

Values Education

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- =====
- EDITORIAL
 - [Values - Get The Parents In!](#)
 - CIVICS & CITIZENSHIP
 - [National Schools Convention 2008 - and the Australian Republic](#)
 - [Abolish state governments: Past time for a Republic](#)
 - CHAPLAINS, VALUES AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS
 - [Queensland Schools Downgrade Women and Girls](#)
 - [The Australian School Chaplaincy Program Debate](#)
 - [Religious Education in State Schools](#)
 - [Chaplains in State Schools](#)
 - [Australian values need to be taught, but not by chaplains](#)
 - FREEDOM OF SPEECH
 - [Thou shalt not annoy or trespass on World Youth Day](#)
 - TEACHING THINKING
 - [Schools of thought: teach children philosophy, experts urge](#)
 - GREEN VALUES
 - [Prince Charles earns more, but cuts carbon footprint](#)
 - [Green Lifeline: "Hope for Nature" - Dr Jane Goodall's Australian Lecture Tour](#)
 - ["Hope for Nature" - Dr Jane Goodall's Australian Lecture Tour](#)
 - [Greenfest 2008](#)
 - HUMANE EDUCATION
 - [Need for standard egg descriptors reflecting uniform hen welfare standards](#)
 - [International condemnation of Rudd Government's cruel pact with Egypt](#)
 - [Australian Animal Welfare Strategy International Conference 2008](#)
 - RESOURCES
 - [Human Rights Today](#)
 - [Morris Gleitzman: Then](#)
- =====

EDITORIAL

Values - Get The Parents In!

Continuation of the national Values Education initiative over the next three years - and beyond - is a high priority for parents across the country.

That much is clear from the programs run by both the Australian Council of State School Organisations and the Australian Parents Council under the banner of Values Education.

That the parent feedback to these two organisations, representing the interests of parents of students in public schools and private schools respectively, should conform so closely is testament to the over-riding importance of this educational focus.

All parents concur that young people need a values-driven education context, both in what is taught and what is practised in schools.

Values are expressions of what is important to our society, as defined by the community at large, so parents need to be intimately involved in all aspects of Values Education programs - not have them passed down from experts on high, no matter how well-meaning or well-written.

There is no room for ivory towers in Values Education, and there is no substitute for the perspective of parents.

Research on all levels by not only ACSSO and APC but a range of professionals and academics has clearly shown that the teaching of values without the input of parents does not adequately meet the needs of the community.

Schools as well as parents have made it clear that ownership of Values Education programs by parents has resulted in highly focused, informed and effectively targeted results for school communities across the country.

The funding of the Family School Community Partnership Bureau is commended and offers an instrument through which ACSSO and APC can help to build, maintain and expand positive relationships between the key stakeholders in the Australian educational process.

Values Education, however, has been identified by parents, teachers, principals and the community around each school as an area that requires its own specialised, parent-informed focus.

We have stepped away from patronising parents with abstract jargon and New-Speak, and now must continue to speak the language of parents in contexts they find meaningful so as to produce educational results that are in keeping with the community's demands and expectations.

Values Education comes alive when you get parents involved. Don't shut them out.

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CIVICS & CITIZENSHIP

National Schools Convention 2008 - and the Australian Republic

This year's National Schools Convention was held in Canberra from 29 May to 3 June 2008

The Schools Constitutional Conventions program started as an initiative of the Constitutional Centenary Foundation in 1995 to increase young Australians' knowledge about the Australian Constitution and the role it plays in our democracy. The first National Schools Constitutional Convention (NSCC) was held in 1995.

The National Schools Constitutional Convention aims to:

- provide an opportunity for students in Years 11 and 12 to explore contemporary constitutional issues
- encourage students to become better informed about the Australian system of government and how the Australian Constitution provides the framework for our democracy
- encourage senior students to take an active interest in the traditions, processes and practices of government.

One hundred and twenty-two senior students, selected from feeder conventions conducted by the States and Territories, represented government, independent and Catholic schools from across Australia.

The topic for the 2008 National Schools Constitutional Convention was 'An Australian Republic: To be or not to be?'

Read more at http://www.civicsandcitizenship.edu.au/verve/resources/Final_Communique.pdf

Abolish state governments: Past time for a Republic

Joel Fitzgibbon, July 03, 2008

AUSTRALIA is the most over-governed nation on Earth and reforms should include abolishing the states, Defence Minister Joel Fitzgibbon says.

