

Deciding the age for mobile phones

EDITORIAL

By **DOMINIC TUPOU**

PARENTS far and wide tackle the question: "How young is too young for a mobile phone?" It's a question that, ultimately, parents must decide for themselves.

A factor to consider is that age is not necessarily an indicator of maturity. A mobile phone for an 11-year-old might seem too early judging only by years, but in some circumstances, that 11-year old might actually be just about the right age to responsibly use a mobile phone. Especially if they are a latchkey kid or because of scheduling and after school activities such as band or sports.

By the same token, some 15-year-olds are not as mature as their years. Some safety concerns that the phone can alleviate are possible, of course, but these too can be largely exaggerated. Yes, payphones are hard to find nowadays, but phones themselves are not. So the excuse that a child "can't call home" is just an excuse.

What the phone should really be for is to increase parents' ability to communicate with their child

and to allow them some freedom. Administration manager Anita Stewart believes children do not need to own a mobile phone until they are 16.

"Before 16, children don't know how to use the phone properly," Mrs Stewart said.

School student Bailey Winner felt that 13 years and up was suitable. He suggested that "by this age you're a teenager and you're old enough to have your own responsibility."

A British mobile phone manufacturer has designed a handset especially for children below the age of 10. The phone, known as the 1stFone, weighs in at just 40 grams and is about the size of credit card. The handset is designed by the parent and comes only with on/off buttons, volume controls, answer button and a selection of pre-assigned contact names.

The phone does not have a screen and operation is as simple as tapping on the name of the contact your child wants to call.

The founder of the device, Tom Sunderland, designed a product that puts parents in control while still providing a vital connection between parent and child.

Perhaps the best advice is to wait as long as possible before getting that phone.



Cartoon: Lane See



STUDY: Asthma has been shown to worsen with exposure to second-hand smoke.

Picture: Shelby Kovacs

Smoke harms children more

By **EMMA HANSSEN**

CHILDREN face a greater risk than adults of the negative effects of second-hand smoke.

When air is tainted with cigarette smoke, young, developing lungs receive a higher concentration of inhaled toxins than older lungs do because a child's breathing rate is faster than that of adults.

Breathing second-hand smoke – smoke that a smoker breathes out and that comes from the tip of burning cigarettes, pipes, and cigars – is almost like a child smoking themselves.

Second-hand smoke contains about 4000 chemicals, many of these are dangerous; more than 50 are known to cause cancer.

Parents who smoke can cause many health problems for their children.

Some of the problems they cause are making asthma worse, bringing on more colds and ear infections, and increasing the risk for Sudden Infant Death Syndrome.

Research has also shown that smoking during pregnancy causes many health problems for both mothers and babies.

Tobacco smoke gets into the air and its residue stays on walls, floors, furniture, toys, and clothes.

This smoke that adults carry around with them on their clothes is called third-hand smoke. So, even parents who smoke outside do not fully protect their children from the harmful effects of tobacco smoke.

Curtain's nearly up for school performance

By **MICHAEL PENERA**

PUBLIC education students are buzzing as Starstruck 2013 fast approaches.

Starstruck is a large musical production run by the Department of Education and Communities every June, offering students from all across the state the opportunity to participate in a unique creative arts experience.

School teacher and Starstruck choreographer Erin Bradshaw said: "The excitement within schools

around Starstruck is simply infectious.

"It is a wonderful opportunity for all school students to have the chance to perform in front of such a large audience and within such a professional venue.

"An experience like Starstruck is more often than not the opportunity of a lifetime for many of our public school students."

Starstruck runs from June 13-15 and is staged at the Newcastle Entertainment Centre in Broadmeadow.



SHOWTIME: The Woodberry Public Starstruck team are preparing their moves. Picture: Chloe Speering

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