



Rachael visits students at Ryan Catholic College

Photos: MEGAN BRAYLEY

Takeaway in a tiara

McDONALD'S Willows customers had a welcome surprise yesterday when Miss Universe Australia Rachael Finch leaned out the drive-through window.

Rachael visited her former workplace in Kirwan as part of a five-day tour of her home town, thanking everyone for their support throughout her journey so far.

"I really want to try it all again," she said, donning a cap and taking her place behind the counter.

She also took on the challenge of dishing out the tricky soft-serve ice-creams and receiving a few tongue-in-cheek digs from staff members telling her to 'hurry up'.

Earlier, Rachael was mobbed by students at her former school, Ryan Catholic College, where she reminisced about the school, her teachers, and a few detentions for 'talking too much'.

"I'm signing autographs — me!" she laughed in disbelief to her former teachers, as students swarmed around her with pieces of paper, photos and even the back of their hands for the signature of their Miss Universe Australia.

One of the students, Katelyn Grocott, 13, said she thought Rachael was 'fabulous' and joined the line for a photograph.

"She's really beautiful and she deserves to win," Katelyn said.

Rachael said she had been looking forward to a trip home ever since she had won the title, taking in the sights of The Strand yesterday afternoon.

"I'm getting back into waterskiing on Saturday and I get to go skydiving on Monday and scuba diving, it's amazing," she said.

Her mother Colleen Zablocki, who is recovering from an intensive shoulder operation, said she was extremely proud of Rachael and was looking forward to spending some quality time with her.

"Rachael is just Rachael, I think this has made her stronger, she has learned a lot from the night that she won this title up until now," Ms Zablocki said.

"She's been put into situations and she's taken it all on board and taken it in her stride, just as Rachael does."

Her father Steve Finch had not seen his daughter since she won the title in Sydney and could not wait to catch up.

"We've booked to go to the Bahamas already (for the Miss Universe final) and I think her chances are pretty good," Mr Finch said.

"She talks really well and she's an effervescent sort of person so she'll do well."

Rachael was not making too many predictions of her chances at the final, which will be held in August, but said she would represent Australia with pride.

"I would love to win but I think that it's what you do with the title that makes you a winner," she said.

"I can just do the best I can and use this support and encouragement I've been given to help me along the way."

— RACHEL TOUNE

More photos of Rachael's visit home on pages 64-65 today



Proud mother Colleen Zablocki with her daughter Rachael Finch