

Dear Beanie Makers,

March 2012

Welcome to the Alice Springs Beanie Festival 2012! We have had a very busy time since the festival last year. Most importantly we have merged with a non-profit organisation called Steps Group Australia. Attached is a letter from the founder of the Beanie Festival, Adi Dunlop, which goes into the details, but be safe and happy in the knowledge that this is a fantastic opportunity for the festival to keep moving forward. As far as you, our beloved beanie makers, are concerned the festival will run in the same format as previous years, but our hard workers behind the scenes will now be well supported in the great work they do. Now on to the details for the 2012 festival... Attached are the entry forms for the National Beanie Competition, and also for Beanie Central, please ensure you read them carefully as some rules have changed.

Important dates for your diary:

**Closing dates for Competition: Monday May 28<sup>th</sup> 2012**

**Closing dates for Beanie Central: Monday May 28<sup>th</sup> 2012**

**Late entries will be returned to sender COD.**

**NB Swingtags need you to stick the barcodes onto each tag used on a beanie, please ensure barcodes are cut neatly and placed correctly, it means your beanie will be looked after well! Please use your full name on the swingtag (no fancy names or initials as this can make it difficult at the end of the festival to match your unsold beanies with you!) Please post back unused swingtags.**

For those lucky enough to be in Alice Springs for the festival:

The Central Craft workshop details and enrolment forms are attached. Book early to save disappointment. We will also be having drop-in textile workshops in the foyer of the Araluen Galleries, these are still being confirmed, if you would like to run a drop in workshop please contact Jo 0408 436 928. The Desert Weavers, Indigenous women who weave the Tjanpi grass into beautiful baskets will be running workshops also. If you would like to join the women on Saturday or Sunday morning 10-12, for \$45 (materials included), please phone Tjanpi 08 89582377 to book in.

If you are interested in doing some tours in or around Alice Springs please contact Tourism Central Australia 08 8952 5800 or 1800 645 199 or [www.centralaustralianatourism.com](http://www.centralaustralianatourism.com)

The local Sunday Markets(9am-1pm) in the Todd Mall will be on during the festival. If you are visiting Alice and would like to have a market stall to sell some of your crafts contact Jenny 0458 555 506 to book a place. You will need to source your own tables etc.

Volunteer a few hours of your time, it is a great way to meet other beanie fans and contributes to the success of the festival. The volunteer table will be manned from Wednesday 20th at Araluen so come over and get your name on the roster, plenty of jobs to choose from.

There will be a free dinner for all our volunteers on Sunday night, the 24<sup>th</sup> July, at the Gillen Club to meet the Beanie Festival Committee, we also hand out some awards to our hard workers. This is our opportunity say thanks for being a part of the Festival, to meet and chat, away from the frenzy of the beanies! We look forward to seeing you there.

For those of you interstate who can't make it to Alice Springs this year look out for the Beanie Festival Tour, dates and venues are up on our webpage. We are travelling Australia with a sample of 100 gorgeous beanies plus some extras for you to purchase. It has been a hit for the past 3 years with lots more venues in 2012 and 2013. **Also for those in SW Queensland the Queensland Performing Arts Centre will be performing "A Head Full of Love" a play based on the beanie festival from July 7<sup>th</sup> to Aug 17<sup>th</sup> 2012, get along and see it!**

We can still use some more tiny beanies to help promote the festival so if you feel inclined post as many as you can with your beanies, they are very much loved and appreciated.

Good luck with your creations, can't wait to open your parcels. Call me if you have any questions, 0408 436 928/ 08 8952 2615.

Regards



Jo Nixon,  
Alice Springs Beanie Festival  
[www.beaniefest.org](http://www.beaniefest.org)

## **BACKGROUND TO ALICE SPRINGS BEANIE FESTIVAL Inc.**

### **MERGING WITH STEPS GROUP AUSTRALIA**

Dear Beanie People

Our Chairperson Gay Epstein has asked me as a "Beanie Queen" to write to all loyal subjects to fill you in on the latest developments in the incredible "Beanie Story".

