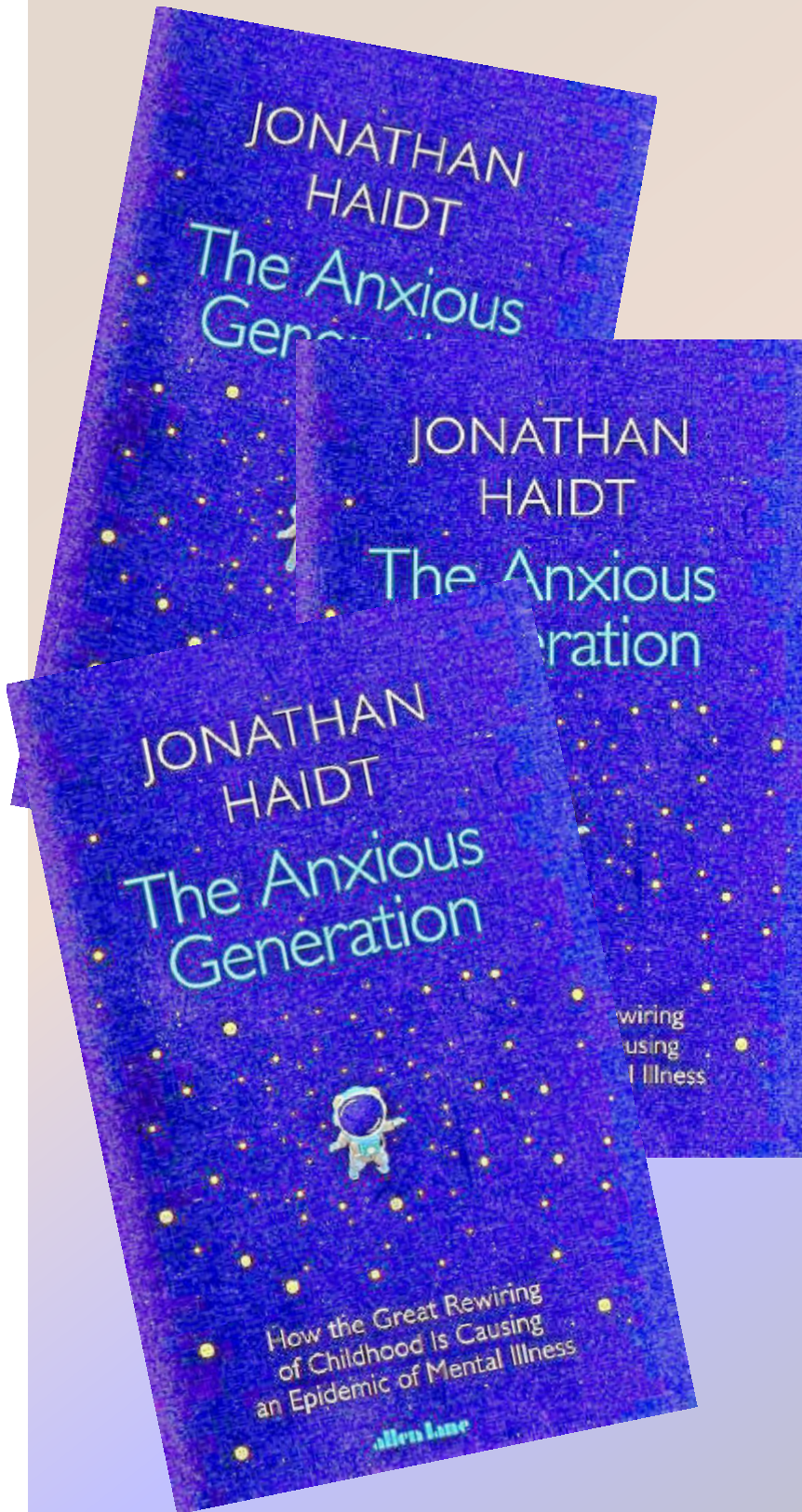


# Cat's Eye Watch

Previously known as Cat's Eye Weekly

No. 146

19th May 2024



## **Inside:**

**The patriarchal system must go**

**The Anxious Generation**

**What we have become**

**Jacqueline Winspear—Novelist**

**Refugee family violence**

**The Big Issue**

**Simple rules for ageing well**

**When good people do bad things**

**Australia: unprepared for war**

**The 'debt' that took people's lives**

**Tesla hypocrisy?**

**The Animal Re-homing Service**

**Pet Medical Crisis**

**Short story: Embers of Berlin**

**And more**

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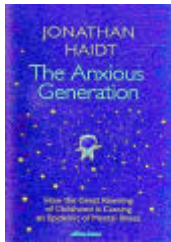
# Any excuse for stirring up the universe

Edited by  
Graham Price

Once was weekly now highly irregular in more ways than one

## HIGHLIGHTS

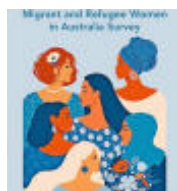
The  
Anxious  
Generation  
p3



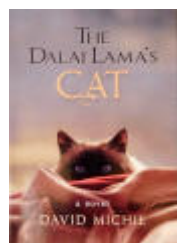
The  
Patriarchal  
System  
must go p8



Refugee  
family  
violence  
p9



His  
Holiness's  
Cat series  
p28



## The editor's desk



**M**uch can be accomplished, grasshopper, if you will cease your restlessness of mind and deny yourself the use of technical gadgets for a day, a week, a month, or whenever. There is much to be said for some ancient religions that set aside a time without technology — a time in which to reflect and be at peace with the world. The helter skelter of everyday life is never good for the human mind and body — a ton of illnesses arise from the rush to be something or somebody. The wise Confucius once said “Life is really simple, but we insist on making it complicated.”

In addition, with the rush of everyday life and the wish to cut corners and consciously or unconsciously, doing some harm to others, comes a form of karma. Religions do not have a monopoly on karma, it's simply a fact of life — do harm and eventually, perhaps not tomorrow, next month, next year, but you can bet your life it will come back to bite you where it hurts.

**With age comes a certain satisfaction in knowing that one is learning lessons every day.** Not a day passes when I find myself with new lessons about life. Sometimes I might make a ‘wrong’ turn, but no matter what happens it is always educational. And as far as ‘teaching old dogs new tricks’ is concerned, well, you can. No doubt about it. People in their 70's and 80's going back to university to complete a degree, others selling up and making a new fresh life in the country — wisely selecting a home near superior medical facilities, because the brain might still be fabulously active and useful, but the body not.

There's a lot of serious information and native cunning in old brains, don't doubt that for a second. Youth has an amazing flexibility and vibrancy, but old age has a real live trillion encyclopaedia set situated in that neural maze within the skull. The lights are still on, the antenna is fine, and the spotlights are still roaming.

**Follow the leader. Will you or won't you?** Every so often, and more times than I'd care to wish, *LinkedIn* sends me a message asking me to follow John Doe, or this minister, that minister, even the current prime minister. Hang on a minute! Are we sheep? Surely this is the last thing any one of us should be doing: blindly following someone at the behest of some organisation, group, or social entrepreneur? Even *LinkedIn*, possibly somewhat hypocritically, invites readers not to do this. Can you believe that? An article by Ameya Agrawal warns against blindly following along, and yet *LinkedIn's* AI digital puppet-master keeps sending emails to follow this person or that person. The article is headed-up with a group of people wearing blindfolds and chain-dancing, with the advice that: “those who are successful, follow their own path instead of listening to advice of others.” There's more advice on this; personally I consider the author to be somewhat naive, but *LinkedIn's* reply would no doubt state, ‘well there are varying shades of grey in this. We didn't mean that literally.’ Really?

**People should rage against companies using plastic ‘tea bags’** instead of the present paper bags. We are warned by health authorities of the danger of micro-plastics entering the food chain — found in fish and shelled sea-food, and it is a serious concern with the population either not caring or not well enough informed. People who continually use take-away or take-out food that requires re-heating are also at risk. Heating re-usable plastic containers at high temperature is not a good look, as scientific studies have shown that there is a risk of food contamination from chemicals which often make-up the finished plastic container.

Be wise, stay safe. *Graham*

Feedback to Cat's Eye Weekly  
is always welcome.  
Click onto my purrfect nose!





## Are the makers of smartphones liable for damage to children's minds? No! Well, perhaps they should be.

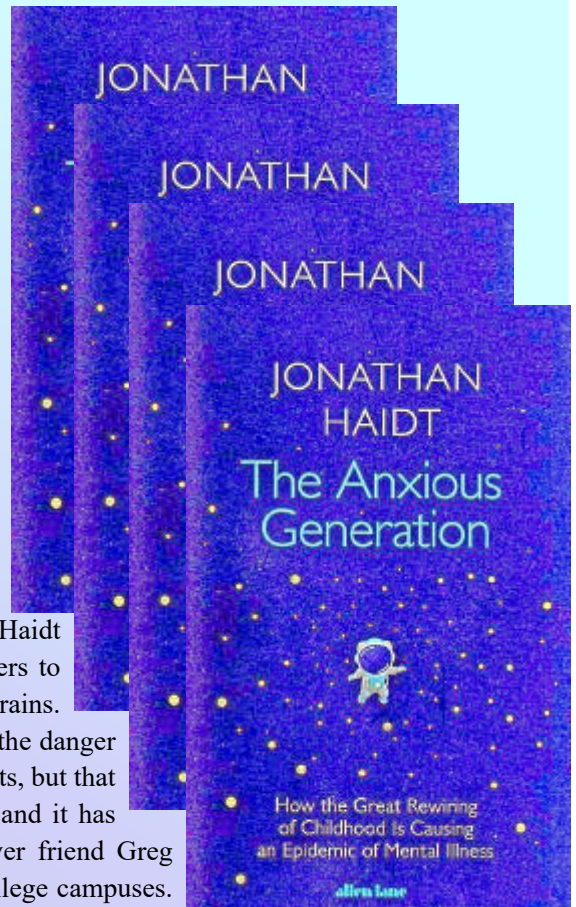
It's impressive. And here's the proof: smart phones are hindering rather than helping our young. Backed up by an immense analysis of data, Jonathan Haidt's latest book *The Anxious Generation*, should be required reading for all parents, teachers, and every parliamentarian.

This well-timed and well-researched book is sub-titled: *How the Great Re-wiring of Childhood Is Causing an Epidemic of Mental Illness* and is dedicated to teachers "who have devoted their lives to nurturing children, including mine."

Haidt is well known for tackling difficult sociological problems. His previous works being *The Righteous Mind*, *The Happiness Hypothesis*, *The Coddling of the American Mind*.

*We are standing on the precipice of untold mental harm from modern technology directed at our children, which requires tough thinking and tough actions to overcome if we are to save them from mental distress and self-harm.*

*The Anxious Generation* is not a book of negativity: it is a well-researched text-book with factual data; it is one of learning, and Haidt offers in part four of his book, ways and means for parents and teachers to counter-balance the current insipid and dangerous re-wiring of young brains. Haidt concludes that this re-wiring is a double curse; in that not only is the danger from distortions caused by smart phone access by children and adolescents, but that on campus students are also being re-wired in their thinking patterns, and it has much to do with individual rights. More than a decade ago his lawyer friend Greg Lukianoff brought to his attention something that was happening on college campuses. *The Anxious Generation* p11: "In 2014, he saw something strange happening: Students themselves began demanding colleges protect them from books and speakers that made them feel 'unsafe.' Greg thought that universities were somehow teaching students to engage in cognitive distortions such as catastrophizing black-and-white thinking, and emotional reasoning, and that this could actually be causing students to become depressed and anxious."



Mental Illness Among College Students

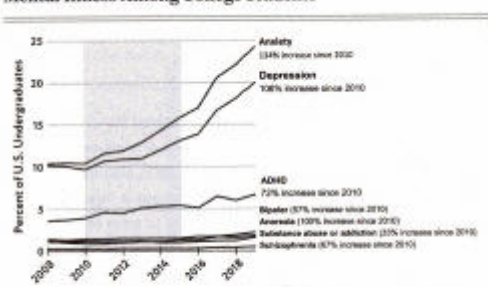


Figure 1.2. Percent of U.S. undergraduates with each of several mental illnesses. Rates of diagnosis of various mental illnesses increased in the 2000s among college students, especially for anxiety and depression. (Source: American College Health Association.)<sup>1</sup>

By 2017, Haidt summarises, "it had become clear that the rise of depression and anxiety was happening in many countries [Australia included] to adolescents of all educational levels, social classes, and races. On average, people born in and after 1996 were different, psychologically, from those who had been born a few years earlier."

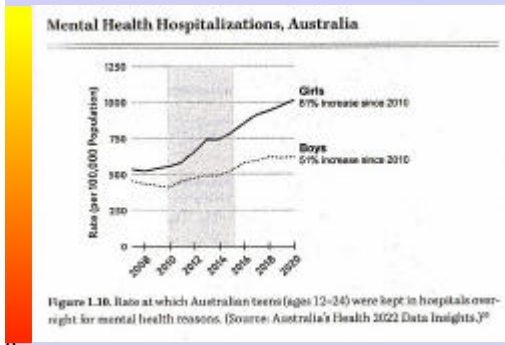
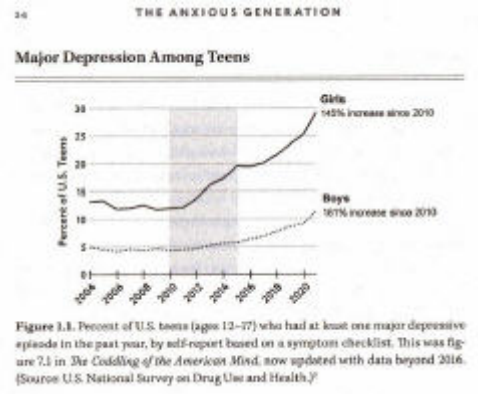
And so, by 2023 when much more research had been done, Haidt considered that not only was the smartphone and social media the problem, but also "it's about a historic and unprecedented transformation of human childhood. The transformation is affecting boys as much as girls."

