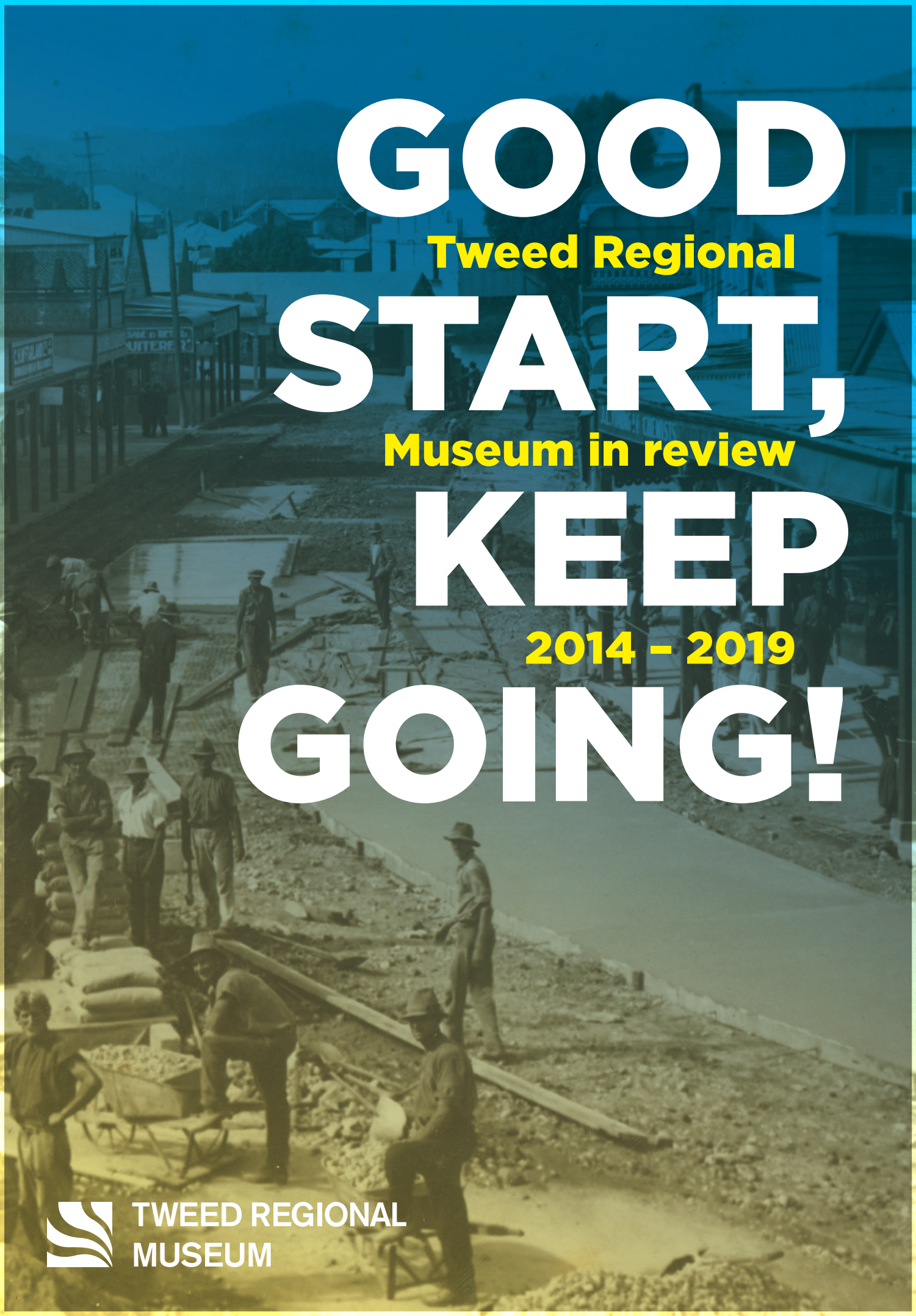
# GOOD START, KEEP GOING!

## Tweed Regional Museum in review

## 2014 – 2019



TWEED REGIONAL MUSEUM



(top) Inside TRM Murwillumbah, 2018. Photograph by David Young.
(bottom) Inside Boyds' Shed, TRM Tweed Heads, 2018. Photograph by Vibrant Imaging.

## Embodying the concept of 'one museum, multiple sites', Tweed Regional Museum operates across three branches: Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Uki, each with a different focus.

