

Wide, brown land has room to roam

EDITORIAL

By ALICIA CLYDSDALE, ALANA SMITH, VICTORIA McNAUGHT and SARAH WHITBY

THERE is no doubt that students would not want eight-foot fences around their school.

If parents are worried about the safety of children, don't build fences – move to the country.

In the country there is less pollution, it is a lot safer for kids to run around and there is a better lifestyle.

Living in the country is better than city living because there is far less pollution.

People often talk about the high quality of country air, and for good reason: it's fresh, clean, clear and makes you feel great.

The reason for this is simple: fewer cars and fewer people.

The quality of country water is also much higher.

On any regular visit to the river, you can see many living creatures such as frogs, eels, ducks, tortoises and birds.

There is also much less noise in the country. In the city there are trams, cars and people yelling outside your house or having parties in the middle of the night keeping you awake.

Living in the country also has lots of safety benefits.

There is less traffic, which means reduced danger of accidents which can cause serious injuries or even death.

Country lifestyle promotes healthy living through a strong connection to the environment and the community.

In the country there is a close community, where everyone knows each other which means help is always close by.

Kids can walk down the street by themselves without being scared that someone is going to hurt them.

It is hard not to appreciate the environment when you are living in the country.

Every day you can look out the window to see rolling hills, trees, birds, dogs, cats, horses and ponies.

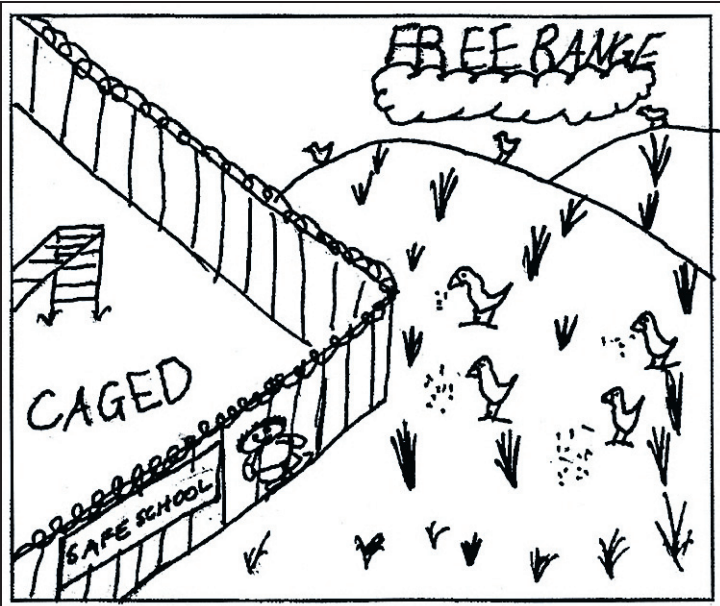
The view fills you with a peaceful, calming sense of satisfaction free from any harsh, artificial city noises.

The country might not have beaches, but there are rivers and plenty of places to go camping.

People are better off living in the country because you can be wild and free.

Children should be allowed to roam, to explore.

So knock down those eight-foot school fences and let kids be free. Or, better still, move to the country.



Cartoon: Blake Tritton and Joseph Whaley



LEARNING: Mackenzie Blackadder in the kitchen. Picture: Liana Byfield

Young cooks grow healthy

By LIANA BYFIELD and NAKETTA CAMERON

TODAY'S society is the fattest on record. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 70 per cent of males and 56 per cent of females were overweight or obese in 2011-2012.

Many schools are introducing cooking and gardening programs to teach students about where food comes from and how important it is to their health in order to reduce obesity among their communities.

At Merriwa Central School, students are learning how to grow their own food and how to cook it in nutritious meals.

Through this, they are developing an understanding of how food helps

their bodies and how they can live longer, happier lives.

Food technology teacher Aaron Creamer aims to promote a love for food and how families can use it to strengthen family bonds.

"Bringing families together over a simple meal and them talking about their days is a great achievement and something that is well worth sharing with students," he said.

The garden is a part of a school program called Patch to the Plate, which first began with a donation from the Merriwa Central School Parents and Citizens Committee.

In order to maintain the herb and vegetable garden program, it is hoped students will sell vegetables, herbs and food items.

Pig damage too costly for farmers

By JAMIE CONSTABLE and COOPER BEENEY

FERAL pigs brought to Australia by early European settlers are costing the Australia economy an estimated \$100 million annually, according to the Department of Environment and Conservation NSW.

Feral pigs are a huge threat due to the wide number of exotic diseases such as foot and mouth disease, rabies and African swine fever that they carry.

On farms around Merriwa, feral pigs are destroying fences, water holes and digging up the ground. The pigs can also kill and eat up to 40 per cent of newborn lambs.

The Rural Lands Protection Act, enforced by rangers from the Livestock Health and Pest Authority, states that every landholder must continually control feral pigs on their land.

Merriwa farmer Chris Beeneey deals with the constant problems associated with pigs.

"Feral pigs are a constant problem to deal with. Just when you think you are on top of the problem, another mob moves in," he said.

"Our main issue is the diggings, where they rip up large areas of ground, reducing feed for our cattle which causes weeds to grow in these areas.

"Often they get stuck into crops reducing yield by digging it up or trampling it, costing us thousands in lost income."

Giving the youth a place to be themselves

By JAMES BRISTOW, JIMMY ZAMMIT and JOHN HAMSON

IN country towns across Australia, youth centres provide a vital service to the local community by entertaining young people and allowing them to participate in activities that they would not normally be able to do.

Merriwa Youth Services officer Justine Witney has worked hard to overcome some of the challenges young people face living in a remote area.

"As we are from a remote area with no public transport, for some this is the only opportunity to explore outside the area," Ms Witney said.

"The Youth Centre provides a safe and supervised environment where young people are welcome to attend and have a great time," she said.

Since reopening in 2008, the centre has seen a rise in youth participating in various programs.

Open Thursday nights, it provides free computer and internet use.



OPPORTUNITIES: John Hamson, youth officer Justine Witney and James Bristow. Picture: Jimmy Zammit

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