

## Kiama's luxurious premises

A case study in how a small country club acquired its own first class premises

By **Jenny Bolden, Club President**

**K**IAMA & DISTRICT Bridge Club Inc was formed in February 1994, when playing socially under the wing of a local Probus Club a group of eight expanded to sixteen. Most players were students of Joke & Leo Hezemans, well known in Illawarra bridge circles.

The club was formed principally to offer a bridge session to the players who preferred a daytime session to the evening session then being run by the Kiama Leagues Bridge Club.

The club commenced playing on Friday mornings at the local Leagues Club, after a few months we transferred to the Community Centre. Within a year or two, there were 18-20 tables each Friday, membership soared and we ventured into extra sessions, firstly at the Family History Centre and then the Rugby Club. Using the two venues was inconvenient, so the possibility of our own premises was investigated.

After negotiations spanning a decade with the Kiama Council, a site was granted to us on the southern end of Bonaira Oval in Kiama. Finance feasibility studies were carried out and it was found that with our savings over 14 years, plus a \$30,000 loan from the ABF, there was a shortfall of \$80,000. Debentures were offered to members and were quickly taken up.

The contract was awarded to a local builder and construction commenced in August 2008. Unfortunately there was a blowout in costs due to the clubhouse being built over an existing sewer and drainage system. Another offer of \$20,000.00 debentures was again quickly taken up by members. The construction was overseen by a

Building Committee, headed by our Secretary. As a result of careful budgeting and purchasing, the total cost of the building and outfitting came to just over \$300,000. We were fortunate to have purchased some chairs when the local Leagues Club updated their Bistro, some tables we owned, some came from the Leagues Bridge Club and some were donated by the Kiama Rugby Club. The carpet was sourced by one of our members at a very reasonable price.

The clubhouse is very comfortable,



*Two of the club's movers and shakers, Dawn Kaehler, left, and Thea Mangos, right, with Paul Marston when he was teaching at the club earlier this year.*

overhead fans and airconditioning and a well equipped kitchen; most of which was donated with the exception of the stove and dishwasher. Our members have been very generous and supportive, assisting the Club in many ways. A Trading Table is conducted each month where members bring along books, plants, jam, cakes, hand-craft etc for sale and this, along with several raffles a year boosts our finances. Recently an artist, one of our members, generously donated a painting for a raffle, which raised a substantial sum of money. Table fees

are the most important income stream and with the amalgamation of the Kiama Leagues Bridge Club we have been able to run six sessions a week, as well as beginners' classes and supervised lessons.

Because the building is on Council land, it is now owned by Kiama Council and the Bridge Club pays a nominal yearly fee for a twenty year lease, which will be renegotiated when it expires. The Council is responsible for the exterior of the building and the interior is looked after by the Club. The cost of land in Kiama made purchase of two to three blocks of land impossible (parking has to be taken into consideration). The Mayor and Council officials have been extremely helpful; meetings with members of the Building Committees over the years, helping us through the Plan of Management, Development Application process as well as the lease.

On May 1st 2009, our clubrooms were officially opened by the Mayor of Kiama with the President of the ABF Keith McDonald in attendance. This was a culmination of years of dreaming and planning.

Since the building was opened, we have gained a number of members which is a direct result of having all the bridge in Kiama played in one building. The successful outcome is a tribute to the dedication and drive of all the Building Committees over the years and the unflinching support of our members.