Presenting the inaugural Edmund Barton Lecture at Newcastle University, Mr. Fitzgibbon said the country was still paying heavily for the agreements by which the states passed some powers to the new commonwealth to achieve federation in 1901.

Barton, a leading figure in the push for federation and Australia's first prime minister, was the first member for Hunter, although he never lived in the electorate.

Mr. Fitzgibbon, the current Hunter MP, said the agreements on federation may or may not be described as a mistake - Barton and others were in no position to achieve otherwise. But, he said: "It's a system that leaves us the most over-governed country in the world".

"Fourteen houses of parliament for 22 million people. In Tasmania, they have an MP for every 8,000 electors."

Mr. Fitzgibbon said the duplication, inefficiencies, buck passing and blame shifting cost the economy billions.

He said the Business Council of Australia put the cost at \$9 billion a year.

Wholesale constitutional reform was long overdue and the starting point should be true independence, he said.

"It is past time for an Australian republic."

Source: <http://www.theaustralian.news.com.au/story/0,25197,23963985-2702,00.html>

Read the Edmund Barton Lecture at <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/pdf/fitzgibbon080703.pdf>

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CHAPLAINS, VALUES AND PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Queensland Schools Downgrade Women and Girls

Senator Lyn Allison, 25 June 2008

The Democrats said today the Queensland Government should stop promoting old style 'values' in religious instruction classes and in the Commonwealth's \$165m school chaplains program in its state schools.

"In the guise of pastoral care and religion, boys and girls in Queensland are being taught different and stereotypical sets of values," Senator Allison said today. "This is dangerous and demeaning, particularly for girls."

"Parents, particularly in Queensland, tell me they are worried that chaplains who have no training in education or youth support are taking religious instruction and counselling children based on their own narrow values set.

At Toowoomba State High School - a premier high school - girls are taught to be 'patient, flexible, obedient, gentle, punctual, dependable, sincere, orderly, resourceful, responsible and to have self-control and initiative', but boys are given nine mostly different values.

"The Queensland Government is effectively endorsing Hillsong's Shine for girls and Strength for boys programs in schools that are supposed to be secular.

"At a time when politicians are talking about a national curriculum, it is reasonable to ask what Queensland's contribution might be if this state school represents Education Queensland's highest-order thinking," Senator Allison concluded.

Read 'Chaplaincy Service and Religious Instruction In School Hours at Toowoomba State High School' at <http://www.toowoombshs.eq.edu.au>

Read a local Toowoomba critique at <http://www.thefourthr.info/hallofshame.html>

The Australian School Chaplaincy Program Debate

Australia Talks, ABC Radio National, 17 June 2008

The National Schools Chaplaincy Program, a controversial initiative of the Howard government, has been under attack from a number of prominent parents and teachers organisations and is under review from the Rudd government.

What do you know about what chaplains are doing in our schools, and would school counsellors be a better investment of the \$25,000 available to every school under the plan?

Indeed this is what the Rudd government intends to do when the current funding expires.

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/australiatalks/stories/2008/2276096.htm>

Religious Education in State Schools

Sunday Night, ABC Radio National, 15 June 2008

Over recent months a legacy program of the Howard government has been taken up by an increasing number of schools around the country. It's the National Chaplaincy program.

Traditionally Australian government schools have been guided by a settlement over issues of religion that took place in the 1880's. In order to avoid costly sectarian rivalries.

Most protestant churches agreed that religion in state schools would be supplied by the churches for specific Religious Education periods, available on a voluntary opt-out basis as part of the normal curriculum.

Hence religion was kept off the State payroll.

Now, some are suggesting the guidelines of the Chaplaincy program are being interpreted in such a way as to subvert the intention of the Education Acts and to open students up to religious proselytization.

That's our discussion this evening.

Download the mp3 at <http://www.abc.net.au/sundaynights/stories/s2275210.htm>

Religion Report

ABC Radio National, 11 June 2008

Ever since the Howard government introduced a program of school chaplains in public schools, there's been controversy, and that controversy shows no sign of abating.

Last week in Senate Estimates, Democrat Senator Lyn Allison raised concerns that the chaplaincy program was being used to introduce a Hillsong project called 'Shine', aimed at teaching girls self esteem, through hair and make-up.

