

Picture: Jai Mijatovic

Good things come in small packages

EDITORIAL

By TAYISHA ROCHE

WE are lucky to still have some small schools operating in our local area. Government policy needs to recognise the many benefits of keeping these small schools open.

Research has found that smaller primary schools have a more positive effect on the academic achievement of students. Students' behaviour is better in small schools with little bullying. Small schools are well-suited to students with special needs. There are increased student opportunities and greater community involvement.

The small class sizes in small schools mean more attention for each student. This learning environment means that the teacher knows all the students really well. Learning is personal and suited to individual students' needs. Teachers have high expectations for their students and this has been proven to lead to students achieving well. Students are less likely to fall through the cracks.

Everyone knows one another so well in the small school and therefore children have more friends. Behaviour is better

because it is easier for teachers to maintain good standards of behaviour in the small setting. It's a happy, safe place to be.

Small schools are an excellent environment for students with special needs. The playground is smaller and quieter, so playtime is not overwhelming or intimidating.

There are more opportunities for students to participate. Students have a bigger chance to be involved in school teams, such as the soccer team or the debating team. There are less children competing for the places. In a big school, competition is fierce and many students miss out. Small schools also offer a wide range of activities. Many small schools have a specialist music or art teacher.

Big schools can be impersonal but small schools are more like a family. They have a strong sense of community and belonging. There is plenty of community support because everyone gets involved and helps out.

Parents choose small schools for their children because they are personal and have caring school communities. Parents know that their children will thrive in this environment.

Small schools are special places. They provide their students with the best possible education – so let's keep them open.

April super storm clean-up continues

By PHOEBE HUMPHREYS

THE residents of the Hunter are still feeling the effects of the devastating super storm that hit on April 21.

The Krake family live in Chisholm and their house was flooded during the storm, destroying all of the contents. They were forced out of their house for four months while it was being repaired. "Everything in the house got wet, we had walls collapse and all the furniture was wrecked. The house had to be left for the insurance company, so the house got mouldy. There was too much destruction to mention everything," Mrs Krake said.

The family have suffered both financially and emotionally. They have only recently moved back into their house and it's been difficult, particularly for her son who has been trying to study for the HSC.

"We had to purchase everything again and there is a still lot of work to be done," Mrs Krake said. "The hardest part is just trying to get back to normalcy. Everything has been upheaved."

The Bourke family from Millers Forest were also affected by the floods. Mrs Bourke and her sons were trapped for a week at their neighbour's house without any power.

"We walked across a paddock to get bread and milk from our neighbours. The flood water rose so quickly that we couldn't get back to our house," Mrs Bourke said.



Residents are still feeling the effects of the April floods.

Many animals in the area have been disadvantaged as a result of the floods. The Bourke family have 19 acres that were completely covered up to a metre high with floodwater after the storm.

"We had 24 horses on a small mound with no grass," Mrs Bourke said.

The devastation from the floods has created extra costs for the

family. Their horses have been unable to eat the grass because it has been affected by the flood waters.

"We have had to buy hay for the horses because they don't have any feed. It's costing us about \$250 a week," Mrs Bourke said.

There are still many other families feeling the effects of the flood, months after it happened.

Student speakers shine at public forum

By TYRONE ROCHE

MILLERS Forest Public School participates in the Small Schools Public Speaking Competition, hosted annually by Mount Kanwarly Public School.

The competition gives students from small schools in the area a chance to speak in front of a larger audience. Students Treyton Roche, Phoebe Humphreys, Jemima Burgess and Naomi Krake participated in the competition held on August 26 this year.

Teacher, Cathy Bray, worked with the students to help prepare them for the event. She said "Public speaking helps students to learn to communicate their ideas effectively, as well as increasing students' self-confidence and their creativity." After competing in the competition, the students are now more confident. Jemima has some good advice for other students: "When you are speaking on stage, just imagine all the audience look silly and then you feel more relaxed saying your speech."

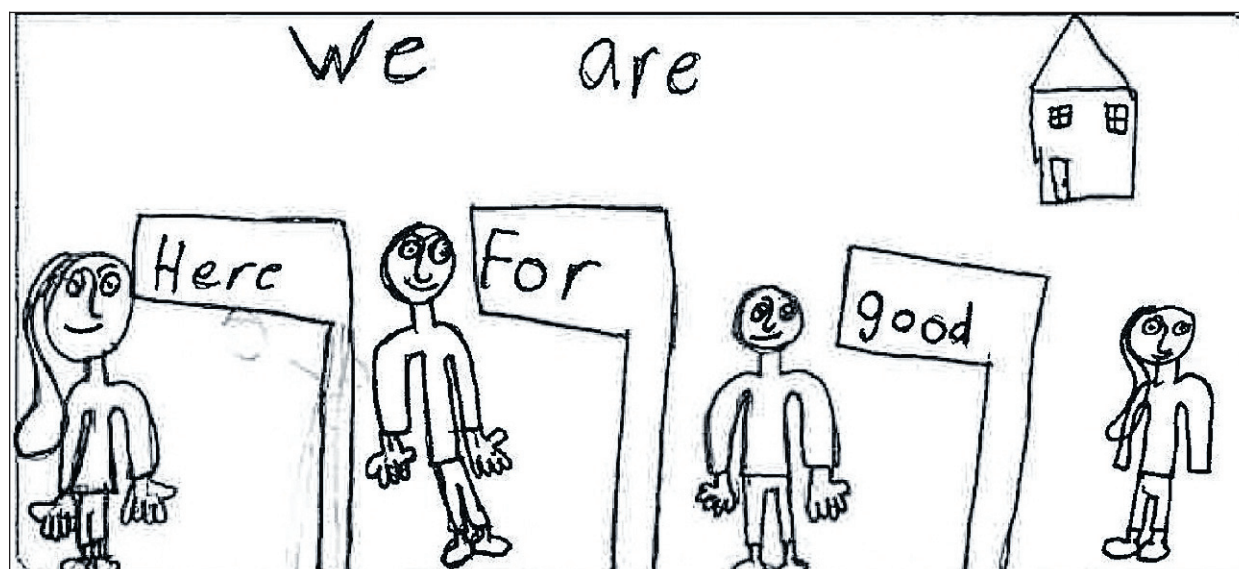


Millers Forest Public School public speaking representatives Jemima Burgess, Treyton Roche, Naomi Krake and Phoebe Humphreys.

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