

Tom Harrington 1951 - 2009

For seventeen years Tom Harrington was the Director of the Sturt School for Wood in Mittagong. It was a role he was clearly born to do. Tom lived and breathed “the wood school”; he didn’t just teach, his duties certainly didn’t end there. He was passionate and devoted to the craft of fine furniture making and was an excellent technician. He had a keen eye for design and detail which shone through the 177 students he taught during his time at Sturt.



In January 2008 Sturt launched a new facility to house students of the new 12 week full time wood courses. This was a dream of Tom’s and in true fashion took the whole job on himself. I remember popping in there one day to find him on his hands and knees with a hammer and chisel removing 30 years of glue from the old concrete floor; this was his 2<sup>nd</sup> day on the floor, before painting it himself. This was typical of his commitment to Sturt there wasn’t a job he didn’t do and the ongoing success of these courses will live to be his legacy for Sturt.

Tom had been struggling throughout the year of 2008 with chest pains and had been to see countless doctors and specialists trying to get a diagnosis. It was around October when he was finally diagnosed with Mesothelioma, a cancer of the pleural lining of the lungs caused by asbestos exposure. He had been exposed to asbestos a few times in his life and said that he knew deep down that it was going to be something like this. Sadly life expectancy from the time of diagnosis for this disease is often measured in months not years.

At this point he moved up to South West Rocks with his wife Catherine to a house they had recently finished building with the plan to retire there in the future. Sadly Tom Harrington’s retirement was thrust upon him in the worst of ways and much sooner than anticipated. He had some great months in the new home, and once on appropriate medication, he had a bit of time where he felt eerily ok. He enjoyed the tranquillity and the walking on the beach during this period.

In his last few weeks his health started to go downhill quite rapidly and Tom Harrington passed away in the early hours on Wednesday 18<sup>th</sup> November 2009 aged 58. He is survived by his wife Catherine and his two sons Nicholas and Max. He was a well respected and loved man, a teacher, a mentor and a friend to many.

John Gallagher

Sturt, November 2009