



News Articles -General

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• Healthy smiles and healthy lunches at Dapto Primary School.

Healthy and smiling

It can be a struggle to get some children to eat healthy food but at Dapto Public School last week the children looked anything but reluctant to eat their healthy lunches.

Over 100 kindergarten students were given new lunchboxes full of healthy food and meal ideas cards at the school last Wednesday as part of Coles' Healthy Lunchbox initiative.

Coles, in partnership with lunchbox makers

Décor, is working with primary schools around the country to assist in educating children and their families on the need for a healthy and balanced diet.

Dapto Public School's canteen started switching to healthy food last year but fully embraced the NSW Healthy School Canteen Strategy this year.

Assistant Principal John Thompson said the school was starting the youngest children at the

school on the path towards healthy eating.

"Kindergarten students have been selected as the target group to ensure the health message is present in children's lives from as early in schooling as possible," Mr Thompson said.

"We aim to serve food that is low in fat, salt and sugar using the traffic lights principle," he said.

"Food that is low in fat, salt and sugar gets the green light, food that is moderate gets an amber

light, and food that is high in fat, salt and/or sugar gets a red light."

"More than 90 percent of the food we serve is green light, and the rest is amber. Food that gets the red light is only served twice per term for fundraising and that sort of thing."

According to Mr Thompson, the healthy kick has been given the thumbs up by children and parents alike.



Dapto Primary students Kylie Kostelenski, Warda Ashraf, Elise Edney, Ashley Barrett and (front) Gemma Smyth show off their writing awards
Photo by WAYNE VENABLES.

Swag of prizes for super scribes

By LORRAINE PITT

Prize winning poetry and exceptional essay writing has delivered to Dapto Primary School a swag of cash and prizes thanks to the efforts of its students.

Elise Edney, Kylie Kostelenski and Ashley Barrett won prizes in the Lake Illawarra Authority's essay writing compe-

tion, scooping a \$500 cash prize for the school. Elise Edney, Gemma Smyth and Warda Ashraf came out on top in the Wollongong City Council Enviro '97 poetry competition, winning an environmental package, book prizes and framed copies of their poems.

Assistant principal Justin Quinn said the

school encouraged its students to enter literacy competitions.

"Our success in these competitions is a tribute to the conscientious approach of the students. They're all talented writers whose literacy skills have developed immensely through a carefully planned and balanced writing program."

Students remember Anzacs at special ceremony

By NATHAN SIMPSON

School children from Dapto, Kanahooka and Lakeview will remember those who gave their lives for their country during a special Anzac Day ceremony tomorrow.

The day will involve the laying of wreaths, special guest speakers and a message to children about Anzacs. Those schools taking part are Dapto, Kanahooka and Lakeview Primary Schools.

Every year on April 25 Australians commemorate Anzac Day.

It is Australia's sacred day when we remember those who landed at Gallipoli in 1915.

Dapto Primary School assistant principal Justin Quinn said although Anzac Day wasn't for another two weeks, it was the only chance for students to commemorate the day, as a school, before the start of the Easter Holidays this weekend.

"It's a very important day and one that we should always remember," he said.

Children will also attend a special service at Dapto's War Memorial tomorrow.

Dapto Primary School students will commemorate Anzac Day tomorrow. They visited the Dapto Anzac War Memorial last week. Pictured are (L to R) Matthew Kent, Michael Fittler, Tess Hallett, Cassie Reid and (back) Ted Evans, Brian Moylan, Doug Rymer and Norm Leslie.



Author visit an inspiration to students

In brief

ON March 29, D C Green, author of *Erasmus James and the Galactic Zapp Machine*, visited Dapto Public School.

He spoke to Years 3, 4, 5 and 6. D C Green told us his rap. It was bad but he covered it up with his weird dancing and everyone was hysterical.

Two children from 6D were chosen to read parts of his book with him. It was awesome. Some people bought his books and he personally autographed them.

He told us about his past careers and his life. His talk was inspirational for heaps of kids. He made things funny even when the subject was not funny at all (eg, almost drowning while surfing).

It was a joy to have D C Green with us at Dapto Public School. We can't wait to read his next book! D C Green ROCKS!

- Emily Hite, Jennifer Taylor,
Josh Yeo, Tanaya Daley and Tori Robinson,
Year 6,
Dapto Public School



Dapto fans of author D C Green (from left to right): Tori Robinson, Jennifer Taylor, Josh Yeo, Tanaya Daley and Emily Hite. Picture: courtesy DAPTO PUBLIC SCHOOL

Right way to use your head



Elite road cyclist Danny Hennessy with Dapto Public School students Zoe Gaudry and Mitchell Rix who won helmets donated by Rebel Sport, Wollongong.

Picture:

Students hear the Bike Week message

By REBECCA HAYTER and GREG ELLIS

Dapto Public School students know the importance of wearing a helmet when riding their pushbikes to and from school.

Elite road cyclist Danny Hennessy visited the school yesterday to speak to more than 250 students to mark Bike Safety Week. Also a Rebel Sport employee, Mr Hennessy presented two helmets donated by Rebel Sport, as well as other prizes to students.

Teacher Marcus Arnold said the presentation helped students understand important road safety rules.

