

Note: a set of 19 historic photos that illustrate this article is pasted at the end, together with captions.

Rotary's role in founding the Seniors Centre

The idea of building the Woolgoolga Seniors Centre came from members of the Rotary Club of Woolgoolga, and it was later the Rotary Club that initiated, managed and completed the project. Starting in 1999, this massive project took five years, culminating in the official opening on 3 May 2004, by the Deputy Prime Minister of Australia, Hon. John Anderson.

The land in Boundary Street occupied by the aging Guide Hall was chosen as the most suitable site. After much planning and negotiation, Woolgoolga Rotary gave the project momentum with initial seed funding of \$50,000 in 2001. The initial seed funding became the basis for a large and concerted effort to raise the rest of the funds through government and private grants, as well as canvassing support from local businesses and suppliers and the Woolgoolga Lions Club.

The majority of funding for construction came from

- The Rotary Club of Woolgoolga – over \$100,000
- Federal Department of Transport and Regional Services – a grant of \$137,500
- Bananacoast Community Credit Union (BCU) – a grant of \$30,000
- Lions Club of Woolgoolga – a grant of \$20,000
- Coffs Harbour City Council – exemption from fees and (initially) a \$90,000 interest-free loan

The construction cost of \$420,000 was much less than the inherent value of the completed building, estimated at three-quarters of a million dollars by the then Council General Manager.

Vital to the project was a huge contribution in the form of donated and discounted services and supplies. The architect (Steve Abrahams) and engineer (John Tozer) donated their services, many local tradespeople provided their services at or below cost, and major purchases such as building supplies and chairs were supplied at discounted prices. The Rotary auction shed provided a large set of white crockery that had been donated, as well as cutlery.

Rotarian Charles Phipps was the project coordinator throughout, given strong support by the other club members in this complex logistic task. Another key player was a former Rotarian, Keith Messer, volunteer Project Manager. Keith Messer was presented with a Paul Harris Fellow Award by Rotary at the opening of the centre. An Honour Board in the Seniors Centre identifies the many individuals and organisations who contributed to the success of the project.

The initial management committee of 8 included 3 Rotarians, then Rotary's involvement was phased down as the committee became more self-sufficient. Charles Phipps and fellow committee member Selwyn Rogers both remain Honorary Members of Woolgoolga Rotary.

Two years after the opening was a milestone in the Centre's history – a Deed of Agreement by which Rotary transferred ownership of the Centre to Coffs Harbour City Council. The original

Council loan was foregone, with no net cost to Rotary, in exchange for the building. The lease was transferred from Rotary to the Seniors Centre.

Historical images

<p>1999</p> 	<p>Guide Hall previously on the site</p>
	<p>Guide Hall previously on the site</p>
	<p>Guide Hall previously on the site</p>



Guide Hall being moved from site



Seniors Centre under construction c2003



Seniors Centre under construction Sep 2003



2004

Just completed, 2004





Honour board thanking those who contributed



At official opening, 3 May 2004: Luke Hartsuyker MP, Rotarian Dick Matthews, Rotary District 9650 Governor John Burkey and Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson



Deputy Prime Minister John Anderson Unveiling the Plaque



DG John Burkey confers Paul Harris Fellow on volunteer Project Manager Keith Messer



5 years old (2009)