



Argument Analysis 2024

Table of Contents

<i>Analysing Language - Introduction</i>	3
<i>Verbs for Analysing Language</i>	5
<i>Words and Phrases for Argument Analysis</i>	6
Words to Describe Tone.....	6
Phrases	6
<i>Persuasive Language and Devices</i>	8
<i>Visual Analysis</i>	20
<i>Structuring a Single Argument Analysis Essay</i>	23
<i>Sample Argument Analysis Response</i>	24
<i>Argument Analysis Tasks</i>	27
Airbnb has lost its way. Even the chief executive agrees	27
Footy crowds need to cut down on the boos.....	30
Being overweight can lead to heart disease ... but don't tell the kids!.....	33
It's great that your child loves Spider-Man and Elsa, but they have no place at Book Week	35
Scoffing at the Commonwealth is easier when you live in a rich, white nation	38
Electric scooters Melbourne: Call to outlaw the personal light electrical vehicles.....	40
It's not just the Matildas. Why all women footballers deserve better pay.....	43
Should grandparents be paid for childcare or should Nanna do it for nada?.....	45
Parents have made smartphones a school problem	48
Can we please find a vaccine for the mullet pandemic	50
Many things should be off the table at 79 – and becoming a parent is top of the list.....	53
Modern praise plague destroying our kids' resilience.....	56
School uniforms and rules about hair colour are a waste of time	58

Analysing Language - Introduction

Read the following, then analyse how they are intended to manipulate language in order to influence readers. Consider tone, vocabulary, word connotation and content of ideas.

Letter 1: Importance of Mental Health Support

Mental health issues affect millions of individuals and their families, and it is time to address this pressing societal concern.

Mental health is not a matter of personal weakness but a genuine health challenge that can impact anyone, regardless of age, gender, or background. Unfortunately, stigma and a lack of resources often prevent people from seeking the help they need.

To create a healthier society, we must prioritize mental health in our healthcare systems, schools, and workplaces. This includes ensuring accessible and affordable mental health services, raising awareness to reduce stigma, and integrating mental health education into school curricula.

Moreover, employers should recognize the importance of providing supportive work environments and resources that promote mental well-being. By investing in employee mental health programs, companies can create a positive impact on productivity, job satisfaction, and overall well-being.

Policymakers, healthcare providers, and communities **MUST** collaborate and address the mental health crisis head-on. If we don't, we will face an exponential increase in people suffering, increased mental health crises and suicides and all of us will be the price for our inaction.

Madeline Cartwright, Essendon

Letter 2: Support for Higher Education Funding

I write this letter to express my concern about the current state of higher education funding and advocate for increased investment in this critical sector. Education is the backbone of a prosperous society, and it is essential to ensure that quality education remains accessible to all.

Unfortunately, rising tuition costs, budget cuts, and diminishing financial aid have made it increasingly difficult for students to pursue higher education. This poses a significant barrier to social mobility and stifles the potential of countless talented individuals. Where Australia was once the envy of other countries for its access to tertiary education, we are now the laughing stock with rates of tertiary graduates declining each year. It's time we asked ourselves why?

Investing in higher education not only benefits students but also strengthens our economy. Graduates contribute to innovation, research, and workforce development, driving economic growth and societal progress. By supporting higher education, we invest in the future success of our nation.

Let us recognize the transformative power of education and work together to provide the necessary resources for our future leaders, thinkers, and innovators.

Chris Tuckman, Point Cook

Letter 3: Climate Change Awareness

I write this letter to raise awareness about the perilous problem of climate change and the pressing need for immediate action. The evidence is overwhelming – our planet is a pulsating powder keg, primed for catastrophic consequences if we do not act now.

Rising temperatures, rampaging hurricanes, and melting ice caps are clear signs that the Earth's climate is careening out of control. But do we turn a blind eye to the sizzling statistics? Do we ignore the warning bells tolling in our collective conscience?

Did you know that the last decade was the hottest on record, with each passing year intensifying the heat? Our planet is gasping for breath, as carbon emissions continue to choke its delicate lungs. If we don't alter our course, we risk facing a future where our children inherit a broken planet, withering like a wilting flower.

I implore our community leaders to don their armor of courage and champion the cause of climate change. Shall we be silent spectators, or shall we rise like the mighty river, eroding the barriers of indifference and forging a path towards a sustainable future?

Let us not bequeath our descendants a world ravaged by our indifference. The time for action is now. Together, we can mend the wounds of our planet, breathing life into the battle against climate change.

Michael Drummond, Hawthorn

Verbs for Analysing Language

Use these specific verbs instead of **argues, contends, shows and demonstrates**.

Emphasize	Insist	Hold
Persuade	Accentuate	Protest
Argue	Underscore	Profess
Suggest	Assert	Confess
Convey	Maintain	Demand
Highlight	Claim	Impugn
Evoke	Reason	Tarnish
Create a sense of	Allege	Confirm
Illustrate	Opine	Corroborate
Insinuate	Dispute	Depict
Propose	Deny	Disclose
Advocate	Question	Endorse
Recommend	Hint	Establish
Advise	Discredit	Intimate
Urge	Inspire	Substantiate
Encourage	Motivate	Typify
Counsel	Embolden	Uphold
Indicate	Fortify	Validate
Demonstrate	Coax	
Imply	Press	
Express	Further	
Stress	Nurture	
Draw attention to	Cultivate	
Foreground	Strengthen	

Words and Phrases for Argument Analysis

Words to Describe Tone

Abusive	Cynical	Negative
Admiring	Defensive	Nostalgic
Aggressive	Detached	Open-minded
Alarmed	Diplomatic	Outraged
Amicable	Disappointed	Passionate
Amused	Dismayed	Patriotic
Animated	Dull	Patronising
Apathetic	Earnest	Pedantic
Apologetic	Educated	Pessimistic
Appreciative	Regretful	Reasonable
Approving	Elated	Remorseful
Arrogant	Enthusiastic	Respectful
Astonished	Expert	Ridiculing
Attacking	Fervent	Sarcastic
Authoritative	Forceful	Satirical
Baffled	Formal	Scathing
Banal	Forthright	Self-righteous
Benevolent	Frank	Sensible
Bewildered	Friendly	Sentimental
Bland	Guarded	Shocked
Boatful	Hostile	Snide
Calm	Humble	Supportive
Cautious	Humorous	Sympathetic
Clichéd	Inspid	Understanding
Conciliatory	Ironic	Unequivocal
Condescending	Lamentful	Venomous
Confounded	Liberal	Vindictive
Confrontational	Moderate	Zealous
Conservative	Modest	
Controlled	Moralising	

Phrases

The power in this text stems from...

For the reader, the text produces...

The general pattern of language provokes...

The influence of this text lies in...

The dominant trend in this text is...

The writer has tailored this text to...

The text embodies...

The article generates feelings of...

The perception of the reader is sharpened by...

The text intensifies...

This accentuates controversy by...
 This incites/ invites readers to...
 Arouses deep concern in...
 Leaves the reader with a sense of...
 Presents the reader with an ultimatum that...
 Affirms in the readers mind...
 Encourages readers to...
 Manipulates readers by...
 Diverts responsibility by...
 Exacerbates the controversy by...
 Provokes a reaction by...
 Challenges readers to...
 The text given prominence to...
 The text mobilises support by...
 The language is designed to...
 The article pinpoints...
 The writer probes...
 The text constructs an image of...
 The author advocates the view that...
 The writer endorses the position...

This [technique]	positions sets up prepares predisposes encourages leads inclines seeks to persuade aims to convince intends to sway	the audience to	see consider agree accept the notion that think that response believe understand feel sympathy for reject fear dislike distrust lose sympathy for lose patience for
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Persuasive Language and Devices

Persuasive Language	Example	Effect	Sample Analysis
Ad hominem attack	“He is clearly not up to the job and the longer we tolerate this incompetence the longer we will suffer!”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uses emotive language to create a negative impression. • Focuses on the individual rather than their opinion 	The ad hominem attack on the mayor is designed to focus the reader’s attention on the person the author feels is responsible for the current issue. By undermining the mayor’s credibility the author seeks to position the audience to dismiss their ideas and viewpoints.
Alignment: left, right or centre justification on a page.	We must act now!	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draws the readers attention when texts are aligned different for a particular section. • Adds emphasis. 	By aligning the text to the centre, the author is drawing the reader’s attention to salient points that they wish to emphasise. Visually, this will draw the reader’s attention to these points and allow the reader to focus and reflect on this as they consider the arguments put forward.
Allegory	“The competing factions may be better described as the tortoise and the hare. We all know who came out on top there!”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conveys hidden meaning through the use of symbolic characters and events. 	By using the allegory of the tortoise and the hare, the author is referencing a well-known message that those who are the fastest do not always benefit. This is likely to encourage readers to be more open minded in their approach and not see speed as the most important factor.
Alliteration: repetition of a sound at the beginning of words.	“Councils Clash over Clubhouse”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Captures attention. • Adds emphasis. • Draws attention. 	The use of alliteration in the headline, “Councils Clash over Clubhouse” is designed to capture the reader’s attention and add emphasis to the issue being presented. The alliterative language makes the headline and therefore the issue memorable for readers.
Anadiplosis	“Our purpose is greater freedom and greater	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasises a message by locating a group of 	The use of anadiplosis for the phrase “greater freedom” emphasises this point and allows the author to reinforce his central

	freedom is our purpose.”	words at the end of one clause or sentence and then repeating that at the start of the following group of sentence.	message. This is in turn likely to be something that readers remember.
Analogy: comparison between two things; helps draw conclusions about similarities.	“Going online without understanding the basics of the internet is like getting behind the wheel of the car without knowing road rules.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Explains a complex point in more familiar terms. • Can help make the contention look simple and obvious by linking it to something we know well. 	The use of the analogy comparing using the internet to driving a car is designed to appeal to a wider majority of readers. By comparing a lack of familiarity with the internet with not “knowing road rules”, the author is simplifying the issue for readers and providing them with an example that they can readily relate to. This is likely to further engage them with the issue by making it easier to understand.
Anaphora	“So let freedom ring from the prodigious hilltops of New Hampshire. Let freedom ring from the mighty mountains of New York.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repeats words at the beginning of successive clauses, phrases or sentences. • Designed to remind readers of a central message. 	The repetition of “freedom” in successive phrases allows the author to poetically emphasise and reiterate his key message. This is likely to be something that readers remember, thus cementing this point in their minds.
Anecdote: a brief personal account or story.	“I couldn’t believe what I was seeing. As I drove down the road, I saw a driver balancing the steering wheel with his knees while he was texting on his phone.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often entertaining or humorous=s. • Personal angle that engages the reader. • Carries weight as a ‘true’ story. 	The author uses an anecdote of his own experience with people texting behind the wheel to emphasise his point that this is a more prevalent issue than people believe. Given the first-hand experience of the author at having seen “a driver balancing the steering wheel with his knees”, readers are more likely to accept the opinion that the author is offering.

