



Cartoon: Zahid Shafie

Fight for the grant to buy a first home

EDITORIAL

By **HAYLEY SHEARER, TAYLA COLLINS, KOOPER ROBSON, ALANA RIMMINGTON and LARRY QUINN**

FIRST home buyers are trying to find their perfect home to settle down in, but with house prices rising and the rules to qualify for a grant always changing it is hard to find something affordable. As a result, many first home buyers are struggling to enter the market and continue paying someone else's mortgage by renting.

On July 1, 2000, a grant was introduced by the government to assist first home buyers to buy a home. This scheme was called the First Home Owners Grant, and was initially set at \$7000 for existing and new homes with an additional \$7000 through the First Home Buyer's Boost Scheme. Many first home buyers used this assistance to get a start in the property market.

Over the years, there has been a range of modifications to this scheme, with the amount offered and rules for qualification changing. On October 1, 2012, the First Owners Grant ceased and the First

Home Owner Grant (New Homes) scheme was introduced, meaning that only first home buyers building or purchasing a brand new home now qualify for government assistance. What about those people who wish to purchase an existing home? Why do they no longer qualify for a grant?

The scheme currently offers \$15,000, however it will be reduced to a \$10,000 grant on January 1, 2016.

With the shortage of available land in inner Newcastle suburbs and the high cost involved in building a brand new home, this grant isolates first home buyers. Many are now back to square one in their search for an existing home without any financial assistance.

The grants were originally brought in to give people a helping hand, however reducing the grants and changing the qualification rules is bringing back the struggle; the assistance is disappearing into thin air for many. The grant should be brought back to its original position, catering for all first home buyers, so people will have the extra financial help to break into the market.

The grants should cater for all first home buyers, not discriminate on what type of house they buy. Everyone deserves a fair chance to own a home.

St John cadets make contributions to life

By **ERIN PARKER, ABBEY GOODWIN, MELISSA DAVIDSON, JESSE TRIMBLE and LOGAN COX**

ST John Ambulance is a self-funded charitable organisation that operates all around Australia. It is a large first-aid training provider who offers its services at many local community events.

St John provides many services to the community including public and school-based first aid courses, first aid kit sales, community care services for the aged, disabled and those with learning disabilities and a national youth program catering for young people aged 8-18 years.

St John's youth programs encourage young people to get involved and learn important lifesaving skills. Children aged 8-11 are able to join as a St John Junior and children aged 12-18 participate in the cadet program.

Superintendent and officer in charge of the Mount Sugarloaf Cadet Division, Scott Roach, became involved in the St John youth programs at the age of eight. "Being a cadet in St John Ambulance gives kids the opportunity to develop life skills – not only do these include life-saving first aid skills but also leadership, communication, responsibility and social skills," said Scott.

There are many stories of success amongst the St John youth programs. Current Mount Sugarloaf cadet, Emily Dando, has been involved in



Mount Sugarloaf St John cadets and leaders meeting at Edgeworth Neighbourhood Centre.
Picture: Erin Parker

St John since she was nine. Emily is not only a St John cadet but the current St John National cadet individual first aid champion. "I like being involved in St John because I've learnt lots of new skills and met lots of new friends," said Emily.

The Mount Sugarloaf cadet division currently has approximately 20 cadets and juniors, as well as four cadet leaders and three officers. They meet weekly at the Edgeworth Neighbourhood

Centre to practise and update their knowledge and skills.

This division covers two main community events regularly, Lakes Motorcross at Awaba and the Model Steam Trains at Edgeworth, where the cadets are given the chance to get out on the field and put their skills into practice.

"I believe that all young people should learn basic first aid skills that could potentially save a life," said Scott.

GRIP: empowering leaders for the future

By **DANIEL MACKINNON, AJA RIPPON, JACK HILLIER, JACOB HAGAN and AMELIA CLARKE**

GRIP Leadership is an independent organisation that helps train and develop leaders for the future with a special focus on school students.

GRIP Leadership runs student leadership conferences all around Australia, catering for both primary and secondary students. In 2015, GRIP hosted conferences in over 75 locations with 25,229 students attending; 997 students attended the Pri-

mary Student Leadership Conference held at Newcastle Panthers on May 18.

The managing director of GRIP, Andrew Strong, explains that the purpose of GRIP is to help students believe that they all have the potential to be a leader and they can all make a difference as leaders at their school. "Everyone leads in some way or another."

"We think that students have the potential to set



Edgeworth Public School leaders working hard on their leadership plan.
Picture: Jack Hillier

the culture of a school, to make their school a place where people want to be. The students have an important role to play," said Andrew.

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