The government has agreed to investigate.

Here's Senator Lyn Allison.

Read more at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/religionreport/default.htm>

Australian values need to be taught, but not by chaplains

Ian Robinson

The proposal to fund chaplains in public schools is another nail in the coffin of a viable free, compulsory and secular education in Australia.

This vital cornerstone of democracy has been progressively downgraded and undermined by the conservative government since it gained office in 1996.

Public education is no longer "free" because of the inadequacy of government funding: public schools must charge "voluntary contributions" and spend valuable time and energy in fund-raising.

Public education is no longer "compulsory": anyone with enough money can opt out of it without forfeiting access to more-than-generous government education grants.

Now Flinders MP Mr. Greg Hunt, supported by a couple of other liberal members, wants to make it no longer "secular".

It seems the proposal arose because a group of Christians associated with a small number of schools in Hunt's electorate on the Mornington Peninsula wanted to appoint chaplains to their schools, but were not able to raise the requisite money in the local "Christian" community. So they did what churches are frequently doing these days - they asked the government to subsidise them, thus further corroding the important democratic principle of church and state.

The justification for this use of taxpayers' money to subsidise superstition is that the schools need the "values" that the chaplains can provide.

On ABC Radio on 25 June 2006, Greg Hunt claimed that our values are based mainly on two great traditions; the Westminster system and the Judeo-Christian tradition. Predictably, he left out a very important third one - the Enlightenment. From which we get most of our secular values: freedom of speech, universal education, the scientific method, freedom from dogma, separation of the Church and State, tolerance - and of course the big three - liberte, egalite, fraternite.

The Judeo-Christian tradition, on the other hand, gave us exceptionalism and intolerance of others, and in the past has given significant support to slavery, colonisation, the subjugation of women, and unjust right-wing and fascist dictators and oligarchies.

This is not just a biased atheist opinion. In a paper delivered to the inaugural Australasian Christian Legal Convention in 2001, Justice Michael Adams, a leading member of the Uniting Church, concluded:

"I do not think it can be seriously contended that any substantial legal, social or political advance, even in the modern era, has been marked by a Christian consensus, with the possible exceptions in the USA of the extension of human rights to Afro-Americans in the 1960s and 1970s and the changes to the Australian Constitution concerning indigenous Australians in 1967."

And more recently a study by Gregory Paul showed that among the developed countries, the pro-religious democracies consistently endured higher rates of societal dysfunction than the pro-secular ones:

"In general, higher rates of belief in and worship of a creator correlate with higher rates of homicide, juvenile and early adult mortality, sexually transmitted disease infection rates, teen pregnancy and abortion."

Do we really want chaplains to be teaching their values to our children?

Read more at <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/pdf/robinson0605.pdf>

Ian Robinson is President of the Rationalist Society of Australia <http://www.rationalist.com.au/home.htm>. The material above is drawn from an article which appeared in the Autumn 2008 edition of the Rationalist Journal

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FREEDOM OF SPEECH

Thou shalt not annoy or trespass on Youth Day

Jano Gibson, Linda Morris and Joel Gibson, Sydney Morning Herald July 1, 2008

Extraordinary new powers will allow police to arrest and fine people for "causing annoyance" to World Youth Day participants and permit partial strip searches at hundreds of Sydney sites, beginning today.

The laws, which operate until the end of July, have the potential to make a crime of wearing a T-shirt with a message on it, undertaking a Chaser-style stunt, handing out condoms at protests, riding a skateboard or even playing music, critics say.

Police and volunteers from the State Emergency Service and Rural Fire Service will be able to direct people to cease engaging in conduct that "causes annoyance or inconvenience to participants in a World Youth Day event".

People who fail to comply will be subject to a \$5500 fine.

The president of the NSW Bar Association, Anna Katzmann, SC, described the regulations as "unnecessary and repugnant".

The Greens MP Lee Rhiannon said if someone exposed themselves in public, they faced a fine of only \$1100 or six months' jail under the Summary Offences Act.

"So if someone flashes a WYD participant they will face an \$1100 penalty but if they wear an anti-Catholic T-shirt they could face a \$5500 penalty," she said.

A police source said causing an "annoyance or inconvenience" was a highly subjective offence. A police lawyer would define it in layman's terms for operational use by officers.

