Squiz Kids Q+A with NSW Premier, Chris Minns

Hello, and welcome to this special edition of the Squiz Kids Q&A, the podcast where you, the kids of Australia, get to ask the questions and boy, do we have a treat in store for you today. Yes, folks, the premier of our most populous state, New South Wales, has agreed to take the Squiz Kids hot seat to answer the curly questions you lot have sent in for him. And there are some real doozies.

But first, a word of introduction. He's a dad of three, husband to wife Anna, and a keen runner. He's been at the forefront of Australia's world first social media ban for under sixteen-year-olds, and is on a mission to reduce the amount of screen time kids have in classrooms. Ooh. And oh yes, he happens to be the forty-seventh Premier of the State of New South Wales, which is no small thing.

Premier Chris Minns, welcome to Squiz Kids.

It's great to be here. Great to speak to everybody listening to Squiz kids today.

Now, Premier, it's your first time in the Squiz Kids Q&A hot seat. Many have come before you from prime ministers to pop stars, and I know you're used to being grilled by journalists and voters, but how are you feeling about copping questions from the kids of Australia?

I'm a bit nervous. I'm a little bit nervous about what they're going to dish up, if they are any anything; if they're anything like my kids, they're the most brutal questioners.

It's true. You can't escape, can you, kids?

And their questioning, they can smash me.

Yeah. Straight on in there. Now, we had so many questions sent in from kids, all of them loving the idea of being part of the political process, which is great. And while

we would love to have asked every single one of them, we've only got limited time and we've had to whittle them down to a handful. Are you ready to do this, Premier?

I'm ready.

Okay. Our first question comes from Maggie, who's eleven years old and lives in Liverpool in Sydney's west.

Hi, my name is Maggie. I'm eleven years old and I live in Liverpool in New South Wales. My question is why did you choose to be a politician?

Yeah. Thanks, Maggie. Um, really good question, I think. Uh, I was interested in politics. I was even interested in politics when I was in primary school. We went to Canberra on an excursion and my dad liked it was on TV. And I thought, oh, that that would be exciting. So when I got a little bit older and I got involved in politics, I thought, here's a job that changes every day.

Uh, sometimes it's easy, sometimes it's hard. Not always that easy, but it's often hard. But the good thing about politics is that every day is different. So, um, if you like variety, like I do, well, that's why I chose it.

Excellent. Good answer. Maggie, maybe that's a career for you in the future. Um. All right. That was a pretty easy one. Premier time for you to tackle a bit more of a curly question. And this one comes from Billy, who's eight years old and lives in Sydney.

Hi, my name is Billy. I am eight years old. I live in Sydney and New South Wales. And my question is if you could be Premier of any other state except New South Wales, which state would you choose and why?

I don't know. That's a good question. Um, I love New South Wales and I've only ever lived in New South Wales, so. Oh you know what. Probably Western Australia because they've got all the GST revenue. They keep all the money. So. So it'd be. How good

would that be to have extra money. Right. That would be good. And they've got beaches over there. It is a beautiful state as well. It is a lovely state. Yeah. So all those people from Western Australia at home.

What is GST revenue? Why would that be interesting?

Yeah it's tax. Tax. You know you raise tax which…

Kids love talking about tax.

Yeah. Yeah. I'm like right pitching right for these kids right?

Perfect. Yeah. You're nailing this. Um, now, Premier, in researching this Q&A interview, I stumbled across reports that you have a curious after dinner eating habit. Is it true that you like to have a bowl of cereal after dinner?

Yeah, it was true. But I've really cut down on milk. I don't drink, I don't drink a lot of milk anymore. I've just really gotten rid of it out of my diet again. There's kids would be just engrossed in this in my eating habits. But I used to I used to get hungry and eat, eat, eat whatever I had for dinner and then just go smash a bowl of cereal. I think it's underrated. People should be eating cereal right through the day.

Yeah, I know my teenage son eats it, like, constantly.

There you go. What does he have, though?

Uh, he'll have whatever's in the cupboard. He's. But he's he's going through a weetbix phase at the moment.

Oh, okay. You see, uh, my boy, I've got three boys, and they love when I go shopping because I'll just buy the sugary cereal.

Yeah. A dad shop.

Nutri-Grain, or sometimes if it's holidays. I once came back with, um, Coco Pops and my wife hit the roof, but the kids loved it. Yeah, I bought a jumbo box. It was gigantic.

Yeah. My kids often prefer me to do the shopping because I come back with nothing useful, but lots of really tasty treats.

Yeah, absolutely. Sugar?

