

MCC ranked 'most improved'

By DEIRDRE GRAHAM

Murrayville Community College has been named the most improved school in Victoria in the annual Good Schools Guide.

School principal Natasha Mudie said the school's median study score had improved from 24 to 32 from 2012 to 2016.

The results put the school on a par with a number of the most exclusive private schools

in the state.

"Our Year 12 results last year put us in the top 25 schools in the state with only one other government school in the top 25 and that was MacRobertson Girls High School," Mrs Mudie said.

"It is excellent publicity especially when parents have to make choices on whether their kids get a good enough education here or if they need to be sent to a private school.

"It says they can stay here and do equally well."

She said the results were only possible because of the hard work of both teachers and students.

"Some of the changes that we put in place during that time are starting to be reflected in results," Mrs Mudie said.

"We've had an increase in the face-to-face teaching time (and we've had some culture changes as well.

"We've reset our values and teachers have a focus on improving writing."

"All the kids are expected to do some writing to time, writing under pressure of time as they would have to do in an exam.

"That's showing through in our NAPLAN results as well."

She said the school enjoyed a strong relationship between students and teachers, with teachers giving up a lot of their own time, including after school.

Small class size was also an advantage.

"The teachers in the

last couple of years have been working hard with teachers in the Mallee education cluster and the second most improved school (in the Good School Guide) was Tyrrell College in Sea Lake," Mrs Mudie added.

"I think our main goal now is to try and hold our position, to stay up there as the school of choice for our community, so we can continue to ensure that our kids can get the results that they could in a bigger school in a bigger place."

Sheep farmers enjoying bumper season

By DEIRDRE GRAHAM

Mallee sheep farmers are enjoying one of the best years in living memory as wool prices rise to heights not seen in Australia for decades.

Local farmer Ray Schroeder said the general indicator for 21 micron wool clean price hit 1524 cents/kg last Friday.

"Even in the Mallee it is well over the 1000 cents/kg which is always great," Mr Schroeder said.

"We're getting up to 1300 cents for greasy wool. To have pieces making over 1000 cents, we haven't had that for a damn long time."

He said the wool prices, and

prices for sheep, were the highest he has seen in his lifetime.

"We've just got back from the Australian Sheep and Wool Show at Bendigo and I think the Mallee is one of the better areas in the country really," Mr Schroeder said.

"We've got pretty good feed. It's been great to have lambing down on green feed and it is a complete turnaround from last year.

"This time last year our paddocks were bare and we were feeding every day.

"(At the moment) it is not unusual to clear \$200 for merino wether lambs. That's almost unheard of (while) older ewes are making close to \$200 as well.

"At this stage, it is all good

news which is fantastic, especially for those who have stuck with it."

Prices for rams are already up, with the top price for a ram at last week's Australian Sheep and Wool Show reaching \$32,000 three times.

According to the Rural Bank wool prices are expected to remain strong in 2017/18, particularly for fine to medium wool categories, supported by growing export demand and limited, albeit now growing, supply from Australia.

The bank's 2017 *Australian Wool Annual Review* also revealed reduced wool exports from major producers such as New Zealand, which will see Australian wool growers well positioned to enjoy the rate con-

ditions of increasing production levels and higher prices.

After almost 20 years of declining shorn wool production, the 2015/16 financial year appears to have marked the turning point, with shorn wool production expected to reach 341,000 tonnes of greasy wool in 2016/17, an increase of five per cent when compared to the previous year.

On the export front, the new report revealed an 8 per cent jump in the volume of wool exported accompanied by a 23 per cent rise in the value - with fine wool exports accounting for 50 per cent of all wool exported.

Mr Schroeder said farmers were now looking forward to the off-shears and upcoming ram sales.

Young footballer remembered

A former Mallee Football League player who lost his life in a vehicle accident last Wednesday has been described as a quiet person, but confident with his footy.

Joel Loechel, 21, of Seaton, died when his car collided with a truck on the Swanport bridge, near Murray Bridge.

MFL league secretary Lou Boughen said Joel grew up in Coomandook.

"He played all his junior footy at Peake," Mr Boughen said.

"He won the Murdoch Medal (association senior colts best and fairest) in 2012 and played two years of senior footy at Peake off and on.

"He got a clearance to Karoonda in 2015 (and) played A grade."

