

## Questions for discussion

Episode 7  
21<sup>st</sup> March 2017

### Energy Plan

1. Briefly summarise the BTN *Energy Plan* story.
2. Give an example of a renewable energy.
3. South Australia gets its power from a few different sources. What are they?
4. Why have coal and gas supplies in Australia been affected?
5. What happened when the state was hit by big storms and heatwaves?
6. Why does South Australia's energy plan include batteries?
7. Who is Elon Musk and what is he offering?
8. Apart from building a battery farm, what else is the SA government doing to help with energy supply?
9. Who will own and operate the power station?
10. Name three things you learnt watching the BTN story.

Write a message about the story and post it in the comments section on the story page.

### Queensland Drought

1. As a class, discuss the BTN *Queensland Drought* story. What were the main points of the discussion?
2. What do the kids like about living on a property?
3. Why can it be hard living on a farm?
4. What percentage of Queensland is in drought?
5. What impact has the drought had on farms in Queensland?
6. How is the state government helping farmers?
7. Angus says that getting rain is like...
8. Where Lochy lives, there has just been \_\_\_\_\_.
9. What did you learn about drought watching the BTN story?
10. How did this story make you feel?

Check out the [Queensland Drought resource](#) on the Teachers page.

### Epilepsy

1. Epilepsy means that Archer has a lot of \_\_\_\_\_.
2. What happens in the brain during an epileptic seizure?
3. The seizures that Archer has can be controlled. True or false?
4. How old was Archer when he was diagnosed with epilepsy?
5. What are some of the physical effects of epilepsy?
6. What does Archer wear to keep cool?
7. How does Archer keep calm when he's feeling stressed?

8. About how many Australians are affected by epilepsy?
  - a. 1 million
  - b. 500 000
  - c. 250 0000
9. What is the aim of Purple Day?
10. What did you learn about epilepsy watching the BTN story?

Do the [quiz](#) on the BtN website.

#### Earth Hour Torches

1. What does the BTN story mainly explain?
2. What are Lily and her class making?
3. How are the lights powered?
4. What is the aim of the Earth Hour campaign?
5. How long has the campaign been running?
6. What is the name of the charity that makes the solar lights?
7. Lily is an Earth Hour \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Why are solar lights a good idea for places like Ethiopia?
9. How can schools get involved in Earth Hour?
10. What did you like about the BTN story?

Check out the [Earth Hour Torches resource](#) on the Teachers page

#### Virtual Classroom

1. What was the main point of the BTN story?
2. Which school do the students in the BTN story go to?
3. Why do students go to Aurora College?
4. Explain what the students do in the virtual classroom.
5. Which subjects do the students learn at Aurora College?
6. The students learn from \_\_\_\_\_based all around the world.
7. Finish the following sentence: Apart from the virtual classrooms, the school has virtual...
8. What are the benefits of going to a virtual school?
9. What are the disadvantages?
10. What was surprising about the *Virtual Classroom* story?

Write a message about the story and post it in the comments section on the story page.

# Drought

## FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. As a class, discuss the BTN *Queensland Drought* story. What were the main points of the discussion?
2. What do the kids like about living on a property?
3. Why can it be hard living on a farm?
4. What percentage of Queensland is in drought?
5. What impact has the drought had on farms in Queensland?
6. How is the state government helping farmers?
7. Angus says that getting rain is like...
8. Where Lochy lives, there has just been \_\_\_\_\_.
9. What did you learn about drought watching the BTN story?
10. How did this story make you feel?

## ACTIVITY

### Class Discussion

Watch the *Queensland Drought* story and discuss the information raised as a class. What questions do students have (what are the gaps in their knowledge)? The following questions may help guide the discussion:

- What is drought? Create a class definition.
- What causes drought in Australia?
- Who is affected by drought?
- What impacts does drought have on Australia?
- How can drought be managed?

The following KWLH organiser provides students with a framework to explore their knowledge on this topic and consider what they would like to know and learn.

<i>What do I know?</i>	<i>What do I want to know?</i>	<i>What have I learnt?</i>	<i>How will I find out?</i>

## KEY LEARNING

Students will develop a deeper understanding of what drought is and how it impacts on people and places in Australia.

