

A pay rise for kids; robots master Kung Fu; the Koala cupid strikes; and a big record for tiny things.

Hello and welcome to Squiz Kids Today ... your fresh take on what's happening in the world around you.

I'm Christie Kijurina

It's Wednesday, February 25

In Squiz Kids Today ... A pay rise for kids; robots master Kung Fu; the Koala cupid strikes; and a big record for tiny things.

That's what's making news, kids' style ...

THE LOWDOWN

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How far does your pocket money go these days? If you're following the old "one dollar for every year of your age" rule, you might be discovering that ten bucks doesn't buy what it used to.

With the price of snacks at the servo or corner shop creeping higher and higher, kids are getting a real-life lesson in something called inflation — when prices rise over time. You might've even heard adults mention the "cost of living crisis," which is just a way of saying everyday life has become more expensive.

New data from the UK shows kids there got an 8% bump in pocket money last year, taking the average weekly amount to £10.73 — about \$21 Aussie dollars. Tidying bedrooms was the most common paid chore, but watering and caring for plants earned the most per job. And the biggest savings goal? Holidays followed by electronics. That checks.

Here in Australia, Westpac bank found that last year, 55% of kids aged 8 to 17 earned pocket money, with the average weekly amount sitting at about \$25.

But whether it's \$5 or \$25, chores really aren't all about cash — they're about being part of a team. Because families, like footy clubs, work best when everyone chips in.

SPIN THE GLOBE

Each day we give the world globe a spin and find a news story from wherever it stops, and today we've landed in China — where AI-powered robots have been showing off their Kung Fu skills.

During China's hugely popular Spring Festival Gala — a TV event a bit like the Super Bowl halftime show, watched by hundreds of millions — more than a dozen humanoid robots performed an intricate martial arts routine for Chinese New Year. We're talking perfectly coordinated fight sequences, sword flourishes, flips and balance so steady it could make your legs wobble just watching.

The tech came from Chinese start-up companies like Unitree Robotics and it's a big step up from last year, when more basic robots danced with handkerchiefs. Experts say the big leap forward is in the robots' "brains" — AI software that helps them balance and control small, precise movements.

Some people online were amazed. Others were slightly... unnerved. So much so that news agencies around the world had to make sure the footage hadn't been generated by AI... There's a link for you to take a look in the episode notes.

China already produces the vast majority of the world's humanoid robots, and experts predict those numbers will double again next year.

Which raises a question: if robots can master Kung Fu today... what might they be learning tomorrow?

ANIMAL KINGDOM

If your family's hooked on reality dating shows — from rose ceremonies to farm romances — here's one you haven't seen: Koala Cupid.

In the forests of NSW's Mid-North Coast, scientists at Guulabaa are playing matchmaker for koalas, carefully pairing them up to help boost wild populations.

But instead of judging personalities, they study DNA. The goal is genetic diversity — making sure koalas aren't related and are a healthy biological match. Size and age matter too. You wouldn't pair a tiny young female with a much older dominant male.

Koalas are slow breeders. They take years to mature, usually have just one joey a year, and that joey sticks with mum for at least 12 months. Which means every match really matters.

The program has already produced seven joeys in a year — all preparing for life back in the wild.

Turns out when it comes to finding love... koalas might be a little better behaved than reality TV contestants.

Biggest, Furthest, Longest

We haven't had a Biggest, Furthest, Longest for a while... and maybe keep this one away from any parent who's ever stepped on a tiny plastic toy in bare feet.

Shopkins! If you've never seen one, imagine your fridge, pantry and wardrobe shrunk down to thumbnail size — then given googly eyes and glitter. These tiny, colourful collectibles shaped like cupcakes, cereal boxes, sneakers and handbags became playground gold when they launched back in 2014.

Now, one woman from Mareeba in Queensland holds the Guinness World Record for the largest collection of Shopkins memorabilia — 2,656 unique items. She started collecting at just seven years old and now owns more than 4,000 individual pieces including duplicates. Just... Oh my!

Q+A Callout

V4:

Attention curious humans!

If you've ever had a science question that made your brain fizz — this is your moment.

Dr Karl is coming to the Squiz Kids Q+A hotseat, and he's ready for your questions. Yes, that Dr Karl. Science explainer. Myth-buster. Bright-shirt enthusiast.

You can ask him anything scientific — like how black holes form, why we get goosebumps, or whether time travel is even slightly possible. Or you can ask about him

— how he knows so much stuff, what his favourite discovery is, or what it's like answering questions on the radio for decades.

Send your question in as a class or as yourself — just make sure you send it in. Email squizkids@thesquiz.com.au or head to the Squiz Kids website and follow the instructions to record your question.

But don't dawdle — the cut-off is next Tuesday, March 3.

And remember, Bryce told you on Monday to keep your ears open for a competition? I still can't spill the beans... but I am absolutely bursting to. Keep listening. Trust me — it's worth it.

Now it's over to you.

If you've got a question you're bursting to ask Dr Karl, send it in!

You can email your question to squizkids@thesquiz.com.au and if we pick yours, we'll ask you to send us a voice recording.

OR head to the Squiz Kids website, follow the instructions carefully, and send us your voice recording directly.

You've got until Tuesday, March 3.

So go on... what are you waiting for?

THE S'QUIZ

This is the part of the podcast where you get to test how well you've been listening ...

1. What's the word we use when prices rise over time and money doesn't stretch as far as it used to?
2. How much was the average weekly pocket money for kids aged 8 to 17 in Australia last year?

A) About \$ 5

B) About \$ 21

C) About \$ 25

3. What kind of performance did humanoid robots give at China's Spring Festival Gala?

SHOUT OUTS

It's Wednesday, February 25... On this day, wayyy back in 1606, Dutch navigator Willem Janszoon [VIL-um YAHN-zoon] became the first recorded European to land on the Australian mainland, stepping ashore on the western side of Cape York Peninsula, that sticky-outy tip at the very top of Queensland. He was sailing a ship called the *Duyfken* [DIFE-ken] when he encountered local Aboriginal people from the Wik language group. The meeting did not go smoothly, and Janszoon mapped the coastline before sailing on. At the time, the Dutch named the land New Holland, a name that would stick around on European maps for more than a century.

It's also a special day for these Squiz Kids, celebrating a birthday today... Caylan from Epping, George from Hawthorn East and Mason from Kilsyth.

Belated shoutouts go to... Zoe from Frankston South, Amanda listening over in Singapore and Benjamin listening over in Lausanne, Switzerland.

Classroom shoutouts go to... 4/5/6A with Mrs Murphy at Albury North Public School, class 4/5M with Mrs McNabb at Albury West Public School, class 5K1 with Mrs Carter at Springfield Central State School, class 3/4A with Mr Andrews at Tanilba Bay Public School and class 6B with Miss Barton at Griffith Public School.

The S'Quiz Answers:

1. Inflation
2. C) about \$25
3. Kung Fu

Don't forget .. if you've got a birthday coming up and you want a shout out - or, if you're after a classroom shout out- drop us a line at squizkids@thesquiz.com.au or fill out the form on our website.

Well - that's all we have time for. Thanks for listening to Squiz Kids Today - we'll be back again tomorrow

In the meantime ... get out there and have a most excellent day ... over and out.