

Teaching children nature's way

Vickii Byram

IMAGINE your child's first learning experiences being in nature - minus electronic devices.

The Nature School aims to provide an alternative to regular classrooms and engage children in the Greater Port Macquarie region in nature play sessions that are creative, hands on, experiential, learner led and largely unstructured.

Sybil J Doyle, Jodie Feeney and Lloyd Godson have based their bush school on the Forest Schools of Europe and the UK.

Port Macquarie will be one of the first places to embrace the back to nature learning program.

Children will spend up to a full day outdoors, largely driving their own learning through their exploration of the envi-

ronment around them.

The skills they learn will include risk management, respect for each other's opinions and for nature, and how to use their imaginations.

The education model is based on research that shows children's confidence and self esteem are improved through learning in a natural environment.

Social and language skills, motivation, concentration, comprehension and mental and physical wellbeing have been shown to be enhanced by the Forest School style of learning. Rain, hail or shine, The Nature School tent will be set up either on Port Macquarie-Hastings Council land, private land, NSW National Parks or Forestry Corporation land, once permissions are established.

"The concept began in Scandinavia in the 1950s, but it

has taken a long time to be accepted in Australia," Mrs Doyle said.

Each of The Nature School founders come from different backgrounds.

Mrs Doyle has a diploma in children's services and Ms Feeney has a background in community work, while Mr Godson is a marine scientist and Antarctic studies specialist.

They all have a passion to provide children aged three to six years with diverse learning experiences.

The sessions will be in blocks of six to 10 weeks in line with school terms, and will follow the NSW early childhood learning syllabus.

The pilot program starts July 14 and enrolment is limited.

For information about fees, enrolment forms and programs email info@thenatureschool.org.au

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Nature is their teacher: Indi Easton, Sybil J Doyle, Elloise Gleeson, Mahli Lees, Lloyd Godson, Jodie and Oliver Feeney are excited to welcome Port Macquarie children to the Nature School next term.

God?

"Guys like me don't whinge to anyone.
But if only people knew how much I stressed
over my finances, just trying to get ahead..."

All this stress got me thinking:
There has to be more to life.
You know, there IS more to life.
These days, I've learned to let go
— I know God is real.
Living with God gives me perspective.
— Chris Walsh

Watch Chris's story and find out
more at changemylife.org.au



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Caravans on the rise

If you thought there seemed to be a lot more caravans and campervans on the roads these day, you'd be right.

According to the 2014 Caravan and Campervan Data Report released recently, registrations of the recreational vehicles (RV) have increased by 5.3 per cent, with a total of 556,844 registered.

Caravan and campervans remain the fastest growing vehicle type in Australia by registration.

This new data comes as no surprise to the Caravan Industry Association of Australia which has seen RV

production in Australia soar over the past decade.

Production statistics for March 2015, show a year on year increase of 8.3 per cent, with year to date production 13 per cent higher than in 2014.

"Yearly production for 2014 was one of the highest in over two decades," said Stuart Lamont, chief executive of the association.

"So for 2015 to already be outperforming on last year is a great sign, and this new data bodes well for our industry into the future."

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