

# The costly world of playing sport

## EDITORIAL

By **BRODIE PRESTON,**  
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**CONNOR WESTBURY**

HAS your child ever played sport at your local club?

Everyone enjoys the thrill of meeting new friends, gaining new skills, being part of a team and learning about commitment.

However, these experiences are being swapped for hours on electronics due to the expense.

We have all heard the alarming statistics that there is an obesity epidemic in Australia.

As a nation we are becoming larger and less active, and are now putting a huge strain on our health system.

But what is the solution? Sport. The truth is that active people are healthier people.

However, the costs that are associated with the majority of today's sports are ludicrously expensive.

Too many families are currently suffering from financial problems.

Paying the bills, buying food, keeping children clothed and maintaining vehicles all take precedence over sporting fees and costs.

Many parents are aware of the upfront membership fees, the

court or grounds fees, the referee or umpire fees, and all extra costs – including uniform, shoes and transport to and from venues – that come with playing a sport.

These are even greater if several children play each week.

As a result, more families are choosing a cheaper option to keep their children occupied and entertained: technology.

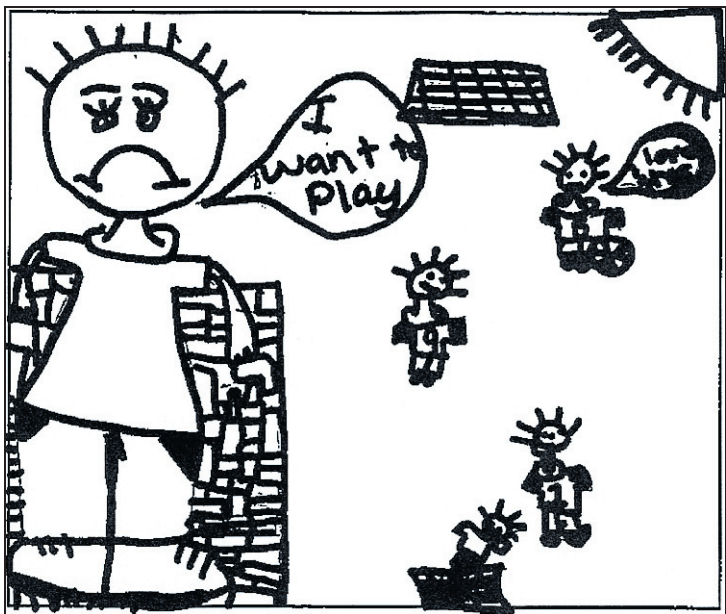
Children are more capable today of navigating the soccer field on iPod, Xbox or PlayStation than in reality.

It is easy to understand why parents are choosing electronics over individual and team sports. A single season of sport can cost more than \$1000 a season for each child, whereas a PlayStation can entertain family members for much less and does not need renewing every 12 months.

The federal government has just announced its budget, with a strong focus on education and health reform.

A proactive approach to improving our country's health would be for the government to allocate a portion of this funding to subsidise sporting association fees and lower insurance premiums for local clubs.

If clubs are forced to shut down due to not enough members, rising insurance premiums and land rates, Australia could become one of the unhealthiest and unhappiest nations in the world.



Cartoon: Lara Stace



**FRIENDLY:** Students Lucy Donn, Holden Hines and Natane Hoyle look forward to a bully-free school.  
Picture: Zanthia Crump

## Students aim for blue skies

By **ZALI GUNTHER, ZANTHIA CRUMP** and **BLAYDAN LAVERICK**

A UNIQUE anti-bullying initiative was launched at Cessnock West Public School on March 25. Created by Skye Monckton, the Blue Skies Project aims to eradicate bullying in all schools and eventually workplaces across Australia.

"I came up with the Blue Skies Project because I had seen the effects bullying has had on my family, my friends and yes, me too. I hope the Blue Skies Project hits all the schools in NSW," said Ms Monckton.

Bullying is not exclusive to one particular group. Workplace harassment, racial and social discrimination are more common than most

people would like to believe.

"It doesn't just stop when you are no longer a child and that is why I want the Blue Skies Project to be in all workplaces as well," she said.

Blue Skies is about identifying what bullying is, how to help others and how to deal with the bully. The phrase "Don't cross the skyline" is used to inform the bully that what they are doing will not be tolerated.

Students now understand the various types of bullying and appropriate action to be taken.

Natane, a student, remembers being threatened by another student: "They said mean words and were threatening to punch me. I said 'don't cross the skyline' and the bully walked away."

## A fresh cheer in store for the home team

By **GRACE BROWN,**  
**TAMSYN CORDWINER**  
and **SANDRA GADE**

CESSNOCK Goannas are thrilled to now be supported by their very own enthusiastic cheerleading squad for the 2013 rugby league season.

Coached by Clara-May Porteous, the squad of almost 20 girls cheer for the team every home game at Baddeley Park.

Approached by Cessnock Goannas, Kirsty Gunther, owner of Kirsty Gunther Academy of

Dance, initiated the cheerleading squad.

Ms Gunther's experience and knowledge of teaching dance has ensured the squad is enjoyable to watch.

"Cheerleading is great for the girls to work in a different environment and with different peers and teachers," she said.

Cheerleader Zali Gunther is enjoying the experience that it is giving her.

"I have made some good friends and I am constantly improving my skills as a dancer," she said.



**READY:** Zali Gunther is prepared for the 2013 rugby league season.  
Picture: Grace Brown

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