World examples in education

By Claire Fenwicke
AN AUSTRALIAN-designed education framework implemented at a Highlands school has spread across the globe.

Four Oxley College educators represented Australia at the Visible Learning Conference in Washington DC to demonstrate how the Visible Learning framework was working in their school.

Oxley College teachers Olivia Cox and Lara Sheils joined headmaster Michael Parker and deputy principal Kate Cunich at the July conference.

There were 1000 participants from nine countries gathered at the conference to hear the latest educational speakers.

Oxley College is featured as a case study in the book ‘Visible Learning into Action’, a teaching method focused on student feedback in the classroom.

Mr Parker and Ms Cunich were speakers at the conference, and spoke about the ongoing journey of how the school was using evidence to inform teaching and learning cycles.

Ms Cunich said the framework was introduced to the school to provide the best education for students.

“It is about listening to the student voice and using their feedback to inform teaching,” she said.

“It allows us to gather information on how the students learn, to help us recognise where we have learnt something and how they learned it.”

Ms Cunich said feedback from students was positive.

“Students tell us they are more engaged and involved because of class discussion,” she said.

“They feel more empowered about their learning.”

Mr Parker said the framework provided a “more holistic system” for schools and education.

“The guess work is taken out of education,” he said.

“It gets teachers thinking about the ways we hold lessons, particularly as we focus more on those reforms that have a greater effect size in the classroom.”

He said the framework focused on the assessment of learning rather than assessment for learning.

“For example, instead of testing students at the end of a unit, what matters is checking where students are up to throughout the unit and finding out what gaps there are,” he said.

“So rather than using assessment to see how the students have gone, you’re seeing how you’ve gone teaching the content and how they are progressing throughout the unit.”

Many schools in Australia and globally are increasingly using the ‘Visible Learning’ framework.

University students studying to become teachers are being trained in the framework as well.

To learn more about ‘Visible Learning’, designed by Professor John Hattie, visit http://visible-learning.org/

Another win for winery

By Linda Lambrechts
ADDING yet another win to its belt is Centennial Winery in Bowral.

Winemaker Tony Cosgriff was excited on the steps of the Berrima Courthouse.

“I enjoy breaking away from the mainstream to offer our consumers something unique,” Tony said.

“It’s also great fun to work with different varietals to learn about their unique characters and interpret a suitable wine style in keeping with what the vineyard produces.

“The Barbera ticks all the boxes when it comes to a silky, smooth, medium-bodied red wine.”

Tony said the grapes for this wine were very ripe and flavoursome, and in pristine condition.

“The end result is a ripe, plump, rich and silky red wine,” he said.

“The Barbera vines are now around 14 years old and produce some very good fruit for us each year.”

The trophy for Best Red Wine is not the first time Centennial Wines has been honoured in this category.

“We have won before at various shows with this wine,” Tony said.

“It’s just such a satisfying example of a good red and obviously the judges like it.”

Very little French oak treatment was given to the wine, allowing it to shine through on competition day, and showing distinctive fruit and spice characters.

Centennial Winery also took out a silver medal for the highly awarded Sparkling Pinot Chardonnay Meunier blend.

Centennial Vineyards winemaker, Tony Cosgriff has added yet another trophy to this iconic winery’s collection.

Rate help for community services

By Victoria Lee
TWO community groups will benefit from council donations that will offset the cost of their rates.

Bong Bong Picnic Race Club Limited and Moss Vale Vale Show Society applied for rate subsidies.

Bong Bong Picnic Race Club Limited and Moss Vale Vale Show Society both applied for assistance under the policy and were granted $500 each.

However, both entities wrote to council this year to ask that the level of assistance be reconsidered.

Bong Bong Picnic Race Club requested a waiver of $12,129 in annual rates for the 2015/16 year, while Moss Vale Vale Show Society requested $12,307 to be waived for the same period.

Councillors were required to decide whether or not to waive the rates of these groups at last week’s ordinary meeting of council.

Mayor Larry Whipper said the decision to waive rates or make a donation to the clubs would be inconsistent with existing council policy.

“What I’m concerned about is that this is complete policy on the run,” he said.

Cr Whipper said he would support a $6000 donation for Bong Bong Picnic Race Club, if the motion included that council would review its subsidy policy.

Councillor Duncan Gair moved a motion that council provide Bong Bong Picnic Race Club with a $6,000 one-off donation, and Moss Vale Vale Show Society with a $12,000 one-off in order to assist each club with their rate expenses.

“The reason being that Bong Bong Picnic Race Club has already been paying rates, it’s not as though this is out of left field for them,” he said.

“But Moss Vale Showground has never paid rates, they’ve been slugged for the first time in their life: $12,000, and that’s where my sympathy is coming from.”

Cr Gair said to find $12,000 for rates and put on a show for the community would likely be a struggle for the community group and encouraged councillors to vote in favour of his motion.

“I think this is a one-off show of our support to the community,” Cr Gair said.

Cr Gair’s motion also noted that these donations were “contrary” to existing council policy and requested a review of the Rate, Water and Sewerage Access Subsidy Policy, to be carried out by the next council.

Councillors voted unanimously to support the donations.