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The recently opened "Pages for All Ages" book shop, adjacent to the op shop, also sells DVDs, CDs, cassettes, records and more.



WHEN the Rotary Club of Boorowa, NSW, first came up with the idea of opening an op shop in their town, they weren't sure it would work. Questions were raised as to the project's viability in a community as small as Boorowa, and how they would ensure enough volunteer staff to keep the place open. They would also need to find suitable premises on or near the main street, and ensure quality donations were made, rather than the op shop being used as a dumping ground for rubbish.

Over the next several months, club members undertook extensive research to vet the concept, including contacting other Rotary clubs operating op shops in country towns in South Australia and Victoria.

In the idea's favour was the location of Boorowa itself. Despite being home to only around 1200 people, Boorowa is situated on a major road linking many NSW towns and the ACT, meaning many travellers pass through, particularly during the holiday season. Additionally, the nearest existing op shops were over 50km away.

The club decided to give the project the go ahead on a six-month trial basis, drafting a business plan to cover all their bases. Three key aims were set out: to help the environment by reducing landfill via encouraging

recycling of useful items, delivering a community service, and creating a surplus of funds to support local community organisations.

With the assistance of the Boorowa Lions Club, the perfect premises were discovered very near to the middle of town at a reasonable price. The problem of volunteers was solved through approaching other local community groups that were enthusiastic about the Rotary Club of Boorowa's proposal of assisting the

project with manpower in return for a slice of funds raised.

These other groups were even willing to lend a hand alongside Rotarians getting the op shop ready for business. A full day of cleaning, washing of walls and windows, and shifting fixtures saw an incredible change in the appearance of the site. Another working bee was organised to sort, price and display the initial donations that streamed in once the project was publicly announced.



Pre-loved household items ready for a new home.



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Most of the original volunteers who helped clean the premises and sort stock also put up their hands to help in the shop once opened, and many more have since been recruited.

“Some can do sporadic shifts, while others are able to be in the shop weekly,” said club and op shop committee member, assistant district governor Julie Poplin. “There are those who are unable to assist directly in the shop but are willing to help in other ways behind the scenes. It is up to the individual and what they feel they can do.”

At the end of each shift, volunteers nominate a local charity or community organisation. Total volunteer hours contributed are tallied and then percentages used to divide up the surplus funds.

In the past 18 months since opening, the Boorowa Community Op Shop has distributed in excess of \$37,500 between 10 local community organisations, including the Boorowa and District Historical Society, RSPCA, Boorowa Hospital Auxiliary, Boorowa Lions Club, Boorowa Rural Fire Service Brigade, Country Education Foundation Boorowa Branch, Vinnies Conference Boorowa and the Rotary Club of Boorowa itself.

All the club’s original goals have been achieved, and more.

“This project has increased the profile of the club and earned great money for Rotary projects, all while offering a great community service,” club president Alan Banks said.

The Op Shop has now expanded into the premises adjacent to the shop and opened a book shop “Pages for all Ages”. •



Green is the new black

In Australia, approximately 6000kg of clothing is dumped into landfill every 10 minutes. A contributing factor is the rise of “fast fashion”, producing cheap items quickly tossed away after being outmoded or simply breaking after one or two wears.

Not only are many of these items manufactured from synthetics, meaning they are not biodegradable, each item discarded represents the waste of an enormous amount of raw materials and production emissions – in fact, fashion has been named the second dirtiest industry in the world after oil. It is just one of many offenders in contemporary throwaway culture. From electronics to toys, the lifecycle of products has become shorter.

Yet as consciousness increases regarding the environmental costs of rampant consumerism, buying second-hand is growing in popularity as a more sustainable option. Not only is facilitating the recycling and rehomeing of goods ethical, it’s a great way to make a difference in the community, as the Rotary Club of Boorowa has discovered.

