

Values Education

Volume 2 Number 2, March 2008

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"Schooling provides a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development.

"By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, schooling contributes to the development of students' sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future."

From the Adelaide Declaration on the Goals of Schooling in the 21st Century

Values Education is not and should not be seen as a separate and discrete element of any school's curriculum, and still less as a further add-on. Rather, that the agreed, shared, articulated and understood framework of attitudes, values and aspirations of the community should inform all elements of the school's curriculum - taking the curriculum to embrace all the activities which take place in and around the school.

In this first issue of "Values Education" for 2008, we seek to bring you a wide range of articles, each with a values focus - and which can be considered from a range of perspectives of learning - ethical, philosophical, economic, literary, scientific, aesthetic, cultural, geographical, mathematical, biological, agricultural, historical.

You may choose to delve, unpack and explore the issues of these values-driven articles against a variety of frames of reference as part of the learning and developmental process: - values education in action.

2008 being the International Year of Planet Earth provides an underlying values theme: the need to manage all activities on the planet sustainably for all peoples, all life, and future generations. First, do no harm.

Sorry It Took So Long

ACSSO's Executive Director Terry Aulich at Parliament House, 13 February 2008

Thousands were on the lawns, others waited patiently in long lines to get into Parliament House. Young, old, indigenous, non-indigenous; they had come from all over the country. The mood was quiet and determined as if a long overdue obligation was about to be fulfilled.

Then, it happened. The Parliament opened with a prayer and Kevin Rudd walked to the despatch box and went straight to the heart of the matter, saying the word that most Australians had waited so long to hear. Sorry.

Without equivocation, without qualification. Sorry.

Then the applause started again and became sustained applause when he sat down. Some cried, some phoned home on their mobiles:

"It was good."

"I never thought I'd live to see the day"

"It was just right"

The Prime Minister had kept another promise, saying sorry to the stolen generation; almost 11 years after the publication of the Bringing Them Home report.

Mr. Rudd will also co-chair a Commission with Opposition Leader Brendan Nelson which will attack the problem of housing in remote communities.

Programmes to deal with poor literacy and numeracy skills, infant mortality and lack of access to early childhood education, will follow.

And Brendan Nelson backed the apology, after years of stubborn refusal by John Howard to utter the one word that millions wanted to hear.

As Bob Dylan said, "the times, they are a-changing". Or is it Aretha Franklin's R-E-S-P-E-C-T?

- Read Prime Minister Rudd's motion online: <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0208/spepm130.php>
- Download Prime Minister Rudd's motion in PDF: http://www.alp.org.au/download/apology_to_the_stolen_generations.pdf

ACSSO Launches New-Look Values Education Website

Some three years ago, at a time when there was a great deal of polemical and divisive debate driven by leading figures of the then government, with rhetorical claims that Australia's public schools were values-neutral areas, ACSSO launched its website under the positive banner: Values. Alive and Well!

Our awareness that education is always about more than knowledge and skills - encompasses attitudes, values, behaviours and aspirations - is clearly reflected in the Adelaide Declaration quote which heads this newsletter.

Our purpose with the Website and Newsletter was to take a parent, family and community approach to the debate around values in education. To provide a range of perspectives on the issues. To raise awareness, and to encourage community debate and discussion so that families and schools work through to a shared understanding of their community values in action.

A new government with a renewed and strategic focus on the values issues that underpin our society, will renew and rejuvenate the national conversation about the ethical and moral framework that will provide the context of a positive future for our young people and our nation in an increasingly globalised world.

Reflecting this, ACSSO now re-launches the Values in Education Website with a new look and a renewed sense of purpose and optimism for the future. Confident that values will continue Alive and Well in each of our school communities.

Show and tell us your school story for our website. We renew our invitation to all schools to tell us about initiatives, events and activities that reflect your community values in action. Short articles and electronic photos welcomed - and will be added to the expanding Gallery of Good News Stories on the new site.

Visit: <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au>

Needed: An excellent teacher for every child

Geoff Masters 18 February 2008

The Rudd government was elected with the promise of a "revolution" to provide Australia with a world-class education system. Why is an education revolution required, and what forms could it take? According to a recent OECD report, 13 per cent of Australian 15-year-olds are at risk of not having the basic skills necessary for work and future citizenship. The situation is worse among Indigenous students (40 per cent), in remote parts of Australia (27 per cent) and for the lowest socioeconomic quartile (23 per cent).

