

BtN: Episode 11 Transcript 10/05/16

Hello and welcome BtN!

Coming up today:

Why some people thought this was a bad move in the fight against poachers.

We find out if staring at a screen can really ruin your eyesight.

And the dog that tracks koalas in the most smelly way imaginable.

You will see all of that soon.

But first:

Tax Balance

Reporter: Nic Maher

INTRO: The 2016 Australian budget has now been revealed and some of the biggest changes were to tax rates. Some people and companies were given tax cuts while other companies might soon be getting taxed more. But what do Treasurers have to keep in mind when tinkering with tax rates like this? In this prequel to last week's budget story BtN's resident treasurer gave us exclusive access as he tried to decide where to set his tax rates for this year's budget.

ANNOUNCER: Previously, on BtN's Budget Emergency.

COMMUNICATION KID: Sir, it's getting closer. We need to make some decisions.

TREASURER: Just give me a minute, I need to think!

COMMUNICATION KID: But it's nearly time!

ANNOUNCEMENT: Budget will release in 3, 2, 1.

TREASURER: This whole 'making the budget' business is a piece of cake. I can't believe people actually stress out over this kind of stuff.

ADVISOR: Alright, let's get to it. They're saying we'll have a big budget deficit next year. We need to start paying that back. What do you want to do?

TREASURER: Well, check this out! Everyone pays heaps more in taxes, we get more money, goodbye deficit. Let's get some milkshakes.

ADVISOR: I don't think that's going to work. With less money, Aussies can't buy as much stuff.

TREASURER: Why does that matter? Can't people just spend less for the next few years.

ADVISOR: They could, but spending is good for the economy. More spending means more money for businesses, which means more jobs for people and more people paying taxes to the government. Plus, it's not exactly a vote winner and there is an election coming up.

TREASURER: Alright I've got it! How about we make businesses pay more tax til it's all sorted out? Solved!

ADVISOR: I don't think that's going to work sir! Businesses need money so they can hire more people and grow. If you take too much away from them, that means fewer jobs and fewer people with money to spend, and that's bad news for the economy.

TREASURER: So you're saying I can't get more money from anyone! Fine! How about we get rid of taxes altogether. At least then everyone will have heaps of cash, the economy will be doing really well and everyone will be happy!

ADVISOR: Not so fast. That means the government won't have any money to spend. That means no healthcare, no schools, no roads and that will make a lot of people angry.

TREASURER: I don't get it. How about other countries, can we steal their ideas?

ADVISOR: Well, every country works differently. The most an Aussie pays in tax is around 45%. But, in somewhere like Denmark it's around 60% because they get things like free uni degrees, really good maternity leave and some of the lowest poverty rates anywhere.

TREASURER: Are all countries taxes that high?

ADVISOR: No, not all of them. Some countries like Russia only tax people 13% and others like Qatar don't tax people at all! Some people don't expect their government to do much and others get money from different places, like selling natural resources.

TREASURER: This budget stuff is a nightmare! I'm just going to try and balance it all out somewhere in the middle.

LEIGH SALES: Joining me in our Canberra studio to talk us through his first budget is Treasurer Johnson.

TREASURER: Hi Leigh, thanks for having me.

LEIGH SALES: People have described your budget as boring, a balancing act. Are you afraid to make the tough decisions?

TREASURER: I'm sick of this!

Presenter: Well that didn't end well. Now, the budget wasn't the only political news around this week. There was also the small matter of a federal election being called.

The Week in News

It's official, Australia will be heading to the polls on Saturday the second of July! Yesterday Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull went to visit the Governor General to ask him to call a double-dissolution election. That means every Aussie politician is out of a job. And has to campaign for re-election! But there's still 9 weeks til the Election Day itself. So this will be the longest campaign in almost 50 years.

Emergency crews in Canada are desperately fighting a huge wildfire that's burning out of control. It started last Sunday in the state of Alberta. And so far more than 100 thousand people have had to evacuate. Authorities say the fire has destroyed more than 1600 buildings. And reckon it could be months til it's completely brought under control.

And police officers around the world have been engaged in an epic battle. Of dance! Last week police in New Zealand issued a running man challenge to Aussie, US and UK cops. And they set the bar pretty high! In response the NYPD got some local kids to help out.

