

Government backing pursuit of cruelty to animals

The pain game

JENNY MOXHAM

I'M sure most Australians would agree that killing whales is barbaric, and many go whale watching simply for the thrill of catching a glimpse of one these giants of the deep.

Anglesea surfer Kaine Hazle was ecstatic last Thursday after having had a close and personal encounter with a whale at Winkipop and even our government demonstrates good will towards these sea creatures by enforcing laws that forbid boats, aircraft and people from disturbing them.

But what about those other creatures of the deep — fish? Why are there no similar feelings of good-will towards them?

After all, they too are intelligent, good-natured, curious and sensitive creatures.

Dr Culum Brown, a specialist in fish behavior from Macquarie University in NSW says: "Fish are more intelligent than they appear. In many areas, such as memory, their cognitive powers match or exceed those of higher vertebrates including non-human primates."

Perhaps a more pertinent fact is that they feel pain.

Cambridge University scientist Donald Broom says "The scientific literature is quite clear. Anatomically, physiologically and biologically, the pain system in fish is virtually the same as in birds and mammals."

Clearly, if fish can feel pain, angling can no longer be regarded as a non-cruel sport.

One might expect that, armed with this knowledge, our government might show a tad more consideration for fish but, the reverse is true.

The Brumby Government is, in fact, spending \$3.2 million of taxpayers' money on promoting angling as a "fun and healthy outdoor activity for the entire family".

To this end, regular Free Family Fishing events are staged where children as young as four are lured into attending workshops. To encourage the little ones, there are free give-aways, prizes and rods provided.

To make sure that as many children as possible experience the



HOOKED AND IN AGONY: A fisherman hauls in his catch.

'Imagine the agony you would experience, swinging from a metal hook that was deeply imbedded in the roof of your mouth.'

"fun" of impaling and suffocating a fish, many hundreds of large, farm raised fish are deposited at the venue on the day.

The farms from which these fish come are much like the factory farms in which broiler chickens,

battery hens and pigs are reared. Fish are tightly confined in filthy enclosures, and many suffer from parasitic infections, diseases, and debilitating injuries.

They spend their lives constantly bumping against each other and the sides of their cage thus, when they are finally taken from these farms and released into a lake it must feel like heaven.

Much the same as when a battery hen is rescued and allowed to walk around for the first time in her life.

How heartless, then, to deliberately deposit these abused and vulnerable creatures in a place where a fishing event is to be held. How cruel to give them their first taste of freedom at a location where they will be cunningly tricked into swallowing a barbed hook then dragged, suffocating, from the water.

Imagine the agony you would experience, swinging from a metal hook that was deeply imbedded in the roof of your mouth. Well, it's exactly the same for them.

Professor Bill Runciman of Adelaide University, says fishing constitutes the greatest source of confused thinking and inconsistency on earth with respect to pain.

People, he says, get very excited about dolphins but at the same time there are fishing competitions at which thousands of people snare fish with hooks and allow them to asphyxiate.

Surely it's time we acknowledged the fact that all the creatures of the deep are equally worthy of our compassion and consideration.

■ Jenny Moxham is an animal activist.

able damage; a world of the "bully" they have now become a target.

Suddenly the impact of such cruel opinions brings about a succession of black thoughts and feelings. Self esteem, self-worth and unworthiness replace hope and happiness. The power of words just became a killer; a silent partner in anonymity that lurks in cyberspace, bullies hiding behind a social network that empowers them to be as cruel as they like without repercussion or so it seemed until a very real consequence came to light.

Kids are taking their lives as a solution to the pain they feel.

We all want to blame someone — the bullies, the parents, the teenagers but the truth is as a society we need to stand together and not accept this as just sad and nothing we can do something about.

We need to stand up and value our teens as worthwhile contributors, we

'We must tell them that we love them, are proud of them and that they are good enough.'

must ask them for their opinions, care about what they want for themselves and the world, and we must make them feel seen and heard.

As parents we have the power to help them.

When did our lives become so busy that we failed to notice the saddened shell that hides in a darkened room seeking approval and validation from a computer?

We have the power to bring our teens back from the brink to help

them become all they were meant to be.

Firstly we need to let our teens know we are there for them.

Take an interest, ask them about school and get to know their friends.

If we meet that inevitable resistance we must keep trying, let them know we are always ready to listen even if it may be hard to hear.

Most importantly we must tell them that we love them, are proud of them and that they are good enough.

If they still won't talk to us we need to be brave enough to ask for help for them and ourselves.

There are some fantastic counsellors and psychologists out there.

So tonight hold them close, kiss them and tell them that to live takes far more courage than to die.

■ Jackie Luscombe is a parent and a trainee counsellor.

Geelong Advertiser

EDITORIAL

New CEO and the public is watching

STEPHEN Griffin has got the nod as the new CEO for the City of Greater Geelong. While the choice may have raised the eyebrows of some, given the criticism he has faced during the Sanger Saga, he was the obvious choice.

There is no doubt the drawn-out dispute between the sacked workers and the council over a couple of free steak sandwiches has wounded the council in the eyes of the ratepaying public. The council has been seen to be over-reactive and has hidden its reasons for the sacking of the two men behind the right to privacy. This is despite the two waiving their rights to privacy so the council could publicly justify their terminations.

Mr Griffin, the acting CEO, refused to get involved and urged the men to seek redress through the Australian Services Union with Fair Work Australia.

Mr Griffin's champions say this has shown determination in the face of union and public pressure; his detractors say he is inflexible and dictatorial.

We may never know which tag is appropriate in this particular case but he is going to need both those assets in his role running the city of Geelong.

There is no doubt the city and the region face tremendous challenges, both in the short term and long term.

The city needs to be the beacon for those who have lost jobs because of the global recession and it needs to provide the leadership that will help the strategies provide more jobs as the nation climbs out of the financial hole. With the councilors, he is going to have to provide the city with a smooth transition from an industrial hub with a manufacturing base to a more diverse economy based on biotech and new technology research.

He will have to oversee the development of Armstrong Creek and co-ordinate the provision of services and infrastructure a new community of 60,000 demands.

He is going to have to learn how to work with a fractious, divided council where unfortunately political expediency and ambition have superseded the rights of the ratepayers.

His recent role as the acting CEO and before that as manager of corporate services have given him a thorough grounding of the needs and the wishes of the community and also of the need to cement good working relationships with Geelong business leaders and lobby groups.

None of these things will be easy. His predecessor, Kay Rundle, earned a reputation as a quiet achiever who got things done despite the political hubris often swirling about her.

The council will not live or die on the publicly aired potholes dispute of the past two weeks but it is a timely reminder that the ratepayers expect fairness and they expect transparency.

We expect much from our leaders and Mr Griffin has been put on notice.

Society must take a stand

JACKIE LUSCOMBE

WHEN did suicide become an option for solving ones problems? When did the finality of death take precedence over the joy of living? How did our teenagers get to the place where only darkness and pain exist? When did we as parents stop talking to our kids? Was it when they ceased to be cute and became hard work?

Rebellion is a teenager's right of passage a statement that says "hello, I'm here world I have a voice and I want it to be heard."

Then comes the deafening silence — suddenly communication is lost, teenagers retreat into a world of pain that deepens into a hole of deep black; a chasm were they become a "victim".

This is a world where other's opinions of them matter too much and have the capacity to do irrepar-