

Border Chronicle

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Vol. 100 — No. 5087 (issue 26 of 2009)

Thursday morning, July 2, 2009

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\$1.50

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Arts survey of Tatiara

RO ROSS
Editor

LOCALS should now be vocal to help the Tatiara stay at the forefront in attracting government arts funding.

The public has the chance to have its say online about what it wants in the arts.

The survey is part of a nation wide consultation being conducted by Regional Arts Australia.

Over the last few decades the district has received generous grants for major projects such as the Keith Water Feature, Bordertown Recreation Lake sculptures and Tolmer Park development.

They've been possible thanks to Tatiara District Council providing the leverage to gain State and Federal Government funding, and committees such as Bordertown on the Move — that have engineered the arts led revival of town centres.

The \$4.2 million Bordertown civic centre redevelopment, to begin later this year, is expected to further lift the level of live performances and exhibitions.

So Regional Arts Australia's call for individuals and groups to indicate whether they want the arts to play a stronger role, is timely for the Tatiara.

The results are expected to help shape the creative future of communities.

Associated public consultations will also be held at Port Lincoln and Berri in SA.

Bordertown Civic Centre Committee chairman Nancy Mattinson said she was disappointed that a consultation session wasn't planned for the SE.

She had attended such a meeting at Mount Gambier several years ago and would have welcomed another opportunity.

However, she applauded the national initiative and urged people to take up the invitation to comment.

"I think that anything like this must have a value somewhere."

Tatiara arts development officer Tyson Brown



FUTURE DIRECTION: Bordertown High School students Natasha Gonzalez, Zoey McCarthy and Trinda Creaser hope to see strengthening of the arts through government and corporate sponsorship.

said he hoped people would participate in the survey because their comment could help maintain the funding momentum.

"Comments from local people are significant, because culture is being pushed in the Tatiara with the civic centre, and we have the three tiers of government supporting that development and a bigger art gallery.

"The local tourism group is developing a public art brochure because many visitors aren't aware of what we have, and the new visitor information guide will have a section on the arts and culture."

The upgraded centre, he said "should be the impetus for promoting art in its many forms as essential in our community".

Mr Brown said Bordertown was a standout example of how grass roots funding could help achieve major visual improvements.

"It's an example of what a region can do, and we need to grow these because the spin-off benefits are substantial with health and social aspects."

He said many of the projects provided excellent examples of how the arts could intersect with other areas such as health, education, environment, tourism and economic development.

The recently completed Highway 35 short film project had highlighted how arts funding could have an impact on young drivers and drive the road safety message home.

Bordertown High School art teacher Rose Milton has welcomed the comprehensive online survey as a catalyst for the community to question future arts needs.

Her Year 11 students, who are currently completing a commissioned work for a local business, would like to see more government and corporate sponsorship for projects.

"I really like it," Natasha Gonzalez said of Bordertown's public artworks.

"But I get jealous because they're so good."

"I don't get jealous, I just get ideas," fellow student Trinda Creaser said.

Mrs Milton, who is also involved in many arts-related organisations, said it was the ideal time to consider the importance of the arts in the Tatiara.

In an IT dominated era when people seemed to be losing the art of talking face to face the arts were all about wellbeing and connecting communities.

"It seems to me that people now want to be entertained without doing much themselves.

"Our town band has died and the a capella group is exclusively old people who know the joy of singing."

She said the big question was how to get young people, and newcomers to the district to participate in arts projects.

"It is important that people in communities do — to gain a sense of wellbeing through a sense of belonging, achieving something for the community and the obvious social interaction and friendship groups which occur."

Mrs Milton said community singing or singing for fun, so popular in many towns, was both thera-

peutic, fun and inclusive.

Another suggestion was weekend workshops for people who worked, and re-instating the art train that once offered workshops in jewellery and print making.

A men's shed could be considered, along with musician nights where people performed and were encouraged to keep it up, and art activities for the young.

"There are many talented art students who leave school and don't have the opportunity to extend themselves in this direction.

"Something for them would be wonderful, such as a young painters' group."

Individuals and organisations who want more creative opportunities should visit www.regionalarts.com.au and complete the survey.

Regional Arts Australia promotes the arts in rural parts. It has achieved significant results in gaining better recognition and support for the enormous contribution that regional arts makes to the cultural, economic and social wellbeing of the nation.