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Bricks that built a generational link



Real joy ... George, 7, loves his Star Wars figures. He started playing with Lego when he was two or three.

Photo: Anthony Johnson

Maxine Frith
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THE humble Lego brick turns 50 tomorrow - and is as popular as ever with Australian children.

Danish toy maker Ole Kirk Christiansen invented the stud-and-tube coupling system for plastic bricks.

Now 36,000 Lego elements are produced every minute and 4 billion mini-figures inhabit the world.

New pieces on the market this year include a summer house, complete with a barbecue and little Lego chicken legs, and a convertible car that has a device for rolling down its roof.

Caroline Squire, marketing manager for Lego Australia and New Zealand, said: "We have seen a real resurgence in Lego over the last few years because the designs have just got so amazing.

"Parents and grandparents have played with it so they can do it with children, and children get a real sense of achievement from building something from scratch."

But there was controversy last year when a book, *Forbidden Lego*, was published, detailing how to make real weapons such as catapults from the blocks.

The company has also drawn criticism for producing *Star Wars* and *Batman* figures that have realistic-looking weapons, although the firm says it would never produce plastic replicas of modern guns out of respect for its founder's pacifist stance.

George Head, 7, of Vacluse, is a long-time Lego fan.

His lawyer mother, Gill Collins, said: "He started playing with the big bricks when he was two or three and has developed through the range.

"It's great because he gets real joy out of creating something himself but it's also very educational. It helps children with their fine motor skills and teaches them to look at things three-dimensionally."

George said *Star Wars* figures were his favourites.

Kids still love Lego, 50 years on

- Lego was patented on January 28, 1958.
- Seven Lego sets are sold every second, worldwide.
- Five billion hours are spent playing with Lego every year.
- There are 915 million possible ways to combine six, eight-stud bricks.

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