SUMMER 2021/22

THINGS TO DO

BEST FAMILY BEACHES

FISHING WITH KIDS

FAMILY FUN ON THE CENTRAL COAST

PRAM & TODDLER FRIENDLY WALKS

& MUCH MORE!
ADVERTISE IN OUR NEXT ISSUE
AUTUMN ISSUE: COVERS THE PERIOD APRIL – JUNE 2022

FAMILY FRIENDLY ACTIVITIES
Port Stephens Family Friendly Beaches (p.3)
Fishing with Kids in Port Stephens (p.7)
Pram & Toddler Friendly Walks in Port Stephens (p.11)

WHAT’S ON SUMMER GUIDE
Summer Holiday Activities & Family Friendly Things To Do (p.15-26)

SHOP LOCAL
Guilt Free Buying

FOOD & DRINK
Dining Out

ROAD TRIP
Family Fun on the Central Coast

HOUSE & GARDEN
Looking For Land? McCloy Communities (p.36)
Looking To Buy Or Refinance (p.39)

HEALTH & WELLBEING
Protect Your Skin (p.43)
Local Services (p.43-45)

CLUBS & CLASSES
Low Cost to No Cost Fitness With Kids (p.46)
Enrol Now: 2022 Regos (p.49)

EDUCATION & LEARNING
First Time Preschooler?

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IMPORTANT INFORMATION
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For more information go to www.whatsoninourbackyard.com.au/advertise or email info@whatsoninourbackyard.com.au
Nothing conjures up summer like salty skin, sandy feet, and gleeful shrieks from children soaking up the sunshine and splashing in the ocean. Port Stephens is spoilt for choice when it comes to kid-friendly beaches. Why not dip your toes into some of our favourites.

**BOAT HARBOUR BEACH**
Nestled in the secluded beachside suburb of Boat Harbour is a picturesque beach with soft sand, spacious parkland and playground facilities. Boat Harbour Beach is perfect for building sandcastles and paddling in the tranquil ocean. The beach has limited shade, so be sure to pack a beach umbrella or shelter, or take advantage of the covered picnic areas. For a full-day experience, bring a picnic lunch, go for a walk through ‘Solace Park’ and out to the headland, or explore the rock pools.

*Top marks:* The timber and rope playground with sweeping views of the ocean.

*Downside:* Lack of shade on the beach. No local shop, so take plenty of drinks and snacks.

**DUTCHMANS BEACH RESERVE**
Known by locals as ‘Dutchies’, this popular beachside reserve in Nelson Bay is within walking distance of the town centre. Dutchies is ideal for small children with its extensive shaded areas for barbecues and picnics and a great playground. The path is also perfect for bikes and scooters. Toddlers will love playing at the water’s edge and older siblings can make the most of water sports, so pack the paddle boards or kayaks.

*Top marks:* Pedestrian and cycleway
access to Nelson Bay town centre. Plenty of shade.

**Downside:** You may have to arrive early to ‘bags’ your favourite spot.

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**LITTLE BEACH**

With its extensive grassed area and cordoned-off swimming zone, Little Beach offers a safe and relaxing spot for young families. Little Beach boat ramp gives young children a chance to see local fishers cleaning their catch-of-the-day and the resident pelicans that know where to go for a free feed. An added advantage is the proximity to Nelson Head Lighthouse reserve. Once there, you can enjoy a bite to eat at the Inner Light Tea Rooms overlooking Boondelbah Island and the pristine waters of Shoal and Nelson Bay.

**Top Marks:** The ramp allowing direct wheelchair access to the ocean and free beach wheelchairs (contact Port Stephens Council for more information).

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**Downside:** Little Beach boat ramp gets very busy on weekends and during holidays.

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**SHOAL BAY**

Shoal Bay is renowned for its silky sand, stunning outlook and proximity to cafes. It is ideal for young children with plenty of shade above the beach, outdoor showers and covered picnic areas. The gentle lapping waves are just the right size for kids and the sand is great for digging tunnels or building sandcastles. Older children can enjoy a range of watersports including kayaking and paddle boarding and the revamped jetty is popular with teenagers and fishing enthusiasts. For families with energy to burn, Tomaree Head Summit Walk is nearby. It offers spectacular views, though the trek is not suitable for very young children (or very tired parents!).

**Top Marks:** Easy access to cafes and eateries.

**Downside:** Parking can be an issue.
NELSON BAY FORESHORE

Summer brings a flurry of activity to Nelson Bay Foreshore. The shade-sail covered playground is bright and interactive, and just a few steps away from the shoreline. The foreshore offers plenty of picnic facilities as well as the chance to mix fun with fitness by hiring a paddleboard or kayak or enjoying SPLASH, an inflatable water park for children over six. For families wanting to indulge in simple pleasures, a picnic lunch, sandcastle building competition or a frolic in the water will be sure to bring a smile without the need to spend money.

Top marks: Watersports and SPLASH park.

Downside: The Foreshore can get crowded in the summer holidays.
- Free and easy parking
- Woolworths, Coles, Kmart & Aldi
- Outdoor playground
- Upgraded food court
- New amenities and parents room
- Over 65 specialty stores
Have you ever thought of joining the ranks of Port Stephens fishermen?

Local fishing expert John ‘Stinker’ Clarke calls Port Stephens “the land of fishing riches”, and this really is the perfect place for a father-son (or father-daughter) fishing trip. There’s an abundance of fish year-round, and hundreds of safe fishing spots at the many wharves, jetties, and beaches in the area. This means you and the kids can always explore new places to fish or make memories at a favourite spot.

From where to fish to what gear you need, here’s what you should know about fishing with kids in Port Stephens.

WHAT YOU’LL NEED

You don’t need a lot of gear to catch a fish. John recommends a rod and reel, hooks and sinkers, bait, and of course, a bucket for your catch.

Tackle World Port Stephens recommends live worm bait for wharf and beach fishing. Local fishing shops will be more than happy to answer any questions when you’re getting your gear, including how to properly bait a hook.

Port Stephens fishing regulations require you to have a fishing license on you while fishing. While minors don’t need a license, if you plan to fish yourself you can apply for one online through the Service NSW website.
WHARVES, JETTIES, BEACHES: WHERE TO FISH IN PORT STEPHENS

Rock fishing is too unsafe when fishing with kids, says John. “Totally forget that altogether.” Instead, any of the jetties, wharves, and beaches around Port Stephens are ideal for a few hours’ fishing. Dawn (if you can get the kids up) or sunset are the best times, as this is when fish tend to congregate – so you can take in a stunning sunset while you wait for something to bite.

John recommends Shoal Bay wharf as there’s plenty of room to set up, and always a high chance of catching something. Fingal Beach is another top tip. Anywhere along the beach is great for fishing, and at the far southern end of the beach is a particularly sheltered spot known as Kiddies’ Corner. You’ll be able to walk the short distance from the car to set up your bucket and rods by the water.

Nelson Bay Breakwall is the most frequented fishing place in Port Stephens. With what John calls a “carnival atmosphere”, it’s a great place to catch a fish and be surrounded by other people trying their luck. Fellow fishermen might have some tall stories to tell. Everyone has a bucket of their own and there’s likely to be a line going taut somewhere.
WHAT WILL YOU CATCH?
The silvery bream, odd-looking flathead, and slender whiting frequent the waters of Port Stephens year-round. They all make for an exciting catch, and they’re yummy too! If the fish meets NSW Fishing size guidelines you can take it home for dinner, otherwise it will be catch-and-release.

