

## Report back Camp Seaside 2003 Balnarring 14 – 16 March

Camp Seaside this year, held over the week end of the 14<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> of March was a great success. There were five new families that attended, which made it a very special Camp. The weather shone especially for our week-end.

After hiring a bus for our troupe, we headed down to Balnarring. With 24 people, including 12 children, all infected/affected with HIV/AIDS, our holiday had begun. The children's ages ranged from 2 to 14 and like the adults they used this time to catch up with their friends and meet the children they had not met. After settling into our houses, we caught up with our old and new friends that had al-



ready arrived. With evening approaching, the volunteers put on all our meals in the houses to cook as we socialized.

Like last years camp, the meals were prepared in each house, by a volunteer. The only difficulty was getting the children to come inside for the meal! After dinner, we gathered around the central "community house" and talked, while the children played. For some of the new families, it was a great opportunity to talk and share openly their experiences of living with HIV in a safe environment amongst their peers. It was not until the early hours that the last stragglers wandered off to bed.

Saturday morning we were woken to the smell of bacon and eggs wafting through the houses, and to find breakfast waiting. The children hurried their breakfast down and dis-

appeared outside to roll down the grassy hills, play on the trampolines, and race around the property. We had an early morning visitor; a large koala had walked up the road, past our houses, to climb into his favorite tree. It was



the first time many of us had seen a koala so close up.

Lila and Renee (our volunteer massage therapists from Straight Arrows) arrived Saturday morning and began the massage sessions for the day, which was much appreciated considering that we were all going horse riding that day. The horse riding was split into 2 groups, morning and afternoon. Unlike the previous camps, we had a bus, so we could make the journey together. The riding school had a few Shetland ponies that our toddlers rode and played with, while the rest of the adults and children saddled up for our trail ride.

After the first session of riding, lunch was pre-



pared for us. Following lunch, the next riding group left and those who had already been went for a massage to soothe their sore legs (and behinds!!) Throughout the day, several activities were run for the children. There was badge making and a walk down to the beach in glorious 25-degree weather.

By late afternoon, all the day's activities over, we cleaned up ready for our roast dinner. After that we gathered in "the shed" to watch Sal and Em perform their interactive circus skills. Showing great dexterity and humour the show was well received by all. The children (and a



few of the adults!) had a go at some of the acrobatics with the girls when the performance was finished. Saturday night, according to tradition, there was a sleep over in "the shed" for the kids. We heard later that we have a sleep talker in our gang who gave the other kids (and some of the volunteers) some entertainment for the night.

Sunday morning brought pancakes and a newspaper to our doors, as well as bleary-



eyed children returning from the shed. After breakfast we took a leisurely walk down to the beach, where we swam, played cricket, built



sandcastles and soaked up the sun. It was with reluctance that we returned to camp, knowing that our fun was soon to end.

The traditional BBQ lunch was ready for us when we got back. The relaxed atmosphere was a great opportunity to exchange numbers, say our farewells, and of course enjoy the meal.

Thanks go again to Gayle, who organized and managed the camp. As usual she did a fantastic job. A very big THANKS to our tireless volunteers, Cory, Natalie, Pam, Mark, Sarah, Kelly, Gary, Madeline and Cathy. Without them, Camp Seaside would not be possible. Madeline has graduated from participant to volunteer, assisted by veterans Ashlie and Kirstie, all helping with the younger children!



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