

Kids give voice to range of concerns

EDITORIAL

By ZANDER CZERWANIW, MILES BURFORD and WILLIAM DAY

STUDENTS today are becoming increasingly more immersed in current affairs as they are surrounded by issues being broadcast via the media and internet.

It's hard to escape. Recently year 5 and 6 students were included in a forum discussing issues that really concerned them.

The various concerns they raised were related to current affairs, social issues or topics handpicked from their own personal concerns. Obesity, bullying, and war were raised, with cyberbullying causing increasing alarm. Others were more concerned about pollution, disabilities, nuclear power, manners in modern society, malnutrition, vandalism, racism and even puppy farms.

Student Miles Burford discussed the issue of obesity and made the point that staying inside everyday playing Xbox or PlayStation and watching television wouldn't help you to become fit and healthy. "If you're active every day, you'll feel healthier and be able to learn better," he said.

Another concern was equality,

with many countries still depriving people of basic human rights. Nicholas Batarseh said: "If I could change anything it would be that everyone was as important as each other. It wouldn't matter where they came from, what race they were, how much money or what beliefs they had."

Each day thousands of children log on to the internet. They text, email or play an online game but Adam Lacey was concerned that many people also use these services to bully or hurt others.

Due to deforestation, pollution and our growing world population the world's ecosystems are changing and this is having a devastating effect on the environment.

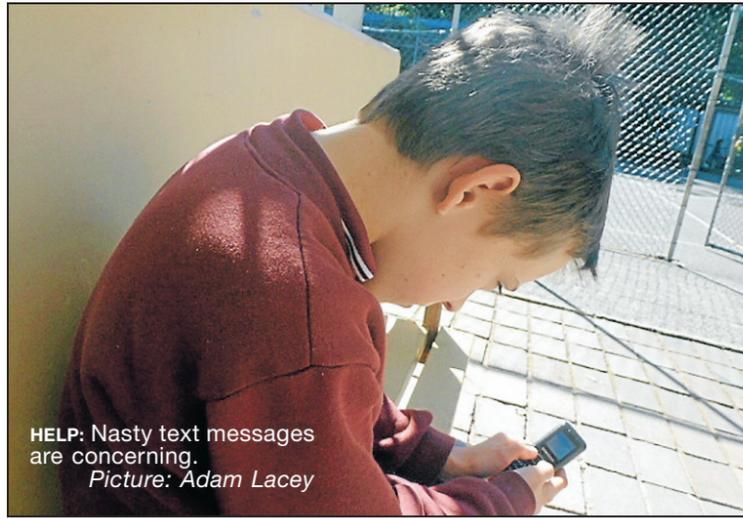
Haley Wilson was worried that our careless practices are contributing to the endangerment and even extinction of many of our animals.

Louise Sanders believes that there is far too much violence in our community. "Kids can't even walk to school without fear and the possibility of being kidnapped. I know my voice may only be small and singular but I believe we can eradicate guns from Australia and soon, possibly the world," she said.

Our children are our future and with this rare chance to understand what really matters to them, and by giving them a voice, then just maybe they will be able to do something about them.



Cartoon: Isabella Dowe



HELP: Nasty text messages are concerning. Picture: Adam Lacey

Dyslexia is a problem we can help

By OSCAR TEBBUTT and JACK BOYD

THERE is hope and help for children struggling with literacy. Many children who experience difficulty with reading and writing may suffer from dyslexia - difficulty with words.

This is not necessarily a reflection of their intelligence.

What do Albert Einstein, Winston Churchill and Tom Cruise have in common? They all suffered - or still do - from dyslexia. Scientific statistics show that one in five children in Australia suffer from dyslexia.

Children affected may often be seen as lazy, which can be very frustrating for them when they try so hard. Or they may be the class clown to cover up for not doing their work, dropping out of school early because they struggle to read.

There are many forms of dyslexia, all of which affect a child's learning. People with dyslexia may rely on phonics to spell words and change words that are irregular to similar regular words such as rede to ready. They may even mix up left and right, or reverse words.

Once an assessment has taken place and it is diagnosed by a professional, an individual program can be put in place.

