

■ Diamond ring plus bling is the thing for Presley tribute Elvis still lives in The Hills

By Flora Cauchi

TWELVE Elvis Presley impersonators promise to leave Hills fans "all shook up" with excitement at the *ELVIS: His Music, His Treasures* event next weekend.

The two-day Elvis bonanza includes four shows totalling more than 12 hours of music.

There will also be a tribute artist contest, from which 10 artists will be chosen to compete to represent Australia in the world competition in Memphis this August during the 35th anniversary of Elvis's death.

Yellow Wiggle and Dural resident Greg Page is lending five display cases with memorabilia from his personal collection of 1400 items usually displayed in Parkes at his museum The King's Castle. Items like the hat Elvis wore in the movie *Charro!*, his boots from the 1968 comeback special, his personal script from *Love Me Tender*, and plenty of bling, including the diamond ring he wore in the Aloha concert, will be on display.

Rocking 'n' rolling on stage on Sunday will be Melbourne-based singer Damian Mullin with his *Forever Elvis* show (\$33).

He was crowned The Ultimate Elvis Tribute Artist last year and will now represent Australia in Memphis.

"I started out doing singing telegrams five years ago and just grew from there," he said.

"I'm excited to perform in Sydney and bring a show full of costume changes and songs like *Suspicious Minds*, *Can't Help But Falling In Love* and one of my favourites, *In The Ghetto*."

ELVIS: His Music, His Treasures will be on at the Castle Hill High School auditorium on the March 3/4 weekend. General admission is \$5.50 and concerts cost \$22 or \$33 (Quote the code **ELVIS35 readers** to receive a 45 per cent discount).

Details/bookings: 8207 3167 or legendsonstage.net.



King for a day: Elvis tribute artist Damian Mullin says his strong voice and great audience connection make his show stand out. He's pictured performing at the Parkes Leagues Club last month.

■ Event organisers Legends On Stage are giving away 10 weekend VIP platinum passes (worth \$139 each) to the first 10 readers who email general@legendsonstage.net from 9am this Thursday (February 23) with the answer to: "In what year was Elvis Presley born?". All other readers who email the correct answer, but are not the first 10, will receive 45 per cent off any concert tickets or VIP passes bought.

Nursery stays

Rumours that Cumberland Forest Nursery could be sold have been denied.

In December, Forests NSW invited tenders from the public to lease six of its retail nurseries, including Cumberland Forest Nursery at West Pennant Hills.

Forests NSW director of land management and forestry services Ross Dickson said: "The tender process will provide small businesses an opportunity to participate in delivering comprehensive nursery services to these communities and will also provide a great opportunity for private sector investment in regional areas."

As a government trading enterprise, Forests NSW is mainly charged with providing hardwood and softwood timber resources for sawmillers and timber processors across the state.

"Over time these nurseries have evolved to be largely retail nurseries within the various regional communities," Mr Dickson said.

"As they are no longer part of Forests NSW's core business, we believe they can perform a better service for regional communities as private operations."

The tender process is expected to close in February.

A spokesman could not give an exact date for when the tender would be determined.

School farm trips paid for by council

By Sally Willoughby

THE Hills Shire Council will cover the costs of school tours to Bella Vista Farm.

Councillors' agreement to charge an entry fee for visitors was amended last week to exclude school excursions.

Councillors agreed with Cr David Bentham's comments that school visits should be free so that children's historical interest in the shire could be cultivated.

Friends of Bella Vista Farm president Keith Bensley said the initial decision could have forced the farm to stop school visits because they could not recoup expenses.

"This is not about the Friends [of Bella Vista Farm] making money," Mr Bensley said. "It's just about covering costs. [The decision] demonstrates a total lack of understanding of the value of the volunteers who give up their time to collect just \$4 from each student to cover the costs of hosting visitors and return a very small surplus to assist with the upkeep of the shire's most valuable asset."

Mr Bensley said the entry fee covered materials for the excursion's activities that enabled pupils to experience life in the 1800s, including making damper and billy tea and rolling a swag.

Any excess money goes

towards maintaining the site. Told that the council would cover the cost, Mr Bensley said he was pleased, but that it was not an ideal solution.

"Instead of concentrating on hosting the community and assisting with the restoration of the birthplace of Australia's wool industry, the Friends have spent a disproportionate amount of time writing submissions, attending meetings, briefing council, addressing council meetings and lobbying individual councillors — all to allow the charging of very modest entry fees," he said.

He said several schools that visited were not in the shire so the council would be using ratepayers' money to subsidise visitors from other areas.

Mayor Greg Burnett said the council's decision was sound "on the surface", but there were ramifications for the Friends that hadn't been thought through.

After exploring options to continue the tours, Cr Burnett said the council had agreed to cover the cost for each student from within its community services budget until the matter was resolved.

He said no school activity tours would be cancelled.

Open day entry or an organised guided tour entry will now be adults \$8, child/concession/pensioner \$4 and a family \$19.

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