You can download the FishSmart NSW app to check if your fish is the right size to take home. The app has a list of minimum and maximum length for each fish species. This will come in handy if your child fishing prodigy catches more than one flathead longer than 70cm (you’ll have to throw one back). Just make sure to post a photo of your legendary luck to the Port Stephens Fishing Facebook group.

That said, it’s all about the experience! Just a niggle on the line can make a fishing trip worthwhile. As John says, “You don’t have to catch big fish, to have big fun”.

BIG4 KOALA SHORES
PHOTO CREDIT: DESTINATION NSW
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**ALL WEATHER SAND BOARDING ADVENTURE**

Fantastic school holiday fun for kids of all ages from toddlers to teens.

**STAY AND PLAY AS LONG AS YOU LIKE!**

Includes a fun 4WD trip to the dunes and return, board hire for sit down & stand up boarding, instruction and shaded picnic area.

From 9:30am daily during school holidays.

**BOOKINGS**

T: 0425 213 096

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**Tea Gardens Ferry**

Nelson Bay ↔ Tea Gardens

Daily 1 hour cruises between Nelson Bay and Tea Gardens. Catch the 11:15am to Tea Gardens and enjoy lunch on the waterfront. Sunset cruises also available - BYO wine & nibbles.

Call 0411 388 380 or book online
www.teagardensferry.com.au

BOOKINGS ESSENTIAL DURING COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS
Port Stephens has a variety of toddler and pram-friendly walks to explore.

Some are paved and perfect for pram power walking if you want a workout, and others are shorter with points of interest to enjoy with toddlers. Here are some local walks to try out.

**TILLIGERRY HABITAT RESERVE**
This biodiversity-rich reserve will reward return visits. Park at the Reserve’s car park opposite the primary school at King Albert Avenue, Tanilba Bay, and take a photo of the map at the entrance.

The wildlife and plants change seasonally, so there’s always something new to see and hear on the boardwalks or gravel paths. You’ll be walking among native trees, flowers, and bird calls: try spotting some of the over 100 native bird species in the reserve. Koalas are regularly seen at Tilligerry Habitat Reserve – the
Visitor Information Centre, open between 9am and 3pm, will tell you where to look.

The tracks and bridges bring you through a variety of habitat, like grassland and woodlands, in a 1.5km loop. The Viewing Deck has great views over Tanilba Bay and access to the Bay’s flat beach, where at low tide you’ll see hundreds of soldier crabs scuttling over the sand. Continuing along the Foreshore Track will bring you to through Koala habitat to Caswell Reserve. This has a great playground, toilets and a baby change area, with trails back through the reserve to the carpark.

ROY WOOD RESERVE

The calm, peaceful Roy Wood Reserve is a local treasure along the Corlette foreshore. There’s no paved path, so walk along the grassy park or the gently sloping beach where safe, shallow water is perfect for toddlers. Dogs are allowed in the Reserve, on leash. There are toilets and picnic facilities, and it’s a beautiful spot to enjoy the sunset.

There are two car parks a short stroll to the Reserve: one on the corner of Foreshore Drive and Sandy Point Road, and another on Carroll Avenue at the other end of the beach.

ROBINSON RESERVE

This paved walk from Birubi Beach to Anna Bay Cemetery runs through the bushland of Robinson Reserve for several hundred metres. You can hear the ocean from the path, which passes Anna Bay’s skate park, a neat playground, and native plant revegetation areas. With the beach at one end, it’s a great walk to finish with rockpools and sandcastles.

You can park in the Birubi Beach car park or the car park on the corner of Fitzroy and Robinson Streets.
NELSON BAY TO DUTCHMANS BEACH OR BAGNALLS BEACH

This is a scenic, shaded path around the coast of Nelson Bay. Find the start of the walk next to Laman Street, at the back of the marina. There you’ll see the first of several information signs on local history and tree species. The path is fringed by trees which overhang and shade the path.

You’re likely to meet – or at least hear – kookaburras, lorikeets and the like by the time you reach Dutchmans Beach. Along the way the trees allow for several glimpses of blue, and they thin in places for beach views. It’s a ten-minute walk to Dutchmans Beach, and another ten to dog-friendly Bagnalls beach, where there’s a playground, picnic and bathroom facilities. On the approach to Bagnalls keep an eye out for the many black swans on the water, ducking for seagrass. Meet dogs on the sand or enjoy the cool and shady path that runs behind the beach.

Of course, for a longer walk continue around the headland or follow the path the other way toward Little Beach!
SCHOOL HOLIDAY FUN
at Hunter Region Botanic Gardens
7th Jan 10am
Let’s Love
Water Show

• 30ha of Inspirational Gardens & Walking Tracks
• Kids Adventure Trail
• Kookaburra Cafe
• Gift Shop
• Picnic Areas

Open Daily
9am-4pm

T: 4987 1655
2100 Pacific Hwy, Heatherbrae
www.huntergardens.org.au

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**SUMMER SCHOOL HOLIDAYS 2021**

**READY, SET, GO** to PCYC

**BOOK NOW!**

**AGAGES 5-12YRS | BRING LUNCH, WATER, SNACKS & HAT**

**BOOK ONLINE TODAY**

**CLICK HERE** for Nelson Bay

**CLICK HERE** for Raymond Terrace

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**REDEEM YOUR CREATIVE KIDS VOUCHERS FOR SCHOOL HOLIDAYS**

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**ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:**
- Mixed Sport
- Arts & Crafts
- Minute To Win
- Water Play
- Scooter Fun
- Mixed Games
- Aboriginal Craft
- *Basketball
- Dodgeball
- *Gymnastics
- Mini Olympics
- Obstacle Course

**Speciality Clinics**
- Basketball & Gymnastics run 9am-12pm $30 per clinic
- Clinic + half day activity $50

**NOTE:** Activities can be subject to change.

Click on the links below for timetable and bookings

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**NELSON BAY**

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**RAYMOND TERRACE**

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**ACTIVITIES INCLUDE:**
- Science Experiments
- Obstacle Course
- Gymnastics
- Multi Sport
- Arts & Crafts
- Minute to Win
- Movie Mania
- Soccer Skills
- Quiz Mania
- Dodgeball
- Aboriginal Craft

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**TIMETABLE**

- 9AM-3PM | $40 PER DAY
- 9AM-3:30PM | $50 PER DAY

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**CLICK HERE** for Nelson Bay

**CLICK HERE** for Raymond Terrace
**SUMMER GUIDE:** What’s On and Family Friendly Things To Do

For the most up to date and comprehensive WHAT’S ON listings you are likely to find in the area, visit www.whatsoninourbackyard.com.au and find us on Facebook: What’s On In Our Backyard: Port Stephens for daily updates. | **BOOKING ESSENTIAL**

**MULTI-DAY EVENTS**

**FREE EXHIBITIONS AT PORT STEPHENS COMMUNITY ARTS CENTRE**

**CHRISTMAS DISPLAY**

Daily until 22nd Dec. The Christmas display containing exciting handmade items to bring the Christmas Spirit into your home. Tickets for the Christmas Raffle will be available at the gallery.

