

Application by Loosely Woven for the Music in Communities Awards 08

1. Name of organisation/program	Loosely Woven
2. In what year did your organization/program begin?	1995
3. What is the main purpose?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to provide opportunities for musical performances within the community • to provide free entertainment for members of the community • to provide fund-raising opportunities for groups such as Amnesty International
<p>4. If not already covered above, briefly describe the community served by your organization/program.</p> <p><i>For these Awards, 'community' means any group of people identifiable by some shared characteristic, eg the geographical area in which they live, their age, their ethnic or cultural background etc.</i></p>	<p>We are based in Sydney's Northern beaches but members come from as far away as Quakers Hill, Seven Hills, Maroubra and Galston. In 2007 we included the active involvement of singers and instrumentalists from Dungog, Tamworth and Grafton in a series of concerts in that area of NSW. We are doing the same thing again this April, this time including singers from Bowraville. Ages range from late teens to 70+. Loosely Woven is not a fixed group of people. It is the name given to whoever is available to perform on any particular occasion. This flexibility allows people to participate every now again who would not be able to make a full-time commitment whilst others of us have it as an ongoing part of our lives. The partial list included in the Appendix contains 79 participants from Sydney, 11 from Dungog, 14 from Tamworth and 15 from Grafton. Over the last 4-5 years, concerts have averaged 20-25 performers.</p>
5. Contact Person	<p>Wayne Richmond 85 Allambie Road Allambie Heights NSW 2100 (02) 9939 8802 (0400) 803 804</p>

About what you do

13. What are the main activities you undertake to encourage music-making in your community?

We stage 3-4 major new concerts each year (See Major Concert List in Appendix).

- Invitations are sent out to all previous participants and to anyone else we can identify to attend a planning meeting at which dates, times and places are determined for rehearsals and performances. We also follow a 'round robin' procedure to elicit suggestions for the content of the concert itself – anything goes! (Some people put forward their own original material.)
- Two or three more experienced people arrange the items for the available instruments/singers.
- Six to eight weeks of rehearsals follow (usually 7-8 weekly 3hr night rehearsals + 4-5 5hr weekend rehearsals.
- The process culminates with 7-9 (or more) performances (2-3 retirement villages + 5-6 public performances) N.B. Concerts are usually approximately 2 hours duration.
- Active audience participation is very much encouraged and facilitated. Programs with words are provided (see sample in DVD) and we always perform acoustically (no PA system) which means the audience's singing can be heard and appreciated by us all. Our attitude is that it is everyone present (Loosely Woven + audience) who create the concert.
- One of the public performances is recorded and videoed with a double audio CD and double DVD being produced - mainly for the archival benefit of the performers though often members of the audience ask for copies as well.

In addition to these 3-4 new shows, Loosely Woven is often asked to do one-off concerts for which a program is put together from previous shows.

- Those of us available during the week perform shorter concerts for retirement villages and nursing homes across the metropolitan area. Wherever possible, we try to integrate resident-based choirs/ensembles into our concerts. For example, when we did a concert at Rowland Village, we arranged in advance to include three songs which we performed with a resident mouth organ ensemble.
- Throughout 2007 (and continuing in 2008) we collaborated with members of Sydney's New Theatre to stage shows aimed at introducing kids 4-10 years to intimate live theatre.
- Last year we collaborated with 'The Mudlarks', an a capella women's choir based in the Blue Mountains, to perform a short concert in the Jenolan Caves followed by a full concert at night in the Caves House. A similar venture is being undertaken on 9th August this year.

14. How can you demonstrate that, as a result of these activities, your community now has more people making music?

IMPORTANT: This is the crux of these Awards. To help us compare you with all the other entrants, avoid 'motherhood' statements and vague assertions. Use statistics, facts, talk about the growth in your participation numbers over the time you have been running, use real-life examples and give us a clear and substantiated sense of how musical participation and activity in your community has expanded because of your program.

In the close to 13 years since the first Loosely Woven concert in September 1995, well over 100 people have performed as Loosely Woven. Many of these are people who might otherwise not performed at all.

