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INSIDE TODAY ...
Race Day excitement
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Hens' six selected for Stingers
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PCYC doors open up to local youth

By JEANETTE GARVEY

YOUTHS of the Burdekin were flying high on Saturday with the doors to the new Police-Citizens Youth Club (PCYC) proudly flung open to the public.

With an array of entertainment, demonstrations and information available during a special Youth Expo, the new million-dollar facility, which is being officially opened at 10am today by State Minister for Community Services, Housing and Women, Karen Struthers, has received a positive response.

"It's great to be in Ayr to celebrate the wonderful work that has been going on at the service centre and the great resource that has been developed," Ms Struthers said.

"The service hub is going to be a real asset for the region and the government is looking forward to the ongoing success integrated youth services deliver in Ayr and around the Burdekin region."

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Centrelink's Paula Mellon (left) and Max Employment's Kathleen Carew gave out career advice to Air Force cadet, Tamika Shand (AAFC), Luisa Schosland and Chloe Webber (AAFC).

Lucky youth in safe home

YOUTH Homelessness Matters – while the majority of Burdekin youth can count themselves lucky to have a family and safe place to call "home", others are less fortunate.

With the official recognition of Youth Homelessness Matters Day last week (April 6), it was a timely reminder that of the 105,000 people who are homeless on any given night in Australia, almost half are under 25 years of age. Burdekin Community Association's co-ordinator of housing and community support, Seanne O'Shea admitted the figures were grim, however, they were mainly based on high instances in metropolitan cities.

JEANETTE GARVEY reports Page 5

HOP IN TO WOODS NEWS
This Easter

HARRY'S VIEW . . .



LETTER-

Modifying exhausts

THIS is an open letter to the majority of the owners of modified vehicles, particularly the Nissan Patrol utes.

I believe your selfish act of modifying the exhausts of the automobiles is a blight on our community.

The peace and quiet of this town is ruined by the incessant noise that you are inflicting on everyone.

I can understand that people have pride in their purchase and wish to stand out from the crowd however, the modifications affects us all.

I have small children who are constantly woken from sleep by the sudden acceleration by these vehicles.

It is horrific and constant.

It is about time the drivers, who I will make a sweeping statement and say they are young males, firstly drive with a bit more care and secondly, think how your pathetic attempt at proving your manhood, is affecting those around you.

Grow up.

Annoyed resident.
(Name and address supplies)

READERS of *The Advocate* are encouraged to express their views on the things that are happening in the Burdekin district or on wider issues affecting this area.

Letters can be a brief comment on a subject - or an extended view on what is happening, up to about 300 words. 'Letters' to the Editor should be addressed to P.O. Box 969, Ayr, Qld 4807 or emailed to ayr@nqn.newsltd.com.au. All contributions should carry the full name of the writer, residential address and daytime phone number.

Threat from noxious fish

Invasive species found breeding in fresh and salt water

Red Cross training for Burdekin volunteers

By ALYCIA PARK

PEST fish, tilapia, is infesting Burdekin waterways, alarming a local restocker, who claimed the noxious species threatens to annihilate native fish and their habitats.

Renowned as one of Australia's worst introduced pests, tilapia is capable of devastating entire freshwater environments.

Burdekin Fish Restocking Association member, Alan Griggs said the gate has been opened to allow for the invasive species to breed in both the Burdekin's fresh and salt waterways.

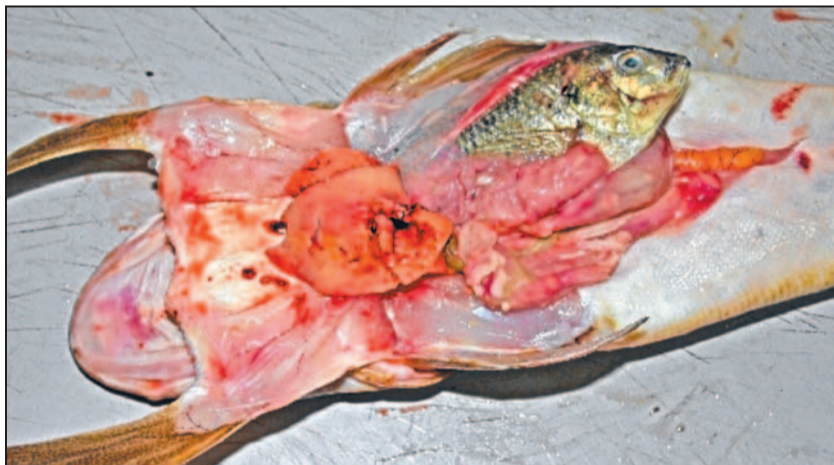
Declaring the fish as "the cane toad of our waterways", Mr Griggs told *The Advocate* that of nearly 85 kilograms of flathead processed, 2.5 kilograms of tilapia was pulled from the gut, in the last few days.

The retailer, whose fish are predominantly caught at the front of Wun Junga Beach, said of the dozen of flathead and salmon filleted on Monday, 720 grams of tilapia were found inside.

