

Menangle School saved

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The old Menangle School site on Station Street now belongs to the community after a land swap between Wollondilly Shire Council and the NSW Department of Education.

At the December 15 council meeting councillors voted unanimously for the mayor and general manager to negotiate the land swap agreement with the department.

The council will swap the land adjacent to Douglas Park Public School on Dowle Street, Douglas Park, in return for the old Menangle school site on Station Street, Menangle.

Councillors also agreed to secure the site from further vandalism as soon as possible prior to exchange or settlement of the property.

East Ward councillor Benn Banasik said the land swap idea was fantastic.

"It's relieving to have some sort of action in regards to the Menangle site as well as Douglas Park School because both issues have been going on for a long time," he said.

"The council staff have to be commended for their negotiations with the Department of Education.

"Now we can board it up to protect the property and can form a committee to look for solutions to establish a community hall."

In December 2007 the Department of Education made an application to Wollondilly Shire Council to demolish the school building.

Menangle residents Laura and Jason Burt have lobbied the council, local politicians and the Department of Education to secure the site for 12 months.

Mr Burt said that he and his wife challenged the demolition application on historic grounds.

"It was a long battle with not only the Department but also with elements of the council who thought it too hard a battle to wage," he said.

"Discussions were then had with local MP Phil Costa and former education minister John Della Bosca which led to a moratorium on the demolition whilst enquiries were made into the historic value of the property."

Mr Burt said this was a big win for the village and would ensure a wonderful community facility that would be utilised to the full extent.

"The wood turners men's shed association has already offered to restore the building free of charge in exchange for somewhere to meet a few times a year," he said.

"Thanks to all the residents of Menangle who answered the letterbox drop with their letters of support and the 500 people who signed the petition that was presented to State Parliament.

"And to all the past students, especially Esma Starr who took the time to pass on the oral history of the school and the area."



Great win: Menangle resident Jason Burt in front of the old Menangle school site with his daughters Neave and Siobhan.