Third spot in the state for speller

By Murray Trembath

CONNELLS Point Public school teachers devised a game they called “Stump the Watt-Smith” leading up to Premier’s Spelling Bee final.

Picking difficult words at random from the dictionary, they challenged contestant Evan Watt-Smith of year 6 to spell them correctly.

The initiative paid off; Evan, of Carrs Park, took third place in the senior competition, for year 5 and 6 students throughout NSW.

Lian Yang from Ermington Public School was the winner at last week’s state final, with Savannah Mandakini

Students were asked to spell words from a list they had previously been given to study.

However, those remaining after round 11 could be confronted with any word in the dictionary.

Evan battled his way to round 20 before misspelling the word “propitious” in the sentence: “They hoped the weather would be propitious for the upcoming picnic.”

Before that, he had successfully spelt the words, souvenir, fallacy, resplendent, osprey, buoyant, coalesce, baldachin, catamaran, espionage, unforeseen, mirage, salmonella, ferocity, millennium, autopsy, spinnaker, colonel, cornucopia and kibbutz.

His mother, Faye, said Evan, who turned 12 in September, would not have been there without teachers Jenny Benson and Paul Cohen.

“Schools don’t have to go into this competition, and Evan had this opportunity because of the work they put in,” she said.

Mrs Watt-Smith said Evan had an excellent memory, was good at listening and had a strong work ethic.

She said he had been in four previous finals, coming second last year, which had helped him this time by giving him confidence.