While police from the Northern Territory had a croc onboard! They've now passed the gauntlet on to others proving that many cops have a great sense of humour and some pretty good moves too.

Ivory Trade

Reporter: Emma Davis

INTRO: Next up authorities in Kenya, Africa have been fighting poachers and the illegal wildlife trade for decades. Last week they took the dramatic step of burning more than 100 tonnes of elephant tusks they'd seized. Their aim was to send a message to the world. But some think they may have made a mistake.

Here, in the middle of Nairobi National Park, more than 100 million dollars is going up in flames. These are piles and piles of illegal ivory. More than 100 tonnes of elephant tusks, representing the death of thousands and thousands of elephants. Authorities started these fires to send a message to poachers in Africa and illegal traders around the world.

ROBIN HOLLISTER, FIRE MASTER: How do you send a message, you do something spectacular.

HELEN CLARK, UNITED NATIONS: That elephant alive is worth so much more than it ever was dead.

Africa is home to around 500 thousand elephants but the United Nations says 25 to 30 thousand are killed every year, many as a result of poaching. Poaching is when a person illegally kills an animal to sell part of it. In the case of elephants, poachers kill them to steal their ivory tusks. Ivory is used to make things like ornaments, jewellery and sculptures and in many countries, particularly in Asia, people will pay thousands of dollars for them because it's a sign of wealth and some believe ivory might have medicinal properties if eaten!

This is a piece of ivory that Australian customs officials confiscated from someone coming into the country and so is this one. This is an elephant's tusk and it was donated. It's been carved and is probably worth thousands and thousands of dollars.

In 1989 a worldwide ban on ivory was introduced which made it illegal to buy new ivory products. Experts say after that, the demand for ivory went down and elephant numbers started to recover. But over the past 10 years, poaching has increased, partly because of demand in countries like China and Vietnam.

ALI BONGO ONDIMBA, PRESIDENT OF GABON: Even in Gabon, the value of a forest elephant ivory has sparked an alarming increase in poaching. Poaching has turned elephants into refugees.

Authorities have tried heaps of different things to fight poaching, like using drones to spot illegal hunting parties, giving rangers special training and creating special private reserves for the elephants to live on. But recently African leaders got together to talk about new ways to stop poachers in their countries, like burning ivory. Kenya's president wants other leaders to destroy their stockpiles like he did, to show that they don't tolerate poaching.

UHURU KENYATTA, KENYAN PRESIDENT: And to do what we can to ensure that never again will our elephants be attacked in this way.

But not everyone agrees. Some think that the burn will actually make ivory more expensive because there'll be less of it available on the market and that could encourage more people to become poachers. Some have even suggested creating ivory farms and making ivory trading legal again to get rid of the need for poaching.

While many people are divided on how to tackle the illegal ivory trade, most agree that more needs to be done to stop these great creatures from disappearing forever.

Poll

And staying with Ivory, I think the controversy around that burn will make for an interesting poll. Do you think burning the ivory was a good idea? To vote just head to our website.

Eye Issues

Reporter: Carl Smith

INTRO: Now to some eye news, over the past 50 years, short-sightedness or myopia has increased dramatically around the world. Many researchers have blamed things like increased screen time. But now, evidence has come out that points to a different cause.

CARL SMITH, REPORTER: Our eyes help us to see the world around us.

But for kids like Sophie, and nearly half of all Australians, their eyes show them a slightly different version of the world.

REPORTER: I'm also one of those people who needs to wear glasses or contacts!

The lenses in my glasses correct my vision so I can see the world clearly.

But how come my eyes can't do that by themselves?

Well in a normal healthy eye light comes through the 'cornea' at the front.

Then it's focussed by the 'lens' onto the back of your eye.

There you'll find a layer of special nerve cells that detect light and colour called the 'retina'.

And that helps to tell your brain what you are seeing.

But some people's eyes are shaped a little differently which can distort or blur what they see!

Being long-sighted or short-sighted are the two most common eye problems kids can have.

REPORTER: Being long-sighted means it's hard to see things up close, and being short-sighted like me means it's hard to see things that are far away.

And it's short-sightedness, also known as being 'myopic', that lots of people have been especially worried about lately.

In countries like China around one in five people used to be short-sighted.

But lately that's jumped up and now four out of every five kids leaving high school have the condition!

And the numbers have also been rising in places like Europe and the US, with signs Australia is also starting to follow the trend.

