

Values Education

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Read this on the web at <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/valnews0805.pdf>

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ETHICS, VALUES AND CLIMATE CHANGE

We put it there, so let's go first in cleaning up

Peter Singer April 3, 2008

It's time to apply ethics and fairness in the climate change crisis.

In Australia, we know that water for irrigation is limited, and we are beginning to discuss how best to divide it up. Here's one way of doing it: let those with the biggest pumps take as much as they want, never mind what that leaves for others.

Not fair, you say? You're right. But then, why are we doing exactly this method of dividing up a scarce resource right now - not with water, but with the atmosphere? Perhaps because we're not used to thinking of the atmosphere as a scarce resource, we don't see how unfairly we are behaving.

The atmosphere is a scarce resource because we are already exceeding its capacity to absorb our greenhouse gases without disastrous climate change. The industrialised nations were the first to pump potentially climate-altering quantities of carbon dioxide and other greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, and they have kept on doing it. Neither increasing scientific confidence, nor their own pledges at the 1992 Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro to stabilise greenhouse gases "at a low enough level to prevent dangerous anthropogenic interference with the climate system" have stopped them.

If the rule of law had the same clout internationally as it has within national borders, we would already be feeling the cost of breaking that promise. Tuvalu, our tiny Pacific island neighbour, has threatened to sue Australia and the United States because, according to some scientific estimates, most of the low-lying coral atolls will disappear under the waves over the next 50 years.

Read the entire article at <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/opinion.htm>

Peter Singer is laureate professor at the University of Melbourne, attached to the Centre for Applied Philosophy and Public Ethics, as well as professor of bioethics at Princeton University

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NATIONAL GOVERNANCE, CIVICS & CITIZENSHIP

Democrats Challenge Rudd on Republic

Senator Natasha Stott Despoja 21 April 2008

The Australian Democrats have issued a legislative challenge to Prime Minister Kevin Rudd on the republic, saying that the resounding consensus from the 2020 Summit demands an immediate legislative response.

"In 2001 I introduced the Republic (Consultation of the People) Bill which would provide a legislative response that captures the renewed momentum for an Australian republic to emerge from the summit".

"The bill provides for a simple two-question plebiscite at the next general election:

1. Do you want Australia to become a republic?
2. If most Australians decide they want a republic, do you want the opportunity to choose from different republic models?

"My bill would do something that the republican referendum didn't do ten years ago: ask the Australian people in a straightforward fashion whether or not they want to sever ties with the British monarchy and, if so, allow Australians to have their say in how the republic should be structured.

"The plebiscite would be non-binding but would also provide a definitive answer on the republic question.

"It is one thing to emerge from the 2020 with a set of aspirational goals, but quite another to take legislative steps towards achieving those goals as any elected government should do.

"I call on the Rudd Government to support the immediate passage of my bill through the Senate when it next sits in May," Senator Stott Despoja said.

Details of the Republic (Consultation of the People) Bill 2001 are at:
<http://parlinfoweb.aph.gov.au/piweb/browse.aspx?NodeID=45>

Senator Stott Despoja was the Democrats representative at the 1998 Constitutional Convention.

Background Information on Australia's Republic Debate

The topic for this year's National Schools Constitutional Convention in Canberra 29 April-3 May was "An Australian Republic: To Be or Not To Be".

The Communiqué from that forum should be available shortly at http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/cce/national_schools_constitutional_convention,8980.html

Teachers, students or parents who may wish to explore the issues of Australia's governance and the Republic debate in recent years as a topic for research and discussion, may be interested in these website resources:

- Women's Constitutional Convention of January 1998 - at <http://www.womenrep.netspeed.com.au/wcc.htm>
- Australian National Constitutional Convention of February 1998 - full record is at <http://www.abc.net.au/concon/>
- Queensland's June 1999 Constitutional Convention in Gladstone - at <http://www.constitution.qld.gov.au/gladstone.htm>
- "The Good Citizen"- Australian Democracy & Citizenship - based on a series of 1998 Radio National programs - at <http://www.abc.net.au/ola/citizen/default.htm>

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HUMANE EDUCATION

How do you like your eggs?

Martin Hickman, Independent, UK, 27 April 2008

Viewed from the air, Holsworthy Beacon Farm takes its place in an idyllic rural scene. But in its sheds, chickens are crammed five to a cage, stacked in rows from floor to ceiling.

