

Some 2019 Letters to the Editor

THOUGHT FOR THE MONTH (#13.1)

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DIGNIFY OUR FINAL DAYS

It is heartening to read that Monash Uni and Peninsula Health are seriously trialling ways to enable the elderly to spend their final stage of life in their own home space rather than in "caged care".

There is a tendency for family members and care professionals to feel obliged to squeeze out the maximum number of days - even if the artificial twilight period is unfit for humans.

Death is natural. When the time comes, and nothing more can be done to maintain a wholesome life, let people die with dignity in their own space.

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EDUCATIONAL BRAINWASHING

To indoctrinate school children in the latest political fads is not the same as educating them. To educate them is to equip them to logically appraise competing ideas, a skill that will serve them and society well.

The best way to prepare children for a rational life is to select an issue that is not red hot. A topic like climate alarm, with its threat of doom, and strong feelings among adults, will overwhelm them. They have little choice but to swallow the dogma whole.

Better to take a subject that is open for debate, one where the teacher does not assert a position. Invite students to speak in turn, to express views and comment on others' views. Teach them to listen, to take

turns in speaking, to refrain from mocking or menacing others, but to point out where a claim is illogical.

Children who learn how to discuss an issue – without simply beating a drum – will be better citizens, able to help steer society through serious future dilemmas.

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NO REWARDS for KILLING INFIDELS

Christians form their concept of God from the teachings of Christ – and Muslims from the teachings of Mohamed. Almost all worshippers adhere to the faith of the family they were born into. A good question for believers to ask is, "Would God really reward me for randomly killing believers of other faiths?"

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HEAR SCRIPTURE, ADD BRAIN

It would be a strange God who created gays and then sent them to hell for seeking a partner.

Of course, some cultures have created a hell for gays. Cultural mores have often been equated to God's will.

Now that we moderns can see across many cultures, we should be able to sweep a lot of primitive detritus out of our religious beliefs.

Notwithstanding the above, a right to freedom of speech is vital to human progress.

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BUILDING SOCIAL SKILLS and PERSONAL RESILIENCE

How sad that the worst years for depression are 18-24 years of age. Many of the young are not coping with life beyond school. How can we better prepare them?

Convention says that parents raise the children and teachers give them skills. But things have changed over the decades. Today, we have small nuclear families. School is now, by default, the extended family. Schooling needs to evolve.

Given that children attend school for 13 formative years, we must aim to give them a love of learning, to create a large-family environment that builds social skills, and to boost personal resilience.

These outcomes are achieved by employing teachers who love their subject, opening small primary schools (or mixed-age sub-schools within larger schools), and including an outward-bound, confidence-building programme.

Potentially breaking an arm is a lesser evil than losing the joy of living.

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SAVE OUR ISLAND

It's embarrassing that Australia has ordered 12 slow diesel submarines with lead batteries. These will depend on help to top up the tank. Already antique now, the first sub will be available in the 2030s! Cost: \$80b! The French are laughing at us. A financial and defence catastrophe.

A modern sub has to be nuclear powered. Yes, we supply uranium to the world. But some like to turn up their noses at using it ourselves. We can't afford to maintain this false pose when it comes to defending our island.

We should buy US subs, well tested and available now. Cheaper and better. With US training of our navy and marine industry as part of the deal.

This is so obvious, I have to wonder what our national government thinks it's purpose is.

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WHO is ENTITLED to VOTE?

Rita Panahi once again speaks wisdom. Both Brexit and the Trump presidency offend some of the more well-heeled and highly educated classes who assume they know better than the masses as to who should rule.

They have forgotten how unjust and unstable societies were before democracy. The stability results from accepting the verdict of the voters (or count of the winning seats) – no matter how close the numbers. It is no accident that migrants want to move to democracies.

To reject or repeat the Brexit vote with its clear majority is to undermine democracy. It is arrogant to say that the people of Britain did not know what they were doing. The masses know what they and their families have endured in a century of European affairs.

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GIVE ME A CHILD UNTIL THEY'RE 12

I respect counsellors and hope that we'll have enough to help those in need. But counselling can't be our sole solution to the surge in mentally troubled young people.

We must look to the societal cause of the epidemic. Childhood is the critical time for forming personal viability. Give me a child until they're 12.

Over the century, we have moved from large and extended families and local community to tiny families living in isolation. Schools have not evolved to keep up with these changes.

Schools need to broaden their role from simply teaching subjects to also supporting communication skills - by grouping children into small, mixed-age, big-family groups (maximum 70) and by building resilience through adventures.

A wholistic childhood will always be the best preparation for adult life.

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SAVING AUSTRALIAN MATHS

Maths confidence is acquired or lost in the early primary years. I managed a primary school for 25 years. The school was not selective but consistently scored high in Maths.

Our secret? We used our best Maths teacher to take all the

Maths classes in the first four years. Thus there were no gaps or overlaps when moving from grade to grade.

The teacher was also savvy about the English versus Maths learning curve. Some naturally strong mathematicians will drop out if they are confronted with problems in language which they cannot yet read. We can't afford to lose them this way.

Let younger children romp amongst the numbers first and discover the patterns and equations. There were no Maths dropouts. A simple remedy - costing no more to provide.

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WHO'S KIDDING WHOM?

Leaving aside for a moment the question whether CO2 really does threaten life on Earth, there's something odd about the uncommonly high penalties we Australians endure to reduce our CO2 emissions.

We've doubled the cost of power, pushed out power-hungry industries, reduced export earnings and suffer more blackouts.

Remember, all our sacrifices have absolutely zero effect unless the biggest-emitting countries follow suit. But they are steadily increasing their CO2.

Do mature adults really believe the big emitters are going to follow our example one fine day and close down their cheap coal-powered energy? □