Meantime, more than 250 cyclists braved wet weather to take up a Wollongong Bicycle Users Group (WBUG) challenge to ride to work and enjoy a free Novotel Northbeach breakfast in the mall.

The annual bike to work day was a Bike Week

activity organised by Wollongong City Council and the Illawarra Area Health Service (IAHS) and supported by the Roads and Traffic Authority and Wilsons Discount Bikes.

WBUG and IAHS spokeswoman Lisa Franco said the bike group was involved because it was a good opportunity to promote cycling in the Illawarra.

Wollongong City Council road safety officer Prue Dunstan said the council had used the event to promote bike safety and alternate modes of transport.

She said if more people rode bikes there would be less congestion on Wollongong roads and fewer frustrated motorists.

"We've also been able to promote the use of our cycleway network, which is the envy of other councils," she said.



Big day: Dapto Public School students, including Aaron Hales and Jack McGrath (holding spades), turn the first sod on the Horsley park they helped design.
Picture: DAVE TEASE

Park plan child's play

If you want to build the perfect playground, ask the experts - children.

That's the thinking behind a new football field-sized park being built at Stockland's 530-lot Brooks Reach housing development at Horsley.

A group of Dapto Public School students and Professor Karen Malone from the University of Western Sydney's Centre of Educational Research and also chair of the Child Friendly Asia Pacific network turned the first sod on the park on Monday.

Prof Malone led the research on the park's design,

informed by the knowledgeable advice of Dapto Public School students, who indicated the top five things they wanted:

- Secret and shady spaces for cubby building
- Thrill seeking
- A play space where they could create their own space
- A place that promotes learning and protects nature
- A place where we can create communities.

The 6800sqm park will feature a 3m-high, 7m-long tower slide, a circular bird's nest swing, a spinning, carousel-like slide and a tree house.

"This feedback from the kids means that Stockland is now able to create a playground that gives kids all the things they want and dreamed of - a chance to be imaginative, explore, test their limits, learn and laugh with their friends," Prof Malone said.

Wollongong City Council has granted the park approval and construction is expected to start mid year, with completion around October.

The students will keep tabs on the building of the park and Brooks Reach. Regular field trips will be part of environment and geography lessons.

Kids' park blooms into life



Input: Dapto primary students Jack McGrath and Aaron Hales at Horsley's new park. Picture: DAVE TEASE

KATE McILWAIN

THE ideal playground has lots of trees, plenty of space to build cubbies and run around and looks nothing like the brightly coloured plastic structures that dominate most parks.

That was the message from 150 Dapto Public School students who told Stockland developers exactly what they wanted to see built in a 6800sqm park at the new 530-lot Brooks Reach development in Horsley.

About 150 kindergarten and Year 5 students were last year asked to draw their ideal playground, and yesterday a small group of children were on site as the park's final plans were unveiled.

Project leader and University of Western Sydney researcher

Professor Karen Malone, who also works on UNICEF's global Child Friendly Cities Initiative, said she had never seen children more passionate about the environment than those at Dapto.

"These kids had a really strong sense of environmental stewardship, which I have never seen before, so there must be something about whatever grows here," she said.

"They were really keen that Stockland didn't disrupt or destroy what was already here in terms of the natural landscape."

Children also asked developers to avoid pre-fabricated playground equipment and requested adventurous rides.

Prof Malone said the final park would grant the children's wishes by building wooden cubby-house platforms around an exist-

ing gum tree in the middle of the park and planting an educational indigenous garden.

The design also has a 3m slide, a circular "birds nest" swing and a "supernova" carousel-style ride.

Year 6 students Aaron Hales and Jack McGrath said they were "pretty happy" with the final plans.

"They look really good, but there isn't really much for our older age - it's more for middle age kids, like Year 4 and Year 3 kids," Jack said.

"Maybe they could have put a little bit more stuff for kids our age."

However, both boys' ideas - Jack's slide and Aaron's supernova ride - were included and they were looking forward to seeing their ideas come to life.

Teamwork aids flood victims

Arkell praises pupils

Dapto Public School pupils have lived up to their school's motto of "working as a team" by raising more than \$110 for last month's flood victims.

They presented a cheque for \$110.30 to Lord Mayor Ald Frank Arkell yesterday for his Disaster Fund Flood Appeal.

Headmaster Mr Wilf Berriman said the pupils themselves decided to raise the money for the flood victims.

He helped organise the fund-raising after an approach by school captain Raelene Gill and prefect Kate Hayes.



● Dapto school captain Raelene Gill (left) and prefect Kate Hayes present the cheque to Lord Mayor Ald Frank Arkell yesterday. Pupils donated



Stand-off at the Bong Bong St-Princes Hwy lights (left to right) Bob Burrage, Jamie Dekker and Terry Rumble.

Rumble sees red over new traffic light snub

A political bunfight over who would activate Dapto's new traffic lights took an ugly turn yesterday when the Roads and Traffic Authority flicked the switch itself.

Local MP Terry Rumble was fuming when he found his bid to carry out the official turning-on had been short-circuited by what he suspected was a political decision to keep him out of the limelight.

Mr Rumble, who suspected the move to cut him out of the proceedings may have come from as high up as the Minister's office, had been lobbying to be present when the lights were turned on.