Compassion in World Farming (CIWF), which visited the farm in conjunction with The Independent on Sunday, found hens unable to spread their wings fully, nest, or exhibit other natural behaviour. Some had large bare patches where they had lost their feathers.

"As soon as you come in from the fresh air, the smell hits you straight away," said a CIWF investigator, describing the mixture of animal waste, ammonia and disinfectant emanating from the cages. "If a bird is in the way, the others will clamber over them... It's a fight for food if they all want to feed at the same time."

The family-owned farm on Devon's Exmoor produces more than 100 million eggs a year for Noble Foods, which supplies 70 per cent of the UK egg market.

Conditions at Holsworthy Farm are thought to be legal, and "representative" of conditions at battery chicken plants across the country. About 55 per cent of eggs consumed in the UK are battery-farmed. Although free-range sales are rising - hitting 51 per cent of retail sales value earlier this year - almost all processed and restaurant foods are made with battery eggs. Only one in three eggs is free-range.

Hugh Fearnley-Whittingstall, the TV chef who exposed the reality of intensive chicken meat production, said: "I have the same reservations about the battery cage system as about intensive broiler houses for meat birds. I am at least as concerned, if not more so.

"A lot of people now choose to buy free-range eggs and they assume the battle on eggs is being won. But it hasn't, because 60 per cent of the eggs we eat are battery farmed."

The system of barren battery cages is so undesirable for animal welfare that the European Union banned it in 1999. After years of delays caused by industry lobbying, Britain will implement the ban in 2012, replacing barren cages with slightly larger "enriched" cages with perches.

"Caged birds have little space to move," said Dr Lesley Lambert, CIWF director of research. "Throughout their adult life they cannot exercise. They will struggle even to fully stretch their wings. The amount of space they have in a barren battery cage is less than a sheet of A4 paper per hen. They spend their whole lives standing on a wire mesh."

The Government announced the ban on battery farming as a Channel 4 series brought the unpleasant reality of intensive poultry production into millions of homes night after night in the series Hugh's Chicken Run. Sales of free-range chicken leaped after the show revealed how intensively reared "broiler" birds developed leg sores from walking in urine-covered sawdust in cramped, windowless sheds.

Animal welfare campaigners hope the same commercial clout will apply enough pressure to end the farming of caged birds

Source: <http://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/home-news/how-do-you-like-your-eggs-read-our-undercover-investigation-into-britains-battery-farming-816214.html>

Think Global, Connect Local

Find out more about the work of Compassion in World Farming including their campaign to make a world fit for chooks to live in, at: <http://www.ciwf.org.au>

Voiceless - The Fund for Animals' "Animal Club" initiative with schools, is adopting the theme of "helping chickens" for 2008. In their first e-Bulletin for 2008 (Issue No 3) they note:

"Did you know that chickens form strong family ties and that hens make devoted mothers, teaching their young many important skills like what to eat, how to drink, where to roost and how to avoid enemies. I bet you also didn't know that hens are highly social animals who will fight to protect their family and mourn when a loved one is lost.

"In order to help chickens this year, Voiceless is asking all Animal Clubs who would like to be in the running for the \$5,000 Humane School Prize to carry out at least one chicken awareness activity sometime during 2008."

This edition of their Bulletin not only includes access to a range of teacher resources and fact sheets about chickens and other animals, but also provides details about each of the Humane School Prize Winners in 2007 - small but important case studies of values in action in our schools. Values - Alive and Well!

For more information, and to access the Bulletin online, visit the Animal Club site at: <http://www.animalclub.org.au/>

Jane Goodall Institute Australia's Special Event - "Out of Africa"

Thursday 5 June 2008 at 6.30 pm - Adelaide Zoo

The Jane Goodall Institute works with school communities via their "Roots & Shoots" program, contributing to young people's personal development through teamwork and community engagement - values education in action.

This World Environment Day, you are invited to an intimate dinner hosted by celebrated chef Simon Bryant, with keynote speaker animal behaviourist Dr Carla Litchfield. Proceeds will support the further development of their work with young people and school communities

For information and registration: <http://acsso.org.au/goodall080605.pdf>

Australian Animal Welfare Strategy International Conference 2008

31 August - 3 September: Gold Coast, Queensland

ACSSO represents all parent and families on the Education & Training Working Group for the Australian Animal Welfare Strategy (AAWS) - jointly convened by Department of Education, Employment & Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and Department Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry (DAFF) - to develop national education, training and information resources to inform humane education in schools as an essential element of values education.