"I would never have had the opportunity of singing over 37 concerts in a year, had I not been a member of Loosely Woven. Singing with this group has given me unique opportunities of learning new songs, with such a wide variety of music, and the chance to be brave enough to sing solo." (Glenys Jackson, 67, member 18 months)

"Joining Loosely Woven mid 2007, I have been involved in more musical concerts or performances than previous years combined. It has kept me busy and I wouldn't have it any other way." (Samantha O'Brien, 31, member 9 months)

"One of the wonderful things about Loosely Woven is that it gives people like me, ie with no musical background or experience - the chance to develop it. Everyone is supportive of one another and it includes people of all ages and levels of musical ability. The only requirements are a willingness to "give it a go", and be able to handle constructive criticism. Loosely Woven has opened up a world of music, singing, dancing and playing, that I would never have had the opportunity to experience and my life is greatly enriched because of it." (Gial Leslie, 48, member 7 years)

"Because of my joining Loosely Woven and the confidence that followed, I now play music and sing three times a week. I have joined another choir and have lessons to improve my voice. I sing and play guitar every Friday at a local nursing home and have harp lessons." (Noni Dickson, 61, member 2 years)

"I had been writing music and songs for over two decades, but was too afraid to expose them to anyone other than my long-suffering wife and my tone-deaf cat. After attending a couple of Loosely Woven concerts I plucked up the courage to suggest that they might like to perform one or two of my humble little tunes. That was over three years ago. Since then my wife Glenys and I have joined Loosely Woven (she as an alto and me as a percussionist), and Loosely Woven has performed more than fifteen of my songs. Loosely Woven has given me the opportunity to hone my percussion skills way beyond the dreams I had long suppressed since my early twenties." (Kevin Murray, 57, member 3 years)

"I had been to Loosely Woven concerts but thought that my voice wasn't good enough to join. Wayne Richmond convinced me that I would fit in with the rest of the group. That was three years ago and in that time I have gained enough confidence to sing solo, something I never thought I would be able to do and I now take regular singing lessons." (Glenys Murray, 56, member 3 years)

15. What difference does your program make to the participants?

Being part of Loosely Woven:

- Boosts the confidence, skills and experience of members. For many, the time with Loosely Woven has led to an expansion of musical activity and, in some cases, a professional career.
- Provides incentive to practice and to increase musical/performance skills.
- Exposes participants to a wide range of musical styles and genres.
- Gives people opportunities to rehearse and perform with other musicians and learn from them.
- Provides opportunities and incentives for the writing and performing of original compositions. In 2004, two pieces of musical theatre (containing 8 new songs) were written by two members specifically to be performed by Loosely Woven.
- The concerts and rehearsals provide valuable social interactions for all. We (including some members of the audience over time) think of ourselves as a family and interact and support each other as families do.

"I have never performed on a theatre stage before, but since we have featured as a singing group for The Kids Club at the New Theatre in Newtown, I have felt so much more confident, both singing and generally in myself." (*Glenys Jackson, 67, member 18 months*)

"I spent a large part of my life loving music but convinced that I could not sing ever since being told so by one of my school teachers. Over sixty years later, thanks to the support, encouragement and opportunities provided by Loosely Woven, I am now singing alto and performing in public, what's more!" (*Pat Russell, 73, member 4 years*)

"[Loosely Woven] has introduced a wide range of musical genres that I would never have otherwise sung, played or listened to. Anything goes in LW, whether it be an original song, traditional, folk, baroque, classical or world music . . . the list is almost endless." (*Samantha O'Brien, 31, member 9 months*)

"Loosely Woven has given me the opportunity to explore new instruments and styles of music, helped improve my improvisation and creativity skills and has given me opportunities to arrange and compose music. I have also met and enjoyed playing with a range of musicians and singers that I would otherwise never have met." (*Maria Dunn, 41, member 10 years*)

"Since I joined in 2005, Loosely Woven has given me the pleasure of having six of my own songs arranged and performed in public. I am now highly motivated to write more." (*Ian Hamilton, 61, member 3 years*)

"I really appreciate the opportunity to sing with such accomplished musicians." (*Peter Tebbatt, 70, member 8 years*)

"Loosely woven develops our musical skills by the more skilled musicians sharing what they know and supporting each others development. It creates social relationships amongst ourselves as we risk exposing ourselves, have fun singing together, and share meals. But also because most of our performances are for charitable institutions it creates community in a much wider sense than many other choirs." (*Suzanne Bartos, 56, member 2 months*)

16, What difference does your program make to your community?

- We always encourage audience participation and to this end provide them with programs which include the words to many of the songs. The fact that we never use a PA system means that this participation is 'real' (they are not drowned out by us). We always talk about how it is Loosely Woven together with the audience who create the musical experience together.
- Furthermore, we often directly involve individual members of the audience in items (singing, percussion, dance, mime etc.)
- In 2004, Dulcie McCartney, one of the residents of the W G Taylor Retirement Village in Narrabeen, asked us if we would perform a play she had written. We were happy to do so as part of our next concert and since that time she has written and we have performed five more. She is 93 years old and almost blind and gets a real buzz out of this. You can see one of Dulcie's plays on the DVD I sent you.
- The extremely wide range of material presented exposes the audiences to styles and genres of music that they wouldn't normally experience thus broadening their horizons.
- The wide range of ages both within Loosely Woven and within our audiences exposes us all to generations other than our own which can only help break down prejudices.
- The informality and openness of our concerts shows people that anyone can be involved in making music and our invitation at the end of every concert for people to join us is often taken up. Over half of the current members joined in this way.
- And, of course, our concerts bring a great deal of enjoyment to us all – performers and audience alike.

