

# Bigger than the sum of its parts

## EDITORIAL

By CAITLIN MAHER

CAN you imagine what it would be like to have a loved one who needed an organ donation? Watching them get sicker as each day passed, hoping and praying that the phone would ring to tell you that an organ is available.

While many do not know what this is like, it can happen to anyone. In Beresfield, 12-year-old Michael Phillips' family went through this excruciating experience.

When he reached the top of the waiting list, the wait continued. His family had nearly given up but then the call came. Michael was one of the lucky ones who eventually got the heart he needed in January this year.

Kylie Roeth's family, of Morpeth, made the decision to donate the organs of a loved one in 2011.

Australia is ranked 24th in the world for the number of people willing to donate organs. Australia is a leader for successful transplant results but around 1600 people are on the waiting list for organ transplants. In order to become a donor in Australia,

people must register. In top-ranked Spain, everyone is an organ donor unless they specifically decline. The fact that Spain's organ donation rate is more than double that of Australia seems to prove that an opt-out system is better than an opt-in system.

Hundreds of people die each year waiting for an organ. This clearly is not good enough when lives could be saved if people had just made a phone call.

If Australia had an opt-out program more lives could be saved.

This would best be combined with a rule that the decision of the deceased stands. Heartbreakingly, in Australia more than 40 per cent of families override the request of the deceased. This means that even if someone chooses to be a donor, nearly half the time the family refuses to allow this last wish.

If someone's will stands after they are deceased, surely their organ donation decision should stand as well. The federal government should enable more Australians to join the 354 donors of 2012 who gave 1052 fellow Australians a new chance in life. The best way is to create an opt-out system with a hard line to follow the wishes of the deceased.

Register and opt to save up to eight lives today.



CONNECTED AGAIN: Adam Rusak with his new iPad after his previous one was stolen. Picture: Abby Morris

# Link to world gets snatched

By OLIVIA JENNINGS and CAITLIN MAHER

TO some, an iPad is more than just a device for games and email. Adam Rusak is one of those people.

Adam, 18, is a student at the Hunter River Community School. As he is affected by Fragile X syndrome, he is unable to communicate verbally and is considered to be severely mentally disabled.

According to his teacher Tracey Rapson, Adam uses the Proloquo2go app which allows him to use symbols to make sentences that the iPad turns into speech, enabling him to communicate his wants and needs with others.

On February 19, his class was

visiting Woolworths at Green Hills doing their weekly shop for the canteen. At about 9.45am, three young men allegedly snatched Adam's iPad and ran off.

Ms Rapson said "I never dreamed one of my students would be robbed in the supermarket ... I encourage them to be as independent as possible".

After reviewing footage of the incident police have located one of the culprits, with sentencing yet to occur.

For Adam, despite the horror of being robbed, the story has a happy ending.

The Social Club from Woolworths at Green Hills, collected funds and purchased him a new iPad.

# The work of a smiling heart beats on forever

By GRACE MacMILLAN and GEORGIA HALES

WHEN Suzanne Morgan retired as principal from St. Joseph's, East Maitland, she had no plans of bowls and crocheting.

Mrs Morgan decided to try to live the verse from the Gospel of Matthew that says "I was hungry, you fed me. I was naked, you clothed me."

