

# Max Potential program boosts self-confidence

By ANIKA HUME

When St Matthews Catholic School student Sebastian Riley started the year, a lack of self-confidence meant he was struggling to communicate with his peers at school just as much as he was running away from talking to customers at work.

But after almost six months working through the Club Mudgee Max Potential program with his mentor Ray Whitfield, Sebastian is learning to counter his confidence demons - with great results.

"I can talk to almost anyone now and I find I'm having full conversations with people who would have intimidated me before," he said.

"I'm also focusing more in class and on my homework and I've gone up a few grades in some of my subjects.

"Even at work I'm better with customers, my boss has noticed that I'm more chatty than I used to be and I've become much more comfortable talking to him if I have any problems."

Sebastian also credits his confidence boost for enabling him to complete his Max Potential community service project - a piano recital for the Pioneer House residents - with such success.

Although not usually his style of music, Sebastian put together a program of old classic pieces like *You Are My Sunshine* and *Amazing Grace* that got the crowd smiling and singing along.

"I was familiar with the songs but I had to re-learn some of them and teach myself others, so there was a bit of relief when I finished," he said.

"It helped that it was a bit smaller crowd because it made it much more comfortable for me and it really helped with my confidence even further that I managed to successfully perform pieces that I wouldn't usually do."

The following day, Mr Whitfield received an email from Pioneer House CEO Diane Newman for Sebastian, thanking him for the recital.

"Diane had been visiting the residents and had a number of unsolicited comments from people saying they were really pleased with the event, which was great," Mr Whitfield said.

"I think the fact he had to learn new pieces and select songs specifically for his audiences was a very positive project for Sebastian - the more he can do those kind of things the more his self-confidence is likely to grow."

Sebastian is now planning his display for the Club Mudgee Max



**PIANIST IN THE MAKING:** Club Mudgee Max Potential student Sebastian Riley, pictured with coach Ray Whitfield, received plenty of thanks for performing a piano recital for Pioneer House residents as part of his community service project.  
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Potential Showcase in August - and is considering a second performance. knowing that I had done something to make them happy, so we'll see," he said.

"It gave me a sense of satisfaction