

Fledgling learners take off at Bimbi

By KIM COTTON

A group of young children living in Wagga Wagga will be off to a flying start this year thanks to a change in name of their preschool.

Tolland Public School Preschool was officially renamed Bimbi Preschool last term to give young students a stronger affinity to their first place of learning.

The school's principal Peter Blair said Bimbi was a Wiradjuri word meaning "place of many birds".

"Our playground is a haven for all manner of local birdlife," he said.

The slogan accompanying the new name is, naturally, "A Flying Start".

"The slogan provided a strong relationship back to the concept of birds and our view is it's a flying start to education. It's a positive step for the community, the preschool and the school at large," Mr Blair said.

The idea to rename the preschool came during its participation in Building Stronger Connections, a department-based program that aims to make the transition from home to preschool easier for Aboriginal families. About 40 per cent of children who attend the school are Aboriginal.

"Our preschool has been operating since 2005 and its name had no real way of encouraging our community and involving them," Mr Blair said.

"A really important thing for preschool students is they have a sense of identity and belonging with an appropriate mindset."

The school's competition to rename the preschool drew more than 100 responses from the local and wider community. Former Year 6 Aboriginal student Yarrika Vincent became the winner after researching the name Bimbi. Charlotte Giandomenico, a Year 1 student, designed the logo, which depicts her family in an outdoor setting. Charlotte drew the picture while attending Bimbi Preschool in 2008.

Mr Blair said T-shirts bearing the preschool name and emblem helped the students identify with their school.

"In a fun way they're starting to develop their independent skills and uniform organisation – they're getting ready for school and it's special to them," he said.

Riverina regional director Colin Parker said other preschools in the area drew on memorable motifs to better connect with young children and the timing was right for Tolland Preschool to do the same. He said the community felt comfortable with Bimbi.

"When you speak to children when they go to school they say 'Yes, I went to Possums'.

These little kids can now say 'I go to Bimbi Preschool'."