Although these percentages are not unusual by international standards, they highlight an important element in Australia's current skills shortage: too many young people are leaving our schools inadequately prepared for the workforce and adult life. The personal, societal and economic costs of this problem have been extensively documented and present governments with a challenge that may well require a revolution.

But which of the levers available to government are likely to be most effective in raising standards among our lowest achievers?

The factors leading to low achievement are complex. Often they are related to broader social and health issues beyond the control of the education system. Government initiatives in education have included improved testing and identification of children with low levels of literacy and numeracy, clearer reporting to parents, the provision of additional tutoring for at-risk students, and the better preparation of teachers to teach fundamental skills such as reading.

At a general level, educational science suggests that the most effective lever for improving the performance of underachievers is to improve the quality of classroom teaching: to get all teachers doing what our best teachers already do.

While excellent teachers are not identical, they do have some characteristics in common. For example, they create classroom environments in which there is a belief that all students can learn successfully, where students are motivated by curiosity, value learning for its own sake, and feel supported and safe to take risks. Learning cultures of this kind are more effective in the long term than "performance" cultures in which learning is driven by external demands, competition and the threat of failure.

Outstanding teachers also monitor the progress and learning needs of individual learners. They take time to understand children's interests and motivations and to diagnose individual difficulties and misunderstandings.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=6988>

Professor Geoff Masters is the CEO of the Australian Council for Education Research

Health & Well-being: Greater focus needed on prevention

Hon Nicola Roxon MP, Minister for Health & Ageing 13 February 2008

A report out today shows the previous Government just wasn't interested in preventative health.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's (AIHW's) National Public Health Expenditure Report 2005-06 shows that public health investment by the previous government represented only 1.8 per cent of the budget allocation for health and ageing.

In fact, compared with the previous year, there was an 8 per cent decline in the former government's funding for public health in 2005-06 (from \$867 million to \$797 million).

In contrast, funding by the states and territories increased by 17 per cent.

The report provides the only consistent national picture of public health expenditure.

The Rudd Government believes that prevention should take a far greater role in the health system.

We have already committed to a National Preventative Health Strategy, to be developed by a National Preventative Health Taskforce. That taskforce will seek to tackle the looming burden of chronic diseases, with an initial focus on alcohol, tobacco and obesity.

We have also announced that the forthcoming Australian Health Care Agreements will include a focus on preventative care.

We will review the Medicare schedule, with a view to introducing incentives to encourage longer GP consultations.

And we have committed up to \$54 million to tackling obesity, including the Kitchen Gardens Program.

We are determined to shift prevention from the margins to the centre of health care - a crucial part of building a health system for a modern Australia.

For more information and to access the Report online:
<http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10528>

Symbols matter

George Williams 18 February 2008

Who may become the Queen's next representative in Australia has attracted speculation months before any choice needs to be made. One reason for this is that the office of governor-general is now central to debates over contemporary Australian identity and our national symbols.

Far from being a curious relic of Australia's colonial past, the post continues to raise questions about our independence from the British crown. Even the gender of the appointee matters. What does it say about the status of women in Australia when not one has been chosen as governor-general since 1901?

Symbols matter. They define who we are and can be a powerful way of redressing injustice and building social cohesion around shared goals and values. Prime Minister John Howard always understood this and during his leadership Anzac Day and Australia Day gained new significance.

After many years disputing the value of symbolic reform in Indigenous affairs, he told the Sydney Institute in October last year: "I announce that, if re-elected, I will put to the Australian people within 18 months a referendum to formally recognise Indigenous Australians in our Constitution - their history as the first inhabitants of our country, their unique heritage of culture and languages, and their special (though not separate) place within a reconciled, indivisible nation."

He declared that his "goal is to see a new statement of reconciliation incorporated into the preamble of the Australian Constitution".

Howard was right, it is long past time that Aboriginal people were recognised in the Constitution.

The other major symbolic agenda is the Australian republic.

Read more at <http://www.onlineopinion.com.au/view.asp?article=6985&page=1>

George Williams is Anthony Mason Professor of Law at University of NSW

Co-occurrence of Human Violence, Criminal Behaviour and Animal Abuse

Ass Prof. Eleonora Gullone Department of Psychology Monash University

In the last decade there has been an increasing awareness of the significant links between violence toward humans, animal cruelty, and criminal behaviours (e.g., Arluke, Levin, Luke, & Ascione, 1999; Ascione, 1998; Flynn, 2000a; 2000b; Gullone & Clarke, in press).

