

Our gymnastic stars of future set the bar high



HIGH-FLYER: Ascot Primary School's Jesse is watched by Calvin, Travis, all 12, India, 8, Braxton and Adam, both 12.

Picture: DAVID CRONIN

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YOUNGSTERS from Ascot Primary School know how to put in a hard day's work.

Not only do they get up bright and early to attend gymnastics training at 7am each day before the school routine begins, but their classroom schedule is followed by more specialist training before going home for dinner.

The school is unique – it is the only R-7 specialist physical education and sport school that offers expert coaching in gymnastics, soccer or netball and is funded by the Depart-

JESSE'S OLYMPIC GOAL

GYMNAST Jesse, 12, is already the best in the state and nationally in his age group.

The Ascot Primary Year 7 student has already decided to continue the sport next year in high school, despite long hours of training. However, he does find time to relax in between

training to reach his goal of one day representing Australia in the Commonwealth Games and Olympics. "It's pretty hard to fit in work because, by the time I get home, it's already about 7pm," Jesse said. "By then, I have to have dinner, so I start doing homework at 7.30pm."

ment for Education and Child Development.

Teacher Sam Kennedy said this was because there were some essential skills that need-

ed to be taught early on. "They have to train young," he said. "They need to get those fundamental skills early ... the girls especially because they peak

when they are younger, while the boys peak in their 20s.

"By the time they reach high-school age, they are set up for a career in the sport and can take it further or they could move to another sport pathway because of the strength and dedication they have put in."

This year, there are eight gymnasts – all boys except for one girl – between eight and 12 who are training at Gymnastics SA. They are under the supervision of the Gymnastics SA team, comprising Paul Szyjko, Dmitry Kalinin and Andrew Cordery.

Parents of students who

take part in the elite training programs pay a fee that goes towards coaching time. Students train for about 30 hours a week and potential gymnasts can start training as early as Year 2.

On Friday, the school's annual gymnastics assembly will be held at Marion Recreation Centre to give the young gymnasts an opportunity to display their skills.

Other students in Years 5-7 will perform a choreographed routine. The training is grueling and requires a strong commitment but these young gymnasts have their eye on elite competition.