## AC AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

### Science – Year 6

Sudden geological changes and extreme weather events can affect Earth's surface ([ACSSU096](#))

### Geography – Year 7

Causes, impacts and responses to an atmospheric or hydrological hazard ([ACHASSK187](#))

The quantity and variability of Australia's water resources compared with other continents ([ACHASSK184](#))

## Key Words

Students develop a glossary of words and terms that relate to drought. Below are some words to get them started. Add words and meanings to your glossary as you come across unfamiliar words throughout your research. Consider using pictures and diagrams to illustrate meanings.

Drought	Rainfall	Environmental impact
Climate	Weather	Agriculture

## ACTIVITY

### Impact of Drought

Think about how drought affects people that live in cities. Look at the direct impact of drought and the indirect impact of drought. A direct impact of drought may be that there is less water for growing crops. An indirect impact of drought may be that people in cities may have to pay more for food.

Which of these are direct and which are indirect impacts of drought?

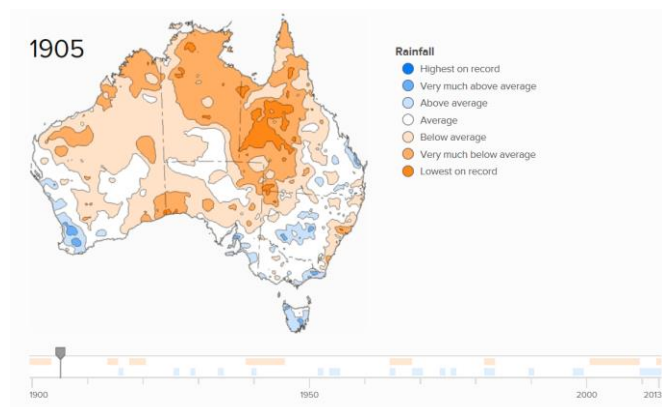
<i>Impact of drought</i>	<i>Direct impact or indirect impact</i>
Wheat crop dying	
Lower water levels in dams	
Tractor sales down	
Farmer loses money	
Anxiety about economic losses	
Loss and destruction of wildlife habitat	
Lack of food and drinking water for animals	
Poor soil quality	
People may have to move from farms to cities	

## ACTIVITY

### Research

Australia has experienced droughts before. Students use the [ABC's interactive drought map](#) to find a major drought in the country's history and research it. How was the country affected? How did the government react?

Encourage students to hear the stories of people who have lived through droughts. They can listen to audio recordings and look at photographs at the [Culture Victoria website](#)



### Images of Drought

Below are photographs depicting drought in Australia. Ask students to look at then respond to the following questions:

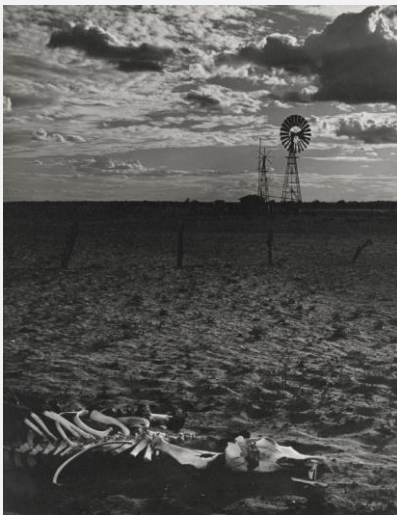
- What is happening in the image?
- What question/s would you like to ask about the image?
- How does the image make you feel?
- Create a caption for each image.
- What does the image tell you about the effects of drought?



[Source: Flickr](#)



[Source: National Geographic Society](#)



[Source: National Gallery Victoria](#)



[Source: Australia.gov](#)

## ACTIVITY

The BTN [Drought Doco story](#) tells the story of Ellen and her family who were affected by drought. Students watch the story then answer the following questions:

1. Why did Ellen decide to make a video about her Grandpa's farm?
2. Where is her grandpa's farm? Locate using Google Maps.
3. What caused the drought?
4. How did the drought affect her grandpa's animals?
5. How has Ellen's family been helping all the cattle survive during the drought?
6. Drought is expensive. What does this mean?
7. How did Ellen's story help you understand more about drought?



