Students take up water fight

CLARE PEDDIE SCIENCE REPORTER

FOUR girls from Loreto College have created their own Murray River campaign, educating the junior school, students overseas and even world leaders.

The girls contributed to a video on sustainable development shown at the Rio+20 Earth Summit in Brazil in June. Teacher Cheryl Stephens said she had answered a call last year from the National Science and Technology Centre, Questacon, seeking volunteers for an international project called "SCiNa Rio: Water and Life".

Together with students at Questacon in Canberra, the Guangdong Science Centre in China and the Science Centre in Singapore, the girls researched water issues in their area and shared their findings.

"The conferences have been eye-opening for our girls, as they got to hear the many challenges being faced by other countries when it comes to managing water," Ms Stephens said.

Sophie Eblen, 15, now in Year 10, said she enjoyed learning about how different countries used and managed water.

"I have learnt research skills, time-management and ... about Adelaide and the world's water."

KIMBERLEY FIRE

Run organisers found wanting

DAMNING findings have been made against organisers of the 2011 Kimberley Ultramarathon, which left runners suffering horrific burns after a bushfire swept through the race route.

Runners Kate Sanderson and Turia Pitt suffered burns to more than 60 per cent of their bodies after they were trapped in a gorse by a bushfire during the 100km race in Western Australia in September.

Michael Hull and Martin Van Der Merwe also received serious burns.

A parliamentary committee report, released yesterday, found Hong Kong-based organisers Racing the Planet did not take reasonable steps to ensure the safety of event participants.

Committee chairman Mike Naham, the Member for Riverton, said the company's biggest mistake was not liaising with WA's Fire and Emergency Services Authority.

INTERNATIONAL DISPUTE

Custody sisters given more time

FOUR sisters at the centre of an international custody dispute have been allowed to remain in Australia pending another legal challenge next month.

A Family Court judge ordered that the girls remain in the country in their mother's care until the hearing is decided.

The girls' great-aunt told reporters outside the court the family was delighted with the decision.

"We're elated that the girls are going to get an opportunity to say how they feel," she said.

The girls, aged nine to 15, attracted international media attention in May when they went into hiding to avoid a 2011 Family Court order to have their custody dispute settled in Italy.

The sisters, who hold dual citizenship, travelled to Australia with their mother in 2010 for a one-month holiday.

SA ads at MCG, Etihad

Murray crusade targets the Vics

"It's important that we spread the message far and wide, so that all Australians understand the devastating consequences of the lack of water in South Australia," Mr Weatherill said.

"We already have more than 4000 people signed up to the campaign and our growing list of River Champions includes marathon swimmer Tammy van Wisse and environmentalist Arron Wood, who hail from interstate."

"This is our once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to return the river system to a sustainable level of health for the sake of future generations."

Mr Burke claims the latest River Murray rescue plan is strong enough to survive a High Court challenge – but adds that ways to increase environmental flows are being investigated.

The Murray-Darling Basin Authority's latest plan aims to return only 2750 billion litres of water to the system each year. However, that figure can be raised or reduced depending on infrastructure upgrades.

Upstream states have argued that improved water management should be employed to cut the amount irrigators must give up, while South Australia has called for it to be used for the environment.

No funding plan has been produced to deliver additional infrastructure upgrades.

MURRAY FIREFIGHTERS

Runners given reprieve

Premier Jay Weatherill's campaign for the Murray advertising campaign will be shown at the Collingwood versus North Melbourne match at Etihad Stadium and the MCG blockbuster between Essendon and Carlton.

The campaign is part of a $2 million push to build support for SA's position in the national debate.

Federal Water Minister Tony Burke will hand a plan to Federal Parliament this year.

Current indications are it will not deliver enough water to secure the system's long-term future.

"This is our once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to return the river system to a sustainable level of health for the sake of future generations," Mr Weatherill said.

DANIEL WILLS POLITICAL REPORTER

SOUTH Australia's bid to get more water for the River Murray will be taken direct to Melbourne football fans with taxpayer-funded advertising to be shown at the MCG and Etihad stadium this weekend.

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