



SOCIAL AUDIT EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

When BE was approached by the Westpac Foundation to undertake a social audit it was an opportunity to prove to ourselves and those we serve that we are an authentic organisation that walks our talk.

Undertaking the Social Audit was a daunting task, due to BE's extensive geography, limited resources (both human and financial), and because each person working with us was already overstretched. Mostly, we embraced the opportunity and during the twelve months that it took to complete we learnt new skills and procedures and examined every facet of our organisation, from mission, values and organisational objects through to environmental and economic impact and compliance. And through that process we gained a new level of consciousness about the way we work, the importance of communication, about setting achievable and realistic goals, about not promising too much, and about delivering in a meaningful and sustainable way to meet our commitments.

Scope of Social Audit

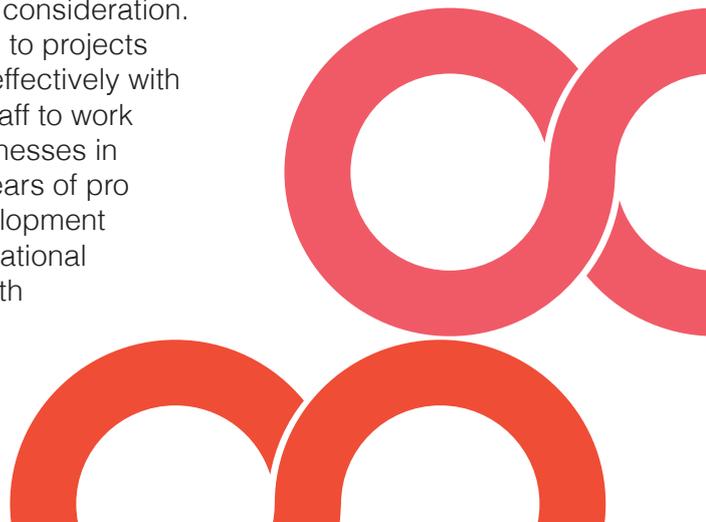
- The Social Audit was conducted over a twelve month period from February 2008 through to February 2009. The audit process was delivered internally by BE's executive team. The BE executive team worked with Libby Darlison and the Miller Group, which included two additional consultants.
- The six key stakeholder groups identified for consultation were BE staff, the BE Board, program participants, program partners, funders and community. We chose to survey only those who had been deeply involved with BE over an extensive period of time.
- We also identified and examined four key programs that represent the spectrum of BE's work: Ngarrwa, Connections, Message in a Bottle and BE Leaders.

Results and Conclusions

Stakeholder surveys indicate that we meet our program objectives and prove that we walk our talk.

During the Social Audit process we found areas of weakness in our operations and have developed new policies and new organisational systems related to HR, finances and delivery of programs and have successfully implemented many of these changes during the course of the social audit.

- Financial system – BE has undertaken a complete rebuild of the chart of accounts and our financial reporting system. To provide better accountability & transparency BE requires quarterly reports prepared by accountant and the accountant perusing finances monthly, with the Executive Director.
- Operations - This aspect of BE was determined to require consideration. Limited resources and a commitment to allocate resources to projects and not on administration have limited BE's ability to deal effectively with aspects related to operation. This combined with limited staff to work in this area meant that through the audit process weaknesses in this area have been identified. BE has now sought three years of pro bono support to address organisational, professional development and HR issues and has undertaken a review of the organisational structure in order to better support staff and contractors with the limited resources available. Changes in organisational



structure have been undertaken to ensure contractors are working in teams to ensure peer support and mitigate the isolation and support issues identified through the auditing process.

- We have now developed a new professional development plan whereby project managers and artists can apply to the executive team to work on other projects within the organisation to learn and share expertise with other members of the team. Individuals who have strength in particular areas will travel to work with colleagues sharing skills and expertise. This will ensure individual development both artistically and professionally and mitigate the costs of bringing everyone together. This approach promotes flexibility and ownership among team members.

The measurement of outcomes/results presented as a weakness for BE, particularly finding measurement and evaluation tools that artists were able to use effectively and tools that in no way compromises the creative processes used by BE in the delivery of its programs.

- We found that the artists did not have the time to run the program and also conduct evaluations and given that no other staff member has time to spare, we have now outsourced the delivery of the evaluation and measurement strategy so that both running the programs and evaluation can be accomplished effectively.
- Going forward BE will use a combination of evaluation methodologies. We will make use of established social indicators for measuring outcomes, such as social connectedness, supportive relationships and environments, freedom from discrimination and violence, and economic participation.
- We will also attempt to develop effective strategies for evaluating the impact of the artistic works produced. Here, we will focus of reviews of the artworks, media stories and audience responses to the quality of the artworks produced.
- This social auditing process has been valuable in teaching us the difference between outputs and outcomes. We now aim to find quantitative indicators to prove that BE's work influences positive changes in the communities where we work, and to what extent and for how long change is sustained. For example, we seek to quantify the effect of BE's Mubali program on birth weights, and changes in young people's use of drugs and alcohol because of BE's involvement in a community. We also seek to evaluate BE's influence on how many people transition into employment and education and whether this is sustained over what period of time.
- The social auditing process has given BE tools to better evaluate the economic impact of BE's programs in the communities where we work. We seek to quantify the effect of our programs that keep at risk youth out of the prison system and in employment or education and whether this is sustained over what period of time.

Strengths of undertaking the Social Audit process

- The Social Accounts have increased BE's levels of transparency and accountability, which gives us a competitive advantage over similar organisations in sector and puts BE at the cutting edge in terms of funding.
- The Social Accounts provides a tool that provides validity to argument for long-term funding relationships
- The process of conducting the social audit has assisted BE mature as an organisation.
- The Social Accounts has the potential to distinguish BE as a best practice organisation.



- BE can now demonstrate measureable outcomes.

Weaknesses of undertaking the Social Audit process

- The Social Audit has been a costly undertaking both in terms of finances and human capital. BE is a relatively small organisation with limited operational and infrastructure resources. BE is not funded to apply financial resources in this area and in fact, many philanthropic organisations are adverse to funding being allocated to infrastructure costs. From the outset of the SAA process it was not made clear the costs BE would incur or the significant time needed to complete the exercise. BE is unique in that we deliver an extensive program across a large geography and only has two fulltime staff to undertake the SAA process.
- The Social Auditing process has not been developed for organisations like BE. The framework is not sufficiently adaptable to make it accessible for small arts and community organisations working in the sector.
- Cultural negative perception – need to use reports to help change this perception. Not specific to this process alone.

Future plans for the next social auditing cycle

BE will include social auditing process and theories in our evaluation and measurement strategy however it is unlikely we will conduct a full cycle of the SAA in the near future due to our limited resources both financial and personnel.

