

## A slice of life

# Our chess 'queen' keen for next move

By **Bonny Burrows**

If life was a chess board Victoria Hendrick would be the queen.

At just 15 years of age the Pakenham teenager is the best female middle school chess player in the country after only four years of playing.

Picking up the game in Year 7 as part of Pakenham Secondary College's chess club, Victoria has been hooked ever since.

"It's really fun. And what's so great about chess is no two games are the same. I've played hundreds of games and each game has been different," Victoria said.

While Victoria has quickly rising to the top ranks of the game, she hasn't been without her fair share of loses.

But she said the falls are what has probably helped her the most.

"Losing is one of the best ways you can actually learn and improve your game," Victoria said.

"There's not just one strategy to do, there's endless possibilities and losing helps you re-assess your game."

She cited competing against a

Mentone private school student who she had lost against three times as an example.

"I just kept trying new things each time and then last year I finally beat him. I was so shocked and happy," Victoria said.

Under the watchful eyes of her tutors, Christian Ampongan and Sergio De Lima, Victoria has been perfecting her game every lunch-time.

Mr De Lima said Victoria was a "real beginner at first" but quickly showed promise.

"We play every day and I think that Vicky's dedication is what's led her to where she is today," he said.

Up next for Victoria is work experience at Chess Kids, the national student chess organisation, under the recommendation of Mr De Lima.

"I knew she had work experience coming up so I suggested it," he said.

Victoria couldn't be more excited - it includes a four-day chess camp where she'll teach others the tricks of the game.

"I can't wait. It's going to be a



**Chess champion Victoria Hendrick.** 165004 **Picture: STEWART CHAMBERS**

lot of fun," she said.

As for future endeavours, Victoria - who is also a black belt in Taekwondo - isn't quite sure yet.

But she knows she'll continue playing chess.

"I'm still deciding, but this is the one thing I won't stop doing. I love it," Victoria said.



**Victoria and teacher Sergio De Lima battle it out.** 165004