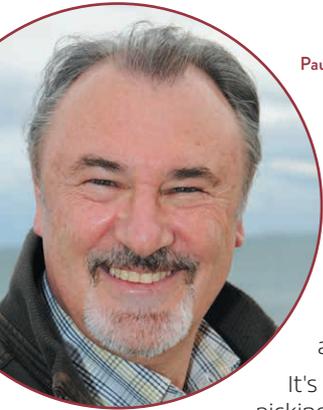


# A very satisfying journey



Emerging Business Excellence – Earbus Foundation



Paul Higginbotham.

As a charity, one of the hardest tasks to achieve is the fine balance between being commercially viable and retaining a charitable core.

It's no easy feat, but picking up the award for Emerging Business Excellence at the AIM WA *WestBusiness* Pinnacle Awards in 2017 certainly gave the Earbus Foundation of Western Australia a fairly clear indication it was getting that balance right.

"Winning the award is important to us in a number of ways," Earbus Foundation of Western Australia CEO Paul Higginbotham said.

"It validates us as a business and reassures those who have supported us as a charity.

"Winning awards for community groups is one thing, but winning in an open business category for start-ups is another entirely."

Going from its beginnings in a Wanneroo kitchen to picking up the Emerging Business Excellence award in five short years says as much as about the management of the Earbus Foundation as it does about the service it provides.

"The fact we literally started with nothing and now we are receiving this kind of recognition is extremely satisfying for us," Mr Higginbotham said.

"The start-up space has nowhere to hide, so if you succeed or fail it's down to you. It really tests your business acumen like no other challenge.

"To be where we are now from where we started is quite a journey. A very satisfying journey."

Earbus mobile ear health clinics offer full primary health care to Aboriginal children in schools, daycares, kindergartens and playgroups. As well as providing comprehensive ear screening, the Earbus employs GPs, audiologists and ear, nose and throat specialists, so referral is quick and treatment is seamless.

By Chris Thurmott

The work Earbus does for Aboriginal children takes it to some of the most remote parts of WA, and with that comes some fairly tricky challenges.

"From 48C heat in Marble Bar to flooded rivers and roads in the wet and flat tyres on dirt roads, it can be tough out there," Mr Higginbotham said.

"The work we do isn't for everyone – it's certainly not for the faint hearted and I think our biggest challenge is recruiting people who are as passionate about this as we are."

It validates us as a business and reassures those who have supported us.

Luckily, Earbus has managed to recruit a number of highly dedicated staff members who have helped to produce amazing results for Aboriginal children, such as a 75 per cent improvement in the rate of ear disease in the Goldfields and a 60 per cent improvement in the rate of chronic ear disease in the Pilbara.

In the Pilbara, those results have been helped by a four-year partnership with Wirraka Maya Aboriginal Health Service, the support of which has been critically important for Earbus' success, according to Mr Higginbotham.

"The general wellness of the kids is vastly better, as we have consistently and persistently screened, monitored, treated and intervened with GPs, specialists, audiologists, nurses and more," he said.

Aside from the obvious medical advantages of the work Earbus does, there has also been a great improvement in the educational abilities of the children it has looked after.

Over the course of a six-month

period a principal from one of the local schools noted a 900 per cent improvement in the number of children being able to read at a grade level or above.

"The impact of ear disease on educational attainment of Aboriginal children is profound – kids who can't hear can't learn," Mr Higginbotham said.

"So this is about giving a generation of Aboriginal children the chance to achieve their innate potential – essentially what should be their birthright as Australians."

With this Pinnacle award, Earbus can now be referred to as a multi award-winning organisation, having been named Community Group of the Year at the WA Regional Achievement & Community Awards and as one of five finalists in the WA Community Services Excellence Awards, both in 2016. Although this is good recognition of how far it has come, Mr Higginbotham sees the biggest challenge as retaining this high status.

The company has been granted the opportunity to extend its services into the Kimberley in 2018 thanks to assistance from the State Government and Health Minister Roger Cook, whom Mr Higginbotham said had been very supportive of the work Earbus did.

The \$10,000 prize money donation for Earbus went to Starlight Children's Foundation, with which it has worked closely since 2015 as outreach partners in the Pilbara and Goldfields regions of WA.



Audiologist Lara Shur (left) testing a baby in Leonora.



# Staying Power

## Marketing Excellence – RAC WA



By Chris Thurmott

What do the Reading, Writing Hotline, Carlton Draught, Vegemite and Weet-Bix have in common?

They have been the beneficiaries of memorable marketing campaigns. Phrases such as 'happy little Vegemites' and 'Weet-Bix kids' are part of the Australian vernacular and highlight the importance of a successful marketing campaign.

Creating something so recognisable keeps a brand front of mind and continues the campaign long after promotion stops.

Not every campaign ends up this way, but one that has ticked the boxes for success is the RAC's recent 'Power of Membership' campaign.

It was the first truly integrated RAC campaign, running across all products and services and rejecting all advertising and category norms as it highlighted what RAC membership could do for its members and the community, rather than trying to actively sell any of its products.

This was one of the reasons behind the RAC picking up the gong for Marketing Excellence at the AIM WA *WestBusiness* Pinnacle Awards.

The campaign met three key objectives – improving brand engagement, driving growth across RAC's roadside assistance and insurance products and retaining the existing member base.

The idea behind it came about because, despite RAC having a very large membership base, there was low awareness of the direct and indirect benefits of being an RAC member, according to RAC Executive General Manager Brand and Tourism Tony Pickworth.

"The brand was in danger of losing its key point of difference as a membership

organisation that gives back," he said.

"The role of this campaign was to create a unified platform across all RAC businesses to clearly connect RAC members and all Western Australians to why it's better to be an RAC member. Not only because of all the benefits of membership, but how RAC gives back profits on behalf of members to the WA community."

Being a private company, the RAC does not have any shareholders.

The profits generated from the products and services provided by the company are re-invested into a number of initiatives that aim to create a better WA. Some of the more noteworthy include advocating for safer roads, sponsoring the RAC Rescue helicopters managed by the Department of Fire and Emergency Services (DFES) and making transport more accessible and sustainable for members.

"What makes RAC unique is we are a member organisation with a business model that genuinely gives back to its members and the community," Mr Pickworth said.

"We compete with many organisations offering similar products, but they

are motivated primarily by profit for shareholders."

Mr Pickworth was keen to point out how proud he was the RAC had picked up the Marketing Excellence award and praised the selection criteria used by AIM WA and the awards judges.

"Many other marketing awards are based on creative aspects and short-term impact, but the Pinnacle award recognises marketing leadership and effectiveness, which is a more meaningful success metric for integrated marketing than creativity alone," he said.

"Winning an award like this keeps us hungry to continue to do great work. It sets a standard to aim for each year in terms of marketing effectiveness.

"The more effective our campaigns are at growing and engaging our membership, the more we can ultimately give back to our members and the WA community.

"That's what drives us to do better campaigns each year."

The \$10,000 prize money donation was given to St John Ambulance WA on behalf of the RAC, further enhancing its support of excellent charitable organisations.

Winning an award like this keeps us hungry to continue to do great work.

