The **Senior** *News*

Plectrums at the ready as Pickers play to soothe souls

by ROWAN COWLEY

PETER Cahill has a simple message for sensitive, artistic men who are battling loneliness and social isolation in their senior years: it's never too late to pick up where you left off.

Peter is founder of The Pickers, a group of senior male guitarists who bonded over their love of music and who now share that love with the wider senior community.

The group began when Peter, and some friends from a defunct folk group he had been part of, started jamming at his house.

As the regular gathering grew, members decided to form an official group, find a more suitable base and open membership to other senior male musicians.

Weekly meetings were moved to Gymea Community Centre, and the group has since presented performances at local aged care facilities and for other senior audiences.

Peter said while there were groups suited to senior men interested in sports and other traditionally male areas of interest, there were few if any support networks for more artistically minded and sensitive men in the area.

PICK ME UP – Peter Cahill hopes other men will join guitar group The Pickers.

"The group is more for the tender souls. It's a bit like a musical men's shed," he said.

"There's plenty of this sort of stuff out there for ladies, but when it comes to senior men, we're quite lacking – and a lot of men are sort of left out on a limb.

"There are a lot of men out there who come from the pre-war era who are reluctant to admit they've really loved a lot of music or poetry.

"But a lot of people out there really love music with history and meaning to it."

During jam sessions, musicians sit in a circle and take it in turns to play something that reflects their musical tastes and skills. Others in the group join in and contribute to the jam when they feel they can.

Peter said the skill levels of participants ranged from people who were "quite good" to those who'd only been playing for 12 months. He stressed it was not an instructional group and some basic knowledge of guitar was required.

The group has about 12 members and eight regulars and is keen to hear from people interested in joining.

Peter said he would like to see similar groups established throughout Australia and would welcome calls from people from other areas seeking advice on how to set up a similar group.

■ Details: 0421-256-030.