"It is obvious when we sing in retirement villages how much pleasure we bring to the old folks there. They also love participating and singing along." (*Glenys Jackson, 67, member 18 months*)

"Our concerts provide top quality music and entertainment free of charge, music with thought provoking themes to broaden people's horizons." (*Maria Dunn, 41, member 10 years*)

<p>17. What are the three main reasons for the success of your organization/program?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our openness & flexibility – no auditions, everyone encouraged and supported to have a go and people can move in and out of the group as circumstances change. Everyone has input into the content of each concert (anything goes) and has a say in where and when we perform. • It is a very rewarding experience for all in many different ways: Opportunities to perform, compose, arrange, improve musical skills, increase confidence, socialise, help others, & the satisfaction of bringing obvious joy to the audiences . • We have lots of fun – something members of the audience often tell us is obvious and highly contagious! <p>“Loosely Woven is successful because, other than commitment, it has no expectations of it's members. Everyone is treated equally no matter what level of musical ability they have and the camaraderie in the group is quite unique. Everyone helps each other. It's main philosophy is sharing and spreading music in the community as far and wide as it can. Anyone can walk in from the outside and become part of our group. It is also strictly acoustic so people can be made aware of the beauty of unassisted sound. We have no need nor desire for complicated sound systems.” <i>(Noni Dickson, 61, member 2 years)</i></p> <p>“Loosely Woven is successful because of the dedication of the organizer, the variety of people involved and the flexibility of the group.” <i>(Maria Dunn, 31, member 10 years)</i></p> <p>“For me the personal rewards are in several areas. There are tremendous rewards in teaching Loosely Woven where skill levels may be low but motivation and concentration are high. At the same time, the social activities which are part of the rehearsal and performing regime enable a level of commitment to the group and to each other which gives life, depth and conviction to the performances. Ideals of fairness, justice, equity, understanding of other people and other cultures are explored in the repertoire and give performances another important level of meaning.” <i>(Jill Stubington, 63, member 5 years)</i></p> <p>“The most important, gratifying aspect of being a part of Loosely Woven is that we all play for the love of music and for the joy that it brings to others. Seeing the smile on peoples faces, or for those with less mobility, just a toe-tapping to the music, really makes it all worthwhile.” <i>(Samantha O'Brien, 31, member 9 months)</i></p>
<p>18. Tell us how you will use the prize money to encourage more music makers?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Get the message out – We know that there must be many other people out there in the community who would love to make Loosely Woven part of their lives and we would love to have them join us. In particular, it would be wonderful to have some more instrumentalists. One of the main things we would do with the money is use it to reach out and find these people through newspaper ads, billboards, leaflets, posters etc. • Skills Development – We would also use the money to pay for someone like Nadia Piave to come and run vocal workshops for us. We have done this in the past but it was difficult for some members to raise the money. • Help facilitate more collaboration with regional musicians. We loved including within our ranks musicians from Dungog, Tamworth and Grafton in a series of concerts in those towns last year and we are doing the same again this year. They got a real buzz from the experience for all of the reasons that we do and we would like to be able to do more of this sort of thing. We covered all of our own expenses during the tour last year which some people found difficult. Perhaps we could use some of the prize money to hire a bus, or subsidise accommodation for future such ventures.

<p>19. I will be including additional files/resources to support our submission.</p>	<p>I have sent through Express Post a DVD of one of our concerts to give you some idea of what they are like and the extent of the audience involvement. It was the last of six performances of a concert called ‘Waltzing with bears’ which we did for Amnesty International in the Avalon Baptist Peace Church in 2006.</p> <p>I will also attempt to upload a PDF version of this application (which should be easier for you to read) as well as an appendix containing the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• List of major public concerts (1995-2007)• Partial list of performers (79 from Sydney + 40 from regional NSW)• Letter from Jill Stubington. Jill was a musicologist and Senior Lecturer in Music at NSW University before she retired a couple of years ago. Her Doctorate degree was in Aboriginal Music about which she is a world authority. Her perspective on Loosely Woven is particularly enlightening. <p>I will also upload a set of music (choir version) for the ‘Waltzing with Bears’ concert (to give you an idea of what we work with.)</p> <p>Photos and other information about Loosely Woven (recent years, that is) can be found on our web site: looselywoven.org</p> <p>N.B. The main purpose of this site is to facilitate the internal organisation of the group and the concerts rather than as a public site.</p> <p>Some video clips have been uploaded to youtube.com (just search for Loosely Woven).</p>
--	--