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**Diamantina Shire Council**

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

### **Sculptures of Dreamtime 'Sand, Dust and Gibbers' Public Art Project unveiled in Bedourie**

The Diamantina Shire Council unveiled the first of three new public art sculptures. The unveiling took place in Bedourie on Monday, October 15 in front of a strong crowd of local residents. The project includes sculptures in Bedourie, Birdsville and Betoota, entitled 'sculptures of 'Sand, Dust and Gibbers' as above, designed and created by Victorian artists Glenn Romanis, Mark Trinham and local artists Joyce Crombie and Jean Crombie-Barr.

Jointly funded by The Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, through the Indigenous Heritage Program, the Regional Arts Development Fund (RADF) and the Diamantina Shire Council the artwork first originated from the idea of having public art created to connect the three towns in the shire. The project's aim is to create public artworks and interpretive signage which tell women's dreamtime serpent stories of the Mithika, Wangkamadla and Wangkangurru people.

This type of art work and storytelling is the first of its kind in the South West Queensland region. The gibbers representing Betoota, the sand hills Birdsville and the dust storm at Bedourie provided a great way to draw this connection.

With the Diamantina Shire being mostly sand desert country, the river channels and waterholes, sand hills, dust storms and gibber stones are an important part of the indigenous cultural heritage that speaks of Place, and Country. The three distinctive artworks which are relevant to each community have been produced so that their cultural stories can be told in a public way using 3D on a large scale in a way that is accessible, visual and available to the public 24/7 that will remain present in the long term. In Bedourie this takes the form of a large sculpture representing the Spinifex in a dust storm, in Birdsville there is a peaceful stone meeting place overlooking the Billabong and in Betoota an impressive serpent has been created out of stones on a hillside near the road.

Diamantina Shire Mayor Cr Geoff Morton said the large public artworks and their signage would be beneficial not only to the local community but also to tourists.

"In the south west region of Queensland there is limited Indigenous interpretive work, but there are many dreamtime stories to be told," Mayor Morton said.

"This project is an important first step to preserve, share and promote this deep knowledge of place before it is lost, mindful that it's an oral history and many of the youth come and go the city."

Following three years of flooding waters, Mayor Morton added that there was an urgent need to document and record the dreamtime stories in the Diamantina region before the familiar linkage and ties to the past were eroded and lost.

FOR ENQUIRIES PLEASE CONTACT:

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***SUSTAINABLY DEVELOPING THE OUTBACK***

“The “Country” has currently been transformed from the dusty drought times into flood plains and magnificent greenery and with this environmental transition has come the joyful telling of many dreamtime stories associated with land and Country, the rivers, channels and billabongs.”

“The Diamantina Shire Council feels there is a responsibility to support and nurture the unique cultural heritage of the Traditional Owners of the region so that it can be preserved and shared for the future.”

ENDS

Photographs:

- 1264 – Diamantina Shire Council Mayor Cr Geoff Morton cuts the ribbon at the unveiling of the ‘Sand, Dust and Gibbers’ Art Project in Bedourie (Photographer: Shandell Smith)
- 7608 – The impressive serpent sculpture in Betoota Photographer: Mark Trinham
- 7374 – The ‘Meeting Place’ sculpture in Birdsville (Photographer: Mark Trinham)
- 1807 – The unveiling of the ‘Sand, Dust and Gibbers’ Art Project in Bedourie (Photographer: Jo Lewington)

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