



WINTER 2007 workplace 
big
 day out

Evaluation Report

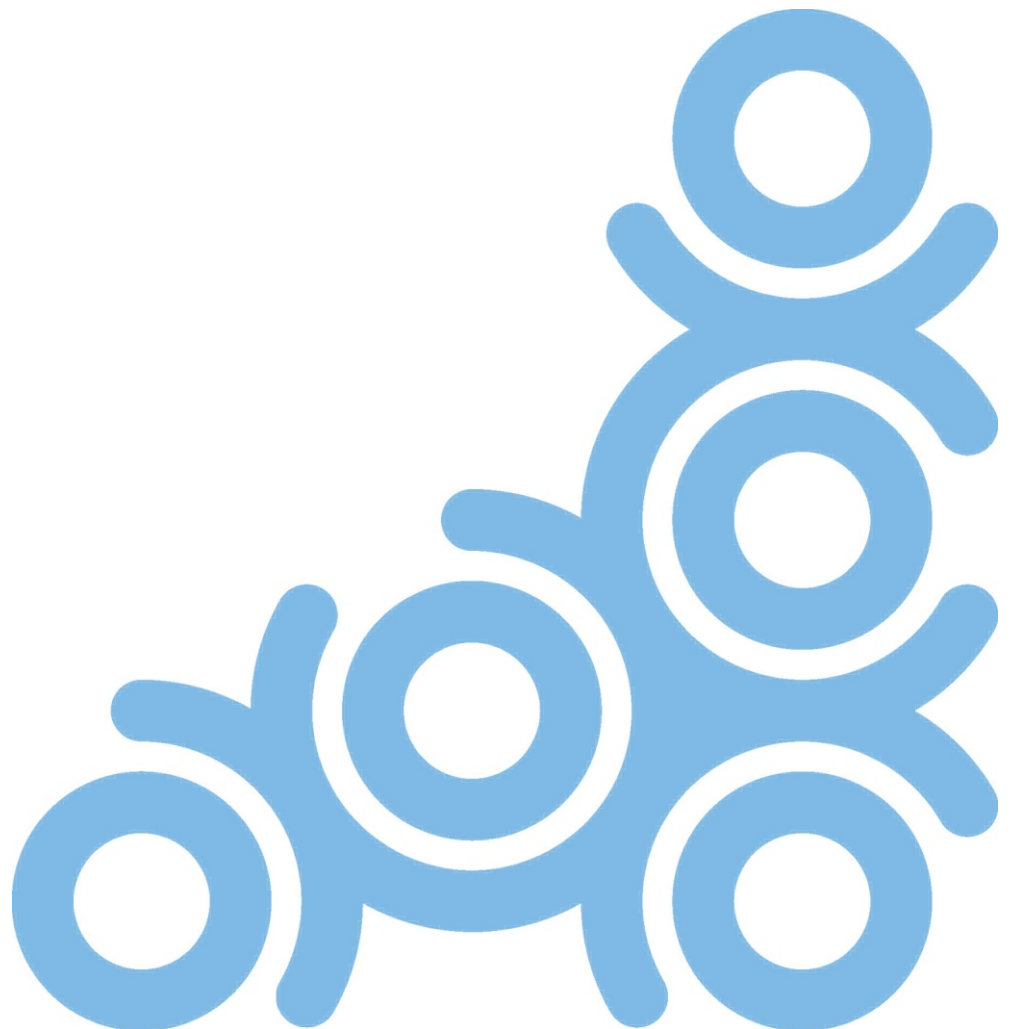




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Introduction

BacLinks is an exciting and innovative program initiated by Karingal and formed in partnership with United Way Geelong. It acts as an independent broker in establishing partnerships between businesses and their local community. The BacLinks Program is regarded as one of the most innovative and respected business-community programs in Australia¹.

Business-community partnerships make good sense. They move away from the outdated cheque-book mentality that provides only a 'bandaid fix' to social and community issues, towards relationships that strengthen the economic and social structures of communities from within. Business-community partnerships promote greater community understanding, empower local communities and encourage support for local business.