The species were also found inside the gut of barramundi, with Mr Griggs saying native fish were "choc-a-block" full of them recently.

"To find them right out on the beach was quite a shock and in the numbers, it's phenomenal," Mr Griggs said.

"In the past, I have seen the odd one



Tilapia which was found inside a flathead fish, caught in the Burdekin's salt waterways.

in the Burdekin River and also in Cungulla Beach, but I thought it was a one-of.

"I was quite surprised because, A. where we caught them is salt water and the fish is thought to be a predominantly a freshwater species.

"It was the first time there has been a bulk of them."

According to Mr Griggs, the aggressive fish has been confirmed in the waterways of Cungulla, Barratta, Plantation, Phillips and Hell Hole creeks, as

well as the Burdekin River and Alva and Wun Junga beaches.

He also alleged they had even been found floating in drains outside Ayr State High School. "Nelson's Lagoon is full of them," he said.

Calling on the Fisheries to lift the ban on the pest fish, Mr Griggs said the tilapia should have no size or bag limits.

"They taste good so let the people eat them.

"For every person who catches them, it's one less that breeds."

Concerned at their rapid rate of breeding, Mr Griggs said it was important for fishermen to keep stocking rates high to keep tilapia out of our waterways.

"When the DPI electrofished the district last year, they found only one in the whole of Sheepstation Creek, because the lagoon is so full of barramundi, they wiped the tilapia all out."

However, with the pest fish now spreading into the salty waters off Wun Junga and Alva beaches, Mr Griggs said it is too late to control them.

"There is nothing to stop them, they will just keep marching south. They will take whatever environment they can grab.

"They threaten the dugongs at the bottom of Upstart Bay because they eat the weeds and algae," he added.

tilapia was discovered in 2004 in a Burdekin tributary, Keelbottom Creek.

Illegally imported into Australia as aquarium fish more than 25 years ago, Tilapia were soon introduced into north Queensland dams as a way of controlling weeds and mosquitoes.

Spread by human hand, the fish have deliberately or unwittingly been introduced into a series of tropical waterways, such as Townsville's Ross River.

AN overwhelming response in North Queensland to calls for Red Cross emergency service volunteers has resulted in a training session being organised in Ayr on Wednesday, May 18.

Red Cross emergency services co-ordinator, Liana Roccon said more than 650 new volunteers have been recruited across Queensland so far this year.

"Since December 3000 Red Cross people, staff and volunteers assisted more than 27,000 people affected by floods, cyclones and fires across Australia," Ms Roccon said.

"In Queensland alone, Red Cross assisted 15,000 flood-affected people in evacuation centres. We owe an incredible debt to these people.

"Providing personal support during emergencies and managing evacuation centres are two of the most important services provided by Red Cross volunteers in Queensland," she said.

"Emergencies can strike at any time and it is vital for Red Cross to have trained volunteers on hand to support their local communities."

To ensure Red Cross support services are delivered safely, consistently and effectively, Ms Roccon said it was essential that all their volunteers were registered, trained and organised prior to an emergency event.

To attend the training course, phone 1800 733 111 or send an email to Red Cross at qldemergencyvolunteers@redcross.org.au.

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Letters to the editor should be concise (no more than 200 words), and clearly typed or neatly handwritten. Correspondents should also include their full name, address and a contact telephone number for verification. Letters may be edited

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PCYC doors open up to local youth

Continued from Page 1

Mayor Lyn McLaughlin said the official opening of the new youth centre would herald the beginning of a new era for youth in the Burdekin.

"This facility is going to make it much easier for our young residents to access services and activities," she said.

"It will be a one-stop shop for permanent and visiting youth services, as well as a place where young people can go for sport, activities and entertainment.

"The centre will also be a great asset to the wider community in that it provides us with a modern venue for meetings and conferences."

Two rooms at the multi-tenant service centre have already been named with Cr Pierina Dalle Cort moving at a recent Burde-

kin Shire Council meeting for the function room to be named in honour of missing Ayr police sergeant, Mick Isles and a meeting room is to be named after Pastor Len Robinson.

The motion, which was seconded by Cr Lou Loizou and supported by councillors, called for the naming in honour of Senior Sergeant Mick Isles "for his work and involvement in the Youth Network Group in the Burdekin" and the honouring of Pastor Len Robinson "who was instrumental in initiating the PCYC movement in the Burdekin".

Council played a lead role in establishing the youth centre, which was funded through a \$1.05 million grant from the Queensland Department of Communities Blueprint for the

Bush program.

Designed by Jon Kuskopf and Associates (now i4architecture), the facility was constructed by Ayr firm, Malas Constructions.

"The centre is already being used for zumba and church services. The PCYC has also received expressions of interest from groups wanting to hold bingo, senior citizens fitness classes, judo and taekwondo at the facility," Cr McLaughlin said.

The new centre adjoins the Burdekin Basketball Stadium on the corner of Macmillan and Little Drysdale streets, Ayr.

The PCYC took over the management of both facilities in March, with the first blue light disco for primary-aged children planned for Friday, May 6.