

Kids and Money show almost on the road

< *Kim Cousins*

A handful of lucky year 5 and 6 students from Goonellabah Primary School joined Lismore Mayor Merv King to view the first showing of *Centsational Harry and the Balance of Life* – a play for kids on how to deal with finances.

The venture is a collaboration between local and interstate businesses - Evans Head writer and director Paul Johnson; Evans Head based business Ethical Investor, and the Bank of Queensland.

The kids laughed and clapped along while Harry learnt how to make and save money with help from his alien friends (named Ali and Ann – geddit?) while being introduced to the concepts of assets, investments and saving.

Mayor Merv King thought the play was an entertaining way to explain financial issues. "The message was there and the kids engaged with it," he said. "Financial education is important for their futures."

Another audience member was Marilyn Perkins of the Northern Rivers Regional Development Board, a group that provides support to both big and small businesses in the region. "There is so little education in financial literacy," she said. "We have a skills shortage in this area. It's great to see primary school students being made aware of their future through the decisions they make now."

The production has been six months in the making, with Paul working hard on the creative aspects. "It took a long time to come up with something that had all the right ingredients," said Paul. "It's unique; there has never been another play like it. Everyone wondered how I could possibly make the topic interesting!"

"We'll be taking the performance all around Australia," said Paul, "starting on July 23 around the north coast region before moving onto the Gold



Coast and Brisbane then Melbourne and Sydney. It [educational drama] is the best thing in the world but you don't get many opportunities to do it."

Michael Walsh, executive director of Ethical Investor, said the production had been developed with reference to the National Curriculum Framework for Financial Literacy learning statements.

"The production has also adapted the widely regarded seven steps to financial success into a format that young people will enjoy and understand," he said.

"These kids will have fun getting a grip on the ideas of risk and return, diversification, and savings and investments. It's also about being positive - money as a means to get ahead, provided you learn from your mistakes."

The hour long performance also gives teachers a starting point when introducing the students to financial literacy and will complement other resources.

Financial literacy has recently been mandated by the Federal Government to be integrated into the school curriculum in 2008.

"A dramatic narrative is the best way for children to learn because it educates through multiple senses as well as creating emotional involvement," says Paul Johnson. "Harry goes from being a flop to a success."

For information on the play, ring 66824019 or go to www.harry.net.au