

We're reaching the end of the rail line

EDITORIAL

By **BILLY McLOUGHLIN**

AFTER a long and hefty debate, the decision has been made to stop the heavy railway running from Wickham into the CBD.

This decision will have a major effect on people who use the train to access the beach and city.

The railway line will be cut sometime after 2015. According to NSW Planning Minister Brad Hazard: "The day has arrived, the numbers have been crunched, the decision has been made."

It will be a \$120 million project, which includes proper disposal of the metal but environmentalists are concerned that the re-use of the timber is still unknown.

One of the major issues at this stage is that no alternative to the rail line has been finalised. Council assures us that the CBD will still be accessible, but is unable to confirm a viable option.

Narrow vision has been demonstrated by not taking into account international evidence that highlights the advantages of a rail line in close proximity to central business districts.

Many people use the train up to an average of four times a day including local business people, local shoppers, tourists and day visitors to the region. It is inevitable

that this decision will significantly impact these people.

Tourism attracts approximately 3500 visitors to Newcastle each year, with 70.5 per cent of these being domestic day visitors. How will people access the CBD for businesses to benefit if the rail line does not get within walking distance?

There are some positive outcomes that will benefit the initiative to revitalise the CBD, including beautification schemes of tree planting and cleaning of graffiti. The cutting of the rail line will also enable easier access to the harbour and all it now offers.

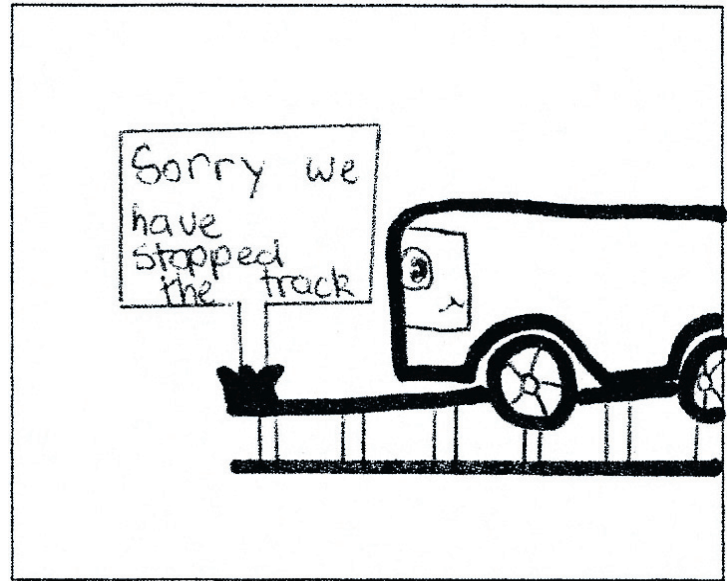
The mayor of Cessnock has made it very clear he is against the cutting of the train line, given the people in his area will be affected, and the leader of the Save Our Rail organisation developed a petition that included 10,000 citizens angry about the cut.

Newcastle MP Tim Owen supports the rail cut: "The destruction of the railway line will help move our city forward."

He believes it will further add to the development and advancement of infrastructure in the CBD.

For many years, the CBD has struggled to attract people. The development of Honeysuckle, opening of restaurants and bars, and a number of residential apartments has started a renewal process.

Time will tell if cutting the rail will be short-sighted or visionary.



Cartoon: Rori Candian

A robot team invades globe

By **HEATH TURNER**

IN June this year the NUBots from the University of Newcastle travelled to the Netherlands to compete in RoboCup.

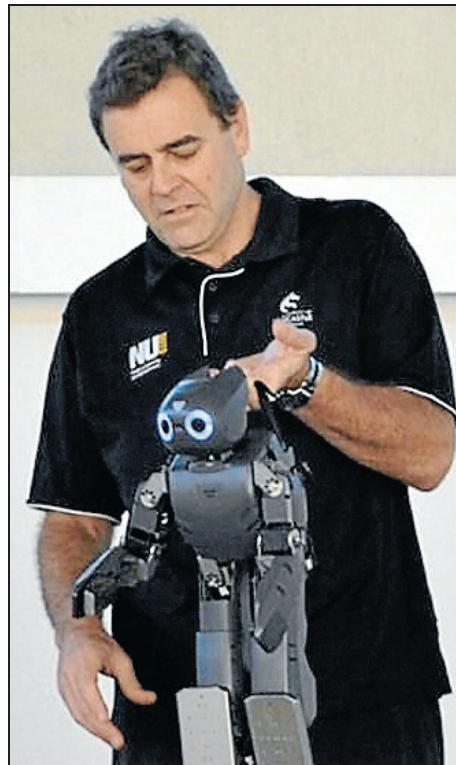
RoboCup is an international competition to further the development of robotics. There are three types of competitions at RoboCup. These include Robot Soccer, Rescue Robots and Robots at Home.

The NUBots have competed in Robot Soccer at RoboCup since 2003 and were world champions in 2006 and 2008. The NUBots are currently competing in the kids-sized Humanoid Soccer league.

