

## Huge donation

BY LISA GERVAIS  
9/12/2008 2:34:00 PM

Mudgee is one step closer to having its first purpose-built facility for people with disabilities in the local government area.

The \$1.25 million project gets a kick-start tonight (Wednesday, December 10) when the Property Shop's Hugh Bateman and David Brayshaw announce that they are donating a \$150,000 block of land in Mudgee South to Lifeskills Plus Inc.

Mr Bateman said he attended a couple of Lifeskills' functions this past year and was "taken aback by their pressing needs" for larger, more appropriate premises.

At the same time, he said they were in a Catch-22 situation, since they did not have assets to go after state or federal government funding, which would have meant "a lot of chook raffles" to raise more than \$1 million.

Lifeskills Plus president Robert Manwarring said the donation did indeed open doors.

"It's very significant. Lifeskills Plus is a non profit making organisation set up to provide the services that Carolyn Peek manages in the Mudgee LGA. And we rely on those funds that come through DADHC (the Department of Ageing Disability and Home Care) to operate.

"Now, to get grants out of the federal and state government, we really needed an asset to say 'look, yes we have this asset, this block of ground, now, we're going to come to you to seek some funds to help us with this particular project. "So, it means that now we are in a position of making application to the federal and state governments through DADHC for funds for us to progress this."

Mr Manwarring and Mrs Peek emphasised it is a community project.

Lifeskills Plus, which is now in rented accommodation on Perry Street, has 26 clients but could accommodate more if it had the space. It can provide overnight respite care for two to three clients but has up to 15 on a waiting list.

Further, Mr Manwarring would like the purpose-built facility to offer job training for clients.

"We would like to think that the new facility will allow us to offer pre-vocational, pre-work experience in retail, hospitality and rural industries, such as viticulture so our people can then become employed in businesses or rural industries."

He said there would be partnerships with TAFE, for example, to deliver training.



Mrs Peek said clients have a range of disabilities, from mild to quite profound, with a myriad of issues requiring a purpose-built facility.

For example, she would like walls made of glass "to provide the supervision but allow the independence for people.

"We need individual program rooms, we need rec. rooms, we need woodwork, those types of facilities.

We've got nowhere to store anything, a therapy room, a sensory room, a high support bathroom where we've got hoists rather than moving things around, a semi-commercial kitchen, places outside, areas for them to have activities, a sensory garden."

Lifeskills has written to the local council seeking support and seeking further sponsors of either money or in-kind donations.

"It's a social justice issue for the parents and it's a really important aspect for those parents as well as the clients," Mr Manwarring said.

"They want to build their individuality and skills and hopefully move into group homes and live a life they want to live as well.

"There's no purpose built facility in Mudgee at all for people with disabilities, or the programs that we offer through Lifeskills. And when you think about that, when you think of a town like Mudgee that doesn't have those basic facilities for people with disabilities, it is a concern."