



Press Release

With the World's Largest Virtual Solar System Drive about to take-off, the project's major funding partner has commended the initiative during a recent visit to the region.

Representatives from AusIndustry - the Federal Government body that funded the project through the Australian Tourism Development Program (ATDP) – travelled the Solar System Drive from Pluto at Dubbo to the Sun at Siding Spring Observatory at the end of last month.

AusIndustry's James Turvey and Michael Grieve met with Warrumbungle Shire Council and Project Management Committee members to discuss the model and marketing and promotion material that is currently being developed to enhance the experience of the Solar System Drive.

The new tourist attraction, a model of our Solar System that's scaled 38 million times smaller, is almost complete with the largest of the planets – Saturn and Jupiter – the only billboards yet to be installed.

Council's General Manager Bob Geraghty said the project, which is anticipated to boost tourism and economic development in the region, would not have come to fruition without the funding and ongoing support from AusIndustry through the ATDP.

“What started as an idea a decade ago has become a reality following the AusIndustry grant of \$418,365 and Warrumbungle Shire Council is highly appreciative of AusIndustry's ongoing support of the Solar System Drive,” Mr Geraghty said.

“The project is moving along well ahead of the original timeframe with 20 out of the 24 billboards already installed. Council will continue to support the project through not only marketing and promotion of the region's newest tourist attraction, but also through maintenance of the billboards to ensure a high quality experience for our visitors.”

The Coonabarabran Visitor Information Centre has already received an overwhelmingly positive response from tourists and is expecting this interest to skyrocket once the drive is complete and marketing material such as brochures and the website are available in coming weeks.

The Solar System Drive has been created along the five major roads that lead to Coonabarabran and up to Siding Spring Observatory. Three dimensional model planets attached to huge billboard signs provide tourists with “out of this world” information on our Solar System. The planets are scaled in size and distance to the Sun - which is represented by the 37-metre Anglo-Australian Telescope dome at Siding Spring Observatory.

Nine Local Government Areas are involved including Warrumbungle, Moree, Narrabri, Tamworth, Gunnedah, Upper Hunter, Gilgandra, Mid-Western, and Dubbo.

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