**PORT PARADISE**

15th Dec to 25th Jan. Explore the beauty of our bays, beaches, and our sanctuaries. Our Artisans will be showcasing the best of the Beautiful Port Stephens. Works may include paintings, pottery, cards, craft, patchwork, fusion, mosaic.

Open Daily 10am-4pm. FREE admission. @ Port Stephens Community Arts Centre, Cultural Close, Nelson Bay. T: 4981 3604. artscentrenelsonbay.org.au

**BE Irukandji’s NEW TROPICAL LAGOON OPENING SOON!**

Dec to Jan. 9am-5pm. All ages.

**Cost:** From $38 per adult. This summer Irukandji will be opening a brand new tropical lagoon! This will double the size of the pools and introduce some exciting new species as well as new activities. Kids from the age of 7yrs will finally be able to see the underwater world with the new snorkel experience being introduced. @ Irukandji Shark & Ray Encounters, 2 Jessie Rd, Anna Bay.

**Bookings:** 4982 2476. Book online: sharkandrayencounters.rezdy.com/437671/irukandji-entry-pass-includes-shallows-encounter-shark-food

**THE CHRISTMAS STORYBOOK EXPERIENCE**

Daily until 15th Jan. 9:00am-5:00pm. Ages: 0-12yrs. **Cost:** FREE. Join Maitland Riverside Plaza for an exclusive showing of the international, animatronic puppet Christmas window displays of the storybook: “The Night Before The Night Before Christmas” by Kes Gray and Claire Powell. There are over 100 puppets all animated by strings. Children can join resident...
Elf on Saturdays where they will be guided along the village stepping stones and the elf will read aloud each page of the story. Bookings essential for story time. @ Maitland Riverside Plaza, 405 High Street, Maitland. Bookings: 0412 037 558. Book online: www.eventbrite.com.au/e/the-christmas-storybook-experience-story-time-sessions-tickets-204933029207?aff=Whatsoninyourbackyard

**BE SURF GROM LESSONS**  
Every week throughout the summer holidays starting from 13th Dec. 8:00am-9:30am. Ages: 5-12yrs. Cost: $300. Woolworths SurfGroms adopts an approach to learning that uses group-based games to not only equip your child with the skills they need to surf and/or SUP, but also to encourage their participation by having fun. Teaching core skills in the ocean across five incremental skill levels, as well as fundamental Ocean Awareness and Beach Safety skills such as surf survival and rescue techniques; basic first aid skills; and about varying surf conditions at the beach. With Port Stephens Surf School @ One Mile Beach. Bookings: 0411 419 576. Book online: portstephenssurfschool.com.au/book-now

**BE THE ZOMBIE HOLIDAY SURVIVAL SHOW**  
28th Dec-9th Jan. Sessions at 4pm. Ages: 5yrs+. Cost: $35. Do your children know how to survive should a zombie horde decide to visit you this Christmas? No!!? That is fantastic news! Fantastic because we are bringing our top-level scientific experts in the field of zombie lore to you this holiday season. This is a show which even the most grumpy, the most serious-minded, the most Grinch-like members of your family will struggle not to laugh at until their little, round belly shakes like a bowl full of jelly. Interactive comedy special. Presented by Funcast @ 182 Salamander Way, Salamander Bay. Book online: darkstories.com.au/holidayshow

**BE CHRISTMAS CRAFT**  
2nd Dec. 1:30-3:00pm. Ages: Adult. Cost: FREE. Learn how to make your own Christmas paper decorations including pleated stars, rosettes, fans and tulle decorations. All materials supplied. @ Tomaree Library, 7 Community Close, Salamander Bay. Bookings: 4988 0670

**CHRISTMAS CRAFT FAIR**  
5th Dec. 11:00am. Cost: FREE entry. Choose from a beautiful and affordable range of handmade Christmas gifts. There's something
for everyone. @ Nelson Bay Golf Club, Dowling St. Nelson Bay.

HUNTER REGION BOTANIC GARDENS CHRISTMAS FUNDRAISER
5th Dec. 10:00am-4:00pm. All ages. Cost: $5. Enjoy our beautiful Gardens while soaking up the wonderful atmosphere of our grounds. Enjoy a sausage sizzle from our volunteers on our lovely eucalyptus lawn while listening to local musician Sarah Barnard. Browse our plant stall, themed gardens, and a few local stalls. Including the Port Stephens Koalas. Browse our gallery with local bird photographer Dick Jenkin, while waiting for your favourite super heroes, who will be arriving at 2pm. Raffle tickets will be for sale during the day. A very special guest will also be attending! @ 2100 Pacific Highway, Heatherbrae. www.huntergardens.org.au

RESIN ART FOR KIDS
5th Dec. 1:00-2:30pm. Ages: 8yrs+ drop off event. Cost: This pre-Christmas workshop will include materials and assistance to make: 6 x Hanging Christmas tree decorations; 1 x Framed artwork. Add the take home kit and use your Creative Kids Voucher to cover the full cost of the event + the at home art pack! @ Spirited Play Cafe, Taylors Beach.

T: 4982 2065. Book online: bookeo.com/spiritedplaycafe

CHRISTMAS CRAFT
7th Dec. 10:30am-12:00pm. Ages: Adult. Cost: FREE. Learn how to make your own Christmas paper decorations including pleated stars, rosettes, fans and tulle decorations. All materials supplied. @ Raymond Terrace Library, 18a Sturgeon Street, Raymond Terrace.
Bookings: 4988 0111

CAROLS AT THE BAY
12th Dec. 5:30-9:00pm. A community carols event held at Fly Point Park. This year will include performances from local primary schools, performing arts students and community groups along with professional entertainment. @ Fingal Bay facebook.com/events/1355075181581928

RESIN ART WORKSHOP
18th Dec. 4:00-6:00pm. Ages: Adult & Teen. Cost: $80. This is an all inclusive, entry level event where you can enjoy afternoon tea and the company of your friends while you get your creative flow running (all over a beautiful timber board in the form of colourful resin). BYO wine/drinks is permitted. @ Spirited Play Cafe, Taylors Beach.
T: 4982 2065. Book online: bookeo.com/spiritedplaycafe
**Battlezone Extreme 3 Hour Event**

19th Dec. 6:00-9:00pm. Ages: 13yrs+. Cost: $60pp. 3 hour intense, mission based laser tag gaming inside The Maitland Gaol. If you take your gaming seriously, these are the sessions for you. Our mission library is constantly expanding – gamers are required to think tactically, work as a team and execute plans flawlessly for a chance at victory. Battlezone Laser Tag @ The Maitland Gaol, 6-18 John Street, East Maitland. Bookings: 1300 661 656. Book online: www.battlezonelasertag.com.au

**Kids School Holiday Program at PCYC Raymond Terrace**


**Christmas Eve at Shoal Bay Country Club**


**Free Kids Disco**

2nd Jan. 5:00-8:00pm. Ages: 3-12yrs. Cost: FREE. Great music, games and prizes. Bring the kids along and have some fun. @ Soldiers Point Bowling Club. T: 4982 7173. soldierspointbc.com.au

**Magic Show**

2nd Jan. 12:00-2:00pm. All ages. Cost: FREE @ Shoal Bay Country Club! We'll also have a jumping castle, kids disco, projector games and prizes to win each day! www.shoalbaycountryclub.com.au/whats-on/

**Kids School Holiday Program at PCYC Raymond Terrace**

**KIDS SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM AT PCYC NELSON BAY**


**PONY RIDES & PETTING ZOO**

4th Jan. 12:00-2:00pm. All ages. **Cost:** FREE @ Shoal Bay Country Club! We'll also have a jumping castle, kids disco, projector games and prizes to win each day!


