

# NSW GOVERNMENT PROVIDES \$36,560 FOR BANKSTOWN ART AND ENVIRONMENTAL EDUCATION PROGRAM

Bankstown MP, Tony Stewart said the NSW Government had provided a \$36,560 grant to Bankstown City Council to support a cross cultural community program about water management, called 'Crosscurrents: Stories of Water'.

The funding is part of nearly \$300,000 in NSW Government grants for projects aimed at encouraging water wise use across Sydney.

"We expect the projects and funding will be used to encourage the people of greater Sydney to play an active role in managing and planning for a sustainable water future," Mr Stewart said.

Mr Stewart said local bi-lingual educators will be trained in water management issues, and then stage a series of workshops in the Bankstown area.

The workshops will target the Arabic, Vietnamese and Indigenous communities in the local area to raise awareness of water efficiencies and sustainable water management.

Mr Stewart said improved awareness of water wise practices, such as increased recycling, modifying water use in the home and finding alternative supplies will be promoted through the water education projects.

An independent assessment committee selected seven initiatives to receive funding, including Bankstown Council's.

Mr Costa said the high calibre of projects is evidence of the enthusiasm and interest in water issues in the community.

"The projects chosen represent some of the State's most innovative approaches to water education," Mr Stewart said.

"By educating the community,

school children and our teachers, we will build on recent successes to spread the fundamental message of water efficiency.

"Water users in greater Sydney have already shown tremendous support for water efficient practices, reflected in the fact that we are using about the same amount of water now as we did in the early 1970s, despite an extra 1.3 million people.

"And with Water Wise Rules now in place, the Water for Life education program is set to play an integral role in the Government's plan to secure greater Sydney's long-term water supply."

The NSW Government's Metropolitan Water Plan outlines the measures that ensure Sydney, the Illawarra and the Blue Mountains have enough water now and in the future.

There are four main parts that make up the NSW Government's plan to se-



...cure our water for life: dams, recycling, desalination and water efficiency.

## Kids: Going too far?

THERE WAS A time when a balanced childhood meant a moderate amount of homework, ample free play and a relatively relaxed routine.

Today it's a frantic rush as parents enrol their children in "enriching" experiences. While these activities may be expensive, the real price may be striking at the core of childhood itself.

Teachers are the first to see changes in today's new breed of overbooked Renaissance children driven by ambitious parents. Primary school educator George Drassas explains that all too often parents try to offer their offspring opportunities they felt that they may have missed out on.

"It is important to sort out what it is we want for our children from what it is that they themselves actually desire,"

Drassas says.

Parents who are too pushy deprive their children of the opportunity to pursue their own interests, express their personalities and even structure their spare time.

"Quite simply, children appear less happy and too often act like serious little grownups rather than the creative and spontaneous beings they are meant to be," he says.

As a teacher, as well as a father of three children, Drassas has often wondered how much is too much and has come to the conclusion that there is no specific answer. It depends

"There is no single formula. Just listen to your child and don't push [him or her] into an activity they haven't expressed interest in. It's supposed to be fun."

Fun is often forgotten as angst-ridden parents go overboard in efforts to prepare



their children for the job market at a premature age.

"They offer German or French as the language after English at my daughters' school," says one mother of two children aged eight and five. "I'm going to sway both towards German because it will be a more useful tool on the job market."

In developed countries, millions of children feel overwhelmed. In the book *The Over-Scheduled Child: Avoiding the Hyper-Parenting Trap*, child psychiatrist Alvin Rosenfeld, states that "parents feel remiss that they're not being good parents if their kids aren't in all kinds of activities. Children are under pressure to achieve, to be competitive. I know sixth-graders who are already working on their resumes so they'll have an edge when they apply for college."

Unfortunately, children forced into an activity will never quite excel.

"Occasionally, I have students who really aren't interested in learning to play the guitar," says guitar teacher Alexia Giamarelou. "It is painful watching and teaching a child who doesn't take joy in music and is merely going through the motions to please a parent."

Once in high school, students are already in a pressure cooker. GRASEP (Secondary School Career Guidance Office) psychologist Nikos Demertzis says that this is when the burnout begins to show. "Too often, there is a shift from out-of-school sports to extra private lessons," Demertzis says. "It is wrong for a teen to be hunched over textbooks studying all day."

### Quality of life

The price is a drop in the quality of life that may also be matched with psychosomatic symptoms ranging from headaches to insomnia.

Demertzis recommends parents give their children the opportunity to learn how to utilise their spare time with constructive activities rather than passive ones such as watching television or playing on the computer.

"Children who are over-scheduled have no free time to call on their own resources and be creative," he says, pointing to the need for at least one to three hours of time required for relaxing and pursuing non-structured pursuits.

"Kids today are lucky," says Demertzis. "There are so many organised activities they can pursue and indeed draw benefits from. It's when they over-schedule or are coerced that the situation sours."

On his part, psychologist George Kallinikakis points to developmental impact of overbooking.

"The consequences of over-scheduling are catastrophic as they gear children's personality to focus in one solitary direction - that of accumulating knowledge," he says.

"Through free play children develop problem solving, how to handle emotional crises, they learn rules and principles, they learn that each individual can behave in a different way in different circumstances and, above all, they learn how to communicate in social situations. They learn the joy of being social and creative."

"A person constantly on the go is in danger of burning out at some stage," he says.

