

Fast wheels and dinosaurs at Bear Cottage



At the Australian Museum – Brenton Geenan gets acquainted with a special lizard while Josh Wakewood and Nurse Bec Bernstein are introduced to a dinosaur.

A few years ago, Bear Cottage identified there were many children with similar medical conditions who would greatly enjoy and benefit from the opportunity to connect with one another and participate in activities they would not usually have the chance to do. As a result, Bear Cottage now holds regular camps for boys living with muscular dystrophy and girls with various neuromuscular disorders.

Muscular dystrophy is a muscle wasting disease with onset in early childhood. It results in generalised weakness and muscle wasting, first in the limb and trunk muscles and progressively affects all voluntary muscles. Survival for boys with this disease is rare beyond their late twenties.

Four boys aged 13 to 16 attended the Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) Camp held recently at Bear Cottage. An exciting range of activities, appropriate to their abilities, were organised for their enjoyment.

As these boys are completely dependent on others for all aspects of

their personal care, including feeding, administering of medications and bathing, they can often have feelings of resentment and inadequacy. Time spent at Bear Cottage during a camp not only provides an immediate boost to their self esteem, but also allows them to mix with peers with similar life experiences where they can draw on support from one another.

During the four days of the Camp, Bear Cottage was redecorated in shades of maroon and blue as everyone got into the spirit of the State of Origin. The neighbours were advised to bring out the ear plugs as six Ferraris roared down the driveway. The boys boarded a ferry to Darling Harbour for lunch and laser skirmish, and then headed to the movies for a viewing of *Night at the Museum 2*.

A definite highlight was a night at the Australian Museum complete with creepy crawlies and hairy mammoths! Torches were handed out at the beginning of the night to create the atmosphere and even a 'real' dinosaur dropped by to size up the boys.

The success of the Camp was evident

as we watched the boys head home with a renewed sense of independence and, of course, plenty of tales to tell!

The DMD Camps are just one facet of the Bear Cottage care program to support children with life-limiting illnesses and their families. It costs more than \$2 million to operate Bear Cottage each year and this is funded entirely by the community and our committed donors. If you would like to find out more about Bear Cottage, please call Brooke Partington on **(02) 9976 8300** or visit www.bearcottage.chw.edu.au 

