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Floating to the Fireworks

Merbein Streets are about to be filled with colour, noise and lots of excited people.

Entries have now closed for the Fishers Supermarkets Merbein Centenary Parade and locals are busy working on their floats and entries for the big event. One such dedicated group is the Australian Dried Fruits Association – Merbein branch members. This includes Malcolm Bennett, Steven Bennett, Richard Wells, Ivan Shaw, Richard Appleby, Kevin McCarthy, Alan Greatz, Andrew Hudson and Ben Hollis.

The hard working group are putting together a mobile dehydrator on wheels. This functioning dehydrator is about 70 metres long and will belch smoke. Richard says “This is really representative of Merbein and its history of dried fruits production and it looks fantastic. It’s going to have 80 wheels supporting the duct.”

The group have been meeting regularly to put the float together. The idea came about when the group wanted to enter a float with a difference in the Parade and something different it is. They settled on the dehydrator - not knowing if this were at all possible. As well as enthusiasm, the group also bring plenty of expertise to the project. After three attempts to make the dehydrator manageable, it finally came together on the fourth attempt.

According to Richard Wells – Parade Coordinator, this group are not the only ones working on an entry.

Richard says “We’ve had a huge response from the local community. We have over 200 expressions of interest and now we need to turn those expressions of interest into entries, with everyone lodging their official entry form as soon as possible.”

Richard says “I doubt the district has ever seen or will ever see again, such a comprehensive array of mobile old and new agricultural equipment in the one parade.”

All parade entries have been asked to supply a description of their entry for the souvenir program.

The parade will be sectioned into the following areas:

Pre Irrigation, Irrigation District, Irrigation and Crop Production, Sporting Hero's, Recreation, Sustainability, Merbein the next 100 years and Cultural Diversity.

Some of the entries registered for the parade include The Carlton Draft Horses from Melbourne, Jodie Foreman, an international performer who grew up in Merbein, will be one of the two stilt walkers and a local percussion band put together especially for the parade, will provide a unique sound experience. Whip crackers, the police horses, people in period costume, 'Captain Sturt', a dip tank and crane, vintage cars, steel wheeled tractors, the first Rack shaker made in Merbein, and some very early spraying equipment along with different fruit drying processes will also be in the parade.

As well as this, Merbein schools are all getting involved and putting in entries. Each school has taken on a theme and they are busily preparing their entries.

Richard Wells says "Everyone who participated in the 1959 parade has fond memories of it. We want to try and do that for the next generation. We want to let the current generation see their heritage first hand."

Some past well know Merbein residents returning for the parade include Hassa Man who played football. He is probably most well known for captaining the Melbourne football club.

Tania Zaetta, television presenter and actress is also taking time out of her busy schedule, to come back to the town she grew up in. She will also be taking part in the parade.

The parade will be held on Friday 21st August and is scheduled to start at 1.30pm at Kenny Park Merbein. The parade will make its way to Chaffey Park via Commercial Street.

Anyone wishing to watch the parade should line the streets from Kenny Park to Cameron Street Merbein. The parade will officially end at Cameron Street. Many parade entries will be able to be viewed on Forbes Drive next to Chaffey Park after the Parade and before the Fire Works.

At Chaffey Park entrants and spectators are encouraged to stay for the Merbein Sawmill Fireworks and family entertainment.

Prizes will also be presented to parade entries. They include the following categories:

Best Float, Best School Entry, Best Sound Entry, Best Group Entry, Best Entry with Horse, Best Historic Entry, Most Entertaining Entry and Best Trade Entry.

Entertainment at Chaffey Park will include face painting, balloon animals and music before the fireworks start. There will also be food available to purchase.

For further information about the Merbein Centenary Celebrations, such the Parade, please see the Merbein Centenary web site www.merbeincentenary.com.au

Further Enquires:

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