

A little “hug” goes a long way at Pimpama S.S.

“Hug a Guinea Pig Program”

The “Hug a Guinea Pig Program” began in 2008 to support the ‘Save the Bilby Fund’ and help to raise awareness and much needed money to maintain the Bilby fence in Queensland. This fence is helping to provide a safe environment for bilbies from predators like foxes; feral cats, etc and hopefully prevent their possible future extinction.

This program is the initiative of Michelle Challes, a Prep teacher at Pimpama State School. Mrs Challes said “My class of Prep/1’s were doing a unit of work on the life cycle. We were given a couple of baby guinea pigs for class pets. As we are only a small school the guinea pigs in their cage became quite popular with all students outside my room.

I then started to think about how we could use this ‘popularity’ to benefit our school or environment. Hugging a guinea pig is such a simple yet nice activity for all kids. It is wonderful to see students of all ages come at lunchtimes to simply sit and nurse a guinea pig and give them a little love. It is especially nice for those students who for some reason are not able to have a pet at home.

I discussed with Karen Page (Our School Sustainability Coordinator) what we could do with the money we raise? Karen suggested that we could maybe support an endangered animal, as we were already supporting a World Vision child in Ethiopia. Hence we chose the bilby!

The benefits of this program outweigh the time and energy it takes to care for the guinea pigs. I am never short of helpers!”

Students pay 50cents to hug a guinea pig for 5 minutes in their lunchtime. Two hugs and the third hug is free. Senior students are trained to organise and supervise the program. Fruit and vegetable waste from lunches supplements their diet.

Baby guinea pigs are also sold and issued with an adoption certificate at our assemblies.

Guinea pigs are also rented out over night or for the weekend to raise money. Everything is provided for the renters: a mini cage, food, guinea pig with care instructions. The students just have to love them and donate money to our “Save the Bilby” fund.

Bilby merchandise like badges, magnets and brooches are sold to the school community after parade at our weekly Farmer’s Market.

Last year we also sold ‘glow-in-the-dark bilby ears’ and ‘bracelets’ at our discos held each term.



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Lunch time huggers!



Donations laid around an outline of a bilby.

Mary-Jane & Fred



A couple of our babies sold.

More lunchtime huggers!



A home for our guinea pigs at school.



Our collection can for lunchtime hugs.



Baby bilbies



A keen hugger!

Just over \$2000.00 has been raised to date. In our first year of raising money, Frank Manthey was so impressed by Pimpama's ongoing commitment to the program he brought two Bilbies to our school to educate the students about this endangered Australian mammal.



Pimpama has also adopted many endangered animals over the years through their close association with the late Steve Irwin's Wildlife Warriors.

Pimpama is committed to sustainability and educating students about the environment because today's students are the global citizens of the future.

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