He had even provided the RTA with a timetable of his availability so there would be no excuse for him missing out.

It was normal practice for the Minister or local member to carry out such a duty, he said.

After discovering - to his horror - that the lights had been activated by a humble RTA technician yesterday morning, he sent a stropky letter off to Transport Minister Bruce Baird.

"I understand that a decision to commence operations today was given from an office outside of Wollongong," he wrote. "I ask for an explanation of this gross discourtesy."

wanted to be in on the act, but president Bob Burrage saw the lighter side.

"I take it with great humour," he said. "It appears the authorities took the line of least resistance because no-one wanted to make a decision."

The deadlock between Mr Rumble and the chamber even caught the attention of Year 6 Dapto Public School student Jamie Dekker, who put her hand up for the turning-on.

"Perhaps some children from Dapto Public School would be able to turn the lights on," she wrote in a letter to Mr Rumble.

"That way there would be no arguing about who would turn on the lights."

An RTA spokesman said the decision to flick the switch was made in the interests of safety and was not the result of a political conspiracy.

The RTA spokesman said it was not normal practice to hold an official ceremony to turn on traffic lights but where it did happen the most likely switch-flickers were community groups who would benefit from the new lights.

Did that mean the school would have got a guernsey?

"They would have been among the candidates," he said diplomatically.

Banksias bloom for reconciliation

By LISA SEWELL

RECONCILIATION was the message at the official opening of the new state-of-the-art \$7 million Dapto Public School.

In a moving ceremony, the school's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students presented young banksia trees to fellow students, to be planted in a reconciliation garden.

Principal Ann Henniker said yesterday the banksia had been chosen by the school community as a symbol for its move from the old site in Byamee St to Sierra St, Horsley.

"When the school was established 128 years ago Aboriginal families were excluded from the system, but now they are very much an integral part of the richness of the system," Ms Henniker said.

"So last year when we were relocating we talked to Aboriginal members of the school community who chose the banksia as a symbol of growing together.

"That native plant has now become the symbol to mark our change of venue, and to show the harmony that today exists between all students."

Ms Henniker said spiralling enrolments over the past decade had necessitated the move, with the majority of the school's 668 students hailing from the expanding Horsley suburb.

The attractive and functional new school has 18 classrooms, library, hall, canteen, special programs room, administration building, covered outdoor learning area and amenities.

"The children were so excited about the move - they now have so many wonderful facilities to take advantage of," Ms Henniker said.

"And the school community can now see where the money it raises goes - we are only adding facilities now, not just using money for repairs."

Illawarra MP Marianne Saliba unveiled a plaque to mark the event. She said the school was one of nine around the state funded by the State Government's \$133 million Privately Financed Project (PFP).



School's in: Dapto Public School captains Blake Wallace (left) and Amy Thompson (right) were joined by Principal Ann Henniker, MP Marianne Saliba and Wollongong school education director Chris Carroll at yesterday's official opening.

Picture: ROBERT PEET

"Under the PFP agreement, the schools are built by a private contractor, Axiom Education, which is responsible for the maintenance, security and cleaning of the buildings and grounds for 30 years, after which the schools will revert back to the Government," she said.

"This innovative approach has dramatically speeded up construction of new schools on the

Central Coast, Sydney and in the Illawarra region.

"The new schools provide for quality public education in areas of rapid population growth."

Siteworks included a games court, staff car park and extensive landscaping, while school traffic had been better managed by the inclusion of a bus lay by and a parent pick-up and drop-off zone.

Having a ball with Hawks

HAVING criss-crossed the country and travelled to New Zealand in recent weeks the Wollongong Hawks yesterday enjoyed home court with some of their youngest and most vocal fans.

The Hawks visited Dapto Public School to tip-off the first School Hoops Session for 2013. This year the Hawks will dribble, shoot and pass with more than 8000 kids from more than 120 schools in one of the club's flagship community programs. And while the kids had a ball yesterday, Hawks players also enjoyed time out ahead of a crucial clash against Melbourne Tigers at WIN Entertainment Centre on Friday night.

■ MORE BASKETBALL COVERAGE PAGE 52

Balancing act: Hawks players Adnis Deleon, left, and Tyson Demos, enjoy their time with Dapto Public School year 4 students Grace Darby and Logan Bellaf.

Picture: ORLANDO CHIODO

Hawks boost school spirit with special visit



Happy day: Hawks players were given a great welcome by Dapto Public School in the first Bendigo Bank School Hoops Session for 2013.
Picture: ORLANDO CHIODI

THE Wollongong Hawks spend half their season on the road, but Dapto Public School had the welcome mat out for their NBL idols, with basketball the favourite subject of the day.

The Hawks were happy to be special guests for the opening day of the Bendigo Bank School Hoops Session for 2013.

Students had a great time collecting autographs and playing ball with the team.

"It's fantastic to see a great community-minded organisation such as Bendigo Bank get behind the Wollongong NRE Hawks," Hawks general manager Mili Simic said. "Their support of the club ensures we are able to continue our School Hoops program free of charge to schools across the Illawarra."

This year the Hawks expect to dribble, shoot and

pass with over 8000 pupils from more than 120 schools in one of the club's flagship community programs.