Since 2004, Tweed Shire Council has invested in major Museum infrastructure, and in dedicated staff and programs, establishing one of New South Wales' leading regional museums.

Museum facilities span heritage listed and historically significant buildings alongside purpose built facilities. The collection, dedicated to the history and heritage of the Tweed, supports diverse exhibitions and public programs.

'Good start, keep going' – a comment left by one of our visitors in 2018[1] succinctly captures our journey so far. It reflects the many important milestones the Museum has achieved to date – and points to the opportunities and challenges that await the Museum's next period of development from 2019.

In the five years to the end of 2018, in particular, substantial changes and new programs were implemented across all Museum sites. Investment in buildings, in collection care and management, and in exhibitions and public programs established a solid foundation upon which to build.

This document provides a brief review of some of our major achievements thus far.



1. A Brinsmead comment in the Tweed Regional Museum Visitors book, 7 June 2018.

# GOOD START!

## Our Vision

Preserving stories, sharing history: building an inspiring museum about the people, places, environment and culture of the Tweed for the benefit and enjoyment of visitors and the diverse communities of the region.

## Our journey

The Tweed Regional Museum's journey over the past fifteen years, and over the last five years in particular, echoes a path travelled by many similar organisations around Australia.

Many have their genesis in the contributions of civic-minded community members passionate about their local communities, and committed to the preservation of stories about their origins and way of life. Countless hours and resources have been contributed, over many years, to research and document community achievements and to build collections intended to preserve knowledge of how land was settled, families grew, properties and business prospered, and communities formed.

This motivation to build collections and to preserve stories and information has been shaped by many factors. Significant among them has been the impact of a period of extraordinary upheaval, and personal and collective loss experienced by families and communities through two world wars and economic depression which punctuated the years between 1914 – 1950.

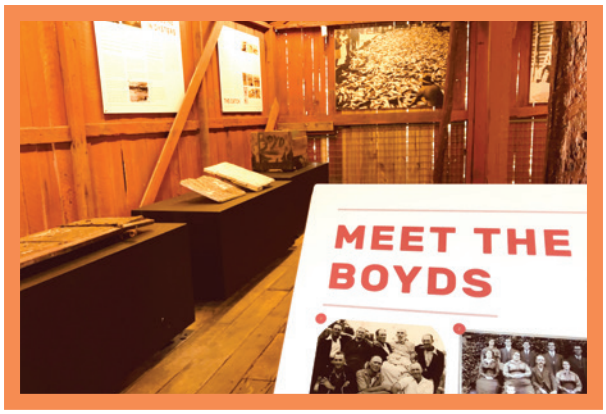
It's not surprising that post this era, when economic prosperity and more leisure time allowed, regional communities all over Australia began to save, preserve and record things representative of their way of life, and of survival against the odds. Things emblematic of losses endured, and in celebration of new-found prosperity.

One expression of this occurred under the banner of local historical societies and museums. Preserving and recording the journey of more than 100 years of settlement became a compelling end in itself. Few boundaries were drawn around what to save or how much. Collections grew, most often through generous donations. Items of extraordinary local, regional and indeed national historical value were preserved, often taking equal place alongside other fondly remembered everyday item, and heirlooms. Many examples of all these remain in collections today, often largely undocumented and unknown outside their local context. Over the years, for a variety of reasons, these collections have become increasingly difficult to care for and to access, and their stories are rapidly disappearing from memory.

Tweed Regional Museum has worked to honour and build on the legacy of many decades of collecting by the Historical Societies of Murwillumbah, Tweed Heads and Uki & South Arm to preserve Tweed's contribution to the regional, state and national story.


# We built better facilities

Refurbishment of the 1915 Shire Hall building and a major new extension to the Murwillumbah branch construction and fit out of a dedicated collection storage facility, refurbishment and reinterpretation of heritage listed buildings forming the Museum precinct at Tweed Heads, and a new office/ research centre for the Tweed Heads Historical Society.




(top) Council Chambers room at TRM Murwillumbah after renovation. Photograph by Justin Ealand.

(second) Inside the Museum Collection Store.

(third) Displays inside Boyds' Shed, TRM Tweed Heads

(bottom left) Displays inside the Courthouse building, TRM Tweed Heads.

(bottom right) New research centre/office for Tweed Heads Historical Society, TRM Tweed Heads.

