

MEDIA RELEASE

DATE: 2 January 2019



SHERLOCK ARTFUL PLAYGROUND SECURES \$25,000

Sherlock's uniquely interactive and imaginative musical-based playground has just received a \$25,000 cash injection thanks to the Country Arts SA Regional Arts Fund Step Out Grants.

While work on designing the Sherlock playspace has been underway for some time, this new funding will deliver a range of artist-led workshops to introduce musical play elements – all using repurposed farm equipment.

This community-focussed project is being led by the Sherlock Community Centre with support from the Coorong District Council, and a range of other volunteers from the arts, engineering, health and farming sectors.

The project will also interweave the Long Story Short project – one of the many initiatives of the *Coorong Conversations Matter* Suicide Prevention Network - which aims to support mental wellbeing of rural men through shared storytelling, artworks and local landmarks.

In developing the project, key community members, artists and Council leaders wanted to ensure that the project would not only provide a sustainable environment to engage children, but would be created by rural men, providing opportunity to meet, connect and learn new skills.

A farmer himself in the Coorong district, Mayor Paul Simmons welcomed the arts funding for the small town of Sherlock.

“Our farmers are doing it tough at the moment and projects such as this allow them an opportunity to put their creative talents and farming skills into action, outside of their otherwise stressful working environment,” Mayor Simmons says.

“It's absolutely vital that people living in remote areas, both young and old, have welcoming meeting places where they can connect socially and learn. The beauty of this project is that while our community members can enjoy the creative challenges offered, there will be broad-scale benefits from the finished project.

“Once complete the Sherlock Musical Sculpture Playground will explore oversized percussion and large-scale interactive public works for families to have fun with.

“We hope it will also help to stop traffic along the Mallee Highway – supporting road safety and providing a much-needed boost to the visitor economy.

“Once the playspace and artworks are complete, I would expect both farmers and families from across the State will want to come for a look (and play) at this unique gem in Sherlock.”

Passionate South Australian designer Mark Thomson is an advocate for rural men's mental health and is already leading the Long Story Short program in the Coorong. He will now take the reins on this project and partner with other artists, engineers and blacksmiths to deliver the workshops – which kick off in February 2019.

Postal Address:

PO Box 399
TAILEM BEND SA 5260
Email: council@coorong.sa.gov.au
Web: www.coorong.sa.gov.au

Coorong Civic Centre

95 – 101 Railway Terrace
TAILEM BEND SA 5260
Phone: 1300 785 277
Fax: 08 8572 3822

Meningie Information Hub

49 Princes Highway
MENINGIE SA 5264

Tintinara Customer Service Centre

37 Becker Terrace
TINTINARA SA 5266



“In many small bush towns you will see an old plough or harvester on prominent display. They are not rusting old junk but are symbolic reminders of hard work, and determination imbedded with the memories of this place and its people,” Mr Thomson says.

“This “story-carrying” idea is also one of the underlying concepts of the Long Story Short project. Eventually the playground will also be an ‘activation point’ for stories, broadcast through mobile phone, about the earlier life and times of the Sherlock community.

“By repurposing old farm resources into musical instruments, we’re not just giving them a second life, we’re also building cross-generational stories told with an authentic local voice.”

Sherlock Community Centre member Natasha Poole was thrilled with the funding news.

“It’s exciting to think that our small community of Sherlock will soon have a play space like no other in the State,” Mrs Poole says.

“Our children will have something to play with for generations, our families will have a space to meet and socialise, and our farmers will be able to proudly reflect on their input into it.

“We would love to see the space become a landmark as well, where people travel to visit the playground, or make it a ‘must-see’ destination along the Mallee Highway road trip.”

Work on developing the project has already started, and from February 2019 local men will have the chance to take part in six workshops to create the playground pieces. These workshops will be led by Mark Thomson, with support from Murray Bridge fabrication engineer Rob Hughes and blacksmith Andrew Hood.

About the artists:

- **Mark Thomson:** An author, artist, maker, photographer and regional community enthusiast, Mark has already invested many hours with local men and developed relationships and ideas. Experienced in community, museum and gallery projects, Mark focus on ensuring positive participant engagement.
- **Rob Hughes:** A highly regarded fabrication engineer, problem solver and keen musician, Rob helped lead the recent ‘Blokies and BBQs’ arts project, and works with the Murray Bridge Regional Gallery on developing cultural projects.
- **Andrew Hood:** A skilled and well-recognised blacksmith with valued heritage skills, Andrew is passionate about partnering as a volunteer in this project.

To learn more or register your interest in the workshops, please contact Mark Thomson by phoning 0419 865 821 or email: backyardist55@gmail.com.

- ENDS -

Contact:

Nat Traeger

DIRECTOR COMMUNITY & CORPORATE | COORONG DISTRICT COUNCIL

Phone: 1300 785 277 | E: ntraeger@coorong.sa.gov.au

Mark Thomson

Artist and project lead

M: 0419 865 821 | E: backyardist55@gmail.com

Postal Address:

PO Box 399

TAILEM BEND SA 5260

Email: council@coorong.sa.gov.au

Web: www.coorong.sa.gov.au

Coorong Civic Centre

95 – 101 Railway Terrace

TAILEM BEND SA 5260

Phone: 1300 785 277

Fax: 08 8572 3822

Meningie Information Hub

49 Princes Highway

MENINGIE SA 5264

Tintinara Customer Service Centre

37 Becker Terrace

TINTINARA SA 5266