



# Shed delivers handcrafted toys to childcare centre

By [Lydia Roberts](#) Updated February 1 2024 - 4:16pm, first published 11:39am



Armidale Men's Shed volunteers Bronwen Roberts, Gene Pesti and president John Pease with some of the toys and crafts made by members.

**HANDMADE** wooden toys will keep tots at Armidale's newest childcare centre busy, and could also be a lifeline for their makers.

Volunteers at Armidale Men's Shed crafted quoits, counting rods, jigsaws and stacking blocks from pieces of timber, made to order for Wholechild Early Learning.

"The brief was for sturdy, safe toys that would blend play and learning for children," Men's Shed secretary Kerrie Nixon said.

"We pulled together all our resources and a team of 12 men and women worked tirelessly over a three-month period to produce a range of toys for the childcare centre."

The toys were delivered in early January to the centre, currently under construction in Queen Elizabeth Drive.

WholeChild learning centre director Garth Grundy said he was thrilled with the toys.

"You can't buy toys like that, all individually made from beautiful natural resources," Mr Grundy said.

"We want children to use their imagination when playing with the toys and the team at the Shed certainly delivered on that.

"It was also a great way for us to work with the community, it's been a real success."

Now, Ms Nixon and Shed president John Pease are on a drive to drum up more business.

"We have financial challenges and need to turn a profit to survive," Mr Pease said.

The Shed is tucked away in Mann Street. There is a shopfront showcasing more than 100 items for sale, including a series of dovecotes for gardens, fine crafted bowls, benches, tables and other toys.

Sixty-seven members work at the rear of the premises on a voluntary basis, honing their hobbies of turning wood blocks into individual objects.

"We also repair and restore items such as chairs and other pieces of furniture," Mr Pease said.

Originally a refuge for men wanting to improve their health and wellbeing, in recent years the Shed has welcomed 10 women on board, who also sell their artworks.

"We want to attract more business, such as the commission for creating toys, since we have financial pressures of annual rent and maintenance of tools and the premises," Mr Pease said.

"If we can't meet our expenses soon, we will have to shut up shop."

The Shed is a non-for-profit organisation which is affiliated to other, similar workshops across Australia.

While volunteers use the Shed to shape objects people want for their homes, they develop confidence in their abilities and share their ideas with like-minded people.

Some of the items created by the team at the Shed include electric guitars (based on the Fender Stratocaster), restoration of Kelly's Plains School bell, a shop counter for Raw Fibre in Beardy Street and theatre production sets for the Armidale Drama and Musical Society.

Gene Pesti, a woodworker from the United States, was creating a bobbin for his wife's spinning wheel.

"I really enjoy my time at the Shed, it's very creative and a lot of interesting people," he said.

Watch the short video as he crafts a block of wood into the bobbin using his hands and a lathe.