

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Birregurra Festival and Art Show – a showcase of volunteer power, gender equality and big prize money

BIRREGURRA, Victoria – July, 2018

On the 13th and 14th of October, over ten thousand people from all over Victoria are expected to converge on the tiny town of Birregurra at the foothills of the Otways for the town's popular annual community festival – now in its 19th year. The festival is diverse, but at its heart is community, music and art, and with all that's been achieved in the town of late, this should come as no surprise.

It's been a big few years for Birregurra, with volunteers from the community contributing over 20,000 hours to secure and deliver more than \$700,000 in federal, state and local government funding and private grants to improve their historical Mechanics Institute hall.

With momentum snowballing since being selected for Regional Arts Victoria's Small Town Transformation program in 2016, the community has installed state of the art audio and visual technology, created a architecturally designed landscape, collaborated with artists and installed several public art installations, installed renewable energy sources, increased accessibility and given the community hub a considerable freshen up. This year's Birregurra Festival will be the first opportunity for the small community of less than 800 to proudly show off what a bit of passion and thousands of hours of hands on commitment can achieve.

The opening of the Birregurra Art Show, which will be located in the upgraded hall, marks the official opening of the festival with a gala opening event on Friday 12th October. The art show, one of the most prestigious in the country regionally, regularly attracts over 300 high quality art works from around the country with artists vying for a noteworthy \$11,000 plus in prize money. This year sees a significant increase in the top gong with local business Irrewarra Sourdough generously sponsoring a \$4,000 non-acquisitive award.

For music lovers, funk, rock, blues, indie and folk will be the soundtrack for the 2018 Birregurra Festival and Art Show. With three festival stages to fill, including a new permanent outdoor stage located in the hall's landscape, Festival Entertainment Co-ordinator, Andy Forssman, has been working hard to improve diversity in the festival's line-up. This year's program features close to 50% female representation with electrifying funk rock riffs from The Kite Machine and Cat Leahy's Melbourne based super duo This Way North – Saturday's main stage headliners. Also featured will be Geelong's rising star Rach Brennan and The Pines along with Nat Vazer, Nancie Schipper and local rockers Hold//Fire as well as many more great acts.

Birregurra Festival and Art Show has developed into one of the state's 'must visits' and for out of towners, Birregurra is conveniently located with a station on V-Line's Warrnambool route. The festival is affordable for families with entry a gold coin donation, includes all the more traditional country festival offerings, and showcases the delectable food and wine from the Otways region as well as arts, crafts and local products.

"Our festival is a big deal for the community" says Vicki Jeffrey. "It's not-for-profit and volunteer run, and is the major source of fundraising for local community groups. Just about every local business and resident has a role to play and visitors to the festival have a wonderful experience and can see the enormous effort put in. Even Dan Hunter's Brae Restaurant in Birregurra, voted No. 58 in the world, has donated dinner for 2 for the raffle."

The Birregurra Festival and Art Show is on the second full weekend in October from 10am to 5pm every year. Entry is a gold coin donation. These donations contribute to the continued operation of the festival. To keep up to date with all the festival news, music line up, updates and program, follow the facebook page at www.facebook.com/birregurrafestival, on Twitter@Birrefest and via the website www.birregurrafestival.com

LOCATION: Main Street, Birregurra VIC / **ENTRY:** Gold Coin / **OPENING TIMES:** 10am to 5pm

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IMAGES: Contact Vicki Jeffrey or go to website – www.birregurrafestival.com