

# Maker space in Katoomba

BY JENNIE CURTIN

A SHARED creative space may soon be a reality in the Mountains.

The Blue Mountains Economic Enterprise (BMEE) has put a proposal to council that the civic centre/town centre arcade in Katoomba Street be turned into a so-called "maker space", where people can come to create or make things as well as sharing their skills and learning new crafts.

The initiative came after BMEE conducted a survey of 300 people and found that 82 per cent would be happy to pay to use a so-called "maker space".

BMEE also hosted a talk last week by Matt Preston, communications director at ADX in Portland, USA, which was the first maker space set up in the world.

Mr Preston said the 1300 square metre site had become a collaborative hub for individuals and organisations who share their skills and the use of about \$1 million worth of power and industrial tools.



**SHARED SPACE:** Jacqueline Brinkmann, CEO of BMEE with Matt Preston from ADX in the USA. He spoke to local creative types about the ADX experience, now a five-year-old success story.

workers, artists, digital designers, writers and other creative types work side by side, sharing their knowledge with others.

He said about 25 per cent of its members were entre-

preneurs looking to start a small business but there were also students, novice builders, tradespeople wanting to try a different craft and retirees enjoying learning new skills.

"Most are people who want to learn how to make something. And there's a constant exchange of knowledge," Mr Preston said.

In its five years, more than 3000 people have used

the space, he said. ADX has also incubated over 100 businesses and helped 200 crowd-funded projects reach their goals.

Mr Preston explained the maker space concept to a

large group of creative talent at the Cultural Centre in Katoomba, who responded enthusiastically to the idea.

"We know from ADX and similar maker spaces in Australia that these are places that bring significant economic, cultural and social benefit to communities," said BMEE CEO Jacqueline Brinkman. "They help grow businesses, create jobs, stimulate collaboration and innovation, increase access to training and education and build social inclusion and capital."

She said BMEE is regularly approached by residents working in the creative industries seeking a collaborative maker space and/or a co-working space.

She said the proposal put to council would see a maker space, co-working space and educational hub set up.

A council spokeswoman said a review is being conducted of the old civic centre, with a draft strategy expected to be considered by the end of June.

"We are still very much at the exploratory stage," she said.

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