

Woodfordia Presents

# WOODFORD FOLK FESTIVAL

27th Dec - 1st Jan

**EMBARGOED**

**UNTIL 6PM SATURDAY 7 DEC 2019**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**Saturday 7 December 2019**

## **New Lake's Ripple Effect at Woodfordia**

Organisers of The Woodford Folk Festival have announced the creation of Lake Gkula, a conservation and recreation lake at their home, Woodfordia, in the Moreton Bay hinterland, an hour's drive north-west of Central Brisbane.

It is the largest all-natural conservation and recreation lake in Australia and, according to Woodfordia's General Manager, Amanda Jackes, Woodfordia's most impressive achievement and a game changer for their not-for-profit organisation.

"This could not have been done without the financial assistance of The Queensland Government, who have been wonderful to work with in this space" said Founder of Woodfordia, Bill Hauritz. "We are going to multiply their investment manifold, as groups and organisations outside our own are already expressing a keen interest in using this stunning new feature. We know Lake Gkula will be an attraction; it's that beautiful".

"In particular, we want to acknowledge the work and wisdom of Queensland Treasurer, Jackie Trad, and Tourism Minister, Kate Jones. This facility will bring millions into our community and already dozens of jobs have been created," said Hauritz.

The lake has cost in excess of \$1.5 million to construct but according to Hauritz, more investment will be required. "It's expensive to run and while we've started with a modest investment in solar energy, our goal is to have the whole lake's electrical consumption be 100% renewable - it's about being responsible," he said.

Organisers believe the investment in Lake Gkula will not only benefit Woodfordia Inc but will stimulate tourism for the broader Woodford community and indeed Queensland. At the festival, the lake will be open for the festival's season campers only. Swimming privileges will also be offered to the festival's artists and volunteers as a thanks for their hard work.

Lake Gkula honours the region's traditional owners, the Jinibara people, naming it after one of their principal spokespersons, Uncle Noel Blair, a much-loved and influential figure in the Woodfordian community; Noel's indigenous name is Gkula, which translated, means Koala.

The Lake is chemical free, using all-natural systems in guaranteeing safe water quality with abundant fish and plant life. 400+ diverse species of native, freshwater fish and 4,000 plants have been deployed so far in and around the facility; the fish have already started breeding and much more stocking is planned.

“While we’re excited to share this news, we’re aware of the irony and potential insensitivity of opening a human-made lake during a drought,” said Hauritz. “Rainfalls onsite have been few and far between, but we were fortunate enough to source all the water for Lake Gkula from onsite dams and a top up from a bore.”

All festival patrons will have access to a lakeside bar, where they can sit with friends and enjoy the view.

“It saddens us to be unable to invite all our festivalgoers to swim this year,” said Hauritz. “But as we’re very much learning the ropes of Lake Management, we’ve turned to experts in the field, who have advised us on the best systems to put in place so as not to overwhelm the lake’s budding and delicate ecosystem. We want Lake Gkula to outlive us all, so it’s important we get this right.”

“In an effort to recover funds, everyone who uses Lake Gkula will be charged an entry fee, which we will keep as minimal as possible for our patrons,” said Jackes. The General Manager will be testing the lake’s capacity during the festival’s construction phase but there is a caveat on its use.

“Because of its all-natural systems, we’ll be asking all swimmers to refrain from using unnatural, inorganic cosmetics, sunscreens, deodorants, wound treatments etc,” said Jackes. “Lake Gkula is shared space for our creature friends who are very sensitive to these poisons.”

“We’ll be offering a range of quality organic products in our General Store, should people need, and there’s always the old-fashioned zinc cream, which is good for water quality and the best UV skin protection,” said Jackes.

The lake’s inception was inspired by the organisers wish to improve the festival experience for their Season Campers. “They are our staunchest supporters and truly the heart and soul of our beautiful festival, sharing their energy and good spirit for the whole six days,” said Hauritz.

“As the ambition grew along with what was emerging as something very special in the design phase, it became obvious that the second benefit of the lake would be the creation of new business throughout the year,” he said.

Amanda Jackes paid tribute to Patrick Handley from Waterscapes, the chief designer and construction manager of the lake: “Patrick’s immaculate skills and imagination came to the fore and we loved that his devotion to the environment came through – we could not have wished for someone better to design and construct Lake Gkula.”

Woodfordia has appointed aquatic facility expert, Shannon Townshend, from Toowoomba as Facility Manager for Lake Gkula, who be bringing a team of qualified people to assist in creating a safe experience for users.

“We’ve been fortunate to attract Shannon as our ‘Lady of the Lake’ to supervise the safety, water quality and security – she’s seriously qualified, well-researched and knows the Woodfordian culture,” said Jackes.

“Safety is about first building a nurturing culture within the community that will use Lake Gkula,” said Townshend. “There will of course be rules but setting a behavioural pattern will be the key to ensuring a safe and enjoyable experience for all.”

“We have no doubt that our beautiful festival community will help us cultivate an equally beautiful culture around this new space,” said Hauritz. “A respect and adoration of the land has always been the Woodfordian way – we see this demonstrated onsite each and every year when not a skerrick of rubbish is left in left in the campgrounds.”

Lake Gkula will be officially opened on Saturday afternoon, 7 December in the company of Woodford Folk Festival’s Build volunteers, who commence work the following day to build the festival for this year.

Tickets available online at:  
[www.woodfordfolkfestival.com/tickets/](http://www.woodfordfolkfestival.com/tickets/)

‘Woodford Folk Festival is supported by the Queensland Government through Tourism and Events Queensland and features on the *It’s Live! in Queensland* events calendar, worth \$800m to the state’s economy in 2019.’