

www.news-mail.com.au

NewsMail

We're for you

**'LEFT
TO DIE
FROM
A UTI'**

EXPLOSIVE CLAIMS IN NEW
AGED CARE REPORT: **PAGE 8**



**WELFARE
MUST NOT
BE CAREER
CHOICE:
MINISTER**

CASHLESS CARD LATEST: **PAGE 7**



**I USED
TO BE
RACIST**

GROWING UP
IN BUNDY:
PAGE 3



'I was a Bundy racist'

Ex-student reflects on regrettable behaviour

TAHLIA STEHBENS

Tahlia.Stehbens@news-mail.com.au

SOME say the further inland you travel the more politically incorrect the jokes become, but Bundaberg born cartoonist Stuart McMillen is working to change that expectation.

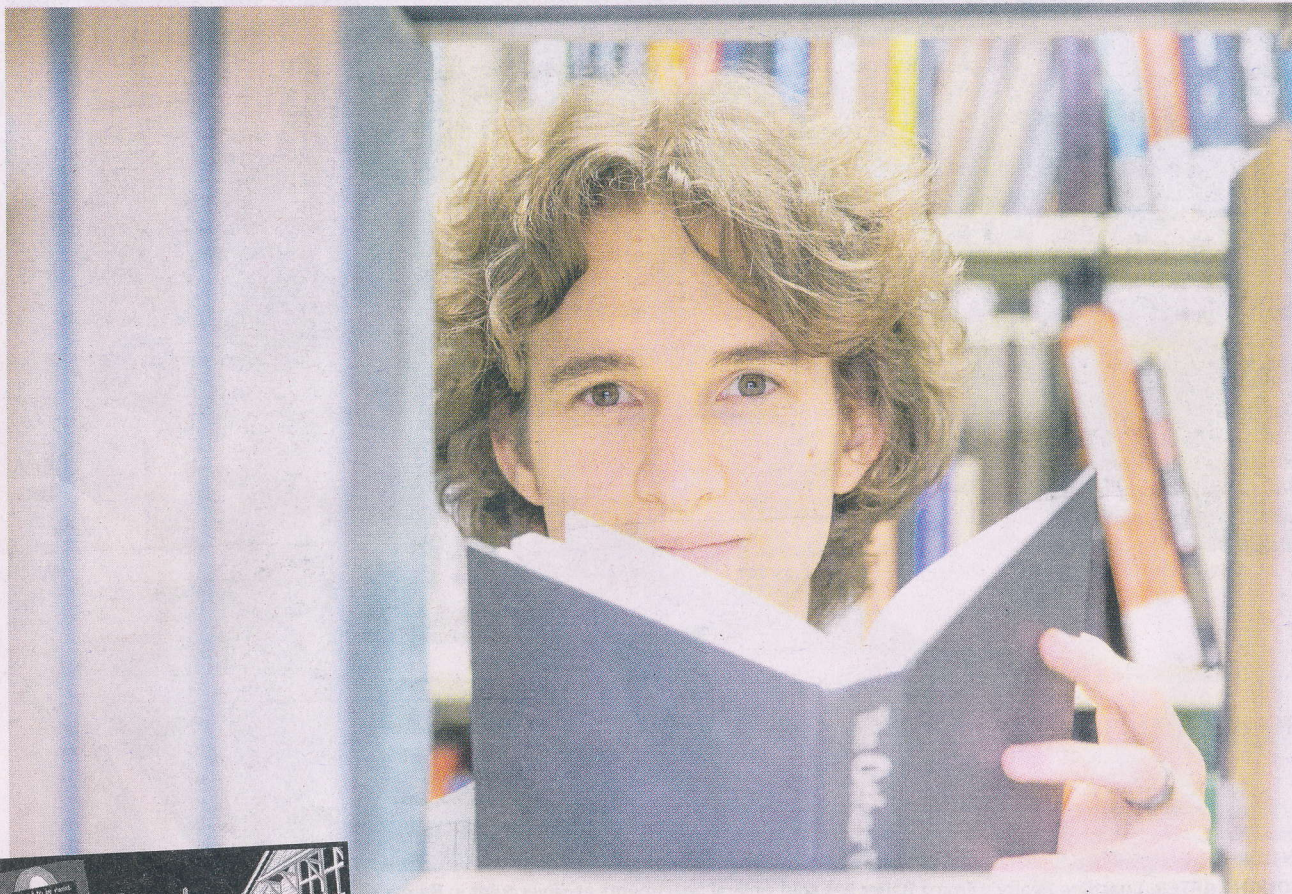
Mr McMillen can now reflect on his years as a racist openly and honestly, but for many years he wasn't aware the inside jokes and belittling of others was going to be something he would grow to regret.

The comic *I Used to Be Racist* reflects on McMillen's teenage years as a Bundaberg student where he participated in what he says was a culture of racism, sexism, and homophobia.

"I want to start by saying I'm not singling out Bundaberg as a racist town, but it just so happened to be where I grew up and that's where this happened," Mr McMillen said.

"What I'm talking about in the comic is that there were undercurrents of making yourself look good by putting others down."

Mr McMillen said the bigotry began for him in primary school by using words such as "gay" as generic insults, which escalated in his high school years.



"I like to think it was fairly self-contained joking within my friendship group and that it didn't spill over as insults to the other groups we were laughing about, but then again maybe I'm remembering incorrectly," he said.

ON REFLECTION: Former Bundaberg student and now cartoonist Stuart McMillen has released a thought-provoking comic addressing his participation in racist jokes at high school.

"For me it was a learned behaviour with a certain group of friends that we encouraged in each other through those years."

After high school Mr McMillen moved to Brisbane for 10 years and now resides in Canberra, but it was the move to different areas that encouraged his reflection.

"It wasn't until I moved away from Bundaberg that I began interacting with different cir-

cles," he said.

"As an adult with some distance I can see that my high school behaviour is something I now regret.

"It came down to meeting people from some of the groups I was criticising, meeting people who were gay or getting in touch with people of different religions and backgrounds that I realised I liked those people so how could I make fun of that group."

As a cartoonist Mr McMillen said using that medium as a platform for communication came naturally.

"By particularly focusing on thought provoking comics I aim to inspire interesting conversations that a viewer can move through at their own pace," he said.

☐ See Stuart McMillen's cartoon at the website iusedtoberacist.com