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The Advertiser

No place for bullies in our school system

SCHOOLS take on an immense and important responsibility when they accept care of our children.

Not only are they expected to arm students with the education needed to make the most of their lives, schools are required to keep children safe from harm.

Conflicts and fights are inevitable when people are thrust together by chance into a new environment, including children mingling in the classroom or schoolyard.

Educators can't be expected to prevent all harassment, only do their very best to prevent what they can.

This is especially true when they are put in charge of caring for children with special needs, who may be more vulnerable to bullying than other classmates.

We have seen some utterly tragic examples across Australia in the last few years of where bullying can end. There have been cases of suicides and self harm that sadly often occur even before parents and friends realise there is a problem.

Bullying has taken on a more aggressive and relentless outlook in the internet

and mobile age as children are pursued by their abusers through SMS and social media at all hours of the day.

But most people would also recall bullying during their time at school that was unwelcome but tolerable.

Name calling or isolation often hurt at the time but leave no lasting trauma.

It is difficult to determine the point at which legal punishment should be doled out for failing to stop bullying.

No one likes to see the courts filling up with cases of this kind, and it is unreasonable to expect teachers and staff - who are primarily employed to teach children the basics of spelling and the sciences - to devote all their time to moderating the risks of potential bullying.

The surge in such cases should lead lawmakers to consider if the line is currently drawn in the right place. Schools and governments must also consider what more they can do to detect children who are the subject of chronic bullying and intervene to end it.

Everyone will win if bullying can be stopped before it causes serious harm.

An infectious spirit

SOME celebrated with the roar of an engine and others in the flickering candlelight, but yesterday thousands of South Australians wholeheartedly embraced the Christmas spirit.

Individuals from all walks of life came together first at the 36th annual Toy Run and then later as the sun set at the 70th Carols by Candlelight.

Generosity, sharing and an overall sense of community permeated both events, which for many South Australians are cherished Christmas traditions.

Embracing the spirit of giving - and putting differ-

ences aside - the MRASA Toy Run boasted more than 6000 riders who spent their Sunday couriers toys and gifts, which this Christmas will bring smiles to those less fortunate via the work of the St Vincent de Paul Society.

In Elder Park thousands of South Australian families spread out their picnic rugs and got in song to herald the countdown to Christmas.

While it's a fun night out, the annual carols are also about making a contribution - the Cora Barclay Centre, Novita Children's Services and The Women's And Children's Hospital Foundation will all benefit.

Drivers' raw deal

TREASURER Tom Koutsantonis has written that the Law Society has tried to discredit the Government's plan to introduce a lifetime support scheme for catastrophically injured motorists ("Better result for serious crash victims", *The Advertiser*, 12/12/14).

He claimed that self-interest fuelled our criticisms of the Compulsory Third Party (CTP) scheme. I want to be clear: the Law Society of SA has from the outset supported the lifetime support scheme, but objects to the denial of compensation to thousands of other injured motorists.

About 12-15 motorists per year are catastrophically injured in SA. We argue the Government did not have to drastically cut compensation for the majority of motor accident victims to provide lifetime support for catastrophically injured motorists.

The Motor Accident Commission (MAC), which operates the CTP scheme, made a profit of almost \$500 million in 2013-14, has about \$2.8 billion in assets and \$500 million is being transferred from the MAC into general revenue.

Does the Treasurer think that total loss of taste or smell, loss of a testicle, a pulmonary embolism, and moderate cervical spinal injury are "minor" injuries? These are just some of the injuries where, in most cases, more accident victims are no longer eligible for compensation, due to a mean-spirited threshold.

The Government has also announced it will open CTP to private insurers, when it previously said it wouldn't.

We're concerned that motorists will be paying higher premiums for reduced protection, and suspect that the balance of the MAC fund will go into general revenue.

We're pleased that catastrophically injured people will get the support they need. Unfortunately the 99 per cent of other injured motorists who aren't at fault have been given a raw deal.

MORRY BAILES,
President, The Law Society of SA, Adelaide.

Tom's cashing in

IN his article "Better result for crash victims" (*The Advertiser*, 12/12/14), State Treasurer Tom



Koutsantonis confirms the Government will close the Motor Accident Commission and open Compulsory Third Party insurance to "competition" in the private sector.

Who will underwrite this risky insurance? Has he canvassed the private sector? If no company will provide such a cover, then how do we register a vehicle?

