

MEDIA RELEASE

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GIANT KOALA UNITES QUEENSLAND AHEAD OF TOWNSVILLE CULTURAL FESTIVAL

Take care and watch for native wildlife on the Bruce Highway these school holidays – specifically a giant koala weighing in at 700kg and towering over four metres above traffic.

The mammoth marsupial is the mascot of the 25th annual ***Townsville Cultural Festival*** (TCF25) and will tour regional Queensland as it journeys from Brisbane to its new home from **9-14 April**.

The furry mascot will stop at communities including Maroochydore, Bundaberg, Gladstone, Rockhampton, Mackay and Bowen ahead of TCF25, held from **16-18 August**, to promote its theme of “Unity in Diversity”.

Festival director and sculptor **Dr Farvardin Daliri** (OAM) said the cross-cultural appeal of koalas made the native animal a fitting choice to front the festival in its silver jubilee year.

“A koala is an Australian animal universally recognised and adored by everyone who comes to Australia – no matter when they come or why they come – whether they are kids or adults, newly arrived refugees or descendants of Aboriginal people from the Dreamtime,” Dr Daliri said.

“Koalas provide a common ground everybody can relate to; a meeting point of all cultures; from Indigenous to mainstream; to migrants and tourists.”

Dr Daliri began sculpting large-scale art works for the festival many years ago. His pieces are significant to the festival and include depictions of Johnathan Thurston, Slim Dusty, Ned Kelly, Mother Earth and Aboriginal Elder King Bundawaal.

The sculptures are paraded through Townsville to launch each festival, but this is the first year one will hit the road and tour beyond the north Queensland city.

The koala comprises a welded steel frame covered in fabricated steel mesh and a layer of artificial turf and paint and was crafted by Dr Daliri over several months.

It will depart Brisbane on **Tuesday 9 April** from MDA’s (Multicultural Development Australia) Woolloongabba office following a traditional indigenous smoking ceremony.

A variety of formal receptions, community activities and cultural ceremonies are planned at each of the koala mascot’s tour stops throughout regional Queensland.

“The theme of the Townsville Cultural Festival is ‘Unity in Diversity’ and we have worked on promoting this single idea for the past 25 years,” Dr Daliri said.

“We believe it is time to share the story of this journey by undertaking our own journey through regional Queensland to show our 25-year commitment to peace and harmony.”

The giant koala will be displayed outside the festival’s Townsville headquarters until TCF25 launches with a carnival parade on 10 August 2019.

Please come along and join us for TCF25 from 16 – 18 August 2019. For TCF25 program details and koala mascot tour stops, visit: www.culturalfest.org

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About Townsville Cultural Festival

- First held in 1995, TCF celebrates 25 years in 2019.
- The 2018 festival welcomed 30,000 residents and visitors from across Australia.
- TCF celebrates diversity and promotes acceptance and understanding in regional Queensland through a three-day celebration of dance, music, food and fun.
- TCF25 runs from 16-18 August 2019 and is preceded by a Festival Carnival on 10 August which includes a grand parade of more than 100 floats and vehicles travelling from Harmony Park to James Cook University, Townsville.
- More than 250 groups are involved in TCF25 including: school communities, cultural and religious groups, community art workers and musicians, sporting and social clubs, local businesses and government agencies.
- The full TCF25 program is yet to be released but will include an Indigenous Visual Art Expo, Yarn Circle, multi-faith prayer ceremony and cultural performers from PNG, Fiji, the Cook Islands, Indonesia, Thailand, Tajikistan, Spain, Brazil, Iran, Afghanistan, Turkey, Malaysia, India, Sri Lanka, China and Japan.

About Dr Farvardin Daliri

- Born in central Persia, Dr Daliri grew up in Tehran, Iran before migrating first to India, then to Australia in 1984.
- He holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts and a postgraduate research qualification in Ceramic Design from India’s Lucknow University, as well as a Bachelor of Education from Latrobe University, Master of Education from Monash University and PhD in Education from James Cook University.
- He is a professional painter and sculptor and has written two books: *I Think I Should Not Think* (2014) and *The Ghost Of the Billabong Speaks* (2016).
- His large-scale sculptures include *River Party – Frog, Fish & Turtle* at Townsville’s Rossiter Park, Home Hill’s *Eddi* and *Giant Carpet Snake*, Bowen’s *Brolgas & Snake* and Weipa’s *Eagle & Fish*.
- Dr Daliri received an Order of Australia Medal (OAM) in 2009 for community service.
- He founded the Townsville Cultural Festival in 1995 and is the Executive Director of the Townsville Intercultural Centre.

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