Civil libertarians said they had never seen anything like the new powers and believed they are more extreme and broader in scope than those used during last year's APEC summit and the 2000 Sydney Olympics.

Read more at <http://www.smh.com.au/news/national/thou-shalt-not-annoy-or-trespass--a-hrefhttpwwwsmhcomaupollsnationalformhtmlbpollba/2008/06/30/1214677946009.html>

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TEACHING THINKING

Schools of thought: teach children philosophy, experts urge

Anthea Lipsett The Guardian, July 2, 2008

Children of all ages should study philosophy in school to develop their critical thinking skills, education experts said today. Academics suggest that, rather than start off with Socrates, teachers use common classroom disputes to help children learn about abstract philosophical principles such as fairness, morality and punishment. They give the example of apportioning blame for spilling paint

The book *Philosophy in Schools*, edited by Dr Michael Hand of the Institute of Education and Dr Carrie Winstanley of Roehampton University, puts forward several arguments for including philosophy in the school curriculum.

"Critical thinkers are people who reason well, and who judge and act on the basis of their reasoning," Hand says. "To become critical thinkers, children must learn what constitutes good reasoning and why it's important - and these are philosophical matters. Exposure to philosophy should be part of the basic educational entitlement of all children."

In philosophy, the quality of arguments and the meanings of words are under constant scrutiny.

Winstanley said teachers could use popular books to initiate philosophical discussions. For example, *Where the Wild Things Are* could lead into debates on the existence of monsters, and why the main character's mother sends him to his room without supper.

Winstanley said: "Better than any other subject, philosophy teaches children how to assess reasons, defend positions, define terms, evaluate sources of information and judge the value of arguments and evidence."

Read more at <http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,,2288603,00.html>

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GREEN VALUES

Prince Charles earns more, but cuts carbon footprint

Jill Lawless Brisbane Times July 1, 2008

Prince Charles's income grew last year, while his carbon footprint shrank. The eco-friendly prince even has an Aston Martin that runs on wine.

The prince's office said greater use of green energy and fewer plane and car journeys helped Charles cut the amount of carbon dioxide he produced by 18 per cent to 2,795 tonnes.

Charles has promised to reduce his emissions of greenhouse gases by 25 per cent between 2007 and 2012.

The prince has also installed wood-chip stoves at his country homes - the Highgrove estate, where he farms organically, and Birkhall in Scotland - and energy-efficient boilers at his Clarence House residence in London.

For domestic travel, the prince's Jaguars, Audi and Range Rover now run entirely on biodiesel made from used cooking oil, and his 38-year-old Aston Martin is fuelled by bioethanol from surplus wine.

Source: <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/news/world/prince-charles-earns-more-but-cuts-carbon-footprint/2008/07/01/1214677978695.html>

Green Lifeline:

A radical new idea could save the world's ecosystems. But what will it do to the economy?

George Monbiot

Almost everyone seems to agree: governments now face a choice between saving the planet and saving the economy. As recession looms, the political pressure to abandon green policies intensifies. A report published yesterday by Ernst and Young suggests that the EU's puny carbon target will raise energy bills by 20% over the next 12 years(1). Last week the prime minister's advisers admitted to the Guardian that his renewable energy plans were "on the margins" of what people will tolerate(2).

But these fears are based on a false assumption: that there is a cheap alternative to a green economy. Last week New Scientist reported a survey of oil industry experts, which found that most of them believe global oil supplies will peak by 2010(3). If they are right, the game is up. A report published by the US Department of Energy in 2005 argued that unless the world begins a crash programme of replacements 10 or 20 years before oil peaks, a crisis "unlike any yet faced by modern industrial society" is unavoidable(4).

If the world is sliding into recession, it's partly because governments believed that they could choose between economy and ecology. The price of oil is so high and it hurts so much because there has been no serious effort to reduce our dependency. Yesterday in the Guardian, Rajendra Pachauri suggested that an impending recession could force us to confront the flaws in the global economy(5). Sadly it seems so far to have had the opposite effect: a recent Ipsos Mori poll suggests that people are losing interest in climate change(6). Opportunities for energy populism abound: it cannot be long before one of the major parties abandons the pale green consensus and starts invoking an oil cornucopia it cannot possibly deliver.