## We rehoused, documented and grew the collection

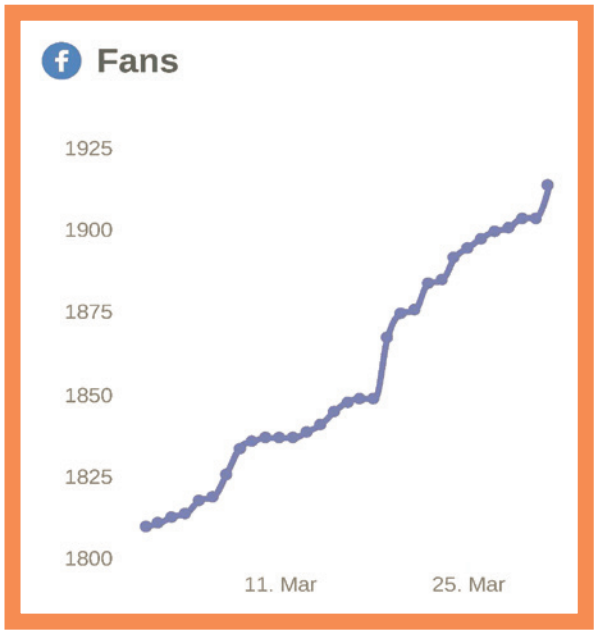
4278 items added to the Shire's collection between January 2015 and December 2018, which now stands at more than 37,458 individual items.[2] 68% of collection items are digitally documented and 100% recorded in the collection management database; all are housed in industry standard storage and exhibition facilities.


(middle) Collection items inside the Museum Collection Store.

(bottom) Collection items inside the Museum Collection Store.



2. https://museum.tweed.nsw.gov.au/Policies/Collection%20Policy%20TRM%20Version%201.2.pdf


# We expanded our audiences

The Museum has welcomed more than 39,600 visitors to all sites over the past four and a half years (September 2014 – December 2018).

The Museum's digital reach, particularly through social media, has engaged significant new audiences. At the end of 2018 the Museum Facebook page had more than 1.4K fans and Instagram 1.1K. Our on-line audiences are growing rapidly.

(top) Visitors to the opening of Boyds' Shed, TRM Tweed Heads, 2018. Photograph by Vibrant Imaging.

(middle) Visitors inside TRM Murwillumbah.

(bottom) Graph showing growth in facebook fans, 2019.

(opposite page, left) Sketch of Long Bob, Tweed's first Postman, C.1865,

(opposite page, right) Postbox at Uki Post Office. Photograph by Vibrant Imaging.

# We worked across the Tweed to preserve and share stories documenting our heritage, and contemporary life in the Shire.

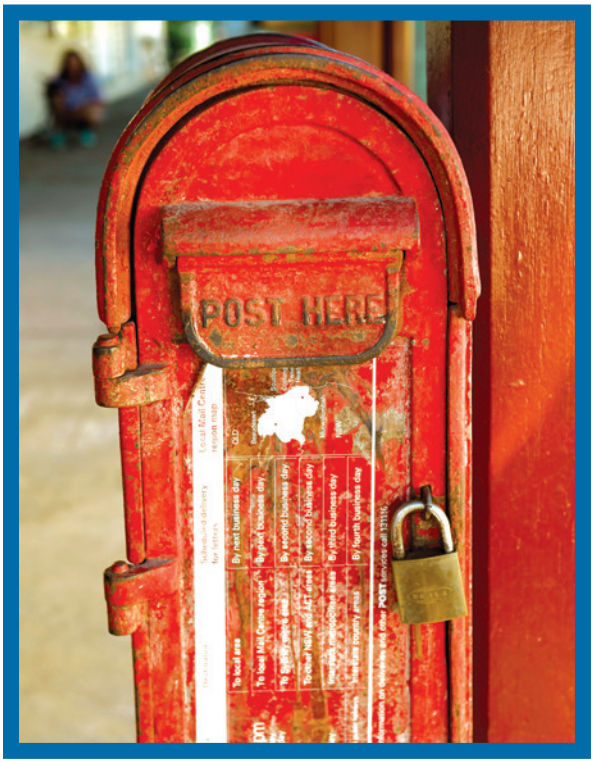
Two projects illustrate our commitment to document aspects of contemporary life in the Tweed for future generations, as part of a rich story of continuity and change.

## *Sorted!: 150 years of Tweed mail*

(11 October 2016 – 11 March 2017).

