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## **The *Parkes Elvis Festival*: Attendee and Host Community Perspectives**

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### **Introduction**

Each year, up to 20,000 people descend upon the rural town of Parkes, 365km west of Sydney, to attend the *Parkes Elvis Festival*. Initiated in 1993 by a group of locals who were Elvis Presley fans, the annual festival has grown from the humble beginnings of a one-day event with a few hundred attendees to a five day festival.

In a bid to assist the festival organisers to understand the impacts of the Parkes Elvis Festival on both attendees and the host community, researchers designed a set of survey instruments to deliver a comprehensive evaluation of the social and economic impacts of the festival. Research was carried out in 2010 and separate surveys were conducted for festival organisers, attendees and local residents. After a brief explanation of the festival, and the man it is inspired by, this chapter explores the methods used to collect data before outlining the results. The results are divided into two key sections, attendees' perceptions, and host community perceptions.

First we profile the demographics, motivations and experience of festival attendees. Second, we profile the perceptions of the host community with respect to both the economic and social impacts of the festival. The surveys demonstrate the overwhelming goodwill and enthusiasm for the festival, by both the host community and attendees. Results show that the festival attracts a mix of first time and repeat visitors, and that many of the returning attendees do so to catch up with friends made at previous festivals. For residents, regardless of whether they attend or not, the large majority understand the economic, tourism and community benefits generated by the festival.

### **Elvis and the *Parkes Elvis Festival***

Known as the 'King of Rock and Roll', Elvis Aaron Presley was born in Tupelo Mississippi, in 1935 and became one of the most influential and celebrated singer/