**DROUGHT DOCO**

## USEFUL WEBSITES

ABC News – Drought declared in more southern Queensland regions after hot, dry summer

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-13/drought-declared-in-more-southern-queensland-regions/8349056>

BTN – Drought Doco

<http://www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s4186862.htm>

BTN – Drought Help

<http://www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s3953562.htm>

ABC News -Your Say: Living Through Drought

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-10-24/your-say-living-through-drought/7959706>

ABC News – Interactive: 100 years of drought in Australia

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/2014-02-26/100-years-of-drought/5282030>

# Earth Hour

## FOCUS QUESTIONS

1. What does the BTN story mainly explain?
2. What are Lily and her class making?
3. How are the lights powered?
4. What is the aim of the Earth Hour campaign?
5. How long has the campaign been running?
6. What is the name of the charity that makes the solar lights?
7. Lily is an Earth Hour \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Why are solar lights a good idea for places like Ethiopia?
9. How can schools get involved in Earth Hour?
10. What did you like about the BTN story?

## ACTIVITY

After watching the BTN story, respond to the following questions:

- What did you SEE in this video?
- What do you THINK about what you saw in this video?
- What does this video make your WONDER?
- What did you LEARN from this story?
- How did this story make you FEEL?
- What was SURPRISING about this story?

### Class Brainstorm

Brainstorm ways in which we depend on electricity every day. Think about electricity used in the home, at school and in the community. Consider lighting, heating, cooling and electrical appliances. Record the student responses on a concept map. The following questions may help guide the discussion/brainstorm:

- Where does the electricity we use come from? (renewable and non-renewable sources of energy)
- What would it be like if you couldn't use electricity for one day? How would it impact on your everyday activities?
- What do you know about the [Earth Hour campaign](#)? What is it raising awareness about and what is it asking people to do?

## KEY LEARNING

Students will investigate what climate change is and ways they can make a difference.

## AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM

### Science – Years 5 & 6

Scientific knowledge is used to solve problems and inform personal and community decisions ([ACSHE083](#)) ([ACSHE100](#))

### Science – Year 7

Scientific knowledge has changed peoples' understanding of the world and is refined as new *evidence* becomes available ([ACSHE119](#))

### Science – Year 8

Some of Earth's resources are renewable, but others are non-renewable ([ACSSU116](#))

### Geography – Year 8

The use and management of natural *resources* and waste, and the different views on how to do this sustainably ([ACHASSK090](#))



## ACTIVITY

### What is Climate Change?

Watch the BtN [Climate Change story](#) to find out more about the consequences of climate change then answer the following questions.

1. According to a report by the World Bank how many degrees will the world warm by in 2100?
2. What could happen to the temperature in some places around the world?
3. What impact could rising temperatures have on crops?
4. There may be a greater chance of drought and tough conditions for farmers. True or false?
5. What effect could that have on food supply?
6. Why might sea levels rise if there is an increase in temperature?
7. What do you think could be done to stop temperatures from rising?



## ACTIVITY

### Design a sustainable community

Students design a community that relies more on renewable resources. For example, redesign a community with an emphasis on pedestrians, bikes and public transport, rather than on cars. They may create a community where we can work, go to school and shop closer to where we live, create more bike lanes, have more people living closer together so they can support public transport and create safer streets to encourage walking and riding.

Students should consider the following:

- What renewable energies will you need to power your city?
- How can your city be more water smart? Consider including storm water harvesting technology.
- Will you build lots of little houses or a few high-density apartment buildings?
- Is your city pedestrian and cyclist friendly?
- What sort of transport will your city use?
- What recycling programs will your city have?

Watch this YouTube animation about [climate change, energy and action](#) to get inspired!

## ACTIVITY

### Choose your climate future

Students investigate how their world could change as global temperatures rise through the WWF's [interactive](#). They will see the effects on their home, community, sports, farming, environment and beach.







## ACTIVITY

### Make a difference

Consider setting a challenge for your class to reduce the amount of fossil fuels you use and build awareness about climate change.

Watch this BTN [Outdoor Class](#) story, where a class of school kids in Alice Springs set themselves a challenge - to spend a whole week outside, with no access to electricity at all.



## ACTIVITY

### Make a Solar Buddy light

The students in the BTN story were making solar lights for children in Ethiopia. Find out how your school can get involved in the [Solar Buddy program](#). The program teaches Australia school kids about the positive impact of renewable energy on communities living in energy poverty.



