

# Gallery relocation in the frame

NO ONE would dispute that building the Rockhampton Museum of Art is a huge job but there is another mammoth task that is going on quietly behind the scenes at Rockhampton Art Gallery.

Preparing and moving the entire collection is no small feat.

The gallery's nationally significant collection is not something you can just put in a van and drive down the street.

So the Rockhampton Art Gallery has received a Community Heritage Grant from the National Library of Australia to buy 22 solander boxes.

They will enable the gallery to rehouse approximately 330 artworks from the Works on Paper collection to the best industry standards, in preparation for

their relocation to the new Rockhampton Museum of Art in 2021.

The solander boxes have been built by a small Australian company based in regional Australia, Artifact Conservation.

Artefact Conservation is firm of conservators who hand make all their solander boxes using the highest quality archival materials.

The housing of the Works on Paper collection to conservation standards in sealed, durable solander boxes will greatly assist gallery staff in protecting the collection from thermal shock, kinetic shock, dust and light as the collection goes through the process of packing, transport and relocation in the new gallery.

The arrival of these conservation storage materials coincides with the reassess-

ment of the paper collection.

This process will include the removal of Fomecore backings and the separation and sorting of artworks by size and media.

The aim is to ensure that the differing media do not negatively impact each other.

Conservation housing for the gallery's Works on Paper collection has been a result of Rockhampton Art Gallery's 2016 Significance Assessment, the 2018 public announcement of the new Rockhampton Art Gallery, and the performance of a 2019 Preservation Needs Assessment.

Rockhampton Regional Council community services spokesman Cr Drew Wickerson thanked the National Library of Australia for the grant which enabled the purchase of the boxes.



PICTURE PAINTS SUCCESS: Preservation Australia conservator Tegan Anthes demonstrates a solander box. Picture: Rockhampton Regional Council

# Digital scalpel cuts deep



DOLLARS AND SENSE DAVID FRENCH

THE announcement that Rockhampton Morning Bulletin is from June 29, going solely online is as much a blow to our community as it is to those who have lost their jobs at the nearly 160-year old paper.

Up and down the coast and inland, the scalpel of digital is cutting through the ligaments that bind our society, and while the online edition will remain, the loss of the "local paper" is seen as an erosion of Rockhampton's cultural and intellectual underpinnings. The lament is far broader than the readership.

Why do many of us harbour an affinity with these pages of paper, which on any given day people may refer to as an august journal, or an old rag? I think the reason goes far beyond the news.

At primary school at Frenchville, my first job was helping milkman, Keith Weston. Getting up at 4.30am, Keith would collect me up at 5 and I'd help him with the last two hours of his rounds.

Carrying in wire baskets, eight bottles of milk in each hand, it was a job that got you fit. It was also a job that introduced you to a world of nocturnal workers – the breadman and the paperman in particular.

Between 2am and about 7am, most households had at least three visitors – all invited. Those with an outside toilet

had up to four (for younger readers, that's what many of those Southside laneways are about). Like the bread and the milk, the paper was something you literally woke up to.

And then through school, I gradually became aware that the paper contained stuff of value.

First there was the fishing column by "Silverfin", which contained not only reports on local conditions, but there was also a roundup of the then vibrant scene for competitive fishing.

Local happenings, the odd picture of some girl you fancied, advertisements for the movies and drive-in and the show, airline and train timetables. If you wanted to know what was going on, the paper was a must.

Getting older, there were

serious news items involving tragic deaths far too close for comfort, and the death notices. Proper analysis of national and international events, and how they affected our region.

For a long time, The Morning Bulletin was marketed as the most awarded regional daily, and for most of the last 20 years I have contributed finance, general interest and opinion pieces. Indeed, in large part I owe my profile in this community to the latitude and encouragement afforded me by Frazer Pearce and former editors.

But journalism and publishing is a difficult game, and as evidenced by the demise of afternoon editions, the rise of tabloids, and even the change of the Australian Women's Weekly to a monthly format, pressures have been rising

since at least the early 1980s. The last 10 years have been particularly difficult.

Like others, our paper responded by changing its format to tabloid, and then focusing content on community.

These measures are akin to television's focus on reality TV (where you don't have to pay actors), and the launch of multitude auxiliary stations, running quarter-century old repeats and ads for anti-gravity beds.

Regardless of the medium, these measures extended longevity somewhat, but could never hold back the full-frontal assaults of the likes of Netflix, Stan, Facebook and Google. Even The Australian (which Murdoch famously said he was happy to run at a loss, in the name of quality journalism)

and the Financial Review are under pressure.

Without the requisite investment in quality journalism, even a digital version of the paper risks becoming irrelevant.

But God knows, we are swamped by the fake news, noisy confusion, and the loud voices of grandstanding politicians and opinion jocks of the left and right.

Perhaps therein lies the future for our now digital newspaper – a reversion of sorts, to the days when local journalists used their skills to not only provide a window into the community, but to carefully parse what's being said by political and corporate leaders, apply it to our community and report it in such a way that it becomes sought-after morning fare for everyone in our region.

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