

**HANSARD RECORD -
WERRIS CREEK COMMUNITY SHED
AUSTRALIAN RAILWAY MONUMENT AND RAIL JOURNEYS MUSEUM**

Mr PETER DRAPER (Tamworth) [2.01 p.m.]: I recently visited the Werris Creek Community Shed, and it was an uplifting experience to see such a large number of community members sharing their time, experience and friendship. Werris Creek is a fantastic small town of about 1,500 inhabitants, approximately 45 kilometres south of Tamworth. It has had its ups and downs over the years, especially as employment in the rail industry has been scaled back. But "the Creek" has always enjoyed a close-knit community base, allowing it to box above its weight. The Werris Creek Community Shed now has 36 members and is open Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays, plus Saturday mornings for the ladies. It provides community connection through engagement and inclusion.

Research suggests that sheds provide a critically important new "third place" for many older men, giving them access to regular activities that are essential to their social wellbeing and psychological health. Sheds promote social equity by levelling the status of members and encouraging mentoring while supporting individuals. Participants often regain a sense of purpose in life and experience enhanced self-esteem, decreased social isolation and, of course, friendship. Sheds deliver positive results for partners, families and communities and provide an important opportunity to encourage men who are not already engaged with the health system into health promotion programs.

Community and individual support has been phenomenal. The shed has been given offcuts of timber by local builders Dellar and Cook, and has been provided with other assistance from Bunnings and Tamworth Building Supplies. Donations include a battery-operated drill from Max Smith; timber and tools from Brian Murphy; a vice workbench from Harold Durrant; workbenches and a wood lathe from Ian Phillips; a pen lathe from Bill Looney; assorted tools from Jake Thomas, Peter Cunningham, Les Weeks and George Keating; a wood vice from Stan Adam; and a scroll saw from Monty Mal. Retired electrician Peter Taylor donated electrical cut-out switches, parts and labour to provide an overhead movable power supply. A small load of jacaranda offcuts for lathe work came from John DeHaart, while a Triton saw bench and table was provided by Rex Heiler.

In addition, the shed has received a television from the local hospital and a copier from New England Credit Union. Whitehaven Mine has arranged tagging of electrical tools, while The Old Green Shop has provided a \$100 voucher for a raffle. The shed has also received an urn from Vaneta and Max Porter; 20 chairs donated by a local couple's son, delivered from Taree; money for its public liability insurance from Liverpool Plains Shire Council; and a couple of trailer-loads of wood for raffle purposes delivered from Boggabri by Margaret and Arthur Heiler. Financial donations have also been received from non-members Margaret Thompson, Whitehaven Coal, the Zeolite mine, the Australian Rail Journeys Museum, Werris Creek Bowling and Tennis Club, Werris Creek RSL, Mrs Gifford, Don and Lyn Thomas, and from members John Rogers, Dennis Landrigan, George Bridge, Peter Cunningham, Ray Maloy and Jim Broughton. In addition, the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal provided a small grant. I would like to thank the president of Werris Creek Community Shed, Peter Cunningham, and all the members for hosting such an enjoyable morning.

While I was in Werris Creek I also had the opportunity to visit the Australian Railway Monument and Rail Journeys Museum that benefits quite significantly from the shed's work.

The museum uses the members' skills to restore artefacts and can call on the skills of local handymen and women who may not want to be part of the public face of the museum. The museum is a not-for-profit, volunteer-run attraction, open seven days a week from 10.00 a.m. to 4.00 p.m. It recently welcomed its 60,000th visitor since the official opening in October 2005. In 2006 the museum was a winner in the Australian Government National Awards for Local Government in the category of Heritage Conservation. In 2007 it won the Australian Property Institute's Local Government Award and Highly Commended for the Heritage Award, the Tidy Towns Award for Cultural Heritage and Conservation, and the Seniors Week Achievement Award for Community Service/Volunteering.

In 2008 the museum won the National Trust of Australia's Highly Commended for the Cultural Heritage Award. In 2009 it won the Quirindi Chamber of Commerce Industry and Tourism Award, the Australian Business Arts Foundation State Award Business Partnership, was a finalist in the national awards, and also won the Champion Award in the NSW Inland Tourism Awards. This year it won the NSW Seniors Week Community Service/Volunteering Award, was a finalist in the NSW Inland Tourism Awards and brought home the New South Wales Office of Rail Heritage Community Service Award for Lady Volunteers. As funding becomes available, members plan to develop the second storey of the rail journeys museum, which will enable the volunteers to further exhibit the hundreds of items of memorabilia currently in storage. I am proud to represent the enthusiastic and entrepreneurial Werris Creek community in this place. Its community shed provides a new outlet for residents, while the Australian Railway Monument and Rail Journeys Museum is a major attraction for the town and the district. Government support for such organisations is an invaluable investment in small rural communities and their people.