As one of fourteen major self-initiated temporary exhibitions (2015 – 2018) *Sorted!* built upon the Museum's existing collection and added new contemporary dimensions to an important story.

Tweeds first postal service, the role of first Postmaster (Joshua Bray), and the Shire's first post office; the essential contribution of Long Bob, a local Aboriginal man, and his countrymen to 'getting the mail through'; and local Federal



politician HL Anthony's role in the national story of emerging telecommunications during the 1950s and 60s, were featured stories.

The Museum commissioned new video interviews with current postmasters and mistress from Crabbes Creek, Fingal Head, Uki and Stokers Siding to sit alongside stories of local post offices in villages of the Shire over 150 years.

## *Untold Stories: living with ability*

(21 March – 24 June 2017)

Incorporating oral history recordings, video stories and objects, *Untold Stories* shared the rich experiences of ten participants living with a range of disabilities, and whose life experiences and achievements were as varied as Paralympic representation, careers in midwifery, scuba diving, academia, advocacy, authorship of a successful children's book, and travel against the odds.

*Untold Stories* exhibition at TRM Murwillumbah.

## We developed relationships with state and national collecting institutions bringing local 'treasures' back to the Tweed.

Two very different projects illustrate the breadth of our commitment to developing exhibitions which represent the richness and complexity of our heritage.

The 1994 film *Muriel's Wedding* is iconic and occupies a special place in Australian film history. Many Tweed residents know the story's creator PJ Hogan grew up in Murwillumbah, and that his family life was inspiration for many story lines in *Muriel's Wedding*. However, many others were introduced to this connection via the Museum's exhibition, *Tweed on Film* (4 July – 25 November 2017) featuring various stories of the Tweed's role as inspiration and location for screen-based stories.

Muriel's wedding dress, loaned to the Museum by the National Film and Sound Archive of Australia, was the centre-piece of the exhibition.

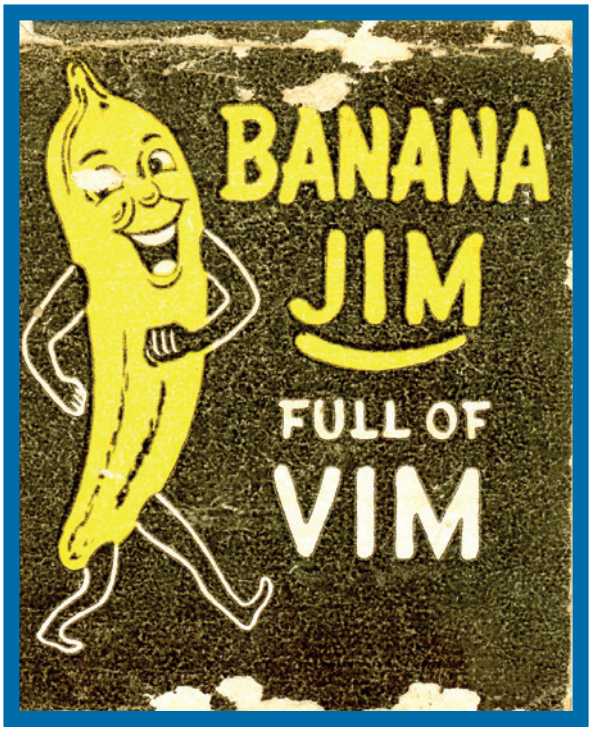
*Aboriginal Breastplates of the Northern Rivers: Contested Recognition, Uncontested Identity* (23 August 2016 – 31 January 2017) told a very different story. The exhibition and publication coincided with Tweed Shire Council's host role for the New South Wales Aboriginal Local Government Conference. It exposed our conflicted past and featured powerful and confronting stories of fourteen Aboriginal people from across the Northern Rivers.

Loans for the exhibition were sourced from the Australian Museum (Sydney), National Museum of Australia, National Library of Australia (Canberra) and the Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences (Powerhouse).


(clockwise from top left) Installing Muriel's wedding dress for the *Tweed on Film* exhibition, TRM Murwillumbah, 2017.

Detail of Muriel's Wedding dress, on display for the *Tweed on Film* exhibition, TRM Murwillumbah, 2017.

*Aboriginal Breastplates of the Northern Rivers* exhibition, TRM Murwillumbah, 2016-2017. Photograph by Justin Ealand.






(top) 'Banana Jim full of Vim' matches, 1950s, TRM Collection.