It is known that many businesses are already benevolently contributing to their local community, however are missing out on vital opportunities to enhance their business performance. This new way of thinking means it is okay, in fact prudent, for business to leverage off their social investments and for community organisations and groups to leverage off their associations with business.

BacLinks experience and expertise can identify, source and match the right community based project with the right business and provide creative solutions, coordination and support to ensure the best possible outcome for everyone involved. Working with BacLinks saves participating businesses and organisations time, money and effort freeing them to focus on core activities.

BacLinks holds the Workplace Big Day Out as an introduction into the business and social potential of employee volunteering and other forms of in-kind contributions. The first event was held in December 2002 and it has since become a premier local event. Held twice a year, the Workplace Big Day Out helps prepare businesses and employee volunteers for the possibilities of future involvement in other community-based projects and allows them to develop insight into the personal and business benefits of involvement.

Evidence gathered at the 2007 Winter event indicates employee volunteers gain significant personal and professional development out of participation. They recognise participation is good for their business and are keen to participate in community based projects other than the Workplace Big Day Out.

BacLinks encourages businesses, and their employees, to take the next step beyond the Workplace Big Day Out to become involved in the wide range of community based projects available and develop enduring business-community relationships.

We thank you for your participation in the 2007 Winter Workplace Big Day Out, held at the Corio Leisuretime Centre, 31 July 2007. Your involvement with this event is valued and we hope that you will find the information contained in this document useful to better understand the concept of the Workplace Big Day Out and the needs it is intended to meet. We look forward to a future association with your business and your employees.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Denise Howes", written in a cursive style.

Denise Howes
WBDO Coordinator

1. SED Consulting 2007, 'Organisational Review', *Sustaining and Growing BacLinks Geelong*, p.9, SED Consulting

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Special thanks go to: Geelong Business News, Geelong Jukebox Rockers, Gordon Institute of TAFE Staff & Students, Karingal Staff, KABLE & Karingal Volunteers, Ray Johnson "The Big Issue", Igel Productions, McDonalds Corio, Rotary Highton, St Laurence Geelong 'Supercats', 94.7 The Pulse, Tip Top Bakeries, United Way Geelong

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Getting-to-know-you activities, led by KABLE (Karingal Adventure Based Learning Experiences) staff, are a great beginning to the day's activities.



Karingal volunteers played a very important role in keeping activities on track by acting as Team Marshals.



Special relationships are forged on the day between people who otherwise would not have the opportunity to meet.



"I loved every minute of it"

"It's great meeting people from other businesses who are interested in taking part in the program"

The range of activities are carefully chosen to be diverse, inclusive and, most importantly, fun.



Origami, a new activity addition, provided some real challenges. Participants learnt how to make paper cups and tulips, as well as paper planes.

WBDO Magical moments...



The smiles on everyone's faces were a testament to the wonderful time they were having.

"I wanted to come because I get a lot out of it"

"I think this is a great event and have learnt lots of things about what Karingal and BaLinks are doing. I am really proud to be a part of the Karingal family"

"It was great meeting new people and seeing them as people first - then the disability"

"A fantastic day... Will be encouraging my workmates to attend next year"



Event planning and implementation

BacLinks is committed to continued strengthening of the Workplace Big Day Out (WBDO) experience for all participants. The first section of the evaluation survey was designed to gauge participant satisfaction levels with event processes, services and activities.

Business Information Package

The information contained in the Workplace Big Day Out Business Information package is valuable in preparing employee volunteers for the day to better understand their role in the event and ease apprehension about participation. Past evaluations have indicated that the Information Package has not always been received by participating employee volunteers resulting in a number of them arriving unprepared.

The first three evaluation questions were designed to determine the level of distribution of the Business Information Package and whether its contents were useful.

| | Yes | No |
|--|------|----|
| Did you receive the Workplace Business Info Package? | 91% | 9% |
| If <u>Yes</u> did you find the information useful? | 100% | 0% |

Table 1

91% of respondents indicated they had received the WBDO Business Information Package (Table 1) prior to the event. Of these, 100% believed the information contained in the package was useful.

Respondents were asked to note any information they considered would be useful to have prior to the event. Their responses included:

- The Package did not adequately indicate how much 'fun' the event was;
- More details on the location map;
- Inclusion of event background details; and
- More information on the BacLinks Program.