**REPTILE ENCOUNTER**

5th Jan. 11:00am. Ages: 3-12yrs. **Cost:** $5 per child plus entry fee (kids 4 and over $5, adults $7.50, concessions $5). Learn about some of our resident reptiles at an interactive reptile encounter.@ Hunter Wetlands Centre. **Shortland. T:** 4951 6466. [wetlands.org.au/whats-on](http://wetlands.org.au/whats-on)

**SLIME WORKSHOP & SAND ART**

6th Jan. 12:00-2:00pm. All ages. **Cost:** FREE @ Shoal Bay Country Club! We'll also have a jumping castle, kids disco, projector games and prizes to win each day!


**KIDS BINGO**


**GIRLS BASKETBALL SKILLS SESSION**

7th Jan. 10:00am-1:00pm. Ages: 6-15yrs. **Cost:** FREE. Come and try! I AM A GIRL – is a program run by Basketball NSW that aims to create a platform to encourage females of all ages to play, referee, coach, officiate and administrate BASKETBALL. The program provides pathways and assists in the development of female role models. @ PCYC Nelson Bay, 7 Austral St. Nelson Bay. **Sign up now:** [www.bnsw.com.au/community/i-am-a-girl](http://www.bnsw.com.au/community/i-am-a-girl)

**LET’S LOVE WATER SHOW**

7th Jan. 10:00-11:00am. Ages: Primary school and under. **Cost:** $5 pp or $10 per family per car. It will be a bit messy and a little loud at times, but really fun and sure to leave your students talking about the show and ways we can all save water for weeks after the performance. During the show children will make water in a safe but explosive reaction and see Eddy the AquaBot make enough toothpaste for an elephant, cover Professor Puddle in toilet paper, make a flower shower work by
singing one of their favourite songs and highlight the many ways we can all love and save water with his fun, singalong songs. @ Hunter Region Botanic Gardens, 2100 Pacific Highway, Heatherbrae. Bookings: 4987 1655. www.huntergardens.org.au

LUCKY PRIZE DRAW
9th Jan. 12:00-2:00pm. All ages. Cost: FREE @ Shoal Bay Country Club! We'll also have a jumping castle, kids disco, projector games and prizes to win each day! www.shoalbaycountryclub.com.au/whats-on/

FREE KIDS DISCO
9th Jan. 5:00-8:00pm. Ages: 3-12yrs. Cost: FREE. Great music, games and prizes. Bring the kids along and have some fun. @ Soldiers Point Bowling Club. T: 4982 7173. soldierspointbc.com.au

KIDS SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM AT PCYC RAYMOND TERRACE

KIDS SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM AT PCYC NELSON BAY
10th-14th Jan. 9am-3pm. Ages: 5-12yrs. Cost: $40 per day. Mon: Aboriginal Craft Workshop. Tues: Make a Mask & Waterplay; Basketball Clinic 8-11yrs*. Weds: Origami & Dodgeball; Basketball Clinic 12-16yrs*. Thurs: Scooter Fun & Minute to Win; Gymnastics Clinic 5-8yrs*. Fri: Mini Olympics & Papercraft; Gymnastics Clinic 9-14yrs*. *Speciality clinics run 9am-12pm, $30 per clinic or clinic + 1/2 day activity $50. Book online: https://www.pcycnsw.org.au/port-stephens-nelson-bay

CRAFTY MONDAYS
10th Jan. 10:00am-12:00pm. Ages: 4-12yrs. Cost: $5 plus entry fee (kids 4 and over $5, adults $7.50, concessions $5). Activities may include painting, making jewellery, sand art or knitting. Full details at wetlands.org.au/whats-on. As well as craft you can try dip-netting; visit the animal house; have fun on the playground; climb the egret tower; go canoeing, and more @ Hunter Wetlands Centre. Shortland. T: 4951 6466

MINI MARINE BIOLOGIST
10th Jan. 10:00am-3:30pm. Ages: 7-11yrs. Cost: $120. This fully guided day offers exclusive behind the scenes access that
enables kids to face their fears and gain knowledge about the ocean and its inhabitants. Participants will learn about the animals and help their Aquarist/zoo keeper leader carry out some important aquarium jobs. They will also participate in a Shark Encounter with their guide. @ Irukandji Shark & Ray Encounters, Anna Bay. 

**Book online:** [sharkandrayencounters.rezdy.com/catalog/171289/mini-marine-biologist-program](sharkandrayencounters.rezdy.com/catalog/171289/mini-marine-biologist-program)

**MAGIC SHOW**
11th Jan. 12:00-2:00pm. All ages. 
**Cost:** FREE @ Shoal Bay Country Club! We'll also have a jumping castle, kids disco, projector games and prizes to win each day! 

**REPTILE ENCOUNTER**
12th Jan. 11:00am. Ages: 3-12yrs. 
**Cost:** $5 per child plus entry fee (kids 4 and over $5, adults $7.50, concessions $5). Learn about some of our resident reptiles at an interactive reptile encounter. @ Hunter Wetlands Centre. 
[Shoal Bay Country Club](http://www.shoalbaycountryclub.com.au) 

**MINI MARINE BIOLOGIST**
13th Jan. 10:00am-3:30pm. 
**Ages:** 12-15yrs. **Cost:** $160. This fully guided day offers exclusive behind the scenes access that enables kids to face their fears and gain knowledge about the ocean and its inhabitants. Participants will learn about the animals and help their Aquarist/zoo keeper leader carry out some important aquarium jobs. They will also participate in a Shark Encounter with their guide. @ Irukandji Shark & Ray Encounters, Anna Bay. 
**Book online:** [sharkandrayencounters.rezdy.com/catalog/171289/mini-marine-biologist-program](sharkandrayencounters.rezdy.com/catalog/171289/mini-marine-biologist-program)

**PONY RIDES & PETTING ZOO**
13th Jan. 12:00-2:00pm. All ages. 
**Cost:** FREE @ Shoal Bay Country Club! We'll also have a jumping castle, kids disco, projector games and prizes to win each day! 

