



At the official opening of Wild Dogs from Down Under grand finale exhibition "Gumbay - China Influence" at the West Gippsland Arts Centre are artists (from left) Jenny Murray-Jones, Gary Miles, Laurie Collins, Kerrie Warren, Leonie Ryan and Eileen Harrison with MC and Baw Baw Shire cultural development officer Karen Whitaker-Taylor

## Official opening of Gumbay

by Emma Ballingall

The Wild Dogs from Down Under recently celebrated the official opening of their grand finale exhibition titled "Gumbay - China Influence" at the West Gippsland Arts Centre.

The official opening was conducted by Baw Baw Shire mayor Dick van Leeuwen in front of about 80 family, friends

and supporters to celebrate the conclusion of the group's "Gippsland" project.

Master of ceremonies and Baw Baw Shire cultural development officer Karen Whitaker-Taylor said she believed the "Gumbay - China Influence" exhibition was not the end of the group comprising of six Baw Baw artists, rather "the step to the next big thing".

The exhibition, which closed on Friday, featured a body of 30 artworks directly influenced by their journey to Jiujiang, China as part of their "Gippsland" exhibition exchange.

Wild Dogs from Down Under is a diverse group of six professional contemporary artists united by their love of Gippsland. The group includes Kerrie Warren, Leonie Ryan, Eileen Harrison, Jenny Murray-Jones, Laurie Collins and Gary

Miles. The group came together two-and-a-half years ago to develop a touring exhibition titled "Gippsland", which featured two-dimensional and three-dimensional visual art pieces with a Gippsland theme.

The "Gippsland" exhibition opened in Warragul before visiting many venues across regional Victoria, Melbourne and last year Jiujiang, China. The final installation of the exhibition was held in Sale during February.

Artist Kerrie Warren said the new exhibition in Warragul completes the cycle of the group that was "truly enormous", with each artist now looking forward to working on new solo projects.

In officially opening the "Gumbay - China Influence" exhibition Cr van Leeuwen congratulated the group for their vision and persistence, resulting in an exhibition of great value to the Baw

Baw Shire. He described the group as "can do people" and spoke about how investors, including ratepayers, had received great value for money out of the project.

Cr van Leeuwen also spoke individually about each artist and gave background as to what had inspired them while visiting China.

He concluded that the Wild Dogs group shows there is "so much going on in the world of art".

"Thank you artists for making this contribution to the Baw Baw Shire," said Cr van Leeuwen.

Cr van Leeuwen also thanked artist Laurie Collins for donating his "Wild Dog" sculpture, part of the "Gippsland" exhibition, to the Baw Baw Shire.

Although the shire originally offered to purchase the artwork to help in funding the exchange to Jiujiang, Laurie chose to donate the artwork.