

Primary entry #19: Avoca Beach PS



The Avoca Advocate



**NEW ROLE:** The HMAS Adelaide will be sunk off the coast of Terrigal. — Image courtesy of the Royal Australian Navy

## Navy ship to become a divers' haven

By ZINNIA BATH and KRISTA JORGENSON

ROYAL Australian Navy ship the HMAS Adelaide will be decommissioned and used to create a diver's dream of an artificial reef off the coast of Terrigal.

The 138-metre, 4100-tonne ship will come to rest off the coast in November as a major tourist attraction.

Dive Imports Australia's Ian James is very excited about the news.

"It will be excellent for photography and also for diving instructors who will be able to teach a larger range of scuba diving specialty courses such as wreck dives and photography and tech diving courses," Mr James said.

"It will be wonderful for businesses throughout the Central Coast, especially the hotels in and around Terrigal."

The frigate was built in 1980 and has an impressive naval background. It served in the Gulf War, East Timor and the Persian Gulf.

HMAS Adelaide was named after the former ship that fought in World War II.

It will be sunk a kilometre off Terrigal Beach on a sand bank to provide different levels of diving.

Snorkellers will be able to explore the top of the boat, which will lie about 10 metres below the surface, while more experienced divers will be able to explore the full length of the battleship on the ocean floor.

# A hidden back problem

By LAUREN TINDALE and TAYLA CRAIG

SCOLIOSIS, which affects three in every 100 people including a student at Avoca Beach Public School, is a little known or understood problem in society.

Scoliosis can affect peoples' lives by curving or breaking the main spinal bone, which keeps their body straight.

The cause of scoliosis remains unknown but studies are being done to unravel the mystery.

Curvature of the spine is more commonly found in female teenagers whose backs take the shape of an S or C.

The condition also sometimes affects a person's posture and ability to walk, bend or run.

The most common form of scoliosis is structural scoliosis.

"Structural scoliosis is a developmental deformity and is extremely difficult if not impossible to change," Avoca Beach physiotherapist Stan Priestly said.

"When it comes to treating this disorder, if identified in its early stages, the best possible treatment would involve wearing a body cast.

"A body cast is uncomfortable and highly inconvenient for sufferers but there is no better option."

Braces are made of high-grade

plastic and fibreglass, with straps for tightening and foam on the inside to protect the body.

Tayla Craig, 11, a student at Avoca Beach Public School suffers from scoliosis.

"It is difficult being a sufferer of scoliosis as you don't know what to expect," Tayla said.

"There are always thoughts looming in my mind that it may never get better or that it is just going to get worse if I don't do anything about it. At the same time I am constantly worried about my posture being incorrect and causing my condition to worsen."

Another scoliosis sufferer said: "It numbs my hips as well as causing my ribs to bruise."

"It makes me ache all over some days and it can be very uncomfortable to sleep in and I get very sweaty on a hot day."

The other treatment for scoliosis is far more serious because the sufferers have to undergo surgery in the hope of correcting the spine's shape.

That treatment involves inserting two metal rods on either side of the spine.



**TOUGH TREATMENT:** A scoliosis sufferer wearing a back brace.



**SLOW TRAIN:** Hunter and Central Coast commuters often have to wait for late trains.

## Rail delays rile coast commuters

By JESSICA MCGUINNESS and BRENDAN ROBERTSON

DISRUPTIONS to trains between Sydney and Newcastle continue to cause problems for Central Coast commuters, with services running slower than they did almost 50 years ago.

Some of the reasons for the increase in travel time are broken tracks, breakdowns and passenger

health emergencies.

"Nine out of 10 trains do not run on time and one in one hundred does not run at all," Central Coast Commuters Association president Kevin Parish said.

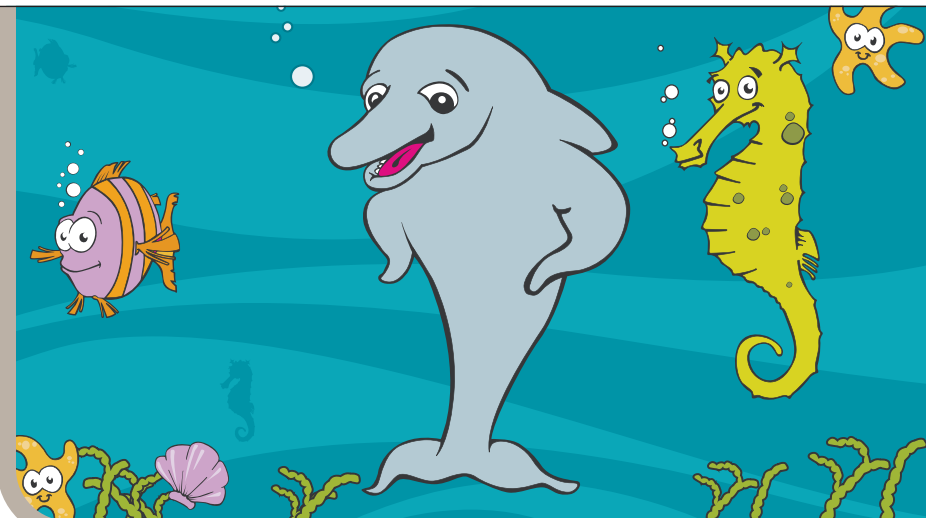
A major concern is the number of trains available to transport the growing number of workers from the Hunter and Central Coast each day.

