



BURRINJA
Dandenong Ranges
Community Cultural Centre
351 Glenfern Road
Upwey Vic 3158
T: 3 9754 8723
f: 3 9754 8523
e: burrinja@burrinja.org.au
www.burrinja.org.au

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Performing Arts in the Hills – one down, one to go

Dear Performing Arts Supporter

Thank you for your fabulous support for the Performing Arts project in the Dandenong Ranges at Burrinja. Through your action the Federal Government has reconsidered their position regarding funding for many of the projects previously axed in the closure of the Regional Partnerships program, including the performing arts project at Burrinja.

The project now has until July 31 in which to finalise contractual negotiations with the Federal department to secure the previously approved funding. Burrinja and the Shire are pleased to see that “common sense” has prevailed in this decision, and are confident that new time lines can be successfully negotiated over the next month to achieve the outcome we have all worked towards. Nothing can be guaranteed however until we have the government’s signature, and for this reason we are continuing to forward letters of support to the Minister’s office until the contract is finalized.

The last fortnight of community action has proven the power of communities to create change, and Burrinja thanks everyone for their fabulous support – from individuals to school and arts communities and the many performers who offered their time at the successful ‘night of action’.

The last hurdle before receiving a final ‘green light’ for the project is Town Planning approval. Our application has been in process with the Shire of Yarra Ranges Planning Department now since December 2007. It is imperative that this lengthy town planning process is completed as soon as possible to enable the project to comply with the new Federal funding project timelines. We had hoped that our application would be heard by Council at their first July meeting, but this is now looking more likely to be July 22.

Once again you can play your part in supporting this process and securing the future of performing arts in the Dandenong Ranges.

You can email your support for the project to the Shire of Yarra Ranges at mail@yarraranges.vic.gov.au and cc our Ward Councillor Noel Cliff at n.cliff@yarraranges.vic.gov.au. You may also ask Council to notify you of the date when the Town Planning Application will come before Council, so you can attend that Council meeting and show your support for performing arts in the Hills.

Once again I have included a brief background regarding the project’s history and benefits.

As always, your on-going support is greatly appreciated, and most importantly, we know it makes a difference!

Yours sincerely

Paul O’Halloran
President, Burrinja

Burrinja Performing Arts Project

Delivering cultural services to the Dandenong Ranges

A 400 seat performance space at Burrinja in Upwey will enable the region's community, schools, theatre companies and music groups to access a quality performing arts venue without having to travel long distances 'off the mountain'. The new facilities will encourage greater cultural participation by the entire community.

This master development project proposes to expand and enhance the existing Burrinja arts and cultural centre with a performing arts venue and ancillary facilities consistent with best theatre practices and including improved gallery, arts studio, foyer and user amenities. It will integrate the building into the natural environment that surrounds Burrinja with the planned indigenous cultural gardens.

The proposed development will address major deficiencies in the facility and in cultural service provision to the region. It will provide greater access to the arts and cultural activities for the region's community and schools.

The project will deliver:

- 400 seat performance space to benchmarked VAPAC standards
- Disability access to the venues
- Enhanced community access foyer gallery
- Improved access, visibility and functionality of existing spaces and uses including arts studios,
- Art of Place indigenous cultural education garden
- Improved arts retail facilities
- Improved rehearsal, workshop and ancillary activity spaces
- Integrated administration offices

The new theatre will be used by all regional schools, professional and community theatre, music groups and children's theatre; for performances, rehearsals, workshops, youth arts activities and more.

Many of the improvements will be made by refurbishing existing areas of the cultural facility, while a new auditorium of some 600 sq metres plus foyers will be added over existing car parking. Car and bus parking capacity and handling capabilities will be increased substantially.

The project will also end the current discrimination against people with disabilities in the area. The centre's existing first floor has no disability access at all, excluding many from using the centre. The new facility is designed as an exemplary 'access all abilities – all areas' facility.

The proposal is in response to three major council studies into cultural facilities and services in the region. It is designed to meet the demonstrated needs of the local community, the arts sector, education sector, tourism and the arts-business sector.

The Master Development builds the capacity of the organisation and facility to provide ongoing and sustainable benefits across a wide range of activities and outcome areas in partnership with other key cross-sector service providers in the region.

The Shire of Yarra Ranges and Burrinja have conducted a series of community, resident and stakeholder consultations regarding the project, commencing with studies in 1998, 2002 and 2003 and working with residents on draft plans through meetings from September 2005 onward.