

To keep the old or bring in the new

EDITORIAL

By **MATILDA DEMPSEY**

OLD buildings are creaky and unstable at times. However, did you know that they could be the only thing left of a community's original school in a few years when everything has moved towards mobile classrooms and temporary buildings?

The question remains though, do schools really need to be historical monuments?

Old buildings should be fixed or replaced.

Some buildings have been part of our schools for decades and are now worn out; they lose bricks if they are hit by a soccer ball or a passing storm.

If you're an adult and your child goes to a school with ancient buildings, you are probably going to worry about their safety going into rundown, rickety, rusty buildings that look dilapidated, even if they are local landmarks.

From a young child's perspective, buildings that are old can be frightening, as every step across the room is followed by a loud creak and the building tremors. Older children don't worry as much but they do resent the lack of facilities and the musty smells

in old classrooms.

Some class rooms are old, but not unstable and could just be slightly adjusted to make a safer place for lessons over the years they are being used. However, as classrooms age, so do the things in them, like carpets and paintwork.

When a new classroom is constructed, it is fitted with the latest smartboards and other things from the 21st century. Old rooms don't come with new gadgets.

Modern people want modern schools. If it is disintegrating slightly every day it is definitely not modern. And neither are blackboards. Learning is much more enjoyable when it's interactive. This is especially true for young children, as learning through games is much more interesting than writing on paper that doesn't even play a funny little tune when you get an answer right.

Teachers prefer a class where the students are not constantly distracted by the wind blowing through cracks in demountable walls and making everyone feel a bit uncomfortable.

Children are better off without old classrooms. They deserve new, up-to-date learning environments. It all comes down to what society thinks is important: ancient monuments or a safe place and stimulating space for children.



Cartoon: Rosalili Ford



REMARKABLE: The four relay teams that represented Newcastle at Homebush state carnival all came from The Junction.

Picture: Rose Potter

Swimming at the state level

By **SUSANNA BEHNE-SMITH**

FOR the first time in the history of the school, all four Junction Public swimming relay teams have qualified to compete in the NSW PSSSA state swimming carnival.

In April, the four relay teams went to Homebush to swim at the Olympic Aquatic Centre against other state regional teams. Both junior and senior girls and junior and senior boys competed well.

It is quite an achievement for all four teams to represent the region and all to come from the one school.

The junior girls swam so fast at the zone trials that they automatically

went through to the state carnival.

This year the individual swimmers also did well. A squad of 28 swimmers went to the zone carnival that was held at Lambton pool. From these students 17 went through to the state carnival.

At the state carnival each relay team competed against at least 40 other relay teams. They all did very well with the junior boys team really impressing by swimming 11th overall.

Maybe this success is due to the many great swimming clubs and training squads that Merewether children have close to them. Or perhaps this was just an amazing year for swimmers.

Waiting for the pool to open again

By **ROSALILI FORD**

THE Merewether Baths is the largest ocean baths complex in the southern hemisphere.

More than 200 residents use this wonderful amenity daily.

The baths are also the home to the Merewether Mackerels. However, for the next year this pool will be dry.

The baths will be closed to the public as from Monday, February 24 until December 2014. The council is upgrading and remodelling the Merewether Baths to make them safer and more modern.

While maintaining the baths' unique and original look, the council will upgrade the children's pool, provide more seating and install new pumps.

Concerned citizens worry about the affect this temporary change will have on the area.

However, despite the inconvenience, the baths will be more user-friendly. The complex will be better for swimmers and less work for the lifeguards.

In the long run, if the council did not do this now the baths would collapse over time. So a well-planned exercise now might save this iconic landmark for future generations.

As long as there are well-behaved tides and gentle weather, it shouldn't take longer than planned.

Goodbye to an old friend, hello to new life

By **ALEXANDRA HARRISON**

SOMETIMES trees have to be cut down. When it is an issue of safety, especially the safety of children, it just has to be done.

After much deliberation, it was decided that a tree, one of the largest trees in the playground, had to go. The tree meant a lot to people and many argued that the tree provided vital shade.

Others in the school community saw it differently. Apart from the safety issue

it was a high-maintenance tree that dropped leaves, clogged gutters and dropped branches. They saw it as too huge for a school playground.

However, even destroying this iconic tree has its bright side. Now the students have more space to play, more light comes in to the rooms and in times of really bad weather, no one has to worry about the tree crashing onto the buildings.

In its place a magnolia tree was planted. It won't grow as big but it is a reminder of the old tree.



PLANTED: Junction student Alexandra Harrison with the new magnolia tree.

Picture: Rose Potter

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