(middle) *Chutney, Chooks and Champions* exhibition, TRM Murwillumbah, 2018-2019.

(bottom) Dairy Farmer, Pat McDonald, featured in the *Chutney, Chooks and Champions* exhibition, TRM Murwillumbah, 2018-2019.

## We worked collaboratively to document and share stories of significant community events.

The Tweed community invests in annual events which have evolved along with social and economic changes continuing to shape life in the Shire.

The major exhibition *Still full of vim: 60 years of the Tweed Valley Banana Festival* in 2015 coincided with the Festival's 60th anniversary.

A second exhibition, *Chutney Chooks and Champions: stories from the show*, featured as part of the Museum program in 2018/19.

Both exhibitions renewed collaborative relationships with community organisations. They showcased the Museum collection and attracted new donations. For *Chutney, Chooks and Champions*, new video stories featuring show exhibitors past and present and a short film, *Show People*, were commissioned for the collection.

Both exhibitions added to the Museum's rich record of the patterns of agricultural and social life shaping the Tweed over many decades, and deepened our collaboration with the community organisations that sustain them.

## We stepped outside, drawing attention to our unique role in documenting and sharing community history and heritage.

Some of our most successful collaborations have taken the Museum to the community, some of the most notable for screen-based events.

A sing-along version of *Muriel's Wedding* as part of *Tweed on Film* at the Regent Theatre in 2017 attracted nearly 200 people who, uniquely, watched the film in the community acknowledged by the film's creator as his inspiration.

In 2018 the Museum again partnered with the Regent Theatre, Friends of the *Pastures of the Blue Crane*, and Museum Friends to screen the 1962 ABC mini-series, Pastures of the Blue Crane, shot largely in the Tweed, and based on the novel by local author Hesba Brinsmead.

Nearly 600 people enjoyed a series that had been 'locked in the vault' for many decades.

Crowd at the Regent Cinema for the screening of *Pastures of the* Blue *Crane*, 2018.

## We worked collaboratively to promote discovery of important places and buildings of historic significance.

In collaboration with Council colleagues and Historical Society partners, we researched and promoted three self-guided walking tours : Murwillumbah Town Centre Heritage Walk; Wonderful Wunderlich Heritage Walk; and Uki Village Centre Heritage Walk.


(top) Roads being laid at intersection of Wharf Street and Main Street, Murwillumbah, C.1920s.

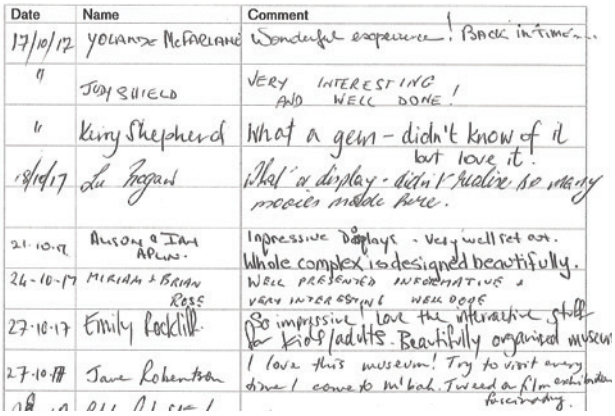
(bottom) Detail of the National Australia Bank building, featured in the Wonderful Wunderlich Heritage Walk.

## We asked visitors what they think about our facilities and programs.

The Museum has undertaken annual visitor surveys since 2014.

Across all surveys, visitor satisfaction levels remained high - over 95% of visitors rated their overall experience as good or terrific– reaching a high of 100% in 2018.

When asked to choose a statement that best described their reasons for visiting the Museum, more than 70% selected 'to connect with local history'.



| Date | Name | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| 17/10/17 | YOLANDE McFARLANE | Wonderful experience! Back in time... |
| " | JUDY SHIELD | VERY INTERESTING AND WELL DONE! |
| " | Kerry Shepherd | What a gem - didn't know of it but love it. |
| 18/10/17 | Lu Pogard | What a display - didn't realise so many species made here. |
| 21.10.17 | ALISON & IAN APLIN. | Impressive Displays - Very well set out. Whole complex is designed beautifully. |
| 24-10-17 | MIRIAM & BRIAN ROSS | WELL PRESENTED INFORMATIVE & VERY INTERESTING WELL DONE |
| 27.10.17 | Emily Rocklift | So impressive! Love the interactive stuff for kids/adults. Beautifully organised museum |
| 27.10.17 | Jane Robertson | I love this museum! Try to visit every time I come to M'bah. Tweed a film exhibition fascinating. |

In 2018, more than 70% of visitors surveyed were visiting TRM Murwillumbah for the first time. The percentage of first time visitors has remained consistently high since the first survey conducted in 2014, and was at its highest in 2018.

