

Debate continues about homework

EDITORIAL

By **SARAH HAYES, HEIDI FRICKER and DEMARIS HUMPHRIES**

THERE is constant debate about whether or not schoolchildren should have homework.

The facts are as follows: children from kindergarten to year 12 are getting a supply of work to complete at home which they must bring back to school by the due date ready for marking.

If children are forced to go home after a tiring six hours of learning and school and are then expected to complete assigned tasks and projects, these can take up many hours of time that could be spent outside, keeping healthy or socialising.

They could risk losing some of their friends if they don't talk to each other in places other than school. And what would happen if they had friends that didn't go to the same school? They would lose contact and their social circle would contract, leaving them possibly friendless and alone.

On the other hand, homework helps to reinforce what children have learned at school. It helps them to work at their own pace

and go back over the things that they struggle with.

It backs up their learning and teaches them time management, how to prioritise and how to get things in by a deadline. It can help them learn to use a variety of resources, such as libraries and computer websites, to look up information useful to their cause and purpose.

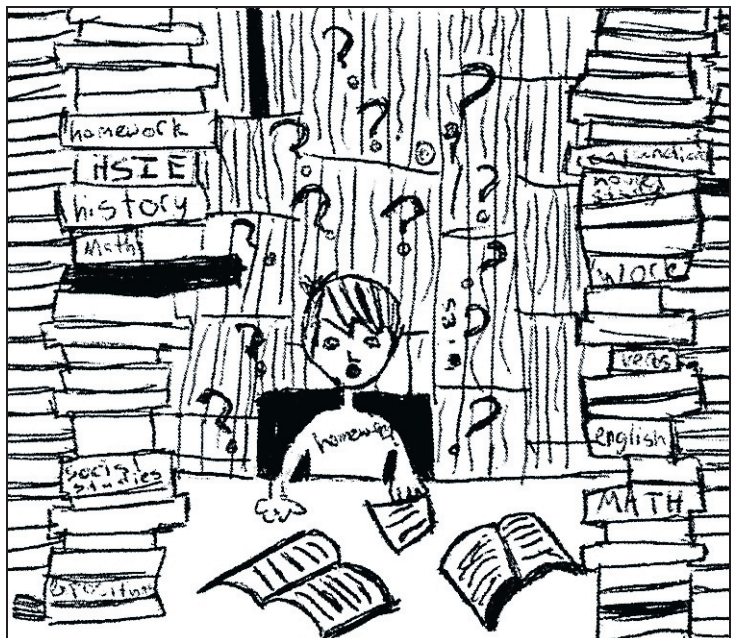
Year 5 student Mikayla said: "I don't like too much homework. I would prefer to use my free time to socialise with friends."

Year 6 student Noah said: "I like doing homework, but sometimes it gets too much if you play sport after school and you don't have time to do it all."

We believe that homework is a good thing, and like most things in life, best in moderation. Homework can be beneficial if the amount students are given is limited to two hours for primary (less for infants) and about six hours for high school students per week.

Creating positive work habits and homework routines also enables students to develop time management skills and enhance learning experiences from school.

Most schools and teachers are flexible when it comes to homework and students and parents should discuss a homework option that best suits the student.



Cartoon: Dayne Garside



STAY COOL: Dan and Rory making a splash at Mayfield pool.

Time to pool our resources

By **RORY GRAHAM and DANIEL CLARKE**

NEWCASTLE council is looking at privatising Mayfield pool, but are being discouraged thanks to the Save the Pool Committee. While it isn't closing down, prices are going up.

"When funds are tight, the council should be trying to squeeze the maximum value out of its existing assets through increased usage and this is exactly what lower entry pricing achieves," said Stephen Clarke, of Save the Pool Committee.

The pool has been a fixture in the community since it opened on November 12, 1966. The main users are children from surrounding suburbs; some kids go there every day after school for a swim and fun.

Closing the pool basically says "stop swimming and go and play computer games," said a local resident.

Many children, when it warms up during holidays, weekends and even after school, spend their time at the pool.

These young people in our community cannot make the trip to alternative pools, some of which located many kilometres away.

Since 2000, the pool's income has increased and in 2010-2011 it made approximately \$319,000.

It will be 49 years old this November and recognition of its coming 50th anniversary would be appropriate, if it stays open that long.

"To close down the pool would be horrible," said a Mayfield pool canteen attendant.

Games are hazardous for health

By **MAX DUNNE and ZANE COOPER**

PS3, Xbox360, Wii – all favourite pastimes for kids. Parents and guardians, however, are starting to get worried about the effect that violent video games are having on their children's well-being.

Studies show that if children continue to play violent video games, the level of violence that they show is higher than if the child was restricted or constrained to playing less violent video games.

There have been several incidences linked to violent video games but these may or may not involve under-aged players. There have also been many debates whether the government should introduce stricter rules on the rating of games.

Games such as Grand Theft Auto, Call of Duty and The Walking Dead contain a level of violence that could influence the children that play these to have a violent and antisocial attitudes.

Another side-effect of too much gaming is the disruption to children's sleep patterns. Video games stimulate the brain, causing it to change its sleeping pattern, affecting focus in class and concentration in work places. Sleep can play a major role in how focused a person is during the next day.

Cyber-safety rules making technology fun

By **JASMINE TARANAWIWAT**

CHILDREN and young people are using technology like computers, tablets or smartphones just as much as adults and sometimes even more so.

Schools throughout Australia are using computers and iPads in class more frequently to assist with learning in the 21st century.

This all makes cyber-safety more important.

The dangers of online cyber-bullying and privacy are a real concern for young people today as the

things people do online can leave a lasting cyber-footprint that can affect you now or later in life.

Some of the ways to be cyber-safe is to use computers and devices in a family-friendly location and that parents are aware of the websites and programs being used at home.

It is also important to never give out personal details online. Children should talk to parents or teachers if they are worried or feel unsafe.



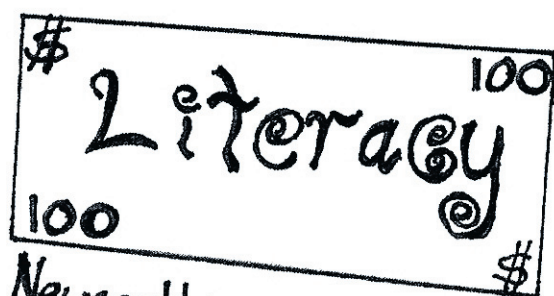
SMART: Student Jasmine has learned to always be cyber-safe at school and home.

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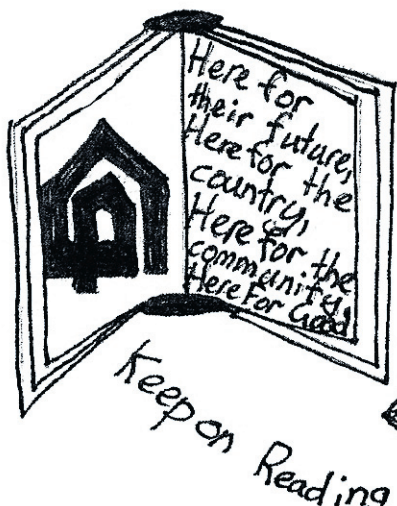


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