## USEFUL WEBSITES

World Wildlife Fund - Earth Hour  
<http://www.earthhour.org.au/home/>

Solar Buddy – Get Involved  
<http://solarbuddy.org/get-involved/>

BTN Outdoor Class  
<http://www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s4102647.htm>

BTN – Climate Change  
<http://www.abc.net.au/btn/story/s3639706.htm>

# BtN: Episode 07 Transcript 21/03/17

Hi I'm Nathan Bazley and this is BTN!

Coming up today

- Nearly 90% of Queensland is now drought declared. We visit some of the kids in the middle of it.
- Meet Rookie Reporter Archer who wants to tell you what it's like to have epilepsy.
- And the kind classrooms school making solar powered torches for those in need overseas.

That and heaps more coming up soon. But first:

## Energy Plan

Reporter: Amelia Moseley

*INTRO: It's no secret that South Australia has had problems with its power supply recently. So this week its Premier announced he would use two things to fix the problem: batteries and gas. The decision got a lot of people talking so we thought we'd take a look at both of these technologies to find out how each might make an electricity grid more reliable.*

You might've heard that South Australia's been having a few power problems lately.

WOMAN: We're all just gonna hang out tonight and treat it like a bit of a night around the campfire I think.

MAN: No refrigeration, no ice, so your food goes off!

Even Adele had issues in Adelaide!

ADELE: I'm sorry for the power cut. You'll never guess what it was.

Ok wait, that blackout was unrelated.

JAY WEATHERILL, SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PREMIER: I can't account for a roadie pulling a plug out.

But the state government has been copping a lot of criticism over its non-Adele related black outs!

South Australia gets its power from a few different sources. It has power stations that burn natural gas, as well as wind farms and solar panels. It can also borrow power from interstate, but when the state was hit by big storms and heatwaves, energy providers struggled to keep up with demand.

But SA's not the only state facing power problems. A few big coal power stations in Australia have closed down recently and then there's natural gas. While we export a lot to other countries, a new report's warned we might not have enough to fire generators here at home. So state and federal governments have been trying to generate some solutions and now SA's premier Jay Weatherill says he has a plan.

JAY WEATHERILL, SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PREMIER: It's a plan for the 21st century. It's a plan to take our clean, green renewable sources and use them to create an energy future for our state and indeed for our nation.

The first part of that plan is batteries. Big batteries that can store lots of power. That'd mean energy from renewable sources like wind and solar could be used all the time, even when the sun's not out or the wind's not blowing. It's an idea that made headlines last week when it was suggested by this very famous dude Elon Musk. He's the super-rich South African entrepreneur, often called the real-life Iron Man! He invented Paypal, founded SpaceX and started Tesla. Which, as well as making speccy electric cars, just so happens to be in the battery business. Over some twitter chats he promised he could build a battery farm in South Australia that could fix the state's power issues within 100 days or he'd build it for free! He says it's something that's worked pretty well in California and Hawaii.

While SA's government won't necessarily go with Tesla's batteries (there are others on the market) it has decided to spend 150 million dollars on building the country's biggest battery farm! It's also going to build a new gas-fired power station which will cost 360 million dollars. Unlike the state's other power plants, it'll be owned and operated by the government, and the energy minister will be given the, umm, power to turn it on in emergencies.

Some aren't happy that SA's investing in fossil fuels. While the federal government isn't happy that SA's going it alone and messing with the way power is distributed at the moment. In fact, things have got a little awkward on that.

JOURNALIST: Is this all a bit awkward?

JOSH FRYDENBERG, FEDERAL ENERGY MINISTER: Haha, no.

JAY WEATHERILL, SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PREMIER: It's about to be.

But the federal government is on board with the battery idea. In fact, the PM had his own chats with Iron Man, I mean Elon Musk last week.

For now, all eyes are on South Australia to see if this new plan helps to keep the lights on!

## This Week in News

In other news this week. While South Australia launched its new energy plan the Prime Minister unveiled an upgrade of his own. He's outlined a \$2 billion plan to expand The Snowy Mountains Hydro Scheme.

For decades the scheme's been providing power for hundreds of thousands of people by turning energy from falling water into electricity. Under the government's changes it would produce 50% more energy.

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In Italy members of a British TV crew have had a lucky escape from an erupting volcano!

Ten people were injured when lava from Mount Etna hit snow and exploded.

REPORTER: Look at this one of these holes was made by one of the rocks we really thought we were all going to die.

Mt Etna is on the Italian island of Sicily. It's one of the most active volcanos in Europe.

