

Lady Denman - Opening the Jervis Bay Environment Exhibition
25 September 2010

Max Dingle

I am really pleased to have the task of opening this exhibition today... though I possibly should say re-opening this exhibition, because I originally closed the exhibition, way back when I was at the Australian Museum, in College Street Sydney.

At the time the Australian Museum had a number of travelling exhibitions that were sent around New South Wales, sometimes on the Museum train, (that was when New South Wales still had a functioning train system), at other times by truck. The exhibitions were set up for short periods of time in regional towns, particularly those without museum services.

This particular exhibition had been developed at great expense and had travelled extensively and it was felt that it had had exposure to a large number of people and was time to replace this coastal environment exhibition with a new topic.

In normal circumstances the old exhibition would be stripped of anything that could be re-cycled into other or future exhibitions and the rest taken to the tip.

The major difference from normality at the time was that I had become involved with the Lady Denman about four years previously and after discussing with Vera Hatton, made a proposal to the Australian Museum that instead of scrapping, the exhibition could be donated to the Lady Denman, the science content was up to date and applied directly to Jervis Bay and the region. So after closing at the Australian Museum, the exhibition was shipped here.

It was not in perfect condition physically, but the content was there and the specimens were invaluable, you don't acquire stuffed penguins and turtles everyday of the week.

I seem to recall the fibreglass dolphin, needed work and Vera called in the services of a local car repair workshop. A refurbished dolphin was born and christened “Misty”.

The content needed some slight adjustments and additions to tie it closer to the local area and the exhibition was set up in a building by the harbour where it was used for a number of years by visiting school groups.

Now some years later this exhibition gets another new lease of life..... it is a great exhibition, I had a look yesterday and the science content is still fascinating. I was particularly taken with the new information about surveying the endangered Grey Nurse Shark in NSW and the very small population left in Jervis Bay.

We can re-cycle and renew exhibitions but if a species disappears it is forever.

I am pleased to open this exhibition and hope it continues to increase awareness of the coastal environment and the need for us to care for and preserve something very precious.