

4 May 2012 - Front Page:
The Riverine Herald

Gallery dream for new bridge

Indigenous art in global attraction

A plan to turn the second Murray River bridge and its surrounding land into the world's longest art gallery could be the most significant tourist attraction in Echuca-moama's history and cost as much as \$100 million over 20 years.

The Bridge Arts Project would see the "story of Australia" told through multiple flood-proof media — including sculpture, paintings and trails — and stretch from the long-awaited bridge across 16.2ha of NSW land.

The committee driving the project also hopes Victorian land will become available.

Committee chairperson Barry Donchi said the extraordinary vision was hoped to be a major source of local and international tourism and would revitalise the twin towns.

"We're thinking big time," Mr Donchi said. "This will tell the Australian story.

"I think Echuca-moama has become a little tired. I think the younger people — teenagers to those in their 40s — are more in touch with the arts. . . The Aboriginal story is massive and never been told correctly. And, international visitation to the region is shocking.

"I think we have about 7000 (international tourists) a year, which is pitiful."

Mr Donchi said the project would involve indigenous and nonindigenous art and enlist the help of major Australian universities, art galleries and Yorta Yorta Nation.

Plans for the project cannot move further until a decision is made on the bridge. Mr Donchi said once a decision was made the planning phase of the project would move "full steam ahead".

Until then, major questions need to be answered, including long-term funding of the project, maintenance and how it could best produce a revenue stream.

The first step is securing a federal grant of \$100,000, which would be matched by the committee, for a study to answer such questions.

Mr Donchi stressed, like the bridge, construction would not be an overnight project.

"This is a thing that could grow massive legs if handled correctly," he said.

"But it will grow gradually. We've got probably two years to get our act together. A whole lot of this will hinge on getting that bridge to be a done deal."

The committee is actively seeking major sponsors.



Zach Hope

