

Case study

Celebrating our Community's Heritage and Identity -Thallon Silos Mural



A new artwork on Thallon's giant grain silos is enlivening the local community and serving as a cultural tourism drawcard for the area.

What

A decline in businesses and population, due to drought and the cessation of passenger and freight rail services, sparked the development of Queensland's first silo project in Thallon as a way to raise community spirits, and create a cultural tourism attraction.

The *Thallon GrainCorp Silo project* to paint four of the 30-metre-high, 40-metre-wide silos was a co-initiative of the Thallon Progress Association, GrainCorp and two Brisbane-based artists, Travis Vinson [known as Drap!] and Joel Fergie [The Zookeeper].

Working closely with the Thallon community including Indigenous members, the artists developed a design which aimed to celebrate and share what the community loves about their town and district.

The final artwork *The Watering Hole* represents icons of the district including a majestic sunset, The Moonie River, Indigenous culture, wildlife and agricultural heritage.

The project has shown the community how art can bring a community together through a shared vision to celebrate the importance of the community (no matter its size) to the people who live there.



The Watering Hole. Photo courtesy Thallon Progression Association

When and where

The mural was completed in Thallon, South West Queensland in three weeks between June and July 2017 following two years of planning and coordination.

Key stats

- 2 artists
- 20 volunteers
- 100 participants

Investment

Total funding of \$7000 was provided for two Regional Arts Development Fund grants for the concept design brief and the creation of the mural.

RADF is a partnership between the Queensland Government and the Balonne Shire Council to support local arts and culture in regional Queensland.



Work on the silos. Photo courtesy Thallon Progression Association

Outcomes

- The project, and its extensive media coverage, raised the profile of Thallon, creating new revenue streams, increasing visitor numbers and boosting local businesses through increased spending.
- The projects raised the profile of the two artists and generated a great deal of interest in their work with potential to work on similar projects in future.
- Due to the large size and scale of the silos, the artists needed to experiment and problem solve, leading them to develop new skills in this area.
- Artists also worked with students at the local school to create two new murals at the school.
- The project was successful at attracting sponsorship, with financial sponsorship from Pathways to Recovery, GrainCorp, Rural Affinity Insurance, Royal Flying Doctor Service Drought and Well being Program, and in-kind sponsorship from Taubmans Australia and GrainCorp.
- *The Watering Hole* was one of the four Silo Art projects from across Australia featured in [Australia Post's Silo Art stamp issue](#) on 21 May 2018.
- The Thallon Silos Project was the first of its kind in Queensland and subsequently generated a lot of interest from other small community organisations

and local councils who wish to undertake similar projects in their communities.

- Almost 200 members of the Thallon community came together for the launch event of the silos mural, united in their enthusiasm of the project and representing a broad spectrum of the community including members of Thallon's Indigenous community, school students, senior citizens, people who live in Thallon and those from surrounding properties and towns

Reflections and learnings

The Thallon GrainCorp Silo project was an incredibly transformative project for both the community and our art practices. The experience of working so closely with the community over a long period of time helped us gain a very clear understanding of what made the town so special (and) polarized the significance of what a project like this could do for the town. Having the opportunity to then create a work of art that would bring so many people together was and will always be a pivotal experience in our lives.

It is difficult to summarize in words just how special the experience was for our art practices. There were so many aspects that we did not expect to be such significant parts in the journey of creating the work. We believe that it was the opportunity to live with the community that was perhaps the most transformative aspect. – Joel Fergie, artist

Feedback

Remarkable at this time of drought and drabness in the landscape to have such a vibrant colourful feature within our rural community. – Community Member

The Project has engaged the imagination of many people in the community giving fresh hope and a positive vibe. Now the challenge is to capitalise on the economic possibilities from increased interest in this small rural town. – Community Member

Tip for others

Be prepared to take your time in the planning and development stage to ensure everything runs as smoothly as possible in the project phase. – Thallon Progress Association.

What next

Several events have been planned to showcase the Silos Mural and build on the momentum they have created within the Thallon community. These include a long table dining experience “Grazing at the Watering Hole” in September 2018 to celebrate local produce with all profits going to drought relief and “Moonie River Music” – a celebration of Thallon’s culture and talent in March 2019.

Find out more

Thallon Progress Association

Website: <https://www.facebook.com/ThallonPub>

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-07-30/thallon-residents-move-back-from-brink-with-big-tourism-plans/8756158>

<http://www.queenslandcountrylife.com.au/story/4804008/see-who-was-at-the-thallon-silo-mural-opening/#slide=5>



The Watering Hole. Photo courtesy Thallon Progression Association