

How to find the right venue? God knows

WHEN Kiama band KES-MAR was looking for a venue, the auditorium at the back of Wollongong Uniting Church wasn't the first spot that came to mind.

However, ultimately that was where the clip for *Is It Me or Is It Love* was filmed, after songwriter and producer Nathan Hawes hired the space through South Coast developed online platform Vennu.

"I was looking for a studio to hire but they were all uninspiring with plain backdrops, and they're all quite expensive," Mr Hawes said.

After hunting around, Mr

Hawes found the Wesley Auditorium.

"We needed somewhere that was going to look great straightaway, and then having the grand piano, dark wood floors, cream curtains and everything, it just worked."

Office administrator Rachael McGarry is still blown away by the set-up the band brought with them.

"They had a lot of props," she said. "They had a lot of big, bulky kit. They were here for a full day!"

Best understood as the Airbnb for community halls,



Vennu founder Suzanna Campbell with Reverend Geoffrey Flynn and Rachael McGarry in one of the spaces available for hire. Picture by Adam McLean

Vennu launched in 2018 and now lists over 100,000 surf clubs, scout halls and school auditoriums around Australia. Founder Suzanne Camp-

bell said the platform aims to help community organisations in regional areas better utilise their existing spaces.

"We're lifting the administrative load for staff and volunteers and making it easier for them to connect with the community," she said.

At Wollongong Uniting Church, in addition to the video clip, the venue has hosted music performances, meetings and wet-weather affected weddings after inquiries through Vennu.

Reverend Geoff Flynn said by attracting more bookings for the spaces in the church,

the church could in turn give back to the community, such as through its soup kitchen.

"Any income that we get goes towards funding our ministry and our mission."

Off the back of hiring the auditorium, Mr Hawes said he and his band mates would be looking at more unconventional spaces.

"I'm inspired to use more and using that site to find other venues to shoot in," he said.

"In coastal towns, there can be such good halls and little spaces, super vibe-y."

— CONNOR PEARCE