Since 2009, the Wollongong NRE Hawks have visited almost every school in the region, providing free one hour basketball clinics to primary schoolchildren.

Every child that participates in the Bendigo Bank School Hoops program receives a drink bottle and Hawks ticket offer provided by the community bank.

"We're very proud to have begun our relationship and support of the Wollongong NRE Hawks," said Jim Crawford, Bendigo Bank regional manager.

"They share the same values as us, they give back to the community and most of all they're owned 100 per cent by the community, just like the local community bank branches."

Mercury News

17. 2. 05



Snack pack: Dapto kindy pupils Chelsea Allport and Rikeya Horne dig in.

Picture: KEN ROBERTSON

FILL THE MENU

Kids greet healthy treat

Noticeboard

DAPTO KIDS GET QUIZZICAL

Students from Dapto Public School are brushing up on their general knowledge ahead of filming for the educational quiz show *It's Academic*.

The school will send 17 students – five teams of three and two reserves, selected based on the results of a test – to filming at Fox Studios on August 20, with the teams to return for further competition in September if they are successful.

Principal David Dark said news of the appearance had set the school abuzz.

"There's great excitement that the kids are going to compete and be on television," he said.

The program's airing date is yet to be decided.

Cousins are Kindy veterans

Cousins Jace Barnes, Caeli Nikolovski and Tailah McCarthy (pictured on p23) featured in the *Mercury* when they started Kindergarten at Dapto Public School earlier this year.

The trio are now dab hands at the "big school" thing and they offer some of their insights and advice to the class of 2008.

For Jace, Kindergarten had been fun so far, but the enthusiastic veteran was ready to move on.

"Kindergarten is fun but I just want to go into Year 1 because I'm already six," he said.

Jace said he had made lots of friends since starting Kindergarten and enjoyed playing with a big group at lunchtime.

But he warned that it would not all be easy.

"You have to sit down and be quiet for the teacher and do quiet work," he said.

His advice to next year's Kindies was simple.

"Don't be naughty and listen to the teacher," he said. "There is no

playing in class."

Caeli is a little shy in front of new people and she had some good advice for people who might be a little apprehensive about making new friends.

"First you have to say, 'what is your name?', then tell them yours," she said.

The quiet youngster said her favourite activity at big school was drawing on the computers in class.

Tailah already had two older brothers at primary school, and knew what was in store.

"It's fun and you get to catch the bus to school," she said.

Tailah reassured new students that getting on and off the school bus was a breeze.

"You have to get out your T-card or bus pass and they will let you on," she said.

Tailah said the best thing about big school was the playground equipment, but she warned future students there were rules.

"Don't run, take turns and don't just push in, and be careful."



Power of three: Cousins Caeli Nikolovski, Jace Barnes and Tailah McCarthy, all aged 5, start kindergarten today at Dapto. Picture: ANDY ZAKELI

Kindy cousins can't wait for first day

By VERONICA APAP

WHILE some children starting kindergarten today may be a little reluctant to get out of mum's car, three little bundles of energy will be ready and raring to go at Dapto Public School.

Caeli Nikolovski, Tailah McCarthy and Jace Barnes are

cousins who will start kindy at Dapto Public together. And the trio has certainly discovered the power of three. When asked if they were ready, they all insisted they knew what to expect.

"You get to paint and stuff," Jace said. "And you get to run around and have races."

Tailah said she was

prepared for the homework and all three said they would look out for one another, particularly Tailah and Jace who will be in the same class.

Their mums, Christie Nikolovski, Lauree Barnes and Tammy McCarthy, are sisters and said the children had always stuck together.

"Jace always makes sure his

girls are okay," Ms Barnes said, while Ms Nikolovski referred to Jace as the rose between two thorns.

Relieving principal Justin Quinn said having three cousins in the same grade should not present too much of a challenge.

"It's great to have that family connection."

My first day at kindy

For thousands of children across the Illawarra, yesterday marked their first day of school. Education reporter **Courtney Trenwith** experienced the tears and fears of one kindergarten class at Dapto Public School.

TEARS were expected at Dapto Public School yesterday, but the 20 students in the Kindergarten blue class were very brave. Only a few cheeks were wet at the beginning of the day, but everyone soon settled.

Sitting cross-legged on the floor, we met Carol Harford who was a kind teacher eager to explain how to behave at school.

We quickly learned about the importance of being a good listener - if you're seen sitting on your bottom with your mouth closed you're more likely to be picked to do the cool things, like be leader in the line or stand up in front of the class and tell news.

"When someone's talking your lips are closed," Matthew said. "You have to put up your hand to ask a question," Jack added.

Lining up was a little bit harder, though. Holding a partner's hand, it was easy to wander off from the line or get caught up in what was happening behind us so that we slowed everyone down.

But Ms Harford was patient and stopped us every few metres to allow everyone to catch up.

By the middle of the day we were ready to learn how to tell news.

"News means you bring something to school or you can tell us about something that you did," Ms Harford explained.

Joshua - who was sitting beautifully - had the honour of being the first student to practise telling news.

"Good morning KH," Joshua was taught to say first.

"I've got four pets," he said.

"A dog, a rabbit and two fish."

