschner on 9383 2117 or sera.taschner@planning.nsw.gov.au before 4pm on February 8.