

Council is barking up the wrong tree

EDITORIAL

By **LEILANI THORNE, GABI DE VOS** and **TAYLA MILLER**

DOGS are great pets for families. They teach children to become more responsible, they provide companionship and encourage exercise.

However, suggestions that Port Stephens Council is considering opening Fingal Bay beach to dogs have been met with both delight and disgust by residents.

While there are many positive aspects to dog ownership, such as increased exercise, there are some distinct drawbacks, not the least of which is dogs doing their business on the shores of Fingal Bay.

Dog owners may rejoice that they could let their pooches roam the beach while they relax and enjoy their time on the shores, however residents would prefer to keep the beach dog-free.

After all, dogs are carnivores and may attack wildlife, they might hurt or scare children, disrupt residents or make the beach their toilet.

From a dog owner's point of view, they pay rates and dog registration and therefore should have a right to use the public spaces of Port Stephens as there are not a lot of dog beaches.

Another benefit is that dog-owning tourists who would not normally come to the area will be able to bring their dogs with them. This will boost the economy in Port Stephens, creating jobs and supporting businesses.

While there are some positive outcomes, the negatives of having dogs on our beaches have to be considered carefully.

Fingal Bay's beautiful scenery may become disrupted with dogs spraying sand in people's faces and polluting the beach by leaving nasty surprises for unsuspecting nippers on Sunday mornings.

There are some dog owners who don't control their dogs and just don't clean up. Behaviour like this will discourage tourists.

Loud barking can also be very disruptive and it would be an unattractive place to stay if dogs were invading people's personal space. Dogs may also become a danger for people, including life savers and the surf lifesaving club if they interfere with rescues.

No one can predict how dogs will interact with other people and other dogs. There are just too many unknowns.

While there are many reasons why Fingal Bay beach should allow dogs, it is likely that dogs will ruin the beach for residents and tourists.

The council is barking up the wrong tree if it puts the needs of dogs before the needs of people.



Cartoon: Molly Wray



CLINK: Principal Helen Bourne doing the time under the close eye of Snr Constable Smith and students Poppy Kaluski and Stella Compton.

Locked up for a good cause

By **LACHLAN ORTON**

ON April 2, St Michael's Primary School Nelson Bay participated in the PCYC's fund-raiser "Time for Kids". This program raises money for the PCYC and its programs including leadership and development, crime prevention and youth in need.

School principal Helen Bourne was a great sport on the day, and agreed to be locked up in a jail cell wearing complete convict attire and was sentenced by a judge.

The children decided Ms Bourne should be charged with not giving enough playtime, making students do homework, making teachers have staff meetings, and expecting teachers to do work after school.

It was then up to the students, staff and parents to raise enough money to have her released. Luckily the school raised \$1800 which, much to the relief of Ms Bourne, saw her released from the cell.

"I did time to stop youth crime and was pleased to do it," Ms Bourne said.

Days later, on April 11, Ms Bourne also bravely went back into her cell at d'Albora Marinas Nelson Bay to raise more money for the PCYC. This time she had to wear real handcuffs. It gave great exposure to both St Michael's Primary School and the work the PCYC does in the local community.

The PCYC has supported young people in NSW for the past 75 years.

Raising the roof to help students in need

By **ANGELINA GRAHAM, JADEN PILLEY, ABBEY RAY, NOAH TYSON** and **ANABELLA MARINO**

STUDENTS at St Michael's Primary School have raised the roof, literally.

Amazingly, they managed to raise it 7000 kilometres away and they didn't even need to make lots of noise to do it.

The school recently held a mufti day to help children at the Smiling Hearts School in Siem Reap, Cambodia.

Sue Morgan, former

principal of St Joseph's Primary, East Maitland, and volunteer at Smiling Hearts, said the school was going to close due to a bad roof.

"[It] was going to close in March because the school's grass roof was unsafe, but students at St Michael's raised enough money to help replace it with a tin roof. This will make their school very safe and means that it will now remain open."

She hopes to bring Aly, the founder of Smiling Hearts, to visit St Michael's.



SHELTER: Smiling Hearts School in Cambodia now has a safe roof, thanks to St Michael's.

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