Event Management

Respondents were asked to rate pre-event information, event organisation, activities/entertainment and briefing sessions between 1 (terrible) and 5 (excellent). (Figure 1)

The percentage of respondents who rated these as above average (i.e. rated at 4 or above) was:

- 92% Pre-event information.
- 98% Event organisation.
- 92% Choice of activities.
- 94% Briefing sessions.

A fee of \$20 was charged for workplace volunteer participation. This has been necessary to cover the running costs of the event. In light of this, respondents were asked if they thought the event was good value for money (Figure 2).

90% believed the event was good value for money.

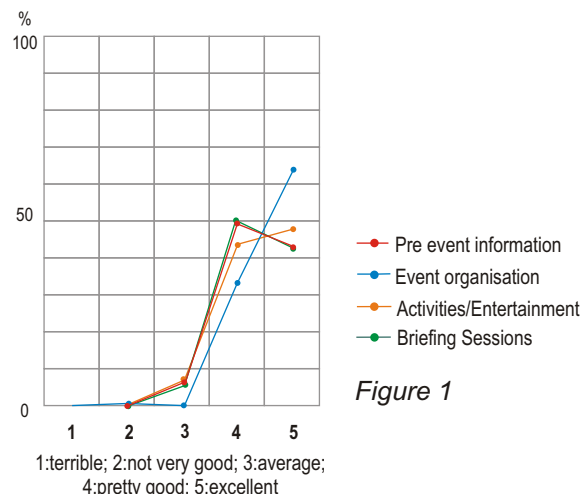


Figure 1

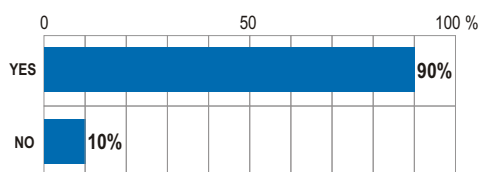


Figure 2

Briefing Sessions

Respondents were asked whether they believed the briefing sessions were effective in meeting the specific purposes for which they were designed (Figure 3).

87% believed briefing sessions helped them to assist and interact with people with disabilities.

94% believed they helped them feel more comfortable about their participation in the event.

98% believed they helped them to have an understanding of the BacLinks program.

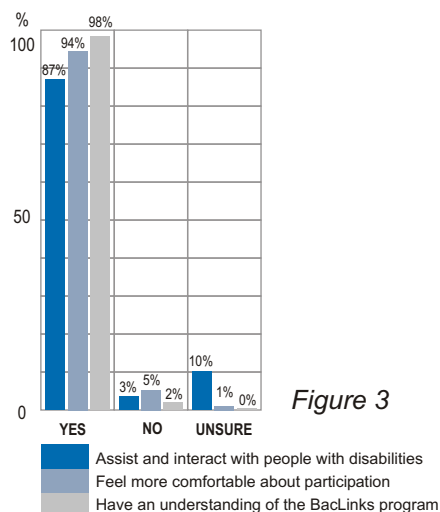


Figure 3

Team Challenge and Getting-to-know-you activities

The Team Challenge and Getting-to-know-you activities are a strategy to help employee volunteers get to know each other and relax in preparation for the main activities.

Repeat employee volunteers participated in a Team Challenge activity while first time volunteers undertook the briefing sessions.

Both groups came together to participate in the Getting-to-know-you activities.

Respondents were asked to rate these activities between 1 (terrible) and 5 (excellent). (Figure 4)

The percentage of respondents who rated these as above average (i.e. rated at 4 or above) was:

- 88%** Team Challenge Activity.
- 88%** Getting-to-know-you Activity.