Word of mouth is the primary source of information nominated by visitors when asked how they heard about the Museum.

(top) Specimen from the Adrian Smith Mineral Collection, TRM Murwillumbah.

(left) Excerpt from the Visitors' Comments book, TRM Murwillumbah, 2017.

(bottom) Adrian Smith Mineral Collection on display at TRM Murwillumbah.

*The museum was great. Nice to see a heritage museum that has moved into the next century. Great displays and videos.* **L. Sims, 2/4/18**

*Thank you for this exceptional gift to the community.*
**R Taylor, 9/9/14**

*Brilliant exhibits; the stories of the past are important to our future!*
**E Butler, San Francisco USA, 15/5/18**

*Best regional museum that I've been to. Just fabulous! Thanks!*
**D Dixon 28/10/17**

*What fantastic stories from the Tweed. The history came alive.* **L&B Riley 11.6.16**

*Been here so many times and I just love it so much that I come back.* **L Bennett 12/7/16**

*I loved my day here everything is so cool.*
**G Jacob 14.1016**

*Awesome and intense.* **Shane 26.10.16**

*I feel so proud to consider myself part of this community.* **V Kirk 3.3.17**

*Good start, keep going!* **A Brinsmead 7/6/18**

# WHAT DOES 'KEEP GOING' LOOK LIKE?

The Community Strategic Plan (2017 - 2027) provides the basis for Council's Integrated Planning suite of documents, identifying the community's main priorities and aspirations for its future, along with key directions.

Tweed Regional Museum contributes to one of the four major service streams identified in Council's Community Strategic Plan (2017 – 2027):

> *People Places and Moving around: who we are and how we live*

Specifically, the Museum represents part of Council's commitment to:

> *Provide places, spaces and facilities for the sporting, recreational, leisure and cultural pursuits of locals and visitors (Places: 3.2)*

The Tweed Regional Museum Strategic Plan 2019/20 – 2020/21 and Business/Operational Plan set out how we will built on the 'Good Start'. It sets out our aspirations and the goals and activities that will keep us going.


Display at TRM Tweed Heads.

# APPENDIX 1 : HOW WE DELIVERED

The Tweed Regional Museum Strategic Plan 2014 – 2017 identified four goals and associated strategies which have guided the Museum's programs over the past 4-5 years. The following table provides key data and how the Museum has delivered.

## Goals and Strategies

| Goal 1: Continue to develop an outstanding regional museum which preserves and promotes the history and heritage of the Tweed Shire | |
|---|---|
| **Strategies 2014 - 2018** | **How we delivered** |
| Complete building redevelopment of TRM Murwillumbah to a high standard | TRM Murwillumbah reopened to the public on 29 August 2014. |
| Complete new professionally designed display facilities in redeveloped TRM Murwillumbah | Completed August 2014. |
| Ensure new displays at TRM Murwillumbah provide an introduction to the history and heritage of the Tweed and a focus on Murwillumbah and surrounds. | Cedar getting, river transport, early postal services, civic administration, agriculture, dairying, local businesses, shipwrecks, community radio, bank robbery, festivals, agricultural shows, film, flood, village stories, inspiring individual stores, and Aboriginal breastplates have featured as part of permanent and temporary displays at TRM Murwillumbah |

| Goal 1 continued .. | |
|---|---|
| Progress new and improved Museum facilities at Tweed Heads and Uki. | New office research centre completed August 2017. Tweed Heads Court House (heritage listed) reopened to the public on 15 October 2017. Boyds' Shed (heritage listed) refurbished, reinterpreted and reopened 9 December 2018. Research and office facilities at Uki (rented premises) upgraded during 2017/18. |
| Provide industry standard care of TRM collections | To December 2018, 100% of collection relocated from all Museum sites and housed in dedicated climate controlled storage, and/or incorporated in new displays. 100% of the collection managed through dedicated Collections Management System (CMS). |
| Completed reviews of Policies and governing documents | Museum Collection Policy updated and adopted by Council 28/11/2015. Museum Deductible Gift Recipient Policy and Associated Procedures adopted by Council 23/1/2015 and updated in 2018. Inaugural Museum Service Agreement implemented 2016 and updated annually. |

