

Media release

***Back Block Bards* raises \$27,000 for Dementia Research**

A book launch and art exhibition in Hillston on Saturday 13 October was a great success raising more than \$27,000 for research into early onset dementia.

The book, *Back Block Bards - A Collection of Bush Verse by Bush Bards*, was written and published by extended members of the Vagg and Parker families from the Hillston/Ivanhoe district, in south western NSW.

A spokeswoman for the group, Mary Vagg, said the sole purpose of compiling the book was as a fundraiser for Dementia Australia Research Foundation, as one of the family members, still only in her mid 50's, has been in full time care in Griffith for 4 years due to dementia.

"Maurice (Moc) Parker, one of the authors, did an amazing job as MC, entertaining the crowd of more than 350", Ms Vagg said. "He was ably assisted by Victorian musicians, Rachel Maruff and Gav Munro from Victoria and the poetry recitals by the poets."

Former Western Lands Commissioner Geoff Wise officially launched the book. In an inspiring oration, Mr Wise told the crowd that he'd observed that country people achieved by working with the strengths of each individual in the community whereas city people have a tendency to divide by attacking individual's weaknesses. "Despite severe drought throughout the Hillston district, and a town population of only 1,400 people, \$27,000 was raised on the night. A huge achievement", he said.

As well as the book, the launch involved the sale of the majority of 28 artworks by Joan Vagg and a variety of other activities. Local auctioneer, Peter Fisk from Rawlinson and Brown, created huge interest in the "*Window to the Outback*" quilt created by Mrs Vagg. The hammer fell at \$3,500. The auction of the first book raised an additional \$520.

Further fund raising activities will continue until 30 April 2019. Books can be ordered at backblockbards.org.au.



Back Block Bards Book team

John Vagg (Roto), Allan Vagg (Hillston), Graham Vagg (Ivanhoe)
Joan Vagg (Hillston), Heather Frewin (Tooraweenah)
Maurice (Moc) Parker (Hungerford), Mary Vagg (Gundaroo)



Official Opening

Maurice (Moc) Parker (Hungerford)
Geoff Wise (Dubbo)



Peter Fisk (Hillston) auctioning the quilt



Rachel Maruff (St Andrews) and Gav Munro (Diamond Creek)



The crowd

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