Antithesis	“That’s one small step for this community but one giant step for the country.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Juxtaposes two contrasting ideas. • Used to emphasise the importance of something. 	The author’s use of antithesis is designed to juxtapose the relatively insignificant initiative and its potential larger impact. This will encourage readers to see that there is great potential in the reported initiative and by highlighting its broader consequence, readers are more likely to be supportive.
Appeal to a sense of justice: engages with people’s beliefs that everyone deserves fair treatment.	“Changing membership fees half-way through the year is unfair. People sign up understanding the cost and changes are likely to have a negative impact on their ability to maintain their membership.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arouses anger at perceived injustice. • Positions the reader to agree that fairness/ justice should prevail. 	By suggesting that a change in fees is “unfair”, the author appealing to a sense of justice in the reader. This encourages an emotive response from readers who value fairness and equity. This is likely to further their argument and encourage support.
Appeal to family values: based on the belief that the family is an important foundation for individuals and society.	“Children should be able to grow up in the safety of a family; knowing that they will be cared for and provided their basic needs.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasises the importance of family. • Appeals to a desire to protect families and what they represent. 	Focusing on “the safety of the family”, the author is appealing to a sense of family values and the innate desire in most people to care for children. This is likely to resonate with people who have children of their own and create a heightened response as they consider the safety of their own children.
Appeal to fear: plays on people’s tendency to react emotionally when their safety, security, country or loved ones are threatened.	“New rules prohibiting police from working alone for fear pf being attached shows that none of us are safe.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually portrays and extreme-case scenario as probable. • Raises fears and therefore encourages readers to address these fears. 	By appealing to a person’s desire to feel safe, the author is evoking a sense of fear through suggesting “none of us are safe”. Motivated by fear and a desire for their personal safety, readers are more likely to agree with the argument presented.

<p>Appeal to hip-pocket nerve: relates to people's concern about their financial wellbeing.</p>	<p>"The outrageously inflated petrol costs suffered by rural Victorians are in no way justifiable. They are being ripped off, plain and simple."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provokes strong emotion, such as being taken advantage of. • Provokes readers to want to preserve their income and savings. 	<p>Highlighting the "inflated petrol prices", the author is appealing to people's concerns about their financial wellbeing. This is likely to encourage a strong reaction from readers who want to preserve both their income and their savings. Suggesting that people are being "ripped off" further asserts the view that it is deliberate which is likely to further elicit a protective response from readers.</p>
<p>Appeal to loyalty: uses people's desire who belong to a group to persuade them to agree with their point of view.</p>	<p>"So, fellow cyclists. We might be misunderstood and even marginalised in our lycra as we hit the pavement on a Sunday morning, but we need to continue to ride with pride."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Can play on people's guilt, sense of obligation. • Convinces people that the interests of the group require support. • Appeals to the idea that ordinary people can make a difference. 	<p>The author appeals to the loyalty of fellow cyclists by nursing inclusive language and creating a sense of shared identity. This is likely to particularly engage readers who are also cyclists and the importance of supporting each other.</p>
<p>Appeal to modernism: engages with peoples' desire to be progressive.</p>	<p>"Restricting children's access to technology is depriving them of the essential tools needed to function in modern society."</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Suggests what is new is better and worthwhile. • Appeals to a desire to be up to date and on-trend. 	<p>Appealing to a desire to remain on trend and modern, the author is encouraging readers to see "restricting children's access to technology" as a deprivation. For parents who want the best for their children, the suggesting that this will negatively impact children is likely to garner support for the idea of reducing restrictions.</p>
<p>Appeal to patriotism: draws on national pride and people's loyalty to their country.</p>	<p>"All Australians should be very proud of the way in which we cheerfully welcome immigrants</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positions readers to feel it would be disloyal to their country to disagree with the author. 	<p>The author appeals to readers' sense of patriotism by suggesting that there should be a sense of pride from "all Australians". This appeal is likely to resonate with readers who want to see their country lauded as a leader by other nations. Targeting a</p>

	from all over the world.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arouses emotions of pride and loyalty. 	domestic readership, readers who have a sense of loyalty to their country will be encouraged to agree with the arguments the author is presenting.
Appeal to self-interest: engages with peoples feelings that their interests should be placed ahead of others.	“A new freeway might reduce the commute for those who work in the city, but as a resident of this area I will have to pay in terms of noise, pollution and house values.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often divides people into them and us. • Suggests the interest of others are in competition with and threaten those of the reader. 	Targeting a local community and the impact of a new freeway, the appeal to self-interest is designed to encourage readers to see the impact that the freeway will have on them. This suggests that their interests are in competition with others. The desire to promote and protect one’s self interest is likely to motivate readers to agree with the author and encourage them to support the author’s argument.
Appeal to tradition: places a high value on the past and one’s heritage; suggests that abandoning tradition is damaging to society.	“How sad that the local Kindergarten’s Christmas concert, put in every year for the past 25 years, has been cancelled for not being inclusive enough.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourages readers to resist change. • Emphasise the importance of maintaining links with the past. • Romanticises the past and rejects modern ways of doing things. 	By appealing to a sense of tradition with reference to the “25 years” the Christmas concert has been performed, the author is speaking to the longevity of the event, encouraging readers to see it as part of the fabric of the kindergarten. This emphasises the importance of the past and encourages readers to resist change.
Attacking Language: used to denigrate an opponent and by implication, their point of view.	“Twitter is made up of unimaginative, ignorant hordes shouting in a crowded echo chamber.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draws attention away from reasoned argument. • Positions readers to believe that if the individual is flawed then their message must also be flawed. 	Using the adjectives “unimaginative, and ignorant” to describe Twitter users, the author is attacking those who use the platform. This is likely to position readers to believe that those who use Twitter are not well informed and therefore their position should not be accepted.
Bold Font	“We MUST act now to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds emphasis. 	By bolding the words “must” and “protect” the author is drawing the readers attention to these two

	PROTECT our environment!"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reader's attention is automatically drawn to this/ these words. 	words, adding visual emphasis to the implied emphasis of the words themselves. This is likely to cement the point in the readers minds.
Cause and Effect: linking an outcome to a particular set of events or decisions.	"The rising divorces rate has created a generation of young people who are struggling to form their own lasting relationships."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Give the impression that a particular situation/ fact/ action is a direct result of another. • Can create the impression that the writer is logical and reasonable. 	The author links the divorce rate to relationship issues in younger people. By suggesting this cause and effect, the author is suggesting that there are generational implications for the divorce rate and that it can have impacts on the future generations. This is likely to encourage readers to see that there is logic in the author's argument and also be concerned at the long-term impact of divorce.
Cliché: a familiar but overused expression that carries a range of associations.	"The early bird may catch the worm but too many media outlets are sacrificing quality journalism to be first with a news story."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conveys meaning in an economical way. • Can help readers feel more comfortable with an idea. 	By utilising the cliché "the early bird catch[es] the worm", the author is able to convey the sense of priority in an economical way and one with which most readers are likely to be familiar. This encourages readers to feel engaged with the issue and that the author is using language from which they are not alienated.
Colloquial Language	"It's all about a fair go, but first you have to give it a go."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Makes the writer seem down to earth. • Likely to appear to a broader audience. 	The use of the colloquial phrases "far go" and "give it a go" is designed to make the point understandable by a broader audience. Given that the phrases are commonly used and less academic, it also encourages readers to see the author as being down to earth and accessible, encouraging them to further consider the arguments being presented.
Connotation: association or implied meaning of a word.	"Gullible sheep who fall for utter scams don't deserve pity. What kind of fool racks up a	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draws on extra meanings associated with a word to indicate a particular 	The author uses a series of words with negative connotations to denigrate those who fall victim to scams. The use of the words "gullible", "sheep" and "fool" positions victims of the scam as responsible for their own

	\$50k debt on an auction site just to win a \$30 TV?"	<p>attitude to a person or idea.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arouses feelings/ attitudes that position readers to accept/ reject/ like/ dislike a group, idea or viewpoint. 	misfortune. This is likely to sway readers away from feeling sympathy for them, suggesting that it is their own fault.
Dichotomy: the tactic of dividing people or ideas into two opposing groups.	"Either you oppose extending the school day to accommodate working parents or you admit that your own interests matter more."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Simplifies the debate. • Suggest that there are only two valid views. • Suggests that the interest of others is in competition with ones' own. 	The author presents the dichotomy of opposition to extended school days with self interest. This simplifies the debate and suggests that there are only two valid views. Readers are forced to position themselves in one of two positions and they are more likely to support the opinion that is less selfish.
Emotive Language: deliberately strong words used to provoke emotion.	"The report on drug use in Victoria, will show that ice has a deadly grip on the state of Victoria."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positions readers to react emotionally rather than rationally. • Leads the reader to share the writer's feelings on the subject. 	The author uses the phrase "deadly grip" to highlight the impact of ice use in Victoria. This emotive language is likely to position readers to react emotionally rather than rationally and see the seriousness of the issue that needs action.
Epistrophe	"This is progress. Progress by the people, for the people."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repetition of words at the end of successive phrases, clauses or sentences. 	The author's use of epistrophe with the repetition of "people" highlights the role of individuals in this debate. This is likely to empower readers to see themselves as likely protagonists and holding more power than they might have initially thought.
Ethos	"As a judge, I have an excellent background to	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mode of persuasion. • Appeals to the writer's 	The author uses ethos as a mode of persuasion, highlighting their own credentials. And experience. This is likely to add to their

	be able to comment on the matter of youth crime.”	credibility and authority.	credibility and authority and therefore encourage readers to take their views seriously.
Evidence: facts, information or expert opinions used to support an argument.	“Research suggest that people who are in frequent contact with friends through technology are more likely to see their friends in person.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives the writer’s arguments more credibility as it is apparently objective and/ or supported by experts. 	The author uses research into the issue to suggest that there is evidence to support their argument and that its not simply a point of view that the author has constructed. This adds credibility to the author’s argument and is likely to position the reader to be sympathetic towards the argument as it is supported by evidence.
Exaggeration/ Overstatement/ Hyperbole: using dramatic, forceful language to exaggerate the real situation.	“We are a nation of sad, fat drunks!”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arouses emotion. • Can be humorous. 	The author uses humour couples with exaggeration to engage readers in an emotive response to their argument. By suggesting that “we are a nation of sad, fat drunks” the author is making a generalisation that readers will know is exaggerated but one that they are likely to remember for its dramatic statement. This is likely to encourage reads to question to what extent this exaggeration is true.
Expert Opinion: drawing on the expertise of people who have specific knowledge on the issue.	“This view is supported by University of Melbourne researcher Dr Bill Jones who has decades of experience researching this issue in many countries.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gives the argument more credibility. • Suggests that the author is being objective and backing up their assertions with facts/ research. 	By drawing on the expert opinion of “University of Melbourne researcher Dr Bill Jones”, the author is giving credibility to their argument. It shows the author has researched the position that they are putting forward and that it is an objective stance rather than a subjective one. This is likely to encourage readers to see the validity of the argument presented.
Fiscal Evidence: evidence that draws on financial information.	“Childcare costs are likely to increase, leaving people	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aligns the argument with a monetary value. 	The author supports their argument with fiscal evidence, suggesting that people will be “\$50 a week worse off”. This aligns the argument with a monetary value

	\$50 a week worse off.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appeals to people’s desire to increase their financial stake. 	and therefore makes it more relatable to the audience. Readers are also likely to consider their own financial position and how it might impact them in the same circumstances.
Generalisations: a sweeping statement that claims that something is true for most cases or all cases because it is true in one or some instances.	“All girls love dolls and dressing up as princesses.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appeals to commonly held views that may be prejudicial. Positions the reader to judge others based on a particular stereotype. 	By suggesting that “all girls love dolls”, the author is playing to commonly held views and generalisations. This is likely to engage those readers who hold a similar view and also engage those who disagree. As such the generalisation broadens the argument and allows readers to engage with the position the author is taking.
Inclusive Language: involves the reader directly by using words such as ‘we’ or ‘us’.	“Until we have a national data base of sports injuries, we are not going to be able to make the changes necessary to ensure all of us who play sport are protected.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Makes the reader feel included in the issue and that their view counts. Encourages the reader to feel as this view is shared by the group as a whole. 	By repeating “we” and “us”, the author is including readers on the issue and suggesting that this is something readers also need to engage with. This is likely to engage readers and present the argument as more palatable as readers are invited to look at how it impacts them personally.
Listing: Numbered or bulleted lists, use of firstly, secondly, etc.	“First, we must all agree on the course of action. Second, we must rally others to join our cause.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Emphasises points Suggests that there is a logical/ sequential order. Provides direction for the readers to consider. 	By listing a series of actions, the author is emphasising his point and at the same time suggesting that there is a logical and sequential order with which to approach the issue. This clarifies the steps for readers, making a more complex course of action seem easier to achieve.
Logos	“If numbers have increased in this community, it is safe to say that numbers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mode of persuasion. Argument that appeals to a sense of logic and reason. 	The author uses Logos as a mode of persuasion. By presenting a logical argument, the author is asking the reader to take information that they are familiar with and extrapolate this to a