| Goal 2: Engage and inspire the community through diverse and innovative programs | |
|---|---|
| **Strategies 2014 - 2018** | **How we delivered** |
| Develop and implement a program of temporary displays and associated activities | Between January 2015 and December 2018, 14 temporary self-curated exhibitions, 14 new acquisition displays, 9 Collectors Cabinet changeovers and 2 major new permanent displays presented at TRM Murwillumbah. |
| Acquire and document items of historical significance to the Tweed in accordance with the Museum Collection Policy | Between January 2015 and December 2018, 4278 items acquired for the Museum collection. |
| Develop and implement public programs that highlight the collection and gather and share stories across the Shire | More than 2300 people participated in public programs between January 2015 and December 2018, 1345 or 57% of these in 2017 alone. |
| Work collaboratively across Council and with community and business groups to develop programs highlighting Tweed history and heritage | Examples of collaborative programs developed and delivered in partnership with Council colleagues and external partners between January 2015 and December 2018 include: LookUp! Program with Strategic Planning and Urban Design Unit, Living with Ability and Untold Stories (both part of Contemporary Voices project) with Community and Cultural Services colleagues; Murwillumbah Art Trail (MAT) participation in 2017 and 2018; Tweed Daily News 'Talking History' columns during 2018. Major exhibitions to coincide with 60th anniversary of the Banana Festival and to celebrate the Murwillumbah Show |

| Goal 3: Increase and broaden audiences, community participation and volunteer capacity | |
|---|---|
| **Strategies 2014 - 2018** | **How we delivered** |
| Provide better access to Museum collections | As at December 2018 more than 5500 items available via the Museum's website (eHive). An average of 5 collection-based images and stories posted on social media each week. Museum Facebook fans number approximately 1400 as at December 2018. |
| Develop and implement a range of activities that promote awareness of the Museum and of community history and heritage | The Museum Facebook page was launched in 2015 and at the end of 2018 had more than 1400 followers. Participation in community-wide events such as Tweed Valley Banana Festival, Murwillumbah Arts Trail, Murwillumbah Show, and programs such as Look Up, Heritage Walks and regular Daily News Talking History columns during 2018. Screenings at Regent Cinema in conjunction with exhibitions, story contribution to shopping centre hoardings and other commercial premises, for example, Beach House Coolangatta. |
| Implement and coordinate a Museum volunteers program | Front of House volunteer program implemented in Murwillumbah and Tweed Heads. More than 90 individuals have contributed to the front of house volunteer program between 2014 and 2018. |

| Goal 3 continued .. | |
|---|---|
| Implement programs that monitor visitor numbers, diversity and satisfaction levels, and visitor responses to Museum programs | Visitor surveys have been undertaken annually since 2014/15. Regular 'How did you hear' surveys also implemented. |
| Maintain cooperation with Tweed Regional Gallery across exhibition, collection and other programs as appropriate | A small number of programs have been carried out in cooperation with the Gallery over the life of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan, regular AUSLAN tours being the primary activity. |

| Goal 4: Adopt best practice approaches to the management and viability of Museum personnel, collections, programs and facilities | |
|---|---|
| **Strategies 2014 - 2018** | **How we delivered** |
| Ensure best practice management of the TRM collection | All collection acquisition, deaccession, documentation, cataloguing, storage and display undertaken in accordance with best practice standards, governance requirements and relevant Council/Museum Policies. |
| Ensure appropriate levels and effective and efficient management of financial resources | Museum capital works and annual operations delivered within budget and operational budget allocations over the life of the 2014-2017 Strategic Plan. |
| Maintain and develop viable facilities and programs at TRM Tweed Heads and Uki in partnership with Historical Society members and volunteers | Museum Service Agreement implemented in 2015/16 in line with similar arrangements across Council. Council provided accommodation, equipment and operational support to the Historical Societies free of charge. Museum Coordination Group established to support Historical Society/Museum activities. |
| Ensure collections are maintained at sustainable levels and in accordance with the Collection Policy | All collection acquisitions in accordance with the Collection Policy and endorsed through the Museum Advisory Committee. 3884 items which did not meet the collection policy deaccessioned between January 2015 and December 2018. |

(previous page) Adrian Smith Mineral Collection, TRM Murwillumbah (detail).