

# Community

*Vikki Durrant*

*On 5 November 2002, an Official Ceremony was held recognising the consolidation of the Infants and Primary Departments of the Riverstone Public School on to the one site in Elizabeth Street. Vikki Durrant, President of the Parents and Citizens Association gave a moving speech on the day. At the request of the Historical Society Vicki provided a written copy for the journal.*

For Judith, as requested a copy of my speech that was greatly influenced by your commitment and dedication to our school and community, you've been an inspiring role model.

Hello, I've been asked to speak today as the representative of our school community. On this special occasion, commemorating our consolidation we need to take a moment to recognise the major contribution of the very many people that aren't able to be here celebrating with us, but who, without their input, we would also not be here today. To all the families and staff, too numerous to mention, that are our history. The importance of this endless list of people is very difficult to express, except to say, there is no present without the past.

As a member of today's Opening Ceremony committee, I know how difficult it was to decide on today's guest list, and due to space restrictions, impossible to include everyone from our past.

On behalf of today's school community, we would like to take this opportunity to extend our thanks, appreciation and gratitude to those absent friends for all they did to get us to this point in time. We ask everybody here today to please share these sentiments with the wider community.

Riverstone began as a semi-rural country town. If it needed or wanted something, the community had to work together to get it. That is why, here in our town, we have almost every kind of sporting club, religious group and recreational activity available, because in Riverstone you don't sit back and wait for things to happen, you get together and work out how to get it done! It is because of that ethos that Riverstone has so much to be proud of which is reflected in our wonderful Riverstone Fair.

Riverstone Public School is a major and important component of the foundation of Riverstone. It began from a need to provide an education for the children of this community and next year we will be celebrating 120 years of doing just that. We DO plan to celebrate and everybody is invited!

The many changes this school has endured as it has developed into what we have here today is not only a great credit to our staff and students, but also to public education, which, over time, has expanded to provide this community with our own Riverstone High School, founded in 1962 and, more recently, Wyndham College in 1998. Riverstone also now has 'Casuarina', another public education facility for children with specific needs, to be based in our old infants' site and due to officially open in the near future.

Riverstone Public School was founded in 1883, in the building known today as the Riverstone Historical Society Museum in Garfield Road, and then it began to grow. It relocated across the street, to what is affectionately known as “the old infants’ site” in Garfield Road, in 1929. The school continued to grow and, in 1957, the primary students moved to this site, Elizabeth Street. Again it grew to meet the needs of the community, so that, in 1977 our own Preschool opened in Piccadilly Street. There we stayed, on three sites for 25 years, until this year, 2002.

Many years ago a few Riverstone people got together and started talking, as you do in Riverstone. They decided that being split over three sites wasn’t good enough for our students. Our children deserved better. Our school needed to be together on one site and so the battle began.

For those of us here today we need to pay tribute to those that went before us in our fight to consolidate. This has been a team effort, a marathon relay race where most of us here at the finishing line have never met those who began the race. And yet, over the years, we have been able to hand the baton on, because we all had the same determination to reach our goal, “one school on one site”.

Our school is family based. Many of our ‘all star’ students sitting here today are members of families whose parents and grandparents were students of Riverstone Public School. It is that community spirit and influential parental involvement that has been integral to our survival and the force behind our consolidation.

I believe that our community spirit stems from our pride in Riverstone, which for most of us, begins with our pride in, and our love of, our children, the stars in *our* eyes. Every generation has wanted to provide the best they could for their sons and daughters, and this was the inspiration behind demanding we have a school that our children deserved. Even though our older children will never have the opportunity to benefit from the new facilities. They were the reason the baton carriers kept going and the flame stayed alight.

What does this consolidation mean for our school’s future?

For parents it means dropping off and collecting your children from one school.

For the P & C it means one modern canteen, only having to employ one supervisor, one roster, one Uniform Shop, and being able to focus our fundraising on one site.

For staff it means only one lawn to mow and one site to maintain, no more walking or driving to each site, one staff room downstairs and no more us and them.

For the school community it means one office, one address, one assembly and better communication and for our students it means brothers and sisters together on one site.

It means no more wasting time walking the streets to get to the library, computers, special days or whole school assemblies and then, walking back again.

It means bright, modern classrooms and furniture, clean, new toilets.

It means assemblies *inside* our new hall.

For these students, and the students of the future, their school lives will include many more hours of education our past pupils spent “in transit”.

It means we finally have a school to match the quality of education that has always been provided on the inside.

It means this school is now like other schools, “one school on one site”.

It means a wonderful future for Riverstone Public School.

As our P & C Association started to believe that the consolidation was to become a reality, and we began to glimpse that light at the end of the tunnel, we decided it was time to officially commemorate our school's history.

Through the hard work and research of one of our very dedicated parents and past students Mrs Karen Stalker, nee Keegan, with Mrs Judith Lewis, past student, teacher and parent, and to whom our library is dedicated, and the Riverstone Historical Society, Riverstone Public School's P&C Association is proud to present the school with two gifts, in recognition of our Consolidation Celebration – A Principals' Honour Board and a past School Captains' Honour Roll Board, dating from 1960, which I now present to Ms Mavromati.

I would like to close by saying, as the song says, "Only shooting stars break the mould", well, we set our sights high, and we have *finally* broken that split site mould! Lastly, to everybody who has ever been or *will ever* be a part of our wonderful Riverstone Public School BE PROUD, because I know I am! Thank you.