**JD’S WORLD OF MAGIC**
12th Jan. Tomaree Library @ 10:30-11.15. Raymond Terrace Library @ 2:00-2:45pm. All ages. **Cost:** $10. Join internationally acclaimed magician Joel, for a funny and interactive magic show. @ Tomaree Library, 7 Community Close, Salamander Bay. Raymond Terrace Library, 18a Sturgeon Street, Raymond Terrace. 
**Bookings:** Tomaree Library 4988 0670. Raymond Terrace Library 4988 0111
**KIDS BINGO**
13th Jan. On sale 10am. Ages: Family. **Cost:** $10 includes Bingo, lunch and texta.
@ **Soldiers Point Bowling Club.**
T: 4982 7173.
soldierspointbc.com.au

**BE EYE TO EYE SCIENCE SHOW**
14th Jan. Raymond Terrace Library 10:00-10:45am. Tomaree Library 2:00-2:45pm. Ages: 8-12yrs. **Cost:** $5:00. Learn all about how your eyes work, optical illusions and touch a real eyeball! Presented by Newcastle Museum.
@ Tomaree Library, 7 Community Close, Salamander Bay. Raymond Terrace Library, 18a Sturgeon Street, Raymond Terrace.
**Bookings:** Tomaree Library 4988 0670. Raymond Terrace Library 4988 0111

**BE BRICKFEST AT THE BAY**
15th-16th Jan. 10:00am-4:00pm. All ages. **Cost:** $7pp/$25 family [2A/2C or 1A/3C]. Rainbow Bricks 12th Annual Brickfest. We'll have many local creators showcasing their unique creations, collections of LEGO, and other fantastic items you can't find anywhere else! Attendees can enjoy a day of family-friendly fun at this unique event. @ Anna Bay Public School, 191 Gan Gan Rd, Anna Bay. Book online: www.trybooking.com/BVSPN

**KIDS ON CONGAS**
16th Jan. 12:00-2:00pm. All ages. **Cost:** FREE @ Shoal Bay Country Club! We'll also have a jumping castle, kids disco, projector games and prizes to win each day! www.shoalbaycountryclub.com.au/whats-on/

**FREE KIDS DISCO**
16th Jan. 5:00-8:00pm. Ages: 3-12yrs. **Cost:** FREE. Great music, games and prizes. Bring the kids along and have some fun. @ **Soldiers Point Bowling Club.**
T: 4982 7173.
soldierspointbc.com.au

**BE KIDS SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM AT PCYC RAYMOND TERRACE**
**Book online:** https://www.pcycnsw.org.au/port-stephens-raymond-terrace

**BE KIDS SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM AT PCYC NELSON BAY**
17th-21st Jan. 9am-3pm. Ages: 5-12yrs. **Cost:** $40 per day. Mon: Mixed Games & Creative Craft.
Tues: Crazy Craft & Mini-Olympics; Basketball Clinic 8-11yrs*. Weds: Minute to Win & Waterplay; Basketball Clinic 12-16yrs*. Thurs: Make a Mask & Scooter Fun; Gymnastics Clinic 5-8yrs*. Fri: Aboriginal Craft Workshop; Gymnastics Clinic 9-14yrs*. *Speciality clinics run 9am-12pm, $30 per clinic or clinic + 1/2 day activity $50.

Book online: https://www.pcycnsw.org.au/port-stephens-nelson-bay

CRAFTY MONDAYS
17th Jan. 10:00am-12:00pm.
Ages: 4-12yrs. Cost: $5 plus entry fee (kids 4 and over $5, adults $7.50, concessions $5). Activities may include painting, making jewellery, sand art or knitting. Full details at wetlands.org.au/whats-on. As well as craft you can try dip-netting; visit the animal house; have fun on the playground; climb the egret tower; go canoeing, and more @ Hunter Wetlands Centre.

Shortland.
T: 4951 6466

SLIME WORKSHOP & SAND ART
18th Jan. 12:00-2:00pm. All ages.
Cost: FREE @ Shoal Bay Country Club! We'll also have a jumping castle, kids disco, projector games and prizes to win each day!


RETRO GAMES & PIZZA
18th Jan. 2:00-4:00pm. All ages.
Cost: FREE. Challenge your friends and family to any one of the dozens of games available! RSVP is required if you would like to join us for Pizza (gold coin donation appreciated. @ Tomaree Library, 7 Community Close, Salamander Bay. T: 4988 0670

RETRO GAMES & PIZZA
18th Jan. 10:30am-4:00pm. All ages. Cost: FREE. Drop in any time and let the games begin! RSVP is required if you would like to join us for Pizza at 12pm (gold coin donation appreciated. @ Raymond Terrace Library, 18a Sturgeon Street, Raymond Terrace. T: 4988 0111

MINI MARINE BIOLOGIST
19th Jan. 10:00am-3:30pm.
Ages: 7-11yrs. Cost: $120. This fully guided day offers exclusive behind the scenes access that enables kids to face their fears and gain knowledge about the ocean and its inhabitants. Participants will learn about the animals and help their Aquarist/zoo keeper leader carry out some important aquarium jobs. They will also participate in a Shark Encounter with their guide. @ Irukandji Shark & Ray Encounters, Anna Bay. Book online: sharkandrayencounters.rezdy.com/catalog/171289/mini-marine-biologist-program
REPTILE ENCOUNTER
19th Jan. 11:00am. Ages: 3-12yrs. Cost: $5 per child plus entry fee (kids 4 and over $5, adults $7.50, concessions $5). Learn about some of our resident reptiles at an interactive reptile encounter. @ Hunter Wetlands Centre. Shortland. T: 4951 6466. wetlands.org.au/whats-on

PONY RIDES & PETTING ZOO
20th Jan. 12:00-2:00pm. All ages. Cost: FREE @ Shoal Bay Country Club! We'll also have a jumping castle, kids disco, projector games and prizes to win each day! www.shoalbaycountryclub.com.au/whats-on/

KIDS BINGO

MAGIC SHOW
23rd Jan. 12:00-2:00pm. All ages. Cost: FREE @ Shoal Bay Country Club! We'll also have a jumping castle, kids disco, projector games and prizes to win each day! www.shoalbaycountryclub.com.au/whats-on/

KIDS SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM AT PCYC RAYMOND TERRACE

CRAFTY MONDAYS
24th & 31st Jan. 10:00am-12:00pm. Ages: 4-12yrs. Cost: $5 plus entry fee (kids 4 and over $5, adults $7.50, concessions $5). Activities may include painting, making jewellery, sand art or knitting. Full details at wetlands.org.au/whats-on. As well as craft you can try dip-netting; visit the animal house; have fun on the playground; climb the egret tower; go canoeing, and more @ Hunter Wetlands Centre. Shortland. T: 4951 6466

KIDS SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM AT PCYC NELSON BAY
24th-28th Jan. 9am-3pm. Ages: 5-12yrs. Cost: $40 per day. Mon: Obstacle Course & Creative Craft. Tues: Make a Mask & Waterplay. Thurs: Scooter Fun & Minute to Win; Gymnastics Clinic 5-8yrs*. Fri: Mini Olympics & Papercraft; Gymnastics Clinic 9-14yrs*. *Speciality clinics run 9am-12pm, $30 per clinic or clinic + 1/2 day activity $50. Book online: https://www.pcycnsw.org.au/port-stephens-nelson-bay
**FAMILY MOVIE: TAD, THE LOST EXPLORER**
25th Jan. 2:00-3:30pm. All ages. **Cost:** FREE. Join Tad and his friends on their adventure to Peru to save the Lost City of the Incas. @ Tomaree Library, 7 Community Close, **Salamander Bay.** **Bookings:** 4988 0670

**REPTILE ENCOUNTER**
26th Jan. 11:00am. Ages: 3-12yrs. **Cost:** $5 per child plus entry fee (kids 4 and over $5, adults $7.50, concessions $5). Learn about some of our resident reptiles at an interactive reptile encounter. @ Hunter Wetlands Centre. **Shortland. T:** 4951 6466. wetlands.org.au/whats-on

