

Of The Class

Cambewarra steps into the future



SMART LEARNING: Cambewarra Public School students Ryan Coombes and Payton Collins use wireless handheld devices to interact with a Smartboard.

By **DAVID WHEELDON**

WELCOME to the 21st century primary school classroom, where there is no longer any chance of a teacher's fingernails screeching down the blackboard.

It's not because teachers have become too nice to put fingers to board, but because the blackboards are becoming a relic.

Cambewarra Primary School is one of the first schools in the region to take up interactive board technology, with nearly all classrooms fitted with the screens.

Smartboards look like a big flat screen computer monitor, with touch screen technology that allows the teacher and students to write on the board.

At Cambewarra students and teachers have taken to the technology like ducks to water.

Year six teacher Peter Tarasenko said he could not imagine teaching without the new technology.

In his class students each have a handheld wireless device they can use to

engage in interactive lessons.

That can involve students' answering questions on the board by pushing buttons on their device.

"It becomes a really useful assessment tool," he said.

"The students' responses can be exported onto a spreadsheet where I can see how each student has answered and from there you can see whether there have been any problems.

"One of the big benefits is that it stops students being inhibited about giving a wrong answer, and you can quickly work out who needs help."

Other benefits include being able to save all the data entered on the board, which can then be modified and used to teach future classes.

It also stops teachers having to spend time writing lesson plans on a black board.

School principal Susan Hilliar said the Smartboards were a necessary learning aid for the 21st century student.

"These days we have to engage students with technology, because that's

how they are engaging the world, every minute of every day, with mobile phones, Facebook and email," she said.

"You would find that if you don't use technology to engage them with their learning, then they will disengage.

"We no longer have any choice about how we teach children.

"The students of today think differently and engage the world in different ways than was traditional.

"Technology has become more of a social use for kids, which is different to how we thought it would be used.

"The thought was that technology like the internet would be primarily used for retrieving information."

Ms Hilliar said interactive teaching technology capitalised on the students' natural leanings toward social learning.

"One great thing about the handheld devices was the enthusiasm the kids have for them," she said.

"When we first got them the kids didn't want to go into the playground at lunch, they wanted to stay in the classroom learning."