

Primary entry #54: Waratah Public School



WARATAH WATCH



Waratah Public School Senior Dance Troupe performed at the Hunter Dance Festival.

Picture: Monica White

Dancers in spotlight on centre stage

By EVA BURG and RUBY HOWARD

HUNTER Region Dance Festival, held most recently in July, definitely did not disappoint, with talented students dancing the nights away.

With an audience of 1200 people per night, 300 students danced over four nights at Newcastle Panthers; the organiser Carol Birrell and her team arranged dancers while organising lighting and sound.

Since 1992, dancers have come to perform on one of the nights held at Newcastle Panthers. Carol Birrell, the organiser, said there is a panel that decides which 80 schools out of 180 schools across the Hunter go through to perform on a select night.

Students from kindergarten through to year 12 learn and present a variety of dances from hip-hop to contemporary; no matter what type of dance, the festival has a style to suit everyone. Caleb Gedeon and Emily Kelly, two dancers from Waratah Public School, shared their experiences and thoughts about the event. Caleb said that his favourite part was the talent that each and every student presented, while Emily loved both participating in and watching the dances.

Cheryl Bailey, a choreographer, believes the Hunter Region Dance Festival is a great opportunity for children who don't usually get to perform in front of an audience.

This celebration of dance isn't stopping any time soon.

By IMOGEN BARKER, KATE MARSCHALL and LOUISE ROTHKIRCH

"I DID drama when I was young and really enjoyed it. In the theatre is where I feel happy and safe," Erika Gelzinnis said. It is this passionate enthusiasm which she hopes to pass to her students.

Ms Gelzinnis is an arts practitioner who has enjoyed the dramatic business since she first attended Young People's Theatre when she was just 8 years old. She did her first TV ad at the age of 16. Ms Gelzinnis, now 50, has recently been working at Waratah Public School, starting a new program called Open Cage. She said "I love being at Waratah. After today, I will have met all the students and almost all the teachers."

Ms Gelzinnis has been introducing individuals to the fun and excitement of drama, playing games, doing physical activities and just having fun with the students and staff.

Throughout her time as arts practitioner, Ms Gelzinnis has worked with classes made up of individuals with all sorts of backgrounds, stories and experiences. Some of the classes have students with disabilities. She said "I like teaching everybody and the way I teach is to look at who I'm working with, how they learn and what I



Members of an 'Open Cage' drama group, with Erika Gelzinnis (second row, right).

need to do to make it safe and fun for them to learn. I sometimes need special equipment or support."

Ms Gelzinnis says one of her favourite parts of her job is "creating art in collaboration with other people and getting to share their creative journey. That applies to students, audiences and other people."

With the assistance of her train-

ees, Ms Gelzinnis trains people who are inspired to do what Ms Gelzinnis does. One of those students is Sarah, who recently finished school in 2014 and hopes to venture into a career in drama, just like Ms Gelzinnis.

In addition to being an arts practitioner and teaching many classes, Ms Gelzinnis has toured,

performed and helped out with companies like Nomads, Norpa, Theatre North and Brainstorm.

She would like to stay at Waratah Public School for as long as she can. "It's so special that Waratah Public School has given me the opportunity to run Open Cage. Mrs Bowen [principal of Waratah] has been so kind and generous."

A new look and location for the Newcastle Courthouse.

Picture: Connor Beveridge



A fresh look for justice precinct

By CONNOR BEVERIDGE and MATTHEW CASEY

THE State Government has started a new project in Newcastle – that of the new and improved Newcastle Courthouse. It will hold 10 "state-of-the-art" courtrooms and two tribunal rooms that can host any local, district or Supreme Court hearings.

One courtroom will be designed and built to cater a trial with 10 defendants and

a jury panel of 15 members. The new building will be designed with environmentally responsible features such as solar panels and smart natural light in order to reduce the building's carbon footprint. Construction is difficult and over 700 people have worked on the job. The new courthouse is being built because of issues

with the old courthouse including: infesting rats and vermin, "lacking adequate air-conditioning" and the mere age of the existing courthouse.

Councillor Andrea Rufo said the "new \$94 million courthouse will be one of the biggest and most technologically advanced court facility outside Sydney greatly improving the region's access to justice".



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