

# Tasmanian Devils visit inner Sydney school

By Charlotte Year 5

**Haberfield Public School celebrates a year of fundraising with a live Tasmanian Devil visit.**



A devil student holds Tasmanian Devil pup, Bandit. Photograph: Mrs Mussone.

Earlier this year, the above students were selected to participate in a school-run extension journalism program. These students chose to study the Tasmanian Devil and its tragic cancer. They compiled articles on the subject, but then they went further.

When the Devil students heard of their plight, they were shocked and horrified. With a quick Google search the students discovered “Black and White Day” which was first started by a young boy named, “Nature” Nick. For a few years, he raised thousands of dollars all across

Australia, but after a while, it rusted up and Black and White day was no more. So together, the eight journalism students set about to host their very own Black, White and Red campaign.

During further research the dedicated students found out that conservation organisation, Devil Ark had a promise that if they raised \$2,500 they would bring a live Tasmanian Devil to their school. This was a golden opportunity and the students were determined.

To get their campaign underway the students needed to get their Principal and journalism teacher on board. 'When we told Ms Jacobsen, the principal, she was like, go for it! I don't actually think that we would, but then we arranged a meeting and broke it all to her and then she was like, go for it!' said Charlotte, one of the student organisers.

The plan was heavily supported by journalism teacher, Mrs Mussone. "When the students first approached me about raising money to get a tassy devil to come to Haberfield, I was a little concerned that they wouldn't make \$2,500, but that concern soon dissipated as I saw how dedicated they were to the cause," said Mrs Mussone.

With the support of the Principal, Mrs Mussone and the other teachers, the students set about organising their fundraising events. "The Black, White & Red mufti day was the students' first round of fundraising. They spent weeks promoting the event through posters, class visits and presentations at the Monday Assembly," said Mrs Mussone.

The plan was to have the school come in mufti, along with a gold con donation. With luck, this would set the devil a course to come to Haberfield. However, the students encountered a few hurdles along the way. "It wasn't all streamlined! We had a couple of shakes. The worst was when I got the wrong schedule and we told the school to rock up in mufti the wrong day. I realised I got it wrong and stayed home all day the next day, crying!" Charlotte said.

When the mufti day finally happened, it was a huge, huge relief for the eight students. Over 600 students came to school in black, white and red, with sums as large as \$50 notes. "All

their hard work paid off because their mufti day raked in over \$1,000 through gold coin donations,” said Mrs Mussone.

“I was really relieved that all of our efforts finally payed off, and the results were incredible. It was so amazing to see everything unfold and all of the amazing costumes!” Camille, another Devil student quotes.



Enthusiastic students and teachers turned up in black, white and red to raise money for the Tasmanian Devil. Photograph: Mrs Mussone

But it still wasn't enough. The sum was a school record, and an incredible achievement, but it was still only so much. So whilst the momentum was still strong, a second round of money raising was launched as a cake stall. Four classes were selected to make black, white and red cupcakes and jellies, as well as an assortment of other lollies and baked goods.

The day of the cake stall had finally arrived and the eight students spent the morning sorting through the mountains of delicious donations. “They looked delicious! I wished I could have eaten them! Lamingtons, hordes of jelly...2 fridge-fulls! There were so many variations of decorations on the cupcakes...music notes and lady bugs and lots of Halloween Themes!” said Angela, describing the goodies.

The cake stall was due to open its doors at 2:45pm, but by 2:30 there was already a large crowd waiting, eager to get their hands on some inexpensive and delicious desserts. So when the doors did finally open, the desserts flew off the table. “It was impressive to watch. The students did an amazing job fielding all the requests and demonstrating their fantastic

selling skills. I mean, how often can a group of primary students make over \$1,100 in the first 30minutes of their stall opening, especially when the desserts were only \$2 each!" said Mrs Mussone. By 4pm there were only a few small biscuits and a handful of cupcakes left.



Delicious hand-baked lamingtons created by the Tasmanian Devil students. Photograph: Mrs Mussone

When the students came into school the next day, they were still tired, but elated. They almost certainly knew that they had raised the money.

"I manned the ice your own biscuit stand, and there was a nonstop flow of students, teachers and parents. I am a fast speaker at best, but my tongue ran

a marathon that day! Thank you for helping to save the devil here's your biscuit and a stick-do not touch it with your hands! Nonstop!" said Charlotte.

Devastatingly, when the students consulted Mrs. Mussone, their hopes were destroyed. They were \$200 short of the goal. But the determined students would not give up. They collected all of the remaining treats and launched an impromptu cake stall.

Students flocked to this one, despite the lack of advertisement, spending their canteen money on black and white goodies. This time there was enough money.

Now they had enough money and after a quick email from Mrs Mussone to Devil Ark, a date was set for the visit of a lifetime. A keeper called Stacey was elected to bring two devil cubs in. Stacey works at the Reptile Park, which is a close supporter of Devil Ark. She has two Devils called Bandit and Calamity, named for the effects on Stacey's house.

"I felt very proud of the devil team for succeeding to raise the money to bring them (the devils) here and I'm sure school enjoyed them just as much as I did," said Berri, a devil student.

Stacey and the devils talked for half an hour while 628 students listened in rapture. "At first I was excited because I have never seen a real life devil and I was eager to meet it. I was also glad that we had raised a large amount of money to save the devils but then I was even happier that we had helped raise the money to save the devils after listening to Stacey," said Gina, a Haberfield student in year six.

Afterwards, there was the ultimate reward to the eight devil students. They were permitted to pet and hold the young devils. "I felt very proud of the devil team for succeeding to raise the money to bring them (the devils) here and I'm sure school enjoyed them just as much as I did." said Berri, a devil student.

The cheque of just over \$2,500 was passed over and the crusade led by the eight determined students was over.

The battle for the devils survival is not over, by far and there are several ways you can help. Devil Ark's offer is open to anyone who raises the money, and Taronga Zoo has a donation box.

The Devil Facial Tumour Disease (DFTD) is a recent epidemic, first noticed in 1996 in a female along the eastern tip of Tasmania. Experts were puzzled at this shocking new disease with unknown origins. At first, it was believed that European dogs with distemper disease were to blame for the outbreak in Tasmanian Devils. However, according to Katrina Morris 'Nothing like the DFTD has occurred in the last 200 years or we would have noticed that,' diminishing the idea that European settlers were to cause. It was not until 2003 that it was taken seriously. Now, a mere eight years later, it has destroyed 84% of the Devil population.

(Exert from Charlotte, a devil student's article explaining the disease.)

Healthy Tasmanian Devils could be gone in the wild very soon. If we do not do anything, we will lose yet another of our iconic Australian animals and the Tasmanian ecosystem will get out of order causing many more creatures to die.