

**2019 RH DOUGHERTY AWARDS  
THE BIG FOOTBALL  
BLAND SHIRE COUNCIL**

**INNOVATION IN SPECIAL EVENTS (CATEGORY  
A: POPULATION UNDER 30,000)**



**RH Dougherty Awards  
The Big Football - Bland Shire Council**

**Category: Innovation in Special Events (Category A: Population under 30,000)**

***1. Clear and concise event brief describing the goals, situational analysis, audience, event plan and format and what the event is intended to deliver.***

Bland Shire Council built and unveiled Australia's first and only Big Football in the village of Ungarie in March 2018.

Council took on the bold project after being approached by a local community group wishing to pay tribute to Ungarie's famous AFL football family – the Danihers – while also attracting tourists to the village.

Ungarie born and bred Terry, Anthony, Neale and Chris Daniher are legends of Australian football and to this day remain as the only set of four brothers to step onto the field together in an AFL/VFL premiership match. It is a record of which the Ungarie community is immensely proud.

The 800 kilogram fibreglass Sherrin football now soars above the Ungarie skyline as a mecca for tourists and Australian football fans and a beacon of rediscovered community pride.

The Big Football unveiling and Legends match which followed attracted more than 2000 people to the tiny village of Ungarie (population 557), was streamed live on social media and broadcast live throughout the day across two Triple M radio networks by media personalities James Brayshaw and Billy Brownless.

A media monitors report commissioned by corporate partner Triple M showed that coverage of the Big Football reached a total audience of 1,341,816 people - bringing unprecedented exposure, publicity and goodwill to the village of Ungarie.

***2.A short description of strategy development, communication and stakeholder involvement***

In 2017 Council replaced its various community advisory committees with the Community Reference Group – an open bi-monthly forum where all members of the community can address Councillors and staff on any issue relating to culture, tourism, access, community and special events without needing to commit to a committee or attendance at regular meetings etc.

This has proven an effective forum for members of the community to approach Council with their ideas and also allowed Council to consider a broad range of views on various subjects rather than just the opinion of a handful of community members appointed to Advisory Committees.

It was through this forum that representatives of the Ungarie Advancement Group first approached Council about building a monument to pay tribute to the Daniher family.

Struggling with drought, the impacts of corporate farming and a declining and changing population, Ungarie was losing part of its identity and as such, came to Council with the idea for a small sculpture in Bing Wallder Park with an interpretive panel recognising the amazing football feats of the Daniher brothers.

Through ongoing communication and co-operation, Council worked with the Advancement Group and the Daniher family to evolve this concept into a bold plan to build an 800 kilogram fibreglass replica Sherrin football – the first of its kind anywhere in Australia.

Positive promotion of the initial concept through Council's communication channels led to an approach from Triple M/Southern Cross Austereo to become a sponsor of the project.

After several meetings with Triple M the initial offer of a sponsorship arrangement grew and evolved into a full blown partnership. As a result, Triple M committed \$30,000 cash towards the project and considerable advertising and promotional support including the provision of dual outside broadcasts, live streams on Facebook and supply of on air talent including celebrity presenters James Brayshaw and Billy Brownless.

Subsequent significant financial and in-kind support was received from the State Government and the AFL.

The project provides a blueprint for community engagement and community and corporate partnerships for other Councils, community groups and organisations.

The project ignited a widespread change in the Ungarie community. Local residents felt more connected to their community, more socially connected to each other and more connected to Council as a partner rather than an adversary.

This improved relationship has opened the lines of communication on a range of issues between Council and the community. Council is able to put its challenges, restrictions and issues forward with greater ease while the community feels empowered to approach Council with faith and confidence on issues which are important to them.

### ***3.Summary of event funding, budget and revenue if applicable and available.***

When the Ungarie Advancement Group first approached Council regarding a Tribute to the Danihers there was no available budget.

Council had just recently adopted its 2017-2018 budget and as it was crucial to the community to complete the project in the first half of 2018 (due to the ill health of members of the Daniher family) there was not an opportunity to consider funding the project as a capital item in the 2018-2019 budget.

Before formally taking over management of the project, Council approved a loan to the Ungarie Advancement Group of \$30,000 to underwrite the project.

However, it soon became clear that this was not nearly enough and the scope of the project was well beyond the passionate volunteer members of the Ungarie Advancement Group.

As such Council agreed to take over management of the project and sought costings for the design, construction and installation of the Big Football.

Suddenly Council was faced with the task of delivering a \$52,500 project with no budget in an extremely short time frame.

It was a challenge Council tackled with great gusto and enthusiasm.

A developing relationship with Triple M delivered the critical breakthrough in the project with a commitment of \$30,000 cash as well as an unprecedented in-kind contribution including marketing and promotion.

This was followed by a \$20,000 grant from the New South Wales State Government and a pledge of \$2500 from the AFL, as well as the donation of auction items and commitment to meet the cost of insurance and umpires to hold a Legends AFL match after the unveiling.

As a result, the construction and installation the world's biggest football was fully funded by sponsorship at no cost to Council or the community.

***4. Show communication methods and distribution outlets, use of innovation and differing communication tools and how they motivated their audience.***

While the plan to build the world's biggest Sherrin football seemed like a great idea, the short and long term success of the project hinged on as many people as possible being aware of it.

