



Cartoon: Emily Engert

## Providing a voice for the voiceless

### EDITORIAL

By **ELIZABETH FINNEY**

AUSTRALIA is a beautiful country, but this beauty that we proudly behold is sometimes shadowed by a cold and unforgiving outcome regarding cruelty to animals.

What is animal cruelty? Well, animal cruelty is harming an animal in any way, including physical and psychological harm. Animal cruelty includes not providing adequate food and water for pets, not taking the appropriate action for your pets when they become ill with a disease or injury and even over-feeding your pets so they become obese.

Animals are a huge part of Australian culture. Many activities for Australians involve animals in sport or outdoor activities where people need to respect the animals that inhabit that particular environment.

Australians are known for their love of animals. However so many of our animals are beaten, disembodied, hurt and killed in horrific circumstances including recent cases involving the live bait scandal in the training of greyhounds

and the brutal killings of nine puppies in the Hunter Valley. This is not acceptable.

While Australia is mostly a nation of people who respect and care for animals, the rates of animal cruelty that have been recorded is alarming. Many animals have been rehomed, reclaimed, put down or transferred into alternative care. As a community, we should put a stop to this violence.

One of the organisations trying to put a stop to this cruelty is The Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. The RSPCA helps thousands of animals in every state and territory. The RSPCA answers at least 50,000 calls of animal cruelty and mistreatment every year.

The RSPCA is a non-government agency, meaning it relies on donations from our community. It costs an average of \$34 million for the RSPCA to operate in NSW each year, so they desperately need more donations from people to keep helping animals which have been exposed to violence.

The RSPCA plays an important role in our community defending animal's dignity however we all have the power to be a voice for the voiceless and put a stop to animal cruelty.

# Future of Boomerang Park still in question

By **EMILY ENGERT** and **GRACE SOLLY**

At present, Port Stephens Council is trying to rezone sections of Boomerang Park. Boomerang Park is a parkland covering over 20 hectares and is located in Raymond Terrace.

According to Jillian Lye, president and chair of Boomerang Park Action Group "Boomerang Park is a unique, green, open space that is utilised by our local schools and sporting communities for orienteering and cross country as well as other community groups like tai chi and yoga."

Mrs Lye said, "The park also supports an enormous amount of wildlife from native birds such as owls, corellas, grass parrots, rainbow lorikeets, black cockatoos, white cockatoos to endangered species such as koalas, grey crown babbler and various species of frogs, just to name a few. Significantly reducing wildlife habitat will adversely impact on survival and genetic diversity of all wildlife, especially our critically endangered local koala population."

According to Mrs Lye the proposed development will alienate the public by reducing the area available to the community for current and future recreational uses. It will also impact on the health and wellbeing of the community by reducing the green, open space and spoil the open vistas in the park.



Grace Solly wearing the Boomerang Action Park Group T-shirt and Emily Engert at Boomerang Park.  
Picture: Emily Maytom

Over a hectare of the park could be sold off for development to help fund a community playground. Port Stephens Council voted to adopt the master plan for Boomerang Park on November 25, 2014. If approved the park land will be rezoned to make way for over a hectare of over 55s retirement living.

The Boomerang Park Action Group is currently collecting signatures and sending letters of objection to councillors and local politicians, to have their voice heard. The matter is due before council shortly. At this point the public will have another opportunity to voice their concerns.

## Embracing Indigenous heritage and culture

By **CAITLIN PING**

EACH Monday afternoon 46 Aboriginal students currently enrolled at Grahams-town Public School come together to learn about their Aboriginal culture.

According to year 6 teacher, Mrs Trembath "The program benefits the students by linking them to their culture. It enables students to form their Aboriginal identity and link them to their heritage."

The group is led by Uncle Jim and his wife Aunty Maxine. Together

they currently work with students at 10 schools from Dungog to Nelson Bay.

"It gives the children a sense of identity and a hope for their future," Uncle Jim said. Aboriginal culture has been a part of his life and through this program he can share his knowledge with students.

In the group, students learn about the Gathung language, cooking native food and singing songs from the Worimi. Emily, a year 6 student, said she enjoyed meeting Uncle Jim's friends and singing songs.



Uncle Jim teaching students Aboriginal dot art.  
Picture: Zachary Chambers

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