Yeah, yeah, my wife not so happy. All right, Premier, given that you're clearly such a foodie, let's go to our next question now from nine-year-old Archie, who lives in Lane Cove, a question that has challenged the greatest minds for the longest of times.

Hi, Chris. My name is Archie. I am nine years old and I live in Lane Cove in New South Wales. My question is, do you think pineapple belongs on pizza?

Um, I do, yeah I do controversial. Yeah. Yeah. I think the, I think the Hawaiian pizza has established itself. It's been around longer than I've been alive and it's about time we give it its due. I mean you can't. What am I supposed to do, move a law to ban pineapple on pizza? That would be insane. So that would be interesting. Hats off to the pineapple pizza Brigade. I think you've earned your place in the pizza pantheon.

There you go. You've had it from the Premier of New South Wales himself. Um, now, Premier, you've just alluded to this. One of your jobs is to help make new laws or change old ones that govern the way that people in New South Wales live. That, of course, includes kids, which is why this question from ten-year-old Jude in North Parramatta is such a cracker.

Hi, my name is Jude. I am ten years old, and I live in North Parramatta in New South Wales. My question is: I believe three-day weekends would be better for schools in New South Wales, because students and teachers would be able to relax and reset so they could come back to school feeling more refreshed and ready for learning. Has this idea been considered? What are your thoughts about it?

It's been considered and rejected.

Uh, sorry, Jude because?

Well, we we, we're trying to educate young minds. We're trying to shape young minds. And if they're at home, I don't know if you. Maybe if the school day went for twelve hours Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday. But I can't imagine you'd be up for that either.

Yeah. This is the thing about life, isn't it, though, that like, sometimes you got to do stuff that you think at the time is not great, but actually, in the long run, adults do sometimes know. Yeah.

There was a there was Jude… I don't know if it still exists, but there used to be the three-day weekend political party. Oh yeah. And um, they would get a fair vote. They never got anyone elected, however. So um, maybe that says something.

Mhm. Mhm. Still in the classroom now, Premier, an Oscar from Tory in the beautiful Mid North Coast region of New South Wales has a question for you. A question that we got from lots of kids who have learned about this particular initiative on the Squiz Kids Daily news podcast.

Hello, Premier. My name is Oscar, and I am twelve years old from Taree. My question is: why are you reducing how much screen time kids have in classrooms?

Yeah, that's a really good question. And, um. I'm really glad you asked it. And I can understand why you're concerned about it, but the truth is that we've gotten a lot of information and a lot of research from around the world that indicates that if you spend too much time on your screen, it can take away what we like to call critical thinking or imagination or creativity. And we want you to make mistakes. Think through problems and get there on your own, rather than with the aid of technology, which sounds old school. And it seems ridiculous that if you've got this brand-new technology, why wouldn't you let us use it? Eventually you will use it and it will be part of your working life. But when you're young, we want you to be in a position where you can think through whatever you want and apply some critical thinking and creativity to the challenges in front of you. And I'm concerned, and I think the research backs that up, that technology gets in the way of that exercise that muscle in your brain?

Yeah, I suspect there's probably a lot of parents listening out there who would agree wholeheartedly with that.

Well, we've got some. This is, I guess, for the parents. Um, but we do have schools now that have paper based less technology and schools that have embraced technology. And there is a difference between their outcomes for the kids. So we just can't ignore that.

And we've seen overseas too, I think, I think perhaps Norway has been a leader in this space. They have reintroducing paper and pen and seeing much better educational outcomes they have.

There's something about having a blank piece of paper in front of you and you having to create the world. Um, crack the problem. Think imaginatively, imaginatively about the problem in front of you. I mean, so much of my job, so much of my position isn't written down and it can't be found on a computer. It's really about applying some imagination and creativity to try and solve the problem.

So that brings us rather neatly to our next question from a listener in Cooma in the Snowy Mountains.

Hi everyone. I'm Joe and I'm ten years old from Cooma. My question is: you were one of the first leaders to push for a social media ban for under sixteen-year-olds. Why do you think that's important?

Well, great question. And I think the first thing I'd say is that I think everybody should spend less time on social media. Not just kids. Adults have got to as well. I mean, it's too much. It just I find it difficult to concentrate and have the discipline to do my job. And I'm a forty-seven-year-old adult who hasn't had this my entire life. And I, I worry that, um, everybody, but particularly kids, you know, I'm not responsible for adults, uh, what they do in their time.

But when it's at school or after school, if we can make a difference so that you can spend more time outside and, um, see the world, then I think that's worthwhile. And I just make the point. There is plenty of time for social media, but you only get one childhood, and it is some of the best days, and it'll be some of the best time of your life. And we don't want you to waste it or or I guess, spend all that time in front of a computer screen when you can have some of the most exciting adventures that are possible.

