



MEDIA RELEASE

May 16, 2008

BURRINJA

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COMMUNITY FIGHTS TO REVERSE FEDERAL AXING OF ARTS CENTRE PROJECT

The Dandenong Ranges community is devastated by the axing of the Performing Arts Centre at Burrinja through the 'closure' of the Regional Partnership program.

The Federal government has reneged on a previous funding commitment to contribute two million dollars to the \$9.6m community project. The withdrawal of funding condemns the entire development.

This project would deliver the region a 400 seat performance space, disability access to all areas, an indigenous education cultural garden and vast improvements to the studios, indigenous and community galleries, rehearsal and workshop spaces.

Burrinja President Paul O'Halloran says that losing the performing arts centre "is a kick in the teeth for the community which has worked for years to get this project." The community, Burrinja committee and Shire of Yarra Ranges have vowed to fight the axing: "This government must stand by the public pledge made to the community nine months ago".

Executive Officer Ross Farnell notes that "although some Regional Partnerships programs may be accused of having been created by a cynical political process; this was never the case with Burrinja. The Performing Arts Centre proposal has been some fifteen years in the making. It follows an exhaustive process of analysing options, surveying the local community, feasibility studies, listening to school communities, and winning support from local and state governments." The shire has allocated \$4.6 million to the project and the state government \$3 million.

The need for the new facilities has been driven by the Dandenong Ranges community. They will be used by the region's many schools, which currently have no local venue, and by professional, community and children's theatre groups for performances, rehearsals, workshops, youth arts activities and more.

The project would also end the current discrimination against people with disabilities in the area. The centre's first floor has no disability access at all, excluding many from using the centre.

"This decision denies the community the one chance we have of meeting the performing arts and cultural needs of the region", says Paul O'Halloran

The new Federal Government has refused to talk to anyone involved in the project since November 2007, and all correspondence has been ignored. Even now, the only notification about the funding withdrawal is via a departmental web site.

SAVE OUR THEATRE

Burrinja will be holding a community protest event on Thursday May 29 at the cultural centre.

The night will be hosted by numerous celebrity performers from the region, and kicks off at 8.00pm. Full details to be released shortly. Enquiries 9754 8723 or events@burrinja.org.au

To join the campaign to save this important community project from the ax, contact Burrinja on 9754 8723 or email: saveourtheatre@burrinja.org.au More info on the web; www.burrinja.org.au.

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