The British government maintains both positions at once. In his speech last week, Gordon Brown said he wanted "to facilitate a reduction in short term global oil prices" while seeking "to reduce progressively our dependence on oil"(7). He knows that the first objective makes the second one harder to achieve. The government's policy is to build more of everything - more coal plants, more nuclear power, more oil rigs, more renewables, more roads, more airports - and hope no one spots the contradictions.

Is there a way out? Could we abandon the fossil fuel economy without provoking a blistering backlash? Two things are obvious. We need a global system, and the current one, the Kyoto Protocol, is bust. It sets no cap on global carbon pollution, its targets bear no relation to current science and are unenforceable anyway, it contains loopholes and get-out clauses wide enough to sail an oil tanker through.

Read more at <http://www.valuesineducation.org.au/pdf/monbiot.pdf>

"Hope for Nature" - Dr Jane Goodall's Australian Lecture Tour

September - October 2008

Dr Jane Goodall DBE, internationally renowned author, primatologist and founder of programmes to promote community empowerment and engagement for the future well-being of young people and our planet, is visiting Australia and New Zealand from 30 September to 19 October 2008

In a series of events across the country, Jane Goodall will highlight the effects of climate change on the planet's biodiversity - and raise awareness of what we as individuals can all do to make a difference.

Jane will share stories from her new Book 'Hope for Nature' which highlights the scientists that are working on flora and fauna which are being saved from the brink of extinction from around the world. Also, each lecture will introduce local scientist "heroes" who will share their research results on native flora and fauna.

These events will also promote the work of the Jane Goodall Institute in Australia, and the rapidly growing network of young people and communities working together under the banner of her international "Roots & Shoots" program which promotes community interaction and engagement. There will be a Roots & Shoots component at each State's lecture, to involve the children that have been doing their own projects on the environment, involving their community and its conservation

The outline program is as follows:

Perth: September 30 - Media Conference at Perth Zoo

Perth: October 1 - Corporate Lunch; Public Lecture at Perth Concert Hall

Alice Springs: October 3 - Community Lecture at Desert Park.

Adelaide: October 5 - Family Roots & Shoots Day & Media Conference at Monarto Zoo

Adelaide: October 6 - Public Lecture - evening

Adelaide: October 7 - Corporate Lunch

Melbourne: October 8 - Media Conference Melbourne Zoo am; Lecture at Dallas Brooke Hall pm

Melbourne: October 9 - Corporate Lunch

Brisbane: October 10 - Greenfest Patron Dr Jane Goodall to open Festival and give talk

Sydney: October 11 - Media Conference at Taronga Zoo

Sydney: October 12 - Public lecture- Sydney Opera House

Sydney: October 14 & 15 - planning for possible events TBA

Wellington NZ: October 17 -19 - media conference & events in planning

Read more at <http://www.janegoodall.org.au/>

Greenfest 2008

10-12 October, Brisbane

Greenfest is Brisbane's free green festival and place for full community participation in the issues around climate change and global warming

View presentation by Dr Jane Goodall, who will speak at the opening of and become the patron of Greenfest green education. View SEED International's locally produced film Think Global Eat Local.

Applications for exhibitors are still open but closing soon. Apply now to exhibit and inspire 50000 forecast visitors to change a habit for the planet.

Throughout the cultural canvas of Greenfest, industry leaders will be presenting a huge range of greener products and services, in these festival areas:

- Green Street Mall : Change a habit for the planet
- Green Motor Show : Drive the future
- Green Career Show : Inspire the change you want
- Green Bake : The good energy recipe

All exhibitions, speakers and performances are free. Participation by new and renewed generations together is a formula for resonance and by just turning up you will have taken action for sharing a greener world.

Greenfest offers real benefits to schools and universities and is committed to working towards conserving Australia's natural habitat.

Read more at <http://www.greenfest.com.au/>

HUMANE EDUCATION

Need for standard egg descriptors reflecting uniform hen welfare standards

Nathan Dukes, Canberra Times, 1/07/2008

Free-range eggs might not always be what producers claim they are, according to consumer group Choice. Spokesman Christopher Zinn said yesterday, "Well over half the hens described as free-range are housed in huge sheds, may never go outside, and their eggs may come off conveyor belts."

A Choice investigation found there was no legal description of what a free-range egg should be, and that big producers had redefined the term to suit themselves.

