

**Big Stories, Small Towns: Asia Pacific**

Briefing document for filmmakers.



**BIG  
STORIES  
SMALL TOWNS**

**“Every community has a memory of itself... A living memory,  
an awareness of a collective identity woven of a thousand stories”**

Joe Lambert, Founder, Centre for Digital Storytelling

## BIG STORIES, SMALL TOWNS

LOCAL STORIES, GLOBAL IMPACT

### ONE LINE SYNOPSIS

Big Stories, Small Towns is a participatory, multi-platform documentary project gathering small town stories of innovation and resilience and sharing them with a global audience through the [www.bigstories.com.au](http://www.bigstories.com.au) website.

### A COMMON THEME

We shine a light on people who care for and create their community.



### SYNOPSIS

Big Stories, Small Towns is a unique model of community engagement and participation.

Professional filmmakers live in a small town and work with local people to bring their stories to the screen.

Stories are made in different ways. There are a mix of photos and documentaries made by the filmmakers and by community members. Filmmakers undertake workshops, training and collaboration with local people to create some of the stories. The filmmakers produce other stories themselves with strong community consultation.

We make films 'with' not 'about' people.

Our guiding principles are defined by the core values of trust, commitment, humility, faith in the ability of others, love and critical thinking:

- *The community is our key partner - work closely with them, and respect each other's expertise and independence.*
- *Work through ethics, privacy and consent with the community and adapt accordingly.*
- *Encourage local content production through training, mentoring, community screenings, exhibitions and ongoing support.*
- *Make beautiful, inspiring, insightful and engaging stories with the community. However, it's not PR, we are not making commercials for local initiatives.*
- *Track the process and results and spend time to share what has been learnt with multiple communities in many ways – online, in the community and across different media.*
- *Use the process and stories as a catalyst for discussion, reflection and inspiration.*

## THE RESIDENCY



The general process for the residency is made up of 3 stages:

1. Extensive research and partnership with local groups and individuals prior to the residency: **3 – 4 weeks.**

2. Professional filmmakers live in residence in a small town for **3 - 4 weeks.**

Filmmakers produce films and photo essays with people in the town.

Filmmakers run participatory workshops, training and mentoring according to community requirements.

3. Filmmakers return to the town to screen and exhibit stories for feedback and approval, prior to release on the Big Stories website.

Filmmakers and local content producers will be present during the screening/ event in town to offer context and to facilitate discussion. This process of screening and feedback will be documented with a view to continue to unpack the 'stories behind the story' and to offer viewers of the final town site additional context.

## LOCAL CONTENT PRODUCERS

Big Stories filmmakers mentor or collaborate with a small group of local people over the duration of the residency.

We have worked with Local Content Producers aged from 18 – 80. Age and technical experience is no barrier.

Previous films and story threads made by Local Content Producers:

***The Oldies***, made in conjunction with Local Content Producer Ann Hughes:  
<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/elders>

***Two Villages***, made in conjunction with Local Content Producers Ang Yung and Lam Suot working with the Lunn and Phnom village councils:  
<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/two-villages>



## WHAT WE MAKE:

### 1. MICRO-DOCS

Made by Filmmakers in Residence, these micro-documentaries are focussed on people caring for and creating their community. They form part of a longer story thread (where short stories connect together to a longer story).

Duration: 5 – 8 minutes

#### Examples:

The Longriders, Murray Bridge:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/longriders/film/longriders-cmc>

Recovery, Strathewen:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/recovery/film/scra-strathewen-community-renewal-association->

### 2. VERTICAL FILMS

A 'Decisive Moment' – these films are the record of a **single encounter, interview or event**.

It can be a video portrait, a musical performance, a community meeting, a walk into town, a conversation between friends or an oral history.

Duration: 2 – 5 mins

#### Examples:

The Story of Yeak Loam Lake, Banlung:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/two-villages/film/peung-chief-of-lunn-village>

Ibrahim's Card Game, Murray Bridge:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/ibrahim>

### 3. DIGITAL STORIES

Digital Stories are made by community members with support from filmmakers-in-residence. They are short, personal stories combining first person narration and personal images from a single storyteller.

Duration 2 - 3 minutes.

#### Examples:

Malcolm, Strathewen:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/film/malcolm>

Brownyn, Port Augusta:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/our-stories/film/bronwyns-story>

Melva, Murray Bridge:

<http://bigstories.com.au/#/story/elders/film/melva-baldock-1>

### 4. PHOTO ESSAYS

In each town we produce 6 photo essays based around the key themes of Big Stories – **dreams, love, family, work, community and history.**

Some examples are on the following page.

Photo essays can be from 10 - 24 images with up to 30 words for each image - preferably a first person quote, and a little bit of context.

For example (for a photo of a man at work):

*"I work like a surgeon. Steady hands. It's taken me over 75 years to feel like I've finally perfected my craft." (THE QUOTE)*

*Simon, 96, watch repairman, Main Street, Port Augusta (THE CONTEXT)*

Please also record a small piece of audio related to the photo essay if possible.

**BIG STORIES PHOTO ESSAY THEMES:**

**DREAMS**



A selection from the Dreams series - <http://www.bigstories.com.au/#/theme/Dreams>

**FAMILY** The 'Family' series could be simple portraits of families, or a focus on a single family with unique characters (e.g. 4 generations of fisher folks, or women in one family with changing roles clearly seen, plus girls' future).



My family always eats together here. This mat is my culture if I eat without it, the food doesn't taste as good.

I got this tape from Sudan. The song says: "Even though you are in Australia and we are here in Sudan, we are the same." It reminds me to not forget my culture. When I listen to this music it is a good feeling.  
**AJITH**

*Part of the Home series in Murray Bridge*

For the Home series in Murray Bridge we asked new arrivals to the town, "Tell us about something from your old home that is important in your new home?"