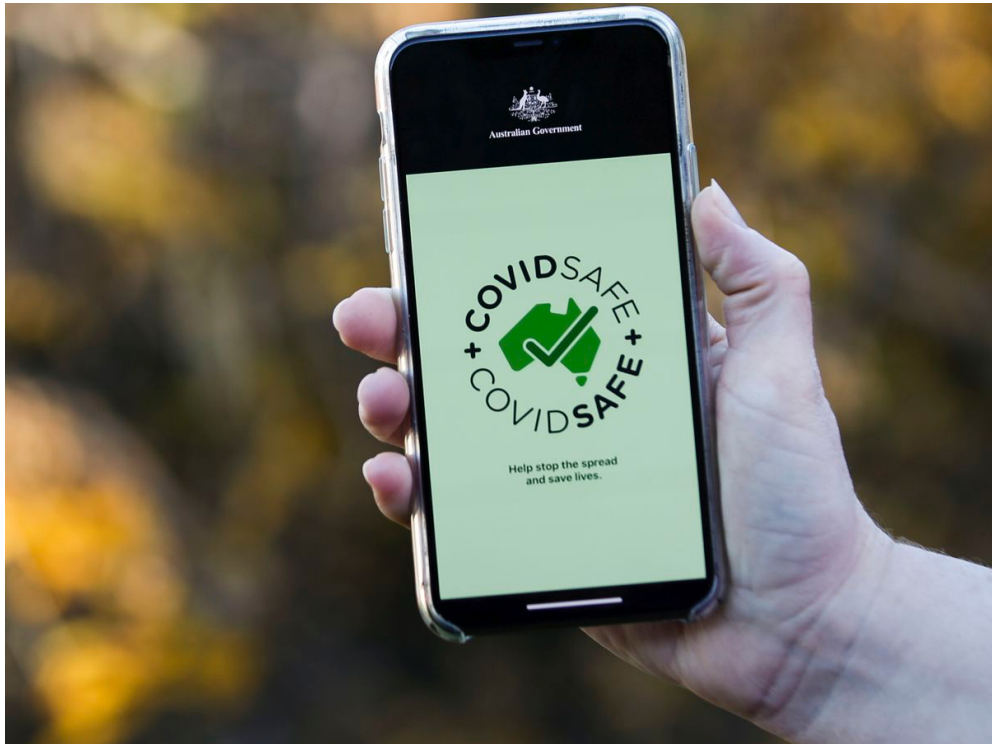
	are increasing everywhere.”		wider context. This is likely to encourage readers to logically follow the author’s argument.
Metaphor/ Simile: comparisons that describe one thing in terms of another.	“Reality TV is the museum of social decay.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Capitalises on associations with vivid image. • Evoked emotion in the reader. 	By comparing “reality TV” to “social decay”, the author is using a metaphor to greater an emotive association for readers. It takes an example that might be known to some of the audience and presents it as equivalent to a concept that can be more widely understood. This is likely to help position readers to better understand the argument the author is presenting.
Numeric Evidence: evidence that draws on numbers.	“500 people joined the rally on Saturday. Another 3,000 people signed the petition.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adds credibility. • Gives a sense of scale. • Suggests that the writer has researched the issue. • Suggests the argument is objective rather than subjective. 	The use of numeric evidence, “500 people” and “300 people” gives the issue a sense of scale and shows the support for the position that the author is taking. This adds credibility to their argument and is likely to encourage readers to see that it as an objective rather than subjective argument.
Pathos	“We are imploring the community in our hour of desperate need.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mode of persuasion. • Argument that appeals to emotion. 	The author uses Pathos as a mode of persuasion. By appealing to the emotions of the reader with the verb “imploring: and the adjective “desperate”, the author is focussing on an emotional appeal that is likely to engage readers with the cause.
Personification	“The rain poured down on crowds, indifferent to their purpose.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figurative language in which non human things are described as having human attributes. 	By describing the rain as being indifferent, the author is asking readers to form an image in their mind of a natural phenomenon being purposeful in its intent. This is likely to further engage readers by creating an image they can readily imagine.
Pun: a play on a word or phrase that gives it	“Its time someone took to Centre Court and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Often humorous. • Gains the reader’s 	Referencing tennis terms like “Centre Court” and “serve”, the author is using a pun to add humour to their argument while at

multiple meanings.	gave the Australian Open a serve.”	attention and emphasises the writer’s point. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Memorable. 	the same time reinforcing the point that the Australian Open should be challenged on the stance that they have taken. This is likely to make the argument more memorable and gain the reader’s attention.
Reason/ Logic: the use of evidence or deduction to support a clear argument.	“If we want to ban smoking for health reasons, we must also increase the price of cigarettes to further discourage smoking.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Creates a credible argument by offering strong evidence. • Makes the writer seem knowledgeable and that their opinion has been well considered. 	The author uses reason/ logic to present their view on cigarette smoking. By suggesting that smoking bans need to be accompanied by an increase in the price of cigarettes, the author is appealing to the logic of readers who would see the two strategies as interconnected. This is likely to add credibility to the author’s argument and encourage readers to see it as a well-considered position.
Repetition: repeating words, phrases or ideas for emphasis.	“One child, one teacher, one book, one pen can change the world.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emphasises the writer’s view point. • Captures attention. • Makes the point more memorably. 	By reading the word “one” the author is drawing the readers to this one word, emphasising the fact that change is possible. This is likely to capture the reader’s attention and encourage them to consider how easy the implementation of this idea can be.
Rhetorical Question: a question that requires no answer, usually because the answer is implied.	“How are we supposed to apply for jobs that don’t exist?”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positions the reader to agree by assuming their answer will be the same as the writer’s. • Engages readers by addressing them directly. 	The author uses a rhetorical question to encourage readers to agree with their assertion by assuming that readers’ answer will be the same as the authors. The use of a rhetorical question engages readers by addressing them directly, thus generating further interest in the issue being presented.
Rule of Three:	“The outcome was depressing, tragic and avoidable.”	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to be more memorable. • Adds emphasis. 	By listing three adjectives to describe the outcome, the author is employing the rule of three. Research suggests that people are more likely to remember things when presented in threes. The use of three adjectives is likely to

			become a phrase that readers will remember and therefore adds emphasis to the author's argument.
Simile	"Politicians are like teabags; you never know how strong they are until they get into hot water."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Figure of speech comparing two unlike things. 	By comparing politicians to teabags, the author is injecting humour into their argument and using a clever comparison to engage readers with their point of view.
Statistics: Using results of research to support an argument.	"According to the annual TAC report, 200+ people die each year on Victorian Roads. This is a 40% increase from a decade ago."	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provides evidence that justifies a point of view. • Suggests that the argument is objective rather than subjective. • Implies the author has researched the issue. 	By using statistics from the TAC report to support their argument, the author is adding credibility to their argument. They are also suggesting to readers that their argument is objective rather than subjective. This is likely to encourage readers to believe the point of view being presented as it is supported by empirical evidence.

Visual Analysis








seen on
www.boredpanda.com

A photograph showing a hand with a tattoo pouring pills from a pill bottle into a red die. The scene is set on a carpeted floor, with several other red dice scattered around. The lighting is dramatic, highlighting the hand and the dice.

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Structuring a Single Argument Analysis Essay

Introduction – CCTAP

- Context – What is the background to the issue?
- Contention – What central point is the author making?
- Tone – What is the tone of the material? How would it sound if read out loud?
- Audience – Who is the material targeted towards?
- Purpose – What is the author trying to achieve?

Body Paragraphs – Argument 1

- What is the argument?
 - What persuasive language is used to present this argument?
 - How does this language position readers?
 - What likely effect does the language have on readers? What else might it prompt them to consider?
 - Does the language appeal to certain elements of the audience more than others?
 - What specific word choices and connotations help support the argument?

Body Paragraph - Argument 2

- What is the argument? How is it similar/ different to the main article?
 - What persuasive language is used to present this argument?
 - Is this similar or different to the main article?
 - How does this language position readers?
 - What likely effect does the language have on readers? What else might it prompt them to consider? How does this compare to the main article?
 - Does the language appeal to certain elements of the audience more than others? How does this compare to the main article?
 - What specific word choices and connotations help support the argument? How does this compare to the main article?

Body Paragraph - Argument 3

- What is the argument? How is it similar/ different to the main article?
 - What persuasive language is used to present this argument?
 - Is this similar or different to the main article?
 - How does this language position readers?
 - What likely effect does the language have on readers? What else might it prompt them to consider? How does this compare to the main article?
 - Does the language appeal to certain elements of the audience more than others? How does this compare to the main article?
 - What specific word choices and connotations help support the argument? How does this compare to the main article?

Visual

- First Impressions
- Foreground
- Background
- Words, Captions, etc

Conclusion

- What might the future hold for the issue?

Sample Argument Analysis Response

To Play or Not to Play, That is the Question



Greg Baum

Sports columnist

April 7, 2020 — [The Age](#)

One of the principles of ethical decision-making is to do the least harm. Our governments are wrestling with this right now as never before. So is the AFL. Its job is to run a football competition, so it cannot be damned for exploring every avenue to re-start this benighted season. The working proposal is to scan teams to clear them of coronavirus before sequestering them in far-flung quarantine "hubs", possibly for months at a time, and bringing them out to play clusters of matches behind closed doors. Where is the harm? The AFL is straightforward in saying it would like to preserve an industry, employing thousands, as well as a game entertaining millions. It says it would not proceed unless granted absolute clearance by civil and medical authorities. But when they are likely to gain that approval, no one can say, except that it won't be soon. Obtusely or deceitfully, the NRL keeps pointing to the fall in daily increase in coronavirus victims as if it won't be long before we kick off again.

But a smaller increase is still an increase. The numbers are still rising. The peak is still to come, and when it passes, the other side won't be all downhill. This week, I heard a health professional say authorities might at some point have to "antagonise" the flattening curve to speed up progression towards herd immunity. Descending this peak will be like descending Everest. Even if the hubs get a green light, are they a sound idea? It would further isolate young men who have already been isolated at home for months, adding stress to already stressed families. Patrick Dangerfield for one is doubtful. On the spectrum of harms, that is not to be disregarded.

Then there are ancillary staff, broadcasters and emergency medical crews. Unable to fly in and fly out, they would have to isolate, too. That makes for quite a community, living in close quarters. And even if that box could be satisfactorily ticked, what sort of message does the whole scheme send to the rest of us? The AFL says all players and staff would be tested beforehand. That is, they would move to the front of a long, long queue. With resources still scarce, no one else gets tested unless they have symptoms or are elderly. If and when they do play, it's footy, an intensely physical game. The rest of us are injunctioned to steer wide berths, congregate no more than two at a time and wash our hands frequently. Not even in lanework is footy played that way. That's not to say it would be unsafe for them, just that it would be a rule for them that is different from the rule for us.