The AAWS International Animal Welfare Conference 2008 is this year's flagship event in the implementation of AAWS - a national blueprint to improve animal welfare for all Australian animals and across the entire community. The Conference will bring together national and international leaders in animal welfare science, practice and policy.

For more information, visit <http://aaws08.blogspot.com/>

University of NSW & Voiceless Animal law Lecture Series 2008

Animal Law is scheduled to take centre stage in universities across Australia and New Zealand as the UNSW/Voiceless Animal Law Lecture Series makes its 2008 debut.

Later this month, Raj Panjwani, one of India's foremost animal advocates, will present a series of public lectures addressing some of the big issues facing legal advocates for animals and the status of animal protection in India.

Mr. Panjwani has over 25 years experience in the High and Supreme Courts of India where his work has changed the lives of countless animals from tigers to turtles to buffalo.

Please visit the Voiceless website for more information.

By clicking the "Lecture Series" button on the homepage, you will find details of Mr. Panjwani's speaking schedule and answers to frequently asked questions.

Go to: <http://www.voiceless.org.au>

RESPONSIBLE USE OF TECHNOLOGY

As the peak council for Australia's public school parent communities, ACSSO is working with Australian Mobile Telecommunication Association (AMTA) to help parents and young people to get the best out of emerging new technologies. Mobiles create opportunities to link young people, families and communities in positive, inclusive and productive ways. We particularly want to ensure that the new technology is not abused through bullying or accessing unacceptable content. This article by AMTA highlights the avoidable risks of misuse.

Sending offensive material via SMS is against the law and you will be caught

Young people should be aware that sending inappropriate material that is offensive to school students could be in breach of the law and potentially result in heavy penalties, AMTA has warned. following a reported incident in Tasmania.

The Hobart Mercury reported this week that a primary school student had received "shocking" and explicit material via SMS from a local high school student.

AMTA Chief Executive Officer, Chris Althaus, said young people should be aware that some people who used mobile phones to send offensive material believe their actions are anonymous.

"That is not correct. These things are traceable and they will be caught.

"It's a criminal offence to use a mobile phone to menace, harass or offend another person. The offence carries very heavy penalties"

Mr. Althaus said it was important for parents to talk with their children about their mobile phone use. "Listen to your child and encourage them to discuss issues with you," he said.

He said there were a range of preventative measures that could be adopted to help protect young people from receiving inappropriate material, whether it be pornographic or threatening messages.

Young people should be careful who they give their number to. Only give it to close friends. Do not leave your mobile where someone can see the number (or access other private numbers you may have set up on your phone). Consider using Calling I-blocking to hide your phone number when calling someone.

If young people receive material that is graphic or insulting they should keep the message (and the time and date it was sent) as evidence and tell their parents or teacher or another adult.

Students and their parents can also talk to their mobile phone company to see if they can help. Your phone company may be able to stop certain numbers calling you. They may also be able to provide you with a new phone number. Ask them about your options.

Mr. Althaus said AMTA had entered a partnership with the national peak body for parents of young people in public schools, the Australian Council of State School Organisations (ACSSO), to give parents information to assist them in helping their children to use mobile phones in a safe and responsible manner.

Find out more about AMTA and responsible communication at: <http://www.amta.org.au/>

National E-Security Awareness Week - 6-13 June 2008

Australian Council of State School Organizations (ACSSO) is proud to partner with the Australian Government for National E-security Awareness Week, on June 6-13. We share a commitment to helping you to be secure online so that you can get the most out of what the internet has to offer.

You don't need to be a computer genius to keep yourself, your family or your business secure when you're on the internet. It's mainly simple and logical. There are some things you need to have on your computer, like security software. Then there are some things you need to do, like setting strong passwords and being cautious online.

The online environment is constantly changing so make sure you're keeping up to date - with your software, your passwords and the latest risks. Follow these simple steps:

- install, update and use your security software
- use strong passwords and change them regularly
- use common sense when sharing personal information online
- think before you click - if it looks too good to be true it probably is!
- be very careful of emails from odd or unknown addresses or organisations you don't normally have online contact with - specially if the text looks a bit wrong or they have unexplained attachments you might be encouraged to open ...
- be smart and stay informed.

Sign up for the new Stay Smart Online Alert Service. You'll be sent regular emails that will alert you to the latest e-security risks, and provide useful advice for how to manage them.

Visit <http://www.staysmartonline.gov.au> for more information.

COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

School Aid support initiative launches new website

School Aid, an Australian non profit organization that empowers Australian school students to help children in need in Australia and around the world, has today launched an exciting new website <http://www.schoolaid.org.au>.

This website provides Australian school students and teachers with the information, tools and resources they need to choose, and take action on, projects in support of their peers whose access to schooling and educational opportunities are limited.

Registration is now open for schools to get involved in projects based in Australia, Bangladesh, Cambodia and Papua New Guinea.

We encourage you to take a look at <http://www.schoolaid.org.au>.

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RESOURCES FOR TEACHING THINKING

"The Philosophy Files" - by Stephen Law

Review by Rupert Macgregor, ACSSO National Project Manager.

In a February 2008 article - which you can read in full on the Opinion resources page of the Values in Education Website <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/opinion.htm> - Nel Noddings observes:

One stated aim of almost all schools today is to promote critical thinking. But how do we teach critical thinking? What do we mean by thinking? ... Here, I consider thinking as the sort of mental activity that uses facts to plan, order, and work toward an end; seeks meaning or an explanation; is self-reflective; and uses reason to question claims and make judgments. This seems to be what most teachers have in mind when they talk about thinking.

Many teachers I have spoken with make the logical connection between critical thinking, the processes of logic and philosophy, and the means of engaging students in an exploration of the meaning of values, in ways that help make them immediate, real, relevant and alive.

I believe they are perfectly right in making that connection, and that this is evidenced not only in the positive responses and results they report - but also in a number of formally reported studies around the world and here in Australia which demonstrate the benefits achieved by students whose mental fitness has been enhanced by progressive workouts in the "philosophy gym" in terms of their academic success in other subjects, and their positive personal development. I plan to review this research in the next edition of this Newsletter.

Meanwhile, in terms of accessible resources, I cannot imagine a better place to begin than "The Philosophy Files" and "Philosophy Files 2" by internationally acclaimed writer and lecturer Steven Law. In the preface, the author claims that his own life was transformed from school drop-out and dead-end job flitter to mature study, a doctorate and lectureship at London University by his discovery of the joys of philosophy in his spare-time reading.

In these studies Stephen Law demonstrates his gift for opening up and guiding us through timelessly complex issues, in a style that with apparently effortless ease combines clarity, elegance and simplicity of expression with an ability to distil the issues in ways that immediately engage the reader in the exhilaration - and illumination - of the shared mental journey.

That (cleverly illustrated) journey takes in some of these fundamental questions:

- Where do right and wrong come from?
- What's real?
- What is the mind?
- Where did the universe come from?

- Is time travel possible?
- Could a machine think?

And much, much else.

As Stephen Law comments in another book entirely:

"One advantage of a little training in and experience of critical thinking and rational debate is that it can help provide a lifetime's immunisation against the wiles of second-hand car salesmen, astrologers, feng-shui consultants, get-rich-quick pyramid-scheme sellers, Holocaust deniers and other purveyors of snake oil. The ability to spot when someone has committed a logical howler, attempted to psychologically manipulate you or otherwise tried to pull the wool over your eyes is always useful no matter what your walk in life. ... It's also important for a healthy democracy that citizens possess these skills."

Review copies of "The Philosophy Files" and "Philosophy Files 2" by Stephen Law (Orion, 2003, 2004) were sourced through <http://www.fishpond.com.au> at AUD \$15 each.

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CONFERENCES & EVENTS

2009 Summer School For Australian Teachers

The Biennial Freilich Foundation Summer School on Bigotry and Tolerance

18-21 January 2009 - Australian National University, Canberra

"Religion and Bigotry"

The aim of the school is to explore the relationship of bigotry with religion in the context of current social issues looked at from an interdisciplinary perspective. Inevitable this will lead to discussions on the relationship of religion with law and politics. Equally the question of bigotry will occur not only a phenomenon between religions but also within religions.

The 2009 Summer School is open to interested primary and secondary teachers currently teaching in an Australian school, or others involved in educational areas within Australia. Applications will be judged by the Summer School's stakeholders.

The Summer School will meet the costs of tuition and most meals and, upon application, the School will also meet the costs of travel and accommodation for 10-15 participants (air travel will be economy, return airfare from applicant's [Australian] point of departure to Canberra airport).

Please complete an Application Form and forward as directed. Applications close at cob 10 October 2008.

Read more at <http://www.anu.edu.au/hrc/freilich/> or <http://law.anu.edu.au/nissl/ss09.html>

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