

Big hearts and, now, big money

While friction continues to sizzle between coal mining interests and agriculture in the Namoi Valley, there is one part of the equation that is an undeniable positive: The towns and villages of the district are being revitalised.

The announcement by the mining giant Shenhua of \$1 million in community grants is to be applauded, not just for the generosity, but for the intelligent manner in which the charitable decisions were made.

Shenhua assembled a Community Fund Committee of 11 people from sectors such as agriculture, aboriginal, health, environment, education, council, business and general community.

The committee ranked the projects and finally recommended 12 from the 63 applications, with some of the more

notable beneficiaries being the struggling Yallambee Home for the Aged, and Paediatric And Maternity Support (PRAMS) which can now completely refurbish Gunnedah Hospital's Maternity Ward.

This is all hot on the heels of Shenhua's \$1 million funding last year for a GP Super Clinic in Gunnedah.

It is Yallambee, however, that probably gives the best example of the difference a bit of money sprinkled through the community can make. As one of the Yallambee committee members said, they were even thrilled when someone donated \$10.

Well, now they've got \$230,000, and much needed refurbishment and renovations will happen.

Some of these projects are already the

darlings of philanthropical people in the Gunnedah community and many would not have survived without the generosity of so many - \$10 here, a chook raffle there. Gunnedah has always been a place with big hearts.

So now we have a perfect arrangement - the money kindly brought to the table by a mining company (Shenhua in this case but most of the energy companies involved in the district have been generous), the input of local citizens in making the decisions of where the money will go, and the beneficiaries being worthy local organisations and institutions who must sometimes have thought they would never achieve their aims in a thousand years.

Well done to all involved. It's been a wholesome week.