

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## STATE'S GIANT ART CANVAS COMPLETE

South Australia's largest art canvas is now complete, with five striking images of children at play, now covering the face of the 30-metre high Viterra grain silos at Coonalpyn.

As the paint dries on this incredible artwork, it's only the beginning for what is set to become one of the most remarkable stories of renewal for the rural town of Coonalpyn.

The artworks, completed during February and March by world-renowned artist Guido van Helten, sits along the busy Dukes Highway in the State's Coorong District Council, and has become one of the most photographed artworks in national history.

Between one and three cars are pulling in to Coonalpyn every minute during daylight hours to marvel at the towering icon, with millions following van Helten's progress online.

Coorong District Council Chief Executive Officer Vincent Cammell said this project brought about a sense of community pride and belief for the future of a once dwindling country town.

"This project has exceeded everyone's expectations, with online engagement alone reaching more than half-a-million people internationally," Mr Cammell said.

"Investing in art is new for our Council, and it's paying off in ways we never imagined.

"We have new businesses opening their doors, more jobs being created, producers growing as they help feed the hoards of visitors, accommodation booked out, inaugural events starting up and so much more.

"From a community perspective, one of the greatest outcomes we have witnessed is what this project has meant to local children.

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“Our youngest residents are showing a sense of excitement about their town’s future, and renewed hope for what they can achieve themselves – a reflection of the mural’s theme.

“With this project and other major developments such as *The Bend Motorsport Park*, we expect this is just the tip of the iceberg for the Coorong district.”

The overall \$100,000 *Creating Coonalpyn* initiative, inclusive of the \$40,000 silo project, has been funded by Council, Country Arts South Australia and sponsorship from business and community; it has also been buoyed by the donation of Viterra’s five-cell silos as the canvas.

Council’s Community and Corporate Director Nat Traeger said she knew this project would create an impact as soon as she saw the draft design concept.

“From the outset, we wanted to create something unique,” Mrs Traeger says.

“Guido was conscious of this during the design, and the final mural depicting Coonalpyn Primary School children offers a focus on the future and renewal.”

After keeping it under wraps during painting, it can now be revealed that the five children on the silos are Kiarah Leske and Blake Thompson (aged six), Macey Jacobs and Reef Gregor (aged five) and Ciara Johnson (aged nine).

“It draws inspiration from photographs taken by Guido (who is also a photographer) as he immersed himself in the community and culture during early February,” Mrs Traeger says.

“Full creative license was granted to Guido to design what he believed would best reflect the Coonalpyn community, and the children depicted were chosen at random.

“The theme reflects the community in an inclusive sense, as opposed to individuals.

In describing his design concept, artist Guido van Helten has described the mural as:

*“...representative of growth in creativity, community spirit and local identity ... In contrast to historical or industry focussed designs, which rely on nostalgia of the past, this design brings together the simplicity of playful interactions with the silo’s structure architecturally and hopes to serve as a catalyst for creative thinking to the artworks audience and the community of Coonalpyn in the future.”*

*“...the design does not focus attention on portraiture, or the children’s faces entirely and instead brings together movement around the circular and architectural features of the silo complex. The completed work will incorporate the south, east and north faces promoting an interactive viewing ... encouraging visitors to park and walk around the silo to photograph different viewing points.”*

Mrs Traeger said work on arts initiative was far from over, and Council, along with the Coonalpyn Arts Group were now planning for ‘Stage Two’ of *Creating Coonalpyn*.

“Visitors can soon look forward to seeing new online features (such as a new *Snapchat* filter), the installation of a silo scenic frame for the perfect photo, and more local arts and tourism events in the future,” Mrs Traeger says.

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“We will also be releasing a documentary film on the project in May, which will tell an intimate story how Creating Coonalpyn has brought our town back to life.

“We are incredibly proud of the project and Guido’s final design. We are grateful to local people for their involvement, and most importantly we are especially excited to share what is now South Australia’s biggest art canvas with the rest of the world.”

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