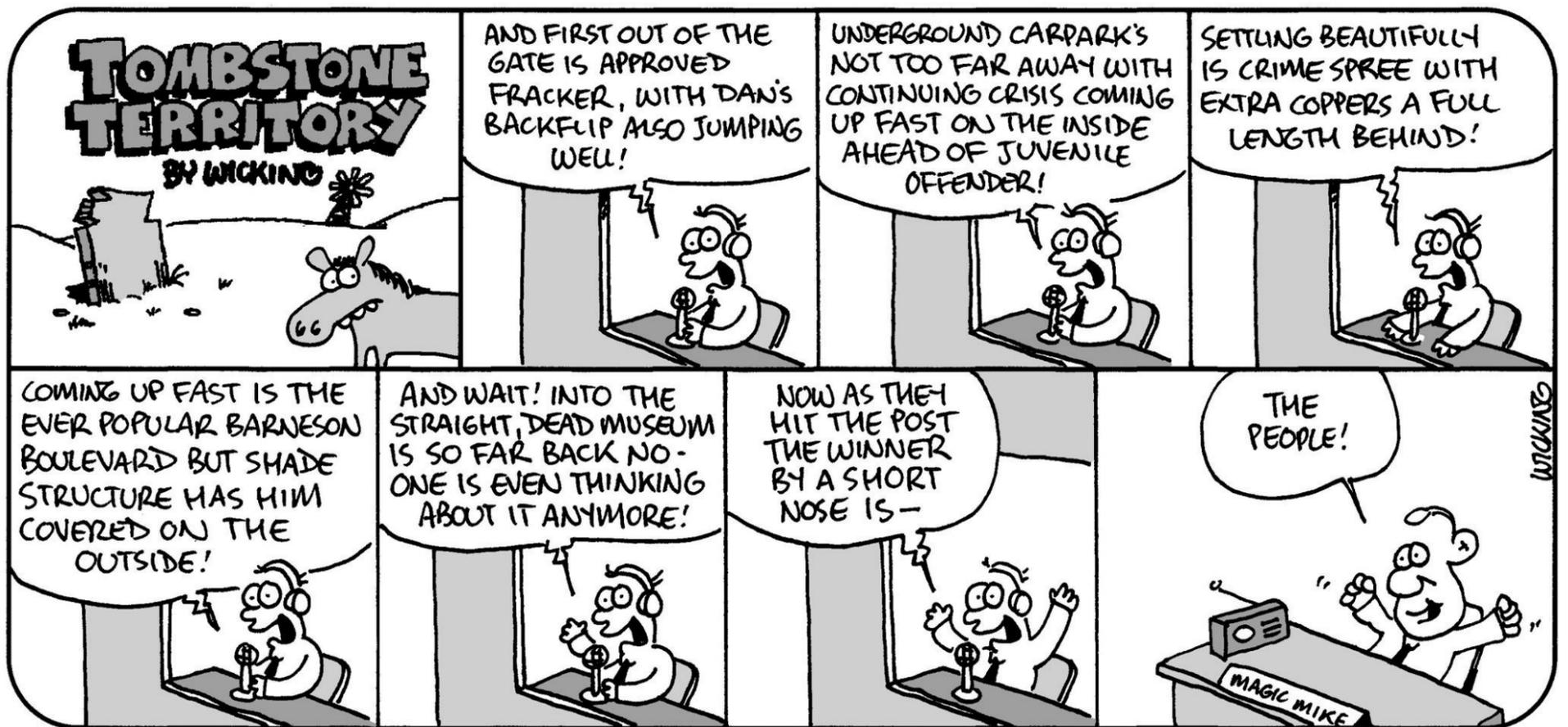


THE SUNDAY SOAP BOX



SUNDAY Territorian OUR SAY

NT laws should be the NT's to make

IT'S a topic few want to talk about but how we die should be up to us.

More needs to be done in the mental health sphere so suicide is never considered an option.

But euthanasia is a different issue. Someone who has been given a terminal diagnosis, who has no option but to lie, often in pain, in a hospital bed, should be given the option to end their life. It should be up to them.

This is a view the Northern Territory has long supported. Almost 25 years ago, in 1995, the NT parliament voted to legalise voluntary euthanasia. However, the law was quickly overruled by the federal government.

