

Media Release



Wagga Wagga locals share flood experience for launch of major oral history project

20/02/13

Almost 12 months since Wagga Wagga's disastrous March 2012 floods, 24 residents have recalled their harrowing experiences for a significant oral history collection to be launched by the State Librarian of NSW, at Wagga Wagga City Library on Monday 25 February.

"Allowing communities to tell their own story is vital and, thanks to our partnership with Wagga Wagga City Library, locals now have a valuable record of personal narratives on this major event with the *Wagga Wagga Floods March 2012 Oral History Project*," says Alex Byrne, NSW State Librarian & Chief Executive.

"These first-hand accounts increase our understanding of how a community under siege responds to an extreme weather event. And, with the environment under the spotlight, the State Library is committed to collecting oral histories from across NSW to provide meaningful records for present and future generations and research."

Wagga Wagga attracted headlines in March 2012 when floodwaters ripped through the community with a dramatic state of emergency enacted, the evacuation of over 8,000 residents and the flooding of around 400 homes across the local area. The recovery effort is still underway and many damaged homes in North Wagga Wagga are still uninhabitable.

Recorded by local historian and author Sherry Morris, the *Wagga Wagga Floods March 2012 Oral History Project* contains over 25 hours of interviews with 24 locals providing different perspectives on their flood experience.

The Project captures the voices of young and old residents, recent immigrants, farmers, council workers and emergency personnel, with moving stories recalling the brutal reality of damaged property, lost heirlooms and comparisons to past flood experiences.

North Wagga Wagga resident Virginia Anderson, whose house was severely damaged, described her shock at the residue left after water levels dropped: "That mud is something else. It's not just mud, it's effluent and dead animal and petrol and I've never smelt anything like it. I think I will always remember the smell of the floods."

According to Claire Campbell, Manager Library Services, Wagga Wagga City Library: "We were thrilled to work with the State Library on this project as it was an opportunity

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to preserve an important local story. And, while the focus is on the flood experience, these personal narratives reveal a telling picture of our present day community spirit and resilience.”

The *Wagga Wagga Floods 2012 Oral History Project* is available from Wagga Wagga City Library and the State Library of NSW.

Also launched today was the Riverina Regional Library’s (RRL) state-of-the-art mobile library featuring improved functionality and space, enhanced technology, and easy access. Setting a benchmark for future mobile libraries in Australia, the world-class design cost \$800,000, supported by a \$200,000 grant from the NSW Library Development Grant program.

The new mobile library will visit 28 communities in four local government areas, contributing a valuable service to the educational and social life of these districts.

For information on the mobile library’s service timetable and to access online services go to www.rrl.nsw.gov.au/mobile-library.html.

For more information, interviews and images, please contact:

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