

Cartoon: Melody Datson

Lack of specialists in rural townships

EDITORIAL

By LILY MILLER

HAVE you ever wondered how vulnerable children living in rural communities receive the specialist services they need? There may be a shortage of these professionals, but there is also wonderful support through local services.

With growth in local areas there are more families needing to access specialist services. This means there are too many people with problems and not enough specialists to help out. There are waiting lists full of people.

Currently there are lots of people waiting to get access to specialist services. Research shows around one in seven Australians suffer a communication problem, 386,000 have speech delays, 326,000 people stutter and 2.5 million people suffer from a problem that will need a specialist's help. That's just in Australia alone. Think about the whole world.

It is not all bad news though – small communities also run some excellent programs. OCHRE (opportunity, choice, healing, responsibility, empowerment) are committed to improving outcomes for young Indigenous children.

Their vision is to work with Aboriginal communities to

increase their confidence, capacity and opportunity to be in charge of their own future. One of their goals is to help promote culture and healing, to support Aboriginal people in maintaining the culture of their communities.

Another excellent community resource is UHCS (Upper Hunter Community Services). These services and programs are provided at various convenient locations throughout the Upper Hunter region. The QEII building in Muswellbrook is home to the Upper Hunter community services. Here you can find a range of services for community members in need.

A local family who has a child with special needs told us they have had to access five specialists including a dietician, speech therapist, occupational therapist, psychiatrist and a paediatrician. This mother expressed her concern. "We definitely need more services available here in Muswellbrook. Not only within the Hunter Health system but more private specialists, ones that can come to the school and see their environment and the progress your child is making and come up with a plan to improve your child's needs."

Even though we don't have many specialist services in the Upper Hunter, and there is a definite need for more, this rural community does have some excellent services to support families in need.

Team endeavours to make a difference

By TARNI PEREIRA

ENDEAVOUR Group Muswellbrook is a disability service which gets adults with disabilities out into the community. Endeavour is a not-for-profit organisation which means they have to raise all of their money. With 24 clients in Muswellbrook in three-and-a-half years, this service just keeps growing.

Endeavour group has other services all over the Hunter in Cessnock, Maitland, Kurri Kurri, Port Stephens, Newcastle and has some getting off the ground in Singleton and Lake Macquarie.

Endeavour's vision is for their clients not to be seen as adults with disabilities but to be seen as people living with a choice, opportunity and a sense of belonging.

The Muswellbrook service does many things out in the community such as starting their own car wash, delivering coffees to local workers, they help out with meals on wheels, wildlife aid, lunch deliveries to local mines and volunteering at community events.

One of the biggest things Endeavour has done since their services started in early 2013 was starting their own secondhand store to provide work experience to the clients and raise money for their service. They also have people from in the community that volunteer to come and do programs with the clients.

Every Thursday they have an



The team at Endeavour Group do a lot to help give people with disabilities the chance to get out and about.

The client's favourite thing at Endeavour is all the friends they have made and volunteering at wildlife aid. One of the clients said that

outing day when the clients pick something fun they want to do. It may be going out for lunch, to the movies, to the town pool or driving to Singleton for tenpin bowling.

Through discussions with clients, it has become apparent that they like Endeavour because staff are friendly and caring and they get to choose what programs they want to participate in.

"Endeavour supports me to learn life skills, gets me involved in the community and builds my independence".

Endeavour group Muswellbrook is an amazing service that is very involved in the community.

Their goal in the next few years is that they would like to see their clients being treated as normal members of the community.

Red carpet out for Muswellbrook movies

By TARNI PEREIRA, LILY MILLER and GEORGIA HUTCHINGS

THERE'S a new attraction to see in Muswellbrook and it's been a long time coming. For years people have complained that there's nothing to do in town and now a new movie cinema has opened. Who doesn't enjoy popcorn and a film?

Muswellbrook cinema opened on Boxing Day 2014. Before that residents had to drive all the way to Singleton – 38 minutes just to see a movie. Even better

news is that ticket prices are exactly the same as regional cinema prices. Plus it's got one of the best sound systems in NSW.

The cinema took six months to build. It employs 12 including some school children. They also advertise local businesses which is great for the community.

Since the cinema opened it has been very popular and a great addition to the town.

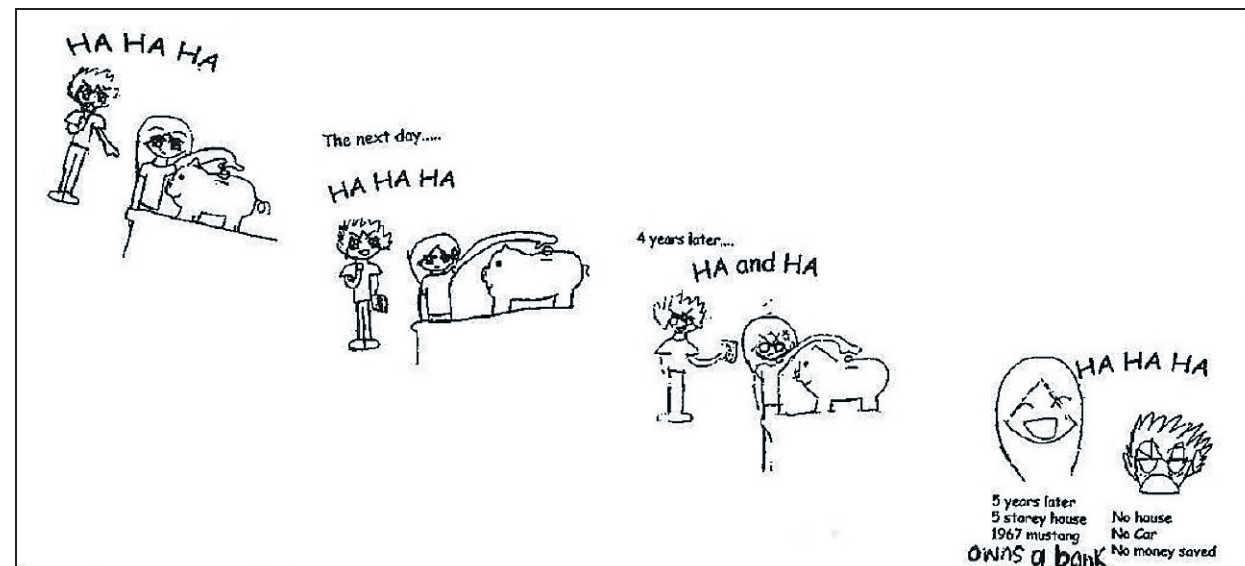


The new cinema has given residents a much-awaited entertainment venue.

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