Many trains are crowded,

meaning travellers often have to stand.

"If the trains were faster, more reliable and I could get a seat I would use the trains," daily commuter Keith Vallis said.

There have been some improvements in running more express trains and there are plans for improvements on the Strathfield to Epping and Gosford line.



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# Early checks can prevent later pain

## Editorial

By BRAD MCCLOGHRY, SARAH LEONARD and CAITLIN HAMILTON

ANNUAL check-ups at schools around Australia are needed to help improve the early diagnosis and treatment of scoliosis, a developmental deformity that is extremely difficult, if not impossible, to treat without surgical intervention.

But if scoliosis is identified in its early stages, intervention such as casting or bracing can minimise the deformity.

Australian girls aged 13 receive a brochure about scoliosis to take home to their parents. But is a brochure once in a while enough?

Over many years government funding has been focusing on obesity. Consequently, other serious illnesses including scoliosis have been sidelined.

Governments are ignoring the fact that if not enough funding is allocated to do regular checks on children for scoliosis in their early school years, it can go undetected. As they grow the scoliosis worsens and when it's finally identified they are in too much pain or too old to undergo

surgery or even physiotherapy.

The brochure relies on parents reading it then checking their child to decide if the child needs to visit a doctor or hospital. Not all parents would do this.

First, in rural areas transport and distance may be hindering access to doctors and hospitals. Second, some parents who rarely see their children because they are so busy working barely have time to read the brochure.

This means that scoliosis might not be detected in the early years.

Experts have stated that if there were more checks on children in their growing years, the number of severe scoliosis cases would drop dramatically. So why isn't the government doing anything about it?

Many types of medical checks were once performed each year and children were diagnosed, treated and followed up. The ongoing pattern of stopping this and other medical checks for school children has been a decision based on money, not looking after young children.

This will continue to be the case unless parents and the medical profession pressure politicians to return to the era where tests for scoliosis and other conditions were the norm.



LEAVE IT: Avoca Beach Public School teacher Liz Fennell likes the current flag.

# Survey flags a big change

By JENNIFER LOHAN and HANNAH LOWE

CENTRAL Coast residents have mixed feelings about changing the Australian flag.

More than 70 per cent of 120 Central Coast residents surveyed by Avoca Beach Public School last month wanted the flag changed.

But Central Coast mother of two and Avoca Beach teacher Liz Fennell likes the current flag.

"I like the existing flag as it shows our link to England, which is the Union Jack," Mrs Fennell said.

But Jo-anna Stevens, another Central Coast resident and Avoca teacher, likes a proposed design that recognises Aboriginal people.



"I like the new design as it has included aspects of Aboriginal life and culture," Mrs Stevens said.

A Portuguese man named Alvaro has designed a new flag with a Southern Cross, the land, water and a boomerang with Aboriginal art.

# Families are hit hard by inflation

By JORDAN CAMPBELL and VINCENT VAN DER GRAF

A SIX-YEAR high in the rate of inflation this year is increasing the burden on Australian families.

Inflation is when prices rise due to lower stocks of products.

Drought is a major cause of inflation but so is the rising cost of fuel and increase in housing interest rates.

Families on a budget are finding their weekly shopping more difficult.

Price rises mean families need to buy less or change their eating habits and diet to fit their budget.

Increases in the prices of meat, fresh fruit and vegetables are making it less likely that these food will form a major part of a family diet.

The mother of Avoca Beach Public School twins Jordan and Daniel Campbell, Brenda Cornick, has found inflation affecting her buying habits.

"Inflation certainly has affected my weekly shopping," Mrs Cornick said.

"The cost of groceries has increased so much. I'm left with the choice of either buy less or spend more and do without other things.

"Inflation has meant there isn't as much spare money after bills and groceries have been paid. Inflation has gone up more than salaries have."



Illustration by Caitlin Hamilton

# Mighty Mariners are making a big mark

By JOSHUA EDWARDS and DANIEL CAMPBELL

THE Central Coast Mariners A-League soccer club is the best thing to happen to Central Coast sports fans.

It is not uncommon to walk past a Mariners player in the street and exchange hellos and goodbyes.

Many Avoca Beach Public School students and parents are enthusiastic supporters of the Mariners, with a survey of children at the school

showing that 40 per cent of children in years 3 and 4 go to games.

"Off the pitch, we hope to grow our membership base and continue to build upon our already impressive home attendance figure," Mariners media manager Ben Coonan said.

"Our youth academy is the only one of its kind in the Hyundai A-League.

"We anticipate it will grow considerably in coming years to provide a unique pathway for Central Coast youngsters to progress."



STARS: Mariners players at training.

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What are coins made from?  
See page 44 for answer.



Here for learning.



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