



*A compelling celebration of country creativity & resilience*

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## **NEW FESTIVAL COMMITTEE TO BE ELECTED AT RIVER ARTS AGM 19 DECEMBER, 6 PM, FORBES SPORTS & REC. CLUB**

**River Arts Festival Inc.'s second Annual General Meeting will be held on 19 December to elect a new President, Vice-President, Secretary and Committee. The Festival's founder and first President, Merrill Findlay, will not be standing for re-election.**

"It's the right time for me to step aside after the astonishing success of River Arts 2013," Ms Findlay said. "Our first committee, along with all our volunteers and our sponsors, convincingly demonstrated that our town can host a fantastic regional arts festival. The new committee will have two years to make the next one happen, with money in the bank and ongoing commitments from our three major sponsors, so I'm very optimistic about the next Festival."

Anyone who loves the arts, or is interested in Forbes' future, is invited to become a Festival Inc. member, attend the AGM on 19 December, and nominate for the Committee.

"We need people with all kinds of skills and experience, from the very practical to the very creative," Ms Findlay said. "Everyone has something to contribute."

"Organising a regional arts festival is a great challenge and immensely rewarding," Ms Findlay continued. "We've learned a lot from the first two Festivals, so the next one should be much easier! I'll be recommending to the new committee that they contract more professionals for River Arts 2015, though. These should include an experienced Creative Director, an experienced Producer/Event Manager, and an experienced Media Consultant. I believe the Festival Committee, especially the new Executive, should have more of an overall management role to ensure the funding, solicit and contract the performers, appoint the Festival Ministers, and liaise with partner organisations, including Forbes Shire Council, Arts OutWest, Regional Arts NSW, Mitchell Conservatorium, Bundaburrah Music, the Chamber of Commerce, all the schools, all the dance and music teachers, all the arts, crafts and sports groups, all the galleries, museums, service clubs, and local businesses."

"Everyone has a vested interest in ensuring that the Kalari-Lachlan River Arts Festival continues to grow to celebrate country creativity, to showcase our local and regional talent, and to attract outsiders to our town. I truly believe that this event and its many spin-offs can transform Forbes into the region's cultural hub to enrich the lives of everyone in our river valley. I'm very confident that, in time, River Arts can become the biggest cultural gig in inland NSW, something we all can be very proud of. This will be the new Festival committee's challenge!"

Merrill herself will be happy to pass on her experience and knowledge and to maintain her connections with the Festival in other ways. She will be doing research on rural arts festivals through the University of Canberra's Centre for Cultural and Creative Research, for example, and working at a policy level to influence local, state and federal governments to increase their support for the arts in rural Australia.