SCHOOLS across the Katherine region celebrated this year’s Harmony Day with special events.

MacFarlane Primary School hosted a day themed “many stories, one Australia” and invited 12 international guest speakers who shared stories of different cultures with the children and their parents.

Students gathered into groups of 15 children from transition through to Year 6, and rotated to different stations located throughout the school to listen to the various speakers.

Principal Jenny Henderson said they had guests from Katherine’s Filipino, Indian, and Australian indigenous communities, as well as people sharing bush stories, folktales and at one station the children were encouraged to make up their own stories.

Katherine resident of four years, Tresa Joseph said she shared information about traditional Indian customs from the province of Kerla, in the most southern part of India.

She showed the children a presentation featuring photographs of the annual Onam festival, which celebrates the legend of King Mahabali coming to visit his people.

“The children seemed to be taking it all in,” Ms Joseph said.

“It was wonderful to share my culture (with them).”

She said the children asked questions about her clothes.

Year 6 student Daniel Paddy said he enjoyed learning about cultures, which inspired him to one day travel to different countries.

Fellow Year 6 student Michelle Hassett said she liked listening to the stories and learning about how other cultures cooked food.

The school then gathered for a lunch featuring Australian and international cuisine, prepared by volunteers.

“The food included an Australian stew, Italian-style spaghetti bolognese, an Indian curry, Filipino chicken and damper.”

They seized the opportunity and raised the urgent need for a safe crossing across the Stuart Highway for children living in Mulgan camp, the condition of the school oval and the need for a Sports and Recreation officer in Mataranka.

Mayor Tony Jack (pic-tured) commended the children and the school for participating in the Council meeting and raising important matters.

“There is a need to include youth in the deliberations of Local Government,” he said.

“It is important that all voices are heard and that younger residents in particular are involved and have an opportunity to have their say for their community.”

The Mayor said council would direct its officials to look into the matter and report back.

“Roper Gulf Shire communities have a large youth sector with more than 30 per cent being under 15 years of age and it is our younger people, who will be the future leaders.”

Students help out in gardens

KATHERINE High School students have spent the past weeks in the bush food and medicine garden adjacent to the visitor centre at Nitmiluk Gorge in an aim to help make the gardens more beautiful and to learn about Bush Tucker and native plant medicine.

Parks and Wildlife ranger Claire Pearce organised the garden visits as part of the Junior Rangers program.

The activities have also been a good way of introducing the students to staff members at Nitmiluk Gorge.

In the past this kind of activity has lead to students coming to work at Nitmiluk when they leave school.

Jilkminggan kids keen to visit cities

A GROUP of 11 students, aged between 12 and 15 years, from the remote community of Jilkminggan are working hard to raise funds for a trip to Sydney and Canberra in May or June.

Jilkminggan school teacher Josie Lard said being able to visit the “big smoke” would help the children make a connection with the broader Australian community and encourage an interest in the governance of Australia as well as give the students an insight into how each citizen can participate in the democratic process.

“The relative isolation our students live in often makes it difficult for the young people in the community to feel connected in a meaningful way to the world beyond their immediate experience, particular in an international sense,” Ms Lard said.

“Sydney and Canberra offer many different activities not available to the children in their home community and we are keen to make the visit as memorable as possible by including a broad range of interesting and challenging experiences,” Ms Lard said.

But the school and its students have to raise almost $39,000 for the two-week trip to pay for air fares, accommodation, transport, excursions and meals.

“The students work hard for it and their enthusiasm and commitment is heartening - we are hopeful that the visit will go ahead,” Ms Lard said.