There is not much doubt about adults making the world safer for children and adolescents over the past century, particularly after World War II. Lessons were learnt, experience was utilised, and children born 1930's-1960's grew up with less burdensome perceptions. But, as Haidt points out: "Quite suddenly we created a virtual world where adults could indulge any momentary whim, but children were left almost defenseless. As evidence mounts that phone-based childhood is making our children mentally unhealthy, socially isolated, and deeply unhappy, are we okay with that trade-off? Or will we eventually realize, as we did in the 20th century, that we sometimes need to protect children from harm even when it inconveniences adults? I'll offer many ideas for reforms in part four, all of which aim to reverse the two big mistakes we've made: overprotecting children in the real world (where they need to learn from vast amounts of direct experience) and underprotecting them online (where they are particularly vulnerable during puberty)" \* Haidt's four usable reforms will be added at the end of this article.

Dr. Andrew Leigh, parliamentary secretary to the prime minister of Australia, wrote a review of Haidt's *The Anxious Generation* in *The Age* newspaper 20 April 2024. A selection of his comments are: "Jonathan Haidt makes the strongest case



yet that smart phones and social media are doing massive harm to the mental wellbeing of young people . . . like Jean Twenge’s *iGen* and Netflix’s *The Social Dilemma*, this is an urgent call to action, from a writer who regards social media as more akin to tobacco than fairy floss. What’s the evidence? Over the past 15 or so years, the use of smartphones and social media has skyrocketed. The average young American receives 192 social media notifications daily. Nearly half of the US teens say they are online ‘almost constantly’. Device use has displaced in-person activities . . . The pattern I uncovered for Australia suggests that the problem is nearly as concerning here. Since 2007, the share of young Australian women reporting anxiety disorders has doubled, from 20 per cent to 40 per cent . . . alternative theories just don’t fit the data. For example, the mental health crisis was afoot before COVID”. Yes, you can blame COVID for many things, but not this. Nor can climate change anxiety be blamed, because as Leigh asserts “it’s hard to see why it should have affected girls more than boys.”



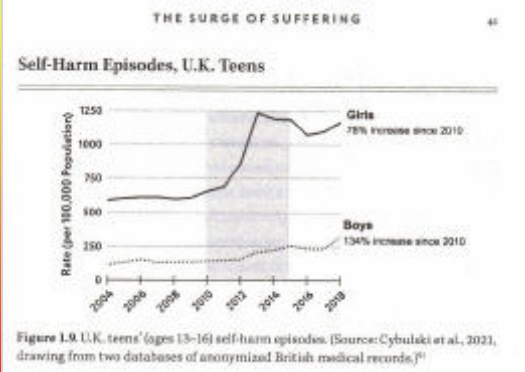
In his numerous conversations with parents, Haidt comes across a common core: that rules about family lives are interpreted on the basis of technology, and that it is so tempting to relaxing a rule simply because it will put an end to disagreements. Most of the parents don’t talk about diagnosed mental illness; it seems that they are more concerned that something unnatural is going on — that they have lost their child and that they are trapped and powerless.

For mental health increases in teens, Canada is much the same as America, followed by the UK, New Zealand and Australia, so it’s not just a case of where you live, but how you live. Even in the Nordic countries, which generally have higher quality of life, the pattern is much the same with girls 76.3% increase in psychological distress since 2010 and boys 51.3%. Haidt argues that the global financial crisis had nothing to do with these figures, nor the American and other school shootings. Most of the Anglosphere countries and the five Nordic nations have felt the impact of smartphone/social media malaise. In non-Western countries the patterns are not as clear due to the lesser availability of abundant data.

**Social deprivation:** Haidt mentions Jean Twenge several times. Twenge is professor of psychology at San Diego State University, focusing on gender, generations, social psychology, and is the author of 180 scientific publications. The results of her research are obvious: “Teens who spend more time using social media are more likely to suffer from depression, anxiety, and other disorders . . . It makes sense. Children need face-to-face, synchronous, embodied, physical play. The healthiest play is outdoors and includes occasional physical risk-taking and thrilling adventure. Talking on FaceTime with close friends is good, like an old-fashioned phone call to which a visual channel has been added. In contrast, sitting alone in your bedroom consuming a bottomless feed of other people’s content, or playing endless hours of video games with a shifting cast of friends and strangers, or posting your own content and waiting for other kids (or strangers) to like or comment is so far from what children need that these activities should not be considered healthy new forms of adolescent interaction; they are alternatives that consume so much time that they reduce the amount of time teens spend together.”

Haidt considers the Great Re-wiring of children’s and teens brains has devastated the social lives of Gen Z — mid to late 1990s to early 2010 — by connecting to everyone in the world and disconnecting them from the people around them. A Canadian college student wrote to him: “Gen Z are an incredibly isolated group of people. We have shallow friendships and superfluous relationships that are dictated and governed to a large degree by social media . . . There is hardly a sense of community on campus and it’s not hard to see. Often I’ll arrive early to a lecture to find a room of 30+ students sitting together in complete silence, absorbed in their smartphones, afraid to speak and be heard by their peers. This leads to further isolation and a weakening of self identity and confidence, something I know because I’ve experienced it firsthand.”

**On self harm:** Haidt finds little difference between the US and Canada of teenagers self-harming, and much the same in the UK which has a slightly different culture, including other Anglosphere lands — this dramatic rise of self-harming of girls which began around 2010 and reached a peak in 2013. Haidt shows four reasons why girls are more vulnerable than boys and gives lengthy interpretations concerning this, including how girls more easily share emotions and disorders. Haidt clearly shows how the





introduction of sharing platforms such as Instagram and Snapchat were primary factors toward the sudden rise all over the world in girls' depression and other social disorders at that time period.

Jonathan Haidt is open to any thoughts on this crisis that envelops us. He doesn't set out to make himself the utmost guru who ever existed. The man is humble, admits the mistakes he has made over the years, and reveals that he didn't deliberately set out to write this book. What he did set out to write was a book about how social media was damaging American democracy. And his plan was to begin with a chapter on the impact of social media on Generation Z. "But when I finished writing that 1st chapter—which became chapter one of this book—I realized that the adolescent mental health story was so much bigger than I had thought . . . And it wasn't just about social media. It was the radical transformation of childhood into something inhuman: a phone-based existence."

\*Haidt's four points for returning to normal life are:-

1. *No smartphones before high school.* Parents should delay children's entry into round-the-clock internet access by giving only basic phones (phones with limited apps and no internet browser) before ninth grade (roughly age 14).

2. *No social media before 16.* Let kids get through the most vulnerable period of brain development before connecting them to a firehose of social comparison and algorithmically chosen influencers.

3. *Phone-free schools.* In all schools elementary through high school, students should store their phones, smartwatches, and any other personal devices that can send and receive texts in phone lockers or locked pouches during the school day. That is the only way to free up their attention for each other and for their teachers.

4. *Far more unsupervised play and childhood independence.* That's the way children naturally develop social skills, overcome anxiety, and become self-governing young adults.

**Buy the book. It will change your perception of smart phones & social media and perhaps save a life that is close to you. Stand up. Speak up.**

*The Anxious Generation* by Jonathan Haidt

Allen Lane large paperback 385pp

\$AUS 36.99



kids **helpline**

Anytime Any Reason

Kids Helpline is a free, confidential, 24/7 online and phone counselling service for young people with concerns about relationships, family problems, sexual identity, depression and anxiety, loneliness, problems at school or work, drug and alcohol problems, self harm, bullying and e-safety including sexting concerns.

Kids Helpline also offers services to parents/carers and schools and teachers.

**Call them on 1800 551 800 to access their phone.**

## The Council to Homeless Persons

Established in 1972, the Council to Homeless Persons is the peak Victorian body representing individuals and organisations with a stake or interest in homelessness. Our mission is to work towards ending homelessness through leadership in policy, advocacy and sector development.

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# What we have become

A companion book to *The Anxious Generation*

**Hugh Mackay is Australia's most respected social psychologist with 22 books to his name. With over 60 years of learning and achieving behind him, he is in the forefront of actions that probe and dissect the Australian way of life, and where—in certain instances—it has gone wrong.**

Mackay feels deeply that our society needs healing, but where to start? He knows and shows that Covid 19 is not to blame for our waywardness. The rot had set in before that.

Before Covid “we were becoming a rather troubled, wounded society: more lonely, more anxious, more depressed than ever; more medicated; more sleep deprived; more gambling addicted; more economically divided. In many ways we seemed less sure of ourselves—still fighting old battles over ethnicity, gender, religion and politics, becoming more aggressively individualistic, and placing ever-stricter boundaries around ‘acceptable’ attitudes and values, while seeming powerless to address such relatively simple problems as homelessness and poverty . . . It’s tempting to resort to hand-wringing over many of those failures, shortcomings and disappointments. And yet . . . look around you. All over Australia, every day, people are performing acts of kindness for friends, neighbours and total strangers; making sacrifices—large and small—for the common good; quietly finding ways of helping to make the world a better place. *In general* people mean well. *In general*, we understand our obligation to contribute to social harmony.” *The Way We Are* pp2-4.

In looking for solutions to our malaise, Mackay informs that this is not a time to be reckless, nor is it a time to be too assertive about ‘Me’, but to seek a spirit of greater kindness and respect for each other. Quite early in his book he lays down three effects that we might have predicted.

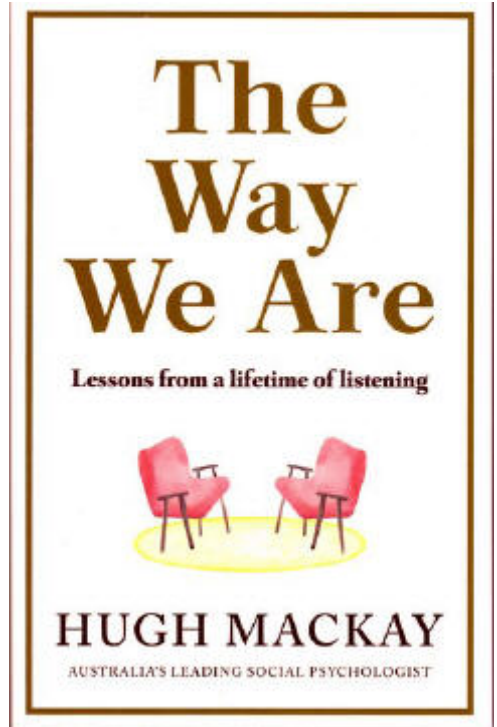
**1. A more narcissistic culture:** “Witness the declining number of people volunteering to do community service. Witness our shrinking political parties, churches, trade unions and service clubs. Witness the rise of so-called ‘identity politics’ where the emphasis is on the wants and needs of specific subgroups, based on their ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, religion of other cultural markers, rather than the needs of society as a whole . . . Witness, above all, the growing emphasis on *personal identity* that has led to an almost obsessive concern Me—how I’m *different*, how I’m *unique*, how I’m *special*. As Anne Manne pointed out in *The Life of I*, the pursuit of fame and our obsession with ‘making it’ in a highly competitive society can also be seen as symptoms of our creeping narcissism. Social media—often used to burnish the image of Brand Me—has become a rich source of fuel for our Me-obsession.”

**2. A more competitive ethos?** “That’s really a by-product of the Me-centred culture. If I Rate my identity, my needs, my desires ahead of my sense of myself as a *member* of this family, this neighbourhood, this community, this species, then I will naturally see everyone else in competitive terms. After all, they want the same things I want, so we have to compete for the prize, whatever it may be: money, status, power, or simply a bigger share of whatever pie is on offer. Some of us will even resort to a grotesque appropriation of Darwinism and excuse our antisocial behaviour as just another example of the ‘survival of the fittest’: ‘You win or you lose, and I’m going to win.’ ”

**3. Social isolation has become our number-one public health issue:** “We are now experiencing loneliness, anxiety and depression in epidemic proportions . . . In Australia we are well aware of the health consequences of obesity, including a greater risk of type 2 diabetes and cardiovascular disease. Bad news for the individuals concerned; bad news for the public health system. [But] consider social isolation as a *greater* threat to public health than that, and you get the point . . . we now recognise social isolation as a risk factor for a variety of diseases: anxiety, depression, hypertension, inflammation, sleep deprivation and vulnerability to addiction, to say nothing of a lower life expectancy.” *The Way We Are* pp32-39.

All that is but the early stages of Mackay’s book. He will go on elaborating and explaining the reasons of how we got where we are, exploring much of the fake wisdom we are subjected to daily; recent gender issues, how poverty is everyone’s problem, why we worship many gods, and the boomer’s legacy.

Yes, he has much to say about the Baby Boomers 1946-1961, how they became the highest birth rate since 1921, how they were ‘protected’ from the effects of the Great Depression; how they became our most highly educated generation, how they loved and married in an era of almost unbelievable material welfare. How they travelled as no Australians before





them, how they embraced social change. But then, together with those benefits came instant gratification, a certain impatience in the goal to 'have it all'. *All you need is love* was the theme song, "which often turned out not to be quite true."