The only reason he is doing this is to get his hands on the \$500 million-plus in the MAC's reserve pool to reduce the Government deficit caused by 12 years of financial incompetence and mismanagement.

RUPERT TUCKER,
West Beach.

Most missing out

I FIND myself in agreement with some of the sentiments expressed by SA Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis in his opinion piece "Better result for serious crash victims" (*The Advertiser*, 12/12/14), but not his conclusion.

CTP insurance attaches to the car, so that any driver of the car who negligently injures another is covered for losses suffered by the injured person, including "the lost chance to live the life they had".

As a long-time contributor to the CTP scheme it is my hope in the event that someone is injured through my negligent driving that they will be treated fairly - treatment costs, loss of earning capacity and recognition of the loss of the life they had. The current CTP scheme fails to achieve these aims for 70 per cent of motor vehicle accident victims.

It is worth remembering a victim cannot sue outside the

CTP scheme, so these uninsured losses are borne by the injured person.

The Treasurer correctly notes that the Lifetime Support and CTP schemes are separate schemes. Accordingly, any improvements to the rights of the non-catastrophically injured victims cannot take away from the rights of the catastrophically injured.

Lawyers must continue to speak out on behalf of the 70 per cent who miss out, as it is clear the Minister responsible for motor accident victims will not speak up for them.

PATRICK BOYLEN, SA
President, Australian Lawyers Alliance (ALA),
Adelaide.

A faulty scheme

FOR another short excursion into the labyrinth of corridors, alleyways and byways in which taxpayers' precious contributions are mysteriously devoured, one can do no better than read our State Treasurer Tom Koutsantonis' latest extension of the maze (*The Advertiser*, 12/12/14).

He says, "The Lifetime Support Scheme ensures that if you are catastrophically (whatever that means) injured in an accident you are entitled to lifetime support".

The flaws in this new form of fiscal detonation are glaring.

First, it provides this "entitlement" to only a discreet section of our community, that is, those whose injuries arise as result of a motor accident. Effectively, it sets up a no fault liability scheme for one section of the population in the absence of any corresponding scheme for the rest, except for

work-related injuries under the WorkCover scheme.

And it discriminates between those involved in a motor accident purely on the degree of injury sustained.

Second, this no fault liability scheme is intended to be funded by a similarly narrow section of the community, that is, owners of vehicles who will be paying for all and sundry from across the world involved in accidents in this state.

It would be naive to think that this open-ended claims magnet will find sufficient backing in this form and will not attack the public purse with another blow to the bottom line of a precariously unbalanced budget.

Third, and most critical, this is another disconnected, ill-considered, ad hoc fiscal imposition in a field scattered by similar schemes in this country, including the Commonwealth and the impending NDIS.

It is a further instance of duplicity, contradiction, overlap, wastage and inefficiency in the conduct of a public issue, that being the public purse's capacity to fund the needs of all seriously disabled people in our society, whatever the cause.

GEORGE CARABELAS,
Mt Barker.

Relocate camera

NO one really believes speed cameras have anything to do with road safety but are about raising cash due to the self-inflicted shortage of it by SA's profligate State Government.

SA's major revenue squad, SAPOL, could vastly improve its takings and exceed the paltry \$629,332 it collects on South Tce (*The Advertiser*, 5/12/14) to probably a million, or more, if it could be bothered to place one on Mount Barker Rd, Bridgewater.

Recently we had, for a short and convenient time for them, the first such camera in 10 years. It makes us wonder who is it of influence within SAPOL (or is it some politician?) who can ensure the revenue squad never come to our road.

ROBERT MCCORMICK,
Bridgewater.

TEXT TALK

SORRY, Jan Dostal, it is not the Government paying the PPL. The Government only has money it takes off us. If I didn't have any part in the baby-making process (and I didn't receive any invitations), then why should I have any part in paying for them?
MICHAEL, Yunta.

ONCE again SA voters have been sucked in by Labor's spin blaming the Abbott Government for the mess our state is in. Time to wake up and make some sacrifices before we go completely down the gurgler.
DAVE RAWSON,
Modbury Heights.

DEAR M.S. Marrs, the only place to see feminine ladies is at aged care and residential care facilities. No dirty white sneakers or cheap thongs, hairdresser weekly, skirts, peep-toe slingback shoes, stockings and a smile.
OBSERVER.