


# A special day out for Brisbane's special needs kids

Now in its 72nd year, the Rotary Club of South Brisbane's annual picnic in the park has been putting smiles on the faces of the city's special needs children since 1947.

**FROM** riding in police cars to hitting the water on a barge, the annual Rotary Special Children's Picnic returned to Wellington Point in October, giving students from South Brisbane's special schools the opportunity to get up close with Queensland's emergency services.

Organised by the Rotary Club of South Brisbane, Qld, 160 students from six schools attended this year's event. They were joined by 123 teachers and carers, and 40 volunteers from Rotary, Rotaract, the emergency services and supporting organisations.

As well as the Capalaba Road Policing Unit's cars and motorbikes, and the Wynnum District Water Police barge, the students were able to ride in a rigid inflatable boat (RIB) thanks

 A close-up photograph of a child's hand, wearing a colorful wristband, resting on the handlebar of a white and black motorcycle. The motorcycle's dashboard and mirrors are visible. The child's face is reflected in the right-side mirror, showing a happy expression. The background is slightly blurred, showing other people and a grassy area.

**PICTURED:** Brisbane's special needs students were treated to rides in highway patrol cars and a water police boat, as well as checking out Capalaba Road Policing Unit motorbikes, a Queensland Fire and Emergency Services fire engine and a Queensland Ambulance Service vehicle, at the Rotary Club of South Brisbane's annual picnic in the park on October 24. (Photos: Queensland Police Service)



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to the Moreton Bay Marine Park department, explore a Queensland Fire and Emergency Services fire engine and get inside a Queensland Ambulance Service vehicle. The Military Jeep Club of Queensland also drove students around in its restored WWII vehicles.

And while it was fun and engaging for the students, Acting Sergeant Sherry Ho from the Queensland Police Service said the event also served as an opportunity to educate the students on the emergency services.

“We showed them the capabilities of the police cars and motorbike, including the novelty of turning on lights and

sirens,” Acting Sergeant Ho said.

“By engaging with the students in this light-hearted way, we aim to make sure they know that we are friendly and here to keep them safe.”

The event returned to the popular Wellington Point Recreation Reserve, which event organiser John Paskin, of the Rotary Club of South Brisbane, says is the perfect location for the day’s activities.

“It’s an ideal facility because it’s located at the end of the Wellington Point peninsular, with a beach and calm waters on one side, ideal for launching the Marine Park RIB, and

the boat ramp on the other side, with access to Moreton Bay for rides on the police barge,” John said.

Now in its 72nd year, the event has been a highlight on the South Brisbane club’s calendar since 1947, having only been cancelled once. But an event of this size takes a lot of planning and community support.

“There is a fair degree of effort by the Rotary Club of South Brisbane in organising this event each year, including liaising with the schools to promote the event and finalise numbers, with the service providers and organisations involved on the day, and with the sponsors for their support,” John said.

But there’s little doubt it will be back again in 2020, with the elation it brings to the students proving enough reward for those involved.

“The comments and praise from the teachers and carers on the day and the evident joy on the faces of the students makes this event worthwhile every year,” John said.

His sentiment is echoed by the emergency service personnel, with Acting Sergeant Ho saying it was extremely rewarding to give the kids different experiences relating to the police vehicles and vessels.

“The opportunity to partake in this event provides us with the chance to all work together to give the students a great day out. Seeing so many smiles on all the students’ faces and being part of a great excursion for them all is a great feeling.” •