Joshua was lucky to get a sticker for his efforts and another one to give to a good listener in the audience.

Next, we sat in a circle and had to find our name from a selection in the middle.

I think everyone was a bit nervous about picking up the wrong name, but fortunately most of us got it first go.

We all got to pat ourselves on the back at the end of our good work.

The second lunch break finally arrived and we lined the aluminium seats outside with our lunch boxes full of Tiny Teddies, sandwiches and fruit.

After eating we were allowed to play in the special playground set up for kindy kids.

Even the big kid had some friends.

Georgia and Morgan showed me how to play dinosaurs before we threw the ball to each other. Kiara also joined in.

But before we knew it the bell went again and it was time to line up to go back to the classroom, via the toilets and bunnies.

The stop-start line took 10 minutes to return to class. The last lesson of the day was a tough one.

Ms Harford asked us to colour in a picture of Humpty Dumpty, cut out the pieces and glue them on another piece of paper showing how Humpty fell off the wall.

Manoeuvring the scissors around the lines of Humpty Dumpty was a task requiring great skill.

But at least by the end of the day we had something to take home to mum and dad - a memento of our first day at big school.

Parents home alone

DAYLE and Nigel Chapman are used to having three young children running around the house each day, but within just 12 months they have been left with none.

The couple's youngest children, twins Morgan and Georgia, started kindergarten at Dapto Public School yesterday.

Their older brother Ryan had his first day there last year. With three children aged only 13 months apart, there now is a marked difference in the Chapman house.

"It's a good transition for us with our lifestyles and an exciting time for the girls, and for Ryan to see the girls at school too," Mrs Chapman

said. "It's nice to think they're going to develop and grow into their own little individuals."

The twins turn five today. Georgia was less excited about going to school than Morgan.

"She didn't like the idea of going to school," Mrs Chapman said.

"She's hesitant, whereas Morgan is more confident. Morgan has guaranteed us she will take care of Georgia."

But there were no tears when the girls said goodbye in the morning and by the end of the day they were jumping with excitement to show Mum and Dad what they had done on their first day of school, including a humpty dumpty picture.



Play time: Walking in two lines isn't always easy, as journalist Courtney Trenwith discovered.

Pictures: ANDY ZAKELI, ROBERT PEET



What next?: Corey and Taylah cutting Humpty Dumpty.



Take a break: Courtney shares lunch with Kiara and Brendan.



Time to listen: Teacher Carol Harford with her kindy class.



First day: Twins Georgia and Morgan Chapman.



Buddy: Leader Madisson Cook helps Georgia.

Dapto students cheer Melbourne Cup



Cup Glory: Dapto Public School students were cheering to be back at school on Monday when they got a special glimpse of this year's Melbourne Cup trophy. The 18-carat gold cup, valued at \$175,000, was closely guarded by its own security personnel as hundreds of kids surrounded former jockey Greg Hall to hear what it was like to win the famous horse race in 1992. The cup has been on tour since July, ahead of this year's race.



Identity crisis: Enjoying the attention of sharing a name are (from left) Emily Elise Smith, Emily Jo Smith and Emily Rae Smith.

Picture: ADAM McLEAN

Three's a crowd for Dapto classmates

By MICHELE TYDD

ROLLCALL can be fun and games for Dapto's Emily Smith and two classmates Emily Smith and Emily Smith.

The three girls started at Dapto Public School this year and each was delighted to find another Emily Smith was never far away.

"It's like being a triplet," Emily Jo Smith beamed.

Kindergarten teacher Michelle Elliott said having more than one of any name was not a problem with middle names to draw on.

"That way they each get to keep their own identity and there is no confusion," she said.

Emily Rae Smith's mother, Deborah, said her husband chose the name on the spur of the moment after they discovered their "boy" was a girl.

"I was told about the other two Emily Smiths

at orientation," she said.

"Emily means strength and determination so they might need it to deal with the confusion of sharing a name," she said.

School principal Ann Henniker said she had never had three students of the same name in a class.

"We'll have to be careful come report time but I don't foresee any identity crisis that we can't handle," she said.



Keeping watch: Corey Wakeling performs a lice inspection on sisters Madeline and Rachael Daffara at Dapto Primary School. Picture: DAVE TEASE

Nit picking is the key to success

By MICHELE TYDD

DAPTO Primary School is not leaving a single hair unturned in its battle to beat nits this summer.

Studies have identified head lice as a national scourge which is growing worse as the parasites become immune to treatment.

Dapto's principal Ann Henniker said as the nits became harder and harder to treat, "we have to become smarter and smarter".

She said summer was recognised as the season for head lice which is why the school had got in early. It started on Friday with a nit-free day when parents of more than 600

students signed off on a declaration to say their children were not carrying lice.

This will be followed up with further examinations this week and an education campaign.

"The thing I've found most valuable in treating lice is vigilance - parents must continue to check their children's hair particularly after treat-

ment to break the life cycle of the lice and their eggs," Mrs Henniker said.

"We have sent home the most up-to-the-minute information we could find not only on treatment but also details on identifying lice."

Children who take part in the campaign will be in the running for prizes and rewards.