But isn't that lesser harm? These are dog days. We're all locked up at home, millions of us, working or, worse, not working. If we are out, we're uneasy. The horizon is flat and endless. Absent sport to play or watch, we're going back to mist up over old games or play new games virtually. It might satisfy for now, but it won't for long. You can sense the unrest, and sometimes hear it. It's the mental health dimension. Rightly or not, footy already was a

panacea. Now it could be seen as an essential service, not so much above the law as exempt from some laws. Staging AFL footy now might not only mitigate harm, but bring some cheer and relief. Maybe. For a start, there is no start. No one can say if the season will proceed, let alone when. That's no one's fault, but it doesn't help. Supposing a re-launch becomes possible, and even allowing for a three-week mini pre-season, the players will not be match fit. Possibly only a rowing eight would be more inconvenienced by this period in solitary than a footy team. Probably, they will be playing in spring and summer, hardly footy weather; with modified rules, in empty stadiums. The sum of it all is bound to be a lesser spectacle.

Sample Introduction

As a result of the recent COVID outbreak and its detrimental affects on society, the decision has been made to suspend the AFL and NRL season. Sports columnist Craig Baum has addressed this decision with an opinion piece "To play or not to play, that's the question". This opinion piece has been published in the age paper arguing that football is not the most important thing right now during the pandemic and that there are other things that society and the governments should be focusing on. In an informative and measurable tone, Baum seeks to appeal to a wide range of audience who may be affected by the pandemic, as well as AFL and NRL supporters.

Sample BP1

Appealing to a wide range of audience and specifically those AFL and NRL supporter who are desperate for the season to make a kick off, Baum argues that the risk to players and umpires is too great and it will be almost impossible for players to socially distance during a physical game. Making an appeal to this target audience, the writer aims to reinforce the rules the government has set in place for the virus and stating the fact that these rules that society is meant to practice will be violated by running a football season. By projecting his point of view at these people, he aims to create awareness so they have an understanding and let go their desire for the season to take place. Baum argues that if the season were to commence, a lot of work would need to be done including the fact that emergence medical crew would have to isolate to be able to assist and injured player during the game and that the AFL crew would be 'living in close quarters'. Transitioning into his second point, he argues that it's an 'intensely physical game', eliminating their ability to wash their hands and keep their social distance, asking the audience why the rules should be 'different for them than it is for us'. Using language techniques to make his arguments persuasive, Baum has used a significant amount of repetition in his argument which has been used emphasis a point directly to the audience whilst making it memorable. The power in this text stems from words such as 'still', 'descending', 'long' and 'rules' contributing to a forthright and pitiful tone. Colloquialism has been entailed by the writer manipulating the reader by achieving informativity which influences a controlled and relax tone, neutralising his argument through the use of 'all downhill' and 'it's footy', tying up the tone of his argument.

Sample BP2

Transitioning into his second argument the article pinpoints the writers argument that the AFL hub will have to isolate already isolated players, adding stress to already stressed families. Baum makes an appeal to those AFL and NRL supporters who want the season to go ahead, reinforcing the fact that this idea to 'kick off' the footy season is not preferable at this point in time. The text embodies the idea that isolation players as well as those who will need to enter the stadium is a bad idea 'adding stress to already stressed families', before further adding to his argument that 'on the

spectrum of harms, this is not to be disregarded'. He continues to mention the fact that 'men have already isolated at home for months' stating the general idea that this procedure will be a lot more work than those realise. The text mobilises support from persuasive language devices, using repetition to the authors advantage throughout the use of words 'stress' and 'isolate'. This idea of repetition has been used to create emphasis whilst making the idea memorable, allowing Baum's argument to stay in the readers head for longer. The perception of the reader is sharpened by the use of rhetorical questions, subtly influencing the audience by having the question generate in their head, being used for effect and not answering. He also suggests that the question has an obvious answer, generating a bland and laboured tone. The severity in this concept has been manipulated by negative connotations and violent language through the word 'harm'. Arousing deep concern, harm suggests that violence and damage can be done which allows the reader to consider this in their minds and to think about the potential impact this could create. Baum has made this argument a lot shorter than others adding emphasis to his point whilst allowing the reader to develop quick comprehension. It also contributes to a forthright and direct tone, which further supports the writers idea to emphasise this point.

Sample BP3

In regards of the global virus outbreak that is currently occurring, this has driven the writer to argue that AFL is not important right now, reinforcing the fact that our minds should be focused on other things right now. Baum approaches his argument by firstly making a mention of "when are likely to gain approval' while also arguing that it will be like 'hammering a square peg into a round hole' suggesting that the idea is impossible as well as making mention that 'empirically its not possible and viscerally something seems awry' suggesting the same idea but in a more straight forward manner. To do so Baum has used an analogy to make mention of 'hammering a square peg into a round hole' which has been used to the authors advantage by lining one idea to one of the completely opposite aiming to capture the attention of the audience.

Argument Analysis Tasks

Airbnb has lost its way. Even the chief executive agrees



Lee Tulloch

May 23, 2023 — The Age

Airbnb launched in 2008 as an online marketplace for short and long-term stays. The name is short for AirBedandBreakfast.

The launch has been so successful that any short-term rental is now colloquially referred to as an “Airbnb”, even though there are now several companies occupying the same space.

“I’m going to Airbnb it” or “We’re staying in an Airbnb” are words uttered every day all over the world. It’s the Kleenex of accommodation.

But brand recognition can have its downside. The popularity of Airbnbs among investors and the resultant, mostly uncontrolled, growth of short-term rentals, has made the term Airbnb poisonous for many in recent years, especially for those living in apartment buildings plagued by the bad behaviour of short-term renters and for those struggling to find a roof over their heads in their own cities where short-term rentals have gobbled up what little vacancy there is. In cities like Hobart, for example, the rental vacancy rate is a mere one per cent.



Airbnbs ... the original intention has changed and many are not happy. *CREDIT: GETTY IMAGES*

Smaller cities struggle to sustain affordable workforce housing when there is tourism demand for residential-style accommodation. This affects the whole fabric of society.

I have a friend who lives in an area that has become popular with tourists. The poolside of her complex is so occupied with the coming and goings of visitors lugging suitcases there’s barely any space for residents to enjoy the amenities they pay for and look after.

No wonder there's pressure on local councils and governments to introduce harsher regulations. In NSW a dozen councils are carefully watching how the Byron council fares with its plan to introduce caps on short-term rentals (limiting properties in the short-term market to renting only 60 days out of the year) which is awaiting a decision by the planning minister.

Department of Planning figures show that since December 2021, about 13,000 short-term rentals have been added in NSW alone. Of the 45,000 rentals now listed, 30,000 of them were "non-hosted", meaning that the holidaymaker could occupy the entire property.

But this is not a hit on Airbnb. The platform has made travel more democratic, particularly for families who can't afford high hotel tariffs and multiple hotel rooms. It has made hotels rethink what they're offering guests and how they can improve their services to be more in line with what the modern traveller wants. The rating system gives a certain degree of power back to the consumer.

Although there's a trend back to hotels as people express dissatisfaction with high charges, poor customer service, and bad hosts, I wonder if this will reverse again now that hotels have become stratospherically expensive in many places?

The housing crisis is complex and short-term rentals are only a part of it. Sleeping through the past decade or so, governments haven't built enough housing to take care of the needs of our growing population - and, worse, they've tied the basic human right for shelter to the investment market.

Pre-pandemic, Australia had 347,000 Airbnb listings - that loss to the long-term rental market still cuts deeply.

This is why I found the recent launch of Airbnb Rooms so interesting. Positioned as a new take on the original Airbnb, the Rooms platform "lets you experience a city like a local by staying with one", with a focus on private room rentals and new features such as a conversational interface using AI.

Wasn't that the original Airbnb concept? Well, yes. People with spare rooms or granny flats had a platform where they could advertise their rooms and make a little money out of them. The hosts were present and often acted as informal tour guides to their cities. It was a truly great idea.

But then it morphed into a massive commercial enterprise with apartment blocks being built solely to be rented out as Airbnbs and good housing stock snapped up by investors who could make more money renting out a property by the night rather than by the month.

It lost its way, as they say. Chief executive and founder Brian Chesky agrees.

“It wasn’t about empty homes, it was about people staying with each other,” he told travel news site Skift. The values got “watered down”, he added. “If I could do it over again, I would hold on to those values.” He’s reading the room. With so many cities and councils under huge pressure to regulate, and some travellers having misgivings about the effect their rental is having on the places they visit, short-term rental platforms are in danger of not being seen as Kleenex but Tesla.

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Tony McIntyre

AirBnB accommodation is no longer the spare room or the granny flat. I cannot understand why they are not legislated as being hotels.

I still find it amazing at how everyone goes on and on and on about housing supply but nobody mentions the demand side of the equation.

We have one of, if not the highest population growth rate in the western world driven mainly by immigration. This is totally within the control of the federal government.

We have a massive housing construction industry which would have to be the most protected manufacturing industry we have. Even it cannot keep up with massive population growth.

The 400,000 extra people we are predicted to have over the next year will work out at something like 100,000 dwellings which are additional to that due to natural population increase and the replacement of existing housing stock. It is huge.

Footy crowds need to cut down on the boos



Greg Baum

The Age April 22, 2023

Victoria set South Australia a stiff but gettable last-day target in a Sheffield Shield match at the MCG many years ago, but when opener Andrew Hilditch was 2 not out at the first drinks break, it was plain that the SACAs had reneged on the chase.

This was too much for a certain young cricket writer of the time, who threw down his pen, marched around to the almost empty outer, tore off his shirt and spent four cathartic hours booing and sledging Hilditch before composing himself, re-dressing and presenting as the soul of professional politeness at the post-match media conference.



Jason Horne-Francis in full flight. *CREDIT: PAUL KANE, GETTY*

There's booing and there's booing. In its time and place, it's part of the theatre of sport. It's one of the ways fans engage with the games they love.

Fans might boo an opposition player because of a perceived offence against one of their own, or because he once was one of their own - no matter that it might not have been his choice to leave - or simply because he is kicking for goal. They boo because everyone is, the mindless mob manifest. Generally, it's booing de jour, not outliving the day. At worst, it might filter into the return clash, but that's it.

Fans boo blithely, not inconvenienced as administrators and media are by personal acquaintance with the boo-ees and so able to project onto their targets black hearts and yellow bellies as they please. They boo self-righteously. They boo heartily.

Sometimes, their booing takes on a darker aspect. Fans might boo a player because of a reported off-field transgression, scandal or twist. Jobe Watson was booed as the face of the Essendon drugs affair, Gary Ablett junior was booed because he liked (and quickly unliked) a

tweet. Way beyond the pale, Heritier Lumumba once was booed upon his return from a spell to deal with his mental health.

Sometimes, players are booed simply because they are good. Wayne Carey and Lance Franklin were accorded this doubtful endorsement. So was Ricky Ponting in England. It always rankles, but some are better constituted to bear it than others.

Fans boo umpires because ... they're umpires. Within bounds, this is part of the theatrics. Occasionally, authorities will try to dampen it down with appeals to people's better angels. The trouble is that no-one at the footy has a particularly angelic mindset. I've seen them. I've been one of them.

The usual effect of a plea for a gentler polity is to provoke more and fiercer booing from people who know that when enfolded and made anonymous by a crowd, they can vent as they never would alone. In the Adam Goodes saga, this went unforgivably too far. That wasn't theatre; it was footy fans as a lynch mob. A sour taste remains.