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And the Sydney Harbour bridge has just celebrated its 85th Birthday!

To help celebrate, a collection of old interviews and videos has been released to teach us all more about its history.

It includes interviews with some of the men and women who helped build the bridge.

Construction began in 1923 and was finished up in 1932.

## Queensland Drought

Reporter: Amelia Moseley

*INTRO: Next up, we're heading to Queensland. Where almost 90% of the state has recently been declared in drought. We checked in with some of the kids living in these areas to find out what sort of problems it's causing for them.*

ANGUS: My name is Lochy and this is Christmas Creek where I live, that makes it the best place ever!

LOCHY: Hi, I'm Angus. I live on Hughenden Station, my home right behind me. It's in between Townsville and Mt Isa - come on! Let's go look around.

These guys are outback kids living across different parts of Queensland!

LOCHY: Growing up on a property is good, because we do most of the things that usually town kids do, but for example we go to school, but that's just 100 kilometres away and we go to swimming lessons, but that's just two hours! You can have lots of animals out here like the cows and horses.

ANGUS: I think it's fun living out on a property 'cause you can do anything. You can climb a tree, drive a ute, ride a motorbike. All you gotta do is tell your parents where you're goin' and they just know where you're goin'!

But they don't call it the Sunshine State for nothing. Where these guys live, it can get super-hot and dry.

ANGUS: It's hard for an 11-year-old. I'm out here cleaning troughs and mustering cattle in 48 degrees. I wish I could just be with my friends in the aircon at home and I can't I just gotta do more important things in life.

Right now, almost 90 per cent of Queensland is officially in drought. That's the most widespread drought recorded in the state. Drought is when there's little, if any, rain, for sometimes years at a time. That means it can be hard to grow crops, or grass to feed animals.

ANGUS: We've gone through a seven-year drought and it's put a lot of stress on our family and our business. The cattle prices drop and then our money drops and you just go "Why are we doing this?" Like this drought's just everlasting, we're never gonna get rain.

The state government will soon be giving farmers some assistance to make things easier until rain eventually comes, but Angus says rain is all he's hoping for.

ANGUS: I reckon that's the best time of the year, it's like having Christmas all the time when you get rain, it's having a thousand presents just fall down on your face.

Where Lochy lives there's just been rain! So they've been lucky enough to avoid being drought declared this time around.

LOCHY: It's now very beautiful to see what it is now, not brown and dirty. It's really green and we've got plenty of food for the cows and there's also lots of water for us to go swimming!

Meanwhile, Angus says for now he'll just keep hoping for the same, but he wouldn't trade in his life in the country for anything.

ANGUS: That's the life on a property, you gotta have faith, you gotta have hope for your cattle, you gotta have strength, you gotta hold the family together, you don't give up on life.

## Ask a Reporter

Have you got a question about the QLD droughts? Ask me live on Friday during Ask a Reporter!

Head to our website for all the details.

## Quiz

And sticking with the subject about how many farms are there in Queensland?

- 2,000
- 10,000
- 30,000

Answer: 30,000

## Epilepsy

Reporter: Matthew Holbrook

*INTRO: Now, Sunday the 26th of March is Purple Day. It aims to raise awareness about epilepsy, something our next Rookie Reporter, Archer has along with many other kids in Australia. We asked him to share what living with epilepsy is really like.*

ARCHER: Hi BTN, I'm Archer and I'm ten. I love playing basketball, watching Star Wars, and hanging out with my guinea pig, Stanley. I later on figured out that she was a girl. But I still call her Stanley anyway. These are my brothers, Lachlan and Jett. Jett is a year older than me, and Lachlan is my twin. While I always have someone to talk to or play with, they can be annoying sometimes.

I'm a normal kid, but I have this thing called epilepsy. It makes life a lot harder. Epilepsy means I have a lot of seizures. They happen when electrical signals in my brain get mixed up, so for a little while my brain's communication system breaks down. When I have a seizure it's really uncomfortable, and I start drooling and I fall to the ground, and I lose consciousness. It's unenjoyable and I don't like it.

There are lots of different types of epilepsy, but the kind I have means my seizures can't be controlled. It's something I've been dealing with most of my life. I was diagnosed with epilepsy when I was 4. I've spent a lot of time in hospital, and been hooked up to machines like this, which look at the electrical activity in my brain. I also have to take medication. It's meant to control my seizures, but it doesn't even work like it's supposed to, and can have really bad side effects.