One important way to help sufferers is by saying and doing at the same time. Dyslexia can't be cured but difficulties can be reduced.

Coping with bullies online

By ADAM LACEY and RHYS CHAPMAN

CYBERBULLYING is an ever-growing problem for youth around Australia as they gain increasing access to the many forms of electronic social media that exists today.

And it is a problem that cannot be ignored. It is not going to go away.

Statistics show that about half of the teens have been victims of cyberbullying and that one in 10 teenagers who have been cyberbullied won't tell their parents.

The rise in depression and even suicide has been attributed to instances of cyberbullying.

Unfortunately, many youths have not yet developed strategies to deal

with the barrage of insults that they may come across.

The only hope is to educate them to help them cope.

Multiple education programs are being developed by various organisations such as Life Education, Cybersmart (an Australian government program) and Project Rock IT. They give valuable survival tips to parents and children. The police also offer worthwhile in-school education programs on navigating the internet safely.

Parents need to take active roles in supervising their children's use of electronic media, while also being aware of changes in behaviour that may signal distress.

Education surely is the answer.

Little devil may be down, but he's not out

By TEGAN DAY, HALEY WILSON and MOLLIE TEE

A SPECIAL breeding program may prevent the Tasmanian Devil from future extinction.

The Australian Reptile Park, on the Central Coast, has embarked on a breeding program, The Devil's Ark, aimed to increase the Devil's population for a more positive future.

It is Devil Facial Tumour Disease - an aggressive tumour usually occurring around their mouth - that is causing their numbers to drop. This highly contagious

disease is wiping out 10-15 Devils per year.

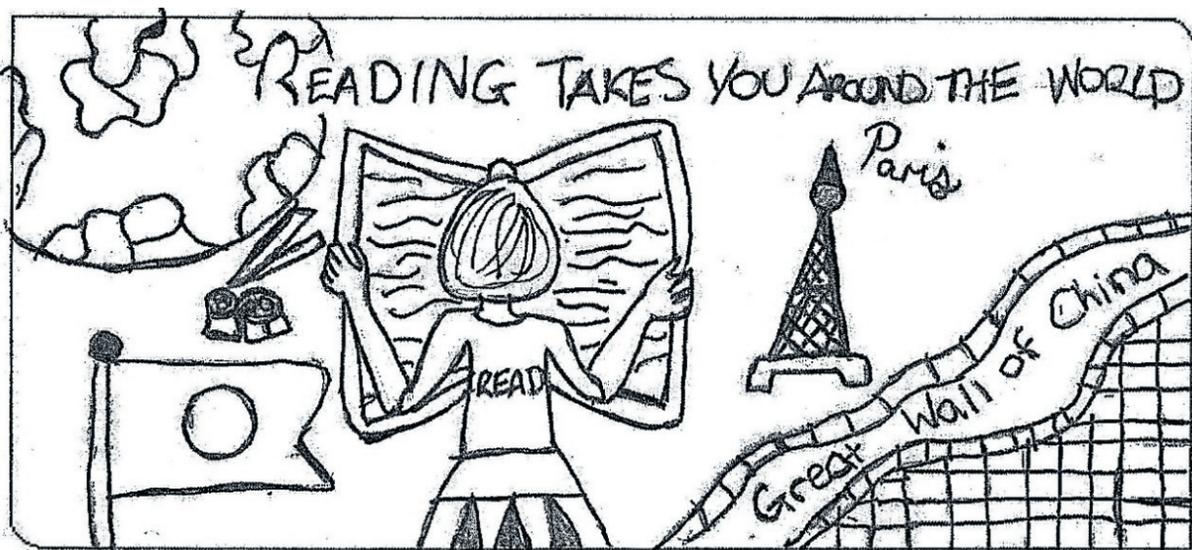
Kelly Masters, an Australian Reptile Park keeper said: "We are hoping to breed 1500 disease-free Tasmanian Devils that are able to be released into the wild. It's a great way to put more Devils back into their natural environment and save them from possible extinction. Sydney University is also developing research programs to come up with a preventative cure."

ENDANGERED: The Tassie Devil is facing extinction.

Picture: Mollie Tee



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