

Primary entry #26: Newcastle East PS



LIFE CYCLE: Maisie Denzin and Alexandra Hudson at the worm farm.

— Picture by Ged Cooper-Johnston and Kip Hamiltons

Worming a way into a better future

By MAISIE DENZIN and ALEXANDRA HUDSON

NEWCASTLE East Public School has taken up many different environmental challenges including a worm farm, frog ponds and compost area.

The arrival of "The Cube" may have destroyed some animals' natural habitats but Year 5 teacher Mrs Maryann Cummings suggested a worm farm could help.

The worms are confined to one spot where they are protected from construction taking place at the school.

Kindergarten teacher Mrs Megan Thompson had introduced fruit time, a daily session where students in her class ate fruit and listened to a story.

This was adopted by other classes but students found it frustrating that their fruit scraps were being thrown in the garbage bin.

So they were collected in a bucket and put in the worm farm to be used as compost.

To make use of the mixture from the worm farm, the school began a vegetable garden.

The school also has a frog pond but has to find a way to help it survive. One suggestion is to collect the water from the side of the road through pipes and pump it into a solar-powered water purifier from where it could be pumped into the frog pond.

Cube is a new dimension

By QUINN SQUIRES, EMILY CHEN, RUSTA KING and DYLAN POPPINGHAUS

THE inquisitive students of Newcastle East Public School faced a mystery when a big black object landed in the school grounds in March this year.

Students peeked over a fence and looked on in amazement when the structure was lifted into position by a crane.

The object, known as The Cube, was designed by architect Mr Brian Suters and environmental group Art In The City.

It was donated to the school by Mr Suters whose children and grandchildren have attended the school.

In the shape of a cube, it was also nicknamed The Lighthouse because of the solar panels with sensor lights which make the structure glow at night.

"It looks awesome when it lights up," Year 6 student Jasmine Duff said.

The Cube is designed to encourage environmental awareness.

Its black body is supposed to resemble coal and its significance to Newcastle along with BHP steel plant, a major industry employing many thousands of people until its closure in 1999.

The rectangular top which contains the solar panels demonstrates there are other ways to create power



MYSTERIOUS: Dylan Poppinghaus, Quinn Squires and Rusta King explore The Cube.

— Picture by Ged Cooper-Johnston and Kip Hamiltons

apart from fossil fuel.

Before its arrival at Newcastle East Public School, The Cube was located at the tug wharf on the foreshore of Newcastle Harbour.

The window slits were

deliberately put in as a symbol to link our past and future.

One slit showed the old coal loader and the other pointed towards Nobbys Head.

Students like to play hide and

seek and tips around The Cube and inside there is a blackboard for them to draw on.

"It's an interesting structure with a nice design, Year 5 student Tasman Fell said.



CATCHING ON: A rainwater tank at the school.

— Picture by Ged Cooper-Johnston and Kip Hamiltons

Eco-friendly homes a hot option

By SOPHIE GRAHAM and LAURANA ELLWAY

NEWCASTLE East Public School students have examined ways people can beat the rising cost of housing prices by making their homes more environmentally friendly.

While it is expensive to build an eco-friendly house, it is better for the environment and should be cheaper

in the long run.

To make your home eco-friendly you can replace regular lightbulbs with power-saving options and install water-saving shower heads in your bathroom and automatic button taps.

Outside, people can put solar panels on their roof to cut down on electricity use and future power bills.

A tank that collects rainwater can be used for water-

ing your garden and drinking.

Hoses that have adjustable nozzles and sprinklers that only work for an hour or two a day will save water for the garden.

Keeping chickens not only provides organic eggs but also fertiliser for the garden.

Recycling food scraps and putting them in a compost bin also helps the environment.

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Old school thinks outside the cube

Editorial

By GED COOPER-JOHNSTON and KIP HAMILTONS

THE Cube, or The Lighthouse, has been all the rage at Newcastle East Public School but does it really belong?

Everything at Newcastle East Public School is very old and traditional, so is this modern sculpture really suitable for the theme of our heritage-designed and listed buildings?

Newcastle East Public School was established in 1816 by Henry Wrenford, a convict sent to Newcastle for fraud. In 1814 he was given a conditional pardon to become the first schoolmaster in Australia.

Australia's oldest public school will soon become the first in Australia to celebrate its bicentenary. With a proud heritage like this, why bring something so new into something so old?

Change is exactly what this school needs. It has already joined ClimateCam (an award system run by Newcastle City Council for schools that consider the environment at every turn) and is considering a wind turbine for alternative energy. The school's new COLA (covered

outdoor learning area) has a passive solar design that local architect Mr Timothy Thurn has used to capture sunlight in winter while still providing shade in summer.

A planned wind turbine would generate a constant flow of two kilowatts of energy and solar panels on top of the COLA will generate three kilowatts during daylight. According to school principal Mr John Beach, five kilowatts is about a third of electricity used at the school.