Without implementing outstanding communication methods, this innovative project would not live up to its full potential or deliver the many potential positive outcomes for the community.

Utilising established media contacts and channels, Council first announced its plan to build a Big Football to the local newspaper and through an interview with regional radio station Triple M.

In the day following the interview, Council was contacted by Triple M with an offer for a \$1000 cash contribution and \$9000 in in-kind advertising (to build community and corporate support) in return for recognition as a sponsor of the project.

Ongoing discussions with Triple M and Council's willingness to embrace them as a partner rather than simply a sponsor led to that support being significantly increased to a \$30,000 cash contribution and in-kind support which included advertising and promotion, provision of national on-air talent (James Brayshaw and Billy Brownless) for the unveiling and a commitment to broadcast the unveiling and subsequent Legends match live over two radio networks and stream live through Facebook with an estimated value of \$296,000.

Council was also able to successfully promote the project through its existing media and communication channels and networks without conflicting its arrangements with Triple M.

This co-ordinated approach to advertising and promotion helped news of the Big Football unveiling reach 1.34 million people – an unprecedented outcome for Bland Shire Council and the small village of Ungarie.

***5. Describe delivery of the event and its results.***

The project met and exceeded even the highest of expectations.

According to the 2016 Census, the population of Ungarie stands at 557 people (many of them previously disengaged) and Council set an ambitious target of 400 people to attend the opening.

The opening on 10 March 2018 was attended by in excess of 2000 people. This conservative number was provided by volunteers from the Ungarie Australian Football and Netball Club who manned the gate

at the nearby Ungarie Sportsground where Council organised and hosted a Legends AFL match to provide entertainment and help raise funds for Neale Daniher's charity Fight MND following the official unveiling.

However, those numbers paled in comparison to the total audience reached by the Big Football project with the assistance of a lucrative corporate partnership between Council and Triple M/Southern Cross Austereo.

The project, launch and Legends game were all promoted heavily across the Triple M/Southern Cross Austereo Network prior to the day, while Triple M provided high profile on-air presenters James Brayshaw and Billy Brownless to MC the launch and provide live commentary during the Legends game.

Triple M conducted an outside broadcast live from Ungarie from 7am until 2pm across two regional radio networks and live streamed both the unveiling and the Legends match on Facebook.

A Media Monitors report commissioned by Triple M following the launch showed that coverage of the Big Football reached a total audience of 1,341,816 people with an Advertising Space Value (ASR) of \$296,797 - all achieved at zero cost to Council.

This incredible exposure continues to deliver tourism benefits for Ungarie and the Bland Shire as Essendon and AFL fans from across the country visit Ungarie to see the Big Football and pay homage to the Danihers.

This has led to increased economic activity in Ungarie, West Wyalong and the Bland Shire.

#### ***6. Outline the innovation and legacy elements.***

Ungarie is situated in central New South Wales, 317 kilometres from the nearest capital city (Canberra), 533km from Sydney and 609 kilometres from Melbourne.

The village lies several hundred kilometres from the nearest beach, theme park or mainstream tourist destination while small businesses are struggling and the population has been in decline.

To achieve its key objective of attracting visitors to stimulate the local economy and reinvigorate the area, Council had to take a pioneering approach to deliver something (literally) big and unique which would capture the attention of tourists.

To stand out and make an impact, the project had to be the first of its kind. As such, it needed to be innovative yet affordable and also able to connect with the local and wider community.

The project demonstrates best practice in community engagement, design and delivery and the development of partnerships.

Members of the Ungarie community feel a real ownership of the Big Football and are proud to show it off to the many visitors which make the pilgrimage to Ungarie to see the structure for themselves.

It stands as a lasting legacy for the Daniher family and their achievements as well as the crucial role the community of Ungarie played in their success.

Remarkably, it was all achieved without costing Council or the community one dollar.

***7. Outline the sustainability and accessibility elements if appropriate.***

Bing Walder Park in Ungarie was chosen as the location for the structure due to its prominent location in the Main Street of Ungarie and the accessibility of the park to people with mobility issues.

The structure is fully accessible to all visitors with the interpretive panel strategically placed so that persons in a wheelchair can read it at eye level.

Weather proof paint and materials were used so that the Big Football is guaranteed not to show any signs of fading for at least 15 years.

Council was already responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of Bing Walder Park and as such there are no additional ongoing maintenance costs associated with the project – making it completely self-sustainable.

***8. Describe evaluation methods and results.***

More than 2000 people attended the official unveiling and subsequent Legends match.

Conservative crowd numbers were counted by volunteers from the Ungarie Football and Netball Club manning the gate and accepting donations for Neale Daniher's charity Fight MND.

The day raised more than \$25,000 in donations for Fight MND.

Triple M commissioned a media monitors report to assess coverage of the lead up to and the unveiling.

Over 36 days and across 54 different promotional channels, the report showed that the project reached 1,341,816 people at an estimated value of \$296,797.

Outside of formal evaluation methods, Ungarie residents have reported a significant increase in the number of visitors to the community while surrounding small business has also recorded a spike in sales.