

Cartoon: Jorja Connell

To pay or not to pay for the beach

EDITORIAL

By **TOM REES**

BLACKSMITHS Beach is a beautiful little stretch of coastline open to all licenced drivers to bring their registered four-wheel-drives.

It is one of the very few beaches that you are not required to have a permit to drive on.

Blacksmiths Beach's entrance is in Awabakal Drive with a car park great for letting the air out of your tyres. The beach provides a fun and safe area for family to participate in activities like surfing, bodysurfing and body boarding.

The closure of Stockton sand dunes has made more people drive on Blacksmiths Beach. As a result of the closures there has been an increase in the amount of people who drive on Blacksmiths Beach and this is having a negative impact on regular beach goers.

Hoons are annoying the residents and the council. The council are thinking about introducing permits to go on the beach to try stop hoons speeding round the beach and littering. The permits will cost \$55 annually and \$22 for the weekend.

The fees from permits will be used to employ a ranger to supervise the beach. A council rate rise to employ a ranger is hardly fair to those that do not currently use the beach.

A user pay system seems to be the best option. But what will happen to the population on the beach when the council makes them pay for the permits? Will there be less people driving on the beach?

Many people that drive on the beach are hoping that the council does not introduce the permits. If the hoons stop their unruly behaviour, perhaps the permits will not be introduced.

It's not only the hoons that are damaging our beach, it is rubbish dumping as well. It's both damaging to the environment and creates an unwelcoming atmosphere to locals and tourists.

Fairfax Media recently completed a poll to see if the people supported the permits. Most people voted yes. Does this show that we are happy to have to pay to get on our beach? Probably not, but it certainly does reflect the value we put on our local environment and a desire to look after it.

So next time you're down at the beach enjoying one of the last real free days out, make sure you leave it in the same pristine condition it was in when you got there.

Anzac honours for a Hunter surf lifesaver

By **AARON CRANE** and **BEAU MCGREGOR**

GORDON Richardson started rowing at the age of 15 for Caves Beach Surf Life Saving Club and has been involved ever since.

During his career he has seen many changes in rowing including the introduction of mandatory life jackets, helmets and rating systems, all designed to improve the safety of the participants.

Mr Richardson has had many major achievements throughout his career in rowing and sweeping. Rowing has taken Mr Richardson all around Australia, New Zealand and most recently England.

Throughout it all, Mr Richardson has been making model rowing boats. When Mr Richardson was asked to help build a model row boat, his career in the construction of model rowing boats began. It has recently led him to receive the honour to participate in the 100th anniversary of the Gallipoli landing.

Mr Richardson joined crew members from UK, France, Turkey, NZ and Australia, with over 35 boats taking part in the historical event.

The surf boat race was a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pay tribute to the many life savers that fought at Gallipoli, and for those who didn't return.

The boat race took place over two days on April 23 and 24, starting at Eceabat in the Dardanelles on Day one. The race consisted of six stages,



Gordon Richardson was selected to participate in an anniversary boat race at Gallipoli. Picture: Kye Gregory

taking crews along the very coastline the Anzacs fought on 100 years ago.

The race continued down the line of artillery fortifications along the south-eastern coast of the Gallipoli peninsula. After reaching the tip of the peninsula at Cape Helles, the race course turned north into the Aegean and headed up the north-western coastline of the Gallipoli peninsula, finishing at Anzac Cove the afternoon before Anzac Day.

"It was a great honour to be asked to be part of such a historical event," said Mr Richardson.

Surf boat racing has rewarded Mr Richardson with many achievements and experiences over the years. "Rowing in the Queen's Jubilee on the Thames River and being part of the Hunter Branch club surf boat crew of the century are highlights," said Mr Richardson. "I've made a lot of friends too".

Cook helps students get their hands dirty

By **AISHLINN EMANUEL** and **LAURA BARNETT**

THE Stephanie Alexander Kitchen Garden Program is a non-profit program that focuses on pleasure flavour, fun and is operated in schools around Australia.

There are more than 80,000 children are getting their hands dirty and learning how to grow, harvest, prepare and share fresh, seasonal food.

Renowned cook Stephanie said "I believe that education has to be education for life. The

children in the ... program learn how to grow, harvest, prepare and share delicious and wholesome food - experiences that will influence and inform the rest of their lives."

Kitchen Garden Schools deliver regular kitchen and garden classes, enabling skills-based learning that extends across the entire school curriculum.

Blacksmiths Public School is currently one of the schools in the program.



Enthusiastic gardeners reaping what they sow.

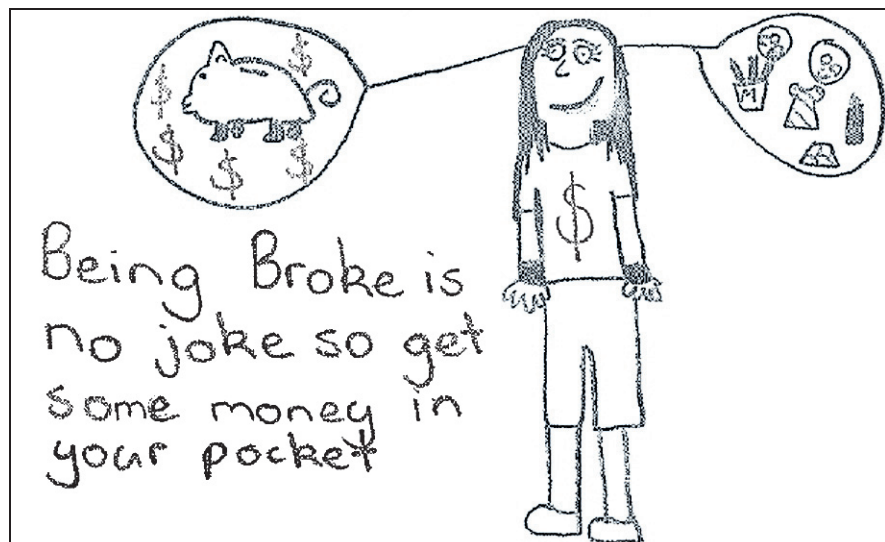
The school's students have been enjoying the program so far, and plan to

keep growing and cooking their own food well into the future.

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