"Now in their sixties and seventies, many of them have been gripped by nostalgia for the simpler, more innocent days of yore, but that's hardly unique to them: we're all drawn from time to time, to reflect on the years when the future seemed full of promise—especially if some of that promise was not fulfilled."

Mackay reckons that the boomers redefined marriage as a relationship, not as an institution, and briefly held the record for the most-divorced generation in our history. Boomers philosophy, according to Mackay is "we're not here for a long time; we're here for a good time."

*The Way We Are* pp210-212: On boomers. "While they typically believed they were more enlightened than their own parents had been, the long view from their later years created some doubt about that. Many wished they had tempered their tendency to permissiveness with a little more discipline . . . Some now wonder whether their parenting style was too much about administration—organising enough activities to keep the kids occupied, and then racing around taking them to and from everything, rather than spending quiet time simply 'hanging about' as a family"

Mackay spends some time analysing boomers, probably because they are the generation that has 'had it all' in the beginning. They never suffered from the horrors of a war that engulfed their parents and in general food and clothing was always there—they ate well, they dressed well. They never lacked from entertainment and mobility; where their parents in earlier days got around travelling by public transport, the boomers always had their car, panel van, kombi, or ute. And boomers, Mackay writes, redefined busyness as a virtue. They also redefined retirement as 'a fresh start'. But boomers also showed us how to rebel. Mackay reckons that the greatest legacy of boomers is "that the world can be at least partly reshaped to suit yourself, that life can be lived on your own terms, that conventions are there to be questioned and can be overturned, and that the shock of the new is good for us." Boomers, considers Mackay, is the last generation to attend Sunday School in large numbers. It kind of rhymes with Frank Sinatra's song "I did it my way."

Mackay finalises his boomer section with a word on 'The impatience of Boomer prime ministers: Kevin Rudd, Julia Gillard, Tony Abbot and Malcolm Turnbull.' Scott Morrison was not included because he was born in 1968. But you will have to buy the book if you wish for these insightful glimpses into the impatient lives of Australia's boomer prime ministers.

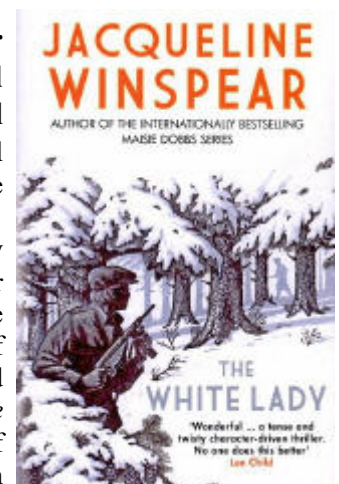
The final chapters of Mackay's book offer antidotes to all our erring ways, none the least being the ability to listen under the heading of 'It's time to hone our listening skills,' a very apt and much needed terminology because most times we don't listen. Why? Because it's all about Me. •

**A companion book to *The Anxious Generation*  
*The Way We Are* by Hugh Mackay  
Paperback 358 pp \$AUS34.99  
Our copy The Avenue Bookstore**

## Jacqueline Winspear novelist:

**Jacqueline Winspear was born in Kent, United Kingdom 1955. After a career in academic publishing and marketing she began to write mystery novels based on intriguing characters during and after World War 1. Her most successful psychological thrillers have been her Maisie Dobbs series.** Mainly set in rural England, though often with excursions to the Continent, these Dobbs detective novels explore deeply into the hidden ramifications of dark forces within humanity.

The unexpected is where Winspear comes from. You turn a page and suddenly you say to yourself "I didn't see that coming!" Such is the expertise of Winspear, who has a particular insight into the human mind. You cannot wait to turn the page and continue to read far into the night because Winspear keeps you alert until the very last page. Her characters are alive, full of strange secrets and unusual effects. Maisie Dobbs is the young World War 1 nurse turned detective, who takes on the most difficult and unusual cases. Winspear's latest novel *The White Lady*, though not being part of the Dobbs series, is mind gripping. The white lady, a veteran of two world wars working in the hush hush environment of British intelligence, finds herself in retirement in the English countryside, but it is a retirement that will not let her go, with one of London's most dangerous crime families becoming involved in her peaceful retirement. ***The White Lady* Allison & Busby Ltd., London, large paperback.**





# The patriarchal system must go

## The patriarchal system must go

**At its very worst, it is overwhelmingly present in countries such as Afghanistan, Iran, Palestine, various other Middle Eastern countries, certain Asian countries, and it lingers like a smelly rat in some European and other Western countries.**

It is consistent with male dominance in commerce, law, medicine, politics, and to a lesser extent in the 21st Century, the Western military. Bus drivers are generally male, but why, when there are numerous instances of females driving heavy vehicles in mining and other industries. Women have an increasing percentage with driving trains and trams, so is there a patriarchal system still in place that blinds — stating that it's okay for females to drive on fixed rails so they cannot wander, but you wouldn't trust them to be in charge of a large moving vehicle on busy highways? And it is accepted that male chefs dominate the hospitality industry, suspiciously so for reasons that are connected to patriarchy: long working hours, being in charge of mainly male cooks and other male staff, particularly in working with a male manager's certain point of view.

When Simone de Beauvoir's book *The Second Sex* was published in 1949, the world was still reeling from the effects of a male-generated world war and the male gender was still very much the dominant one in society. De Beauvoir pointed out that in certain early societies there were instances of an attempt to bring women's rights closer to that of men, but that it did not last. *The Second Sex* pp82-83: "The pre-Islamic Bedouin women had a much higher status accorded to them than that in the Koran. The great figures of Niobe and Medea evoke an era when mothers, considering children to be their own property, took pride in them. And in the Homeric poems, Andromache and Hecuba have an importance that classic Greece no longer granted to women hidden in the shadows of the gynaeceum."

Ownership. In Victorian times it was women and children who were virtually owned by the dominant male in the household of Western society, whether that was in Europe, Great Britain, the USA or Australia. The law stated so. All women's property after marriage — apart very minor exceptional circumstances — was the property of the husband. The remnants of that society still linger in the 21st Century. Numerous males still consider that the female is their property. Religions of old have often been patriarchal and this flows onto those of today such as Jehovah's Witnesses and The Exclusive Brethren. Most other religions, including some Pentecostal groups, also have a gender gap in which male leadership dominates and that is mostly because their good book tells them so — the good book written by men, mainly for the enhancement of men.

On marriage. As recently as 2011 the Anglican or Episcopalian priest, Rev'd Jonathan Michican — chaplain and Theology Department Chair at St. John XXIII College Preparatory in Katy, Texas — wrote in his blog *The Conciliar Anglican*: "While the man is asked to love, comfort, and honor his wife, the woman is asked additionally to obey and serve her husband." It seems that this priest is still back in 1662 when the Book of Common Order was first authorised. Patriarchy still exists. In some societies, it's the old story — girls are valued as wives, but not as individuals. Some Middle Eastern, African and Asian countries employ the dictum that a female is not to leave the house unless she has a male family member with her, and a lesser restriction in some Islamic countries is that the female may travel for three days without the companion by her side. However, it will depend on the country, because some Islamic regimes do allow females to go out by themselves. These restrictions generally come from later Islamic writings such as Hadiths and not directly from the Koran. •

### Further reading:

[The Woman they could not Silence. CEW140 on this site, page 6.](#)

<https://ing.org/the-case-against-patriarchy-in-islam-fitra-viceregency-and-universal-principles/>

<https://sangatnetwork.org/2019/07/29/how-deep-are-the-roots-of-patriarchy/>

<https://www.ucl.ac.uk/news/2022/sep/analysis-how-did-patriarchy-start-and-will-evolution-get-rid-it>

*The Patriarchs: How men came to rule*, by science journalist Angela Saini

Angela Saini presents science programmes on BBC Radio 4 and the World Service.  
Angela has a Masters in Engineering from Oxford University.

ANGELA SAINI



THE  
PATRIARCHS  
HOW MEN CAME TO RULE



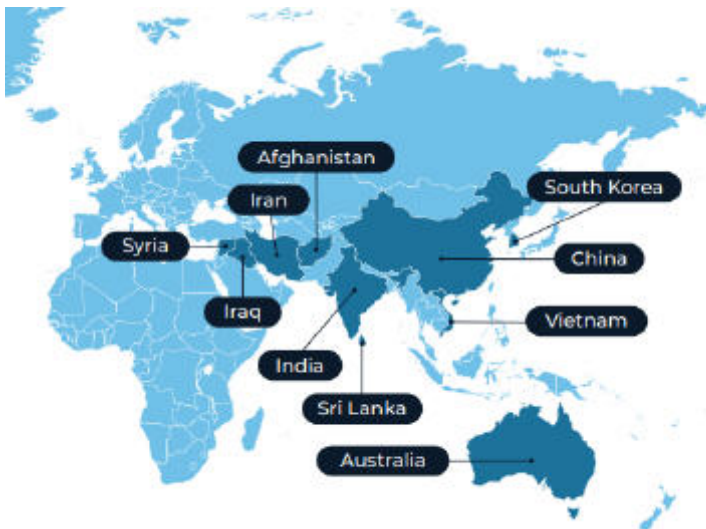


## One in three Migrant and Refugee women suffer family violence

A Monash University research study conducted through the university's Migration and Inclusion Centre, together with Harmony Alliance, has revealed one in three migrant refugee women suffer from family violence. The report, tabled in 2021, and taken from a snapshot of 1,400 women, reveals a shocking incidence of violence by a partner or former partner with perpetrators also from the extended family, together with in-laws. 91% of the respondents experienced controlling behaviour.

Researchers found that not only was violence used but often there was financial abuse and although many participants considered their religion was important to them during their daily life, very few consulted a religious leader, which perhaps points to misogynist attitudes prevailing within their religion.

On harm or abuse, 34% reported that it mainly came from a family member, while 23% stated that it came from an in-law. 91% suffered from controlling behaviour and 42% had experienced physical or sexual violence. Nearly 40% of the migrant and refugee women believed "their victimisation as a result of theft, burglary, threatening behaviour or property damage was motivated by bias and/or prejudice. Those who reported bias-motivated victimisation were more likely to live in areas characterised by greater advantage, to be aged between 30 and 44, to have been born in North Africa and the Middle East or South-East Asia, and to



### Top 10 countries of birth

*Credit Monash University*

to family money within a business. Not giving access to other monies because you are a housewife.

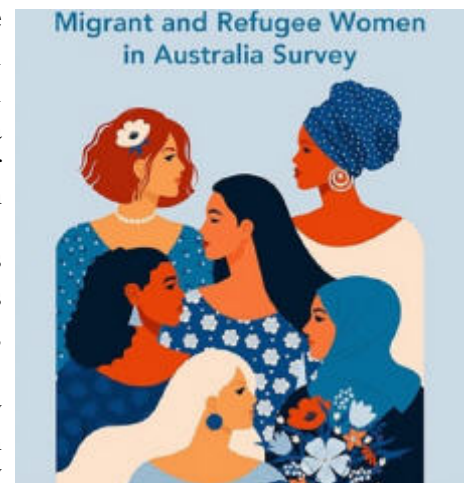
Among the reasons given for not disclosing domestic family violence were: Private/personal/family matter, which was the highest reported, followed by the fear it would make things worse. Among those who reported hate or bias-motivated crime against them, the highest percentage of birth countries were those who came from North Africa and the Middle East, followed by South-East Asia and Southern & Central Asia. The lowest with 5% were born in Oceania e.g.. Australia, New Zealand, Pacific Islands.

The research covered attitudes to and from police and government, how likely was one to trust religious leaders, employment and employer discrimination, experiences during Covid 19, sources of income, hardship, and is one of the few studies on DSV that has been undertaken internationally. The complete research findings may be downloaded from:

[https://bridges.monash.edu/articles/report/\\_/14863872](https://bridges.monash.edu/articles/report/_/14863872)

**For help with domestic violence  
go to**

<https://www.whiteribbon.org.au/helplines/>



*Picture courtesy Monash University*

be of either Christian or Muslim faith."

Almost 98% of respondents were born overseas, while only 34 of the women were born in Australia and almost half had been in Australia for 10 years. The place of birth spanned 125 countries, but the highest immigration was from Iran, South Korea and India. 42% spoke English extremely well. The State of Victoria recorded the highest abuse at 42% of the 1,400, with New South Wales following at 28%.

The highest age-group suffering from domestic violence was 30-44 year-olds, with 45-64 second, 18-29 third, and the lowest with 5% was 65 and over.

Controlling behaviour was high on the list of abuse. Many threats of coercion were used by partners or other family members, which included: Threats to limit your contact with family or friends; threats to put you down to make you feel bad, threats to withdraw sponsorship, threats to have you deported, threats regarding your children, threats to prevent other family members from obtaining visas to come to Australia.

Other controls were: Demanding money or assets—dowry price, bride price etc. Being told you have to pay back costs relating to immigration. Limiting your access



# The Big Issue

**The Big Issue No. 711 is now on sale with feature article on Amy Winehouse. Isabella McCrae's three-page article begins with a foreword: "Amy Winehouse's battle with addiction claimed her life.** Now, a charity in the musician's name is making sure young women struggling with substance abuse don't fall through the cracks. But McCrae then gets into the nitty gritty with the story: "Katya avoids thinking about Amy Winehouse. It takes her to a dark place. She is 27, the same age Amy was when she died of alcohol poisoning in 2011 after a long and public battle with addiction. There is so much tragedy in the story that Katya, whose name has been changed to protect her identity, finds it too painful. But on her own journey to recovery from addiction, she has found hope and friendship in the sanctuary set up in Amy Winehouse's name."