A distant echo can be heard this season in the booing of Jason Horne-Francis. From North Melbourne fans, it's understandable, though the Roos themselves don't condone it. When joined by fans from other clubs, it becomes a pile-on. Under it is ... a 19-year-old, a stripling, a boy whose mortal sin was to leave North one season after he was conscripted into the club.

Yes, he was the No.1 draft pick, but it was the system that made him so, not him. He wasn't the first to find his status a crown of thorns. Yes, he was unhappy at North, at an unhappy time for the club. Yes, he could have handled matters better; what 19-year-old has all the answers and moves?

Horne-Francis was away from home and lonely. Some teenagers manage, others can't, but the system makes no distinction or allowance. He left, but you can be certain that if he had settled in Melbourne, but ultimately not made the grade, the club would have moved him on.

It's the business of footy. But it should not be blind and deaf to the human dimension. It shouldn't mean that a teenaged footballer is made the cast villain. Good on Port Adelaide coach Ken Hinkley for so publicly backing Horne-Francis. The attacks on him have been public, so why should not the defence?

If sports fans must boo someone, make it a deserving figure. Of course, the most deserving are out of sight and mind, in back offices and the backs of minds. They're sport's meta people, appearing only at lunches.

But here's one particularly worth a decent boo: the millionaire who thinks we should be celebrating the "generational wealth" he has created for Australian golfer Cam Smith by hooking into Saudi Arabia's vast sportswashing fund. He was the Great White Shark, hereafter the Great White Sea Slug.

As for Hilditch and that cricket writer from long ago, let's just say that one of them is still going strong.

Being overweight can lead to heart disease ... but don't tell the kids!



Brad Emery

April 23, 2023 — [The Age](#)

The runaway success Aussie kids show *Bluey* has become the perennial “Old Yeller” of the acolytes of cancel culture. Every time the show depicts something the social media police take issue with, they grab the trusty old rifle off the mantel – “C’mon Bluey, let’s go for a long walk in the forest.”

The most recent “*Bluey* issue” to which online critics have taken umbrage aired last week. The episode, titled “Exercise”, opens with Bluey’s dad Bandit weighing himself. “Aw man,” he comments and grabs a handful of excess mass around his stomach. He lets out a sigh in front of Bluey and her younger sister Bingo and declares that he needs to get out and do some – wait for it – exercise.

Bluey’s Mum, Chilli, also airs her discontent with her own weight within earshot of the girls.

You’d think promoting exercise and the need to be healthy would receive a tick of approval from all and sundry. Surely anything that encourages kids (and parents who also secretly watch *Bluey*) to exercise would be widely applauded.

Wrong. Apparently, the episode was enough to send the tut-tutters on social media and within the health industry into a tizz. Doctors, dieticians, online content creators and social media personalities were among the chorus of voices claiming *Bluey* had engaged with “body-shaming”.

One prominent TikTok user took to the digital realm to share her frustration over the problematic scene. “Apparently, *Bluey* is totally OK with fat-shaming now,” she said. “I mean, overall the message of the episode was fantastic. But the fact they added in the scales and showed both parents being sad and disappointed after seeing the number on the scales, is pretty problematic.”



Bluey’s dad Bandit is concerned about his weight in the episode “Exercise”. CREDIT: ABC

According to the Cambridge Dictionary, body-shaming is criticism of someone based on the shape, size or appearance of their body. Abuse or criticism of another person based on their

appearance can never be tolerated and should rightly be identified and stamped out. Bullying kills.

We do need to acknowledge that the importance of weight and/or shape to how a person thinks of themselves can be a risk factor for the development of eating disorders. About one million Australians, or 4 per cent of the population, are living with an eating disorder in any given year.

However, in the episode of *Bluey* in question, that's not what Bluey's Dad was doing. Bandit was checking his own body mass and using it as an indicator of his overall fitness. He then made the assessment that he needed to get off his bum and get moving. Isn't that something that should be encouraged?

The Heart Foundation lists being overweight or obese as one of the key risk factors associated with heart disease. Being overweight, especially around the waist, is also a lifestyle risk factor for type 2 diabetes.

So, taking this into account, the critics who have attacked *Bluey* would have us adopt the position that being overweight can lead to heart disease and type 2 diabetes, but whatever you do, don't tell the kids!

It's ridiculous.

My father and grandfather were both heart patients. My grandfather died of a heart attack in his 60s and my father had three heart attacks and a quadruple heart bypass.

So, I'm constantly looking down the barrel of either getting my shit together or getting my affairs in order. Over the past few years I've chosen the former.

As a parent, my child has a pretty good chance of having to be heart smart from an earlier age than many of her peers, as her genetic compass will likely shift toward heart health being an issue.

That's why we educate our child about the need to be fit and healthy, to keep our body in good condition, like an engine that we don't want to break down.

Whether she gets that message from the excess jiggle around my middle, or from an episode of *Bluey*, I don't really care.

When woke warriors scream at the world, I usually grab a healthy bowl of unsalted popcorn to watch from afar.

However, when these blinkered blusterers create a reckless and unnecessary fuss over an innocent health message for kids it needs to be called out for the crock-of-kale that it is.

It's great that your child loves Spider-Man and Elsa, but they have no place at Book Week



Cherie Gilmour

August 22, 2023 — [The Age](#)

It's that time of the year when two words strike fear into the hearts of parents who couldn't papier-mache a boat to save their lives: Book Week.

Last year, during a frenzied costume rush, I found myself embroiled in a debate with my three-year-old about why an Elsa (from *Frozen*) dress wasn't appropriate for Book Week. "Look at this!" I said, holding a *Snugglepoot and Cuddlepiefie* print dress. She looked at me with the kind of ridicule only a three-year-old can muster, and I had flashbacks of my mother trying to buy me "sensible shoes".



Frozen is a great children's movie, but should it really qualify as a Book Week costume option? CREDIT: DISNEY

There were tears, a tantrum, and finally, a three-year-old whose dreams came true when she walked into Book Week as Elsa. I felt defeated by commercial forces that were more powerful than my parental guidance.

When *Bluey: The Beach*, a book based on the storyline of an episode of the TV series, won the Australian Book Industry's Book of the Year in 2020, it raised all sorts of questions. What is a kid's book? What should a kid's book be? Am I a narky purist for turning my nose up at a television franchise winning a literary prize? Is it better for kids to read something over nothing given our nation's declining literacy rates?

But something about kids rocking up to Book Week in Elsa and Spider-Man costumes really gets my Billy Goat Gruff, even though I know firsthand how hard they are to avoid.

"There's a quiet frustration among children's writers who are up against very talented screenwriters whose work is being turned into books," a children's writer told me. How is anyone meant to compete against *Bluey*?

The trend for popular characters across different media to be channelled "into a single commercial system erases the boundaries between primary and secondary texts, enabling primary texts (such as television series and video games) to function as promotional

material for other primary texts (such as movies and toys), and vice versa,” Marsha Kinder wrote in *Playing with Power in Movies, Television, and Video Games: From Muppet Babies to Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*.

The commercialisation of stories across mediums leads to never-ending recycling: TV shows become books and multi-installment movie franchises. Disney films become video games, books, cartoon series, Disneyland rides, toys, T-shirts and costumes that can be pulled out of the dress up box come Book Week.

The marketing machine churns out titles guaranteed to sell, piggybacking on the success of other media or on the names of celebrities or sports icons who have little to do with the book’s actual creation but plenty to do with projected revenue. Even more loathsome are the books created for diversity box-ticking purposes.

It’s not the publishers’ fault that *Frozen* and *Bluey* are the equivalent of crack cocaine for small children. But this Book Week, rather than talking about what our kids read, we should be asking why they read.

If *Bluey* books are the gateway drug that leads kids to other books, this is good. Great, in fact. Countless studies show that the health benefits of reading – whatever the subject – are many.

As adults, we read for various reasons. You might be hooked on elaborate detective novels with dark covers and authors with pseudonyms or prefer psychologically stimulating literature like Liane Moriarty or Sally Hepworth. Maybe you’re a sucker for highbrow literature – the arthouse novel that doesn’t use quotation marks for speech or the Penguin Classics.

In the same way that we have a varied diet in what we eat, we should encourage our children to consume a wide range of literature, too, not just whatever is spewed out of the marketing machine.

Like *Guardians of the Galaxy* is to a Wes Anderson film, kid’s books also have auteurs: practitioners of style who are passionate about the written form. Think of Graeme Base, Alison Lester, or Jackie French.

More than just encouraging kids to pick up a book – any book – a beautifully crafted story that’s been purpose-made to be read has the power to inspire kids to fall in love with language and the joys of the imagination. TV shows, by contrast, tell you what to look at, with little room for subtlety or personal interpretation. But a good children’s book is like a poem; its meaning won’t reveal itself immediately. You can return to it throughout your life, and it will always whisper new messages. This power is why *The Giving Tree* and *The Velveteen Rabbit* still evoke such strong responses in people decades on from their original release.

This Book Week, let your kid wear the Spider-Man outfit but push the boundaries of their reading adventures. I can guarantee you that librarians and local bookshops will be your greatest allies in the mission. The

Marketing is a powerful force, but it has nothing on the imaginations of storytellers whose work continues to speak to us through the ages. And even better, the costumes for these stories can become hand-me-downs.

Cherie Gilmour is a freelance writer.

Moss

Sorry but you must have way too much time on your hands. You seriously tried to stop your 3 year old dressing as Elsa because you don't deem it a proper book? If it's a story in book form then it's a book as far as I'm concerned and anything that encourages a child to pick up a book is to be encouraged. Most harassed parents don't have the time, energy or money to get outfits that represent 'real' books. They have an Elsa or Spiderman outfit though, ready to go so they use it. Please don't judge parents who send their kids to book week in these costumes. They are doing their best.

Nathan

While I understand your point, I do want to point out that long before he appeared in kids cartoon series and blockbuster movies, Spider-Man was a character who originated on the printed page. The popularity of Peter Parker was born out of decades of people - many of them young people - reading through his adventures on the pages of Marvel Comics.

Scoffing at the Commonwealth is easier when you live in a rich, white nation



Waleed Aly

July 28, 2023 — [The Age](#)

Whoever you think has had the better of the argument over the Victorian government's decision to dump the Commonwealth Games, there's little doubt which side has been more fashionable.

Declarations that hospitals matter more than bread and circuses reflect well on whoever wishes to make them because they have an immediate ring of decency. Decrying the Commonwealth Games as impossibly daggy and substandard underlines one's sporting discernment. Then there are those who object to the Commonwealth itself, casting it as the final, antiquated remnants of the British Empire: an irredeemably retrograde association that simply shouldn't exist. This claim quite explicitly betrays a certain anti-imperial seriousness.

Each of these arguments presents as being the stuff of high standards and high minds. And while I have no desire to be the millionth person to announce a view on the Victorian government's decision, or even the Commonwealth Games, I cannot resist addressing the last of these arguments – against the Commonwealth itself – for the simple reason that I think it's a bad one. Fashionably bad, but bad nonetheless.



It fundamentally mischaracterises what the Commonwealth is, and who it should benefit. It simply assumes that because its membership is built on a shared history within the British Empire, it must be a mere extension of imperial domination. Over time the Commonwealth only became less and less imperial. After World War II, it dropped "British" from its official title. Where once its nations shared a "common allegiance to the Crown", that all changed when India became a republic in 1950. Now, most Commonwealth nations are republics, while others like Malaysia or Tonga replaced the British monarch with one of their own. It even has members that were never part of the British Empire in the first place, like Mozambique, Rwanda, Togo and Gabon.

