

YOUR SAY

Better than gifts



Eve FISHER

I'VE been a Christmas grinch for as long as I can remember.

My loathing for the festive season is evidenced by Boxing Day being my favourite day of the year as it's the single longest point — a glorious 364 days — until next bloody Christmas.

Obviously this doesn't take into account that the years are swimming by faster and faster and Christmas is making its way into shops earlier and earlier.

I've barely recovered from last silly season and here it is upon us again.

Things have changed for me though.

Nowadays I make a point of shutting the hell up about the craziness, the consumerism, the waste and the financial pressure.

Often eye rolls burst forth but I do what I can to keep them in check.

You see, my beloved man adores Christmas — it takes him straight back to his happy childhood — and I don't want to be that person who takes the rock out of *Jingle Bells*.

Luckily, dealing with my curmudgeonly approach to spending money I don't have to buy junk people don't want has been helped by the discovery of an interesting social movement. A novel approach to the season, if you will.

You only need to take a quick glance at your feed on the socials to realise that experiences are having their day in the gifting spotlight.

An experience can be anything. It might cost money, or it could be free.

It could be as daring as a skydiving ticket, or as touching as a child making a parent breakfast in bed.

It might be educational, an event or a thrillseeking adventure.

It may take the person out of their comfort zone, or simply make them more comfortable.

There are no rules, except the obvious one — the experience shouldn't contribute to the ever-growing pile of stuff we own.

It's all about building memories.

As counter-intuitive as it seems, good memories are actually much more tangible and accessible than objects, and have the marvellous ability to have a positive physiological effect on the body by lowering cortisol — the stress hormone — and boosting dopamine, the happy hormone.

Teaching children that joy doesn't only come gift-wrapped is a vital lesson and more parents are taking seriously the idea that children need experiences more than anything.

One of my dear friends, a single dad, is more dedicated to ensuring his three daughters have proper life experiences than bursting cupboards. Doing rather than having.

Sure, he buys them plenty of presents, but look closely at the gift pile and you'll see necessary items like clothes, shoes and beach gear make up the bulk while a couple of fancier items will round out the list.

For the most part, he spends any spare cash on buying experiences for his girls throughout the year. Think camping, fishing, footy, bike rides, road trips and interstate holidays.

He knows his daughters will remember the fun times they had growing up far more than the presents they received in those same years.

Christmas is the perfect time to teach kids about consumerism and waste. Giving experiences, instead of landfill, as gifts beds home those ideas.

I often find myself wishing that Christmas here was more like Thanksgiving in the US and Canada, where it is just as important to families.

People travel long distances to get home in time to be with their loved ones and, of course, gorge themselves senseless.

Thanksgiving is not about giving presents, it's about giving thanks. And that's plenty in my book.

If only Christmas was the same. Family, food and fun without the exorbitant cost of buying a little something for every man and his dog.

But now this whole experience movement is changing the notion of gift-giving and finally I've found some Christmas cheer.

Happy holidays everyone. May your 2020 be a year of love, hope and prosperity.



GIVE AN EXPERIENCE: Joy doesn't only come in wrapping paper.

ADDY READERS HAVE THEIR SAY - LETTERS AND TEXTS

CATS DO RIGHT THING IN ABANDONING GAMBLING

THE president and board of Geelong footy club are to be commended for their decision to exit all reliance on gambling revenue.

It is an exceptional alignment of cultural values and strategy.

Many other parents and grandparents will also be delighted that we can take kids to Geelong home games, knowing there will be none of the insidious and "normalising" intent of gambling adverts.

Bishop Phillip Huggins, Point Lonsdale

TREES FALL VICTIM TO ALLOTMENT SIZES

I REFER to a land development proposal relating to Clarendon Park, Drysdale, and am disgusted and disappointed with the council and developer's attitude relating to lack of retention of native eucalypts contained on this site.

There are some 200 mature trees

serving as a habitat and food source for resident wildlife. These trees are about 27 years old and it is understood that there is a need to cull some trees.

However, according to the developer's project manager, only 18 trees will be retained within a creek reserve.

Greed to optimise the size and number of allotments outweighs recommendations from a previous consultant arborist's report that because the trees were generally healthy that they should be retained.

I have listened to excuses from local council planning and the State Government as to why a master plan incorporating rezoning and allotment design configuration is not open to scrutiny immediately before commitment to the master plan.

The master plan was established about 11 years ago and should be subject to public scrutiny, impact assessment review for current environment, risk and community

needs to ensure compliance.

With regard to presentation of native vegetation on the Clarendon Park proposal, it is not too late for the local council and, if necessary, the State Government to exercise their powers and reverse their decision in terms of allowing the removal of vegetation.

The ball is in the council's court and their response will demonstrate their commitment or lack of commitment to environment preservation.

Noel Bradley, Drysdale

LEADER GOES MISSING IN OUR TIME OF CRISIS

AT a time when a country is undergoing colossal strife (like, say, a natural disaster ravaging about one eighth of the country), it is expected that the nation's leader will guide citizens through these troubled times with compassionate leadership, resource allocation and thorough policies.

Despite this, Scott Morrison has

left for Hawaii, still without giving proper and overdue acknowledge to climate change in its effects on natural disasters.

While our diligent volunteer firefighters are here because they "want to be here", according to our fleet-footed leader, Scott Morrison wants to be elsewhere.

Jacob Demopoulos, Leopold

COUNCILLORS FAILING TO TAKE THE MESSAGE

I FEEL like it's groundhog day over here in Brownbill Ward.

Does anyone know how to keep our elected so-called councillors accountable?

I am trying to find out how the application by Kaufland got on to a council agenda.

The vote was utterly meaningless, of course, because the State Government has control over the site.

Kevin V Russell, Geelong

Geelong Advertiser EDITORIAL

Staff do the talking

THE findings of the 2016 Commission of Inquiry into the workplace culture at the City of Greater Geelong cast a dark shadow over our council.

They found a culture so tainted that the State Government decided to axe the elected councillors and install independent commissioners while an entire organisational review could take place.

More than three years on, elected councillors have returned but the ripple effects of long-term cultural problems haven't quite disappeared. This was evident earlier this year when this paper was inundated with people claiming that the bullying culture was alive and well inside City Hall.

Yesterday City of Greater Geelong CEO Martin Cutter outlined just what had been done to tackle the problem and the strides that had been made in this area.

Most impressively, the council consulted around 1000 staff members in a series of focus groups to get a true indication of the experiences being faced by workers on the ground.

While Mr Cutter conceded that the organisation still had some way to go to eradicate the cultural problems, there is a widespread acknowledgment that things are moving in the right direction. This is in no small part due to the decision to directly engage staff on the issue and getting on the front foot to ensure transparency in what is being done.

THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1788 - HMS Supply, first ship of Britain's First Fleet to Australia, reaches Botany Bay

1919 - The World War I Peace Congress opens in Versailles, France

1968 - United States and Soviet Union agree on draft treaty to control nuclear weapons

1977 - Australia's worst rail crash, at Granville in Sydney, kills 83 people when a train hits a bridge

1991 - Three teenage fans are crushed to death at an AC/DC concert in Salt Lake City

ADDY ONLINE POLL

Yesterday's question: Have you visited Geelong's floating Christmas tree this festive season?

YES 23% NO 77%

Register your vote at geelongadvertiser.com.au

WRITE TO:

POST: PO BOX 91, GEELONG 3220 or yoursay@geelongadvertiser.com.au

Letters should be less than 300 words, carry full name, address and phone number of writer and be signed.

We reserve the right to edit letters.

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