

Secondary entry #8: Narara Valley High School



The Valley News



JOURNEY: Dennis Cooper (yellow) steers the ship during a training run. Picture: Emmaline Cooper

Inspiration sails toward Rio and glory

By EMMALINE COOPER and ALISSA KEISELIS

DENNIS Cooper, of Niagara Park, is on his way to the 2016 Rio de Janeiro Paralympics for sailing. He has been training at Rushcutters Bay with other sailors, including former gold medallist Liesl Tesch.

Dennis is a T10 paraplegic who has lost all feeling below his waist and will never walk again. He has become an inspiration to many disabled people.

"When you first become a paraplegic, you are highly unmotivated and feel like giving up," Dennis said. "If people see an old man like me doing this they might think 'hey, if that old guy could do something like that then I shouldn't give up, either'."

Dennis has had to focus on exercising his upper body and needs to be in top condition for this task.

"You have to be really fit and in shape for this, and when you're older than the average person as well as in a wheelchair and unable to move the bottom half of your body, it is really tough."

Dennis said the sailors' main interest is in the journey rather than the reward, and they are just focused on doing the best they can.

"Going to the Paralympics is not just about going there to get a gold medal, it is to push and challenge myself, and this is definitely the hardest challenge I have done my entire life."

By SHANIA ANDERSON and DARCY ARCHER

LOCAL filmmaker and mother-of-two Kaye Harrison has had her latest documentary *The Sunnyboys* screened at the Sydney Opera House's Vivid Festival this year.

The documentary filmmaker began directing the project in 2010. *The Sunnyboys* is about the life of the lead singer of hit '80s band *The Sunnyboys* Jeremy Oxley, who has been living with schizophrenia for 30 years.

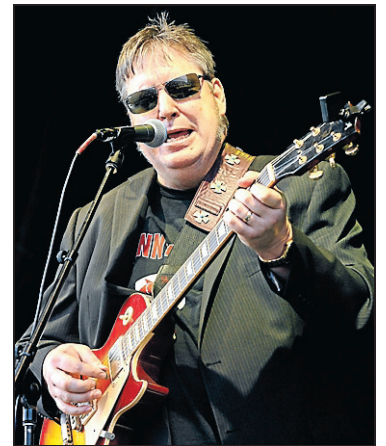
Over the course of two years, Ms Harrison frequently visited the Oxley family and documented the life of a family living with mental illness.

"I want to make films about these issues because they are not understood completely. A lot of ignorance surrounds the idea of schizophrenia and I want to show people the way it actually is," Ms Harrison said.

By the end of 2012, Ms Harrison had almost finished her documentary and was already planning on entering the film into prestigious Australian documentary festivals



DIRECTION: Kaye Harrison at work and Jeremy Oxley of the Sunnyboys.



Main picture: Darcy Archer

such as the Sydney Film Festival, the Melbourne Film Festival and the Vivid Festival which is also in Sydney.

This isn't her first time directing a documentary made to be screened on live television.

Already, Ms Harrison's other two documentaries, *The Long Goodbye* and *Crossing the Line* have been shown on ABC television and have

been great successes. The films both document the lives of families living with different illnesses.

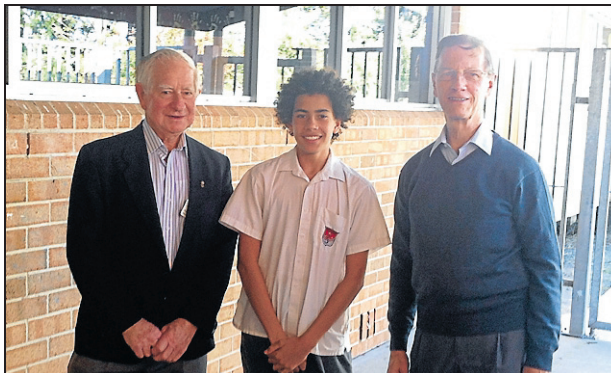
The Long Goodbye focuses on dementia, while *Crossing the Line* is about aboriginal health issues.

One out of four families live with mental illness in some point of their lives.

As such, it is hoped that Ms Harrison's exploration of the Oxley

family will be one that many people can relate to. For others, it is a great chance for viewers to learn about the pain that is suffered by dealing with a mental illness.

The film screened at the Vivid Festival at the Sydney Opera House on June 2 and will be screened on ABC television later this year.



LIBRARY: Rotary members Peter Turnbull and Henk Smith with Abel Vueti. Picture: Jack Berry

Students strive to pursue dream

By TAHLEE HAMILTON, JACK BERRY, ABEL VUETI and DYLAN WEDLAKE

STUDENTS at Narara Valley High School have been working tirelessly to honour a wish made by Tevita Vueti, the father of two Narara Valley High School students.

Mr Vueti passed away in August 2012. His life's dream was to establish a library for a school in his village in Fiji.

The library will give the children of the Mokani village greater advantages to boost their education and will build a path of opportunity in the children's later lives.

Students in the school's Interact group are pursuing this wish. Interact was created by Rotary Australia to involve school students in community volunteering.

The students are hoping to

raise enough money to build the library and are also collecting second-hand books to fill the shelves.

The devastated sons enlisted the help of their fellow Interact members and the local Rotary to make their father's dream come true.

"It's what my father would have wanted, without Rotary's help this project would be impossible," eldest son, Abel Vueti, said.

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