The investigation also tested eggs for quality, and found 36 per cent of free-range eggs failed tests for freshness. Choice recommended eggs be stamped with the date they were packed instead of unreliable best-before dates. "While they might come out of the chook in great shape, they need to be refrigerated constantly for use-by dates to be valid," Mr. Zinn said.

The investigation also found guidelines varied greatly between organisations, even though the eggs might all be branded "free-range".

The Australian Egg Corporation's quality assurance scheme, "Egg Corp Assured", allows up to 14 birds per square metre inside a barn.

According to Choice, by comparison cage egg systems allow the space equivalent of 18 birds per square metre.

Other organisations only allow up to seven birds per square metre, including the RSPCA and the Free Range Egg and Poultry Association of Australia.

Read more at <http://canberra.yourguide.com.au/news/local/news/general/it-may-not-be-eggsactly-what-you-think/800893.aspx>

International condemnation of Rudd Government's cruel pact with Egypt

Handle with Care Coalition, 14 May 08

The world's leading animal protection groups have united in the condemnation of the Australian Government's plans to resume the live trade of cattle to Egypt.

"The government has ignored the cruel reality of the live export industry for the sake of commercial gain, despite all of Mr. Rudd's claims in the past that he will not tolerate animal cruelty," said Major-General Peter Davies, Director General of the World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA). WSPA is leading the Handle with Care coalition - an international alliance of animal welfare groups calling for an end to the long distance transport of animals for slaughter.

"There is now outrage across the world that the Rudd Government has decided to support the expansion of a Middle East trade already condemning millions of animals a year to an arduous sea journey and inhumane handling and slaughter," Major-General Davies said. "The government has refused to meet with the Handle with Care coalition to learn what really happens to animals sent to the Middle East, and this appalling decision is the result."

Public pressure forced the Howard Government to suspend the live cattle trade to Egypt in 2006 after revelations of shocking treatment of cattle in that country.

"What this means is Mr. Rudd and his Minister are agreeing to send thousands of Australian cattle on an exhausting journey to Egypt to suffer the terror of being slaughtered while fully conscious," Major-General Davies said.

"The Australian public has expressed that they do not want their country participating in such extreme animal cruelty for the sake of profits. It is time Mr. Rudd listens to the will of the people on this issue and makes a stand for his nation's animals."

The Handle with Care coalition is calling on the Rudd Government to end live exports and to expand the existing meat trade to the Middle East.

Read more at <http://www.handlewithcare.tv/au>.

Australian Animal Welfare Strategy International Conference 2008

31 August - 3 September: Gold Coast, Queensland

ACSSO represents all parents 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.

Read more at <http://aaws08.blogspot.com/>

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RESOURCES

Human Rights Today

Human Rights today: Discussing the issues, Accepting the challenge is a new curriculum resource which has been developed by Curriculum Corporation for Amnesty International Australia.

This new resource is designed for use by teachers and students in Years 9 and 10.

Students explore:

- how human rights are defined and formalised,
- how people experience their rights and
- how people and organisations defend human rights.

The resource also contains activities that students can undertake to defend human rights.

Read more at <http://action.amnesty.org.au/humanrightstoday/>

Morris Gleitzman: Then

ABC Radio National EdPod, 3 July

When are children old enough to learn about difficult things? And what is the best way to explain the inexplicable?

Instead of shying away from what can often be distressing topics for kids, Morris Gleitzman tackles them head on.

He has just published "Then". It's the sequel to his 2005 novel "Once" which follows Felix and his friend Zelda as they witness the atrocities being committed by the Nazis in Poland in 1942.

Richard Aedy interviews Gleitzman with a sensitive and inquisitive touch, and draws out how and why this insightful and often light-hearted author is prepared to lead his young readers to face one of the most confronting and testing examinations of values that the human race has ever experienced.

This EdPod also includes an interview with Libby Gleeson about how she came to write her most recent book Mahtab's Story, a fictional exploration of what refugee children go through as exemplified by a pre-teen girl and her Afghan family who flee an oppressive regime and eventually make it to Australia.

As Aedy says, the book is "very much inspired by real life events".

It is immensely gratifying that these two Australian writers for young people can draw on such searching events in our immediate past and current history to impart to their readers - and to adults who care to pay attention - how children can and do embody the most positive values in the face of the most horrific experiences.

And the word "values" is not mentioned even once.

Download the podcast at <http://www.abc.net.au/rn/edpod/stories/2008/2292303.htm>

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