Yeah, no, we one hundred per cent agree with you right here at Squiz Kids. And as perhaps you're aware, we're super serious here at Squiz Kids about media literacy. Yes. Um, and our Newshounds classroom program, teaching kids to think critically, like you were saying before about the flood of content that they will consume online in their lifetimes. That program has had more than five thousand teachers around the country sign up to it, which is why we were delighted to receive this question, which comes from eight-year-old Izzy in Woolwich in Sydney.

My name is Izzy, and I'm eight years old from Woolwich. My question is, we've been doing Newshounds in class where Squiz-E tells us to stop, think and check before believing everything we see online. Why is that important for kids to learn?

Yeah, that's a great skill to learn because you can put anything you want on the internet. You can put the facts and the truth and, um, information that is one hundred per cent accurate and cannot be contradicted. You can also put as many lies as you want on the internet. And there is no internet police. It can be the truth sits alongside a massive lie. So it really rests on your shoulders to make a decision about whether what you're reading is accurate or not, whether it's true, and make up your own mind. And I think the idea of just having a think about whether what you're looking is actually right or not, it's going to make a big difference in your life. That's the first thing.

Second thing is that, and everybody's done it, and I'm not criticising anyone, but you've got to sort of think about what it means if you're forward on a, a meme or, or a quote or some kind of image or a video. Um, is that going to hurt someone else's feelings? Is it going to make someone else feel terrible? I think that we've all got a bit of a responsibility to think about other people. Uh, it's a, it's a lot easier to hurl an insult on a computer than it is face to face.

But I think probably a good rule of thumb is if you're not prepared to say to someone's face, you probably shouldn't do it online, right? And if you're a kid, and if you're not prepared to say it in the playground, then perhaps it's not something that you should be saying online or forwarding online or.

Yep. That's that's one hundred percent true. Yep.

On the subject of skills should be learning in this new digital age. Here's an insightful question from nine-year-old Thekshana from Preston's in Western Sydney.

Hello, Premier. My name is Thekshana and I am eight years old from Saint Catherine of Siena, Preston, Sydney. Being a NSW Premier, what kind of kids initiative have you taken recently and what once will you promise in the future? And is Newshounds something you would like to see in every NSW school? Like it will be in South Australia. Thank you.

Oh, I didn't know that. I didn't know he was doing that in in South Australia. So maybe that's something I can steal from him and pretend that I dreamed it up. That's a great idea.

Why not? I'm sure he won't mind you stealing.

Probably will. Mind if I don't give him credit. So let me have a look at that. What's some good ideas? Some initiatives? We've got a really good program in New South Wales schools that we run with food Bank and its Breakfast Club, and it's for everybody. You just roll into the school. Not every school does it, but a lot of lot of schools in Western Sydney and some in the country do. And you just roll in, everybody gets breakfast. And it means that you start today with a full tummy. Important not Coco Pops, unfortunately, but it's pretty good even so.

Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Of course. Uh, Premier, the online world is changing by the minute and the speed that frankly makes my head spin. And one of the things that we'll be learning in a new version of Newshounds, to be released next year, is how AI and the algorithm are pushing us all into echo chambers. Okay. Reducing the amount of different ideas, different people, or different points of views that we're exposed to and how that is damaging something called social cohesion. Now, why is that a dangerous thing for us all? And more broadly, why is it dangerous for our democracy and the amazing Australian way of life that we all take for granted?

Wow. I mean, that's a good question. I think that we're trying to come to terms with that right now. There's an old saying that, um, uh, a lie can go right around the world before the truth even gets its pants on out of bed when they get up in the morning. And that's the long way of saying that, um, lies spread quicker than facts. And I think that what we really have to be careful of with social media is hearing or reading something online and thinking that it's automatically true, particularly if it impacts somebody else's life. Um, who is your neighbor or who you live with? Because that, that can just make life more difficult, make life more difficult at school in our communities, in the street, at the shopping center.

The second thing that, you know, we've all got a responsibility to look out for and that includes me is, um, there are a lot of, there's a lot of information online that is, it picks

on people because of the basis of their skin or their religion or their race. And yeah, you know, we should be judging people on whether they're good people or not. It doesn't mean that you don't have to judge people. You can make it. You can make a decision about whether you want to be friends with someone or whether you like them. But I mean, I think in a successful society, you do it on the basis of their contribution to the country and what their values are, not just because they're from a particular background. That's not not fair. I wouldn't like it if someone didn't like me because of my background. And I think that's the way we should be treating others. What is it, the golden rule?

