

Primary entry #30: Medowie PS



# COO-EEE MEDOWIEEEE



**TOGETHERNESS:** Amber Smithson, Adam Beehag and William Boswell (back) and Chase Richardson, Sunny Ward, Daniel Arkins and Georgia Sulis (front).

## Learning together is a great thing

By COURTNEY WHITE

ICING biscuits and putting fruit on skewers is not normally part of a public school curriculum but once a year that is what Medowie Public School children get up to on "Doing Things Together Day", held recently during Education Week.

Thirty-eight groups of children from kindergarten to Year 6 were involved in many activities such as dressing up, dancing, constructing planes, making jewellery and 3D models, playing skittles, sewing and looking through microscopes.

The teaching staff also decide on three enjoyable and co-operative activities for the students to participate in together and even canteen volunteers join in.

The canteen holds activities such as icing biscuits and putting fruit on skewers, which one of the groups said was "yum and fun!"

All activities involve working together as a group.

Stage 3 teacher Mr Bob Skawinski has been organising the program at the school for five years.

Groups had students from each year and to make things interesting Mr Skawinski made it a competition.

"Our team got lots of points because we were polite, helped the younger children and packed up after the activities," one student said. "We had no bossy kids in our group."

# New view of the future

By TYRA HAYDEN, ALANA MONTGOMERY and CASEY SMYTHE

STUDENT leaders from five schools in the Medowie/Raymond Terrace area met recently to discuss ways of improving their schools by the year 2020.

The "20-20 Summit" is one of several programs in which these local schools are co-operating.

The student conference was modelled on the Federal Government's recent ideas initiative.

Medowie Public School captain Courtney White, 11, said the summit showed delegates what it was like to work in parliament.

"We agreed that the government should give more money for sporting facilities," Courtney said.

"It was good because everyone was co-operating and coming up with good ideas."

School leaders from Medowie, Wirreanda, Grahamstown and Irrawang public schools and Irrawang High School spent a day brainstorming opinions and ideas.

"The 2020 Summit is a great idea, encouraging kids to think that people are listening to their ideas and that they know they get to help improve Australia for the future," Medowie Stage 3 teacher and organiser of the event Mr Darren Gould said.

Eighty student leaders discussed



future needs in the areas of health, education, young people's needs, transport and community needs.

At the conclusion of the day each group reported on their five most important issues.

Some of these included increased subsidies for solar efficiency in homes, free first-aid and CPR training for a broader range of school students and the development of a local youth

centre for recreational and educational activities.

The same schools are also involved in a co-operative venture called the Lakeside Learning Community, which helps Year 6 students make a smooth transition to Year 7 by producing a collegial relationship.

The official launch of that program will be held at Medowie on July 24.

**LEADING THE WAY:** Participants from Lakeside Learning Community primary schools brainstorming ideas with student leaders from Irrawang High School.

— Picture by Tyra Hayden



**CLEANSING:** Andrew Smith, accompanied by indigenous students, performs the traditional smoking ceremony.

— Picture by Liam Laird

## Students are welcomed to country

By COURTNEY WHITE, SAMANTHA DAVIES and JENNA HUGHES

MEDOWIE Public School has been visited by an Aboriginal elder who welcomed the students to his people's country.

Year 1 students invited Uncle John Ridgeway, an elder of the Worimi Nation, to perform the "welcome to country" ritual before

Worimi chief executive officer Andrew Smith performed a smoking ceremony.

The two traditional Aboriginal ceremonies are performed to keep bad spirits away.

Mr Ridgeway welcomed visitors onto the land of his ancestors in English and Kattang, a traditional language of the Worimi.

Mr Smith performed the smoking ceremony before a

large assembly of students and parents as indigenous students also tapped sticks and waved gum leaves.

At the back of the procession, Mr Smith held a coolamon containing burning sticks, with the smoke travelling across the air.

The ceremony was part of a celebration of learning for Year 1 and 2 students who showcased their work on "Our Families".



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# Children's needs are not being met

## Editorial

By COURTNEY WHITE

ALTHOUGH the word Medowie means "place of tall trees" it does not mean we have to live an isolated life in the bush.

We have heard a lot of talk recently about the new strategic plan for our town, bringing high-density housing and the construction of a bigger and better shopping centre.

But who is listening to the kids? The kids of Medowie are always on the road going to sporting, cultural and social events. So the strategic plan also has to take account of their needs.

At the moment, Medowie does not have many places for kids to hang out. If we want to go to the cinema, the swimming pool or even shopping we have to travel to Raymond Terrace or further.

But making Medowie bigger will not necessarily make it better for the kids. We need a central shopping mall and a local library.

The present shopping centre is a mess. There is not enough variety and all the shops are too spread out.

Let's have a central shopping precinct, like Marketplace in Raymond Terrace, where kids

can enjoy shopping with their friends and family. Let's attract big retail names and let's have a food court.

What else is on our wish list? We need a playground and a proper park. Adults are always encouraging children to get out of the house to get away from their computers and video games and be more active. So give us facilities for this.