**The Amy Winehouse Foundation—Based in East London—was set up in 2011.** The story of Katya's recovery at Amy's Place is written over three pages in this issue. It's been a hard struggle, but McCrae states that Katya is in a much better place now.



**Leslie Jamison's new book *Splinters* is reviewed by Mel Fulton—books editor,** which reveals memories about motherhood, divorce and an artistic project. Fulton reckons that Jamison doesn't hold anything back in *Splinters*, it's the whole hog. Jamison is searching for great art as it applies to daily life, daily traumas. "With her baby strapped to her chest, she spends hours holed up in galleries and museums contemplating the work of other parenting artists." *Splinters* is now in most good bookshops, capturing the grief of a marriage breakdown with caring for a baby, while hope is out there.

**Peter Whelan has a three-page article —Force of Nature—with stunning photographs by Ciril Jazbec** about the timeless splendour of Bhutan's 'primeval forests and glacial mountains' and their uncertain future. Adrian Lobb finds the rebellious lead singer Bruce Dickinson packed off to boarding school at 16, being bullied, being unconventional, jumping into any relationship he can find. Sarah Smith—former music editor with the *Big Issue*—takes a look at Amy Winehouse's glory days and reminisces about Amy's pitch perfect, soulful ballads. It's a *Big Issue* packed full with fascinating stories. There is also a short note on page seven about a wheelchair-bound *Big Issue* vendor who saved up \$50 each week to go on a cruise in the *Queen Victoria*. It took him three years to save for the fare. And he's off to Bhutan! What courage! What stamina, what dedication for a disabled person! Dreams can be made possible.



*The Big Issue*

SAUS9.00 from your street vendor

Or go to [thebigissue.org.au](http://thebigissue.org.au)

## A Day in the life of Melbourne's public transport system

With apologies to Punch

"Everybody orf. There's another demo 'ere by the great unwashed."





## Simple rules for Ageing well

It's well-written, it's straight forward and it's simple. This book is chock full of hints for anyone attempting to slow down the ageing process. And because this book is American there is no 'e' in Aging, but we'll use the good old Oxford English version—Ageing.

The co-writers Dr. Frank Lipman and Danielle Caro as an afterword write: "Many of the core practices in this book have been known in different cultures for centuries. We didn't make up this stuff or discover it, but we're glad to be able to help people to get back to it . . . We want to acknowledge and thank ancient medicine for it's common sense brilliance and offer a nod to modern science for rekindling respect for the simple intuitive practices of healthy ageing."

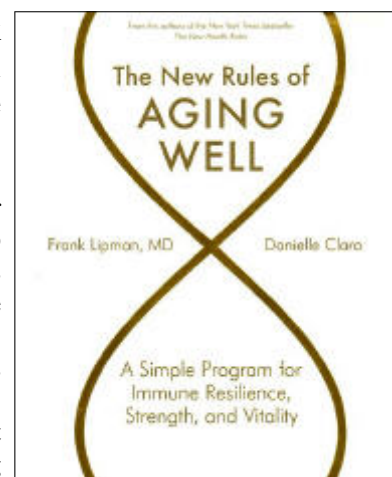
The book is divided into seven sections: 1. The Essentials. 2. Easy Adds. 3. Focus on Food. 4. Fitness & Rest. 5. Deeper Wellness. 6. Everyday Habits. 7. Inner Health.

In Essentials "the biggest factor in health ageing is simply eating less. After about age 45 your body just doesn't need as many calories as it once did—it's not building anymore; it's protecting and preserving. This requires less fuel." Coffee with caffeine? Cut it off at 2.00 p.m. at the latest. Fasting? Good idea now and then 12-16 hours without food, but lots of water. Sugar? Cut it out and tone down alcohol consumption.

Things to improve your sleep: Less light in the bedroom, though white light as in bedroom reading light before you sleep, will help you to fall asleep faster. But no ipads, laptops or smartphones—the 'blue' light emitted from screens interferes with sleep. Don't sleep in an overheated room. Cut out late bedtime snacks, they interfere with sleep and also lead to weight-gain. The authors are keen on extracts of medicinal mushrooms, such as lion's mane, reishi and chaga which contain high quantities of anti-oxidants such as ergothioneine and glutathione which are known to help prevent Alzheimer's and Parkinson's. Sunshine? You need it daily if you can, not only for Vit.D but to keep your circadian rhythms balanced. Pages 63-65 are full of hints about relaxing your brain and preparing for bed. Stretching on a regular basis is advised

The food section runs from page 75 to 119, chock full of sound culinary advice. Under the heading of 'A bad stomach isn't something to accept', the authors advise trying an elimination diet, taking bitters or apple cider vinegar before meals, trying antimicrobial herbal supplements and getting tested for a 'leaky gut'.

Further chapters are Fitness and Rest, trying out new habits, Inner Wellness, and if you can, having an animal around you. "Relax like a cat, play like a dog."



*The New Rules of Aging Well*  
Glossy hardback A5 size  
Various prices \$AUS32.00-45.00

## A DAY IN THE LIFE OF THE VICTORIAN LABOR PARTY

With apologies to Punch



**1st Minister:** "Y'know, that Big Build debt of ours has put us in a bit of a tight spot with the voters. I'm gettin' a rather sinkin' feeling."

**2nd Minister:** "Yairs well, we's gunna take every parliamentarian's pension off 'em to prop up the ambo's, the police, an' the fire'es, seeing we ain't got no money left for those critical services that are fallin' short."

**3rd Minister.** "Nup. Yer off the planet there. Just let it ride. Do what we always do—let the voters' grand-kids pay it off. No worries mate."

## Wire

### Women's Information Referral Exchange

One in three calls WIRE receives from women are related to family violence. Wire: 372 Spencer Street, West Melbourne 3003. Telephone Support Service Line 1300 134 130 Mon-Fri 9.00-5.00. <http://www.wire.org.au/>

## MS Australia

### Multiple Sclerosis needs your help

Log in for the latest news at:

<http://www.msaustralia.org.au/>



# The 'Debt' that took people's lives

**It was called Robodebt, not dissimilar to the United Kingdom's Post Office pay-back scandal that took people's lives. This was an Australian government welfare hunt that unlawfully fingered thousands of people and was associated with three suicides. Pay us back, this government agency said!**

The Post Office scandal in the UK only took two people's lives, but both were instances of government and justice systems over-reach without comeback, and the mind boggles to try to understand how these systems could have allowed this to occur in a democracy. The Australian Robodebt was set to involve 470,000 Centrelink pensioners/disability folks and others connected to that government agency. Overpaid, they said, so you will have to pay it back. And the payback sums for certain people were enormous: in some instances said to have been required to pay back up to \$56,000. This was a social security system gone mad. The impact on mental health was staggering — many people went through unnecessary trauma as they tried to figure a way to pay back this supposed over-payment of pensions. Robodebt even required payment from a deceased person and Centrelink admitted that they had refunded to a deceased estate almost \$10,000.

This situation occurred under the previous Coalition governments of prime ministers Tony Abbott, Malcolm Turnbull and Scott Morrison. Someone should have been watching, but no one was. As a result, excessive hardship was forced on numerous people. Where was the pay-back money to come from? Folk who had been scraping along on the breadline, living off a pension, were suddenly faced with paying back money they did not have. This had to be the worst bungle of any government agency since the beginning of government in Australia. Years after the Robodebt occurrence 2016-2019 there are citizens who still feel much anxiety whenever Robodebt is mentioned. After a government inquiry in 2022, the department was required to refund any monies paid back. The upshot of all this is that government agencies need to be checked by Ombudsmans every year without fail, •

## Unprepared for war

**Australia has 11 warships and the present government by late 2023 intended to increase that to 26 by the mid-to-late 2040s, approximately 20 years from now.**

In June 1945 at the end of WWII Australia had 74 warships, together with supply and movement vessels which totalled in excess of 100 vessels, not to mention an extra 33 motor launches, and 75 auxiliary patrol boats. It seems a bit dodgy by the Defence Minister, Richard Marles, to state that this upgrade is the largest since WWII, a delicate insinuation at the very least considering that most of this flotilla was still around after the war. That was Marles's statement earlier in 2023. Since then, having been forced to face a certain reality, Marles has — would you believe it — come out and labeled China as a potential aggressor and upped defence spending. Was he shaking in his boots, or what? As a result, Marles has increased defence spending by \$50 billion, which is on top of an earlier allocated \$72.8 billion. But the purchase of nuclear-powered (not nuclear-armed) submarines hikes up the cost, probably not due until approximately 2040, and has been estimated to cost about \$368 billion. The fact is that we need these silent submarines NOW. Is the Albanese government not aware of technological expertise already underway for satellites to detect underwater submarines? Would not half the money be better spent on more warships fitted with ballistic missiles and iron-dome protection capabilities, together with multiple land-based medium-to-long range missile sites to protect our north-west and north-east frontiers? It is abundantly clear by now that the Pacific ocean is being infiltrated by a nation that doesn't take kindly to opposition.

To put things into perspective—excepting the nuclear-powered submarines—Australia's defence budget in recent times was usually about \$26 billion, compared to China's \$151 billion and the United Kingdom's excess of \$58 billion. Recent wars have shown that we need to be prepared — that dictators may pull the plug at any time, almost without warning. We were caught with our pants down at the start of WWII, but recovered quickly with the help of America and Britain. Allied countries were again caught with their pants down in 1950 when Kim Il Sung of North Korea gained approval from Russia's Joseph Stalin and China's Mao Zedong to invade South Korea. Communist buddies stick together, or perhaps you didn't know that?

Before WWII Australia had considerable facilities in place during peacetime with numerous factories churning out vehicles, farm equipment, heavy metal industrial items, electrical engineering manufacturers, which could quickly be turned into making armaments, ships, planes, tanks, anti-aircraft weapons. In 2024 we no longer have most of these manufacturing plants. We rely on products from overseas and if our shipping lanes were ever cut off, it would be a disaster for this country. Oil is another necessary item, mostly sourced from overseas. Without petrol, diesel oil and jet fuel, our navy, army and air force cannot function. Our reserves were, at the most only 24 days, which has recently been upgraded to between 27-32 Days.

Putin's special invasion of Ukraine has been going on for two years and three months since February 2022. How long would a pacific war last if such were to occur? •



# When good people do bad things

**The blame for apparently good people doing bad things is often laid at the feet of peer pressure, social conditioning, or ideology.**

But that is not always the case. When I was in primary school, possibly about eight or nine years old, one day a school friend of mine who shall be named as V, and who was an attentive student and never seemed to get up to bad things, suddenly produced a sheet of newspaper from under his jumper, then a box of matches from his pocket and proceeded to light the newspaper against the back fence of someone's property. What my feelings were at the time, I have no idea, but fortunately the timber fence did not catch flame and the incident was forgotten.

So, what induced this good person to attempt to burn down someone's fence? As an only son, he certainly was not spoiled, in fact it was somewhat the reverse. His father kept him on a fairly tight 'leash'. There was a certain code of strictness that was meant to keep the child in line, and I've often wondered if that was the problem. Had that parent gone too far at times so that the child 'couldn't do this, couldn't do that?' All the signs were that this was an average middle-class working family no different from others in the street — peaceful, law-abiding, wanting only the best for their children.

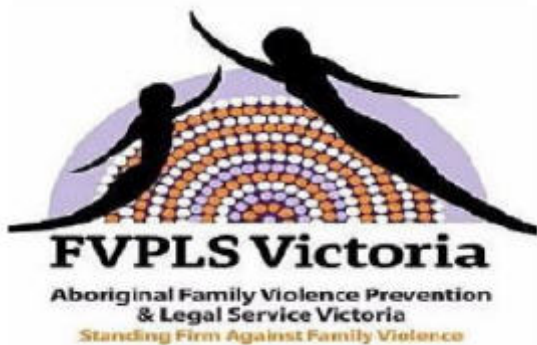
V's school marks were excellent and there was no messing about at school, no disruptions during class, but now and then some clues arose. V wasn't what you would call a class bully, but sometimes there would arise a need to pick on other children slightly smaller or thinner than V. No one would get substantially hurt from this; it was light teasing, sitting on top of the others, holding them down, very rarely any punching stuff. Some might say this was normal male childhood growing-up stuff, but no, there was an undercurrent of something more, something deeper. Why was V acting like this when his other close school-mates were not? But V didn't grow up to be a sociopath or psychopath. In fact during his teenage and young adult life, V enjoyed what appeared to be a 'normal' life with friends and those he loved. Eventually, he married to a fairly vivacious and to all appearances a caring young lady. In our mid to late twenty's we had drifted apart — gone our own separate ways — but every once in while there was contact. The last time I saw V was around 1968 at his place of business and it wasn't all that long after that when he took his own life, which had a devastating effect on his family. No warning, no signs of anything amiss.

And I know that it wasn't his business life or work-place and perhaps even his marriage that killed V. It was something else that hailed back to his childhood — something that had ill prepared him for life in a rocky and often turbulent world. V wasn't what you would have called a larrikin in the old days, nor was he non-attentive to other's needs, as his work-place friends would attest. In society's view, V was a good person.

It is tempting to see the world as black and white, but that is not how it is, The world and the people within it are multiple shades of grey and each individual person is surrounded by other persons of differing shades of grey; each, having grown from childhood with a unique picture of the world around them. Until, that is, something clicks from their past which ignites a fuse that has been waiting so long.

