

# Support for NSW small schools

State View

Andrew Gee



I'VE been surprised that some people are suggesting that the \$80 million Rural and Remote Education Blueprint launched recently by Education Minister Adrian Piccoli means that small schools will have to close or amalgamate.

I've had a good read of it and it says nothing of the sort. There may be benefits to working with other schools, but as Mr Piccoli has stated, no small school will be forced to co-operate, associate, let alone amalgamate, with another school, if they don't want to.

So will small schools lose their financial independence? No again. Under the new Local Schools Local Decisions policy, each school now has more power than ever before to decide how their money is spent.

The issue of principals' salaries is currently the subject of an award negotiation between the Teacher's Federation and the government.

There's a fair bit of argy bargy going on and nothing has been decided yet. In the midst of it all there is obviously a need to ensure that small schools continue to attract outstanding teachers.

Our small schools have served regional NSW well for generations. Long may they continue.

## Crown reserve funding

MEMBER for Orange Andrew Gee has announced \$510,000 worth of grants for the region's Crown reserves under the NSW Government's Public Reserve Management Fund (PRMF).

Mr Gee said the grants would go towards maintaining and upgrading local reserves that supported community activities and events.

Grants are offered to the following local reserve trusts:

- \$144,800 to Manildra Showground to establish a caravan and RV stopover area with dumping point and compliant amenities block with disabled access facilities.
- \$195,000 to Mount Arthur Reserve near Wellington for maintenance and safety upgrade of the Scenic Drive roadway within the reserve to address identified public safety risk.
- \$50,000 to Red Hill Reserve at Gulgong to build an underground shaft at the poppet head.
- \$40,000 to Victoria Park, Mudgee as a contribution towards the redevelopment of existing tennis courts into six junior courts and the upgrade of two existing decommissioned court surfaces;
- \$80,500 to Wellington Caves for the development of strategic business plans, together with three product improvement activities and two amenity improvement/useability projects.



**HONOUR:** Making a difference one tractor ride at a time, (from left) Graeme Eggleston, Martha Brown and Chris Gryllis at the Bush Spirit Award ceremony at the Orange Showground yesterday. Photo: LUKE SCHUYLER

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# Tidy Towns rewards Graeme's bush spirit

By NICK McGRATH

TRACTOR Trek director Graeme Eggleston began raising money for Camp Quality as a means of giving back to the community.

To be honoured for doing so with this year's Tidy Towns Bush Spirit Award is extremely rewarding, he says.

Mr Eggleston brought the Tractor Trek to the Central West for the first time last year, and just 12 months on the event has ballooned to include 28 tractors and 52 drivers travelling 340 kilometres across the central tablelands.

Doubling last year's total, the 2013 Tractor Trek raised more than \$174,000.

The event is Mr Eggleston's, a dedicated and passionate fundraiser, way of giving back to the community while also challenging himself during retirement.

"The goal was to raise enough money to help all the children and their families in the central west who have been touched by cancer," he said.

"Being a part of this fundraiser has been extremely rewarding, particularly after seeing the difference the money raised has had on local families and seeing the joy and smiles the tractors bring to local residents in the rural communities."

Eggleston accepted the award after creating the fundraising event in 2012

with the assistance of local farmer John Sharp.

Over the course of two years, 43 tractors have participated in the event, raising more than \$257,000 in support of children living with cancer.

The Bush Spirit Award is given to community projects that successfully address challenges and demonstrate proper planning, community partnerships and real outcomes in the solution.

The awards, hosted by Keep Australia Beautiful, aims to encourage, motivate and celebrate the achievements of rural and regional communities across Australia.

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