

# Partners pull together

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IT is hoped a partnership between Hawthorn Rowing Club and Balwyn High School will be the key to changing the perception of rowing and making the sport more accessible.

Rowing was introduced this year to Balwyn High School's Year 8 students through the school's sport education program.

Physical Education teacher Josie Millard said it was a wonderful example of how schools could work with community groups to offer options to students.

And she said, because of the success of the partnership, it could be used as a blueprint for other schools and rowing clubs across Australia.

"It's exciting," Millard said.

"If we can build up a strong partnership it means we can introduce rowing to government schools without it costing a lot of money while also continuing to foster the club system."

Millard said it would be difficult, but not impossible, to change the public's perception of the sport.



Balwyn High School rowing crew with their coach, Olympian Simon Spriggs. Picture: JOANNA FINCHAM. n20pp800

"The kids that I'm teaching to row, they don't know what rowing is," she said.

"The kids don't have preconceived ideas about it being elitist.

"There is a perception it's a private school sport and it doesn't need to be."

By the end of the year,

about 80 students would have tried rowing at the Hawthorn club during the school's day-time program.

The partnership was developed through the Hawthorn Rowing Club's new junior development program.

The club believed there was a need to attract

younger people to the sport and, 12 months ago, employed the services of former Olympic rower Simon Spriggs to lead the charge.

Now there are 24 youngsters training under Spriggs, on top of the Balwyn High School activities.

"They wanted to re-

vitalise the club," Spriggs said of the reasoning behind developing a junior program.

"They wanted to be a good community citizen and to give kids who normally wouldn't have the opportunity to try rowing the chance to give it a go."