

KIDS GET THE JUMP ON LITERACY SKILLS

MEADOW HEIGHTS

Children from three Meadow Heights playgroups have spent the past 10 weeks taking part in Westside Circus's Tumbling Stories program, a combined literacy and circus initiative that teaches circus tricks, storytelling and language skills.

Now the children can balance, tumble and jump like never before, and the groups of three-to-five-year-olds have improved their language and storytelling skills to the point where they have produced three picture books.

The books, titled *The Boy and Caterpillar*, *Aspro Sheep Fly Rocket and Other Stories*, and *The Dinosaur and the Butterfly Bus*, will be launched at Meadow Heights and Bethal primary schools on December 9 and 12.

Westside Circus community program manager Jane Hartnell says The Tumbling Stories program, now in its fifth year, was designed for refugee and migrant families to promote language development and family and community relationships through the agency's circus skills.

The organisation develops partnerships with migrant communities via VICSEG New Futures, a not-for-profit community organisation that provides support and



Circus act: WestsideCircus trainer Jo Mion helps Pasa, 4, balance a spinning plate. (MICHAEL COPP)

training to migrants. The program was funded by the Helen Macpherson Trust, the Ian Potter Foundation, Arts Victoria, the Australia Council and a partnership with VICSEG and Bethal and Meadow Heights primary schools.

"It's an idea we think is really powerful,"

says Ms Hartnell. "It introduces new ways for children and parents to be creative together. It helps strengthen relationships between mothers and children and increases confidence. They learn resilience and that it's OK to not do something right the first time."

LEXI COFFEY

RIVER LAND TO BE REZONED FOR FARMS

Hume council has moved to clarify its intentions in proposing to rezone a block of land reserved for public purposes to farming land.

The proposed amendment, C181, is on exhibition at the council's Sunbury and Broadmeadows offices until December 13, and anyone affected by it can make a submission.

According to former Bulla shire engineer John McKerrow, the land in Eadie Street, fronting Jacksons Creek, was set aside for a public park after being deeded to the council by the Victorian Housing Commission when it developed Goonawarra. Mr McKerrow said the land grant was undertaken "to join into existing Sunbury via a direct pedestrian connection".

Hume's city sustainability director, Kevin Walsh, said the council was proposing to rezone 6437 square metres of the land (1.6 acres) to farming and to sell this to the adjacent Goona Warra Vineyard for agricultural use. Mr Walsh said this would not compromise access to, and along, the river.

HELEN GRIMAUX