On the front line: Crazy Hat Day went to these students' heads yesterday in the fight against nits at Dapto Public School. (From left) Jess 6, and Emma Kate Thirkettle, 6.

Dapto kids get down to the nitty-gritty of

by MICHELE TYDD

HEAD lice control has always been a bit hush-hush in schools, but Dapto Public has turned it into a week of celebrations.

Crazy Hat Day yesterday provided a fitting end to the week's activities with lots of colour and prizes for

the zaniest creations.

"We've had a tremendous week of fun and fundraising while achieving good results with nit control," principal Ann Henniker said.

The No Nit campaign started last year to combat the tricky problem.

"It has always been a problem in all schools but the last thing we want

to do is traumatise the students if they happen to get them," Mrs Henniker said. "We get parents to check their children's hair at the beginning of the week and at the end and then those who bring notes to say this has been done, go into a lucky prize draw."

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Drivers ignore speed peril to school kids

\$1.2m road safety plan under way

By MEGAN LEVY

MANY motorists in Horsley are flouting the 50km/h speed limit, placing the lives of young school children at risk, according to a new traffic study.

The study shows 15 per cent of motorists on Bong Bong Rd drive faster than 70km/h, posing a danger to hundreds of school students attending the new Dapto Public School.

The study, conducted by Wollongong City Council, comes as the council embarks on a million-dollar plan to improve safety for school students and children in Horsley, an area plagued by traffic problems.

Under the \$1.2 million project, three roundabouts will be installed along Bong Bong Rd to slow traffic and improve access to the school.

The council is also negotiating with the Roads and Traffic Authority to place traffic lights at the intersection of Homestead Dr.

One roundabout, to be built at the intersection of Sierra Dr, is expected to improve traffic flow out of Sierra Dr at peak times.

A cycle path will also be completed in the area.

Two children have been injured - one seriously - on the same section of Bong Bong Rd recently.

This month, a five-year-old girl was struck by a vehicle travelling east on Bong Bong Rd near Denham Dr.

She suffered minor injuries and was treated at a nearby medical centre.

In March, a four-year-old boy was flown to Sydney Children's Hospital in Randwick in a critical condition after he was hit by a car at the same location.

"The combination of speed and the sheer volume of traffic in the area create dangerous conditions for those trying to cross the road," Wollongong Lord Mayor Alex Darling said yesterday.

"The roundabouts will create conditions to slow drivers down, protecting the safety of the many children who walk in the area."

The council conducted the traffic survey this year, and placed traffic counters across Bong Bong Rd - the only access road to Horsley - to count the amount and speed of traffic.

It revealed an average of 14,500 motorists drive along Bong Bong Rd each day near the railway crossing.

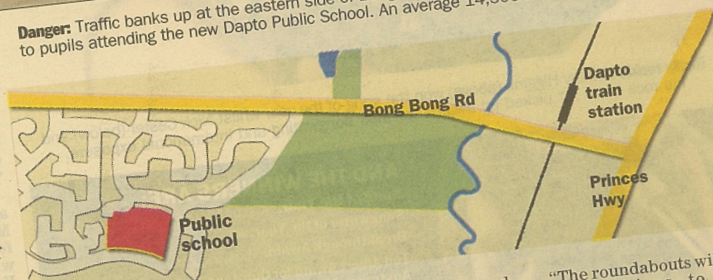
That figure dropped to 8600 vehicles each day between Homestead Dr and Horsley Dr.

About 15 per cent of vehicles travelled at more than 70km/h in the 50km/h zone.

The three roundabouts will be built at intersections with Sierra, Horsley and Lucas drives. Funded by contributions from developers, they could be completed by December.



Danger: Traffic banks up at the eastern side of Bong Bong Rd rail crossing. A study points to congestion in the area, posing a risk to pupils attending the new Dapto Public School. An average 14,500 motorists drive along Bong Bong Rd daily near the crossing.



Free ride safest option at Dapto

By MICHELE TYDD

A SCHOOL without pedestrian crossings can present interesting transport challenges.

The new Dapto Public School in Sierra Dr is overcoming the potential safety issue with a daily bus routine which resembles a military operation.

Without crossings on the main road (Bong Bong Rd) hordes of children who would normally walk are queuing for a free ride home.

While Wollongong City Council determines the best place for two crossings, teachers and Premier Bus Company have joined forces to ensure children get to and from school safely.

"It's amazing to see so many children massing for the buses when the bell goes at 2.50pm," principal Ann Henniker said.

Under temporarily relaxed bus pass criteria most of the 663 students are eligible to ride to and from school. Children who live only blocks away are opting for wheels over walking.

"It's managed so well that we have 400 children disappear on the buses within 15 minutes thanks to the efficiency of school and bus staff," Mrs Henniker said.

Mornings are not that unusual because the arrivals are staggered.

"In all of my years in the education system I've never seen this many children catching buses," she said.

"Two teachers have volunteered to do bus duty to ensure that a potentially chaotic situ-



Operation bus stop: Christie Armstrong and fellow Dapto Public School students wait in the seemingly endless school bus queue.
Picture: KEN ROBERTSON

ation doesn't develop."

Mrs Henniker said council officers were working with the school's P&C to make certain the crossings

were in the right places.

