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introduction speech: barry donchi

bridge arts project presentation to regional development australia

Good afternoon. Welcome to Perricoota Vines Lakehouse. I'm Barry Donchi, Chairperson for the Bridge Art Project steering committee.

Today is about our vision and what we can achieve with a united effort.

Today's presentation has been prepared around Regional Development Australia's willingness to learn more about the idea.

We welcome Barbara Hull, CEO for RDA Murray and are proud to introduce her and Nicole to today's guests. (Applause)

Perhaps at this point it would be appropriate for each person to introduce themselves and identify who they represent:

(Round table introductions)

1. Mal Kersting (Regional Director Northern Victoria - Vic Roads)
2. Hayley Lawton - (Creative Services & Graphic Design)
3. Christy O'Brien - (Media Officer for Paul Weller MP)
4. Mari Q (District Planning Officer - Campaspe Shire)
5. Brian Sharp (Moama resident & Murray Shire)
6. Katrina Tehan (Tender Right)
7. Mark Francis (Murray Regional Tourism Board)
8. Kerry Williams (Bridge Arts Project Committee Member + Echuca Moama Arts Initiative Rep)
9. Neville Atkinson - Chairperson Yorta Yorta Nation
10. Deb Webster - Indigenous Community Development Broker (Dept Planning and Community Dev. Bendigo)
11. Nicole Doughty (Executive Consultant Murray Now Limited)

12. GUEST OF HONOR: Barbara Hull - Executive Officer of Regional Development Australia (Murray) Part of Simon Crean's Federal ministry for Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government

13. Peter Clinnick - Managing Director AES - Advanced Environmental Systems
14. Zach Hope - Editor Riv Herald
15. Len Hall - Vic Roads
16. Neville Hallam (Vic Roads)
17. Pete White (EM Tourism)
18. Peter Williams (Campaspe Shire)
19. Hayden Cock (C4EM)
20. Greg Murdoch (Murray Shire)
21. Damian Morgan Bulled - (Yorta Yorta Nation Interim CEO - Bridge Arts Project Committee Member)
22. Ged Brandrick (Brandricks Architects)

Apologies today come from:

- Donna Collier - Development Officer (Dept Planning and Community Dev. Bendigo)
- Anne Mawson (Echuca Moama Arts Initiative)
- Paul Weller MP
- Kevin Williams (Indigenous Artist and Njernda Representative)
- John Kenley (Bridge Arts Project Treasurer)
- Jim Cosgriff (C4EM)
- Kevin Simpson (Campaspe Shire)
- Keith Baillie (Campaspe Shire)
- Damian Drum MP (MP)
- Clive & Judy Atkinson (Bridge Arts Project + Mirembeena)
- Beck Hayward (Murray Shire)
- John Mitchell (Njernda)

And a special mention to Kimberly Moulton (Bunjilaka Melbourne) who is fascinated by the idea and wanted to be here today but had other commitments.

I have been deeply involved in Moama for more than 20 years and have lived locally for over 45 years, during which time the location for a new river crossing has been strongly debated.

As you can see by this property, our family is heavily involved in tourism. During recent trips overseas and various spots around Australia, I have been inspired to think of a "bigger picture" for this region.

It would appear that there is a world-wide trend of interest in the arts, in many forms, and in history, particularly indigenous history.

Let's think about the bigger picture for this region.

Bingo! We are about to have available a new river crossing, the approaches, supports and surrounds of which will provide an incredible canvas for historical interpretation - artistic displays and education.

What do you think Gaudi could have done with that?



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A once in a lifetime opportunity is at hand. A project that will continue to grow and evolve and will attract local, national and international tourists, students, academics and art lovers. Europeans and Asians - people from all over the world are intrigued by our inland Australia and aboriginality.

This region already has many diverse offerings to visitors.

We are in the heart of the greatest Aboriginal Nation in Australia - past and present (The Yorta Yorta Nation) and the opportunities are endless.

Think about -

- **60,000 years of occupation**
- **The oldest civilisation on the planet**
- **A central point for Australia-wide Indigenous history - A national centre.**

Contemporary art in its many incarnations, can tell many stories and unravel many truths about the life and times and colonial treatment on the original custodians of our region and Australia as a whole.

History is an ever-evolving study. The future exposes more about the past and it grows from both ends (like the bridge).

Our steering committee is comprised of a broad spectrum of the community, including the Yorta Yorta people, business people, arts people, education people and interested citizens.

So far, 99% has been great feedback, including Vic Roads, Local Government, Urban Arts Experts and Cultural Advisors.

Today we ask R.D.A. and all present to open your minds to the potential of this vision and we welcome your involvement, advice, support and of course your constructive criticism.

Open your minds and think big.

We believe the time is ripe.

We can create a national, international, iconic, ever evolving drawcard to our region and our country.

If we do our job well here today, and can convey our enthusiasm and commitment, Barb Hall will excitedly take our message to Minister Simon Crean and assist us with our next steps and the way forward.

Thankyou.

I now introduce Chris Bilkey our steering committee secretary for the formal presentation.