

## Central Coast teachers mark centenary with donation

November 10, 2018

Teachers from the Central Coast associations are passionate about the kids they teach and supporting Stewart House, because they know first hand the help a 12-day program at Stewart House can be for children who are doing it tough.

We may live in an idyllic part of the country but there are a number of social problems, particularly relating to students from disadvantaged homes. Along with the ramifications of social disadvantage there are those children who are dealing with crisis, illness and trauma in their daily lives. It was from this reality that an idea for celebrating the centenary of Federation was born.

Central Coast teachers wanted to celebrate the centenary year with an action for our most vulnerable students. Gosford Teachers Association members agreed with the idea that Stewart House embodies everything that motivates us as teachers — the human face of teaching, caring, empowering, knowing our students and identifying their needs. Our teachers decided to make this year a little easier for Stewart House to fund excursions for their students.



After discussing the idea with the presidents of Woy Woy and Wyong associations, Damien Purins and Chris Wright, we decided to make this a collective action. Central Coast associations often work together using solidarity as a powerful tool for developing activism through cross-association events. At our respective meetings, Central Coast teachers voted unanimously to support Stewart House as our way of celebrating the centenary year.

We contacted Aimee Palfreeman from Stewart House with a proposal to fund off-site excursions for the groups of 84 children who attend each 12-day program throughout the year. Their weekend excursions provide learning experiences that many of the children have never had the opportunity to enjoy.

Our teachers were thrilled to hear that \$8000 donated from Gosford, Woy Woy and Wyong associations would enable the children to attend excursions to Taronga Zoo, the Maritime Museum, the Powerhouse Museum, Australia Museum, Sydney International Aquatic Centre, Ryde Aquatic Centre, Cook and Phillip Park Aquatic Centre and Sydney ferries.

After months of drought, Sydney turned on a downpour for eight of our teachers who made the journey down from the coast to Stewart House on the first Thursday of the October holidays. With our Organiser Debbie Westacott we presented the cheques for \$8000 to Ms Palfreeman on behalf of Stewart House and were given a guided tour of the facility.

Our teachers were overwhelmed by the incredible programs in place at Stewart House and left inspired to be proactive in their workplaces by bringing more teachers on board to make a regular donation to the facility.

Chris Wright from Woy Woy said: "I would urge every teacher to give a little to help this terrific charity's amazing work." Kristy Davies from Gosford added: "I was so impressed by the relevance of the wellbeing programs offered." The visit inspired Suzie Pass from Wyong who said: "I am determined to encourage all staff members to contribute to such a worthwhile cause."

It was a very worthwhile, informative and fun day for our teachers who attended the presentation. On behalf of Stewart House, Ms Palfreeman thanked the teachers of Gosford, Woy Woy and Wyong associations for their generosity in making such a significant donation to celebrate the centenary year of Federation.

Stewart House is funded through the goodwill of our public school teachers. Any amount you can afford to give is appreciated, to find out more about Stewart House and how to contribute go to [stewarhouse.org.au](http://stewarhouse.org.au).

Gemma Burrows, Gosford TA President