



CONSERVING & PRESERVING

# Behind the Scenes of the Esperance Museum

PHOTOGRAPHY ROSIE HENDERSON

With winter upon us and school holidays looming, there's never been a better time to visit the Esperance Museum. Alive with quirky and colourful relics from our town's fascinating past, the museum is a great rainy day activity for young and old. We took a peek behind the scenes to see what keeps it going strong after 45 years of operation.

The Esperance Museum opened in 1976, a joint effort between the Esperance Bay Historical Society and the Shire of Esperance. The museum was built on the enthusiasm of volunteers and, 45 years on, continues to rely on volunteers to maintain, conserve and preserve the history of Esperance. "Without the Historical Society and all the volunteers, we wouldn't have the collection we have today," says Lynda Horn, Cultural Officer at the Shire of Esperance. That collection contains almost 18,000 records. Some 12,784 of those records are archives, made up of newspapers, pamphlets, photos, and even meeting agendas and minutes from local clubs, guilds and societies. Another 4,803 records are objects, ranging from agricultural machinery, to tins of food, to fossils. It's eclectic, to say the least. "We have a lot [of records], and it's because of the efforts of our volunteers gathering all those things over the years," says Lynda, who oversees the museum's volunteer program. "We wouldn't have what we have without what they've done."

A team of 38 volunteers, some of whom have been with the museum for 20 years, lend a hand in a variety of front and back of house roles at the Esperance Museum. A big task behind the scenes is accessioning – detailing the history of an archive or an object and placing it in the museum's catalogue. The job is ongoing, with an estimated 20 linear metres of unprocessed archives and another 400 objects that need reviewing. Other current projects include archiving Esperance Theatre Guild records, rehoming thousands of objects into archive-quality boxes, and newspaper cataloguing.



Museum volunteer Jen Ford