



Pondering about the giant pandas

EDITORIAL

By **MEREDITH KATE ARTHUR**

GIANT pandas belong to the order of Carnivora. Carnivora, despite being derived from the word carnivore, do not necessarily eat meat which is the case with giant pandas, who primarily eat plants, but they can also eat fish, eggs and insects.

According to the Smithsonian website, "Giant pandas live in a few mountain ranges in central China, in Sichuan, Shaanxi, and Gansu provinces."

"They once lived in lowland areas, but farming, forest clearing, and other development now restrict the pandas to the mountains.

"Giant pandas live in broadleaf and coniferous forest with dense understory of bamboo, at elevations between 1524 - 3048 metres.

"The giant panda, has a body typical of bears. It has black fur on ears, eye patches, muzzle, legs, and shoulders. The rest of the animal's coat is white, some speculate that the bold colouring provides effective camouflage into their shade-dappled snowy and rocky surroundings. The panda's thick, woolly coat keeps it warm in the cool forests of its habitat.

"Giant pandas have large molar

teeth and strong jaw muscles for crushing tough bamboo.

They are "about the size of an American black bear; giant pandas stand to about 60 centimetres tall at the shoulders (on all fours), and reach 1.2- to 1.8 metres long.

"Scientists aren't sure how long giant pandas live in the wild, but they are sure it's shorter than lifespans in zoos. Chinese scientists have reported zoo pandas as old as 35.

"Giant pandas reach breeding maturity between four and eight years of age. They may be reproductive until about age 20. Female pandas ovulate only once a year, in the spring. A short period of two to three days around ovulation is the only time she is able to conceive. Calls and scents draw males and females to each other.

"Female giant pandas give birth between 95 and 160 days after mating. Although females may give birth to two young, usually only one survives. Cubs may stay with their mothers for up to three years before striking out on their own. This means a female, at best can produce young only every other year; in her lifetime, she may raise only five to eight cubs.

"The giant pandas' naturally slow breeding rate prevents a population from recovering quickly from illegal hunting, habitat loss, and other human-related causes of mortality."

Find the new normal

By **NEXUS**

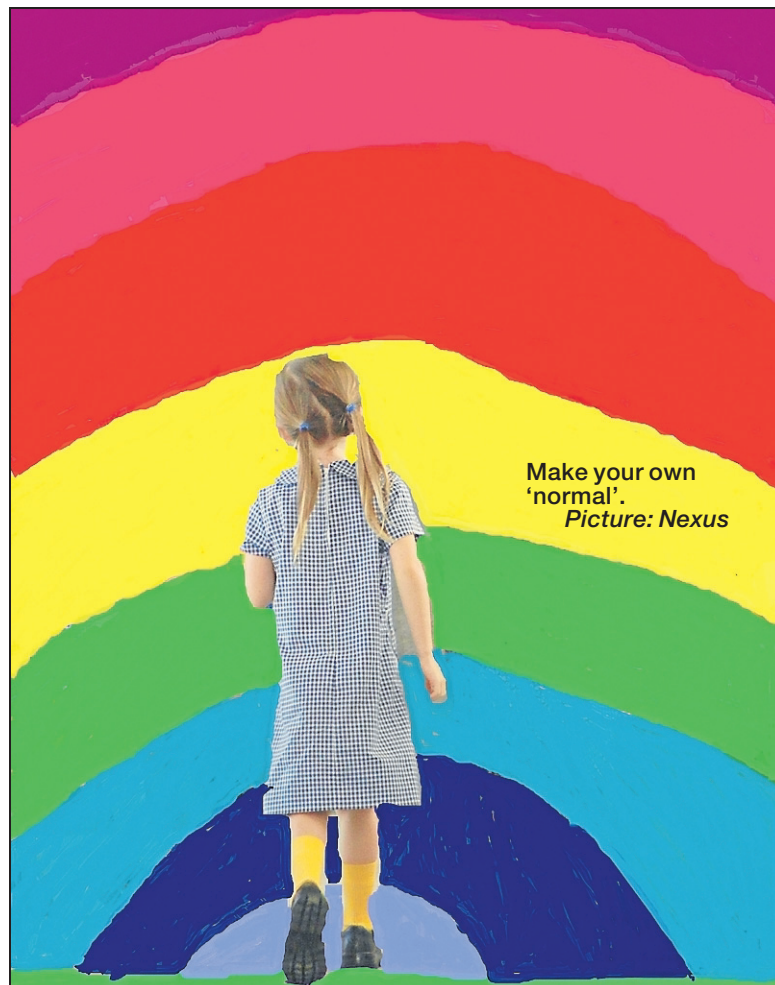
NORMAL. What is normal? It sounds so simple but it's really hard to find an answer or a satisfying one at least.

It is a constant whisper or a voice that is asking me to find the answer more as I grow older. "I want to find out who I am before the world tells me who I should be". So begins my quest of self-discovery, eager to participate in any blood test or scan which could be the answer to my riddle and the ever-growing questions. Are hormones determinants of normal, is that what makes us the same or different? Is it the ability to learn and adapt that makes us normal and fit in? Or can it be nature verses nurture? With each question more questions are raised.

The concept of normal is something that I struggle with, it is something that I constantly try to achieve. Normal is different things to different people, some things which I believe that I have already, unwittingly, achieved is establishing personal fashion sense, being part of a sporting team and even finding a hair colour that I like.

Before the world told me who I should be, I was a beautiful child, individual like all the rest, I didn't care that I loved playing with dolls or that building dirt roads and pushing toy trucks around the backyard was good or bad.

As that small child grew I was waiting to develop an identity and now as a 16-year-old I feel a self-imposed pressure to choose to follow what society is telling me is normal, to behave a certain way or say the right thing at the right time. With all this information coming at



me 24 hours a day I have a choice to follow what is expected or to listen to the voice in my head, "create new memories". Thankfully I have brain which is fully capable of storing both

new and old memories. I can choose to metamorphose into whatever my heart desires. After much consideration "normal" is what you feel comfortable with.

Big rains came to many across the Hunter

By **GREEN CLASS**

THIS term at Kotara School Green Class has been focusing on the text *Big Raining Coming*. This book looks closely at weather in Australia.

In the April storm the students said they had a lot of different and varied experiences.

Ryan, of Bonnells Bay, said he felt stressed, it was noisy and very windy he was the first person to see a tree had fallen on his aunty's house. Thankfully his aunty had already

taken her kids out of the house to his nan's. Sadly his aunty's house had to be demolished.

Kayden was at his neighbour's when the storm hit. He tried to get home but the winds were too strong. They had a fence damaged, flooding and power loss. He felt they were lucky to have a generator.

Kyle was awake when the storm hit and was too scared to go outside. He didn't want to get zapped by fallen power lines. Their trailer blew onto the car. He did make it to



Alot of trees were blown over from the storm's strong winds.
Picture: Green Class

school but he had to go home at 10.30am because flood waters in the school car park were rising and if they didn't leave he might become trapped.

Kye said his backyard flooded and water came into his bedroom. They lost power due to fallen trees they decided to move into his aunty's house.

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