

# Ray of hope poetry funds will be granted for 2012

**MEMBER for New England Tony Windsor is more than "confident" the Prime Minister will agree to reinstate funding for the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards competition.**

The iconic awards are in danger of folding after the Federal Government pulled \$50,000 in funding that paid for a project officer and covered administrative costs.

The competition will go ahead this year, but the Dorothea Mackellar Society has been forced to dip into its savings to cover the costs.

Mr Windsor handed over a petition containing signatures of local students to Ms Gillard last December.

Around the same time, Federal School Education Minister, Peter Garrett, sent the independent MP a letter rejecting the funding.

The document stated "it is important that school activities funded by the Commonwealth are truly national particularly in the constrained fiscal environment we face".

"I have been advised that participation in the awards in 2009 were heavily concentrated in New South Wales and Victoria, despite efforts by the organisers to promote the awards nationally," Mr Garrett's letter read.

It went on to say funding for the awards is "not appropriate".

Another letter, sent to Member for Tamworth Peter Draper from NSW Arts Minister Virginia Judge also refused State Government funding for the competition.

"Funding is not available for competitions, awards or prizemoney," the letter stated.

Dorothea Mackellar Society President



DOROTHEA Mackellar Society President Phillipa Murray is hopeful the Federal Government will come on board for the 2012 writing competition.

Phillipa Murray said the group was "really disappointed with the responses."

"This is very serious and it will be our last year unless we can

source some new sponsorship," Phillipa said.

This week, the society was given a ray of hope after Mr Windsor said he believed the funding would be reinstated.

"I'm confident the funding will come through," he said.

"We will follow up on it, but I'm as confident as the sun coming up for a thousand years."

# Strategy meeting to promote rural shires

**GUNNEDAH Shire Council will send representatives to a special meeting in Sydney next week aimed at finding ways to entice city-dwellers to head to the bush.**

The meeting is being held under the Promote Our Regional Towns and Shires (PORTS) initiative which is identifying strategies to attract people to live, work and invest in NSW regional towns and shires.

PORTS is seen as the equivalent of a second tier Evocities program which encourages city-to-city relocation and lifestyle changes.

"As the Evocities campaign is based on this approach, it would appear there is little relevance to the proposed PORTS campaign which will now need to conduct its own research as a fundamental first step in the ultimate delivery of a major promotion program," Cr Marshall told last night's ordinary meeting.

Cr Marshall attended a meeting in Sydney last month with PORTS executive members

from Parkes, Lithgow and Leeton Councils.

"We met with the executive of Evocities to consider the manner in which PORTS could be further developed.

"Evocities is unashamedly and forcibly a city-to-city change involving the seven provincial cities Albury,

Armidale, Bathurst, Dubbo, Orange, Tamworth and Wagga Wagga.

"Fifty rural councils have been invited to next week's strategy meeting and it is obvious we will have to do some research to identify our target market."

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# Preserving writing awards' history

**EVERY historic record from the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Awards will be archived under a new plan to preserve the history of the iconic writing competition.**

Gunnedah's Ewing Real Estate has pledged \$2500 to kickstart the process that will see 28 years worth of records filed and potentially even housed in libraries and museums.

Everything from correspondence from the late Dame Joan Sutherland, former Prime Ministers and past poetry judges who are award-winning authors will be archived.

Memorabilia, tapes, videos, letters, donations and past poetry entries will also be recorded.

Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Society and Awards project officer Mila Stone said the task of sorting through the records will be a huge undertaking.

"We really don't know the extent of it but it will be very interesting," she said.

"It is vital to preserve a very important part of Gunnedah's history, the poetry of such quality written by children Australia-wide needs to be preserved for the national records."

Currently most of the documents are kept at the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Society and Awards office in Gunnedah.

Other memorabilia is housed at the Tourist Information Centre and the historical museum.

The \$2500 from Ewing Real Estate will allow stage one of an overall plan to be implemented.

This involves sorting the material into groups including past entries, correspondence, press clippings and financial and committee records.

The second stage will involve carrying out conservation treatments on items and digitising others.

Ms Stone said implementing the initial stages will hopefully provide a platform for future and more substantial funding to allow the records to be housed in the State Library, museums and other interested entities.

"This funding [\$2500] is just for initial archiving or cataloguing of records.

"Those records will also be used as part of our current upgrade of the website, historical links and enquiries relating to tourism," Ms Stone said.



EWING Real Estate has come on board to assist the archiving effort of the Dorothea Mackellar Poetry Society. Pictured handing over the \$2500 cheque is Bob Ewing, project officer Mila Stone and Don Ewing.



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