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New life for old building



Member for Northern Tablelands, Richard Torbay MP, reading to Gwydir Toy Library Bingara Branch coordinator, Tania Brennan, and Bingara Preschool children in the new toy library play area.

The former Masonic Temple building began its third phase of its existence last Tuesday, when Richard Torbay, Member for Northern Tablelands, officially opened the Bingara Youth and Family Services Centre.

The building, built in 1904, was purchased by Council in April 2000, and became the Bingara Arts Centre. It has been used for art exhibitions, functions, was the venue for the North West Theatre Company's first production, "Educating Rita", and was the regular meeting place for the Community College's Needlecraft group.

The building is now home for the Bingara Toy Library and Bingara Youth and Family Services.

Mr. Torbay said Toy Library Coordinator, Tania Brennan, had worked to secure the funding needed to upgrade the building to accommodate the toy library. Funding of \$20,000 from the NSW Government was matched by the Gwydir Shire Council.

"Kristina Keneally, when Premier, granted the late funding from the Community Partnership Funding for 2010, after the application was initially rejected by the independent review panel," Mr. Torbay said.

"The funding was used to transform the old Masonic Hall into a site-specific facility to provide children's services to the community.

"The Toy Library, led by Tania

Brennan now spearheads a wonderful space for children in the Gwydir Shire community including playgroups, after school and school holiday activities, and of course, the toy library."

Mr. Torbay acknowledged the work of Tania and her husband David, children Gabbie and Kurtis, and her parents, Bill and Jan Baldock, who all helped with the move from the toy library's previous home in Maitland Street.

"I am so impressed at the support given to the facility by Mayor John Coulton, his councillors and Council staff led by General Manager, Max Eastcott.

"I'm sure this facility will become a place that figures fondly in the childhood memories of tomorrow's adults," Mr. Torbay said.

The Gwydir Toy Library, Bingara Branch, currently has 38 members. The Toy Library originally began in the Presbyterian Church hall then moved to the old Ritters building in Maitland Street.

The new facility has a playroom with new carpet and meeting rooms. After school, a Youth worker holds sessions with older children on the Nintendo Wii.

The preschool visits on special occasions, with 14 to 16 children, and either to 10 mothers with young children meet to share experiences.

Funding shortfall poses challenges

Gwydir Shire Council has submitted its audited financial reports to the Division of Local Government. The Annual Financial Reports will be submitted to this week's Council meeting which will also be addressed by Council's auditor.

The General Manager, Max Eastcott noted in the meeting papers for this week's monthly meeting that "The most significant issue raised again by the Auditor is Council's ability to fund infrastructure renewal. The net operating loss of \$5.7m (\$5.9m in 2010) before capital grants and contributions indicates the shortfall in recurrent funding.

"Without significant increases in recurrent funding, Council's assets will continue to decline at a much higher rate than we have the ability to renew or even maintain them.

"On the positive side, Council's cash position has improved and we need to maintain the momentum to

continue to get this to the position it needs to be.

"While some argue that every cent that comes in should go out in services, having an appropriate level of cash reserves will make Council more resilient and able to handle one-off events with more certainty. Cash reserves also aid in the management of asset replacement.

"Council will continue to struggle with recurrent funding shortfalls for the foreseeable future and will need to continue working on strategies to resolve the problem.

"The Council will not be considered sustainable in the long term until it achieves surplus net operating results before capital grants and contributions.

"The result for the year ended June 30, 2011 was a total loss of \$5.7m against a budgeted loss of \$8.8m. This will continue to impact on Council's ability to maintain its aging assets and infrastructure," Mr Eastcott stated.

Roxy Museum shares in NSW Arts and Cultural funding

The establishment of a Greek Museum at the Roxy in Bingara took a giant step forward this week with the announcement of a \$94,500 grant from the State Government.

Duty MLC for Northern Tablelands, Sarah Mitchell, said that under the 2012 Arts Funding Program, the Roxy Museum would receive government funding which is available for the construction, renovation or fitting out of buildings and other facilities for arts and cultural use.

"I am pleased to announce that \$94,500 will be directed towards Gwydir Shire Council for the capital development of the Roxy Museum," Mrs. Mitchell said.

"The Roxy Museum is a fantastic local concept that celebrates Greek settlement in rural Australia and this funding will help people conduct research and develop collections that document Bingara's history," she said.

The announcement was welcomed by Member for Northern Tablelands and Roxyphile, Richard Torbay PM, who described the Roxy restoration as "one of the finest staged developments in the region."

"Sandy McNaughton, the Gwydir Council and community supporters have done a magnificent job of restor-

ing the original Roxy theatre and the adjoining Greek café," he said.

"This \$94,500 grant means the plans for the upstairs museum commemorating Australian Greek café culture, particularly in our region, can go ahead.

"This has been an ambitious and successful project and it's great to see it all coming together like this."

Mr. Torbay said the Museum would house memorabilia donated by the Fardouli family in Inverell and other families connected to the Greek cafés which were a feature of almost every country town last century.

Strong support from the Kytherian and Greek communities and good relationships with other museums

would also result in other items to display and special exhibitions.

Also delighted with the grant was George Poulos, Secretary of the Kytherian Association, and member of the Roxy Board of Management.

"The grant will continue the progress towards making the Roxy complex in Bingara a Hellenic heritage site of not only national, but world significance," Mr. Poulos said.

"It will attract tourists from around the world."

Art deco glass designed from the original is currently being installed in the café.

Photographs of the glass and its installation will feature in next week's Advocate.

Council to meet at Warialda Hospital

The venue for this week's Council meeting has been moved to the Warialda MPS Meeting Room.

In a fine show of dedication to duty, Mayor, John Coulton will be attending the meeting, even though he is presently receiving medical attention in the Warialda Hospital following an accident on his property, which involved a quad bike. Hence the change of meeting venue.

Roxy Café advertisements to appear soon

Advertisements calling for expressions of interest to operate the Roxy Café will soon appear in local and national media, according to General Manager, Max Eastcott.

Mr Eastcott told the Advocate that the business is to be extensively advertised, including in glossy magazines and over the internet.

Applications will close at the end of January.

Year 12 celebrate a major milestone



From the left: Dean Turner, Gabbie Brennan, Danike Fields, Meg Rampling and Michael O'Brien.

Bingara Central School's third class of year 12s, last Thursday celebrated a huge milestone at their Farewell Formal with family, friends and the staff and patrons of Bingara Central.

While there were seven in the class, only five were able to attend the formal. School Captain Gabbie Brennan, Meg Rampling, Danika Fields, Dean Turner and Michael O'Brien were present while Shaun Fletcher and To-

mas O'Rourke were unable to attend.

During the evening Alison Johnson, Robert Johnson, and Principal Mark Vale farewelled the class with reflections of their years of schooling while also wishing them the very best for the future.

Gabbie presented a speech on behalf of the year 12 class, reflecting her time at Bingara Central along with a photographic slide show beginning from preschool to their final years of

schooling.

On behalf of the student body, Year 11 student Daniel Rafter toasted the graduates, followed later by a toast from Meg Rampling to the school and finally the cutting of the cake by Dean Turner.

While they are not all sure of what they will be doing, the students are all looking forward to what lies ahead of them for the future.