"At a new school there is no point putting in crossings unless the children's natural patterns are taken into con-

sideration. Council is undertaking a survey for this purpose but in the meantime have implemented traffic calming devices," she said.



Stroll: Pupils, parents and teachers walk to Dapto Public School.

Picture: ADAM McLEAN

Catch the walking bus

Students from Dapto Public School last week became the first in the Illawarra to test drive one of the safest, most environmentally friendly and healthiest ways to get to school - a walking bus.

The bus' first trip took place last Monday and already the program has received over 60 enrolments from students keen to be "passengers".

The walking bus program was introduced at Dapto Public School thanks to a partnership between developer Stockland - which is building Brooks Reach, a new residential community at Horsley - and Connections Community

Development (CCD).

CCD Walking Bus program co-ordinator Lynda Hobden said the program was a success in six other NSW schools.

She expects the West Dapto community to embrace the walking bus as well.

"Prior to the launch this week we had around 30 students signed up. By the end of the week we had 80 students enrolled."

"Parents are quickly beginning to recognise the benefits of the program and the kids are very excited about traveling to school with the walking bus," she said.

Dapto Public School deputy

principal Cheryl Seagrove said the program was already showing signs of becoming a great success at the school.

"Not only will it help give kids regular outdoor exercise, it's a way for them to get to know their local area, make new friends and arrive at school and back home safely."

"It will also teach them more about their neighbourhood and how they can look out for each other - and it takes cars off the road which makes it a safer and cleaner environment. It's an incredibly positive initiative."

Info: www.walkingbus.com.au

Banksias bloom for reconciliation

By LISA SEWELL

RECONCILIATION was the message at the official opening of the new state-of-the-art \$7 million Dapto Public School.

In a moving ceremony, the school's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students presented young banksia trees to fellow students, to be planted in a reconciliation garden.

Principal Ann Henniker said yesterday the banksia had been chosen by the school community as a symbol for its move from the old site in Byamee St to Sierra St, Horsley.

"When the school was established 128 years ago Aboriginal families were excluded from the system, but now they are very much an integral part of the richness of the system," Ms Henniker said.

"So last year when we were relocating we talked to Aboriginal members of the school community who chose the banksia as a symbol of growing together.

"That native plant has now become the symbol to mark our change of venue, and to show the harmony that today exists between all students."

Ms Henniker said spiralling enrolments over the past decade had necessitated the move, with the majority of the school's 668 students hailing from the expanding Horsley suburb.

The attractive and functional new school has 18 classrooms, library, hall, canteen, special programs room, administration building, covered outdoor learning area and amenities.

"The children were so excited about the move - they now have so many wonderful facilities to take advantage of," Ms Henniker said.

"And the school community can now see where the money it raises goes - we are only adding facilities now, not just using money for repairs."

Illawarra MP Marianne Saliba unveiled a plaque to mark the event. She said the school was one of nine around the state funded by the State Government's \$133 million Privately Financed Project (PFP).



School's in: Dapto Public School captains Blake Wallace (left) and Amy Thompson (right) were joined by Principal Ann Henniker, MP Marianne Saliba and Wollongong school education director Chris Carroll at yesterday's official opening.
Picture: ROBERT PEET

"Under the PFP agreement, the schools are built by a private contractor, Axiom Education, which is responsible for the maintenance, security and cleaning of the buildings and grounds for 30 years, after which the schools will revert back to the Government," she said.

"This innovative approach has dramatically speeded up construction of new schools on the

Central Coast, Sydney and in the Illawarra region.

"The new schools provide for quality public education in areas of rapid population growth."

Siteworks included a games court, staff car park and extensive landscaping, while school traffic had been better managed by the inclusion of a bus lay by and a parent pick-up and drop-off zone.

Students test drive people-powered school bus

Students from Dapto Public School were the first in the Illawarra to test drive one of the safest, most environmentally-friendly and healthiest ways to get to school – a walking bus.

Thanks to a partnership with Stockland – who is creating Brooks Reach, a new residential community at Horsley - and Connections (CCD), Community Development started from April 30, local students started using foot power to get to school. The bus's 'maiden voyage' was a huge success – with 40 registered walkers and special guests including players from basketball team the Wollongong Hawks plus Megan Mitchell – NSW Commissioner for Children and Young People also making the trip.

Bringing the walking bus to Dapto Public School is a result of research by Stockland that asked from their children what they wanted from their neighbourhood, and the new one taking shape at Brooks Reach. Stockland senior development manager, Michael Braithwaite, said the results showed many children felt concerned about knowing their neighbours, and being able to get to

school safely. "This is something the kids told us they wanted so we're really excited to be able to help make it happen."

"The walking bus initiative helps to teach children valuable life lessons about stranger danger and road safety. It also encourages parents and children to include exercise as part of their daily routine in a fun and social way," he said.

Dapto Public School deputy principal, Cheryl Seagrove, said the walking bus would help reduce traffic congestion around the busy school before and after the bell rings.

"Not only will it help give kids regular outdoor exercise, it's a way for them to get to know their local area, make new friends and arrive at school and back home safely," she said.

