

The world doesn't really seem to care

EDITORIAL

By MEGHAN RICHARDSON

DRIVING down the road with the radio on, the lyrics to a popular song boom out: "I don't care!"

When did it become fashionable and cool not to care? When did the ability to feel human emotions and sympathy and empathy become such a drag? When did that whole trend start?

Perhaps it is the youth of today, or the last generation, or even the one before that. When creatures were crawling out of the prehistoric ooze, did they care?

Caring is defined by the dictionary as feeling and exhibiting concern. When asked, people I surveyed said that caring means to feel empathy or a desire to help people in a vulnerable place.

Those same people were asked to describe what a world that didn't care would look like.

Almost 60 per cent said that they thought the world was already like that.

Perhaps caring is an old-fashioned idea, yet it is crucial to the well-being of young children, and skin-to-skin contact is needed to release hormones for the survival and growth of babies.

And caring for others shouldn't

stop as we get older. The number of suicides recorded annually accounts for between 1.6 per cent and 1.9 per cent of all deaths, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. That number should be zero. People shouldn't rather die than tell anyone how they feel because nobody cares.

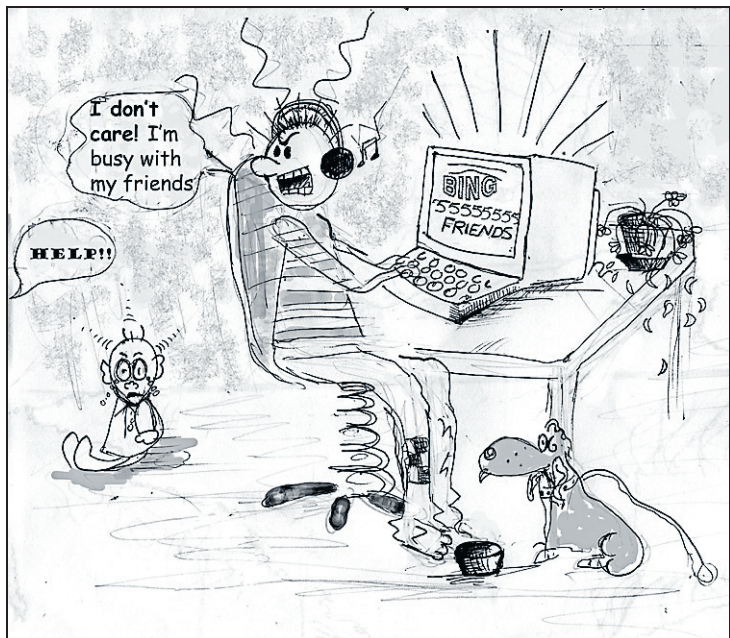
What influences what we care about? Typical answers include animals, music, books, peers and family. Caring about books is an interesting thought – pieces of paper with the same 26 letters repeated in different assortments. Perhaps people who care about books have a lot of empathy if they can relate to characters made up of words and imagination.

There's a lot to be said about the kind of music people listen to and how it affects them. Listening to music that constantly promotes violence and the degradation of women might change the way someone thinks.

Likewise, the friends we surround ourselves with and the family we go home to also have a major influence.

Everyone sighs into their coffee cup about something. So maybe when you find yourself with another, even in a seat next to a stranger on the bus, you should ask what they care about.

It is a better insight into someone's soul than the eyes are. It shows that you care.



CARTOON: Laura McDonald



RESEARCH: Andrew Gardner explains the serious effects of sports-related concussion. Picture: Cameron Arnott

Tackle a blow to your brain

By MADELINE GARRET-JONES

CONCUSSION is a common injury in many sports such as horse riding, AFL, rugby league or union. Even though this injury may go undetected, it can have serious effects on the brain later in life.

Andrew Gardner, of the University of Newcastle, has been researching sports-related concussions for eight years. His findings would benefit anyone who plays a sport in which head injuries are inevitable.

"Active rugby union players who sustained three or more concussions during their career performed poorer on processing speed measures", Dr Gardner said.

"A sportsperson with a concussion

may have poor concentration, headache, trouble sleeping and memory problems."

There is limited protection offered to those who do play sports.

"Because a concussion is a brain injury, where the brain hits the skull, soft helmets don't protect against concussion," Dr Gardner said.