For a long time many people have thought it's reading or too much time in front of screens that's increasing short-sightedness.

But scientists now say the problem could be not getting enough sunlight!

And this is how they tested it - with chickens and tiny goggles.

These little guys are being exposed to different levels of light to see how it affects their sight!

And the result?

Well with 3 to 5 hours of bright light each day fewer chickens became short sighted!

ASSISTANT PROF REGAN: That is enough per day of this high light to prevent myopia.

These guys say that light releases a chemical called dopamine in our bodies which can stop or slow short-sightedness!

Lots of people will still have to wear glasses because eye conditions can be genetic too.

REPORTER: But the research is really good news for many school kids! Because the scientists reckon if you can spend a few hours outside every day, then there's a much lower chance of you becoming short sighted.

Researchers are even testing out some new ways to bring more light into kids' lives.

So in places like China they're trialling these glass classrooms that let in more light all day!

Spending more time outside in bright light won't mean everyone will always see clearly but it could mean a sharper world for many.

Quiz

How long does it take your eye to blink?

Is it

- 1/100th of a second
- 1/10th of a second
- Or a second.

Answer: 1/10th of a second

Kind Classrooms

Now, last week we launched BtN's Kind Classrooms, a campaign that aims to get all classes around Australia thinking of something small they can do for someone else.

We've had a great response so far, with heaps of schools all over Australia signing up. Some say they're going to help at an aged care home, some are giving food to the needy, some are even washing their teacher's cars! That is kind!

Just remember there is still time for your class to register and get involved. All it takes is one kind idea and your class could end up on BtN. Go to our website for all the info you need to become one of BtN's Kind Classrooms today.

Refugee Experience

Reporter: Carl Smith

INTRO: Now kids' camps are usually a fun experience. But one camp for kids in Norway is anything but. Its aim is to give attendees a glimpse into life as a refugee. And despite being really tough, Norwegian kids are signing up in huge numbers. Here's a taste of what it's like.

Hiding in the trees, crossing borders, unable to stop to catch their breath. But earlier that morning life was very different for these teenagers.

KRISTINE: Do you think it's going to be wet outside?

MAREN: I hope not!

KRISTINE: Yeah.

MAREN: My name is Maren.

KRISTINE: My name is Kristine. I am 15 years old. And now we're going to Camp Refugee. That's a camp where you play a refugee for 24 hours.

Kristine and Maren are just two of the schoolkids taking part in a giant, real-life simulation of what it would be like to be a refugee.

KRISTINE: I'm expecting that it's going to be hard and maybe a little bit cold. We'll probably get hungry because we're not getting too much food.

To start the day-long camp they have to take on brand new names and nationalities. So for today they've become refugees from Sudan in Africa.

MAREN: But it's my new identity. So, this is who I am now.

The camp's organisers want to give the kids on this camp a glimpse of what life could be like for refugees forced to flee their homes.

KENNETH JOHANSEN, SOCIAL WORKER: Biggest challenge is that they don't know what's gonna happen. Norwegian kids don't have a grip of what it means to be a refugee. They see it on TV, but they don't know the feeling.

So while on the camp the kids face the kinds of challenging conditions many of the world's refugees would.

KRISTINE: Not very many people are speaking to us because we are women. We can't talk to other men.

CAMP REFUGEE EMPLOYEE II: Is there anything in your backpack I need know about?

As they travel through the night, experiencing what it would be like crossing into new countries, things can get pretty full on.

KRISTINE: Walking, running, threw ourselves in the side of the road every time a car drove by.

CAMP REFUGEE EMPLOYEE IV: You have been on a long journey. This is a place to relax and get new energy. Here you will get water, you will get the chance to go to the toilet.

MAREN: Now it's just relaxing and maybe get some food and water.

But just like in the real world, refugee camps aren't always the most stable places to live.

MAREN: I don't know. They suddenly just screamed that we have to move and pack our stuff.

KRISTINE: They told us earlier that this place was safe, but obviously not.

Finally, at the end of their 24 hour refugee journey, crossing through many different countries they've arrived in Norway.

CAMP REFUGEE EMPLOYEE IV: OK, how did you get to Norway? I want the exact route.

But just like with real refugees, not all of them have been given asylum in this final country.

CAMP REFUGEE EMPLOYEE V: You walked far and came up against many challenges! Only a few has been granted temporary stay in the Kingdom of Norway!