**KIDS SCHOOL HOLIDAY PROGRAM AT PCYC RAYMOND TERRACE**
31st Jan. 9am-3:30pm. Ages: 5-12yrs. **Cost:** $50 per day. Quiz Mania & Dodgeball. **Book online:** https://www.pcycnsw.org.au/port-stephens-raymond-terrace

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**FINGAL TWILIGHT MARKETS**
11th December
8th & 22nd January
12th & 26th February
4-8pm. Family friendly market. Come for a swim, a shop and a play. FREE parking. Live music by local talents. The market boasts over 100 stalls with a variety of products. Huge playground for the kids. Dog friendly with an off leash, fenced dog park on site. Food vendors on site with a variety of fresh food and drinks. Saltwater Restaurant also on site for those wanting a lovely dinner (bookings are essential). Locally owned and operated market. Come and support local makers and producers!
@ Fingal Bay Foreshore. www.fingaltwilightmarkets.com

**HOMEGROWN MARKETS**
4th December.
Every Weds & Sat in January.
Every 1st & 3rd Saturday in February.
4-8pm. Handmade, eco focused + design market. Celebrating all things local-made in the Hunter. A great family friendly event with live music + kids entertainment + a delicious street food lineup. Bursting with good vibes + fun times. @ Nelson Bay Foreshore. www.homegrownmarkets.com.au

**FOR DAILY UPDATES**
**FOLLOW OUR FACEBOOK PAGE**
www.facebook.com/whatsoninourbackyard
After lockdown disruptions, we'd be forgiven for wanting to splurge this Christmas to treat ourselves and those we love, but it doesn't have to be a guilty pleasure.

With research from the Australian Retailers Association in conjunction with Roy Morgan showing Australians are “set to spend over $11 billion on presents this year”, sustainable choices can be the gift that keeps on giving to ourselves and the planet. Here are some options to get you started.

**SPREAD SEEDS OF GOODWILL**
A potted plant or succulent bowl brightens up any space while being great for the environment. Plants make the perfect present for anyone. Young children will love making their own plant terrarium, teenagers’ rooms look better with some (resilient!) potted plants, and mums and dads will appreciate potted herbs for the kitchen, or a tree that grows with their family.

**MADE WITH LOVE**
If you’re crafty, there are many options for eco-friendly gift giving. Hand-crocheted or knitted makeup removers and washers, candles, homemade chocolates or biscuits, handmade bath bombs, jams or chutneys, fruit platters, facial scrubs, lavender eye pillows, spice blends, or a hand-written recipe book are some thoughtful ideas that just take a bit of time and creativity.

**THE GIFT OF IMAGINATION**
After one too many rum balls, there’s nothing better than relaxing...
into a good read. Most book shops will be able to recommend books for any age or interest, or you can purchase a gift voucher. An audiobook subscription is another alternative, or for those who love to write, a stylish journal will get those creative juices flowing.

A HAPPY AND HEALTHY PRESENT
Now businesses have opened up again, local classes are available where you can meet new friends and tone up. Why not offer a subscription for yoga, dance classes, or the gym? If your gift is for someone who is already exercising, you could buy them a new exercise towel or mat, a reusable drink bottle or some ethical exercise wear (such as gym gear made from recycled plastic bottles and fishing nets, or organic materials) and plastic-free body care products. Another alternative is to offer to be a walking or running buddy for a friend or family member.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS
If the post-Christmas returns counter queues are anything to go by, mass-produced purchases often end up where they started. Or worse, in landfill. The gift of an experience will create memories to last a lifetime. For adults, you could consider movie, theatre or restaurant vouchers, a family photo session, hot air ballooning, a dolphin watch cruise or koala adoption. There are many options for children, from a day-trip to the
zoo, sporting event tickets, cooking, music or art classes, surfing or SUP lessons, pet fostering, indoor rock climbing, horse riding, driving lessons, concert tickets or a farm stay. Again, it needn’t be expensive. Home-made vouchers redeemed for a cooked meal, a foot massage, a home facial or a car wash and polish will be appreciated far more than a rushed gift decision.

SUPPORT LOCAL
One of the best ways to have a guilt-free Christmas is to support local businesses that offer sustainable, eco-friendly options. Purchasing ‘cheap’ products costs us in the end by relying on overseas manufacturing at the cost of local communities and our environment. You can find some great gift ideas in our Christmas in Port Stephens Facebook group.

🌿 SUCCULENTS CREATIONS BY SOPH
PHOTO: SUCCULENT BOWL

Handmade, Eco Focused & Design
MARKETS
Nelson Bay Foreshore
Click on the link below for MARKET DATES
الف
homegrownmarkets.com.au

GOOD VIBES
LIVE MUSIC
Family Friendly!
According to Maddy Crockett, a born and bred local who created Fingal Twilight Markets with the support of her partner and family, shopping at local markets provides customers with a hands-on experience.

“All of our stallholders either make or design their products and being able to purchase them directly is a truly unique experience,” Maddy told What’s On In Our Backyard. Maddy started the markets to “bring people together for fun, music, food, and shopping, while supporting local businesses” particularly those that haven’t been able to operate during lockdowns. This year, there are some great guilt-free gift ideas that can be purchased in a relaxing, open-air environment.

“We have a range of products on offer from candles to clothes, to honey, to plants. You can find a gift for everyone and anyone at Fingal Twilight Markets,” Maddy said. All wrapped up in sustainable choices.

To put the finishing touches on your guilt-free presents, don’t forget sustainable wrapping options. Use recycled paper or gift bags, wrap your presents in a t-shirt or beach towel for a ‘gift in a gift’ or try Furoshiki, the Japanese art of wrapping presents using tea towels, pillow cases, bath mats, material offcuts or even cloth library bags.

If you are still looking for inspiration, check out our Facebook page Christmas In Port Stephens www.facebook.com/groups/christmasinportstephens where you can discover unique gift ideas that you are unlikely to find anywhere else.
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With beautiful natural surroundings and a vast array of activities for all ages on offer, the New South Wales Central Coast, 1hr 45mins drive from Port Stephens, is the perfect family escape. Here’s how you can enjoy it with your brood.

**CHOOSE YOUR OWN ADVENTURE**

At Amazement Farm & Fun Park in Wyong, in the heart of the Central Coast, getting lost is par for the course. Along with the three fun-filled hedge mazes, farm animals, a bird sanctuary, train rides to see the camels, giant board games and a brand-new Ferris wheel provide hours of excitement.

Swinging through the trees is an essential part of the fun at TreeTop Adventure Park in Ourimbah State Forest, just west of Wyong. Make like Tarzan on a high-ropes course with 100 obstacles, or tackle the world’s longest roller-coaster zip line, the one-kilometre-long Crazy Rider Xtreme — a knuckle-whitening line with dizzying loops thrown in. Kids of all ages will love NetWorld, a bouncy realm up in the trees complete with giant inflatable balls.
Glenworth Valley Outdoor Adventures, 15 minutes south of Gosford, the gateway to the Central Coast, has an excellent range of outdoor activities on 1,200 glorious hectares. Saddle up for a horse ride through spectacular countryside with guided rides, free-range rides for experts and pony rides for kids aged three to 12. You can also tackle quad biking, abseiling, kayaking and laser skirmish. To really make a weekend of it, Glenworth Valley even offers camping — the tipis are spacious and comfortable. Don’t miss the afternoon Running of the Horses, when up to 200 horses are let loose in the paddock to graze for the evening.

