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Christmas comes early at Wagga fair

By Ella Smith

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Riverina Woodworkers Club members John Piper, Ken Hoffman and Ross Hedt sell their wares at the CMRI Christmas Fair. Picture: Les Smith

JUST shy of 100 stalls converged on the grounds of the Murrumbidgee Turf Club today to open the two-day Christmas fair that raises money for the Children's Medical Research Institute (CMRI).

Organisers spent six months planning the 27th fair, brought forward a week to capture the October weather, in the hope of raising \$49,000 for a specific piece of equipment called the Qiagen real-time PCR cycler.

"It is our major fund-raiser for our Wagga committee," CMRI president Fiona Hamilton said.

"It's grown from six stalls in a garden from an idea to now become an institution."

The 98 stalls from the local region, Queensland and Victoria donate 10 per cent of their takings, selling jewellery, clothing, food, homewares and craft.

"There's just a really good variety," Mrs Hamilton said.

"There's a real mix and range to kick off the Christmas shopping."

Sydney-based Maya Neumann made the journey with one suitcase packed with homemade hats to set up a stall for her 13th year.

"I like the fact it's a charity and a cause I believe in," she said.

"I'm honoured they ask me to come.

"I don't know what they put in the water supply here, but you could not meet nicer people anywhere."

Ms Neumann, whose hats are made from organic plant material, conceded weather conditions were near perfect.

"This weather is just made for hat makers," she said.

The Riverina Woodworkers Club, formed in 1987, made their fifth appearance at the fair.

"We try to have a wide range of items," club member David Matheson said.

"Timing of this fair is (ideal) because people are inclined to buy Christmas presents."

The 65-member club sold puzzles, chopping boards, platters, walking sticks and jewellery boxes, while donating a huon pine coffee table as second prize in the CMRI raffle.

The fair will continue tomorrow from 9.30am and conclude with the drawing of the raffle at the end of the day about 4pm.