



Archer's big day

YOUNG Archer Shepherd realised one of his dreams on Saturday. The under 9s Fizzy Red led the ACT Brumbies onto the field ahead of a Super Rugby showdown with the Auckland Blues. Archer was given the honour by his coach after a standout performance for the Reds during a match on the Canberra Stadium turf during the lead up to the contest. He was given a peice of advice or two from Brumbies skipper Ben Mowen - something he's unlikely to forget anytime soon. Archer, along the Brumbies outfit, was tunnelled onto the field by the rest of the Fizzy Reds squad and a host of other junior teams from the region. Photo: Lloyd Scroope.

A 'strike' changed it all

By LOUISE THROWER

FFIFTY years ago today "a cold, frosty D day" for schools settled over Goulburn.

The threatening storm calmed but the week ahead whipped up debate that had enormous consequences down the decades.

And it all started over a toilet block.

On July 16, 1962, some 600 of Goulburn's catholic students were enrolled in local public schools in protest over the state government's lack of funding.

The city's movers and shakers, parents and religious were out to make a point. If the government couldn't fund vital infrastructure at the city's Catholic Schools, it should absorb them into the public system.

The mooted six-week "strike" exerted maximum pressure and won national publicity. After a week it was called off and shortly afterwards, Our Lady of Mercy Primary School won its new toilet block.

More importantly, it catapulted the state aid debate to the fore and set men like the late Brian Keating on a lifelong mission.

As Fr Frank Keogh, former administrator of Sts Peter and Paul's Cathedral would later say: "It's not too hard to imagine the flag of justice flying over that toilet block."

Politics and religion were not on the minds of students who marched off to public schools that day.

But somehow the divide hit a young St Joseph's Primary School student, Trish Wyles (now Groves) full force.

"I hate Catholics," a Goulburn North Public School student told her as she struck her in the face.

"I was so stupefied, I couldn't move," Mrs Groves told the *Post*.

For others like Brian Watchirs a St Patrick's Technical School student, it was a time of adventure, a chance to play rugby league for the week.

Only later did many realise the significance of that action.

The years have rolled on but people have not forgotten. In two weeks the Canberra/Goulburn archdiocese will mark the 50th anniversary of the now famous protest.

On July 26, it is hosting a dinner for 150 people, including some at the centre of the debate, religious, staff and politicians, at Trinity Catholic College. The following

day, up to 1000 people, including 700 students, will pack into Sts Peter and Paul's Cathedral for a celebratory Mass.

Canberra/Goulburn Catholic Education Office director Moira Najdecki said the action was hugely significant.

"In terms of catholic schools it had an absolutely enormous and fundamental impact," she told the *Post*.

"The biggest impact is the certainty to pay salaries, determine class sizes and educational outcomes.

"In the 1950s there were enormous class sizes and teachers were nearly all religious. This changed and in the 1960s there were still large class sizes but more lay salaries to pay, so it was absolutely essential there was money for this if the catholic system was to continue."

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