I can get drowsy, my legs can get really stiff, I get tired easily sometimes I forget things, or fall over. I also have an ice vest like you see footy players wear. I wear it to keep me cool, because when I'm tired and hot, I'm more likely to have seizures.

I'm in Year 5 at school. My classmates and teachers are great, but I still think I'm treated differently, because people are always worrying about me, even though I don't want them to. When I'm at home, I've got my parents and brothers, who I know are looking out for me.

LACHLAN: I keep a good eye on him, and sometimes even if he has just the slightest twitch, I'll make sure mum's nearby just to make sure he's OK.

ARCHER: And if I'm feeling stressed and need a break, I've got Stanley to help calm me down. I can get tired and a bit paranoid, and sometimes it's hard to sleep. And some days, I have a lot of seizures, and can't go to school. When they're really bad, I have to go to hospital.

Epilepsy affects around a quarter of a million Australians. It's a disability, but in South Australia, where I live, the state government doesn't recognise it as one, and epilepsy services don't get any funding here. That's why I've been campaigning for the government to support the Epilepsy Centre.

The epilepsy centre is an organisation that helps kids and families like mine. I'm also trying to promote Purple Day. It's held on the 26th of March. It's about making people around the world understand more about epilepsy. And this year, my school will be wearing purple, and raising money.

Living with epilepsy ain't easy. But I want you to know I'm a normal person just like you.

PRESENTER: Great work Archer.

## Earth Hour Torches

Reporter: Carl Smith

*INTRO: Next up, we have some more Kind Classrooms inspiration. A group of kids working hard to make cheap and environmentally sustainable torches for families in Africa. They're building the solar-powered lights as part of Earth Hour, an environmental awareness campaign that's marking its tenth anniversary this year. Take a look.*

This is Lily, and she and her class are making solar-powered lights for families in Ethiopia.

LILY: So this is one of the lights and as you can see it has a solar panel on the back to charge a battery for this light.

LILY: You just take them outside into the sun to charge up, and they'll have enough energy for about 4 hours of light.

LILY: and her friends got involved with this project as part of Earth Hour, a campaign to help the environment that runs every year.

It started here in Australia 10 years ago by getting everyone to switch off their lights for one hour, but now it's celebrated in about 170 countries around the world!

These days Earth Hour does a bunch of other things alongside switching off the lights, like supporting developing countries to use more renewable energy and cleaning up the environment.

This year they've also partnered with the charity solar buddy - to make these lights!

LILY: The lights are actually pretty easy to make and they come with a step by step guide.

KID: I think it's really good, because if everyone made one of these, they're really easy and really good for the environment and they can help people who are in other countries who are less fortunate

KID: And the people there who don't have lighting can use them

LILY: Later this month we'll send our solar torches across to Ethiopia so families there can use them.

Solar lights are a really good idea for developing countries because electricity often doesn't reach lots of the towns or villages or it's too unreliable.

And with the help of Aussie kids the solar lights have already been sent to lots of countries, including Papua New Guinea and Ghana.

Lily says the solar buddies can make a big difference for people while also really helping the environment!

LILY: Normal torches use disposable batteries and many in developing countries use fires for light, so switching to these solar-powered torches will be more environmentally friendly!

SOLAR BUDDY PROMO KID: At first, I didn't have a light to study at night, but now thanks to Solar Buddy I have this nice Bright Beam Solar Lamp

Other schools can get involved with this program making solar buddy's for Earth Hour.

LILY: And there's a bunch of other stuff you can do, like switching off your lights on March 25th at 8:30pm, or even host an event!

LILY: We hope you enjoyed learning about the solar buddy, and why we think it'll make a big difference building these for Earth Hour. Bye!

## Kind Classrooms

In those last two stories, Archer and Lily brought you two ways you can give back for Kind Classrooms this year. But there are heaps of other options too.

Last year we saw all sorts of amazing acts planned and carried out by Aussie kids. And we'd love to see even more amazing stories this year.

So get thinking, film your work and send it in to BTN before the 29th of March and you might see your good deeds featured on the show.

For more details, please head to our website.

## Sport

Aussie surfer Owen Wright has capped off an incredible comeback to surfing by winning the Snapper Rocks Pro on the Gold Coast yesterday.

