

Couples defy crisis with lavish weddings

Australian couples continue to defy the tough economic times, spending up big on lavish nuptials, a bridal magazine has found.

The economic downturn hasn't dampened the bridal spirit with the average cost of tying the knot \$49,202, an increase of 25 per cent in the past three years, Bride to Be says.

The magazine's "Cost of Love" report, investigating the financial repercussions of romance, found couples are turning away from the traditional, splashing out to make their big day more personal. "There's no recession in bridal town," Bride to Be acting editor Jacqui Mooney said.

"It's about quality not quantity with couples lavishing more money on fewer guests."

Couples are spending an average \$10,476 on their receptions, inviting 97 guests at \$108 per head, the magazine's online poll of 1,007 couples found. "Couples are older now at the age of first marriage, they're more sophisticated and well travelled so they're really taking control of their day," Ms Mooney said.

"They see it as a significant life experience and they want to invest heavily so that they can have the day that reflects their personal taste." 36 per cent of women are paying between \$2,000 and \$4,000 for their gown, while 12 per cent splurge in excess of \$4,000.

Ms Mooney said the groom's style had become just as important in recent times.

"It's about what the boys are wearing as well as the girls," she said. "One in five grooms are even having skin and hair treatments in the lead-up to the big day."

More than 116,000 couples tied the knot in Australia in 2006.

DISCOVER PERSONAL TREASURES AT THE ARCHIVES

New South Wales residents are encouraged to learn how to explore their family history, when the National Archives hosts a Shake Your Family Tree day at its Sydney office on Wednesday, February 25, from 10am to 4pm.

Visitors can learn about their grandparents, parents and other relatives, and unearth personal treasures at this free event, which is being held at National Archives offices around the nation.

Some of the treasures visitors could find include letters, photographs and other documents in service records, immigration and citizenship applications, employment records, copyright registrations and other government records.

Highlights of the Sydney program include behind-the-scenes tours of the repository, and seminars on preserving precious family history documents and photographs. Bookings are essential.

Visitors will be able to view documents from the Archives' collection, talk to reference staff about family history research, and learn how to use the online database. They will also be able to pick up a Shake Your Family Tree showbag.

Director-General of the National Archives Ross Gibbs said, "This annual open day is a great opportunity for new or experienced family researchers to learn about family history."

"People are often amazed to discover what we hold and that we've probably got something on most families in Australia. If members of your family migrated here in the 20th century, served in the defence forces, or worked for, or had any other dealings with, the Commonwealth Government, we're likely to have something to interest you."

The Sydney office of the National Archives of Australia is at 120 Miller Road, Chester Hill.



FREE WORKSHOPS

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DO YOU LIKE TO SING?

Would you like to learn and share songs with others?



Songs from next door

Starting on Tuesday 28 April, a series of free workshops to learn songs, develop or rediscover singing skills and form a choir for seniors in the Marrickville area. You will be invited to share songs from your cultural or musical background as well as learning vocal warm ups and techniques for singing in a group. The group will be led by experienced choir facilitator, Linda Marr.

Venue: Seaview Hall, Seaview SDulwich Hill (next to library)
Time: 12.30 – 3.00pm
Dates: Tuesday 28 April to 30th June, 2009

For information and registration please telephone Linda on 9568 6303



This project was supported by funding from Marrickville Council: serving our diverse, vibrant and innovative community

Stepping out of the shadows

On Thursday 19 February Multicultural Mental Health Australia (MMHA) will accept \$2.7 million in funding from the Department of Health and Ageing to continue enhancing the mental health and wellbeing of Australia's culturally diverse communities.

MMHA Chair, A/Prof Abd Malak AM, will join the Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, the Hon. Laurie Ferguson MP, to accept the funding at a special event at the SBS studios in Sydney.

"This funding announcement shows the Federal Government's commitment to meeting the unique mental health needs of these communities," A/Prof Abd Malak said. "It allows MMHA to continue its hard work and innovations in multicultural mental health. MMHA will continue building on its partnerships and developing more mental health resources for these communities."

During the funding announcement, MMHA will also launch a stigma reduction training kit and audio series of mental health fact sheets.

Through a partnership with SBS Radio, MMHA produced a series of CDs in over 20 languages on various mental health topics. The Director of SBS Radio, Paula Masselos, said SBS Radio was very proud and excited to produce such an invaluable



resource for so many different communities.

"MMHA and SBS Radio identified the need for this series to better reach and extend these important mental health messages to the entire community, especially those with low literacy levels," Ms Masselos explained.

MMHA Consumer Advocate, Vicki Katsifis, said the series is most needed in non-English speaking communities and will help her Greek family.

Ms Katsifis explained that the CDs will be used along with a new mental health training kit designed to help raise awareness and reduce stigma towards mental illness in these communities.

"Such resources were never available when I was first diagnosed with bipolar disorder. Had they been, my Greek family would not have suffered from the shame and stigma towards my illness from our community,"

Ms Katsifis said. "I hope these CDs and the new Stepping Out of the Shadows training kit increases the ethnic community's knowledge about mental illness and encourage people, like myself, to seek medical help."