Then link everything with cycleways so that kids can get there without having to be driven by our parents. It would mean our parents do not have to wait around for us to finish and double the trip. These days, our parents are constantly worried about rising petrol prices.

All these improvements to Medowie would be a great benefit for local kids. But although we look forward to a bigger and better Medowie, we do not want to lose our meaning of Medowie as the place of tall trees. We do not want to lose our natural environment.

We should have a say in what this town will be like and the improvements to it in the future. After all, we are the future residents of Medowie.

So Port Stephens Council needs to listen to our wishes, as well as to the adults. The council should encourage children to make their wishes known so that they experience what it is like to have a say in our community.

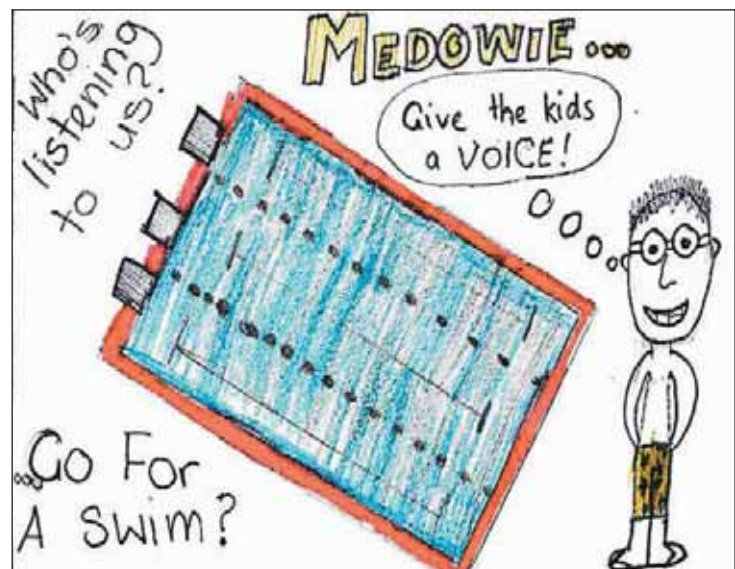


Illustration by Ashleigh Shoultz



QUEST: Senior students help younger students with their playground activities.

# Looking forward to cool times

By ELIZA CUMMINGS and SAMANTHA DAVIES

MEDOWIE Public School hopes to soon obtain a good enough electricity supply to run air-conditioners bought by the school last summer.

"The air-conditioners will be able to be used soon and our students and staff will be more able to effectively do what they do best, teaching and learning, in a comfortable environment," school principal Mr Glen Whitton said.

The federal government gave the school an \$80,000 grant from the "Investing In Our Schools" program to install an air-conditioner in every classroom.

But if the air-conditioners were used now they would drain Medowie's fragile electricity supply. Medowie occasionally suffers power outages because the town is growing too fast for infrastructure to keep up.

"Medowie is due to get an electricity upgrade soon," Mr Whitton said after speaking to EnergyAustralia.

"As soon as this happens we'll be able to get the air-conditioners working."

A Department of Education representative has said it is expected the upgrade to the school's electricity supply will be completed by the end of the next summer break.

# Making better future leaders

By TYRA HAYDEN

MEDOWIE Public School students are preparing to become the leaders of tomorrow through an initiative called QUEST (Quality, Environment, Students and Teachers).

Forty-eight Year 6 students have been chosen to resolve conflicts and organise co-operative activities.

"We want the kids to develop leadership skills," Stage 3 teacher Mrs Vicki Elliott said.

"That's especially important as they go on to high school where bullying might become more of an issue. We also need to improve their communication skills and confidence."

Children are given a one-day course in conflict resolution,

confidence-building and other personal skills.

After completing their training, QUEST graduates select sports and playing equipment on their own initiative and set up activities for kindergarten children.

"My mum was a school leader at this school and I'd like to have that privilege too," QUEST trainee Sarah Davis said.

Others see the program as an opportunity to turn their lives around.

"This is something I'd like to try," said one Year 6 boy who asked to remain anonymous. "I've been suspended before and I know what it's like. I can help others learn what I've learned so they don't make the same mistakes."

# Crunching and sipping is good for the kids

By CASEY SMYTHE

MEDOWIE Public School is part of a trend towards healthier eating sweeping Australian schools.

Many schools in the Newcastle area have signed up to "Crunch and Sip", a program that brings fruit or vegetables to snack time instead of high-sugar food bars and potato chips.

"I used to have things like potato chips and lollies," 11-year-old Hayley Waterhouse said. "But now when I open my

lunchbox there are lots of carrots. It's okay, I like carrots."

For many children the sight of fruit and vegetables is a new experience.

One teacher described how a student attracted the stares of curious classmates after they opened a carton of blueberries, an exotic fruit many had not seen.

The program, which also includes substituting water for fruit drinks, is said to improve the brain function of children.



HEALTHY LEARNING: Liam Laird and Tim Voigt take a break from learning for Crunch and Sip. — Picture by Meg Hughes

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What Australian animal is on a five cent coin?  
See page 44 for answer.

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