

Mullum Women's Shed strikes a chord



Although Mullumbimby prides itself on its strong sense of community, tolerance and inclusion, there are a number of women who feel socially and emotionally isolated, lonely and disconnected. Many women in the region have expressed the desire to engage and collaborate with other like-minded women in a spirit of community and friendship.

According to Mullumbimby Women's Shed committee members, many women long for emotional and social engagement but feel blocked due to fear or because they don't know how to proceed. Some battle a sense of isolation due to losing a partner or a close confidante. Others may be lonely because they live in a remote area or with a disability.

Empty nesters, single mothers and those new to the area can also crave connection. Such social isolation can be both a cause and a symptom of other issues such as depression, helplessness, social anxiety or agoraphobia.

Loneliness can also hit those with a refugee background or those from the Indigenous and other communities.

HealthSpeak visited Mul-

lumbimby Women's Shed for its official opening in early March and spoke to committee member Julie Beesley.

She explained that it was when she was working at Southern Cross University on a video project that involved the Sudanese refugee community in Lismore that the idea of getting refugee women together to connect through art and craft came into Julie's mind.

"And at the same time I heard someone talking about the Mullumbimby Women's Shed. I went along to the first meeting and found myself on the committee. My ethos matched theirs. Since that time two women who started it have had pressing commitments and handed the reins onto me. And I connected with Melanie Gunn, Christina Covington and Caterina Boschin and things went from there."

The first meeting about the Shed was held in September

2017 and it began in a small warehouse space, which quickly became too small for all those women wanting to come along. Now Mullumbimby Women's Shed Facebook page has more than 600 friends and it continues to grow.

The concept of the Mullumbimby Women's Shed shaped by the committee is that it presents an opportunity for all women to connect through art.

It's a not-for-profit hub where women can come together to explore their creativity and develop artistic skills. It's a space where women will feel welcome, supported and inspired to develop, learn and share new skills in a range of arts and crafts such as painting; weaving; pottery; tapestry; jewellery-making; sewing and much more.

It's a friendly, soulful sanctuary where women can encourage and learn from each other in a supportive environment under-

pinned by a spirit of generosity and inclusiveness. There is also an ethos of being environmentally conscious and sustainable with a focus on the use of recycled materials.

Mullumbimby Women's Shed comes to life each Thursday from 10am to 2pm and is managed under the auspices of the Mullumbimby Neighbourhood Centre. The address is 91 Main Arm Road, Mullumbimby (part of Wildspace).

"It's a dream come true for all of women and we are astounded at how many women are interested in becoming involved and how it's resonated locally.

"Now that we have this bigger home we'll set up pockets of space with popular arts and crafts and women can get involved in projects they can do over time. They can up skill and share and we might hold some master classes as well," said Julie.

HealthSpeak congratulates all those involved in getting the Shed off the ground and established in its new venue. It's a model that could be emulated in other North Coast towns.

On Facebook, connect at Mullumbimby Women's Shed.

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