Who cares about this? Not Australians, Canadians or Brits. Indeed, a 2009 survey found UK citizens to be the least supportive of the Commonwealth. Support was twice as high in less wealthy countries like Malaysia, South Africa and India. And that's significant when you consider that the Commonwealth is made up of mostly developing countries. Of its 56 members 21 are in Africa. A whopping 33 are "small states", such as islands in the Caribbean and the Pacific. That makes it the only major world forum in which small states are the majority.

These nations face unique disadvantages that come from being small, isolated, and often without valuable natural resources. They are particularly economically and environmentally vulnerable. Accordingly, the Commonwealth produces a relatively high amount of research specifically promoting their interests to the rest of the world. It also provides them a regular forum to lobby and build relations with a behemoth like India, which is probably of much greater interest to them now than Britain is. Viewed this way, the Commonwealth isn't a means of continued colonial domination. It's a forum for the world's tiniest nations to sit at the same table as the world's biggest. It turns out that calling the Commonwealth an imperial anachronism is easiest if you're in a rich white nation that would ultimately have nothing much to lose if it vanished.

If we want to criticise the Commonwealth, let's choose some better criticisms. You might prefer to argue that it doesn't live up to its charter, which commits its members to democracy, gender equality, sustainable development and international peace and security. Certainly, there are Commonwealth nations who do not answer that call. And yet, aside from the most egregious examples – apartheid South Africa, Mugabe's Zimbabwe, Pakistan after the 1999 military coup – these members go largely without censure. But that leads to a very different kind of argument: one that asks the Commonwealth to police its members' values and behaviour more, rather than less. That's the opposite of accusing the Commonwealth of being quasi-imperial. It's accusing it of giving too much deference to its members' sovereignty.

Electric scooters Melbourne: Call to outlaw the personal light electrical vehicles



Susie O'Brien

The Herald Sun - March 26, 2023

E-scooters are the best thing that's ever happened to cyclists. Thanks to all the annoying scooter riders infesting our city spaces, no one cares much about Lycra-clad loons anymore.

We're much more concerned about the irritating users of these so-called electric micro-mobility devices, or as I like to call them, drunk-people death traps. Locks blowing in the breeze, e-scooter riders glide in and out of pedestrians on footpaths and roads, barely breaking a sweat. With ear buds jammed in their ears, they're often checking their socials as they zoom along, they're blissfully unaware they're leaving a string of annoyed walkers and motorists in their low-carb footprint.scooters in Melbourne CBD.

Some wear helmets like a fashion accessory, refusing to do up the strap. Do you know what you call a helmet that's not done up? A hat. I am not against e-scooters, but e-scooter riders who have an amazing inability not to ride

dangerously. Sometimes there's two of them crammed on the same scooter, giggling as they clock up speeds of 40km/hr going the wrong way on the freeway.

E-scooters are believed to meet an unmet transport need. What need? Acting like an idiot at top speed in public places? Officially they are known as PLEVs – personal light electrical vehicles. These so-called jetskis of the city should be known as their real name: PISS. Personal injury Status Scooters.

People ride e-Scooters along the footpath on Elizabeth St. Picture: Brendan Beckett
The state government announced earlier this year that the one-year trial allowing two brands of e-scooters would be extended until the end next week. They should read on and save themselves many hundreds of thousands in consultants' fees. I'll tell them what they need to know for free. THE TRIAL HASN'T WORKED. NOT EVEN A BIT. E-SCOOTERS ARE CRAP AND EVERYONE HATES THEM. (OK, I feel better now.)

To Lord Mayor Sally Capp and Premier Daniel Andrews, I make this plea. Please rid our lovely city streets, paths, parks and waterways of these lurid louts. Please let drunk people with an urgent desire to get across the city so they can lose moneyat Crown Casino stumble into cabs like they used to before e-scooters came to town.

Please let young people who want to feel young and free take a jog rather than pick up an e-scooter.

The corner of St Kilda Rd where a motorist tried to run down several people riding e-scooters. Please let tradies who are late for work opt for fare evading on public transport like they used to do. I urge you to allow Neuron and Lime to go back to being brain cells and fruits, not transportation options. Whatever you have tried to do to get the e-scooter operators to take responsibility hasn't worked.

From the beginning the trial was flawed because it allowed two commercial companies to operate, but banned individually own e-scooters from being ridden in public even though it's legal to buy them.

The idea was that the scheme would ensure the companies would track wrongdoers, control the scooters' use and storage and monitor the impact. But for the past year, e-scooter riders have been carelessly flouting the rules and no one seems to care.

There are fines of more than \$900 but this isn't a deterrent because hardly anyone is fined. If e-scooters continue (please, no), the rules have to be strong and upheld by police because we can't count on e-scooter users to do the right thing unless coerced to do so.

Hospital statistics show the most common accident involves a drunk young male without a helmet who falls or loses control of his scooter.

E-scooters should only be used on bike lanes and paths writes Susie. Picture: David Crosling
Yes, of course it does. If these scooters are to be made a permanent blight on our landscape, they need to be docked off footpaths and in properly demarcated areas. They need to be only used in bike lanes and paths where they are separated from pedestrians, and they should only be used by those with a drivers' license.

The government should also make it mandatory for all e-scooters be registered so the riders and owners can be identified. They must fine riders without helmets and fine riders with helmets that are not strapped on.

Crack down on people who are riding them on footpaths or roads and fine them too. Confiscate e-scooters left lying around the city, fining the owners. And then fine people who don't issue enough fines.

There's another issue. Right now, only those riding within the road rules and operator's conditions are insured for third party injury. This makes no sense because most accidents happen when people are doing the wrong thing.

However, it would be better to outlaw them altogether. The Scooters Behaving Badly Twitter page has this apt slogan. Don't park or ride your e-scooter like an idiot. Better yet, don't ride one at all. This, I think, says it all.

Bettina

I (notionally) work in the city and go in there when I must (about twice a week). Every day I see 'scores' of people riding illegally on the footpaths, and at great speed (and as there are NO POLICE, ever, in the city) they can do as they please. And for all the 'private' scooters, they are ALL ILLEGAL, if you don't have a motorcycle licence. The city is a dirty, dangerous (full of beggars) place to visit - I for one am embarrassed to call myself a Melburnian !

Peter

In the city on Saturday night. They were all over the roads and footpaths. 90% without helmets worn(just attached to the scooter) and more than 50% two-up. They swap from road to footpath is the lights are red. ignore road rules all together and the only police vehicle seen all night was a parked PORT vehicle. They know there is no interested in policing them, so they behave accordingly. The trial proved they were unsafe so the government extended the trial. The ever-unaccountable government.



Scooter riders in Melbourne CBD. Picture: David Crosling

It's not just the Matildas. Why all women footballers deserve better pay



Andrew Webster

Chief Sports Writer

August 11, 2023 — [The Age](#)

By every measure, the Matildas and the FIFA Women's World Cup has been an outrageous success; a game-changer for not just women's football but women's sport in this funny little country of ours.

Sell-out attendances at matches and heaving live sites dotted around major cities; TV ratings that outstrip State of Origin and NRL and AFL grand finals; online and social media traffic that has threatened to break the interweb and googles.

There's nothing more clichéd than evaluating the rise of women's sport by the number of men who are watching and talking about it but, still, fat old men in pubs are talking about Caitlin Foord, Hayley Raso and Ellie Carpenter - and it's a beautiful thing. Most tellingly, my well-placed beer sources report that Colombian supporters almost drank Allianz Stadium dry when their country played Germany two weeks ago, putting England fans who had been there two nights earlier to shame.

A giant has been stirred in this country and that giant is best embodied by a 172cm, 20-year-old called Mary Fowler, whose touch and poise has been something to behold in all of Australia's matches.

With all that in mind, then, it's important to cast our minds back to the eve of the tournament when the Matildas took it upon themselves, as co-hosts, to put the issue of pay and prizemoney parity on the agenda with a social media campaign of their own — not just for them but, mostly, for other countries that don't have a collective bargaining agreement, including the Lionesses, England's national team that won Euro 2022 last year.

Australia's players were predictably slammed by some commentators as being "woke" and told to "just worry about playing", but the truly laughable remarks came from FIFA president **Gianni Infantino** when pressed on the issue on the eve of the opening match. "If somebody's still not happy about something, well, I'm sorry," he said. "I'm happy with everything and I love everyone."

Thanks for that, Papa Smurf. I love everyone, too, but my patience would be sorely tested if I was getting disproportionately paid for my efforts while FIFA backstrokes in swimming pools of cash.

The issue of pay and prizemoney equity is one of sport's trickiest issues, not always well argued by either side of the debate. Comparisons are fraught with danger.



Hayley Raso, Emily van Egmond and the Matildas are flying. CREDIT: REUTERS

Men's sport is the forever bankable powerhouse while women's sport is the lightning every major football code is trying to capture and shove in a bottle, even if they want to pay a discounted price for the lightning and the bottle.

It's silly, though, to argue that the average audience of 3.56 million people who watched the Matildas play Denmark in the Round of 16 *proves* they are as popular as the Socceroos, who attracted an average audience of 1.34 million.

It proves that a lot of people watched the Matildas in prime time on a Monday night, the other in the early hours of a Monday morning. Support for one team doesn't have to come at the expense of the other.

Indeed, it will be interesting to see the figures for the Matildas' quarter-final against France played at 5pm on a Saturday when people are out and about.

Many also incorrectly assume that the Matildas are poorly paid in comparison to the Socceroos. They've been paid the same for the past four years under the current CBA.

Nevertheless, there's a yawning gap in World Cup prizemoney. The \$US440 million in prizemoney that FIFA handed out in Qatar last year dwarfs the \$US110 million the women's tournament will receive this year. Infantino has flagged the notion of parity by 2027, but it's all words. Nothing in writing. Nothing official.

And the issue runs much deeper than what's being dolled out to the elite players. If women's football, and indeed sport, is to flourish, it requires significant investment from FIFA, national governing bodies, broadcasters, the media and, of course, fans.

This World Cup has provided a decent look at what it can look like. Let's hope the party continues when the rest of the world goes home.

Should grandparents be paid for childcare or should Nanna do it for nada?



[Hannah Vanderheide](#)

August 15, 2023 — [The Age](#)

The best part of being a grandparent is getting to hand them back, right? Well, it doesn't always work that way.

Picture it: you've finally managed to retire, you're settling into a new pace of life and the next few decades are shining ahead of you, gloriously golden. Then your kids start in with the babies.

You're thrilled, obviously, practically giddy anticipating all the joy en route for your family. But there's a tiny niggle, a historical whispering about how bloody exhausting babies are. And how obstinate toddlers get. And how relentlessly unpredictable young family life can be.

It will be fine, of course; everyone figures it out and you'll help wherever you're needed. But what if you're needed every day? Or you're expected to care for the grandkids three days a week so that your child can work? Childcare is prohibitively expensive, the housing market is a joke eliciting no laughs, and, of course, you're happy to help, right?

Well, that's the question. Where is the line between "helpful grandparent" and simply "the help"? And if you are putting in long hours, working as an early childhood educator, shouldn't you be paid as one? For my own parents, receiving substantial support from my nan in raising us, the answer was yes.

After a lifetime of care work, professionally as a paediatric nurse, and raising two kids solo, she went in on my parents' first home and lived with us. As was the case with a 1970s divorce, my nan got the kids and little else.

To then expect a woman who had devoted her working life to caring for others to sacrifice time she would otherwise have spent pursuing a blossoming talent for watercolours to care for us, without any compensation, would have been entirely unreasonable.



Grandparents are increasingly being called upon to help out with their children's kids. *CREDIT: SEAN DAVEY*

The bottom line is childcare is work and bloody hard work at that. It's also deeply undervalued work in a world that enduringly diminishes care-based professions. As such, it's no secret that the bulk of unpaid care work still falls disproportionately on women.