Second Impact Syndrome (SIS) is common in professional sports players. It occurs when another concussion is received before recovering from a first concussion. It affects the brain's development, especially in children and adolescents.

The best way to avoid SIS is to completely recover from the concussion before returning to any sport where further injury is a risk.

Caring for the wild and woolly

By EMILY RUTHERFORD

ON any given night across the Hunter, many life-saving rescues are taking place. The recipients of these rescues don't understand their plight. Nor can they speak to thank the individuals who save them.

Audrey Koosmen is the president of the Native Animal Trust Fund Inc Hunter Wildlife, a volunteer organisation that assists National Parks and Wildlife to rescue and care for all injured native animals.

Ms Koosmen is one of 40 carers who operate 24 hours a day, with limited government support.

Most of the injuries are caused by motor vehicles, dog attacks and bad weather. The animals stay with the carer from a few days to 20 months.

The main seasons for rescues are spring and summer because of increased activity such as breeding.

"The recent extreme weather has caused the loss of many flying foxes and kangaroos in the area," Ms Koosmen said.

Increased pressure on wildlife is caused by human activity, especially habitat loss. Ms Koosmen wants more people to get involved.

Volunteers are ordinary members of the public. Training must be done before caring can commence, for example, it can take 12 months to become an approved koala carer.

Good Samaritans aid closer communities

By COURTNEY BEVERLY

FOR 28 years, the Samaritans' work has been helping children, families and youths with disabilities and mental health issues.

The Samaritans is a non-profit organisation and is part of the Anglican Church.

One of the 600 staff and 450 volunteers, Mrs Graham has worked with the Samaritans for seven years.

"I wanted to work in a place where I could use all my skills for the betterment of the community. To make

a difference," she said.

A Samaritan is someone with the core values of compassion, integrity and justice.

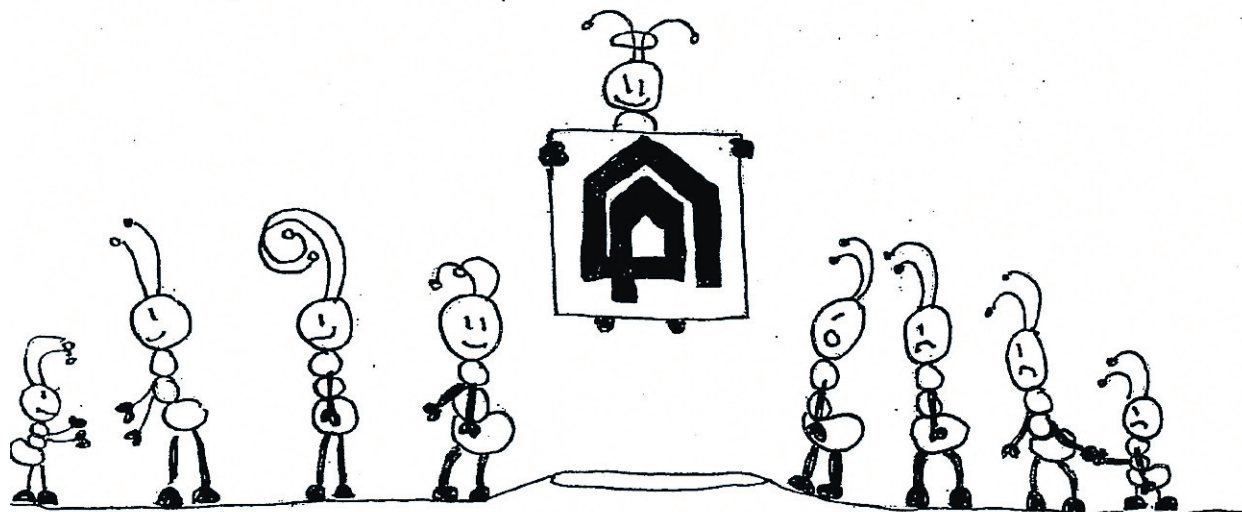
"I have influenced my family, I have encouraged friends to volunteer – school children can become involved," Mrs Graham said.

"Through my work, I have a much better understanding of living with poverty, disability and struggling families. I believe everyone has a place and space in the community".



VALUED: Mrs Graham's work with the Samaritans has brought her fulfilment. Picture: Cameron Thorpe

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