



Local primary school students Rory, Jacob, Ariana, Aisling, Anton and Ruby with their new wristbands as part of the Every Minute Matters initiative.

010421 10

# Initiative to boost student attendance launches

**EDUCATION**  
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**A brand new initiative aiming to improve school attendance in the Central Goldfields Shire has launched, with a whole of community strategy to spread the message.**

Launched last Wednesday, the Every Minute Matters initiative aims to reduce absenteeism and will build on the partnerships already established between the Central Goldfields Shire cluster of government schools and the community.

The Maryborough Education Centre, Carisbrook, Timor, Talbot, Dunolly and Bealiba primary schools are each taking part in the initiative and will work with families to see the connection between school attendance and good educational outcomes.

The initiative has been launched as part of the Australian Schools Plus Fair Education program, a three-year program helping schools engage families and communities to improve learning outcomes, with the Central Goldfields cluster of schools receiving \$250,000 to support this.

One element of the initiative is wristbands for each student which are used to track attendance, with students receiving different coloured wristbands showing how punctually they attend school.

Speaking on behalf of the cluster schools' principals on Wednesday, Timor Primary School principal Andrew Tatchell said the shire's overall school attendance is below the state average.

"I think this is an initiative we've needed for some time, 20 percent of students in our shire miss at least 20 days a year which is a considerable amount," he said.

"We've obviously got the wristbands but there are some other, smaller initiatives taking place around consistent attendance, things like attendance lotto, getting the attendance data out there through newsletters and social media platforms and there is further work to come.

"We are very excited, we're only at the start of this initiative and I challenge us all to really take on this community-wide approach and response to school attendance and turn it into a good news story in the near future.

"We want the best for all the children in the Central Goldfields Shire and we certainly think this initiative will get more kids to school, more often and help change lives."

Information collected as part of Every Minute Matters shows that students with an attendance of 80 to 89 percent miss between 20 and 40 school days in a year, which is equal

to one day every week and over two years of schooling missed by year 12.

The cluster schools have worked collaboratively with Go Goldfields and the Central Goldfields Shire Council in launching Every Minute Matters, which family engagement officer Ali Wilson said is part of making the initiative a community-wide one.

"Participating in school helps children develop not just important knowledge skills but social and emotional skills, good communication, resilience and skills for future success — getting up and getting to school on time, things like that," she said.

"We understand there are many barriers to that, it's not always as straightforward as getting up and going straight to school. This is about the community supporting families to help all kids get to school — not just their own kids.

"We have got a bit of a culture where we start to think it doesn't matter if we take a day off here or there, it could be the odd Friday or a birthday but it all adds up over time — even coming to school 10 or 15 minutes late every day adds up very quickly.

"Without our children thriving, our community can't thrive so we really want to build a positive, strong future for Maryborough."