You will know someone to whom you thought you were close to, who has done something to your dismay. You find it difficult to understand why this has occurred. It is almost beyond your belief. Somehow, there has been a turning point in that person's life that has allowed this to happen, and it may well be a memory triggered from way back in the past that has evoked this odd happening. It's not the end of the world. Good people are sometimes stretched beyond their limits by outside forces and are battling demons within. •

## FVPLS is now Djirra



**Preventing and addressing family violence is at the core of Djirra's work. All our programs support Aboriginal women's journey to safety and wellbeing. Our programs are trusted, rich in culture, trauma informed, and promote the important work of Djirra, including by offering safe, alternative ways for women to learn about and access family violence and legal supports. <https://djirra.org.au> [info@djirra.org.au](mailto:info@djirra.org.au) Free call: 1800 105 303**

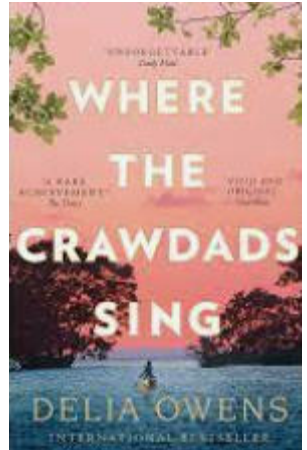


# Where the Crawdads sing

**It is one of the most brilliant novels of recent times. But turning it into a two hour TV programme didn't quite work. Oh, the acting was fine, the scenario fitting, the scenes were, well . . . very satisfying.** But sorry, you simply cannot take a 384 page book of such high quality and turn it into a one-off TV presentation. It would have been better for the producers to have turned it into a four part series.

The book by Delia Owens is a remarkable rendition of a girl living in a swamp land, so close to nature, and then using that nature to draw and write books on botany, ornithology and zoology; at the same living in poverty with a fractured family and finding herself entrapped within romantic liaisons.

The origins of the film would appear to have been blessed by the producer, Reese Witherspoon, who gave Taylor Swift the opportunity to write and sing the theme song. But as Christy Lemire points out in her review of 15 July 2022, the film is tepid and restrained, "the characters never evolve beyond a trait or two." The scenes are brilliant, the atmosphere real, filmed on the coast of Louisiana with sensitive 'cinematography'. But all told, the one-off production is a flop. Read the book and have an enjoyable experience in the quietness of your home. •



## Tesla hypocrisy?

**Why would Tesla build an electric car that has a top speed of 200 mph (321 kph)?** Yes, admittedly, there are petrol cars on the roads that will reach those speeds, but in this age of accident speed reduction, safety, and prevention of climate change, surely it's not on for an innovative car manufacturer to be that irresponsible?

But Tesla has done it and prides itself on this. The Tesla model S Plaid is stated by Tesla to reach the quoted speed, however *Car and Driver* states that even if it could, you wouldn't want that, because the car would be so unstable as to crash. C&D did a test run and really couldn't reach more than 162 mph (260 kph).

<https://www.caranddriver.com/reviews/a38423992/2021-tesla-model-s-plaid-by-the-numbers/>

"Given how unsettling the Plaid is to pilot at that speed, however, you wouldn't want to do 200 mph even if it could. Because it gets up to speed so quickly, we could simply lift off and coast rather than slam on the brakes. But that gave us a lot of time to ponder the Model S's high-speed behaviour, which, frankly, was terrifying. It wanders in its lane, with lots of slop on center in the steering that doesn't have anything to do with the yoke. Putting it in the sport steering setting helped a little, but it's like Tesla neglected to dial in its high-speed steering and handling behaviour. This is not what you want when traveling two-thirds the distance of a football field every second. Tick. Tick. Every other car that's in the same conversation—from the Porsche Taycan to the Bugatti Chiron—is unerring and locked on its lane at 150-plus mph."



However, other S Plaid model tests on *Youtube* indicate that the car has no problems with stability on a track at high speeds. Perhaps it all comes down to the fact that not enough tests have been carried out by independent authorities. Even so, surely it is irresponsible for Tesla to manufacture such a speed car to be placed on our often unreliable Australian country roads? Another concern is that the tyres are not safety rated above 163 mph (262 kph). •

## Tyres causing more pollution than exhausts!

There's no such thing as a climate free vehicle. All tyres on the roads cause far more pollution than do vehicle exhausts with tyre 'dust' emissions from electric vehicles 20% higher than fossil-fuel vehicles. Yale University studies indicate that each year 200,000 tons of particles from tyres end up polluting the world's oceans. This is due to more efficient methods of analysing pollutants. In the recent past these emissions could not be detected, resulting in governments not regulating. The problem, according to the CEO of Emissions Analytics, Nick Molden, is that not only are rubber particles the cause, but also various chemical compounds manufactured into the tyres. "You've got a chemical cocktail in these tires that no one really understands and is kept highly confidential by the tyre manufacturers." And not only tyres, but also brake dust particles. Recent studies about brake dust have revealed that it is more potent than diesel fumes. Governments need to act NOW. •



## The Animal Rehoming Service

For further information,  
please log onto

<http://www.tars.org.au/>

The Animal Rehoming  
Service Inc. is a  
registered charity.

Donations over \$2 are tax  
deductible. (ABN: 51 275  
837 567)



### Update: Loki's still looking for a loving home!

**Loki is a nearly 2 year old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 27kg male Tri Colour Harrier x, who's looking for a loving home.**



He's a very cuddly and sweet-natured boy who'd love to be a treasured member of the family. He'd suit an-all adult home or one with older, dog-savvy children.

Loki's also a playful and active boy who loves his daily walks or playing at the local park with his doggy friends, both big and small.

Loki would love a home with another playful dog for company.

He's not good with cats. He enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. He also enjoys using his crate.

Loki's adoption fee is \$300. Microchip Number: 956000014821343. Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Craigieburn based, but we go to you).

### # Update: Aaru's still looking for a loving home!

**Aaru is a 2 year old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 8.5kg male Japanese Spitz, who's looking for a loving home.** A family with another Spitz would be a bonus!

He's a very affectionate and sweet-natured boy who would thrive as a treasured member of the family. He'd suit an all adult home or one with dog savvy teenagers.

Aaru's a playful and active boy, who loves his daily walks, playing fetch and doing zoomies in the park.

He's great with other friendly dogs and would suit a home with another similarly playful and friendly dog for company. He's not been tested with cats. He enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Regular grooming would also be required. Aaru's adoption fee is \$850. Microchip Number: 991003001044961. Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Carlton and Warburton based, but we go to you).



**We are now much loved in our new home and very grateful to TARS Inc. Such a new lease of life!**

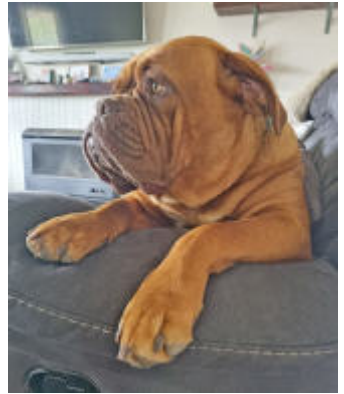


Lottie is a 3 year old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 45kg female Dogue De Bordeaux (French Mastiff) who's looking for a loving home. Someone with large or giant breed experience is preferred.

She's an active girl who loves her daily walks and swims at the beach, but also enjoys laying out in the sun relaxing. She's a very loving, cuddly and sensitive girl who also doesn't mind a snuggle in bed.

Lottie would suit a calm, relaxed, all-adult home or one with dog savvy, gentle teenagers. She needs a bit of extra time to warm up to some people, especially those that are 'in her face' but is otherwise great.

She doesn't like dogs that rush at her either and would therefore need someone experienced, calm and confident to continue with her training. In the home, she'd be fine with a gentle, desexed male dog who's happy to have her as the top dog. She's also been great with the cat she's lived with, but would need to be introduced slowly to other cats. She enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Lottie's adoption fee is \$550. Microchip Number: 953010005566007. Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (**Geelong based, but we go to you**).



### Update: Audrey's still looking for a loving home!

**Audrey is a 20 month old, desexed, vaccinated, wormed and microchipped 27kg female Kelpie x possible Labrador, who's looking for a loving home.**

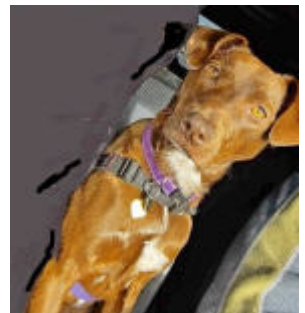
She's a playful and active girl who would suit an active family, happy to exercise her at least once daily, ideally twice. She'd suit an all adult home or one with older, dog savvy children.

Audrey's also a gentle, sweet-natured girl who would thrive in a calm, relaxed home as she's quite sensitive to yelling etc. (We suspect life may not have been great in her previous home).

She's a bit shy around other dogs but we think she'd enjoy a home with another friendly, active dog for company. She's not been tested with cats.

Audrey's had basic training and picks things up easily. She enjoys an indoor/ outdoor lifestyle, sleeping indoors. Audrey's adoption fee is \$450.

Microchip Number: 956000015896353. Pet Exchange Register Source Number: RE100709. If interested, please call Michaela on 0409213131 (Noble Park North based, but we go to you).



**OUR CHARTER IS:** To act as a contact and liaison point between people who want to re-home their animals and people who wish to adopt them.

To facilitate the provision of care and accommodation to genuinely homeless animals, by providing enriching foster homes, when available, whilst finding them suitable permanent homes. To provide veterinary care for homeless animals, if required, prior to placement in a suitable permanent home. All animals are desexed prior to Re-homing, to curb the exponential growth of unwanted animals in Victoria. When necessary, smaller vet expenses such as desexing and vaccinations are covered by the new owner, but larger vet fees are paid for via fundraising. To provide ongoing support and advice to those adopting, for the life of their new pet. •



# Pet medical crisis

from Jennifer Hunt

## Our Story:

Hello, my name is Jennifer Hunt, founder of "Pet Medical Crisis". In 2009, my Border Collie Jed was eight years old. He was playing with my 4 year old son, James, on the beach, when our world changed. While chasing seagulls, Jed ruptured several discs in his back. This started a series of major operations over three years, each costing many thousands of dollars.

We were so fortunate to be able to afford his treatment and keep Jed with us. Without funds, the only option for Jed would have been euthanasia.

This tragic experience inspired us to establish Pet Medical Crisis in 2010, supporting pensioners / disadvantaged owners to meet the high cost of veterinary care. Since then we have distributed over \$1,000,000 to assist hundreds of pensioners to help their emotional support pets with urgently needed veterinary care.

Jed relied on us to carry his back end in a special sling for 9 years. He passed away on 17 December 2018 after providing us with untold joy, unconditional love and inspiration.

## Our Purpose

Pet Medical Crisis ensure Australian Pensioners who are struggling financially have the opportunity to give their loved pet the best chance of survival when veterinary care is needed.

PMC empowers owners by providing their loved pet with veterinary care.

The charity raises funds to assist pensioners in necessitous circumstances / financial difficulties. We do this by assisting with the costs of medical intervention for their companion pets. The pet owner's inability to fund the care would otherwise result in unsustainable debt, death or significantly impact quality of life.

Our Motto: KEEPING PETS AND THEIR PEOPLE UNITED IN HEALTH \* 2010-current

Our hashtags: #savingpetstochangetheworld @petmedicalcrisis

**Any veterinary clinics in Victoria can apply for assistance.**

By recognising the inherent worth and contribution of pets to human well-being, Pet Medical Crisis prioritises the critical role of pet care in Australia's responsibility to protect our community. Caring for our beloved pets is a fundamental aspect of upholding our collective duty to support and safeguard our society's overall health and happiness. •



## Pet Medical Crisis

**A not for profit fund to save pets whose owners cannot afford their emergency care.**

[www.petmedicalcrisis.com.au](http://www.petmedicalcrisis.com.au)

**Email:** [petmedicalcrisis@gmail.com](mailto:petmedicalcrisis@gmail.com)

**PMC is now on Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/PetMedicalCrisis/>

**Also, a walking harness — 'Dog-A-Long' — is available to assist your dog to become more mobile — supports dogs with hind leg problems associated with ageing, arthritis, hip & spinal problems. For suitability check with your Vet.**

## A day in the Life of Australia's Vagabonds

Apologies to Punch

**First vagabond:** Aye mate, did'ya 'ere about Macquarie Bank an' Bankwest?

**Second vagabond:** Nah, wot's up?

**First vagabond:** Mad nutters, gunna stop tradin' in cash, mate, that's wot. All goin' digital. No notes, cheques, no coins anymore. Other banks followin' on sharp as, maybe.

**Second vagabond:** Struth! That's the end of handouts for us, mate.

**First vagabond:** No worries. I 'eard that our PM Albanese is gunna give all of us an iPad or Notebook thingo an a card reader to go wiv it See, we kin still git our donations.

**Second vagabond:** "Struth! But that's gunna cost millions! Hey, an' they forgot summit. Really forgot summit!

**First vagabond:** Wot's that, mate?

**Second vagabond:** Wen all those satellite thingo's crash down or burn up wiv wot they calls a gigantic solar flare, we're stuffed, well an' truly.

**First vagabond:** Geez mate, you orta be prime minister!







## Mercury O'Proud Political correspondent

**This could be your mother, aunt, grandmother, sister, except for the time and place. Domestic violence has taken a good and reasonable precedence recently with groups including some governments, fast-tracking that issue.**

But, what seems to have been of a lower priority is locking up so-called refugees of known violent behaviour. High Courts, both in Australia and New Zealand, have ruled that each government has been holding certain so-called refugee inmates illegally, and no matter how those governments scramble into making more laws to curb violent so-called refugees, the fact is that we have known criminals out and free, committing offences that most Australians and Kiwis would balk at. And some of these people are even on bail for offences committed after being released back into the community.