This year the team consisted of six students and two staff members who work in the robotics lab at the University of Newcastle.

At RoboCup this year there were 24 teams from universities around the world including USA, Iran, Israel, South Korea, Japan, England, Germany and France. The NUBots finished in 10th position.

Peter Turner is a member of the team. His job is to fix the robots between the games. When asked what could be done to improve on the NUBots' 10th placing he said: "We need to be able to



work out which way the robot is facing. Both goals were yellow this year and it was difficult to work out which goals we were attacking and which goals we were defending."

The NUBots hope to compete in 2014 and are aiming to make the semi-finals.

HIGH TECH: Peter Turner shows his robots to the students at St James Primary.

Picture: Kate Dundas

The cost of fashion not worth lives

By **SERAFINA ANGELI**

ON April 24, Rana Plaza, an eight-storey Bangladeshi clothes factory, collapsed and more than 1000 people were killed.

It housed many clothing factories and had started to show serious cracks, but warnings to close the building were ignored.

The collapse awakened the world to the awful conditions in which these people work.

Many chain stores use sweatshops to make their clothes. In better Bangladeshi factories, clothes makers are paid around \$16 a week, but in many factories, workers get around \$2.50 a week.

The conditions in the sweatshops are so poor because consumers want cheaper clothing, forcing companies to source cheap clothes from sweatshops in countries where wages are much lower.

Poor pay, injuries and heat exhaustion are common. But consumers are now becoming more aware and are rethinking their need for a bargain.

Recently, 50 brands worldwide, including Target, Cotton On and Forever New, have signed up to the Bangladesh Fire and Safety Accord, an international effort to change conditions in the sweatshops.

While this is promising, the surviving Rana Plaza workers continue to protest for wages lost since April.

Spending time with a Stoogle and a writer

By **LILLY BAINES** and **SARAH deGROOT**

DR Cameron Stelzer visited St James Primary to share with the students what it's like to be a writer and illustrator. Dr Stelzer, who is the author of the Stoogle series, has a PHD in visual arts.

He started writing nine years ago, but before he became an illustrator and writer he wanted to be an actor, lawyer or an artist.

Some of his favourite authors include Graham Bass, Emily Rodda, Roald

Dahl, Anthony Horowitz, Paul Jennings and Morris Gleitzman.

At the moment he is editing two books called *Kings Key* and *Destiny of the Pie-Rats* and he is going to start writing a book titled *Trophy of the Champions*.

Dr Stelzer says *The Forgotten Map*, his latest book, is his favourite.

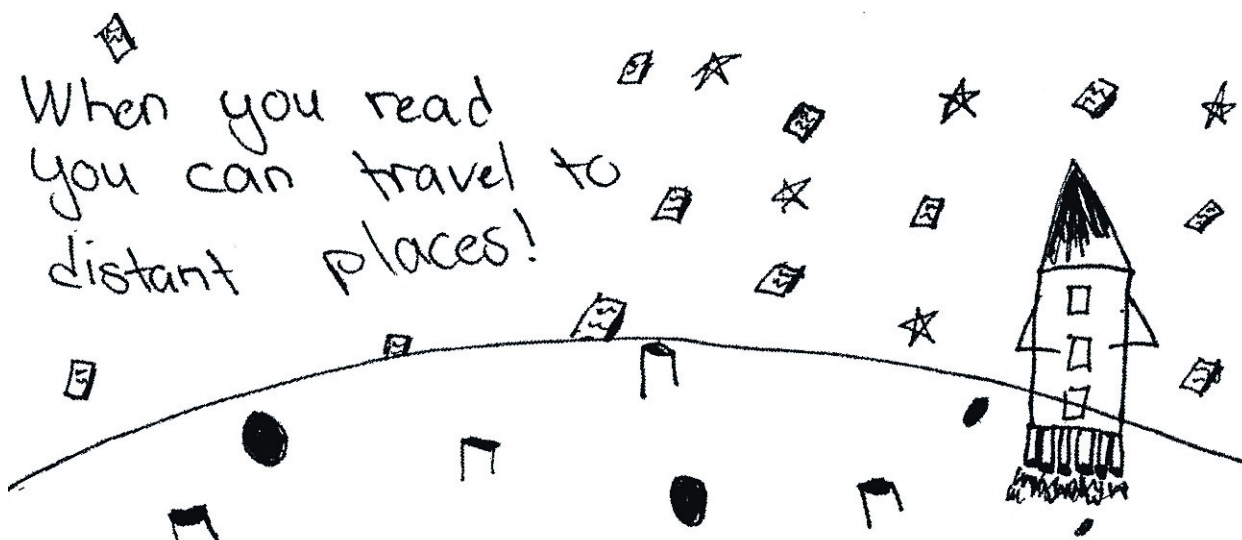
He says children and the audience inspire him to write children's books. Dr Stelzer writes books because they're fun, humorous and he gets to use his imagination.



IMAGINE: Lilly Baines and Sarah deGroot with author Dr Cameron Stelzer. Picture: Charlotte Roberts

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