Related to this, animal cruelty has been proposed to be a potential indicator of subsequent or simultaneous violent criminal behaviour.

Prominent examples of this link in Australia are seen in anecdotal evidence of notorious violent adult offenders. For example, mass murderer Martin Bryant was known to RSPCA officers in Tasmania in relation to animal cruelty offences. Similarly, serial killer Ivan Milat was known for being cruel to animals prior to murdering seven victims in New South Wales.

Concern has also increasingly been focused on the pain and suffering experienced by animal victims of abuse. Furthermore, instances of animal cruelty are increasingly being seen as grounds for investigation into the welfare of children and their families (Dadds, Turner & McAloon, 2002).

Researchers have attempted to develop an understanding of the underlying causes for animal cruelty behaviours in childhood and their potential contribution to the development of aggressive or violent tendencies into adulthood. Research has suggested that childhood animal cruelty may be a symptom of something in a child's life that requires clinical intervention (e.g. Gullone et al., 2004).

Ascione (1993) has defined animal abuse as "socially unacceptable behaviour that intentionally causes unnecessary pain, suffering, or distress to and/or death of an animal" (p.51). Similarly, Felthous and Kellert (1986) have defined cruelty to animals as a "pattern of deliberately, repeatedly, and unnecessarily hurting vertebrate animals in a manner likely to cause serious injury" (p. 57). Both definitions incorporate an element of intent to harm and Ascione's definition incorporates an element of "social acceptability". Further, as with child abuse, animal abuse can include physical abuse, sexual abuse, and neglect.

There have been several proposals put forth in an attempt to better explain and understand the link. In particular, an effort has been made to better understand the factors that underlie the abuse of animals.

Read more at http://thebegavalley.org.au/uploads/media/human_violence.pdf

Find out more about humane education programs for young people:

- Jane Goodall Institute's Roots & Shoots initiative: a global environmental and humanitarian program for youth <http://www.janegoodall.org.au>
 - <http://www.fullystoked.com/support/support.cfm?page=rs>
 - Voiceless: The Fund for Animals - Animal Club <http://www.voiceless.org.au/>
 - Compassion in World Farming - Australia <http://www.ciwf.org.au>
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Government Must Ban Brutal Live Exports: Report

Rosslyn Beeby, Canberra Times 12 February 2008

The Rudd government should set a deadline for banning all live animal exports to Asia and the Middle East, and switch to a chilled meat only export trade, an international report says.

Compiled by Handle with Care, a new global alliance of ten animal welfare groups, the report names Australia's live-sheep exports to the Middle East as top of the list of the world's worst live-animal export routes.

It calls for government assistance to reward farmers who "do not transport their animals beyond one of the nearest available abattoirs" and for retailers to boycott products linked to long distance livestock transport.

The report coincides with the issuing of video footage recently filmed in Middle East markets by Animals Australia. It shows live sheep exported from Australia being dragged along the ground, lifted into car boots by their legs, and trussed on to roof racks.

Animals Australia chief executive Glenys Oogjes said the footage documented "continual brutal treatment of Australian sheep" at a major market in Dubai.

"Real change in the Middle East will not occur whilst Australia continues to supply millions of animals each year to the region, as our willingness to supply animals reinforces locally held beliefs that their treatment of animals is acceptable", she says.

Meat & Livestock Australia manager of livestock exports Scott Hansen said the footage showed there was "still significant work to do" to improve butchering techniques and livestock handling at Middle East markets. "We have made a difference in the way these animals are treated. We've demonstrated the economic benefits to be gained by improving animal welfare and livestock-handling through our training workshops in the Middle East. We can see the difference we've made."

Responding to questions on the live export trade, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd said last year he could "not abide animal cruelty under any form" and Australia should "move up the value-added chain" to processed meat exports.

For further background on the organizations mentioned and details of their recently reported investigations of the live sheep trade:

- "Handle with Care" - <http://www.handlewithcare.tv/au/index.asp>
- "Animals Australia" - <http://www.animalsaustralia.org/>
- ABC's 7.30 Report explored the issues on 11 February 2008 - see <http://www.abc.net.au/7.30/content/2007/s2159904.htm>

Norway aims to be carbon neutral by 2030

AFP Jan 17, 2008

Norway's government said the country would dramatically slash its carbon dioxide emissions by 2020 and aim to be completely carbon neutral by 2030 -- 20 years ahead of schedule.