It's horrifying to observe that picture of Ninette Simons, when three men posing as police officers entered the Simons home, knocking Philip Simons to the floor and then cruelly bashing his wife, Ninette. The man who grievously assaulted Ninette is Majid Jamshidi Doukoshkan, a 43-year-old Kuwait-born 'national'. He was earlier detained together with 153 previously held immigration detainees, who have been released into the community by a High Court decision. The buck stops here with governments, which seemingly, cannot frame legitimate laws against criminal immigrants let out into society to roam free.

The Simons are not young folk who can recover from severe injuries quickly. Ninette is 73 and a cancer patient and her husband, Philip is 76. A home invasion such as this will leave them traumatised for the rest of their lives, and may well cause their lives to be shortened. People of Australia and New Zealand. You put these governments into power, now it is your time to stand up and protest as loud as you can.

The program Q&A or Q+A on the ABC network generally doesn't get many accolades from CEW, but on Monday 30th April it presented a long awaited questionnaire on domestic violence and the urgent need to add funds to refuge's and other organisations that set out to provide for women caught up in a domestic violence situation. And the audience was well prepared to put questions of this nature to several politicians on the panel. Good one ABC, we'll give you a tick for that.

### A brief word about Hamas.

1. Hamas doesn't want a two-state settlement, so it's of little use to international affairs when many politicians state this is how it should be for Palestine and Israel.
2. Hamas knew very well that Israel would react with devastating military force into Palestine after October 7. That's of little concern to the leaders of Hamas—they are not living in Palestine. If you are a Palestinian and oppose the rule of Hamas just don't stand too close to a window in an elevated building.
3. Hamas has been firing thousands of rockets and mortars into Israel since 2001. Thousands. Let there be no doubt about that.
4. Hamas doesn't care much about Palestine civilians dying as long as Hamas's long term plans are realised i.e. total annihilation of Israel so that not one person exists. Complete and utter destruction of the Jewish state.
5. Hamas is led by wealthy people who do not put their own lives on the table in front line fighting. Hamas's political chief Ismail Haniyeh lives in luxury hotels in Qatar and Turkey. He is estimated to be worth 4 billion US dollars and while his Palestine people are starving, flies about in private jets. The Arabic international newspaper *Asharq Al-awsat* in its 14th Nov 2022 edition, stated that eight Hamas associated leaders left their homes in the Gaza strip to live in luxury in other countries, together with their families. <https://english.aawsat.com/home/article/3414056/8-hamas-islamic-jihad-leaders-leave-gaza-live-abroad>
6. Hamas originated from the radical *Muslim Brotherhood* in Egypt in 1987 and has within its charter the killing of all Jews, not only in Israel but all over the world — every country. The 1988 charter or covenant of Hamas is taken from the Muslim Hadiths and in chapter seven reads "The Day of Judgment will not come until Muslims fight the Jews, when the Jew will hide behind stones and trees. The stones and trees will say, 'O Muslim, O servant of God, there is a Jew behind me, come and kill him'." The charter of Hamas is not that of current Islam, it is Islamist—terror. University and college students, do your homework. Do not simply follow the crowd that bays for blood, organised by 'professional' activists. And please be aware that by singing "From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free" you are simply echoing a terrorist chant that wishes to wipe Israel off the map. That is the real meaning of from the river to the sea. Young people often make mistakes that they regret in later years. Don't make this one. •



*Pic courtesy of WA Police media*



# The digital age isn't always a happy one

**The beauty and often magnificence of digitalisation — and there is beauty to be found in art brought to life onto the digital screen — is always accompanied by a downside; the weakening of social skills as more and more unnecessary items invade our computers and smart phones.** But that's the way big business and sometimes shady entrepreneurs wish to project into the billions of eager worshippers' minds — overwhelming the as yet unformed brains of children, teenagers and young adults.

The biggest problem with the digital age is, naturally enough, security. Nobody should have to be informed more than once that when you open your smartphone/iphone or computer to the digital world out there, the prime warning is that you are then walking on an ocean of disinformation and suspect ideology. Locks and security systems keep your home safe, but numerous folk ride the waves of the internet with such misplaced trust in what's online.

And what often escapes the mind is that this venture into 'out there' is in reality an artificial world . it's not the real world. But it is accepted as being real. Artificial worlds can then be dangerous places for children to wander, learning artificial 'skills' which when projected to the real world, simply do not work.

Because much time on the smartphone is spent in this artificial world, children and early teenagers may develop a sense of attempting to apply doubtful social media to real life, only to find that with this comes a let-down. The format of playing or engaging with trivia online is not the same as imaginative play in real life. There is a vast difference between the digital life and face to face life. Is there anyone who sits and listens to you on smartphone social media? No, there is not. Interactions are usually short and there is no real sense of anyone listening to your problems, video chats excluded. Again, the speed of interactions online may result in a misinterpretation and easily learned frustration of why real life cannot be as speedy as what is seen online. You may well ask, they watch many programs on TV where superfast is the norm, so what's the difference? The difference is that in most cases the child or teenager is already aware that the TV is a source of fiction, but the smartphone is indeed 'reality.'

The Child Mind Institute in the US has an excellent article on how multitasking with iphones or smartphones can ruin concentration. <https://childmind.org/article/kids-shouldnt-use-phones-during-homework/>

## Further reading:

<https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/news/how-parents-smartphone-use-affects-their-kids#:~:text=Her%20research%20suggested%20that%20the,their%20child%20nearby%20seeking%20attention>

<https://www.newyorker.com/books/under-review/can-we-get-kids-off-smartphones>

<https://protectyoungeyes.com/tricky-people-stranger-danger-in-the-digital-age/> •

## Lithium-ion batteries: the ticking time-bomb



**A few years ago, the editor's friend owned an apartment which he leased out through an agent. One night he received a phone call from the police—** his apartment had been totally destroyed, with damage to others surrounding. Some American people, out in Australia for a holiday, had gone out to either shop or see a movie. One of them had left an iphone on charge, and that is what started the fire.

Lithium-ion batteries exist in mobile phones, cars, computer laptops, iPads, some children's toys, eScooters, electric bikes, electric cars, and are increasing in fire damage to homes and vehicles. One of the dangers is overcharging, but sometimes it is a simple matter of the batteries breaking down with age or being charged with faulty or a non-authorized device.

As recently as March 2024, the Australian Broadcasting Commission reported that there have been more than 1000 fires attributed to Lithium-ion batteries over the past 12 months. Fires can also occur at recycling plants when batteries are tossed into garbage bins. The report also concluded that vapes are a danger when thrown away. Any crack in these batteries can lead to the interior core being exposed to air, heat, or moisture, which can then cause the batteries to ignite. Mobile phones left on the dashboard of a car on warm days may also ignite.

Officeworks have recently ceased recycling batteries, and though they state it is an administrative move, we wonder if perhaps they are worried about fires in their stores from receiving damaged batteries? •

More viewing: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HED0bqemFuM>

<https://www.dfes.wa.gov.au/hazard-information/fire-in-the-home/lithium-ion-batteries>

<https://www.accc.gov.au/media-release/consumers-urged-to-use-and-store-lithium-ion-batteries-safely-to-prevent-deadly-fires>



## Islamists: they don't think like us

The first priority of an Islamist is to be a martyr, to kill the unbeliever and to go into the Islamic heaven. The final focus is not on the here and now, the focus is on the hereafter when they will 'receive their reward under Allah.'

But meanwhile, there is much to be done — to transform countries into more sharia-type societies using many means: spying, hijacking websites, crowding elections in what were once safe seats, becoming magistrates, mayors of local councils, school and education department officials, court officials, and more. That is the softly softly approach to domination, which to the satisfaction of Islamists, is mostly working in this 21st Century. And in those districts where it is not working to their satisfaction, then bullying tactics are used, including violence.

Under the heading of 'Islamists are bullying Britain into submission', British MP Suella Braverman, wrote in *The Telegraph* 29th Feb 2024: "They started with the Jews; there were stern words of disapproval from the top but things only got worse. The Islamist cranks and Left-wing extremists then took control of the streets; the police looked meekly on. They harassed teachers through the courts; our human rights and equalities laws were used against us. They threatened to kill an MP; he decided, justifiably, to leave public life. A respected peer, Lord Austin spoke out against terrorism and Islamism; he was suspended from a job he loves. They have hijacked a by-election in a deprived town in northern England. We see their influence in our judiciary, our legal profession and our universities . . . And then they came for Parliament."



Suella Braverman  
Pix by Telegraph India

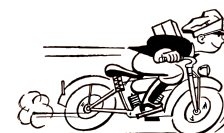
This is the situation in Britain today. It is a situation that many countries in the Western world find themselves in. The immigrant Islamist hijacks Islam to further the cause of jihad and Sharia law. It is a problem for moderate Muslim folk who seek to blend in with the community.

When approximately 500 Australians attempted or succeeded in travelling to Syria and Iraq to join in jihad war against the 'unbeliever', then you have to ask: who is influencing these people? Part of the problem is that there exists some Imams (religious leaders) who are borderline and preach to radicals — particularly in New South Wales . The other part is that there exist activist 'sleepers' who do not leave the country, but whose ambition is to accept and coddle youths into their way of thinking, which is that the West is corrupt and that the only way for a good Islamist is to carry out jihad, not only overseas but also in Australia. •

Con Clusion



the week that was



**If you survived another week without cussing that would be a miracle—international affairs being what they are.** And at home here in Oz, well things don't seem to be improving much with governments spending as fast as they can borrow. And the shocking interest bill on top of that, Victoria in particular.

**It's not the night of the long knives when that madman Adolf** purged some of his associates in 1934, but it is increasingly apparent that young folk—and some not so young—are taking up carrying knives like never before; the Westfield Bondi stabbings and the orthodox priest stabbing in Sydney shocked the nation. There is a certain fear out there in the community about where will it happen next? You can always rely upon Nikki Gemmell's light-hearted yarns in *The Weekend Australian Magazine* for a good incisive read, but her latest article of 18-19th May catches our attention as to the current fragility of women shoppers being out there and feeling vulnerable. The fear of the stranger who comes too close, the man standing in the car-park, the fellow suddenly sitting next to you on the bus when it is near empty, and yes, Nikki did have need to go to Westfield Bondi Junction this week and she did feel that fear: "As I walked back to my car in the car-park, a lone man in front of me hesitated, looking at his phone. Right, now I had to pass him. Walk ahead into a cavernous expanse suddenly emptied of any other people. I hastened to my car. The man had altered the direction that he had been facing . . ." And Nikki's mind goes into overload. Her heart pounds, her step quickens. Is he carrying a knife?

**A fascinating book out this coming week will raise eyebrows within the establishment.** Researched and written by Professor Clive Hamilton—author of *Hidden Hand* and *Silent Invasion* co-authored with Mareike Ohlberg—and Professor Myra Hamilton, *The Privileged Few* looks deep into the elite culture of private schools and how the privileged few are consolidated and given advantages in society, but at the same time still not outshining students from public schools, and "in practice they [private schools] give rise to a sense of entitlement and specialness . . . that sees many of them believing they are above society's norms and rules." Exactly! We can hardly wait to get our hands on this book. Take care, Sleep well. •



# Embers of Berlin

A short story by Graham Price

**Berlin 1945: Helmut was standing on the fourth floor of the deserted bomb-damaged building on Hermanstrasse, His unwashed body smelling somewhat, clothes almost in rags, but he'd managed to purloin some brown shoes from one of the bodies in the ruins across the road.** They were a little tight on his bare feet, but they would do until he found something better. He hadn't minded taking them from the child who lay half buried in the rubble, after all, the boy didn't need them anymore. Helmut's girlfriend, Greta, a year younger at her war-weary age of nine, stood beside him with her right hand on her brow blocking out the glaring sun. Her blue dress, the one made by her mother some years previous, had been torn and muddied, so she had taken to wearing a boy's overalls that she had found in a shattered shop window display — the leggings almost covering her bare encrusted feet, a size too large. She didn't mind, she'd had no stockings or shoes for months and her feet had toughened up running through Berlin's shattered streets. She was blonde, Helmut was fair but not quite blonde, and they would have joined up with the Führer's youth movement had they been old enough. But the war was over, with Berlin divided up amongst the Soviets, Americans, British and the French. It was early June, springtime. She remembered the cherry blossoms from some of the Japanese gardens in Berlin, but there were no gardens to be seen among the bombed out building rubble that blocked off most of the streets. Men, young and old, were out with their shovels and bass brooms attempting to clean up, but it was a thankless task and what they had begun at dawn had barely made much difference by eventide.

Helmut pointed to the east. "Look Greta, see those tanks in the distance, they are Russian. I know 'cos of what I learnt in school. And over there, see, those are the Yankees. You can see the American flag flying."

"I don't understand, why are they divided like they are? They are the victors of our poor country so why don't they mix? I thought those *bastardes* were all joined together, gloating over our defeat."

"Don't swear! I don't know. It's really weird; the guns on those Russian tanks are pointed toward the Americans. How can that be?"

"Well, I'll swear if I want to. My father used to swear a lot. Do you miss yours, Helmut? I don't; he was a pig, he used to hit my mother. I'm glad he's dead. I'm really glad."

"How do you know he's dead? He was in France, wasn't he, fighting for our beloved Führer?"

"My mother got a letter, that's what. I could find it and show you, except that . . . well, you know . . ."

"Yes, everything's gone. Your house, your mother and sister. My house, my mother, and where my father and my brothers are, I don't know. We should go down to that American meeting place where they find lost persons"

"I'm not going anywhere near those enemy soldiers. You can go if you want, but they'll probably lock you up in some prison."

