



## **CENTENARY OF THE OFFICIAL OPENING OF KENDALL SCHOOL OF ARTS**

Plans are well in hand to celebrate the centenary of the official opening of Kendall School of Arts on 27<sup>th</sup> May 1910. The main focus of the celebrations is a dinner, with entertainment by Black Magic Big Band and Sing Australia, on Saturday 29<sup>th</sup> May 2010 at 6.30pm.

This much loved building has been the focus of many district activities over the last hundred years. It is well built of local timber on a site which in 1881 was used to rest horses and bullock teams after they drew logs from the forests to the Kendall timber mills. In 1892 part of this land was set aside as 'a site for School of Arts at Kendall (Private Village)' and in 1908 local residents began erecting the building with donated timber.

Over the years many performers and entertainment groups used Kendall School of Arts including Slim Dusty in the 1950s. It was a popular venue for dances and balls, with a reputation for its well sprung floor. From 1921 the building also served as a venue for the moving pictures of the day when large film canisters were unloaded from the train at Kendall Station to be collected by such entrepreneurs as Keever's Touring Talkies during the 1930s, and later by Manny Gibson's Essex Picture Theatre, McGilvray & Richards, John Hatsistouris and Bruce Longworth.

Following the loss of the School of Arts' supper room roof during a gale in 1983, a referendum was held, in conjunction with a state election, inviting the local community to determine the future of the building. Five options were given: sale; total demolition for a park; demolition and replacement with a new building; essential repairs; complete restoration. The vote was overwhelming in favour of complete restoration.

Substantial funding for the restoration came from the Commonwealth and NSW Governments. Hastings Council also assisted in this major undertaking. Once again, local residents gave unstintingly of their time and money. They undertook not only major fund raising but also much of the physical work of the restoration. When a new Board of Trustees was established, some of those involved were appointed as custodians of the property they had helped to rescue. One of them, Frank Kandilas, later extended the stage, making it suitable for major performances.

In 2003, again with NSW Government funding, a Community Technology Centre was added, providing public access to computers and related technologies. This addition included the employment for the first time of a Centre Manager. In 2005 the Commonwealth Government funded the building of a Rural Transaction Centre to accommodate banking and health-related services which had been lost to the community over previous decades. As a part of this expanded Community Centre, the Kendall School of Arts remains a vibrant hub for the community, making an important contribution to the social, artistic and cultural life of Kendall and district. Its superb acoustics are still widely admired.