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MEDIA RELEASE

DARWIN INVENTOR ON A HAT TRICK AFTER SECOND AWARD

A Darwin inventor is on a hat trick after winning his second innovation award in a row for a shade structure that has revolutionised iconic outdoor events in the Territory.

Colin West, mastermind of innovation at Total Event Services, took out the Minister for Business and Employment Innovation Award for Framelock Shade – a portable shade structure that can be certified to cope with the Top End’s unpredictable weather conditions.

Framelock Shade is believed to be the world’s first portable shade structure that is certified to withstand wind loads of up to 30 metres per second.

It is the second win in a row for Colin after he won the Minister for Business and Employment Innovation Award for his Framelock Crowd Control Barrier in 2010.

Master of ceremonies for the night, James O’Loughlin from *The New Inventors*, joked that Colin was now on a hat trick for the same award in 2012.

The Framelock Shade innovation was born from a demand for a safe, well-presented and portable shade structure that can be certified by a structural engineer to comply with the Northern Territory Government’s *Building Act*.

The Framelock Shade uses a special aluminum portal frame structure, lowered mansard roof design and Alnet extrablock shade cover that provides a SPF 43 rating to block out 97.6 per cent of ultra-violet rays.

Research into the design and materials produced a robust shade cover strong enough to withstand a 30 metre per second wind speed that also allows any heat to escape. The Framelock Shade is designed with minimal anchor points and safely pinned to the ground to avoid the use of dangerous tie down ropes and star pickets.

Colin created a new Australian, and possibly world, record for the largest area under shade when his team at Framelock Structures erected a massive 8700 square metres of Framelock Shade for the comfort and relief of thousands of punters during this year’s Darwin Cup Carnival. The Framelock Shade has also been used at other major Northern Territory events including V8 Supercars, Darwin Festival and Heineken Hottest 7s.

Colin says he was gobsmacked at winning the award at the Northern Territory Research and Innovation Awards at the Darwin Convention Centre on October 14, where 330 people gathered to showcase the best of the best in innovation and research in the Territory.

“They could’ve blown me down with a feather when they read out my name as the winner,” Colin says. “It is the first time ever in my life I was completely shocked.”

Colin sees a great future for the temporary shade structure as offering cost-effective, portable shade solutions for schools and community groups in remote Indigenous communities across the Territory.

“The shade looks good and it has a clear span so it is one of the safest shade structures in Australia with no pins, ropes or star pickets needed to hold it down,” he says. “It can be installed easily and it is good value for money if you look at the dollar value per square metre.”

Colin says the recent awards prove the Northern Territory is up there with the best inventors in Australia and the world.

“It is good to be recognised as it is hard to make a difference from somewhere like Darwin,” he says. “But it shows we can do it just as well if not better than anywhere else in the world. It is because we are so remote that we look at alternatives and outside the square.”

Photo caption 1: Darwin inventor Colin West, photograph by Shane Eecen.

Photo caption 2: A record breaking 8700 square metres of Framelock Shade erected at the Darwin Cup Carnival this year.

Colin West - Background

In his youth Colin West aspired to the stage but trained as an interior designer. He worked in the theatre as stage hand and ‘skinny’ stunt man. He got into touring bands, worked as entertainment manager in a Derby hotel and filled in as disc jockey before coming to Darwin 35 years ago. His new boss told Colin he was coming “to the capital city of the Northern Territory”. He arrived at the old tin shed that was the airport terminal and was collected by his new boss in a ute with a dog in the front. He worked in the saloon bar of the slightly down market Dolphin Hotel on land now occupied by the Jape Centre, then left to work in Sydney with Howard Page, “the ultimate audio person in the world”.

Colin returned to Darwin 30 years ago to work at legendary John Spellman’s “Dix”. When Phyllis the Drag Queen with a tooth missing walked out, Colin was offered the DJ’s position in addition to running his own sound system business during the day.

His big break was providing sound to the old Workers’ Club, with his company Top End Sounds growing over the years to incorporate events management and a retail outlet in Stuart Park.

Colin then paid \$7000 for Australia’s first open narrowcast licence, Info TV, which ran a half hour program on what to do in Darwin, featured guest appearances from the likes of Chief Minister Shane Stone and used Japanese digital technology to provide the ‘best weather service in the Territory’.

His next venture was tents, after it dawned on him one year at the V8s that “this is the future”. He has since designed a range of custom-made tents used for a range of events around the Territory.

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