As you know our festival has grown over the past 16 years from a little group of friends in Alice Springs to include people from all over Australia and indeed the world!

All through these exciting years we have kept our original vision of encouraging beanie making as a way to develop creative confidence and financial independence amongst Indigenous people from Central Australia.

Every year we run hugely popular beanie making workshops in remote communities funded by profits from the festival (commissions on your beanies) and Government funding.

In recent years it has been harder and harder to get grants through Arts funding and it was suggested that if we attached ourselves to a Registered Training Organisation these workshops could be funded through education and training sources.

Now it happened that one day in September 2011 I went to gallery in Alice Springs called "Red Desert Gatherings" to ask if they would sell Indigenous beanies left over from the festival. The gallery staff were delighted by the gorgeous beanies and intrigued by the beanie festival story. A kind staff member asked me if I would like to visit their workshop where Indigenous artists gathered every day to produce artworks for sale in their gallery. It was my turn to be intrigued and pretty soon they were asking me to organise beanie making lessons for them. They said they were part of an organisation called STEPS.

The next day I met the Executive Director of STEPS, Carmel Crouch, who explained they were a **Registered Training Organisation** and because of their size and impressive record they were confident of getting government funding for their programs.

Well as you can imagine it wasn't long before I googled STEPS. I found out it was a not-for-profit organisation "**dedicated to creating opportunities that help people towards independence**". From small beginnings in 1989 they now have 23 offices in Qld, NT, Vic and Tas delivering training and community services. Carmel put a proposal to the Beanie Festival Committee suggesting that we join with STEPS because of our similar goals and values. Our chairperson, Gay Epstein, flew to Alice and the BF Committee met with the Directors of the Board of STEPS Group Australia to discuss a merger.

**After much debate the Alice Springs Beanie Festival Committee voted to join with STEPS.**

The Beanie Festival treasurer, Tony Nicholson (who fortunately lives near the STEPS Head Office on the Sunshine Coast) in full consultation with the BF Committee negotiated a formal "Heads of Agreement". This protects the interests of our Festival as well as assuring we can comply with the STEPS' standard of governance. It was approved by the committee and signed by Gay and Tony on our behalf.

**This move will put our Festival on a firm footing.** The Festival is now a major national event needing paid staff as well as volunteers. Sadly many community festivals in regional Australia have had to fold because of lack of professional support and funding. Now with STEPS backing I am confident our festival will go from strength to strength

STEPS has a wealth of expertise in areas such as administration, submission writing, training and marketing. Their staff in Alice Springs and at the Head Office are enthusiastic and happy to help us in any way they can.

STEPS will be able to sell our beanies all year round at outlets in Alice Springs, across Australia and on line. Initially we will concentrate on selling Indigenous beanies and when that is running smoothly STEPS is **keen to give all our beanie makers, more marketing opportunities.**

With help from STEPS staff we plan to extend our beanie workshops in remote communities of Central Australia **and develop an ongoing "Beanie Industry" run by Indigenous people from the Alice Springs town camps.**

Our beloved Beanie Festival will still be held at Araluen every June **and we will still need teams of volunteers to run it.**

An Advisory Committee of Beanie Festival Members will continue to guide the Festival. STEPS will employ a Beanie Festival Manager to plan and carry out all the hundreds of tasks involved in staging such a big community event.

The competition, Beanie Central, exhibition, Friday night opening celebration, Craft council workshops and **all the parts of the Festival that you know and love will continue.** I hope you appreciate what is really good about this move is we will be able to give a lot more indigenous craftspeople opportunities to make and market their beanies.

Beanie headquarters will now move from Jo Nixon's house to "The Red Desert Gatherings" 7 Stuart Terrace Alice Springs thus relieving Jo's family of "beanie overcrowding". I am confident that the only changes you will notice will be positive ones.

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e are looking forward to a wonderful 2012 Festival. I hope you can come.

Warm and fuzzy wishes to you all from  
Adi Dunlop (beanie queen)