"You're crazy. They won't be like that, they only want to lock up some of the soldiers coming back from the war."

"Still, I'd keep well away from them if I were you. We've done alright so far with the gang, nickin' food where we can. No one comes around our hide-out. Anyway, we should get out of this place before someone comes. Those men down in the street are getting too close. If they follow and find our place and the food stack we'll starve. We shouldn't have come out this far in the daylight."

"She's right, you know," said a hoarse male voice behind them. They turned and saw a man who seemed to be in his late 50's standing on the stairwell behind them. There was no escape. In spite of the moderate warmth of the day, he wore an overcoat and a hat. He was clean shaven and Helmut thought that he looked like some kind of official. They were trapped. The man completely blocked the stairway. He casually took a pipe out of his pocket, stuffed some tobacco into it and lit it with a silver lighter. He was staring at them with a look that sent shivers down Helmut's spine.



Greta didn't seem phased by the man. She stood in the shadow of an exposed steel beam and piped up. "What do you want with us?"

"Just a little talk. You're not in any trouble." He pulled an identity card from his pocket and held it forward. "Berlin *polizei* just wanting to know if you have noticed anything strange, seeing you roam our streets at night. If you can come closer, I can show you a picture of a man we need to know more about, that's all."

"A copper!" said Helmut. "We don't know anything."

Greta stepped forward. "Let me see." She came toward the policeman, tentative at first, then bold.

"What's your name?" said the man.

"Greta, just Greta."

"Don't you have a surname?"

"Not for you . . . let's see. No, we haven't seen that man. He's a nobody."

The police officer shoved the photograph inside his breast pocket. "Well young lady, he's not a nobody. He was my colleague, Franz Horst, a copper just like me."

"Was?" piped up Helmut. "you mean he's dead!"

"Exactly, just down the road from your hiding place."

"You don't know that," said Helmut. "You're just guessing."

The man took a puff at his pipe. "Cheeky bugger, aren't you. Well, we've been keeping an eye on you lot . . . five of you, isn't it, eh? Hiding down near that bombed out hotel, the Fox and Wolves. The fact is, little man, there are so many of you lost kids around Berlin these days, mostly orphans, that it's not worth rounding you up. We've got more important things to attend to. Like murder."

Greta was startled. Murder!"

"Yes," said the policeman. "We suspect a soldier, perhaps one who deserted his post, like this man." He took another photograph from his pocket and the children came closer. Helmut stared at the small sepia photograph. There was a crease across the face which made it difficult to view. It showed a man with dark hair, cropped at the sides, large eyes that could have been dark blue or dark brown, full lips and a small scar on the right side of the forehead. The man's collar seemed to be that of a uniform with a colour patch each side on the leading edges of the collar. An officer, thought Helmut.

Helmut piped up. "No, haven't seen that man. Where did you find the photograph?"

The man grinned. "Well, you ask the right questions little man. You might make a great detective. The photo was with some soldier's clothing not far from where my friend Franz's almost naked body lay, a few *strasse* from here. The picture was in one of the pockets; of course it may not be the man we are looking for, but I feel fairly certain that it is. He's taken my colleague's clothes, swapped his uniform for them. Whatever, even if it is not, this man may lead us to the killer."

"So," said Helmut, "If we see this man, how will we be in touch with you and . . . what's in it for us?"

The man laughed. He ruffled Helmut's light brown hair. "Oh, we'll turn a blind eye to your activities. You could be more use to us than being sent out of Berlin to a camp for orphaned children. Your secret is safe with us."

Helmut looked at Greta, "Can we trust a copper?"

She stared directly at the man. "Never trust a copper . . . never!"

"Well," said the man, "You can trust this one. I lost my wife and my young son, about your age, with the bombings in February. I know the pain of losing those close to you. Here . . ." He reached into the depths of the overcoat pocket, pulled out a wallet and shoved a 100 Reichmark with a couple of US dollars into the boy's hand. From his other pocket he took out



an unopened packet of Lucky Strike cigarettes and gave them to the boy. “You can bargain with these for some food to keep you and your friends from starving, and if you find some information for us, there will be more of the same.”

“*Danke*,” said Helmut as he reached out for the money and cigarettes. He passed the cigarette packet to Greta and she placed it in one of her overall pockets.

“If you have any information it is best not to come down to the police station; in any case we are moving to new headquarters — the old place still stinks of the Nazi’s. No, keep away from there, otherwise some of my colleagues might hand you over for re-settlement.” He took a small notebook from his coat pocket and scribbled an address, tore the paper off and handed it to Helmut. “That’s my home address. There’s a very safe locked letter box for any information you may find. You do write, don’t you?”

“Well” said Helmut. “I do write, but Greta is better at it than me — she’s going to write books when she is older, aren’t you, Greta?”

Greta blushed and the man said “Is that right? My my, another *Frau Ava*, I presume.”

“Who? Said Helmut.

“Oh, you must have missed that in your schooling. One of Germany’s more renowned poets long before the Middle Ages. I expect you know about Jesus and John the Baptist, eh? Well, she wrote some very pleasant poems about them. If she were alive today, she would be a professor in one of our universities. You know, eventually, you two will have to go back to school.”

“Yes, we will,” said Greta, “But that won’t be for a long time, will it?”

The man shook his head, “I suppose not, but you will have to face up to it one day. When you grow up you’ll be looking for employment, and your schooling will help with that.”

Helmut was staring at the identify card in his hand. “So you’re a detective inspector, Konrad Schmidt!”

The man shrugged his shoulders. “That’s what it says.”

The hideout had been selected for its obscurity. It was behind an old lumber yard that was filled with rubble from bombed-out buildings at the front and on either side. Behind, hidden by a pile of charred timber, were the stables where the children slept on straw bedding. There was no way an entrance could be made from the front, but the children had access via an winding alley at the rear. It too, was partially bombed, providing more security from the rear where the children had to scramble over rubble to find their way in. There was minor damage to the large stables and a clump of disfigured fir trees hid it even further from prying eyes. The children were not naive — they knew that one day they would have to move due to the cleaning up process, as they previously had to when the work groups came too close. But that would take time as the clearing crews were still a fair distance away. The leader of the *fünf* or five was Maximillian Weber, an eleven-year-old blacksmith’s son; an orphan as far as he knew and no relatives left alive to speak of. Max could have been taken for thirteen or fourteen due to his tall slender appearance. He was reasonably muscular due to working for his father in the old forge, a business that had provided very little for the family and was no longer in existence.

“What have you got?” he asked as Helmut and Greta came through the hessian covered entrance. Greta held the cigarette packet toward him and told of the meeting with the inspector of police. Helmut showed the 100 Reichmark bill, but said nothing about the American dollars. He described the man the police were looking for and Max shrugged his shoulders. “Nothing to do with us.”

“But there will be a reward,” said Helmut. “And we need the money. So, how much is in the kitty now, with this one hundred?”

“Jurgen is our treasurer,” said Max, “I think, almost one thousand Reichmarks, not that one can buy much with it anymore. It’s American dollars we want, but then people will ask where we got them from, so . . . need to be very careful.” Helmut and Greta stayed silent. “Oh, and speak of the devil, here he comes.”



A short, tubby lad with thin tortoiseshell-rimmed spectacles entered. He seemed excited. “Look what I found in the ruins of the Foxes and Wolves! Hundreds of Reichmarks!” He pulled a wad of notes from his shorts pocket and waved them at the others. “Must be seven or eight hundred there.”

“Let me see,” said Max. He took one of the notes, rubbed it between his fingers and then held it up to the skylight. “No, they’re fakes.”

“Can’t be. How do you know?” said Jurgen, rubbing his brow.

“My dad got some at the forge. He would show them to me and point out the bits that were missing. See here, that signature is all wrong and the paper has a thick feeling to it. My fingers should slide over it, very slippery like. And if I crumple it . . .”

“Don’t mess with it!”

“Nah, see how it won’t unravel properly. We can use these to light the fire.”

Jurgen pressed his lips together. “What a waste of my time. Damn it.”

Greta laughed. “You won’t grow up to be a banker, Jurgey!”

“Well, even so, there must be lots of people who wouldn’t know the difference. We could still use them.”

“And end up in jail with all the crims?” said Helmut. “No thanks.”

Max handed the note back to Jurgen. “Where’s Clara? I told you to stick together.”

“She’s coming. She wanted to pick some wild flowers in that field on the corner.”

Max growled at Jurgen. “You’re not to leave her alone, I thought I made that clear. We Falconeers must never be caught on our own. It’s too dangerous.”

Jurgen looked downcast. “It’s quite safe where she is, just around the corner.”

“Rules are rules. Don’t let this happen again. Here . . .” He handed Jurgen the real 100 Reichmark bill. “Put this with the others, and don’t mix them up with those counterfeits.”

Jurgen took the bill and went to the old fireplace. He pulled one of the bricks away revealing a gaping hiding place, took the notes out, counted them carefully and replaced them with the new found note. “One thousand two hundred. Not bad eh?”

“So, they taught you how to count, did they?” smiled Helmut. “Well, add these onto it.” He pulled the US dollar notes from his pocket and waved them under Jurgen’s chin.

“What on earth!” said Max. “Where did you get those?”

“From the copper,” said Greta. “And we’ll get more if we find the man they’re lookin’ for.”

Max picked up a handful of straw and whirled it around on his fingertips. “You weren’t going to keep that from us, Helly-boy, were you?”

Helmut laughed. “Haha, just trying you out, Maximillian. Testing your patience. Unlike that copper, you won’t make a good detective.”

Max stretched. “It’s getting dark. We’d better go look for Clara . . . can’t have her out there by herself . . . there are bad people around. Jurgey boy, you’ll be responsible if something’s happened to her.”

“She should be here. It was only some flowers . . .”

“Then they’d better not be lying there all alone.” Max took a somewhat battered army torch from a desk they had managed to purloin from a shop wreckage, waved his right arm upward and headed for the exit. “Come on!” They shuffled



out behind him, all four Falconeers as they had named themselves, in search of one missing. They'd sworn a blood oath to be with each other for life and they had to find her otherwise their oath would mean nothing to them.

Out into the already cooling night air, over the rubble strewn pathway, taking care not to slip on the often unsettled broken bricks and other rubbish, until they reached the field. There was no sign of Clara.

"Where could she be," said Greta. "Clara . . . Clara!"

"Shush, not so loud," said Max, swinging the beam from the powerful torch around, lighting up the stalks and blooms of Spring flowers.

Jurgen pushed back the spectacles on the bridge of his nose. "She was here just a few minutes ago. Where could she have gone?"

Greta glared at him. "It's all your fault, you heard what Max said . . . never leave one alone . . . never!"

"Someone must have taken her," said Helmut. "She wouldn't go off wandering by herself."

"I'll bet it's that man the police are looking for," said Greta, "He's taken her . . . Oh Clara, Clara . . ."

"Now you're being silly," said Helmut. "No one's taken her . . . She mustn't be far away . . . she's probably gone off looking for more flowers. She always liked flowers, she wanted to be a florist."

Max flashed the torchlight around. "Let's spread out a bit . . . but not too far . . . we'll go down the *strasse* slowly, and keep your voices down. We don't want to run into any grown-ups."

They moved out of the field, being careful not to trip on loose rubble and other rubbish lying across the *strasse*, four adventurers bound together by their blood oath — Falconeers, one for all and all for one in search of the elusive fifth. The Falcon body was missing one of its own. Within each of their hearts there was a vacant space where one had suddenly departed. A first quarter moon was beginning to show and a light breeze had sprung up. It was much the same kind of silence that had existed long before the war, when at night all residents had gone to bed and Greta was tucked up in the attic bedroom with her kitten, reading Hansel and Gretel to the little cat under the soft yellow lamplight. Sometimes she could hear her father snoring from the bedroom below and now and then her mother saying something like "For goodness sakes, Anton, shut up!" But that could never be, never again. She'd gone down that *strasse* numerous times, looking for any sign of life, any sign of the house. But it was not to be, she could not locate it amid the ruins, and they were all gone: mother, father, her little sister Beatrice, and the kitten. She'd searched for that feline from dawn to dusk for several days but in the end, gave up in resignation. She was alone. There had been talk of her father joining the army and fighting the enemy in France, but she was unsure of that. He'd been gone for months and her mother didn't seem to care much at the time.

She'd been nicking some food once more from the bomb-damaged grocery store when Max and Helmut had found her. It had been an old Jewish store, taken over by other Germans when the owners had been moved away. Greta was there the day it happened, when several uniformed men bearing swastika symbols dragged out Mr. Hoffman and his wife and their small son, Erich. She, with other children, had often played with Erich in the *strasse* early evenings, just before the sun went down and all were required then to be at home. She had liked Erich, but he had been taken away, bundled into the back of an old police van with his parents. She watched it go, belching fumes from its exhaust as it turned the corner and disappeared. Where were they going, she wondered? There was quite a crowd around that night and soon people were helping themselves to the goods within the shop with the broken windows and smashed front door. Won't do any harm she had thought, now that the Hoffmans were gone. She knew they were never coming back because she'd sometimes heard her father talking about prison camps for those people. She'd wondered what he meant by *those* people. None of it made any sense. And later, during the years that followed, after the nice German people had repaired the damage to the windows and the facade and taken over the store, well another night came when it too fell during an enemy's bombing raid; the very same night that her house was destroyed with all in it. And her little kitten, Freya, no more.

