

30 years of cuddles

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Among the many icons of the Outback Queensland, Tambo's Teddies are certainly the cuddliest.

And in order to celebrate its 30th birthday, a limited-edition bear will be released in February, the Banjo bear.

According to co-owners Tammy Johnson and Alison Shaw, only two hundred special edition Banjos will be made before he 'joins the crew' as an 'on-the-shelf' teddy bear.

Possibly even more exciting is the teddy bear picnic to be hosted by the Tambo Tourism and Business Association in July.

Co-owner of Tambo Teddies Alison Shaw said Tambo Teddies is a proud icon of the town.

The now world-renowned stuffed toy had originally come about during a brain-storming session in a government workshop in 1992; the government at the time had a directive to establish new industries in regional communities.

Previous owners Helen Sargood, Charm Rynie, and Mary Sutherland spawned the idea of creating teddy bears from sheepskin, hoping it would help the ailing wool industry.

From that point of inspiration, they were motivated to see it come to fruition.

But, it wasn't always easy going, the trio would have to spend nearly a year extensively planning, designing, and working with trial and error.

"We just sort of shutter at the challenges they faced today," current co-owner Ms Shaw said.

"If you want to know anything today you can just jump on the computer and google it.

"They would have had to pour through that phone book that you can hardly read.

"There would have been hours spent on the phone just trying to find where to source materials."

Originally, they planned to source sheep skin locally but soon found that the skins of local merino sheep were not readily available enough—forcing them to source skins from a tannery in Nerangba.

Tambo Teddies still source many of their skins from that location today.

All that effort would pay off, with the business going from strength to strength with Tambo Teddies purchased from customers all over the world including from royalty in England and Denmark.

"There are so many people who just love teddy bears," Ms Shaw said.

"People just love the story behind Tambo Teddies.

"They love the fact that they have been loved and made in the outback—that they've been born out of an almost throwaway idea."

Ms Shaw said she believes that people gravitated to Tambo Teddies because of the love, care, and effort that has gone into its creation.

"It's the sentiment behind it," she said.

"There's a lot of that underpinning; they're a sentimental purchase, a lot of people feel something special when they buy a Tambo Teddy and give it to their children or grandchildren.

"There is no production line; each bear is individually made."