



For immediate release

Numbers up for banker turned fair-trade advocate

An event started three years ago by a Melbourne banker determined to make the world a fairer place, has now become Australia's largest fair-trade and ethical festival.

Susanna Bevilacqua launched Moral Fairground, with the help of fellow banker Bobby Vosinthaong, after visiting some of the poorest countries in South East Asia and witnessing first hand the working conditions and environmental impact of mass consumerism.

Despite never organising an event before, Susanna set out to seek corporate sponsorship and a venue, to build awareness and educate about ethical, socially responsible and environmentally aware businesses through a series of events.

Within months she had Federation Square on board as a venue, and support from some of Australia's most renowned brands – Oxfam, Cadbury and Lush – and signature event, Fair@Square, was born.

In the first year alone, more than 40 other Australian businesses took part in the event which attracted 20,000 visitors.

Just two years later and the pair have doubled that, with more than 80 businesses involved in this year's event and visitor numbers predicted to hit more than 75,000.

While still not paying themselves, Susanna and Bobby, who have three children under the age of six between them, and still work in the banking industry, say they prefer to see the money invested back into the event.

For Susanna it's about creating a business where they can inject vital funds back into fair-trade communities.

"It's not about just doing something that makes us feel good and pays us, we want real change."

It seems consumers generally want the same.

Recent research undertaken by the Mobium Group in conjunction with the Fair Trade Association of Australia and New Zealand revealed 90% of adult consumers want retailers to offer eco-labelled products and more than 80% of Australians wanted clearer and simpler information on its benefit and impacts.

While fair-trade labelled products only launched in Australia in 2005, the industry had already reached AUD\$120 million by last year.

Those statistics certainly resonate with local council, with the City of Melbourne now supporting the event.

Councillor Dr Cathy Oke, who has more than 15 years experience in the sustainability sector, says it's fantastic to see Melbourne leading the way in educating about, and promoting, fair-trade and ethical products.

"It's a timely event too, just weeks before Christmas, and will encourage sustainable purchases when more often these days people want to give gifts with meaning or purpose."



Moral Fairground Advisory Board member and senior associate at Net Balance, one of Australia's leading sustainability advisory firms, Cameron Neil, says the growth of Fair@Square over the last three years has been phenomenal and a clear reflection that consumer demand for products with purpose and meaning is here to stay.

"Australian consumers are increasingly demanding transparency on how products are made, who made them, and their environmental footprint.

"Businesses are recognising this isn't a feel good fad. Some are leading the way, ensuring their products are produced in a fair and ethical way, and seeking to reduce the environmental impact of their production, use and disposal. We need to see more of that."

Megan Taylor spokesperson for Lush, which sponsors the event, agrees now is the time where more businesses should consider moving towards ensuring they know the footprint behind their products.

"Lush provides an avenue for eco-conscious Australians, who are discerning about which products they use and willing to accept no less than those that are ethically sourced, environmentally friendly and 100% free from animal testing. This event is a wonderful way for companies to showcase their commitment to sustainable living options."

For more information: <http://moralfairground.com.au/fairhighlights.html>

For high resolution images and interview requests:

Kirstie Bedford
KDJM communications
T: 0437 455 001
E: kirstie@kdjmcommunications.com.au

About Fair@Square

Fair@Square demonstrates how Australians can take action to create a sustainable future that values and respects all people and the preservation of our planet.

The festival showcases goods and services produced by a wide range of ethical producers including Oxfam, Cadbury, Lush and Adorn – to name but a few.

It offers workshops, talks, market stalls, music, fashion and art.

Still a relatively new concept, it's just three years old, and will this year expand into a three day event from December 2 – 4.