Newcastle East has already installed water tanks and pumps for toilets and replaced 11 fluorescent light fittings to make them more energy-efficient by putting reflectors behind every light to get the same amount of light using only a third of the electricity.

The Cube was placed in the playground for children to enjoy and is proving popular for those who enjoy hide-and-seek.

Mr Beach believes that the school must keep introducing exciting new ideas in its old environment to keep the school fresh and relevant for today's students and so the school stays functional for the children.

Newcastle East Public School has a heritage of which it is very proud. But in the 21st century, it is embracing a new age of life, to move forward and continue thinking outside The Cube.

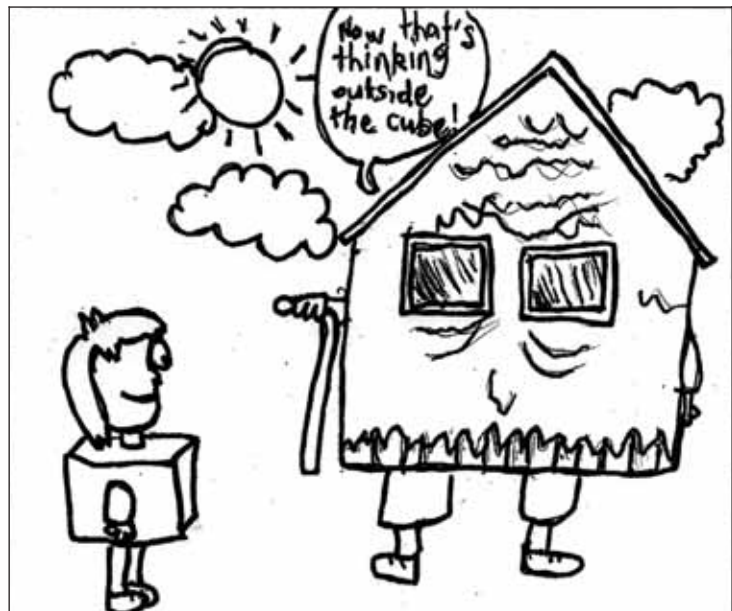


Illustration by Tasman Fell



IN THE TANK: Emily Chen shows off the ClimateCam plaque. — Picture by Ged Cooper-Johnston and Kip Hamiltons

Climate is in the spotlight

By EMILY CHEN

NEWCASTLE East Public School is participating in an environmental program called ClimateCam.

ClimateCam is designed to encourage schools to do their bit for the environment.

Nineteen other schools in the Newcastle area are taking part.

Jessica Bosscha and Melissa Cleary from ClimateCam recently visited the school and presented the principal Mr John Beach with a plaque.

A star is awarded and placed on the plaque whenever an environ-

mental goal has been achieved.

There are eight stars to be collected for environmental planning, energy and water monitoring, installation of three-star taps and bubblers, waste recycling, trees for carbon, dual-flush toilets, efficient lighting and water tanks.

Some of those tasks will be more difficult than others for Newcastle East. Efficient lighting will be a challenge because the school buildings are very old and it would take a while to cover the costs.

But the school has already been awarded its first star for installation of water tanks.

Loud howls of protest on whaling

By EVIE JURD and JASMINE DUFF

WHALING, the livelihood of whalers and the basis of many useful products, is considered by some people as cruel and heartless.

Environmental groups feel the inhumane slaughter of the majestic mammals needs to be abolished.

Many Australians also believe it should be banned.

On May 20, 2002, a letter signed by 21 renowned scientists was sent to Japan's government from the World Wildlife Fund which strongly criticised Japan's whale "research" program because it failed to meet minimum standards for credible science.

But six years later, whaling in the protected waters of Antarctica's Southern Ocean marine sanctuary continues.

Some people believe whaling is useful because it provides whale oil, ambergris (a waxy, flammable substance used in making perfume) and spermaceti, used in making candles.

The planet's great whales are battling to survive and, although some people risk their lives to protect them, there are other less dangerous ways to protest.

People can write a letter of protest, sign a petition or donate money to an organisation that actively protests about issues that affect the environment.

Eccentrics come to rescue of ozone layer

By EVIE JURD and JASMINE DUFF

SEVEN Newcastle East Public School students competed last month in the Odyssey of the Mind tournament with a performance based on the environment called The Eccentrics.

The students had to create a play using all seven performers.

Three of the characters had to be Eccentrics while the others took roles as baddies and aliens.

The problem the team had to solve was fixing a hole in the ozone layer.

The Eccentrics creatively fixed the problem by plastering a Band-Aid over the hole. When asked if they thought their solutions were sensible their views differed.

"No, of course it wouldn't (work)," Tika Wright said.

"If it was a giant Band-Aid maybe, but I doubt it," Emily Chen said.



BAND-AID SOLUTION: Evie Jurd, Emily Chen, Zac Grondin, Kip Hamiltons, Lilly Marshall, Harry Gelzinnis and Tika Wright. — Picture by Ged Cooper-Johnston

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Who is on the \$50 note?
See page 44 for answer.



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