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Bike sheds

This article and comments were published in an online community newspaper.

Breaking News

National News

Local News

SHEDS SHELVED

Plans for new bike sheds at Bambidi School have been put on hold after the parents on the school council decided that solving traffic congestion around the school was a greater priority.

The area set aside for the sheds will instead be used as a car park for parents waiting to collect children from school. Parents are currently forced to wait outside the school gates on Prospect Road, where parking is at a premium. The lack of parking spaces, combined with the constant flow of delivery vans servicing the warehouse opposite the school, brings Prospect Road to a near-standstill at the end of the school day.

‘The safety of the schoolchildren is of utmost importance,’ says Tim Parnett, president of the school council. ‘By making this area a car park, we can get vehicles off the main road. This way, children leaving school on foot will be able to cross Prospect Road more safely.’

READERS’ COMMENTS ON THIS STORY

 Ricky98

posted 8 minutes ago

The reason that you don’t see us on bikes is there is nowhere for us to lock them up!

 Urbanite

posted 10 minutes ago

It seems that the school council is once again looking after the fuel-guzzling parents. This is yet another kick in the teeth for those who try to do the right thing.

 Yellowfin

posted 3 hours ago

I support the school council’s decision. Prospect Road is often gridlocked. I wasted twenty minutes yesterday driving around until I could find a suitable place to collect my son. No-one would use the sheds anyway – I rarely see kids on bikes these days.

 K3LLY

posted yesterday

Prospect Road is really dangerous. I am happy to leave my bike locked to a lamppost if it means I can ride to school safely.

 Lara J

posted yesterday

This is such a pity. The bike sheds would have been awesome!

A spotlight is positioned at the top right, casting a beam of light onto a stage. The stage floor and walls are decorated with a pattern of small, colorful dots in shades of red, orange, and white. The background is a solid reddish-brown color.

Chooky Dancers go global

Imagine this situation: you live on a tiny island off the north coast of Australia, and you and most of your friends have never even been to Darwin. You all love dancing: any style, any time, but especially at the local disco, where hundreds of local kids gather every weekend.

Then one day, on a dusty basketball court, your group is doing an up-beat version of the Sirtaki dance from the 1964 movie *Zorba the Greek*. Someone films it, and the film is uploaded to the Internet. It's so funny that suddenly you are a sensation, with thousands of hits in the first few days. Before long, you are receiving invitations to perform all over Australia.

This did happen in 2007 to the Chooky Dancers, an Indigenous dance group who live on Elcho Island, off the coast of Arnhem Land.

Since then, the energetic and very amusing Chookies have performed at numerous comedy festivals and cultural events all around Australia. They have also appeared in a full-length feature film. These young Yolngu men absorb and then reinvent dance moves from everywhere: from traditional Indigenous dance styles and ideas, to techno and hip hop, kung fu and Bollywood.

And now the Chookies have gone global. In early 2011, they travelled out of Australia for the first time. They went to Beijing, the capital of China, where they performed their particular brand of zaniness to a Chinese TV audience of probably close to one billion.

The Chookies' act was part of one of China's biggest annual shows – the Spring Festival Gala. Over the years the festival has hosted a huge variety of acts from all around the world and of every imaginable style and content. Even so, the audience had seen nothing like the Chooky Dancers, who began, as usual, with a traditional Yolngu dance, before breaking out into their signature Zorba. The Chinese were totally won over.

It's a great international, multicultural, outback youth success story – an Indigenous Australian dance troupe performs a techno version of a Greek dance on Chinese TV!



The bundle arrives

That was the third night it had rained. Thunder echoed a long way off, booming out of the high valleys like the brawling of giants. The white flicker of lightning cast the shadows of the nearby peaks onto the long lake near my hut, shadows as angry and sharp as the crags themselves. I fed the fire and stirred the beans in the pot.