We say "it takes a village to raise a child", but in cultures that do it well that "village" is made up of women. So to say "it takes a village" in our modern world is really saying that we expect women who have spent their lives as primary caregivers, income earners, and often carers for their own ailing parents, to then gear up, ready to raise the next generation.

Now, family means being there for each other, no questions asked, but when the set-up is such that one party feels used, underappreciated and potentially resentful, the arrangement needs to be examined. I'm not saying this applies across the board, but it's happening more than we might think.

An older family friend often complains that her daughter – a single mum by choice – relies too heavily on her to cover childcare. Caring for her grandchild while juggling her own shift work, our friend laments, "She chose this. I have not."

On the flip side, I have colleagues who grumble when their parents are on holiday, "spending my inheritance", and unable to fulfil their usual childcare duties.

Of course, every situation is different and, as with any decree, caveats abound.

I'm not proposing that the role of grandparent should become a transactional one. Occasional care, special outings, helping when parents are sick, and generally supporting new parents through the early years of child-rearing is a cherished part of grandparenting. What's needed is open and compassionate communication to ensure all parties are actually happy with the arrangements, whatever they may be.

Compensation needn't be as formal as cash for care either. In the case of my nan, it meant paying for her art supplies and classes. It's about acknowledging the value of what's being provided, and an understanding that this is not something kids are owed from their parents.

Parents' obligations go as far as getting us safely through to adulthood. They don't then extend to leaving us a lump sum of cash when they die and putting aside the golden decades of their lives to raise our kids.

What if they're "all cared out" and need a few decades where tiny, vulnerable creatures don't depend on them for survival? Is that allowed? Is that selfish? Well, if it is, so be it.

It's the kind of selfish I'm going to be if my own kids end up multiplying. I will adore my grandkids and be there for support, but I am certainly not raising my brood, caring for my own parents as they age, then working to retirement only to be rewarded with the expectation of raising the next generation.

Hannah Vanderheide is a freelance writer and actor.

Parents have made smartphones a school problem



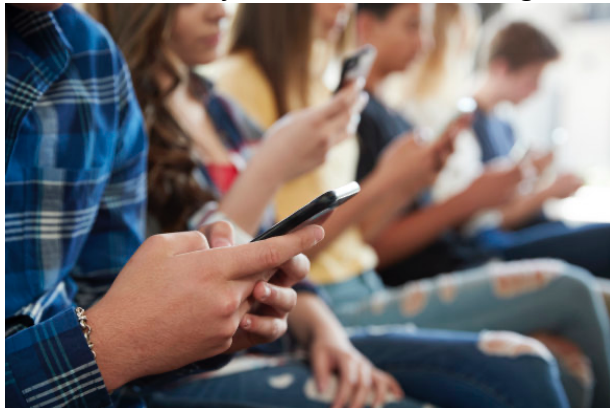
Antoinette Lattouf

Broadcaster, columnist and author

The Age - April 5, 2023

The move to ban smartphones in NSW high schools is undoubtedly met with groans and eye rolls by teenagers. But I'm not judging them. I, too, am rolling my eyes. Not at teachers, principals or even the government. Nope, my beef is with parents.

Data collated this year suggests that 37 per cent of children under 12 have a smartphone. That's jumped by 15 per cent in five years. The average age of a pre-teen smartphone owner was seven-and-a-half years old. Almost 1 in 10 were given a smartphone between the ages of five and seven. Many five-year-olds are still learning the alphabet and how to count to 20. Is it just me, or is something not adding up?



Parents need to be the pilots not the passengers of these digital planes. *CREDIT:ISTOCK*

Research shows social media's negative impact on kids. It's addictive and terrible for their mental health. Smartphones further exposing children to the 24-hour brutality of cyberbullying and online grooming is also a disturbing problem.

The dangers are well-documented, and unlike tablets and laptops, phones offer round-the-clock, pocket-sized, and unfettered access to the online world. So why on earth are more and more parents giving even younger children smartphones?

Inevitably, mobile phone use leads to social media use, and my daughters know kids as young as seven who use Instagram and TikTok, despite the minimum age being 13. You can usually spot them near the handball courts gyrating to sexualised songs from TikTok or at the playground mimicking dangerous pranks that are going viral.

I understand the pressure to give in to children pleading for a smartphone, but the list of harms is far longer than the number of vowels a child can use to elongate the begging:

“Pleeeeeeeeeeeeease, all my friends have one. Why are you soooooo strict and mean? I promise I won’t spend heaps of time on it.”

Mobile phones make children more sedentary. Myopia in kids is skyrocketing thanks to excessive screen use and – crucially – young children don’t have the digital literacy skills and maturity to navigate the huge amounts of content they will come across online.

Safety is often cited as the primary reason to give a child a phone. I understand that some kids catch public transport to and from school. I also empathise with the fact that many households have both parents working due to that fat mortgage and cost of living pressures. Add after-school activities to the mix and, well, as a mother of two I can attest to the logistics and comms required to juggle it all.

However, most of the above can be solved by using a good old-fashioned dumb phone like a Nokia, which anyone over 30 might once have used. It can only take calls and send texts. There are also a range of watches that can track a child’s location, but kids can only make or receive calls and texts from home.

Parents need to be the pilots not the passengers of these digital planes that are taking off faster than we can say “don’t send anyone a photo of your genitals”.

Thankfully, I’m not the only one. A growing number of parents want to give the finger emoji to smartphones for their young kids. The Heads Up Alliance is a growing parent community that tries to encourage other families to ban social media and smartphones among primary schoolchildren. Their overall aim is to encourage parents to delay smartphones and instead use that time to prepare children on how to safely use them when they’re older.

This group was among those who lobbied the government to bring in the school ban. While schools and governments have a role to play in managing the use of smartphones, the fundamental duty of care and early introduction comes from the home.

I’m not suggesting smartphone prohibition. Instead, we should wait until children are physically, mentally and emotionally ready to understand and navigate their consumption and the dangers that come with its use.

Many parents I know regret giving their child a smartphone as early as they did, but I have yet to meet a parent who is kicking themselves for holding back.

Can we please find a vaccine for the mullet pandemic



Hannah Vanderheide

May 30, 2023 — [The Age](#)

We've copped a lot of crap post-pandemic. From rising interest rates and rents, a cost-of-living crisis, mass burnout and the promise of other crises to come. But we don't seem to be talking about the most troubling thing to come out of our brush with total annihilation – the resurgence, and subsequent “mainstreamificaiton” of the mangey mullet. Like most societal collapses, it happened gradually.

I spotted one of those juicy neck warmers out at a restaurant after the first round of COVID lockdowns ended. It was still novel enough, then, that my friend put a photo of it on our group chat with a satirical, “My new boyfriend just arrived!”

What happened next, no one could have seen coming. Instead of climbing back into the monster truck they piled out of, the mullets proliferated. Suddenly, everywhere you look you see business happening up front, and a party growing down back.

Forgive me, having come of age on the mean streets of Canberra in the early 2010s, I am a bit baffled. Back then, the mullet was a sure sign that you were up to no good. It was a statement, much like a full-face tattoo, that announced to anyone in glancing distance that they should give you, and your “Billy-Ray Cyrus”, a wide berth.

So why are these self-described “filthy” buggers now showing up everywhere from the footy field to the boardroom? Is it some kind of elaborate prank? Frankly, I'm stunned by these mullets. They've gone from post-lockdown-LOL, to fringe fashion statement, to now showing up at bars where I can't afford more than one drink.

And it seems exposure therapy has done nothing for me because I – along with most Millennial women who date men – still grimace a little with every glimpse.

I will say that I agree with the suddenly former WA Premier Mark McGowan, when he said, “I think you should be free to have a mullet and go to the pub. I don't think there should be rules around that.” This was back in the crazy hazy days of 2020, after a mullet-necked teen was refused entry into a Perth watering hole.

I certainly don't condone discrimination based on appearance. We're an odd bunch, we humans; we come in all sorts, and you should be free to live your best life, mullet or otherwise. Heck, people like me wear activewear nearly every single day without penalty, so you should be free to flaunt that collar duster whenever and wherever.



Achy Breaky Hair: Billy Ray Cyrus. CREDIT: FILM MAGIC

I'm simply seeking clarification because this isn't one of those "I was born this way" kind of deals. What baffles me is, when faced with the choice of mullet or short back and sides, why oh why would you opt for the former? I mean if Bon Jovi couldn't make it fashionable what hope is there for your average Joe Blow-mullet?

I'm not saying this hairstyle has never had its place. In 2018, a small NSW town called Kurri Kurri founded Mulletfest in celebration of those who choose the mullet "as a lifestyle, not a hairstyle", with categories including "Everyday", "Ranga" and "Grubby". And with this, I am entirely on board.

The joy of the mullet lives in its absurdity, not its ubiquity. Collectively, we've all made some pretty big fashion faux pas – jeans under skirts and, even worse, fishnets under ripped jeans ... It's never too late to admit when we've strayed down the wrong path. But there are certain things that simply shouldn't meander their way back into the mainstream.

The good news is that the course correction is simple and low cost – just a quick snip from a sharp pair of scissors, and you're back on track with no track down your back.

So, to the intransigent mullet enthusiasts out there, of which I'll concede there are many: we might not understand each other, but I hope you can forgive my aversion as I learn to accept what you've done with your deserved haircut liberty.

I know we can peacefully learn to coexist. If you could maybe just sometimes tuck that thing into your collar for me, that would be perfect. Thanks.

One of the few

I just cannot believe something so awful has made such a huge comeback. So many little kids have the style. I thought we would have learnt a lesson. The 80s were fabulous, with the exception of the mullet which should have been left back in the 80s.

Many things should be off the table at 79 – and becoming a parent is top of the list



Thomas Mitchell

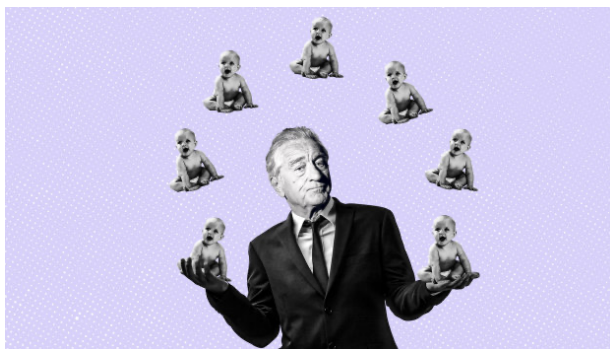
Culture reporter

May 14, 2023 — [The Age](#)

Five months into first-time fatherhood, and everything hurts all the time. My knees are so sore from rocking the baby in his early days that I am almost certain there is serious ligament damage but can't bring myself to visit a doctor for confirmation.

My back aches from an endless cycle of lifting and putting him down, made worse by the fact that he appears to double in size every half an hour.

And my voice is permanently hoarse because being a parent means your life becomes a musical; every act must be accompanied by a big number in order to prevent possible tears. "We're going to have a bath; we're going to have a bath; my knees are shot; the water's hot; we're going to have a bath!"



Meet *The Parents* ... again. Robert De Niro has just become a father for the seventh time at the age of 79. *CREDIT: MARIJA ERCEGOVAC*

Five months into first-time fatherhood, and I have never felt older in my entire life, so you can imagine my surprise when I read this headline: Robert De Niro "just had a baby" at 79.

At first, I assumed it was just the latest in a series of strange roles that have made up the latter part of De Niro's career. Of course, the guy who starred in *Dirty Grandpa* (2016) and *The War With Grandpa* (2020) is now shooting *I Just Had A Baby At 79*.

