

Gumdale 90th Anniversary Speech- Claire Chester

Whenever I'm asked where I work and I say 'Gumdale,' the reaction is genuinely always the same: eyes widen and the words "That's a BIG school!" quickly follow. And it's true.

Gumdale is big. But it's not just big in size. It's big in heart. It's big in opportunity. We had a big helicopter land on our Paul Green oval just last year. It's big in what it gives to both our students and our staff.

In the spirit of our name, Gumdale, as a teacher I often think of our students as little gumnuts.

Our school, Gumdale, has been growing like a mighty gum tree for 90 years. The trunk of this mighty gum tree is built on strong foundations we explicitly teach: our GROW Well values, a love of reading, and the skills needed for an ever-changing, information-rich 21st century.

From this trunk grow the branches.

The branches of opportunity, at Gumdale that can be in classrooms, on the sporting field, in the arts, or through innovation.

And of course, from the branches grow the twigs.

The twigs are the skills we teach our children to build day by day: resilience, creativity, problem-solving, kindness, curiosity, and, most importantly, the courage to try new ideas. And the leaves are our students themselves (each one of you), each unique, trying your best, reaching for the sunlight, flourishing together as one vibrant canopy.

And the experiences at Gumdale truly are second to none.

Our children don't just learn in classrooms. We get to take them sailing on the sparkling bay, sometimes spotting dugongs and turtles. They learn adventure. They learn risk-taking and resilience.

And sometimes, learning looks like a wagging tail and a friendly nuzzle. Shout out to our therapy dog, Millie, who reminds us that kindness, comfort, and care are part of growing too.

We're very grateful to Todd Gerhardt Realty for supporting our signature programs, which open doors to everything from sport, to equestrian, to drone flying.

If there is a way to enrich education, Gumdale, 90 years on, will find it.

For staff, the opportunities are just as rich.

We grow through professional learning.

We grow through our strong focus on literacy and innovation.

We grow through the privilege of working with Indigenous communities to embed Aboriginal culture into the children's learning.

And none of this growth would be possible without the support we as teachers receive from our incredible leadership team, our dedicated support staff, and our enthusiastic teacher aides. Together, they help us give every gumnut the best chance to thrive.

Each class feels like its own little family, but together, Gumdale is one great, big, thriving community.

To be a teacher of these gumnuts is to hold both the history and the future in your hands.

It's hard to believe that around 25 years ago, Gumdale first connected to the internet. Now we are a bring your own device school. Did you know that Google is only 27 years old? I asked my class how old they thought Google was the other day, and their guesses ranged from 100 to 2000 years old.

Teaching has changed so much in that time, but one thing has never changed: the pride and joy we teachers feel in watching our gumnuts grow. Every day we get to see them sprout new ideas, stretch their branches a little further, and sometimes drop nutty surprises along the way.

Gumdale has changed so much in 90 years. Yet through all this change, the heart of teaching here remains the same. We guide each gumnut to grow, to stretch, to discover their strength, and to branch out with courage and innovation.

It's a privilege to nurture the next canopy of Gumdale's mighty gum tree.