

# Setting sail for the parade

**By Hannah Knight**

A GROUP of Merbein blockies have come up with a unique centenary parade entry.

While it's not what you would usually see being towed down the main street, the lads' 70m dehydrator is guaranteed to turn heads.

Billowing colourful smoke, the fully-functional dehydrator will feature in next month's Fishers Supermarkets Centenary Parade.

Representative of Merbein's long history of dried fruits production, the entry has been crafted by Malcolm Bennett, Steven Bennett, Richard Wells, Ivan Shaw, Richard Appleby, Kevin McCarthy, Alan Groatz, Andrew Hudson and Ben Hollis on behalf of the Australian Dried Fruits Association's Merbein branch.

Richard Wells, centenary parade co-ordinator, said the moving rack dehydrator had taken a long time to perfect.

"I don't think anyone would have seen a dehydrator duct move before," he said.

"We ran it last night (Monday) for the first time and it was just unreal. About eight or nine of us have been meeting on Thursday nights for the last six weeks or so, so a lot of works gone in to it."

Mr Wells said, traditionally, dehydrators were used to blow hot air on to fruit to speed up the drying

21, Mr Wells said many people were busy working on their entries.

"We've had a huge response from the local community," he said.

"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."

Starting from Kenny Park at 1.30pm, the parade will make its way along Commercial Street before finishing at Cameron Street.

At Chaffey Park, entrants and spectators will then be encouraged to stay for the Merbein Sawmill Fireworks.

Split up in to sections, the parade will cover pre-irrigation, the irrigation district, irrigation and crop production, sporting heroes, recreation, sustainability, Merbein the next 100 years and cultural diversity.

Featuring whip crackers, police horses, Elliot the Emu, vintage cars, steel-wheeled tractors, and a huge array of entertainment, the streets of Merbein will be abuzz with activity. Mr Wells said he couldn't wait to be part of the action.

"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."



Picture: Sarah Simmons

**GROUNDWORK:** Richard Wells, Ben Hollis, Kevin McCarthy and Bob McCarthy. process. "What used to happen is to about 10 or 12 per cent so they'd they'd drying the fruit on the dry- use a dehydrator to finish it off.

"Hot air comes down the duct and they'd enclose the rack in black plastic."

"But, it would need to get down

"They'd blow the hot air into fruit for a few hours and then take it off dry."

With the parade set to take to the streets of Merbein on Friday, August