**ENounter Wild Animals**
Home to more than 2,000 critters, Australian Reptile Park in Somersby is a must-stop for animal lovers. As well as meeting Elvis the crocodile, Elsa the koala and Hugo the giant Galapagos tortoise, visitors can hand-feed kangaroos and see Komodo dragons, alligators and Tasmanian devils up close. See funnel-web spiders being milked at Spider World, or book in for one-on-one interactions with animals and their keepers.

Then head to Calga, a 15-minute drive from Somersby, to visit the Australia Walkabout Wildlife Park, a wildlife sanctuary that’s also home to 4,000-year-old Aboriginal sites. Learning is made fun at Dream Wild Workshops, where kids can learn about bush tucker, bush medicine, animal tracking, Aboriginal art and how to throw a boomerang. There are also ranger-led spotlighting tours at night and a Junior Wildlife Ranger program for children aged seven to 12.
GO HIKING OR BIKING
One of the most beautiful walks in the region, the Bouddi Coastal Walk runs through Bouddi National Park from Putty Beach to Macmasters Beach and can be done in one go or broken up into sections. The 8.5km path takes you along beaches and boardwalks, delivering panoramic views, remarkable rainforest and even a shipwreck at Maitland Bay. At Gerrin Point Lookout, watch for migrating whales between May and November.

Mountain-biking families will savour the superb Ourimbah Mountain Bike Park. Located in the Ourimbah State Forest, west of Wyong, the park has more than 18km of trails, including the Family Loop, as well as cross-country and gravity trails for experts. Transition Extreme runs ‘uplift shuttles’ from the base of the bike park trail to the top from Friday to Sunday so you can pack more downhill runs into your day.

HEAD FOR THE WATER
Take your kids under the sea without getting wet by visiting the Marine Discovery Centre in beachside Terrigal. Kids can look at shells under microscopes, become junior marine scientists and even take a virtual dive tour around the HMAS Adelaide, a sunken ship off Terrigal that serves as a living reef.

If you want to get into the water, there are more than 40 Central Coast beaches — 15 patrolled — to enjoy. Particularly family-friendly options include Copacabana, Umina, Ettalong, Tuggerah, Wamberal, Terrigal, Pearl and Macmasters beaches.

For the ultimate in-water fun, make like Buzz Lightyear at Jetpack Adventures, located at Mt Penang Gardens in Kariong, near Gosford, where you can try jetpacks and flyboards on Jetpack Lake. Even kids over 10 years and over 35 kilograms can have a go. After all the excitement of zipping about, take time to stroll around the beautiful gardens, have lunch at Waterfall Cafe or picnic in the grounds.
The McCloy Group are a Hunter-based property group whose history started in 1961 when Don McCloy started a Belmont-based construction company specialising in commercial buildings, schools and hotels.

Don’s son, Jeff, who is now the Chairman of McCloy Group, joined his father in the mid-seventies, taking over the reins in the mid-eighties after ten years working together. In the 1990s, the McCloy Group diversified considerably, reflecting Jeff’s innovative approach and business acumen, today delivering award-winning residential communities across NSW.

The Hunter region of NSW is fast becoming a popular lifestyle destination for families. Known for its easy access to local beaches and wineries, it’s an idyllic place to live, work and play. The growing demand has certainly been felt on the land front with 2020 showing a surge in interest, which has continued into 2021. Not to mention with all-time low interest rates, NSW Government Grants and impressive builders’ incentives there has never been a better time to build.

For McCloy Group, their communities are masterplanned for the benefit of the growing area, put simply by Chairman Jeff McCloy.
“We have a reputation that we complete what we do; that we’re there for the long haul — that’s our philosophy”.

Each community aims to set the standard for the local area, their team oversee each element from acquisition to client handover to ensure desired outcomes are achieved and the results exceed market expectations for future residents.

It’s truly the hallmarks of McCloy Communities which set them apart, they place a strong emphasis on creating exceptional living environments with vibrant public art and aesthetically serene streetscapes. They build children’s playgrounds, cycleways, plant mature street trees and place a strong emphasis on open spaces.

“We don’t just do ‘property development’. Our legacy is transforming underutilised spaces into award-winning communities in which communities thrive and people love to live.” Continued Mr McCloy.

WHERE TO BUY AT A PORT STEPHENS McCLOY COMMUNITY:

The McCloy Group is staging construction of more than 6,200 residential homesites geographically spread in the Hunter, New England and Northern Rivers regions. Here in Port Stephens, you’ll find two active communities in Medowie with their third, Potter’s Lane at Raymond Terrace selling out in November this year. Each proving its place in the community with land releases over the past year selling out within days of being on the market.

Their newest community, The Gardens, located on Medowie Road offers premium flat homesites in a sophisticated and welcoming environment. When complete, The Gardens will be true to its name with manicured gardens and mature street trees throughout; plus signature McCloy Group public art donations resonating with the community. First released in July 2020 The Gardens saw a number of hopeful parties camping out from as early as the Monday prior to be
the first to secure a homesite, with numbers increasing as the release date approached. Today homesites are selling at the Gardens up to 989m² which can be secured with just a 5 per cent deposit.

The same experience has been felt nearby at The Bower located at Boundary Road Medowie. The Bower is a more established community, first launched in 2016. At the time it too had a surge of demand, and today has seen this spike again. It is home to another state-of-the-art 1-hectare park and playground facility, known as Bower Reserve, which comes complete with half basketball / netball court, toddler’s playground, children’s playground and adult exercise area. Homesites at The Bower really are a unique opportunity and with a deposit of only 5 per cent required on land, they’re a great option for many homeowners and are often found to be more affordable than purchasing an existing property.

If The Bower is for you, don’t delay as this community is now selling its final stages!

When considering land for your new home in the Hunter a tour of the McCloy Communities is a must. For more information about McCloy Group and their residential communities visit mccloygroup.com.au/hunter-land-for-sale.
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Land Sales Office: 9 Gardenia Drive, Medowie (Next to Medowie Macadamia Farm)
The New Year is almost upon us and now is the perfect time to resolve to take control of your finances for 2022.

Whether you are planning on buying a property or looking to refinance, it’s a good idea to create a comprehensive family budget. Creating a detailed budget is a valuable tool even if you are not looking to apply for a loan, as it can help you to stop overspending and offer insight into where you can save money.

If you are looking for a loan, managing your money with a family budget will put you on the right path to learning what your borrowing capacity is, and it could help speed up the loan application process. Lenders will typically want to see three to six months of expenditure and regular savings when they assess your application.

So, let’s dive in with some simple steps to help you create your budget and manage your money better.

**CREATE A LIST OF ESSENTIAL BILLS**

1. Write down all your ‘must pay’ fixed cost bills, for example, rent, car insurance.
2. Write down all your ‘must pay’ variable cost bills, for example, food, utilities, dentist.