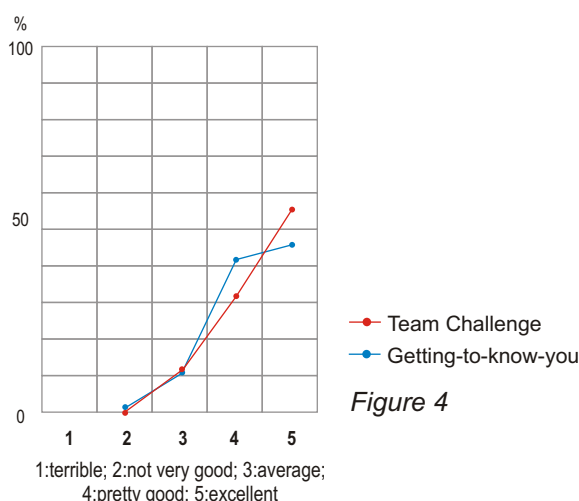


Figure 4

Workplace Big Day Out participation

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they had attended any previous events. They were also asked whether they would participate in another event (Figure 5).

32% of respondents had attended at least one previous Workplace Big Day Out event.

97% of all respondents stated they would participate in another WBDO event.

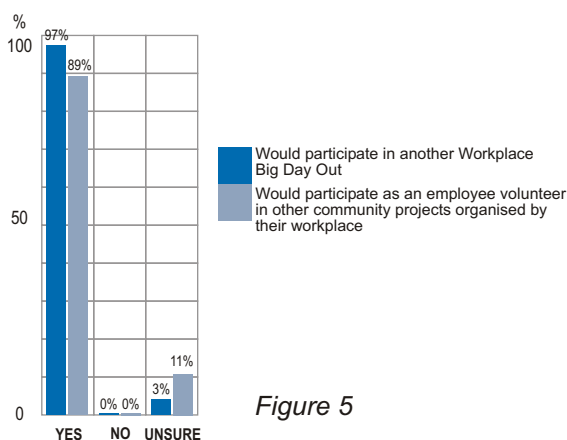


Figure 5

Respondents were asked whether they would participate as employee volunteers in community projects, other than the WBDO, organised by their workplace (Figure 5).

89% of respondents indicated they would participate in other community projects organised by their workplace.

Why have a Workplace Big Day Out?

Businesses, Australia-wide and around the world, are fast recognising the value in making a social investment in their community. This social investment can take the form of employee volunteering, as well as other forms of in-kind support, gifts of cash and sponsorship.

The Workplace Big Day Out was developed to serve as an introduction to the business and social potential of employee volunteering. The event also provides staff training and development opportunities.

The second section of the evaluation survey was designed to assess the effectiveness of the event in meeting these intended purposes.

Employee skills gained through participation in the Workplace Big Day Out

Participation in the Workplace Big Day Out has the potential to develop and improve on employee skills and attributes. These can then be taken back into the workplace to enhance productivity and foster greater company loyalty and harmony.

Respondents were asked to indicate the skills and attributes they developed, through their interactions and experiences in the event, that they can take back into their workplace. Figure 6 shows the percentage of respondents who indicated each particular listed skill.

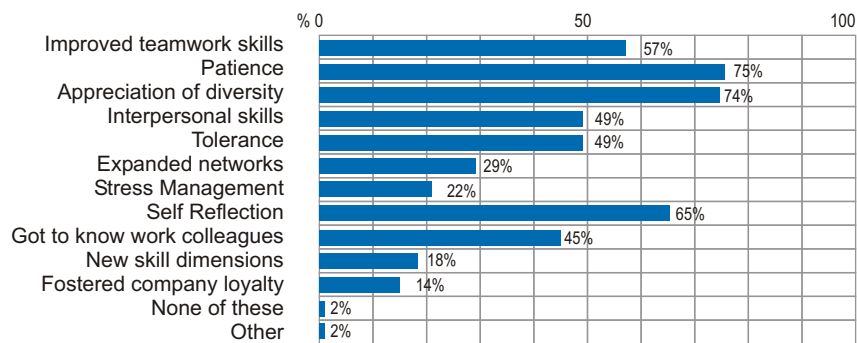


Figure 6

Patience (**75%**) and appreciation of diversity (**74%**) were rated as the most developed skills. These were followed by self-reflection (**65%**) and improved teamwork skills (**57%**). Mentoring, although not available for selection, was also mentioned.

3% of respondents believed they had experienced development in all of the 11 listed skills and attributes.

38% of respondents believed they had experienced development in more than half of the listed skills and attributes.

98% of respondents listed at least one skill and/or attribute.

