

NEWSFRONT

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Radical plan to tackle Tassie's low literacy Call for 'citizen jury'

Get ready for Gen Z to take the reins

BLAIR RICHARDS

A CITIZENS' jury has been floated as a new way of addressing Tasmania's stubbornly high illiteracy rate.

The Mercury's Future Tassie survey found 90 per cent of Tasmanians believe an ambitious literacy goal is an important target for the state.

Tasmania's rate of functional illiteracy is 48 per cent.

Australia Institute Tasmania director Leanne Minshull said as poor literacy was an ongoing problem in Tasmania despite significant expert and government effort, a citizens jury could be a way of tackling the issue.

Like a criminal jury, a citizens' jury is made up of community members who hear evidence from experts before coming up with a "verdict" that the government agrees to adopt.

Citizens' juries have been used to tackle difficult issues in other jurisdictions.

Abortion law reform in Ireland was led by a citizens' jury.

"(The jury will) come up with a solution that is acceptable to the community because they are from the community," Ms Minshull said.

"I think it would be a great thing to do in Tasmania. If it works for something like literacy we could use it for other issues the community struggles with."



BOOKWORMS: Poor literacy has been a problem in Tasmania despite efforts to tackle the issue.

The State Government did not address the Mercury's question on whether it would consider a citizen's jury on literacy.

A Government spokes-

woman said there were "steady improvements" being made in literacy.

"Literacy is one of the goals to support all learners to succeed as connected, resilient, creative and curious thinkers.

"This is a goal not just for

schools but for all Tasmanians — it requires a whole of community effort. Pleasingly, we have already seen steady improvements through existing efforts, but we know there is more to be done.

"The Department is devel-

oping a birth to adulthood literacy framework, which includes a number of actions.

While in the final stages of development, stakeholders will again have the opportunity to have input into the final approach."

MANDY SQUIRES

DISNEY-LOVING and celebrity- and brand-obsessed, they bare their souls on social media, care passionately about equality and the environment — and they are determined to make the world a better place.

Meet Generation Z. Born after 1996, they will account for 32 per cent of the world's 7.7 billion people this year, edging ahead of Millennials.

By next year, Gen Z is expected to account for 40 per cent of consumers.

"This generation is already distinctly different from Millennials," a US report by Pew Research says.

"What they engage with is often a representation of themselves, their values, and their expectations.

"Going beyond their own world view, they are regularly engaging with content around politics, inclusivity and social responsibility."

A 2018 Mission Australia survey of more than 28,000 Gen Z-ers, aged 15 to 19, revealed 43 per cent were concerned about mental health, 29 per cent about alcohol and drugs, and 23 per cent had strong views on equality and discrimination.

Deakin University's Dr Rosalyn Black said her research showed young Australians were "passionately and deeply concerned" about social equality and climate change, but did not trust conventional political parties to represent their views.

"The faith of youth in traditional political parties has plummeted to an all-time low but young people's desire to shape society and to act in a way which mirrors their values could be at its strongest level ever," Dr Black said.

Dr Black said most didn't like the offerings of major parties, and particularly of conservative politicians who denied climate change.

Brain training latest fad in fat fight

BRIGID O'CONNELL

BRAIN training is emerging as a new and promising way to treat the obesity epidemic, with Melbourne researchers uncovering a way to boost the ability of making healthier food choices after a week of "exercising the brain".

Monash University

researchers have designed an app that trains overweight adults to be less drawn to junk foods, simply by tilting their mobile phone screen.

They compared the effect of a type of cognitive training used to treat alcoholism, called approach-avoidance training, which aims to overturn instinctive biases.

Overweight adults were shown images of food on the phone screen, and were trained to tilt their phone away from them when the food was in portrait orientation, making the image smaller. They were taught to tilt the screen towards them if the image was in landscape orientation, which made the picture larger.

Most of the unhealthy foods were presented in portrait, meaning participants were "pushing away" junk food.

The method sounded simple, said lead researcher Dr Naomi Kakoschke, but after a week of daily 10-minute training, those of the 60 participants who underwent this type of training were more likely to choose

healthier foods and even lost a small amount of weight after six weeks.

"We're not directly telling them to avoid or approach certain foods. They learn through association that most of the time they are 'approaching' healthy foods, and 'avoiding' unhealthy by pushing it away," Dr Kakoschke said.

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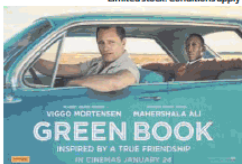
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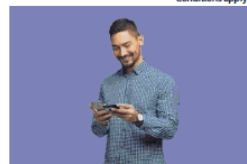
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