"The climate agreement gives Norway a long-term climate policy that will stand regardless of changing governments," Prime Minister Jens Stoltenberg said in a statement issued after his centre-left government and three large opposition parties agreed on new emission targets.

The parties agreed on what the government said was a "realistic" goal of cutting greenhouse gas emissions by between 15 and 17 million tonnes by 2020, with some three million tonnes of the CO2 expected to be absorbed by Norwegian forests.

About two-thirds of that reduction would be implemented on Norwegian territory while the remaining cuts would be achieved through international emission trading systems, they said.

Norway, which emitted nearly 54 million tonnes of CO2 in 2006, should become a so-called zero-emission state by 2030, according to the statement.

The Scandinavian country, which is not a European Union member, previously aimed to slash emissions by between 13 and 16 million tonnes over the next 12 years and become carbon neutral by 2050.

Read more at http://afp.google.com/article/ALeqM5jFFk4t5_Z1-tmeTCX8UKuDQ8sMiw

Vatican takes a role in keeping God's earth green

By Francis X. Rocca Religion News Service

The Holy See announced this month that it would become the world's first "carbon neutral" sovereign state by planting trees in a Hungarian national park to offset the carbon-dioxide emissions and energy use of Vatican City.

It was only the latest of several statements and actions by the Roman Catholic Church's leaders that reflect an increasingly prominent concern for ecology.

Over the last few months, the Vatican has sponsored a two-day conference on climate change, and Pope Benedict XVI and other leaders have called for more attention to environmental problems.

In June, Vatican officials announced that the papal audience hall adjacent to St. Peter's Basilica would be covered with photovoltaic panels that will make it possible to heat, cool and light the building exclusively with solar power.

And in a sign that environmental problems are not merely a theoretical concern, Italian newspapers published photos this month of statues in St. Peter's Square covered with black spots just eight years after their last cleaning. The damage was the result of exhaust from bus and automobile traffic, a Vatican official said.

Environmentalists welcome the growing involvement of the world's largest church in the movement to protect nature from the effects of human industry. But some say the Vatican's approach to the subject is hampered by a lack of scientific expertise and by a theological bias that privileges humanity over the rest of nature.

Read more at http://www.usatoday.com/news/religion/2007-07-25-vatican-green_N.htm

Ross Garnaut urges new greenhouse gas targets to tackle climate change

Peter Williams AAP February 21, 2008

The architect of the Federal Government's climate change policy says Australia should make early, deep cuts in greenhouse pollution and press other nations to follow suit.

Economist Ross Garnaut, who today releases the interim report of the Government's climate change review, also backed the adoption of interim emissions targets.

Professor Garnaut told a solar power function in Adelaide that the Government may need to go further than its target of cutting emissions by 60 per cent by 2050.

"Australia would need to be prepared to go considerably further in reduction of emissions as part of an effective global agreement with full participation by major developing countries, designed to reduce risks of dangerous climate change to acceptable levels," Prof Garnaut said.

"Unfortunately, time is not on our side. I am increasingly of the view that climate change is a problem we must as a global community tackle effectively in the next few years if we are to avoid unacceptable levels of risk."

He said Australia's vulnerability to climate change and its ability to cut emissions suggests it "should be pressing the international community towards the strongest feasible global mitigation outcome".

Read more at <http://www.news.com.au/story/0,23599,23250297-421,00.html>

Keystone Creations

"Keystone Creations provides quality curriculum and values-based songs for the busy teacher.

Our practical, easy-to-use products, include a CD of songs with accompanying resource books. They target outcomes and learning sequences of the Primary School Curriculum documents.

The original concept had in mind the non-musical teacher, however, after extensive research, it grew to include simple music scores for the benefit of music teachers.

Integrated Curriculum These resources aim to make learning an enjoyable experience for students and teachers alike.

This unique concept teaches 'a lesson in every lyric', ensuring that, through the meaningful, values-based lyrics and catchy melodies, students will be learning, without even realizing it!

Integrated Curriculum Each song comes packed with ideas, which not only enhance the classroom experience, and address specific curriculum unit content, but also provide suggestions for performance pieces and the all-important school assemblies. "

Read more at <http://www.keystonecreations.com.au/index.html>

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