

Primary entry #1: St Joseph's Primary Merriwa



# Merríwa Mag



Merriwa's James Hagley gets his sheep judged at a recent junior judging event.

## Competitors face judge in Sydney show

By GABY NICHOLLS and LAUREN REDGATE

JUNIOR judging has been a part of the Merriwa Show Committee for over 10 years.

In 2013, Merriwa Show Committee member Maria Cameron introduced a program for local youth called the Merriwa Show Interschool Challenge. All local high schools were invited to take part.

Successful competitors were then eligible to compete at the Sydney Royal Easter show.

The sections judged include cattle, sheep, fleece, as well as art, cooking and photography.

"Last year our Junior Judging Champion Tom McAlister was State Reserve Champion," said Mrs Cameron.

Merriwa Show Committee president Rob Tindall says there are many advantages associated the program.

"The Interschool Challenge was about creating opportunities for local youth to interact with experts in their special industry, find inspiration, work experience or mentoring to help make vital career and study choices," Mr Tindall said.

Many local grain growers and stud breeders support this competition by sharing their knowledge.

James Hagley, Kylie Farfull, Craig Walker and Rolanda Clout-Collins represented the Upper Hunter at the 2015 Sydney Royal Easter Show.

## Arguments over mining

By JOHN MAGNER, DARCY MOORE and DAMIAN JAMIESON

DEBATE is raging in the Liverpool Plains on the topic of Shenhua Watermark, a Chinese mining company, after it recently gained the licence to mine in the area.

Shenhua gained the licence to mine, causing some concerns for the farming community and a great debate has started as to whether mining should be permitted.

The Liverpool Plains is an extensive agricultural area in the north-western slopes of NSW.

The main agricultural crops include barley, chickpeas, faba beans, sorghum, sunflowers, maize, wheat and cotton.

Extensive numbers of beef cattle and sheep (mainly prime lambs) are also farmed.

Noel Saunders, a mixed farmer and owner of Saunders Contracting in the Willow Tree area felt that Shenhua would probably not mine the black soil and that they could possibly co-exist with the mines.

Mr Saunders says the biggest problem for residents would be the coal dust.

NSW Farmers' President Fiona Simpson said the decision by the panel to approve this project meant that "no place in NSW is safe from mining."

"This mine is the wrong mine in



Will prime farmland like this be affected by mining in the Liverpool Plains? Picture: Darcy Moore

the wrong place and we urge the government to honour its promise that it will protect the Liverpool Plains," Ms Simpson said.

Mining has occurred on the Liverpool Plains for 70-80 years at Werris Creek, Caroona and Gunnedah.

Former NSW Governor, Dame Marie Bashir is reported as saying, "I couldn't be more passionate about a cause than this one."

"When we raise our concerns, often the government attempts to dismiss us, but here is something

the government can't ignore," she said.

It is believed the mine will be on the stony ridge country that the locals do not use for grazing or crops.

A survey of businesses by the Gunnedah Chamber of Commerce said that 75 per cent of businesses wanted the mine to go ahead provided the water was right.

Water studies have been done by the best hydrogeologists available in Australia to ensure the water sustainability. Key conclusions

from the NSW Department of Planning and Environment state that both the ground water and bore water would have minimal impact from the mine.

The Watermark coal mine will employ a peak construction workforce of 600 employees. The workforce will build over time but will start with 200 employees in the first year of operation.

The question remains - can the mines and our farmers work together to provide a natural resource and food for everyone?



Residents at Gumman Place will be safer when the new device is implemented. Picture: Emily Ninness

## Community rallies to raise funds

By EMILY NINNESS and TIA MAGNER

THE Merriwa community is rallying to raise funds to keep their elderly residents safe.

The Rotary Club of Merriwa has teamed up with Gumman Place to raise money for a new calling device. Gumman Place is a facility that provides care for the elderly people of Merriwa and the Upper Hunter.

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It is currently in need of a new calling device as the current device is outdated.

The new device will be used to track residents' location and any irregularities in their movements.

Hostel co-ordinator Sue Duggan says the system is extremely expensive and they continue to raise funds with the help of Merriwa Rotary Club.

"A full range will cost up to \$24,000," said Ms Duggan. Gumman Place has now raised \$18,000.

"We have been raising money for 12 months, we hope to get this money by June this year," she said.

Merriwa Rotary Club is holding a cattle drive to assist with raising money.

There are also many people in the community contributing financially.



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