

MEDIA RELEASE

Councils Celebrate 10 Years of Friendship

31 May 2016

It was billed as “a hand up, not a handout” at its genesis. Ten years on, and Buloke Shire Council and Hobsons Bay City Council came together to celebrate their enduring Friendship Alliance with its milestone on Friday and Saturday of last week.

The 10th anniversary of the relationship was marked with a visit to Buloke by Hobsons Bay staff and Councillors which included a tour and celebration dinner. Mother Nature certainly played her part across the two day visit. The southern visitors firstly enjoyed a slow reveal of heavy fog as they crossed into the Shire via Cope Cope on Friday morning with 10mm of rain fall in ten minutes in Birchip later in the day.

Official proceedings commenced with lunch in Donald at the Woods Street Café. The luncheon was the perfect setting to reacquaint themselves and set the tone for what proved a successful event. Hobsons Bay also presented cheques of \$600 to both Donald 2000 and the Donald History and Natural History Group. The cheques came from the proceeds of the sale of work from the “Night Sky” photo exhibition by the Altona Camera Club.

Next stop for the touring party was Birchip, where they were hosted by O’Connors Farm Machinery. This stop included an informative tour of the facility with manager Tom Sheridan. Caroline Welsh, Chair of Birchip Cropping Group, Robyn Ferrier, former Buloke Shire Councillor, John Richmond Birchip P12 Principal and Cr Gail Sharp shared insights into rural living, farming and small business with the group.



It was then on to the Auchmore history precinct, hosted by the Nullawil Historical Society. This provided a glimpse into the proud Mallee farming tradition and the positive legacy of resilience left by preceding generations.

The crescendo to day one was the celebration dinner hosted by Buloke Shire Council at the Charlton P12 College Trade Training Centre. The event was catered by Year 10 students, their parents and staff. Their successful efforts have helped fundraise for a work experience trip to Melbourne.

Current and former Councillors and staff as well as other members of the local Buloke community joined the Hobsons Bay visitors and enjoyed each other's company. The night was all about sharing ideas on strengthening the alliance and there was a noticeable buzz in the room.

Hobsons Bay Mayor, Cr Peter Hemphill, and Buloke Shire Mayor, Cr Reid Mather, each spoke with great passion and emotion about what the relationship brings to each Council. They looked back over the journey so far and forecast forward to a stronger, even more fruitful arrangement.

Saturday saw a visit to Charlton's Rex Theatre and a private screening of the Birchip "Back Roads" episode, providing the visitors with further insight into the lives of their Buloke community partners. Visits to the Charlton museum, the local farm of Ian O'Connor as well as local Charlton businesses provided the group with a greater understanding of the economic and cultural fabric of our rural communities.

This visit demonstrated the reality of the Friendship Alliance between these rural and metropolitan communities. The willingness of local community groups and businesses to contribute their time and facilities was a real reminder of country hospitality and the desire to promote our region.

End release

For further information contact Travis Fitzgibbon on 1300 520 520