The 'Walking Bus' program, launched in Sydney in 2007, involves parent 'drivers' walking children to and from school along a set route, with stops along the way. CCD's Walking Bus program coordinator Lynda Hobden said the New South Wales schools. She expects the West Dapto community to embrace the walking bus when they under-

stand more about it – and see it in action. In just one week the number of registered 'Walking Bus' children has doubled to 80 students, which shows the local community are definitely embracing this initiative.

Ms Hobden said the 'Walking Bus' had already revealed one of the great positives of the program.

"Two of the families on the bus lived on the same street but had never met before. By the time they'd arrived at school, the mums had exchanged phone numbers and promised to stay in touch.

Now their kids will walk together to school and play together after school and on weekends. It's a great way to bring people out of their homes and cars and actually have a

conversation. We still find it overwhelming when we see the impact of something so simple," she said.

For more information on the walking bus initiative, visit www.walkingbus.com.au. For more information on the Brooks Reach residential community, visit www.stockland.com.au/brooksreach



Students show that they have drive

Gold star

Students in Stage 1 at Dapto Public School recently participated in a fun transport-themed day, complementing work they had been doing in class.

The Year 1 and 2 students had been studying different forms of transport and responded enthusiastically to the opportunity to take a hands-on approach.

With the support of parents and caregivers, the students were asked to design and make a model of a form of transport using boxes and recycled materials.

A variety of activities were organised including a "car rally" requiring the students to wear their transport model and move around the school in teams, following clues and answering questions.



Year 1 and 2 students from Dapto Public School model vehicles they made from recycled products as part of their study of transport. Picture: KEN ROBERTSON

The wheels on the bus...

EMILY DUNCAN

A FLUORO yellow convoy of school children, parents, prams, Wollongong Hawks players and bustling photographers snaked its way along Dapto's suburban streets for the Walking Bus's maiden voyage on Monday.

The Walking Bus involves parent 'drivers' walking children to and from school along a set route, with stops along the way.

The program was introduced at Dapto Public School by Stockland, the developer behind Brooks Reach, a new residential community in Horsley.

It's the result of research that asked children what they wanted most out of their school and neighbourhood.

"One of our core values is developing a sense of community, not only in our residential communities, but in the surrounding area," Stockland senior manager Michael Braithwaite said.

"This is something the kids told us they wanted, so we're really excited to be able to help make that happen.

The Walking Bus was launched in 2007 by Connections Community Development (CCD) and has expanded to six schools and 12 routes throughout Sydney.

CCD Project Manager Lynda Hobden said a recent trial walk in Dapto had already revealed one of the program's greatest values.

"Two of the families on the bus

arrived on the street but had never met before," she said.

"By the time they'd arrived at school, the mums had exchanged phone numbers and promised to stay in touch."

But it's the students who are the Walking Bus's happiest passengers.

Jack Benn and Tailah McCarthy of Horsley were full of praise for the program.

"We can't get bus passes because we live too close to school," Tailah said.

"Our parents worry that we might get hit by a car or somebody might take us.

"It's for our health and our safety."



Picture: EMILY DUNCAN



Marching on: Students and teachers from Dapto Public School walk with parents as part of the "walking bus" venture. Picture: ADAM McLEAN

Students put their best feet forward

SHANNON TONKIN

THE wheels on Dapto Public School's newest student bus don't go round and round - they go pitter patter instead.

More than 80 students yesterday took part in the Illawarra's first "walking bus" - an initiative in which parents volunteer to walk with groups of children to and from school along set routes.

Each route, up to 1.2km long, weaves its way up and down populated roads near the school and runs to a timetable, including stops at designated "bus stops" where children can be collected by their parents.

Dapto Public School deputy principal Cheryl Seagrove said it was hoped the walking bus would

encourage a healthy lifestyle for students and reduce traffic congestion at drop-off and pick-up times.

"With the West Dapto roadworks almost on our doorstep there is really limited parking available near the school, meaning the road before and after school gets really busy," Mrs Seagrove said.

"The walking bus will get a few more cars off the road, while also promoting a cleaner environment and regular exercise and road safety for children."

Mrs Seagrove was unable to say how many children regularly walked to the school, either with or without parents, but believed the vast majority either arrived by bus or were driven to and from

school, despite many living close by.

She said the average age of the children registered to use the service was five to seven years.

"It seems to be quite popular with parents of kids in kindergarten to Year 3," she said.

Horsley mother and walking bus volunteer Natalie Brown said her sons, Cameron, 7, and Mitchell, 5, leapt out of bed yesterday morning in anticipation of walking to school.

"They love the idea of being able to walk to school with their friends," she said.

"I like it because it gives me the chance to incorporate exercise into an activity I have to do anyway."

Mrs Brown, who usually drives

her children to and from school, said the service would allow other parents, and herself when she was not on duty, to "continue with their day" and not have to battle the pre-9am and post-3pm traffic outside the school.

Fellow Horsley mother of two Ana Steele used the morning walk as a trial run to see whether she would sign her boys up for the service.

"If I do I'll walk with them until I know they are happy and co-operative with the parent volunteers," she said, but admitted the boys loved the experience.

Students were joined yesterday by Wollongong Hawks players Rhys Martin, Dave Gruber, Larry Davidson and Dan Jackson, and Hawks mascot Mo Hawk.

