

# School prays for life of a popular teacher

By ROBYN WUTH

St Mary's Christian Brothers' College is praying that one of the school's most popular teachers will survive his road accident injuries.

John George Murdoch, 24, was critically injured in a car accident on the Gatton bypass last Thursday afternoon.

The vehicle he was driving collided head-on with a Toyota Lexcen 1km from the eastern end of the bypass at 4.30pm.

He was taken to Gatton Base Hospital, along with the driver of the second vehicle, and then transferred to Royal Brisbane Hospital, accompanied by a doctor and a nurse. His condition was described as "extremely serious".

He has been on a life-support system since Thursday and has not regained consciousness.

The driver of the second vehicle was transported to Toowoomba Base Hospital and is listed in a stable condition.

John has been a teacher at St Mary's college in Toowoomba for the past four years. Yesterday morning more than 900 students joined staff to pray for his life.

Since joining the school, he has been involved in almost every aspect of the school. A teacher of accounting, business principles, computing, religion and pastoral care teacher for a Year 8 class, John also spent much of his spare time with the boys.

A coach of cricket's first XI, most rugby grades and a basketball team, John also volunteered to stage manage the school play, which begins next week.

Deputy principal Mr Keran Lunney said the school was in shock after the news.

"We have daily bulletins about how he's doing. He was involved in so many aspects of the school community. It's a very traumatic time for us all," Mr Lunney said.

"It's so hard to believe that something like this could have happened to John. He was always so responsible. He was a safe and cautious driver.

"Some of the boys used to complain when he drove the school bus because he went too slow."

Police have not established the cause of the accident. Preliminary investigations indicate Mr Murdoch crossed to the incorrect side of the highway.

He left school that Thursday afternoon to attend a special meeting for talented rugby union referees. Just the week before the accident, he refereed his first match in second grade.

"He was marked for the top refereeing jobs. Eventually the representative games," Mr Lunney said.

"He was such a dedicated teacher. If we ever needed a volunteer for any job, he was there and the students loved him."

Two students who have spent much of their time with John are the captains the rugby and cricket firsts.

Both were coached by John and said he was one of the best they'd ever had.

"I never had him as a teacher, but he genuinely loved kids," Matthew Stiff, school rugby captain said.

"He always made time for us in training and was a dedicated teacher."



JOHN MURDOCH

Both said they hoped John would pull through and be back on deck this year.

"This morning's prayer was probably the loudest the school has ever had. Everyone wants him back."

Mr Lunney said he had marked John as having a long future with the school and urged people past students, friends and acquaintances to pray for his life.

"His injuries are very serious and we pray he will be back with us soon."



**PRAYING FOR JOHN:** Students of St Mary's Christian Brothers College, Toowoomba, including school cricket captain Anthony Kiepe (left) and rugby union captain Matthew Stiff, are praying for their teacher and coach John Murdoch. John was critically injured in a crash on the Gatton bypass last Thursday afternoon.

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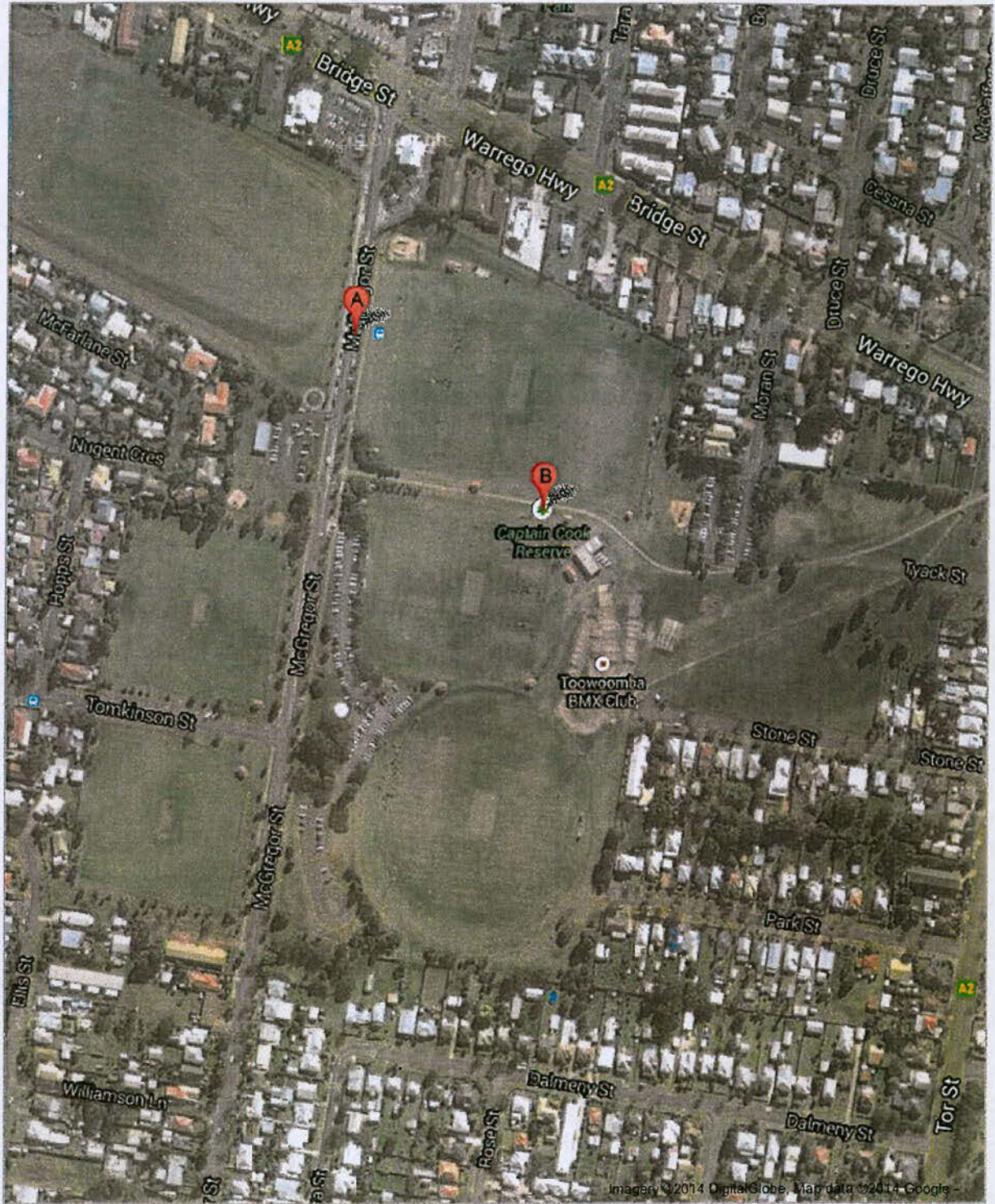
CANBERRA: Foreign aid has Treasurer Mr Ralph Willie said





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