I'm used to my own company. People don't come to my lake. It's too far away from any towns, it's a steep hike up the hills, there's nowhere to stay and it's not very pretty. There are lots of other places with better views and easier access. Truth to tell, I don't make any effort to maintain the little goat path that leads here. I like being on my own. Other people are trouble.

That's why the pounding on the door startled me. The rain had smothered any sound of footsteps on the gravel path, and the shutters on the windows had been closed against the weather. The pounding came again, louder this time. I gave the beans another stir and pulled the pot off the fire and onto the little stand by the hearth, then got up and moved towards the door.

I needn't have bothered. It burst open and a huge man, carrying a bundle in his arms, staggered in. His shirt was stained like a rose, deep red where the wound still bled, fading to pink where the rain had washed around it. His face was almost devoid of expression, pallid and staring. He fell to his knees, still holding onto the bundle.

I'd seen enough to know that this man was a goner. He'd lost too much blood and had come too far in that hard, chill rain. I shoved the door closed and went to him, touched his shoulder. He turned his face to me, white as wax. There was a gash in his scalp, and his coarse black curls leaked runnels of crimson down his face. He lifted the bundle in his arms up to me and said, 'Here.'

I caught the bundle as he fell. It was a child.



Royal Flying Doctor Service

The furthest corner. The finest care.

Sadly, Lieutenant Clifford Peel's plane disappeared in France during World War I. He never saw his idea become a reality.



The first flight was made using a de Havilland DH 50 aircraft, hired from the Queensland and Northern Territory Aerial Services (QANTAS).



Reverend John Flynn, founder of the Aerial Medical Service, is featured on the Australian 20 dollar note.



A PC12 flies over Rottneet Island, WA.

Royal Flying Doctor Service

The Royal Flying Doctor Service (RFDS) provides 24-hour medical support to people in remote areas. Today it has 21 bases across Australia and cares for around 270 000 people a year – that is one person every two minutes.

- **1917** Lieutenant Clifford Peel, a former medical student training as a pilot for World War I, writes a letter to Reverend John Flynn. In the letter, he suggests that planes can play a significant role in helping people in the outback.
- **1919** Flynn writes an article for *The Inlander* magazine about outback aviation and its potential. On a campaign for a better medical service for the people of the outback, he follows this with a second article called *Flying doctor – why not?*
- **1926** Flynn's persistence pays off, and the Aerial Medical Service (AMS) is established. Alf Traeger, a wireless expert, joins Flynn and works on creating a two-way radio.
- **1927** Cloncurry in Queensland is selected as the base for the AMS. The AMS advertises for a 'flying doctor'.
- **1928** The AMS takes off for the first time to answer a call for help from the town of Julia Creek, approximately 100 km from the Cloncurry base, with Dr Kenyon St Vincent Welch on board.
- **1929** In the first year Dr Welch makes 50 flights, covering 32 000 km, and treats 225 patients.
- **1934** Breakthrough! Air–ground communication is now possible.
- **1939** Flynn's dream is realised. The AMS operates nationwide.
- **1942** The AMS changes its name to the Flying Doctor Service of Australia.
- **1955** Queen Elizabeth II grants the prefix 'Royal' to the Flying Doctor Service.

Through the break

Breakers rise like hulking sea eagles. They glide, then crash, tossing their prey of bodies and surfboards to the sand, hissing to retreat and hurl again.

Shai has been coming all summer, catching three buses to stand at the shoreline, close his eyes and crunch warm shell grit between his toes – like he did on his old island home, where currents were lazy and the waters warm and calm. He watches surfers spear through waves. Counts one ... two ... three ... until they emerge, then watches the practised flick of their hair. He'll be out there with them ... one day.

He grips the pitted second-hand board to his chest. 'Today,' he murmurs. 'Today.'

Heart hammering, Shai wades in, flings his legs onto his board and strokes towards the looming curve of green crystal until it's too late to turn back. The water wall shimmers and fragments above him. He dips his board's nose as he's seen others do, spearing into his fear. Ears, eyes and nostrils are swamped. He feels the shove of the wave, hears nothing but the dull rumble of the sea. Counts one ... two ... three ...

