

The algorithm robot in the spotlight; Canada's mysterious moving island; Footy finals fever is here; and where have all the dugongs gone?

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

I'm Bryce Corbett

It's Thursday, September 3.

In Squiz Kids today ... The algorithm robot in the spotlight; Canada's mysterious moving island; Footy finals fever is here; and where have all the dugongs gone?

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

THE LOWDOWN

Well - will you look at that ... Squiz-E the Newshound has joined us at the top of today's podcast - and that's because his nose is twitching overtime as politicians in Canberra - Australia's capital - yesterday talked about a secret robot that's at work behind the scenes every time we're on the internet.

It's called the algorithm – and it basically keeps track of everything we search for when we're online - everything we watch, read or listen to - and develops a continuously updated report card on the sorts of things we like so it can keep serving it up to us.

Why? Because ultimately: it wants us to stay online - to stay scrolling or diving deeper into a YouTube rabbit hole - for as long as possible. Because that's how its creators make money.

And while the algorithm usually works in the shadows, yesterday it was in the spotlight as Australian politicians debated about what control we should allow it to have over our lives.

At the moment: the algorithm goes about its work - monitoring and keeping track of our online habits - *without* our permission. The politicians in Canberra are arguing that we should be able to *choose* whether the algorithm keeps track of us when we're online - which would mean forcing tech companies to change the way they operate.

And while it might sound great to have someone constantly watching you and running out into the internet and finding content for us that it thinks we might like - there are worries it can also be bad for us - pushing us further down content rabbit holes, possibly exposing us to more and more extreme videos or dangerous or worrying points of view.

To give it a food analogy: imagine if your mum and dad noticed that you liked ice cream ... it was the one food you scoffed down without having to be forced to eat it. And so they fed you ice cream for breakfast, lunch and dinner. And at first: you thought it was just awesome .. but after about a week, you started to feel sick, you started to lose energy and your body stopped working properly because it wasn't being fuelled by a balanced diet. Same concept with the algorithm.

You'll be hearing more about the algorithm in the coming months as politicians debate it - and as we overhaul our Newshounds media literacy program for primary school classrooms – in the meantime: just remember to always do what Squiz-E tells us: and that's STOP, THINK and CHECK whenever we're consuming content online.

Thanks Squiz-E - keep up the good work!

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 Canada – in the province of British Columbia, on the west coast of the country - where a mysterious floating island has authorities baffled.

Video of a tree-covered island, about the size of a football field, started being shared online about a week ago - showing it bobbing on the gentle waves of a huge lake.

Within days, it had floated from the middle of the lake to come to rest on a part of the shoreline.

Which prompts the question: where did it come from? And how does an island float?

One theory that experts have is that the island may have formed over many years by driftwood accumulating on the lake's surface which created a base for plants and trees to take root.

Isn't nature incredible?

SPORT TIME

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Heat up the footy franks and reserve your favourite spot on the couch ... we're rolling into footy finals season here in Australia with this weekend's AFL and NRL matches set to determine who will battle it out for grand final honours.

The AFL race to the semis begins tonight with Fremantle facing off against Hawthorn, followed on Friday by the elimination final between Geelong and Carlton ... Saturday will see the Sydney Swans travel to Brisbane to take on the last year's premiers the Lions - while Adelaide will play host to the Crows versus Bulldogs in the second elimination final for the weekend.

Meanwhile, NRL fans will also have plenty to feast on this weekend as the last round of the 2026 season takes place and teams jostle for a place in the top eight.

All eyes will be on the Warriors, Panthers, Roosters and Dolphins as they compete for the minor premiership honours ... minor premiers is the team who finish at the top of the ladder before the finals begin – and currently the Warriors, Panthers and Roosters are all tied on 38 points, with the Dolphins only one win behind them in fourth spot.

Let the games begin!

ANIMAL KINGDOM

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And so to the Gulf of Carpentaria we go - in the far north of Australia – where the question being asked is: where have all the dugongs gone?

The gulf is a massive body of tropical water at the top of Australia - and the last time a proper count was done - there were an estimated 10,000 dugongs living there.

A dugong is just about the cutest sea mammal going – they’re called sea cows - because they’re big and round and have cute smooshed up faces with long whiskers and they graze on sea grass that grows at the bottom of the sea.

A recent survey of the Gulf by marine scientists - who are people whose job it is to study what goes on with life underwater - indicated that the dugong population may have dropped by as much as 50 percent .. which is a lot.

Early indications point to a reduction in sea grass in the Gulf as the reason for the drop in dugong numbers - with cyclones, floods and high winds impacting the underwater food source.

Researchers will now work with indigenous rangers to keep an eye on things and work out how to bring back the dugongs.

THE S’QUIZ

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

1. In which country has a random floating island been discovered?
2. Starting with ‘a’ - what’s the name of the robot that’s behind the scenes, monitoring everything we look at when we’re online?
3. What’s the other name sometimes given to dugongs - thanks to the fact that they graze the ocean floor eating sea grass?

SHOUT OUTS

It’s Thursday, September 3 – today is Australian National Flag Day .. because it marks the day back in 1901 - so 125 years ago - that the Australian flag flew for the first time over an official building ... that building was Melbourne’s Royal Exhibition Building and it

came after a public competition was run asking Aussie to come up with the design for the flag ... the winning design is the Union Jack, Southern Cross and Constitution Star combination that together make up the flag we know today.

It's also a special day for these Squiz Kids, celebrating a birthday today...Eeman from Oran Park, Finn from West Albury, Emily from Banana, Clayton from Hunters Hill

Belated birthday shoutouts go to...

Classroom shoutouts go to ... Class Q9 and their teacher, Mrs O'Brien, at Karrinyup Primary School in Western Australia; Class 6 Gold and their teachers, Mrs Glover and Mrs May, at Mt Carmel Catholic Primary School in Yass; and Year 6 Class and their teacher, Mrs Sitters, at Greenock Primary School in South Australia

The S'Quiz Answers:

1. Canada
2. Algorithm
3. Sea cows

Don't forget .. if you've got a birthday coming up and you'd like a shoutout, or if you want a classroom shoutout, or parents, if you'd like to shout out a class or a wonderful teacher... 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 with the Kids vs Adults Weekly News S'Quiz

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