Students dining in style with upgrade

STUDENTS now have access to a safe and clean environment for preparing and eating meals thanks to the rebuilt $1.2 million Batchelor Outdoor Education Centre Dining Hall. Education Minister Peter Chandler said he was thrilled to officially open the new dining hall and see first-hand how the facilities will be used.

“The new dining hall will serve as a multipurpose space available for use by the Batchelor Area School and the local community,” Mr Chandler said.

“The newly developed outdoor facility will serve as a location for students from across the Territory to engage in outdoor education activities across many areas of the Australian curriculum through the provision of hands-on learning experiences.

“The facilities will also be used to teach students about safety relating to the activities they will undertake, as well as informing them about the natural and cultural significance of the area.”

Member for Daly Gary Higgins said he was pleased to see the plan come to fruition.

“The hall doubles as a function facility for use by the community and an evacuation centre in case of a cyclone.”

The redevelopment of the Batchelor Outdoor Education Facility was completed in July.

Stock deaths last straw

MEGAN PALIN

THE grieving owner of prize livestock that were shot dead on his property by rogue hunters last month has been forced to close the NT’s only buffalo dairy farm after the company went bust.

Top End Buffalo owner Geoff Arthur, 68, said the senseless deaths of the two riverine buffaloes – his No.1 breeding bull and a top milking and breeding cow – marked the final straw for the dairy farm at Rum Jungle.

“It certainly didn’t help,” he said.

Mr Arthur said he was unable to secure $300,000 needed to keep the business afloat and would soon file for bankruptcy.

He said the farm had “seen many ups and downs” since it was established but he was proud to have been the first to prove high-end buffalo dairy products could be produced in the Top End.

“About eight years ago my wife and I decided we wanted to see if we could take riverine buffalo in the semi-arid tropics,” Mr Arthur said.

“We spent years working out how to get the best out of them and in 2011 we started to sell products. Our sales went steadily upwards.”

Top End Buffalo produced everything from buffalo yoghurt and milk to cheese including “top of the line mozzarella”.

“We had a huge list of people all over the country wanting to purchase our product,” he said.

But in 2012, Mr Arthur was gored by a buffalo and suffered serious injuries, which put him out of action for almost a year.

Mr Arthur said a string of bad business decisions sent the company into a downward spiral.

He said his wife suddenly left him and the company.

“I've got nothing left and nowhere to live (long-term). We make our beds, we lay on them. I take the full blame,” he said.

Mr Arthur said he expected to have everything off the farm by the end of this week.

“It's a magnificent industry the Top End has lost,” he said.

Luca was Top End Buffalo's top breeding bull. He was shot in the neck and would have died slowly, the company’s Facebook page says.

0411 151 911
1800 GENNIE

gennie.cox@elders.com.au

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