MAREN: It was a long and exhausting journey, but in the end, we didn't even get our asylum.

It wasn't the most fun school camp. But it showed these guys just how tough it can be for those, forced to flee their countries, hoping for a safe place to call home.

Quiz

Time for our second quiz now. How many refugees were there worldwide at the end of 2014?

950,000

9.5 million

or 19.5 million

Answer: 19.5 million

Sport

It's been a bad week for the Parramatta Eels. The club's been accused of cheating by breaking the NRL's Salary Cap rules. The rules limit how much clubs can spend on players to make sure rich teams can't buy all the best talent. Now the Eels could lose all 12 competition points they've earned this season and face a really big fine.

The Youth Girls AFL National Championships wrapped up on Friday as Victoria Metro beat Western Australia in the Grand Final. The Victorians dominated the match winning 95 points to zero. It capped off a big week of footy for some of Australia's best young female footy players.

Leicester City has won the English Premier League for the first time in its 132 year history. Experts are calling it one of the biggest underdog sports stories ever.

ALAN BIRCHENALL, FORMER LEICESTER CITY PLAYER: If you wrote a script and Walt Disney was still alive he'd say I'm not doing that as a film it's too unbelievable.

In fact, at the beginning of the season experts thought it was more likely, we'd discover the Lochness monster actually exists or we'd find life on other planets.

Koala Tracker

Reporter: Carl Smith

Okay finally today, to better protect endangered species, scientists often have to do massive surveys to work out how many there are in the wild. But some animals can be pretty tough to track down like, say koalas that live up in the treetops. So one group of researchers has come up with a pretty interesting way to track them down - koala tracking dogs. Just wait till you hear how they sniff them out though.

CARL SMITH, REPORTER: This is Maya, and she's on the hunt. But she's not hunting an animal; she's hunting its poo.

DR ROMANE CRISTESCU: Maya's job is to help us humans do a better job finding koala poo.

Yep, Maya is a koala poo hunter. Disgusting. So how come Maya's trained to find koala droppings? Well it's to help her handlers find the koalas that dropped them

there. Because koalas aren't always that easy to find, hiding all the way up in their trees.

DR CELINE FRERE: The great thing with dogs is they can smell what we can't see. Koala poo smells very much of eucalyptus, and so they can help us locate scats very easily.

DR ROMANE CRISTESCU: Where is it? Where is it? Do you see? She just pointed at it with her nose and then she dropped. You're such a good girl, Maya. Well done.

And a smart nose like this one can even track down koalas that have moved around a bit!

DR ROMANE CRISTESCU: The poo stay in the environment for many months, sometimes years, which mean that if you arrive in a site and there's no koala, you may find the evidence on the ground, and that tells you that's koala habitat.

In many parts of Australia koala numbers are declining because of dog attacks, road strikes and vanishing habitat. So researchers like these guys are trying to figure out which are the most important areas to keep protected.

DR ROMANE CRISTESCU: You can see how small they are and they're so easily obscured in the litter, so for a human to see that is really hard. Maya, Maya! Although a canine researcher might sound like a strange idea, dogs like Maya are really suited to the job!

DR CELINE FRERE: You need a lot of stamina because you have to cover a lot of ground and look under each tree for scats. For Maya that's not a problem. She's playing and she has high stamina, so she's 20 times faster at finding the scats. But most importantly for conservation, she's 150% more accurate.

But even the best poo detectors need to keep their skills up with a bit of training!

DR CELINE FRERE: So it's very simple 'cause we don't want to take her in the bush and for her to start indicating on possum poo or eastern grey poo. We want to make sure that Maya knows what koala poo is and exclude any other marsupial poo.

And what does Maya get out of it? Well, first up she was actually rescued and given a home when she got the job!

DR ROMANE CRISTESCU: It was a win-win for her. She got a second family, and for us, we pretty much got the best detection dog we could wish for.

And on top of that, for this pup tracking and playing fetch rarely feels like work.

DR ROMANE CRISTESCU: You're such a good girl, Maya! If you think about it, dogs don't go to work for a salary, they go to work because for them it's play.

CLOSER

And that brings us to an end for today!

Please head to our website for more info on anything you've seen today including how you can be a part of BtN's Kind Classrooms.

And I'll see you next week!

Bye for now