



PICTURED at the opening of the new school readiness room at Mary Ranken Childcare Centre are committee treasurer Kathy Spence, Cr Rebecca Ryan (Gunnedah Shire Council), Malcolm and Elizabeth Heath and grandchildren, Clancy and Julian, Project Manager Shenhua Watermark Coal, Paul Jackson, Debbie Watson (Shenhua Community Liaison Officer), Mary Ranken Childcare Centre co-ordinator, Cherie Ison, and Executive Officer of Gunnedah Family and Children's Services, Norelle Bunce.

# A new room to help prepare for school

**THE Mary Ranken Childcare Centre has opened the doors to even more opportunities for pre-schoolers with the launch of a new room for School Readiness program.**

The room was officially opened by Paul Jackson, Project Manager of Shenhua Watermark Coal, which provided \$30,000 from the 2011 round of Shenhua Watermark's Community Fund to assist with the project.

While the centre does receive government funding, like many community facilities, it also requires assistance from fund-raising and donations.

Mr Jackson acknowledged the support of Malcolm and Elizabeth Heath, whose generous donation from a clearing sale at the family property, Pine Cliff, enabled the building to be furnished.

Special guests at the function included Cr Rebecca Ryan, Norelle Bunce, Executive Officer of the Gunnedah Family and Children's Services and members of the Management Committee.

"It is fantastic to be here today to formally open the new room at the Mary Ranken Childcare Centre and of course being Education Week this week it is perfect timing for us all," Mr Jackson said.

"I understand the centre has been here in Gunnedah for the past 30 years and it is without a doubt a very important facility for the local community - this new room will expand the centre's pre-school program.

"Shenhua was very pleased to provide a contribution from the Community Fund which was established by Shenhua Australia as part of the Exploration Licence for the Water-



PICTURED inside the new school readiness room are pre-schoolers Luke Jones, Lily Grant, Cai Garrett, Tahira Smith and Tayla Dudley, Jack Johnson (back row), and early childhood teacher, Fiona Langdon, along with Shenhua's Debbie Watson and Paul Jackson. Absent: Clayton Frend and Ella Hancock.

mark Coal Project which was granted in 2009.

"The fund provides \$1 million per year for up to five years for local community initiatives - Shenhua Australia is making every effort to ensure it is an active member of the local community and wider region as our Watermark Project progresses."

Mr Jackson said the purpose of the Community Fund is to support the development of the region's economy, enhance and maintain the environment, improve important local facilities and develop and promote training and employment opportunities.

"I understand the centre is cur-

rently in high demand, with some families being on the waiting list for over 12 months," he said.

"We hope this upgrade will help meet some of that demand."

Mr Jackson then untied the ribbon to officially launch the school readiness room, with Norelle Bunce thanking Shenhua and the Heaths for their contribution to the centre and its children.

The management committee has expressed appreciation to builder, Col Jackson, electrician Paul Bunce and committee secretary, Rebecca Ryan, for her help with the submission.

The School Readiness program runs four days per week and the children attend two consecutive days per week.

They go on lots of excursions, attend orientation programs at all the infants schools and practice lots of pre-writing and pre-maths activities in their workbooks in preparation for attending "Big School" next year.

Mary Ranken Childcare Centre joined forces with the Gunnedah Conservatorium to manage catering for the Pine Cliff sale, which also benefited Motor Neurone Disease research.

Mary Ranken is a non-profit, government-funded organisation, run by a dedicated, voluntary management committee. It has been operating in the Sugar Gums complex since 1998.



THE new room officially opened at Mary Ranken Childcare Centre to cater for the school readiness program.