Business involvement

Respondents were asked to indicate whether they believed it is important for their employer's business to become involved in the community in which it operates (Figure 7).

100% believed it is important for their business to become involved

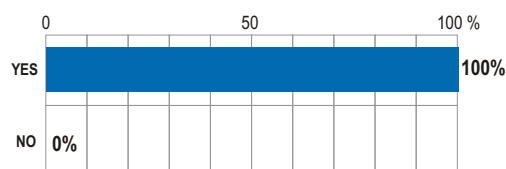


Figure 7

Respondents were then asked to indicate why they believed it is important for their employer's business to become involved in the community in which it operates. Figure 8 (overleaf) shows the percentage of respondents who indicated each particular benefit.

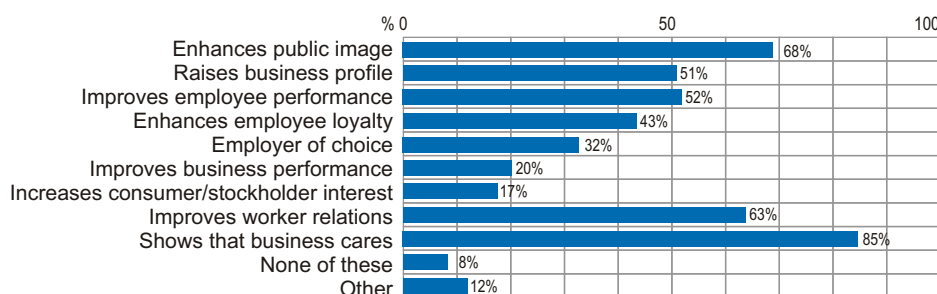


Figure 8

Respondents believed it is important for their business to become involved in their community because it shows that the business cares (85%), enhances public image (65%) and improves worker relations (63%).

11% of respondents believed it was important for their business to be involved for all of the listed reasons.

40% of respondents believed it was important for their business to be involved for more than half of the listed reasons.

98% listed at least one reason.

Comments that were made, but not included in the list, included generalist opinions that: business should altruistically put back into their community; business is an integral part of the local community so should contribute for this reason; and business is privileged so should contribute to the less privileged.

How well is the concept of the Workplace Big Day Out understood?

The objective of the Workplace Big Day Out is to introduce businesses to the business and social benefits of supporting local community. There are, however, numerous personal benefits of participation.

Respondents were asked why they attended the 2007 Winter Workplace Big Day Out event (Figure 8).

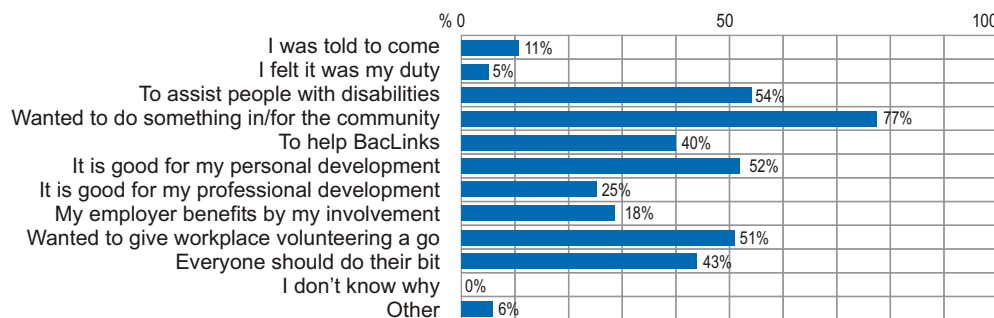


Figure 9

The majority of respondents indicated they attended because they wanted to do something for their community (77%). Other popular reasons for attendance included assisting people with disabilities (54%), it is good for personal development (52%), and wanting to give workplace volunteering a go (51%).

89% of respondents attended voluntarily.

18% attended because they believe their employer benefits from their participation.

43% attended because they believe everyone should do their bit.

25% attended because they believe participation is good for professional development.

Other responses, not listed, suggested people attended because they find the event fun and worthwhile, they gain insight into disability and it provides an opportunity for them to express a need to give of themselves.

Respondents were asked to rate (1 being the most important;7 being the least important) their understanding of the Workplace Big Day Out.

