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A multi-arts festival that brings a whole region together, some from the most disadvantaged area in NSW, wins national award!

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Moorambilla Voices and Festival has won the **2011 Music in Communities Award**. In just six years, the Festival has grown from its beginnings as a choral outreach program with 38 boys in drought-stricken Coonamble in northwestern NSW, to a cultural highlight of national significance. The grassroots multi-arts Festival has community music-making at its heart, whilst creating new Australian works about the region by leading composers and professional musicians and visual artists. In their citation about the winning entry, the National Awards Judges said:

“This is a world class initiative, in the bush. It has developed from the bottom up – using the talents and resources of the region and amalgamating them with visiting artists, to create really meaningful opportunities for everyone involved. It is not often that you see young community members from rural and remote Australia given the opportunity to be at the heart of a cultural program this rich and diverse. Here, local stories and legends are told through music and visual art connecting with ancient Indigenous art forms of the Ngemba Wailwan people and Japanese drumming. Leading composers work with the participants to generate new music for the Moorambilla Voices massed choirs, featuring Sydney Brass, Taikoz & the Sydney Youth Orchestra inspired by the traditional art works developed in residence representing lifelines, landscapes and legends of the local area. The economic and social value of this festival to the local community is enormous.”

Run by the Music Council of Australia’s national Music in Communities Network, the Music in Communities Awards promote and reward community music initiatives which improve Australia’s cultural life. This year’s theme, *Local Links*, invited groups to highlight the connections, partnerships and relationships they have nurtured in and beyond their local community.

The festival is defined by its partnerships and collaborations with other artists, particularly the indigenous visual artists from the Ngemba Wailwan Collective in Warren. The life blood of the festival is its strategic partnering with Coonamble Shire Council and with Outback Arts. The support offered by council no doubt influenced by the festival providing a ‘return on investment’ in terms of direct spend to the region of \$198,000 in 2011 alone!

An initiative of *Music: Play for Life*, the Music Council of Australia’s music advocacy program, the Awards have a total prize pool of \$10,000. The Moorambilla Voice and Festival receiving \$5,000.

Moorambilla Voices provides these opportunities to the young people across the region regardless of identity, financial or social status. To support the ongoing access and equity of the program Moorambilla Voices recently launched its 2012 Scholarship Fund Raising Program through the Moorambilla Voices Public fund – go to www.moorambilla.com to find out how you can support this unique and vibrant program.

For interviews or further information- contact voicesadmin@moorambilla.com or Margie Moore OAM - 0416074931

**Patron – Richard Gill OAM
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