

What matters to you?

ASPIRING writers have the chance to get their creative skills recognised in a national competition. Pupils aged 5-12 are encouraged to enter the annual What Matters? competition.

The challenge is a 400-600 word essay on what issues in society they think are important to them.

The contest gives youth an outlet where they can share their thoughts on topics they are passionate about.

More than 2500 pupils from more than 210 schools took part in the competition last year.

Popular issues covered included body image, mental health, climate change and human rights.

The winner will receive a notebook computer and software package from competition organiser, Officeworks. Winning entries will be published in print and online.

Entries close May 6.

Application forms: whittlam.org.

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■ New year rush to secure homes Auction fever hits

By **Sandra Siagian**

IT WASN'T just the temperatures that were up in February, with the real estate market also on the boil.

As the holiday season came to an end, homebuyers dived back into the market, said St George and Sutherland Shire agents.

With the Reserve Bank of Australia holding the official cash rate steady at 4.75 per cent this month, agents said the short-term position was giving people the confidence to buy.

Highland Property Agents director David Highland said the agency experienced an increased new year market compared with other years.

"We had inquiries in the first week we came back on January 3," Mr Highland said.

"The shire is an affluent region that people are interested in and this steady rate has cemented their confidence to buy."

With 30 auctions already due to take place in February and early March, Mr Highland said there could be more.

"We are expecting a very strong quarter," Mr Highland said.

"This surge is coming off the end of last year when the market fluctuated and was inconsistent, the federal election was on and many vendors held off selling to wait for the first couple of months."

McGrath Brighton-Le-Sands agent Matthew King has locked in 16 auctions this month.

He had more than 200 inspections for one property at Beverly Hills last month and 10 bidders registered for the auction.

"February and August are the two best months of the year," Mr King said.

"This time is the best punctuation mark for people to move as there is less competition on the market."

PROPERTY



Bidding success: Christina Yeomans (second from left) with her son Rickman and relatives Esther and Pang Gunawan, purchased a property at Beverly Hills after a competitive auction.

Picture: Lisa McMahon

Christina Yeomans of Lilyfield was the lucky bidder who snapped up the three-bedroom Beverly Hills property after finding out the property was on the market only a week before.

"I was very nervous on the day because it was so crowded," Mrs Yeomans said.

"When I first saw the property it was estimated for offers of more than \$600,000 but then it kept increasing and I ended up pushing my budget to \$765,000."

INSPECTION TIPS

MAKE sure you check a few things first before you decide to purchase a property. Miranda building inspector Warren Gunn said it was important to be aware of any major defects and safety hazards before you made a purchase. "Rectification of building defects on a property can cost the new home owner thousands," Mr Gunn said.

Here are some of his top tips to look out for.

1. Timber pest inspection

If a significant amount of timber has been used in the construction of buildings and structures on the property, this inspection will advise you on any evidence of timber pest activity on the property such as termites and wood decaying fungi (rot).

2. Insulation in ceiling areas

An electrician should inspect the insulation to ensure it has been installed correctly as insulation placed over lights or electric cables could present a fire risk in a building.

3. Beware of fresh paintwork

It can be difficult to detect defects behind a fresh coat of paint such as mould, water stains caused from leaks, corrosion and timber pest damage and general weathering damage. Special attention should be made to ceilings, floorboards, walls, skirting boards, architraves, window sills, cladding, posts, pergolas and decking. Ask questions and try find out why if repairs have been carried out and if any problems still exist.

4. Look at properties in different weather

Try look at a property in varying weather condition (especially during and after periods of rainfall) and see if any problems become noticeable such as leaks, ponding of water, blocked stormwater pipes and drains and flooding.

5. Appliances

Confirm with the owner what appliances are included in the sale of the property and check their condition. If the appliances have a warranty guarantee, ask the owner if this can be transferred to you along with any installation certificates.

Details: buildinginspectionswg.com.au



Care for Babies & Infants

CatholicCare is seeking foster carers to care short term for up to 6 - 12 months for babies and infants whose parents are considering adoption. This is a specialised area that would suit people who may be retired mothercraft nurses or have had experience in childcare.

The decision to consider adoption is a significant one and requires foster carers who are sensitive and understand the complexity of making such a decision for their child. Many parents considering adoption go on to parent their child however need the time to make this decision.

Foster carers take on the important role of caring for children during this time and need to have the flexibility and availability to transport children to weekly contact visits and other appointments. Therefore, we require that carers in this program do not have any childcare commitments of their own for young children under 7 years of age.

Foster carers also need to be aware that this type of fostering is voluntary and a parent can chose to parent at any time prior to the legal time frames set out in legislation. Foster carers also actively participate in transitioning a child back to their parents, extended family or adoptive families.

Foster Carers receive training and ongoing casework support from our team. Authorised foster carers are exempt from the "Welfare to Work" program and receive a minimum tax free allowance of \$395 per fortnight depending on the age and needs of the child they are caring for. Working with Children Checks apply.

If you and your family feel that you can provide this care for children please contact Bernadette Ahern on 8709 9333 or visit www.fosterkids.com.au



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