The top three responses were ranked by totaling the number of times a response was indicated within the three highest belief ratings i.e. between 1 and 3 (Table 2).

| Top 3 Responses | Total number of times ranked in top 3 ratings | Ranking |
|--|---|---------|
| It is a way I can put back into my community | 47 | 1 |
| It provides an opportunity to learn about disabilities | 46 | 2 |
| It encourages people to appreciate their advantages | 30 | 3 |

Table 2

‘It provides an opportunity to learn about disabilities’ received the highest total of Number 1 ratings (**23**), although it ranked second overall. ‘It is designed to introduce me to the concept of the Workplace Big Day Out’ and ‘It helps my workplace meet its social responsibility commitments’ both ranked low (6 and 7 respectively when ranked in the top three ratings; 3 and 1 respectively when ranked in the bottom three ratings).

General Feedback

Positive comments noted on evaluation forms included belief statements that the Workplace Big Day Out:

- Was a great day;
- Was a good opportunity to meet other like-minded business people;
- Shows the person first, the disability second;
- Educates people about BacLinks and Karingal;
- Is well organised;
- Encourages people to ‘have a go’; and
- Can’t wait to do it again

Some issues were raised in the comments section about event processes. These will be addressed below.

Issues

1. Event services and processes

Event costs are largely met through sponsorship and budget limitations restrict the level of services provided. As such T-shirts and caps are limited to employee volunteers and BBQ lunch provisions are governed by the generous donations of supporting businesses. T-shirts are only available in larger sizes so they can be easily put on over existing clothing. The wearing of T-shirts is a requirement of sponsorship arrangements. Event timing is strictly governed by program member timetables.

2. Activities/Entertainment

The scope of activities and entertainment is limited by the inclusive needs of the event. BacLinks attempts to introduce at least one new activity/entertainment at each event, however the limitations have meant that some activities have been provided at more than one event. Over time, new activities, entertainment, and activity providers, will replace the existing to help keep the event fresh and interesting.

3. Program member representation

Participation in the event is offered to all program members from local disability services whose client group is of an age and disability level that best serves the needs of the event. This group includes Karingal, of which BacLinks is an enterprise.

Discussion

The 2007 Winter Workplace Big Day Out was very well received with positive responses to key event management and service areas. Evaluation feedback supports the event's continued success in providing a fun, supported environment to encourage businesses and their employees towards further community involvement, as well as personal and professional development opportunities.

BacLinks is a not-for-profit organisation. This event introduced an attendance fee, implemented out of a necessity to cover running costs. Evaluation feedback indicates the event was seen by the majority as good value for money, with employees keen to attend further events and encourage colleagues to participate.

Evaluation responses suggest employee volunteers gain a great deal of personal satisfaction from participation and strongly recognise the individual benefits gained through their experience. Responses also suggest the event fulfills a personal need for workplace volunteers to make a worthwhile contribution to their community.

While employee volunteers do not strongly recognise that community involvement improves business performance they do firmly believe it is important for their business to be involved in the community in which it operates. They recognise community involvement shows the business cares, it enhances public image, encourages company loyalty and improves worker relations. These benefits, as well as others recognised in the evaluation, are factors thought to ultimately lead to better business performance.

The Workplace Big Day Out is clearly successful in highlighting the benefits of employee volunteering, however, only a small percentage of employee volunteers understood the true nature of the event. The evaluations revealed a commonly held belief that the event is held to provide an opportunity to learn about disability and to put back into the community.

This is not surprising given the program member group that regularly attends the event. The reason why BacLinks invites this particular group, however, are unrelated to the purpose and objectives of the event i.e. to introduce businesses to the social and business potential of community involvement. The Workplace Big Day Out event simply serves as a springboard for businesses to become involved in their local community and is not in itself an 'end result'.

BacLinks therefore encourages businesses to become involved in other projects we broker. These projects encompass a broad range of community need with each offering a unique experience for employee volunteers, as well as strong staff development and training opportunities with a diverse range of skills and benefits. They can often offer a stronger, more holistic connection with community and have far reaching community benefits of greater social and economic impact. This evaluation has revealed employees are keen and ready to participate in community projects other than the Workplace Big Day Out arranged through their workplace.

