

Musical chairs

By Casey Neill

Pianos destined for the scrap heap are getting a new lease on life in Keysborough.

In what's believed to be a world-first, Pianos Recycled is restoring, repurposing and recycling pianos to keep them out of landfill.

"While this is a global issue, at least 10 pianos a week in Melbourne are currently being dumped," Peter Humphreys said.

He started the social enterprise with Mike Hendry and Sandra Klepetko.

If a piano can't be restored to playing condition, Pianos Recycled will repurpose as much of the instrument as possible, including using the quality - and sometimes rare - timbers and unique veneers to create products.

They've explored establishing relationships with local jewellery makers and - as half a piano's weight is made up of timber - working with Melbourne woodworkers to design and create bespoke furniture.

"Any materials not used in repurposing can usually be recycled," Mr Humphreys said.

"We have begun engaging and building an ecosystem comprising artisans, crafts associations, piano industry businesses, and the recycling sector to grow this initiative."

Pianos Recycled is also looking at ways to link saving pianos with broader community and social needs.

"Recently we helped the City of Glen Eira with a temporary street piano installation for their cultural inclusiveness program, and a proportion of their ivory and ebony jewellery sales go back to conservation and preservation programs," Mr Humphreys said.

He said pianos were extremely popular in households around the world in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and particularly in Australia.

"In fact, between Federation and 1930 more than 300,000 pianos were imported into Australia and more than 50,000 were made here,"



Mike Hendry and Peter Humphreys with an up-cycled piano. 182306

Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS

he said.

"About 4000 pianos a year are still imported into Australia."

But Mr Hendry said these pianos were now at the end of their useful playing life.

"And if their owners don't want them, they'll be thrown away," he said.

He said that in the next six years, the number of pianos ending up in landfill would almost fill the MCG.

"Dumped pianos put pressure on Australia's landfill problem and have a negative impact on the environment whereas restored, repurposed and recycled pianos create a positive economic multiplier effect," Mr Hendry said.