Suddenly, body rigid, blue-knuckled, he shoots upwards, into the silk water beyond the wave that is now billowing behind him to shore. He yelps with joy and paddles until the breakers can no longer drag him back, feeling freer and freer with each pull.

Bobbing, drifting, he rests his head on his arms. The people on the beach dip in and out of view. The boy from far away, who all hot summer cringed in the shallows, fearing the waves, is no longer stranded on the sand.

Turning his board, Shai claws his way until he is picked up by a swell and carried in a roaring rush towards the shore. He tumbles as his board is ripped from beneath him. He rolls with the sand and froth and shells until, panting and grazed, he lies on the land's edge, the edge of his new country.

Shai staggers to his feet and looks out to the horizon. He says goodbye to another island, out there somewhere, beyond the break. He smiles, collects his board, limps up onto the dry sand and breathes deeply the air of the place he'll now call home.



Jessica's new room

'It's dirty and it smells.'

This was to be Carlos's only comment about their new house. He went straight through to the backyard and sat under a tree in protest.

Jessica had noticed the smell too. But for her, that musty odour emerging from years of unattended dampness was much more inviting. She wandered from room to room opening blinds and curtains. As the light filtered in, Jessica watched the particles of dust rise and dance as though being called, finally, to some higher purpose.

'Jess, this will be yours.' Her mother hesitantly led her down the hall to a small room at the back of the house.

'I promise this room will really brighten up, with new curtains and pictures on the wall.' She bit her lip while watching Jessica survey her surroundings. Jessica was not, however, mourning the loss of the large space she had previously occupied, or her view of the park, as her mother suspected. She was soaking up the layers of memory embedded in the floorboards, the rising damp, the particles of dust. Her last room had been new, with bright white walls and built-in wardrobes, but this one had a past.

'Go to Carlos, I'm alright.'

Her mother kissed the top of her head before she left as though thanking her for being a brave little soldier. Jessica closed the door quickly behind her, hoping to keep the memories contained and intact. What stories this room must have to tell! She ran her hand over the wall, looking for traces of what had been, for evidence of a single event frozen in time and space. There were occasional black stains – Smoke? Was there a fire? – and tears in the wallpaper. The first thing her mother would do was paint over these walls, but Jessica longed to peel back the sheets of paper one by one. She tried to make out the remains of a sticker on the window sill. Some smiling cartoon character. This must have been a child's room once. A nursery?

'What was this place? What does it all mean?' She spoke this softly to the walls and the floorboards, the dust and the damp, enticing them to reveal their secrets. She paused as though waiting for an answer. Nothing came.

It wasn't really the answers that mattered to her, in the end.



The 3D dinosaur

This opinion piece was published in a media blog.

Call me the youngest dinosaur in the world. Not the kind whose jaws lunge at you out of the phoney depths of a 3D movie. The other kind: a dinosaur of outmoded opinion. How outmoded? Let's just say I consider 3D physically dangerous, economically predatory, artistically self-defeating and imaginatively stunting.

That kind of dinosaur.

Take off your 3D glasses for a moment and look at some evidence from the real world. (Remember that place?)

When you watch a 3D film, your brain receives two slightly different 2D images and is forced to make sense of them by merging them into one. The immediate result of this merging is an enhanced sense of apparent depth (the 'third' dimension). The not-so-immediate result is, for at least 15 per cent of us, eye strain, headaches and a dangerous disorientation. These risks are greatest for children and teenagers. (And which two groups of people form the major audiences for 3D?) It is even possible that children will develop permanent problems with depth perception if they are overexposed to 3D.

Why do film-makers inflict these risks on us? So they can charge us extra at the ticket office. Who wins out of this? Not us. So who does? The film-makers themselves?