Yeah, absolutely. I think you're absolutely right. Now the Squiz kids audience are pretty future-facing, as you'd expect from a group of primary school kids. Which is why I love this question from Thekshana's eleven-year-old sister, Veeksha, also from Prestons in Western Sydney.

Hello Premier, my name is Veeksha and I am eleven years old from Sydney, Australia. I am in year five in Saint Catherine of Siena, Prestons. My question is would they I the mode of learning is quite different. What kind of jobs do you expect there to be in the future? Thank you.

That's a, oh my goodness. Well, I don't, I it's interesting. And um, I think that's probably one of the central questions that we're trying to work out in government and our economy and our big businesses, because there's no doubt it's going to have a big impact. But we want people to meet their full potential and and be employed in jobs that they love. A lot of people think that it will affect things like the law and office jobs, where there's a it's a heavy research based. Um, so that means looking things up, studying things. Yeah. AI is really good at that. AI is not good at being a carpenter, being a builder, working as an engineer, building tunnels. It can assist, but it can't replace humans. So that's what a lot of people think. My sense is, uh, that despite a lot of people saying that everyone will be tossed out of a job as a result of AI, that won't happen, that the economy still relies on human ingenuity. And, um, and that's, it can't be replaced with a computer. And this goes to what I was saying at the very beginning of the interview, and that is the best way of ensuring that you're not replaced by a robot is to create, be creative.

Use your imagination.

Exactly. Pen and paper.

Yes. Take time to think. One hundred per cent. Because they're the things and skills that a computer will never replicate.

It'll help to future proof you one hundred percent. Um. Now, New South Wales, Premier is a big state more than three times the size of the entire United Kingdom. Bigger even than the country of France. And while Sydney is the focal point, there are lots of folks out in the regions too, including our next questioner, Leo, who's eleven, from Tamworth in country, New South Wales. And if I was a betting man, I'd say he might one day grow up to run for Parliament.

Hello, I'm Leo from Tamworth and I'm eleven in the regions. New South Wales stands for Newcastle, Sydney, Wollongong. Why doesn't the money make it over the mountains? Regional people matter too.

Leo. Leo's hammered me.

You've done it, Leo. He's. He's flawed.

But I think you're right, Leah. You know, there's been too much of a focus on metropolitan Sydney. I'm not sure about Newcastle and Wollongong. I mean, they need their share as well. But one third of the people of this state do not live in Sydney. They live outside of Sydney in places like Tamworth. And you're one hundred percent right. We need to make sure that we are putting money into hospitals and roads and basic infrastructure that these communities need. I'll be honest with you. I don't think we've done a good enough job on that front. And just because there's a big distance between where you live and where I live, we need to make sure that we're putting

money and resources and opportunity for you so that you can, well, you can be the next generation in your in your family to live in Tamworth, and then you can have kids and raise them in that community too.

Yeah, yeah. Which is super important.

Absolutely.

All right, Premier, you've done amazingly well. We're almost at the finish line. You think you can handle one more question.

I can handle it.

Oh, good for you. Our last question comes from interstate up north, no less. And we all know how much the New South Wales and Queensland rivalry sets passions alight. But I know you love a little bit of NRL footy.

Yep.

So I figured you could handle this question from a listener in Brisbane.

Hello Premier, my name is Felix. I'm twelve years old from Brisbane. My question is who's your favourite footy team and isn't it Queensland's turn to win the State of Origin next year?

Haha. Second question first. No, it's always New South Wales year, although, you know we had a good win this year. But you guys are tough, there's no doubt about it. Yeah, and I go for the mighty Canterbury-Bankstown Bulldogs. We didn't have a great season this year but we're looking. I think we've got a good opportunity to well smash

the Dolphins. The Cowboys and the Broncos and the Titans next year. So as long as we get the the metal on those four teams and everybody else.

Them's fighting words.

I'm up for it. I'm up for it.

He's up for it. You heard it here first, ladies and gentlemen, we'll premiere. That's all we have time for today. Thanks so much for braving the Squiz Kids Q&A hot seat. How are you feeling after fielding some of those curly questions from Aussie kids?

I feel good, I mean, but there were some really good questions in there. Very thoughtful, um, focused on the future. And we've obviously got some super bright kids in Australia.

Yeah. Future's in good hands.

I think that's right. Yeah, absolutely.

Now before you go, we always get our Q&A guests to help us with the traditional Squiz Kids sign-off. Premier Chris Minns, will you do the honours?

Now get out there and have a most excellent day.

Over and out.