

IN TIMES OF CHANGE...

By Julie Boyd

info@julieboyd.com.au

www.julieboyd.com.au

In times of change learners inherit the earth while the learned find themselves beautifully equipped to deal with a world that no longer exists Eric Hoffer

It is my blessing these days to be able to walk morning and evening on a beautiful beach. Every day is different with new joys to be discovered and unexpected adventures. A little like being a Principal really. Usually life is relatively calm 'beautiful one day and perfect the next'. Except when it's not. Today the surf is so high and viciously rough. We are in the midst of a 'claytons cyclone' otherwise known as an east-coast low. The whole landscape is changing- in one day.

This week I had one of those 'whack on the side of the head' moments that strike us all occasionally. It happened during one of my morning walks when I noticed two pieces of plastic junk. As cleaning up the beach is also a daily event- done in an attempt to show mother nature that she is appreciated by some of us- just not the 'weekend tourist/terrorists who insist its not their responsibility to keep anything clean or consider anyone except themselves! I knelt down to pick the plastic up, intending to throw it in the bin along with the broken glass, fish hooks and used disposable nappies collected that morning.

After gingerly turning both pieces over I saw, to my surprise, the number of small living flora and fauna which were firmly attached, opening, closing, and moving, looking for water.

I had experienced this once before. I had thought that was a 'one-off' experience. Last time it was a plastic drink bottle with a whole colony of creatures attached around the lid. At the time I had offered it to a teacher visiting the beach that day with her Year 11 Biology class as a problem solving exercise for the students. Do we destroy this as plastic rubbish, or preserve it as a legitimate habitat? I thought it was a fascinating dilemma. She wasn't interested, or in fairness to her, maybe the sight of me in my walking gear was just too scary.

The 'head whack' experience this week was this was obviously not a single event. As well as the two pieces of plastic today, yesterday I found an abandoned tyre which had a whole colony of creatures using it as a habitat base.

What does this have to do with being a Principal? Well- I think it raises a series of extremely important and timely issues

- a. How often do we overlook or discard experiences that have the potential to change our perspective?
- b. How open are we to changing our viewpoints and frameworks, and what does it take to do that?
- c. In what ways, and how rapidly, are we adapting, and assisting our schools to adapt to a world that is moving at breakpoint speed.

- d. Are our departments, bureaucracies and politicians either ready or able to encourage and support those Principals who ‘think and act outside the box’?
- e. When the going gets rough for our Principals and teachers are they cut free so they can survive and create a new environment, or are they tethered so that they drown?

In a world where our coral reefs are dying and the sea levels are rapidly rising, threatening our way of life, our sea-creatures are creating new places for themselves in the world. It's happening very quickly. They're simple creatures. We are not! Will our rubbish dumps will become the new reefs? Unattractive but effective - maybe.

In a world where we have kids and parents striking until a Principal who did think laterally and act in the best interests of the kids is reinstated; where we have teachers bemused by the transcultural nature of many of our students; where technology and behaviour is running ahead of moral and ethics, the question must be asked. How are our schools, particularly our secondary schools, fitting students for the world as it exists now, and supporting teachers who are working toward this? Or are we so focussed, on trying to assess the unassessable at the behest of governments wanting numbers for political leverage, that we've completely lost sight of the purposes of learning and education?