## APPENDIX 8: Big Stories 2014

**LOVE** Who do you love? What do you love? Why? Or you could focus on one relationship (or one persons attempt to find love).



*Jenny and Jim take a dip. Queenstown, Tasmania, 2013.*

**COMMUNITY** This could be a “One Day In Town,” or an essay about a particular community event, celebration or meeting or a shared local interest. Community is something that brings people together in the one town.



*Queenstown, West Coast Shack community.*

## APPENDIX 8: Big Stories 2014

**WORK** People at work, inspired by Studs Terkel’s book “Working.” These can be “A Day in the Life” style photo essays or portraits of different workers, could be one industry, or one person and their work.



Some images from previous Work Essays (L-R): On the farm, Raukkan, The Men’s Shed, Port Augusta, Wami Kata Old Folks Home, Port Augusta.

**HISTORY** We’ve curated old family photos series, done ‘Then and Now’ photo series in collaboration with local photographers (including re-tracing the steps of a local photographer) and an “Elders” photo series. Below are some examples:












Collage of personal archival images from the Elders Project in Murray Bridge



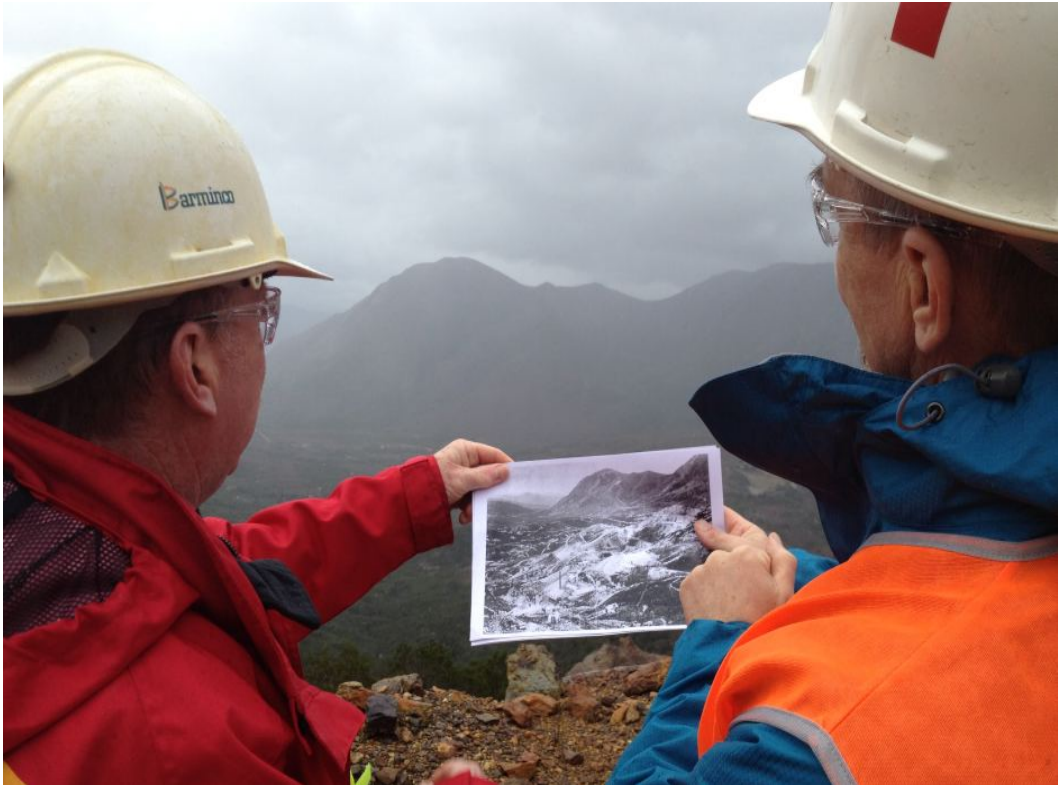
Ken Wells and Big Stories, “Side by Side” series, Murray Bridge 2011 and 1961.

APPENDIX 8: Big Stories 2014

HISTORY

| Lovedays Creek House  |  | Alva Loveday Murray Bridge  |   |
|---|--|---|---|
|  | ① Start of Flood, 1956.  |  | ① Alva Loveday Murray Bridge<br>Down from Hoosier Shop & Garage Niddoh                |
|  | ② Lovedays Creek House Flood waters creeping.                                  |  | ② Front of Loveday's Home with the Flood Rising.                                      |
|  | ③ Lovedays Creek House nearly covered with water Boat tied up on edge of water |  | ③ Lovedays Home. Sand bags that we thought we would keep out the water                |
|  | ④ Roof of cow shed under Flood water   |  | ④ Loveday Home. Rising Flood water where sand bags are disappearing with water rising |
|   |  |  | ⑤ Loveday Home. Flood water creeping Higher Windmill in back ground.                  |

Alva Loveday storyboard for digital story, Murray Bridge.



Queenstown, 2014. The unchanging ridge and disappearing snow. Images from 2013 and 1926.

## LOCAL SCREENINGS AND EXHIBITIONS

We organise local screenings and exhibitions to showcase the work. We try to show the stories back in surprising ways.

We've held exhibitions in galleries, screenings in cafes and on the side of buildings and discussions in the school or library. This allows people to see the stories and have editorial input. It's also an opportunity for reflection and discussion around the ideas in the films.

This community screening and feedback process is an important part of what makes *Big Stories* different from most projects.



*Murray Bridge Gallery, 2011*



*Café screening, Cambodia, 2011*