

Experience of a lifetime

Residents are calling it the 'Baz buzz'. The film industry is calling it the biggest punt in Australia's cinematic history. For the hundreds of Bowen locals who have been cast as extras, they call it the 'opportunity of a lifetime'. Literally hundreds of locals of all varying ages and from all walks of life are being used as stockmen, pub attendants, waitresses, shopkeepers, society ladies, cinema goers, men of leisure, soldiers as well as many more characters.

According to Therese the excitement of the locals involved in the film has been infectious and as soon as she steps into the make-up and costume departments feels uplifted. "It's a morale boosting experience for the Bowen community. It makes us proud to live in Bowen. It makes us proud to be Australian and to revisit our heritage, it really is an extraordinary feeling," Therese said. Therese has been costumed as an uptown society lady. "It's an amazing experience because not everyone gets to witness what happens on a movie set, and get to see how props and people are used and moved around". "Although movie

making is about pretend, the end result is to make everything look and feel real, so as soon as you step out on the set and see the detailing of props and period costume, you feel as though you have stepped back in a time warp to the 1930s," she said. "The whole movie making process is a well oiled machine. The crew work relentlessly around the clock checking every detail meticulously. Nothing goes unnoticed from make-up, costumes, hair, props. They are dedicated yet so nice, courteous and considerate to everyone". "Baz Luhrmann's vision of directing and eye for detail is absolutely extraordinary. It is fascinating to

witness. There is no doubt that this will be one of the best things I have ever been a part of," she said. "I think it is particularly interesting for the younger people of Bowen because they are being introduced to an era that they may not have known much about beforehand, or about the historical significance of the events that led to the bombing of Darwin during World War II".



Bowen Tourism Manager - Therese Saad.
LEFT: Therese and Olivia in costume on set.



Bowen businesses are booming and they have Baz to thank

Business owners have been forced to put on extra staff and open for longer hours in some cases, to meet the growing demand, which is bringing millions of dollars into the town. Construction materials, hiring machinery, hiring office space, accommodation and meals to host Baz Luhrmann's cast and crew is providing a welcome injection of funds to the local economy. Locals are describing it as the busiest they have ever seen the usually quiet coastal town - even tourist numbers are swelling. Grand View Hotel, the southern facade of which meets the movie set, has been one of the biggest winners. Thousands of dollars cross its counter with cases of alcohol and as many as 350 meals being consumed a day by the cast, crew and fans hoping for a glimpse of a movie star. Other eateries are busy too and many movie actors including Byran Brown, David Wenham and Ben Mendelsohn have been spotted dining at the yacht club and Horseshoe Bay Café and Restaurant. Fellows Fish Bar staff were ecstatic when Nicole Kidman and Keith Urban bought fish and chips. Nicole Kidman, as well as Hugh Jackman and Baz Luhrmann have sampled Jochheim's Pie Shop specialties - Hunky Hugh meat pies, Baz Baguettes and Nicole Petite biscuits. Many actors and their families have been spotted shopping in Woolworths

and IGA and in other shops around Bowen. They have all been friendly and obliging fans by cheerfully posing for photographs and signing autographs. Accommodation places have also seen an increase in business especially considering it is still not yet Bowen's peak season. Most caravan parks are near to full, and many motels are near full capacity with mainly curious tourists who have come to Bowen in the hopes of spotting a movie star. Businesses who sell construction materials have boomed with the movie production team buying up big on all sorts of things from building materials, screws, hinges, power leads and basic tools. These businesses have been working overtime in trying to meet the demand and to get the goods sourced and delivered promptly. Many trades people have been enlisted to help out with plumbing, electrical, building, welding, plastering and painting requirements for the movie sets. Some have also been called out to carry out emergency repairs on set and at various movie location offices situated throughout town. A number of locals who approached the production crew for a job to assist with set construction when the crew first arrived in town are still employed by Luhrmann's film company to continue modifying sets. It is expected that they will continue to be employed until

filming completes in mid-June. Bazmark Films has scouted to find appropriate premises it needs during the filming process. There are more than a dozen sites throughout Bowen that accommodate workshops, offices, places for editing, art department, costume department, production office and extras office. Rent is being paid by Bazmark Films to all these businesses and individuals. Even local beauticians and seamstress services have been enlisted by Bazmark Films. A local seamstress is being employed by the costume department throughout the duration of filming to assist with costume modifications. Her hours of work have gone through the roof since the movie train rolled into town. Residents and business owners say the movie has put Bowen on the international map and it is expected that the significant boost to the economy will continue for some time to come. **SOME FACTS:** Casual employment - 98 volunteers and 600 extras to date. 6000 visitors have signed the guest books. Contribution to local businesses in excess of \$1.4 million across locations; \$750,000 local payroll; \$2 million accommodation and more!

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