A number of responses suggested businesses should become involved solely for altruistic reasons with the event providing opportunity to 'help out' in the community. These perceptions are understandable given the intense personal experience and satisfaction gained from participation.

BacLinks understands this, however, we believe business and community need each other. We suggest it is in our community's best interests for local business, through community involvement, to leverage off the relationships they build with community, and vice versa, to develop and strengthen the economic and social frameworks from within.

Conclusion

BacLinks believes business-community partnerships are significantly beneficial to everyone involved and can strengthen communities from within, both economically and socially, making it good sense to become involved in your community. For businesses interested in making a social investment business-community partnerships are a very effective way of going about it and the Workplace Big Day Out is a good starting point.

The Workplace Big Day Out event is purposely designed to introduce businesses and their employees to the concept of employee volunteering and other forms of community involvement through business-community partnerships. It does this by providing a unique environment for businesses and their employees to experience the personal and professional benefits of community involvement.

The event continues to be successful on a number of levels. The multi-faceted benefits of participation have been documented time and again with employee volunteers reporting high satisfaction with the event, a sense of personal accomplishment, and pride in their employer's involvement. This 2007 Winter event was no exception.

Evaluation responses, contained in this document, have shown that employee volunteers recognise their participation in the event is beneficial to themselves and their business. They are keen to attend future events and participate in other projects arranged by their workplace. This is good news, as it is BacLinks aim to encourage businesses to step beyond the Workplace Big Day Out towards further involvement in other projects they broker. Giving BacLinks a call is the next step.

BacLinks membership

Membership with BacLinks ensures your community investment is managed efficiently and cost effectively. Our experience and expertise means we can best identify and source suitable community projects that match individual business interest and capacity. The connections, support and coordination we provide ensures that business involvement is made easier, saving your business or community group time, money and effort.

For more information on the BacLinks Program and how you can become involved phone **03 5249 8989** or visit our website www.baclinks.org.au

Special thanks go to all the businesses, organisations and individuals who actively contributed to, or participated in, the 2007 Winter Workplace Big Day Out:



Alcoa - Pt Henry
Austin Group Limited
Barwon Water
Black Dog Promotions
Blue Circle Southern Cement
Brett Noonan (Alcoa - Martial Arts)
Channel 31
Commonwealth Bank
Corio Leisuretime Centre
Delwyn Jenkins (Belly Dancing)
Elaine Janes (Dancing)
Encompass Community Services Inc.
Geelong Advertiser
Geelong Business News
Geelong Jukebox Rockers (Entertainment)
Gordon Institute of TAFE Staff and Students: Chris Melville; Tom Smith & Brendon Wemyss (Indoor Cricket); Jaclyn Verbeek and Louise Welsh (Games Sense)
KABLE: Yestin Griffiths; Sarah Quick-Scarlett; Tim Henshall (Team Challenge Activities) and the KABLE work crew
Karingal Staff
Karingal Volunteers:
Head Marshal - Deb Brodie
Marshals - Audrey Rowe; Deb Farrar; Joan Robertson; Maria Pitaro; Marissa Heard; Michael Pink; Naomi Floyd; Paul Aldridge; Graham and Nicholas Cravern; Nicole Edwards; Sigrid O'Toole

Igel Productions
Matchworks - Sponsor
May Travaille (Geelong Badminton Association)
Mio Seamder and Yae Sansom (Recipe for Happiness - Origami)
Pam Hutchinson (Photography)
Photis Kyprian (Football Federation Victoria - Soccer)
Powercor Australia - Sponsor
Ray Johnson (The Big Issue)
Redstick Strategic Communications
Robyn Jarvis (Geelong Bowling Lanes)
Rotary Highton
Safeway
Shell Refining (Australia) Pty Ltd - Major Sponsor
St Laurence Community Services
St Laurence Geelong 'Supercats'
Target
Telstra Country Wide
Tip Top Bakeries
United Way Geelong
Volunteers:
Leia Howes; Rita Jennings; Robyn Forrest

For more information about the BacLinks Program please contact one of the BacLinks team on **5249 8989** or visit our website

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