



Staff remain dedicated to their students.



The faces of **AUST SMALLEST SCHO**

THIS REMOTE SCHOOL HAS A MIGHTY BIG FUTURE

It might be one of Australia's smallest schools, but there is no shortage of smiles at Jerdacuttup Primary. With just six students enrolled in 2025, aged between six and nine, the school's population is one of the smallest in

its 61-year history.

Some days, there are more staff than pupils. But principal Geoff Kustka insists the school remains the hub of the community. "It's such a welcoming community here and they are great to work with," Geoff tells *New Idea*.

"We have so much space and so few students that we are able to implement new ideas and programs easily. This is of great benefit to the students."

The rural town of Jerdacuttup is situated 150 kilometres west of Esperance, WA. With a population of 183 in 2021, the town has faced a sharp decline in residents

Despite this, Geoff says he is determined to keep the school operational, believing that the key to its survival lies in rebuilding it from the "bottom up."

'Children and staff are happy to be here'

– which the school has felt too. Just a decade earlier, the Jerdacuttup Primary had 19 students and four teachers.

The dedicated educator is gearing up to mark 12 months in the top job, having taken over as principal from Term 2 last year.



Jerdacuttup Primary was founded in 1964.



CARPET CANVAS

The floor art is always a hit!



A humble school cleaner has become an overnight sensation for her unique artworks on a classroom rug.

After completing her work at Deniliquin North Public School, in NSW's Riverina region, Laurie Nelson spends one random night a week crafting her surprise artworks.

While she mostly uses her vacuum cleaner and hands to perfect each piece, she often turns to pencils and rulers for the intricate details.

Laurie's creations, featuring everything from horses to playful penguins, have quickly become a tradition, with students lining up to see the latest masterpiece.

"The kids just love it," Laurie tells *New Idea*. "They get excited, the staff enjoy it, and it makes me feel good. I've even had requests for unicorns, rainbows,

and chickens... pretty much anything you can imagine!"

Laurie's talent for art blossomed during the pandemic. She began drawing to pass the time. When a colleague suggested she apply her skills to the carpet last year, Laurie didn't hesitate to start shading a sunrise setting.

While most pieces are quick to create, others can take hours to complete during the school holidays.



Laurie is often inspired by the students' artwork hanging in the classrooms.

RALIA'S OL!

The farms in the area have become corporate, and "employ more young males or females for seeding and harvest, rather than building a farming community where there's people living on the land," Geoff says. "[But] if we build [the kindergartens, the pre-primary] up over the next five to 10 years, the school is only going to thrive."

The limited enrolments certainly doesn't stop Geoff and his two colleagues from delivering a quality

education for the children.

The students benefit from a specialist performing arts teacher, and plans are also in motion for the creation of a new wellness centre and music room. These follow some major renovations carried out in 2024. The original school house, built in 1964, was refitted with new carpet and furniture designed by the students themselves! Picnic benches were also added to the playground, generously made by the Hopetoun Men's Shed.

"We have the chance to make this school something truly special," Geoff adds. "The children and staff are always happy to be here."

By Megan Rowe