This week the Federal Senate will debate overturning the Euthanasia Laws Act, which would return power to the territories. It would recognise the NT as a lawmaker in its own right, meaning its decisions would be less likely to be overruled. Because why should Territorians be held back because other states don't agree?

The Territory must be given the right to decide its own fate, just as we should be given the right to decide when we die.

WHAT'S THE DEAL?

WHAT'S the deal with slow walkers?

Why do they insist on walking in front of those who want to go fast?

And why don't they have awareness of their surroundings to realise when someone is trying to pass? It's not like those in a hurry don't stomp their

feet a little. It's not like they don't have audible sighs as they get thwarted overtaking again.

Slow walkers need to stick to the left of foot-paths, not meander down the middle. On that point, everyone should stick to the left and stop stopping others in their tracks.

Safe, and sound

SCHOOLS need to be safe.

Put simply, violence in any form is unacceptable.

We have high expectations of every student in relation to behaviour and I would like to highlight that the vast majority of our students in schools right now are inspiring, young individuals of whom, as a community, we can all be proud.

The reality is, however, a small number of our students get it wrong on occasion, the way that they behave is not acceptable.

So what do we do about that?

As educators, we have a responsibility, an obligation, to ensure that all students are engaged in positive social activity at school.

Teaching the curriculum is a given. Families expect teachers to teach their children the essentials and we continue to focus on delivering upon this expectation.

Equally as important is the role that educators and schools play in guiding, supporting and mentoring children to be positive members of society.

It is our responsibility as educators, to ensure that children attend school and learn in a completely safe and supportive environment free from threats or harassment.

We know our young people come from diverse backgrounds and families and that they are a reflection of the community in which we all live. As much as we'd like our children to arrive at school, and have had a calm and stable life, we know that this is not a reality for everyone at different points in time. For our teachers to be responsive to these issues, it requires us to



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put support systems around them and ensure strategies are in place.

I'd like to acknowledge the work that our educators do. I'm in awe of the work teachers, support staff and school leaders do each and every day to grow their capacity, but also support their students to ensure that their classrooms are safe and supportive environ-

to follow policies and guidelines to manage student behaviour. This includes suspension and expulsion.

In addition to the overarching department policy and guidelines, schools have behaviour management policies and processes in place to de-escalate negative behaviour, re-engage students and promote wellbeing. These policies are

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ments for every student.

I make no apologies that when the learning environment is not safe, decisions need to be made after all information is gathered, strong and decisive action taken with clear consequences.

We recognise that the collaborative relationship between schools and families is essential to student engagement and continue to work with families to ensure each young person has the best possible educational opportunities and outcomes.

Northern Territory Government schools are expected

to follow policies and guidelines to manage student behaviour. This includes suspension and expulsion.

Within NT schools, we have teachers and principals working with families and students to ensure that everything in our power is done to engage students.

It doesn't mean that we don't have kids that do the wrong thing. We do. And for them, there are consequences and there also needs to be the opportunity to learn the appropriate behaviours we ex-

pect in society. Beside suspension or expulsion there are alternatives to managing student behaviour. Many of our schools are beginning to use restorative practices or conferencing where they work with both the victims and perpetrators to understand the impact of their actions.

In the digital world in which we all live, it is also an educator's job to make students aware of the impact that inappropriate use of social media can have on others, on them, on their families, their friends, their teachers and the community.

Social media, when used appropriately, can be a fantastic communications tool, it can keep us connected with family and friends, share special moments and celebrate achievements. When social media is used inappropriately, the consequences are great and sadly this week's violence clearly highlights this.

Our commitment is that we will work as a key partner in each young person's learning and schooling to do what it takes to ensure they engage, grow and achieve, to have the skills, knowledge and wellbeing so they have choices for their future.

This is especially important in the more challenging and difficult times and we are grateful for the families and friends who work with us and who hold the same high expectation that our schools need to be safe, supportive and inclusive places of learning.

Our kids deserve nothing less.

➤ Vicki Baylis is the chief executive of the NT Education Department

TOUCHED BY THE ROAD TOLL THIS YEAR **31** LAST YEAR **20**