While a junior at Peake Joel took part in

West Adelaide's junior development program.

After injuring a shoulder early last year, he hadn't returned to play in the Mallee league.

Mr Boughen described the accident as "a tragedy".

"It hits home when things like that

happen," he said.

Mr Boughen said a number of Peake's A grade team had played junior football with Joel.

Several people have used the Mallee Football League facebook page to express condolences to Joel's family and friends, and pay tribute to him.

Liberals to invest in country health

A decade long \$150 million country hospital capital works and maintenance backlog will be addressed under a Marshall Liberal Government, via an Investing in Country Health policy, it is claimed.

Member for Hammond, Adrian Pedrick, has been advocating for the need to ensure adequate investment in health facilities in the Hammond electorate.

"Hospitals and health facilities play an important role in Hammond and throughout regional South Australia, where the Weatherill Labor Government's neglect of country hospitals has left a backlog reported to be in the order of \$150 million," Mr Pedrick said.

The key health policy will see

more respect shown to the strong role played by local communities across regional South Australia, in supporting hospitals and health facilities.

"Patients in Hammond are often disadvantaged by distance and challenges in accessing doctor and specialist attraction and retention, but just like their city cousins, they are entitled to fair access to health services," said Mr Pedrick.

"The State Liberals acknowledge the need to have a robust network of health care services right across South Australia.

"We are committed to ensuring Hammond is part of that focus by addressing the unacceptable \$150 million country hospital capital works and maintenance backlog."

He said a Marshall Liberal

Government would fix the backlog in country capital works by:

- Ensuring that all money raised in local communities is spent in local communities.
- Acting with urgency to address high risk repairs and maintenance at country hospitals.
- Implementing a country capital works renewal strategy to address the backlog in country capital works and plan positively for future development.
- Developing a policy to retain part of private patient income in local hospitals for the benefit of local services.

SA Liberals spokesperson for health and wellbeing Stephen Wade said for too long the Weatherill Labor Government's city-centric approach has undermined patient care, claiming

many country hospitals had been run into the ground.

"Country South Australians have a long tradition of raising funds locally which help meet the health needs of communities, in particular, through buildings, upgrades and equipment," Mr Wade said.

"In the recent State Budget handed down by Labor, they made much of a \$1.1 billion health spend, but there was not one dollar for capital investment in country hospitals.

"The State Liberals will empower Health Advisory Councils to control their trust funds, ensuring local funds meet local needs - protecting private donations and enabling local management of bequests."

To help remind Riverland and Mallee motorists to register their motor vehicle, I have available my new registration reminder stickers. If you would like one, please call into the Chaffey Electorate Office or contact 8582 4230 and I would be happy to mail one to you.

Recognising community participation

The Youth Volunteer Scholarship Awards are accepting applications until 21 July 2017. The scholarships are awarded in recognition of young people who are currently volunteering and have a history of community participation. To nominate a worthy young volunteer, visit www.ofy.sa.gov.au.

Multicultural Infrastructure Grants on offer

Round two of the Multicultural Infrastructure Grants Program is now open for applications, offering funding of up to \$200,000 to support multicultural communities to upgrade or build a community facility. To apply or for more information, visit www.multicultural.sa.gov.au/grants or contact 1300 650 985. Applications close, 31 July at 5pm.

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Chaffey Community Column

Member for Chaffey
Tim Wheatstone MP

Sign the petition on community legal services cuts

Due to funding cuts, after almost two decades of service, the Berrri based Riverland Community Legal Service was recently closed. The replacement service is based in Christies Beach and will travel to Berrri once a week. Walkerie once a month and Lameroo once a month. If you would like to sign a petition to help join our battle to have funding and services reinstated in the region, please visit the Chaffey Electorate Office on 13 Kay Avenue, Berrri or contact the office on 8582 4230.

WANTED: Exporter nominations for awards

Riverland and Mallee exporters are being encouraged to apply for the Business SA Export Awards which recognise the most dynamic and innovative businesses in the State. The Awards operate under a two-tiered process - with exporters first achieving State distinction through the Business SA Export Awards program, before progressing as national finalists to the Australian Export Awards. Applications close on 7 August 2017. There are a number of categories, for which people can apply. For more information, please visit <https://business.sa.com/LiveMenu/Training-Events/Business-SA-2017-Export-Awards>.

Registration sticker reminders available