Back in 2015 a brain injury threatened to end his career.



OWEN WRIGHT: In the start of Feb I was sitting in the doctor's office and there were doubts about this year and then to have that final with one of my best mates. I'm just over the moon, so stoked.

Meanwhile, six-time world champ and fellow Aussie Stephanie Gilmore took out the women's event.

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The Adelaide Crows have qualified for the first ever A-F-L Women's grand final after beating Collingwood in the final round of the season.

Adelaide will face the Brisbane Lions who finished the season on top of the table and undefeated!

The two teams will go head-to-head in the grand final on Saturday.

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And a golfer in the US has pulled off one of the flukiest shots of the year

COMMENTATOR: You're kidding no, no, no!

We're not sure what's more impressive; the shot or his caddy's rendition of the chicken dance to celebrate.

## Did You Know?

Okay last up today, we're visiting an Aussie school that only exists in virtual reality

But first an interesting VR fact for you.

Did you know? In the 1930's, science fiction writer Stanley Weinbaum wrote a book about a pair of goggles that let the wearer experience a fictional world.

Many people say the book was one of the first predictions of the VR goggles we have today.

## Virtual Classroom

Reporter: Carl Smith

*INTRO: And we're sticking with VR for our final story. What would it be like to go to school in Virtual Reality? Well, Aurora College in NSW says it's the first VR school in the state. Students meet together in a digital world for lessons run by experts all over the world. Here's a taste of what the kids there think of it.*

MAC: Hi BTN my name is Mac, I live in Cowra

HARRY: My name is Harry.

ALEX: I'm Alex, and I live in the Snowy Mountains, which is right next to all the ski resorts in New South Wales.

Mac, Harry and Alex live in different parts of New South Wales, but they all have one thing in common. Despite living a long way from each other, they're all students at the same school - Aurora College.

TEACHER: Good morning, great to see your smiling faces hello!

Aurora College is a virtual select school for bright and talented kids living in rural or regional New South Wales.

That means these guys still go to their local schools, but they're also enrolled in extension courses in Aurora's virtual classrooms!

MAC: My day starts off like everyone else's - the bell rings and I go to roll call, and everyone goes off to classes. But instead of that, I go off to the library and log in to my aurora class via my laptop

HARRY: Via the internet I am connected with many different students and teachers around New South Wales

ALEX: And this is my science class, and today the focus is on energy!

Aurora College's advanced classes aren't offered in most smaller schools.

ALEX: I do Maths, Science and English on my virtual school and all my other subjects I learn at my home school.

And as a bonus, they get to learn from experts based all around the world!

TEACHER: We're crossing to Switzerland now to talk to Stephen Goldfarm, an experimental physicist working at Atlas.

PHYSICIST: So welcome to the Atlas control room.

RESEARCHER: My name's Rob Hollow and I'm with CSIRO Space science.

Aurora College isn't just virtual classrooms though. There are virtual teachers.

TEACHER: Hi Izzy it's so nice to see you again since the last mentoring session, thanks for meeting me today.

A virtual hall.

KIDS: it's really useful.

And for breaks between lessons.

ALEX: We all meet up in class but then when class is over we all meet up in a virtual playground.

HARRY: There is also a coffee lounge where we can order virtual coffee.

And if you spend a bit too much time enjoying your VR coffee and miss something in class, it's not a problem.

MAC: It's easy to catch up on lessons I would have normally missed, cos they're all recorded.

Aurora's students say their VR school can sometimes cause problems.

MAC: The hardest thing is that sometimes I miss Cowra high school lessons because my Aurora timetable is different, and that means I have to catch up in my own time.

But they say the benefits are worth it.

MAC: I started at Aurora this year and so far, the best things have been the opportunity to meet new people that I wouldn't normally meet

And the best part? Each year the Aurora kids get to meet up in person for a week of activities that they call 'residential'.

HARRY: I have lots of friends at Aurora College which we can talk to and catch up with during 'residential'.

ALEX: Just meeting all the new people at the Residential camp, and just doing school online it's a fun new experience!

Who knows, maybe one day more kids will get the chance to meet up for a virtual coffee before starting class for the day.

## Closer

And that's it for today! But there is heaps more for you on our website, including resources and class activities for this ep. and instructions for sending us your videos for Kind Classrooms. Thanks for joining me, and I'll see you next week for more BTN.