They might think they do, but they should think again. If 3D becomes the new standard, we will see a shift in the kind of films that are made. Setting and action take over; character, relationships and plot wither. Where once we explored the depths of a character's psyche, we plunge into the depths of some 3D ravine. Where once we followed the twists and turns of a developing relationship or a subtle plot, we crawl through a 3D cavern, dodging 3D bats. No film that lacks the promise of a 3D thrill will even find the financial backing to be made. So stand back, all you serious film-makers, and make room for kids' movies and animation.

But the most infuriating thing about 3D is that it is not necessary. There is already depth in 2D media. The imagination finds it there. If we depend on special glasses to find it, we have already begun to replace the wonders of imagination with the gimmicks of technology.

I heard a child leaving a cinema recently announce, 'I wish life was 3D!' That should be sad, not just to us dinosaurs, but to everyone.

John Simpson

Australian Convict Sites

Australia's newest World Heritage Site

Eleven Australian convict sites, spread over three states and Norfolk Island, constitute one single World Heritage Site. The sites were selected as pre-eminent examples that show Australia's rich convict history. There are more than 3000 convict sites around Australia.

What is World Heritage?

'World Heritage is the designation for places on Earth that are of outstanding universal value to humanity and as such, have been inscribed on the World Heritage List to be protected for future generations to appreciate and enjoy.' (UNESCO)

Worldwide, there are over 900 World Heritage Sites, including Stonehenge, Venice and Kilimanjaro National Park. Australia has eighteen Sites, including Kakadu and the Sydney Opera House.

Why were the Australian Convict Sites granted World Heritage status?

To be selected for World Heritage listing, a site has to meet at least one of UNESCO's ten criteria, of which six are cultural criteria and four are natural criteria. The Australian Convict Sites were awarded World Heritage status on the basis of these two criteria:

- iv. to be an outstanding example of a type of building, architectural or technological ensemble or landscape which illustrates (a) significant stage(s) in human history*
- vi. to be directly or tangibly associated with events or living traditions, with ideas, or with beliefs, with artistic and literary works of outstanding universal significance. (The Committee considers that this criterion should preferably be used in conjunction with other criteria.)*

More than 160000 men, women and children were condemned to transportation from Britain to Australia between 1787 and 1868. The Australian convict sites – steeped in this history – have no equivalent elsewhere in the world, so they are unique in their ability to improve our knowledge and understanding of the convict era. The forced migration of prisoners represented a shift in global ideas and beliefs about punishment and reform. Transportation as a form of psychological punishment was a new way to deter crime and reform criminals through hard labour: labour upon which a new colony and a new society would be built.

World Heritage-listed Australian Convict Sites

Tasmanian sites

- Brickendon–Woolmers Estates
- Cascades Female Factory
- Coal Mines Historic Site
- Darlington Probation Station
- Port Arthur Historic Site

NSW sites

- Cockatoo Island
- Hyde Park Barracks
- Old Government House and the Government Domain
- Old Great North Road

WA site

- Fremantle Prison

Norfolk Island site

- Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area

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Royal Flying Doctor Service

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<www.flyingdoctor4education.org.au>

Australian Convict Sites

Adapted extract from *Australia's World Heritage Places: Australian Convict Sites Information Sheet*, accessed at:
<<http://www.environment.gov.au/heritage/education/pubs/factsheets/australian-convict-sites.pdf>>. Reproduced with permission of the Australian Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities.

Playing the bones

Have you ever heard of playing the bones?

The bones are instruments that have ancient origins, and yet are still played today by some Australian folk bands. They are two clean and dried pieces of bullock's rib, each about 15 cm long.

To play the bones you hold them on either side of the middle finger of one hand, and rock your wrist back and forth. Instant percussion!

Some experts claim that today's cattle bones are too soft to make good music. Fortunately, hardwoods such as Tasmanian Oak and Jarrah make good 'bones' and some musicians use spoons instead of real bone to get click and clatter into their music.