But no, there it was, splashed across news websites and doing the rounds on breakfast television: Robert De Niro, 79, has just become a father for the seventh time. The two-time Oscar winner and his girlfriend, Tiffany Chen, 45, welcomed a daughter on April 6.

De Niro confirmed the news while doing press for his latest film, the appropriately titled *About My Father*. Quizzed about his six children, the 79-year-old corrected the interviewer, "Seven, actually," De Niro said, adding: "I just had a baby."

As far as announcements go, it's pretty De Niro; he was hardly about to drop a carousel on Instagram, but more curious was the response. For the most part, people seemed nonplussed. Articles used phrases like "expanding his brood" or referred to how "scared but excited" he was about becoming a father again.

But nowhere was anyone putting their hand up and addressing the elephant in the room: should we be scared (not excited) that Robert De Niro is having a baby at 79?

The Peter Pan syndrome of famous men is not new; you can't kick a rock down Hollywood Boulevard without hitting a guy born before the First World War but whose girlfriend is on TikTok.

And coming up with a list of examples is easy because the minute De Niro announced his baby news, the algorithm kicked into gear. Aware that people would be searching online for "old actors with young babies", websites started pumping out listicles.

Thanks to US Weekly's *Celebrity Dads Who Had Children Late in Life*, I know that Alec Baldwin had two kids at 62, Richard Gere had one at 69 (and again at 71), and Steve Martin became a father for the first time at 67. Yeah, the guy from *Parenthood* (1989) waited until 2012 to actually give it a go.

The age-old problem we have here is that these men do not see old age as a problem at all.

While we may roll our eyes at the likes of Leonardo DiCaprio and his penchant for dating women under the age of 25, what De Niro is doing is more irresponsible.

Putting aside the issue of what constitutes an acceptable age gap, surely common sense suggests that once these Peter Pan men hit a particular age – let's say 50 – they should approach sex in the same way they approach steep hills; safely.

Undoubtedly, there will be those who believe this entire column is ageist and everyone should be free to do whatever they want, whenever they want, however they want.

But at 79 years old, certain things should be off the table completely: parkour, spicy foods and becoming a parent.

I'm under no illusion he will be changing nappies or getting up for feeds. One of the perks of being rich is hiring people to help with the tricky bits, which is fine.

My wife and I regularly daydream about how much easier things would be if we were insanely wealthy. But all the money in the world can't buy you more time, and time is what matters most.

The sad reality is that Robert De Niro's seventh child will be on borrowed time with her father, making the decision selfish.

By the time I'm 79, I look forward to my children taking on the role of caregiver: making sure I'm fed, singing to me and keeping me away from sharp corners.

As for De Niro, well, I hope his knees are still up for it.

wangbaba

I'm 62 and just fathered my second child. My wife wants a third, but I have made it very clear that this is not going to happen. Reason/s below.

I do tend to agree with the author. I will need to keep working until I'm at least 75 (which I'm very happy to do - I'm in good health and have a particular skill set which should allow me to do this), but even then, my youngest child will still be at school.

I've never been able to kick a football but I can ski and cycle, and am encouraging my five-year-old to do the same. I should be able to join her in these activities for a good while yet, but at some point, yes, I will become an old codger and not be of much use. This will be even more of an acute problem vis-a-vis the younger one.

I was opposed to the idea of a second child, as I did feel I would at some point be too old to be able to continue doing justice to the responsibilities of child-rearing. So why did we go ahead and have another?

Simple reason: my wife wanted another. Desperately. So I agreed, despite all my misgivings.

62 is probably a little too old. 79 is definitely too old. But it remains a personal choice for the parents, and so I'm not going to sit in judgment of Mr de Niro. I wish him and his family well.

Utterly selfish disclosure: I am loving fatherhood - no regrets.

Modern praise plague destroying our kids' resilience



Susie O'Brien

May 26, 2023 – [The Herald Sun](#)



Every kid who plays sport has a swag of shiny medals proclaiming their prowess or participation in under-12s soccer, or open-level under-8s high jump.

I have a bronze medal from 1979. It's for coming third in the under-8s 100m dash at Leigh Creek Area School.

The fact there were only two others in the race didn't dampen my excitement. I got a medal! It's in a box of childhood treasures that includes my set of knuckles made from real bones (the butcher's son was in my year) and my high school Mars yellow and red certificates for athletics. The Mars Athletic Star Award was a national athletics competition, with kids receiving one to five stars for competing in a range of events. I got three two-star certificates and my sister got four with four stars. Yes, of course she did. I didn't care that she was better than me. I got a certificate, and it wasn't one star!

Awards, certificates and medals were thin on the ground for a non-sporty kid whose greatest heights were reaching the softball E and F team in year 12 playing with kids two years younger. No one was rewarding me for participating, let me assure you. Compare this with the haul of medals, affirmations, ribbons and pats on the back available to kids these days. They go to a semester of soccer training and get a certificate for turning up. They come last and get an award for participation. They do worse than last time and get an encouragement prize. Every kid who plays sport has a swag of shiny medals proclaiming their prowess or participation in under-12s soccer, or open-level under-8s high jump.

When I was growing up in the 1970s and 1980s, kids knew where they stood – what they were good at and not good at. Kids like me who weren't that good at sport knew it and didn't sweat it. The few shiny things that came our way were prized because they weren't handed out week after week. That lonely little bronze medal came to mind when Australian Federal Police Commissioner Reece Kershaw went rogue during hearings of the Senate Estimates Legal and Constitutional Affairs this week. Delightfully off script, Commissioner Kershaw mused about the need for younger workers to [receive lavish praise](#). He said that in his experience, members of Gen Z need to be praised three times a week, compared to

Millennials who needed praise only “three times a year” and Gen Xers like him who needed it only “once a year”.

Demographer Mark McCrindle weighed in, affirming the neediness of Gen Z as they had grown up with positive encouragement whereby “every child gets a turn at being player of the week”. I’d suggest this plague of praise is breeding a generation of kids who have come to expect constant affirmation, even when they put in no effort and do bad jobs. We are at a point where even praise has to be delivered in the right way, with so-called experts advocating we praise the behaviour, not the child. This means saying “you did a great job” or “I love how hard you keep trying” rather than “good girl!” or “you’re so smart”.

I am pretty sure my own dad was too busy wearing budgie smugglers as daywear and concreting things into the backyard to worry about complimenting his daughters in the right way. It’s ridiculous. How are kids going to grow up resilient and strong if they are never confronted with their own failings? An inflated sense of entitlement is no substitute for good old effort and grunt work. Of course, this tough love approach doesn’t apply to kids with special needs who need encouragement and praise regardless of their outcomes. But kids who have no reason not to pursue high standards should be clearly confronted with accurate results measuring their efforts. Ask any parent; it’s now harder than ever to see how your child is really doing because any lack of skill or effort is hidden behind positive affirmations. Early childhood assessments measure a child’s being, belonging, becoming. Too bad if you want to know about their pencil grip. My son’s school report tells me he usually “actively participates in learning” and sometimes “generates, evaluates and challenges ideas”. Where’s the A-E of school reports in my day? Where are the certificates revealing the good and bad athletes? Now, where are those knuckles? I feel like playing a game with winners and losers.

Susie O’Brien is a Saturday Herald Sun columnist

What an absolutely ridiculous article! All kids, no matter whatever their endeavour is, need encouragement, they need positive affirmation and they need praise! I have always treasured my small participation medals for playing junior sport, many years ago. I treasured my certificates and book prizes for attendance at Sunday School too!

Kids know exactly where they are in the pecking order with their sporting abilities. They receive plenty of subliminal encouragements from playing computer games, so sport must compete against those incentives. Any classroom teacher will state that kids thrive on praise, no matter what level that they are at. It is totally ridiculous to deny encouragement, praise and small awards from kids these days!

Bruce13

School uniforms and rules about hair colour are a waste of time



Adam Voigt

CEO and former principal

June 21, 2023 [The Age](#)

When Mordialloc College decided that a year 10 student with brightly coloured hair should study away from his peers until his hair complied with the school's dress code, the world imploded.

At least, that's what you'd be forgiven for thinking if you read any of the online responses to the story. Pitched battle lines were inked around which of two apparently opposing rights are the heaviest – the student's right to free expression or the school's right to enforce a dress standard.



Sides were chosen and arrows were fired. And if the vociferous nature of the public conversation reflects even a little of the private WhatsApp chat groups I've seen among parents when a school is perceived to have wronged our child, then a brief pause to reflect on the example we're setting our kids might be in order.

Parents and schools squabbling over the colour of a student's hair is as edifying as two toddlers scrapping over which coloured sippy cup they want their cordial poured into.

It doesn't matter and the eventual winner doesn't really gain anything anyway. All we do is tell those watching that we have frivolous priorities and weak negotiation skills.

Frankly, it's embarrassing to be going to war over hair colour and dress codes in schools and that's chiefly because they don't matter.

Waverley College has warned parents that students showing up with mullets will have their hair cut for \$20 at school.

On the side of uniforms and dress codes are those who would argue that they promote social cohesion, respect for teachers, improve attendance, reduce class distinctions and foster a sense of group identity.

And, if you dig deeply enough into research papers that only confirms that viewpoint, you'll find some supporting evidence. But in each instance, the impact is so small that it simply doesn't warrant the time and effort required to enforce strict uniform standards in schools. The research is clear that, if a high-quality education is the genuine objective, then we'd be addressing factors far more impactful than what the students are wearing.

Opponents of school uniforms will tell you that they cultivate robotic conformists of our kids, poison self-expression, oppress student voice and also improve attendance. Except, not so much.

While one study in 2012 found that a handful of secondary schools recorded increased female attendance rates at school, it was only by about half a day a year. It hardly seems something that parents and students should be choosing as their social justice and educational hills to die on. Half a day.

In Victorian government schools, like Mordialloc College and Officer Secondary College, where such friction points over hair and uniform have recently emerged, the decision on student dress codes is one that requires school council ratification.

School councils are parent representative bodies, meaning that parents picking a fight with the school over dress codes are picking a fight with their own comrades, who just happened to make a different assessment of the potential competing rights of the school and the students.

At the precise moment that parents and schools could be uniting in the shared goal of building a decent, resilient learner and citizen of our young people, we're throwing tantrums about our separate and competing rights. The losers in our ability to see reason? Our kids.



The bad habit we've formed in our community of dying in the ditch for causes that really don't matter at all is damaging our kids in two ways.

Firstly, we're setting our young people the example that getting your way is what matters most – and it doesn't. It's abundantly evident that the skills that successful people in the future will need include collaboration, compromise, problem-solving, perspective and empathy. As artificial intelligence advances upon the more manual and repetitive jobs of the future, it'll be the jobs requiring the navigation of humanness that remain. The last thing they need is the skill of navigating themselves into collisions about trivia like school uniforms or hair colour. In effect, we need them to adopt the ability to examine the gravity of an issue and know when to say, "Meh, whatever".

Secondly, scraps over uniforms and hair colour create a distraction for busy schools that we don't need them dragged into. We need every school laser focused on installing the skills, knowledge and character traits that give our kids a fighting chance of winning in this crazy world. They don't have a second to waste on whether a student's cause, multiplied by their parental endorsement, is worthy of compromising a standard that the school's representative parent body itself approved.

I don't know if Mordialloc College have tried to find a compromise in this particular case. I hope they have and I also hope they didn't waste too much precious learning time on it.

More than anything, I hope that more Victorian parents are realising that side issues like uniforms, hair colour, canteen lists, homework policies, bus routes and other such nonsense are unworthy of lacing up the boxing gloves for.

Adam Voigt is a former principal and founder and CEO of Real Schools.

