



Minister Stuart Findlay with Graham Lucas (left) and Neil McLean. Picture: TROY BENDEICH

## Pub provides service with a sermon

By ROD MORRI

NOT since the wedding at Caana have booze and the Bible been so closely aligned.

Every Sunday, between 4pm and 6pm, a religious minister delivers a sermon at the North Wollongong Hotel — while "parishioners" sit quietly and sip their beers.

So when it's your shout at the North Gong pub church, you get up and yell: "Praise the Lord!"

It was at the wedding at Caana that Jesus changed the water into wine. No such miracles are needed at the pub church.

The unique religious concept is the brainchild of the Christian Light-house Centre's chief, Warwick Marsh, who was looking for new ways to spread the word.

It has been running for two months and is proving quite a success.

"We've had a mixed response from indifferent to positive, but there hasn't really been anything negative," Mr Marsh said.

"The only problem we've had was when the music got a bit loud one day and one of the punters couldn't hear the races.

"But apart from that, we've had only good reports.

"I wasn't sure if it would work at first but it seems to have been a success."

Mr Marsh said every week, a different minister was invited to the pub to give the sermon.

"We've tried to spread it among the churches," he said.

"But none of the preachers is heavy handed or anything like that.

"It's always quite lighthearted. The idea is to keep it entertaining to try and get our message across.

"Most of the speakers shorten their sermons when they come here, to make sure we don't lose people's interest."

While the service is being held in the back bar of the pub, drinkers sip their beers in the public bar where the sermon is audible.

"Some of the guys are too embarrassed to actually go out the back and take part but most of them usually listen pretty carefully," said owner Serena Lynch.