*Item 2 costs are unknown to some degree, particularly how much is spent on food, so put an estimate and be more generous than conservative.*

**STOP:** Does your income cover items 1 and 2 comfortably? If yes, keep going to the next step.
CREATE A LIST OF NON-ESSENTIAL BILLS
Write down all the bills you could potentially live without, for example, Netflix (yes, life does exist without Netflix!), gym membership, etc.

STOP: Does your income cover these bills comfortably? If yes, keep going to the next step.

DOWNLOAD YOUR BANK STATEMENTS
Go through your bank statements and make a list of any items that are not included in the lists you have made above, and tally those costs.

STOP: How much is being spent on these items? Could you save this money instead or even half of it?
These items are known as your ‘discretionary’ expenses. You WANT them but don’t NEED them. These also tend to be the things that you treat yourself to, things that you could do without, but you buy them anyway. These expenses could also include nights out or lunches with friends.
Any expenses such as these could be put towards a deposit.
At Smartline, we absolutely recommend spending time on the Australian Government page ‘Moneysmart’. There is a wealth of information and ideas, and a spreadsheet where you can record everything and set your budget. moneysmart.gov.au/budgeting

Still need help? If you would like assistance working out your borrowing capacity, and creating a plan to work towards buying a property, get in touch and have a chat with us! Understand what you need to do well ahead of time and be prepared when the time comes to buy!
To contact Mandy, call 0414 967 309 or visit the website at: www.smartline.com.au/gregw
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PROTECT YOUR SKIN THIS SUMMER

Australia has one of the highest rates of skin cancer in the world. Fortunately, UV induced skin cancer can be prevented.

For best protection for you and your family, Cancer Council recommends the following sun protection measures:

1. Slip on some sun-protective clothing that covers as much skin as possible.
2. Slop on broad spectrum, water resistant SPF30 (or higher) sunscreen. Put it on 20 minutes before you go outdoors and every two hours afterwards. Sunscreen should never be used to extend the time you spend in the sun.
3. Slap on a hat – broad brim or legionnaire style to protect your face, head, neck and ears.
4. Seek shade.
5. Slide on some sunglasses – make sure they meet Australian Standards.

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Keeping your family fit and healthy doesn’t have to cost a lot of money or involve a membership. Here are some free and low-cost options to jumpstart an active lifestyle for your kids and yourself.

**BABIES AND TODDLERS**

There are some great free baby and parent exercise videos. Using your baby’s body weight for extra resistance, you can do a range of fitness activities such as squats, lunges, leg raises and planks.

As an outdoor alternative, gather some other parents with each one responsible for demonstrating an exercise, and then do a pre-lunch circuit. It will hopefully encourage an afternoon nap for your baby (and yourself if you’re lucky).

You can make stories interactive by acting out your kids’ favourite books in an outdoor setting. One of our family favourites is ‘We’re Going on a Bear Hunt’ by Michael Rosen. Find some parkland and recite the book as you go through the ‘swishy swashy’ grass and ‘squelch and squerch’ through some ‘thick, oozy mud’.

**PRESCHOOL/SCHOOL-AGE**

A morning gathering rocks and pebbles, painting and sealing them, and then hiding the creations or hunting for others will energise young children and provide some great incidental exercise for families. There is a Facebook group called Port Stephens Rocks where you can post your finds or let others know when you have done a rock drop.

A treasure hunt takes a bit of time and pre-planning, but kids absolutely love the idea of uncovering hidden treasure. Make a treasure map guiding them to the treasure using creative clues. The treasure can be as simple as a basket with some treats.
or a collection of ‘gems’ such as polished stones, shells and costume jewellery. Not only is this activity good exercise, it also helps develop team-building and problem-solving skills.

Fly is a great game to play on the beach or in the park with a group of school-aged kids and the only equipment needed is some long, relatively straight sticks. Arrange the sticks horizontally on the ground with a ruler’s length between them. Have the children line up, with the last child the ‘fly’. The aim is to land one foot in each space. With the final stick, the ‘fly’ leaps as far as they can. One of the sticks is then placed on the landing spot, and the game rotates through. You get ‘out’ by touching a stick or taking more than one step in each space as the game gets progressively harder. Once the original ‘fly’ is out, the next person becomes the fly. Best not to do this game at a dog beach for obvious reasons!

Another activity involving the great outdoors is collecting items from nature such as feathers, leaves, dried flowers, dried seaweed, bush nuts, bark, different textures of sand, or seashells (just be sure not to remove any living plant or creature).

Local mum Helen Bragg takes her young girls nature collecting, and then they make artwork with their collections. “They love collecting things and it’s great exercise as well as being creative,” Helen said.

"They love collecting things and it’s great exercise as well as being creative," Helen said.
TEENS
There are plenty of options for teens. Being good role models when it comes to fitness is important at any age. Water sports such as kayaking or bodyboarding are great for the whole family, as are some of the amazing bush trails in Port Stephens, or making the most of the outdoor exercise stations at Peace Park, Tanilba Bay; Nelson Bay Foreshore; and Little Beach.

An exercise idea for the backyard or local park is to use a ‘workout dice’ which has different exercises on each side. Crank up the music and you’ll soon be having lots of fun and getting fit at the same time. Another inexpensive option is to take your bikes to Stockton, catch the ferry across to Newcastle and explore some of the great cycleways on offer, or try the bike paths closer to home.
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pcycnsw.org.au/port-stephens-nelson-bay/activities

PCYC Raymond Terrace
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PCYC also have a number of different activities to choose from these school holidays.

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Suncorp NetSetGO is Australia’s official starter program for girls and boys aged 5 to 10. It’s a chance to learn the netball basics, get outside and make some friends. For a lot of kids, this is the first time they’ll pick up a netball or chuck on a bib. It’s a learning experience. And a lot of fun. Learn more and find your local club at play.netball.com.au/kids/suncorp-netsetgo

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**PLAYGROUPS**

**FIND A PLAYGROUP**

Looking for a playgroup near you? To find a playgroup, visit playgroupnsw.org.au/Explore/FindaPlaygroup and use the handy search tool. Enter your postcode or suburb and desired interests and click the search button. Or, you can just enter your postcode or suburb only and search. Then, browse through the directory to find a playgroup that suits your needs.

**RUGBY**

**Junior Rugby League**

Join our league of strong and confident kids. Sign up to play League, and sign up to making friends for life. Registrations will soon be open for the 2022 season. Whether you're new to a club or a familiar face around the grounds, we’re sure you will have a ball along the way. Find out where your nearest club is at playrugbyleague.com/play/juniorleague
Starting preschool for the first time is a huge adjustment for the whole family. Here are our two top tips to help your child cope with this major new milestone in their life.

1. **PREP AHEAD OF THE BIG DAY:**
Read books about what preschool will be like. Buy supplies together – lunchbox, backpack etc; make it fun!

Give them a sense of what to expect: Role-play at home; pretend you’re at preschool. Talk about all the wonderful activities they may enjoy.

2. **THE START OF THE JOURNEY:**
Make the first day a good one! Well-rested and well-fed. Perhaps arriving earlier or later than the 9am ‘rush’ will prevent your child feeling overwhelmed. Many preschools stagger their arrival times on the first day – you might arrange a later drop-off for the first few weeks if your child is upset by a crowd.

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