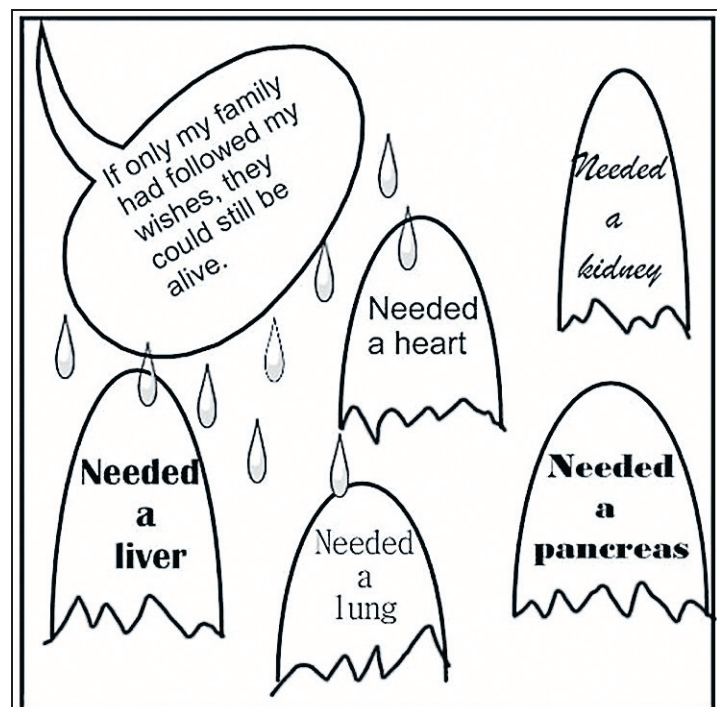
As such, she decided to head off to Cambodia, one of the poorest countries in the world, to teach.

Mrs Morgan found it hard to see children "who are so immersed in poverty that they are not fed, clothed or sheltered adequately".

The school she worked at has no electricity, there were no walls and the roof was collapsing. She travelled to school via tuk-tuk. She says her own accommodation was clean but very basic by Western standards.

Mrs Morgan said her greatest sense of accomplishment was spending time at the Smiling Hearts school. "So many people have touched my heart," she said.

"I remember a three-year-old with a bit of material tied around her waist to clothe her. I got some more material and made her a skirt. She was so happy. The simple things mean so much."



Cartoon: John Skinner

# A park that goes beyond the Bero Bears

By EMILY EDMONDS

IN the past 12 months Tarro Park has been utilised by community groups beyond those of the mighty Bero Bears.

Some Emerging Jets teams (the younger version of the Newcastle Jets) have chosen Tarro Park as their home ground.

One parent of an under 11 Emerging Jet said the club had chosen the field as it was a central location for players to get to, "and they try to cater to people from different areas".

Hunter Valley Grammar School also used Tarro Park for the first time last year for its school cross country.

Director of Sport Tony Burgess said he thought it "was by far the best cross country event" the school had held.

Local schools have been using the park for years.

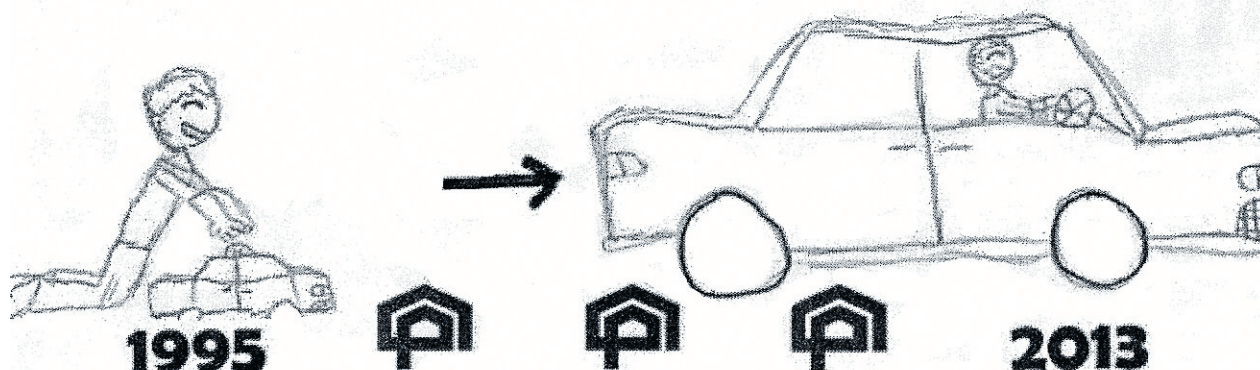
Now that others beyond the area are recognising it as a valuable asset, the community hopes Newcastle City Council will not try to include Tarro Park in their budget cuts.



FIELD FOR ALL: Tarro Park has proven to be a valuable asset to the entire community, and those further out of the area. Picture: Lucy Larney

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