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STROKE OF GENIUS: Solar heating at Mayfield pool will allow Myles Gaffney, 5, and Paddy Connor, 3, to stretch out their swimming season.
— Picture by Natalie Grono

Swimmers come in from the cold

By **JACQUI JONES**

SWIMMERS will be able to prolong their season at Mayfield pool, with a new heating system set to take the chill off going for a dip in the cooler months.

The improvement comes two years after the site was threatened with closure.

Newcastle City Council will switch the new solar heating system on tomorrow at an event to celebrate the pool's 43rd birthday.

Entry to the pool is free and entertainment and live music will be staged.

Save Mayfield Swimming Pool campaign group member Kate Connor said it was a great result, given that the council had intended to shut the gates.

The civic authority proposed closure in August 2007, but did not proceed with the plan after public protest.

"It's such an important win for our community that it's stayed and it's really great for council to

come on board to improve the pool," Mrs Connor said.

Mrs Connor, her husband Tim and sons Paddy, 3, and Ned, 1, are regular pool users and welcome the heating.

"We'll be able to use the pool for a longer season and groups like swim clubs and the elderly in the community will be able to enjoy the warmer water as well," she said.

Port Waratah Coal Services donated \$15,000 towards the solar heating system.

Garrett puts energy into rating Disclosing efficiency

BUILDING owners will be forced to reveal the energy efficiency of their properties when they sell or lease office space, Federal Environment Minister Peter Garrett has announced.

The national disclosure scheme, starting in mid-2010, will mean thousands of commercial property owners face fines if they fail to provide an up-to-date Building Energy Efficiency Certificate. Only commercial properties larger than 2000 square metres will be affected.

Mr Garrett called the scheme a "tremendous driver" for greener buildings, since tenants, owners and potential buyers will easily be able to compare the costs of running office space.

He told an Energy Efficiency Council conference in Melbourne yesterday the plan "will help drive demand for greener offices that are

Research of energy sources

A RENEWABLE energy research centre at the CSIRO will develop ways of including higher levels of renewable and low-emission energy sources in electricity grids.

The Renewable Energy Integration Facility opened yesterday at the CSIRO Energy Centre in Newcastle.

The \$1 million research

centre mimics the way electricity consumption varies during a day and draws energy from solar panels, wind and gas turbines.

It is hoped that once efficient methods of storing and integrating renewable and low-emission energy sources are developed they can be applied to commercial networks.

not only more comfortable to work in, but can also deliver more motivated and productive workers and support cleaner energy jobs".

He cited a US study that indicated "green" buildings sold for 16 per cent more than others and had a 6 per cent increase in rental rates.

Mr Garrett did not give an estimated cost for building owners for such

a plan, or make himself available for questions after the speech.

As he entered the conference, he was confronted by Friends of the Earth activists campaigning against nuclear power.

He walked through the crowd saying "good morning" as police and security held back protesters.

"How do you sleep at night, Peter?" one protester shouted.