

North Shore Times

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IGOR (eeee-gor) In cinemas this January

Saying adieu to French and ni hao to Mandarin

IT'S no longer de rigeur for children to learn French or Italian – Mandarin is the hottest language for North Shore parents, who want their children to grow up bilingual.

Iona Johnson, of Killara, said her two children had been learning Mandarin since September because she believed it was fantastic for their mental development.

And Lily, 2, and Robert, 1, have taken to the new language like ducks to water. "It is such a widely spoken language and very appropriate for our region," Ms Johnson said. "My kids know they speak English at home but it's good for them to be exposed to another language."

Lily can count to 10 and sing in Mandarin, and knows her colours, while Robert, still learning to talk, is making sounds and interacting with teachers at his weekly class.

Dawna Leung, who founded Mandarin Stars six months ago for children aged up to five, was born in Britain and grew up speaking English, Cantonese and Hakka, a Chinese dialect.



To Page 4 CHINESE ON THE MENU: Teacher Dawna Leung with Lily Johnson, 2, and her brother Robert, 1.

Picture: SARA NIXON -PP218156

\$1m from Uncle Kev

JANNE SELETTO

NORTH Shore mayors left their meeting with Prime Minister Kevin Rudd \$1 million richer – and with hope of more money to come.

Mr Rudd has announced \$300 million in grants to local

councils at the meeting, attended by more than 550 mayors and shire presidents from around Australia.

The package was designed to boost the national economy by investing in infrastructure at a grassroots level.

And while Willoughby, Kuring-gai, Lane Cove and North Sydney councils all received under the average allocation of \$450,000, there were no complaints.

Based on a formula, Kuring-gai Council will receive

\$392,000 – more than other councils on the North Shore. Willoughby, North Sydney and Lane Cove will be granted \$287,000, \$272,000 and \$188,000 respectively.

Willoughby Mayor Pat Reilly said his council's

\$287,000 grant was a very good start. "It's hardly a king's ransom," he said.

"But it's an embryonic type of exercise, so I'm giving the government the benefit of the doubt."

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