Rare chance for students to get valuable lessons

KIM KIRKMAN

For the first time in six years, Port Hedland School of the Air students took a break from isolated study to learn an imperative skill last week.

Spread out across 560,000 square kilometres and usually educated from remote stations via satellite, 56 students enjoyed swimming lessons together in Port Hedland.

PISOTA principal Michael Jennings also said it was the first time a Port Hedland School had conducted in-term swimming lessons for six years.

"The planets aligned, because we got swimming teachers and accommodation – the two things we need to do this," Mr Jennings said.

He said the focus was on giving the children quality swimming tuition, as well as a relatively rare opportunity for the PISOTA community to come into town and spend time with their teachers and peers.

"We had about 25 families come in from all over the Pilbara," Mr Jennings said.

BHP Billiton iron ore provided accommodation for the families, without which, Mr Jennings said, the school's first ever swimming class would not have been possible.

Lessons were conducted from Tuesday to Thursday at Gravatt Aquatic Centre.

"The intensive nature seemed to work, water safety skills in some children improved up to three or four swimming stages," Mr Jennings said.

Mr Jennings said children who live remotely actually swim quite a lot, because many of the pastoral stations they live on are near rivers.

"There is a real necessity for them to be water wise and safe from a young age," he said.

Group will tackle local noise and air pollution

The State Government has appointed an advisory group to provide a forum for discussion on noise and air pollution in Port Hedland.

The group will collaborate with the Department of Environment and Conservation to support and provide advice on air quality and noise management, and share information with the broader community.

Environment Minister Bill Marston last week announced Roger Richardson, a lifelong Hedland resident, as chair of the new group.

Mr Richardson was previously employed for 35 years as a shipping superintendent with BHP Billiton.

"As a third generation Port Hedland resident, with an extensive background in the field of environmental regulation, Mr Richardson is a committed representative of the community who is well suited to this role," the minister said.

In March, the State Government released the Port Hedland Air Quality and Noise Management Plan, prepared by the Port Hedland Dust Management Taskforce.

The plan included recommendations to establish an advisory group to work collaboratively with PBC.

Mr Richardson will serve a five-year term, expiring June 30, 2016.

There are easier ways to sneak a peek.

Pilbara's biggest display village is a showcase of innovative, sustainable and modern housing designs. With 17 homes from 17 of WA's best builders on display you're bound to discover a design that is right for you.

The Pilbara Display Village is open Saturday and Sundays from 1-5pm, or by appointment with individual builders, in the heart of Baynton West estate on Wagari Drive.

Visit landcorp.com.au/pilbaradisplayvillage