And so, she had become a Falconeer. Later she had met the other two Falconeers, Jurgen and Clara. She thought Jurgen was funny, she laughed at his jokes and Clara had become a good friend. They found a cat one day, a tabby which was running across the rubble toward them, mewling softly. Clara had taken it in her arms and said to Greta "I think it's a girl . . . what shall we call her?"

"What about Freya, after my kitten that died?"





“Oh yes, let’s do that. Hello little Freya, meet Greta your new mum, and me of course.” They laughed and Clara handed the cat to Greta, who snuggled the tabby to her cheek. “Oh, lovely little girl. We’ll get you some food and I’ll see if we can steal some milk for you from somewhere.”

Greta had found some sandals in one of the ruined houses that fitted her perfectly, so hopefully no more cuts or abrasions to her feet, but she stubbed the big toe of her left foot in the darkness. “Ouch! That hurt.”

“Not so loud,” said Max. “Don’t you listen?”

Greta was beginning to think that Maximillian was getting on her nerves, but she held her tongue. After all, they were the Falconeers, blood friends to the end. She bent down to rub her foot when she noticed it — a blue shoe.

“That’s Clara’s!”

“What?” said Helmut. “Clara’s?”

“Yes, that’s Clara’s shoe. See the gold buckle on it . . . it’s Clara’s shoe . . . oh God!”

Helmut picked up the shoe. “Shine your torch on it, Max. I don’t think . . .”

Greta cried: “It is . . . it is. Oh Lord, what has happened to her?”

“Let’s see,” said Max, shining his torch on the shoe. “Hmm, sure looks like hers, but it might be a coincidence. Lots of shoes found in the ruins these days.”

“We have to find her, no matter what,” said Greta.

“Well, okay, she might have wandered off in the dark and got lost, said Max, “She never did know north from south. Let’s move on.”

Greta took the shoe from Helmut and shoved it into a pocket on her overalls. “If we find the second one, that will be a bit scary.”

The four moved on, coming to a path that somehow the bombing had missed. “Hey,” said Jurgen, there’s some flowers here . . . looks like they’ve been recently cut . . . just a couple. Do you reckon she’s leaving us a trail to follow?”

“Could be,” said Helmut.

It took them almost fifteen minutes to follow the trail of cut flowers. Greta thought that Clara must have cut a very large bunch. The last one was near the doorstep of a shell of a house, one side damaged, the other side safe. The foursome moved up to the open door on the safe side. Max turned off the torch. “What will we do if there are men inside who have taken Clara?” said Greta.

“We’ll run and get the police,” said Helmut.

“No, we won’t” said Max, picking up a large piece of steel pipe. “Everyone, get something, a rock, heavy stick, anything. If it’s only one man, we’ll attack. We’re the Falconeers!”

Greta turned. “I thought I saw someone following us, but maybe just my imagination. Can’t see anyone out there now.”

“Are you ready Falconeers?” whispered Max, “Now very quiet like, let’s go.”

They followed him through the entrance hall where much of the ceiling plaster had fallen to the floor. Max shaded the torch with part of his cardigan and pointed it to the ground. They could easily see footprints, one set was large and one small — a child’s bare footprint. “Careful now,” he whispered. “I think there’s only one grown up in here.”

They heard muffled words from a door on their left, which because of sunken hinges was cracked open. Max held up his hand for everyone to stop and be quiet. There was a louder voice coming through “No, no . . .!”

“That’s Clara,” whispered Greta, digging Max in his back. “We’ve got to rescue her.”



Max looked back at the other three. “Okay, here goes. You all got your weapons?”

Greta shivered as Max shouldered open the door to reveal what had been a large parlour which was lit by several candles and a paraffin lamp. The embers of a fire could be seen still glowing in the grate.

Clara was sitting on the edge of a couch fully clothed with one blue shoe with a gold buckle held in her lap. There was a dark-skinned unshaven middle-aged man standing near her and a woman of about the same age with hair beginning to turn grey.

The man turned at the intrusion. “What the h....!”

“Well, well, well . . .” said the woman, “Look who’s here!”

“You’re kidnappers,” said Max, brandishing the length of pipe. “Give us back our Clara.”

The man laughed. “None of your damned business. We lost our little girl in the bombings, so now this one will belong to us.”

“No she won’t,” said Helmut, lifting his left hand, which held a piece of ironmongery almost a metre in length.

The man swept the ragged edge of his jacket aside and slipped out a hunting knife.

“Which one of you is first?” he cackled. “I’ll slit all your throats one by one.”

The woman laughed. “And no one will come looking for you dearies, ha ha . . . oh deary me , this just sends me up. The rescue brigade is here . . . ha ha ha.”

The children had spread themselves out against the wall, looking at the woman and the man in turn . . . the man with the vicious looking hunting knife. Max was thinking. Could they all rush him at once, or would it be better to back off, run for the police? But how long would that take, and by the time they arrived these people would be gone and with them, Clara.

“You’d better let her go,” piped up Jurgen, who was shaking somewhat. “Otherwise . . .”

“Otherwise what?” said the man, stepping forward and swinging the knife blade in front of him. “C’mon, which one first, eh? Or just piss off out of here. Well, which is it to be?”

“Do as he says,” said the woman, picking up an iron poker and placing it into the embers of the fire, “Or I’ll burn out all your eyeballs.” Greta fainted and slumped to the floor. Helmut dropped his weapon and knelt beside her.

Max stepped forward. He swung his section of pipe at the man, who easily deflected it, grabbed Max around the neck and pressed the hunting knife into his jugular. The children froze. Then there was a noise behind them. A tall man, somewhat unshaven and looking as if he had just crawled out of a haystack, with portions of straw still clinging to his overcoat, looked at the children and grinned. He stood there for a moment with his hands in his pockets, surveying the scene before him. Helmut turned to look at him and shivered. He was the man in the photograph that the police detective had shown to him. The facial scar the detective had pointed out was quite visible. Trapped . . . they were all trapped!

“So,” said the man who was holding Max. “Put down all your weapons, you kids. Just drop them on the floor.”

“You’d better do as he says,” said the tall man. Reluctantly the children obeyed . . . what else could they do? It was all over. Jurgen suddenly felt very cold.

“Now, *Unteroffizier* Hagen” said the tall man, moving into the room. “Let the boy go.”

The man holding Max snarled: “You might have been my commanding officer on the front, Schneider, but you got no authority here. Bugger off before I stick this knife in you as well.”

“I said, let the boy go and put away that knife.”

“In yer dreams.”

“Last chance, Hagen, let the boy go.



The man named Hagen moved the point of the knife along Max's throat. "You want to see this kid bleed, eh? You of all people know how good I was with a blade in the trenches. Get out. Leave us alone . . . I'll deal with this kid, he's got something coming to him."

Schneider pulled a Luger pistol out of his coat pocket and aimed it at Hagen's head. "Do as I say or you're curtains."

Max struggled against the firm grip, but he could not free himself. The man was too strong. Hagen laughed at Schneider and pulled the boy closer to him. "What's it to be, Schneider, you or the kid. Get out now while you can."

The explosion sounded like a grenade going off within the room. The nine millimetre bullet passed through Hagen's right eye and exited through his skull, embedding itself into the tattered frame of a faded picture of the Führer addressing a crowd. Max ran toward Helmut and the others. The man called Schneider had swung his pistol toward the woman who was in the act of retrieving the poker from the fireplace. "Put it down Frau Hagen, or you'll be joining your husband."

She sank back into the couch and began to weep. Helmut ran to Clara, took her by the hand, then hugged her. Greta, sitting on the cold brown linoleum floor, was awakening. Schneider motioned to Jurgen, "Get her some water from the kitchen. Don't worry about that woman."

Jurgen looked up at him and smiled. "Yes sir. Straight away, sir."

Max and Helmut were beside Greta, calming her. She looked up at the tall man. Her face seemed puzzled. "Father! Oh my goodness, it's my father come home!"



## Success story

### The right support at the right time sees Kai flourish

**Kai\* entered foster care in January 2020 aged 14. When he arrived, he had been diagnosed with moderate depression, social anxiety and moderate OCD and he had been refusing to take his medication for some time.**

He was shy and withdrawn and would often spend all his time in his bedroom, only speaking when asked questions, and even then, his answers were just one-worded responses.

Kai's foster carers knew there was a lovely young man busting to shine through so they were determined not to give up on him. So they worked hard to get him to understand the importance of taking his medication while making sure he felt welcome, comfortable and safe.

And the perseverance has certainly paid off. Kai is taking his medication daily, his participation at school has improved significantly and his confidence has grown. Kai's overall mental health and motivation have shifted, he is enjoying school, opening up at home and interacting with members of the household.

It's obvious Kai is now feeling like part of the family, feeling safe and beginning to thrive.

With a new outlook on life, Kai now talks about his future and plans for his life beyond 18. He is keen to obtain his learner's permit so his carers can teach him to drive.

Recently Kai celebrated his 16th birthday and, this once shy, self-secluding young man was showered with gifts, cards, and birthday well wishes. He got to enjoy a birthday pizza night, thanks to the **OzChild Thriving Families fund**. A party with gifts and a cake was something Kai had not experienced before.

The smile on Kai's face said it all, this young man was finally coming alive!

It really is incredible to witness such a difference as a young person begins to trust, learns to share, and starts to look forward to a life they once could only ever have imagined.

Stories like this remind us of the incredible difference **OzChild** carers make and the commitment they have to see children and young people thrive, they really are superheroes!

\*Names have been changed to protect identities. **Could you care? Why not take the first step today, join us at an information session and find out more about becoming a foster carer. Contact Us: OzChild National Support Office PO Box 1312 South Melbourne VIC 3205. Phone: +613 9695 2200. Email: [hello@ozchild.org.au](mailto:hello@ozchild.org.au)**

**Foster Care Enquiries: 1800 954 550**





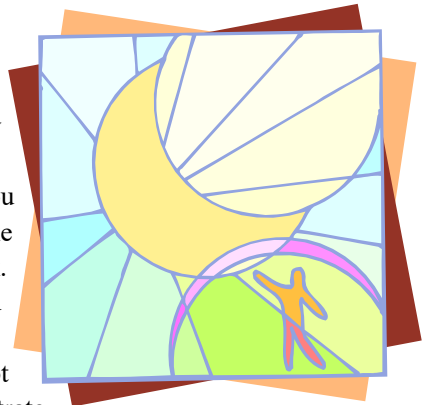
# The Quiet Corner

## The heaviness of life and the lightness of being.

**There are always problems, and sometimes multiples hit all at once and we find them difficult to handle.** Unless you are brilliant at multi-tasking, and certainly not many men are, but women sometimes manage that without turning much of an eyebrow, then it surely is wise to tackle only one problem at a time.

It is better to tackle the smaller problems first, so that as you gain confidence, you can then take on the others one by one. But before commencing, do something positive like going to see a favourite movie, get out and about with some friends, take a long run or walk. Enjoy some sport. Only then you can sit quietly for a time with no distractions and contemplate the first problem, considering in the quiet that this too will pass — that it is not the end of the world, that problems can be overcome. Other people do it, so why not you? Sit quietly, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths, notice your breathing, concentrate on it. Clear your thoughts away, just concentrate on your breathing. That's where your mind should be, noting your breath in, breath out, dismissing all thoughts.

If you find troublesome thoughts entering your mind, immediately think to yourself 'Stop that!' Or, 'No, don't do that.' You are in charge here, not your erring thoughts. Relax, down from the top of your head to your toes, slowly moving down, down, down into the quiet corner. Feel calm moving through your body. The mind is a runaway dragon, if you let it be, bringing up past thoughts that have little to do with today. Give yourself at least ten to fifteen minutes of this quiet time, twenty minutes to half an hour if you can. Then, as you allow thoughts to come back, take pen or pencil and paper and commence to write down the situation concerning the first problem. If this takes hours, so be it. You are unraveling the problem and setting a pathway for the future. •



## The Dalai Lama's Cat

### If you are a cat person, you will love the Dalai Lama's Cat series by David Michie.

Michie's first book *The Dalai Lama's Cat* has gone through 60 editions since 2012, published in over 50 countries and 20 translations. It was one of a kind when it hit the bookstores and was snapped up by hungry readers searching for the sometimes illusive kindness of the world. The novel is set in Dharamshala, northern India, overlooked by the snows of the Himalayas — a most serene outlook. Into this peaceful atmosphere is rescued from the slums of New Delhi, a stray female kitten of dubious Himalayan origin, with slightly damaged rear legs and looking for all the world like a lilac-pointed Siamese cat.

Adopted by the Dalai Lama and thenceforth known as His Holiness's Cat, or HHC, the novel is written in the first person with HHC going through various experiences, much as humans do. Throughout the book — and throughout the ones that follow — are scattered Buddhist teachings, which are not over-emphasized but appear somewhat natural when difficulties arise. It is up to HHC to find her own way in life, gathering experiences usual and unusual along the way. This is a delightful book, peeping deep into the curious mind of a cat under the influence of living at the Dalai Lama's retreat and the associated village of McLeod Ganj. Yes, HHC does venture out and about, getting into mischief here and there and meeting all manner of human beings, and then some of her own furry beings. David Michie weaves a wonderful story of animal/human interaction.

*The Dalai Lama's Cat* pp7-8: "The first day I wobbled around the corner into their office, there was an abrupt halt in their conversation."

'Who is this?' Tenzin wanted to know.

Chogyal chuckled as he lifted me up and put me on his desk, where my eye was immediately caught by the bright blue top of a Bic pen.

'The Dalai Lama rescued her while driving out of Delhi,' Chogyal said, repeating the attendant's story as I flicked the Bic top across his desk" •

