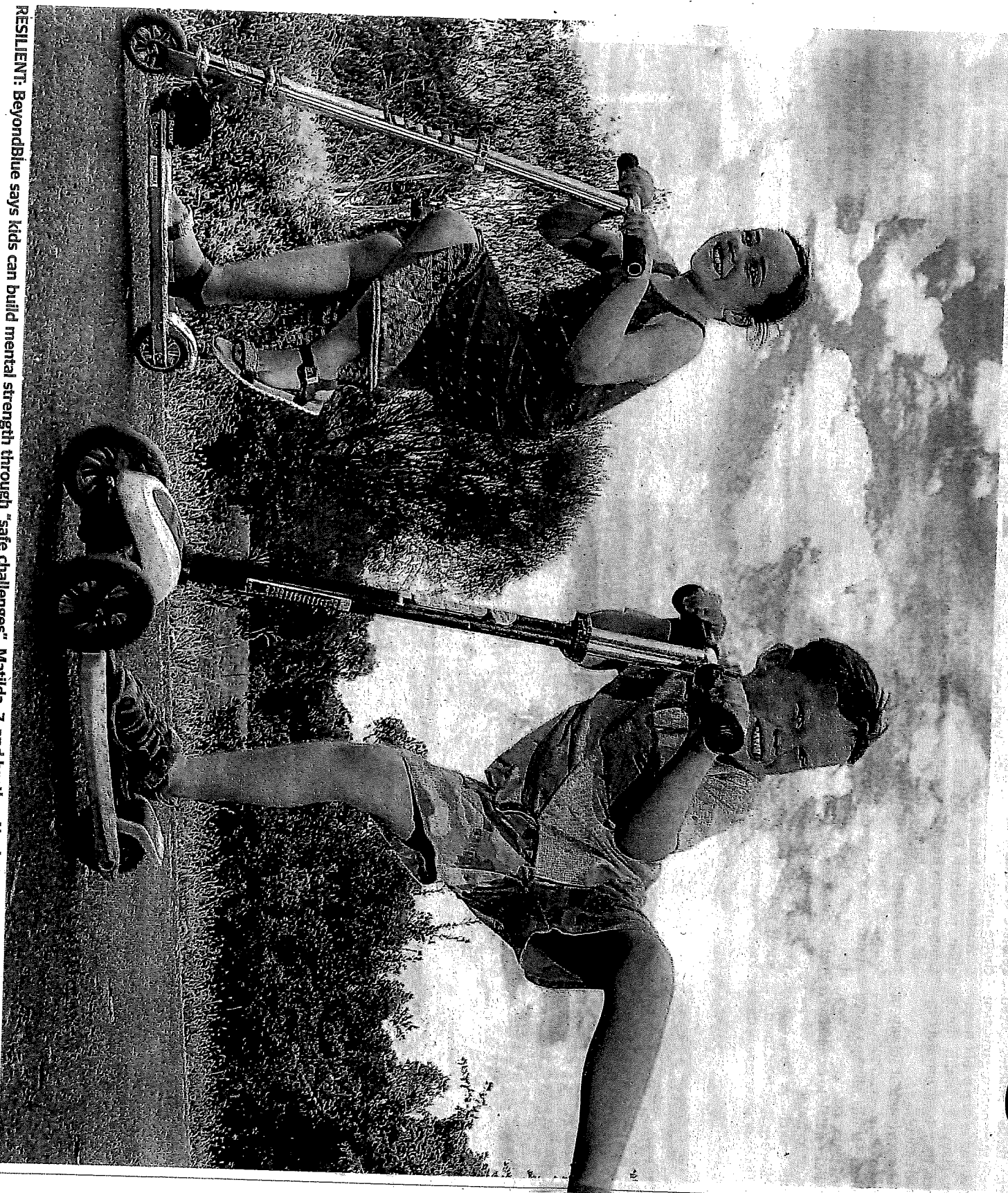


# Activity the key to build strength, reduce bullying



**RESILIENT:** BeyondBlue says kids can build mental strength through "safe challenges". Matilda, 7, and brother Noah, 5, on their scooters. Picture: IAN CURRIE

## TIM WILLIAMS EDUCATION REPORTER

SCHOOLS should organise more lunchtime activities to minimise opportunities students have for bullying, the states' Commissioner for Children and Young People says.

Commissioner Helen Connolly also says students are more worried about the "cumulative impact of low level bullying on them" rather than more "extreme" forms.

Ms Connolly wrote to *The Advertiser* in the wake of the Liberal Party's announcement it would scrap the Safe Schools anti-homophobic bullying program and replace it with a broader-focused scheme.

That prompted principals, who backed the Safe Schools program, to call for schools to conduct regular bullying audits, allowing students to identify bullies with the protection of anonymity.

"Relying on young people to self-identify a problem and

report it to an adult is not adequate," Ms Connolly writes.

"More organised activities are needed in schools at lunch break, and peer support encouraged."

She says she will undertake a "major consultation" this year "speaking directly to children and young people to better understand bullying from their perspective, and identify how they think it should be addressed in schools, online and in the community". Ms Connolly's comments

come as a UniSA study reveals the racism endured by South Sudanese refugee students.

Researcher Dr Melanie Baak interviewed students about their schooling in Africa and Australia and found that, without prompting, they discussed racism from peers and teachers. That included being called "n\*\*\*\*er" and "black bitches" and being told to "go back to your country".

Dr Baak said schools needed to actively address exclusion and abuse of migrants,

rather than just making statements about being committed to inclusion.

Another research project by mental health organisation BeyondBlue has found creating "safe challenges" for young children helps them become more resilient later in life. It is today launching a guide for parents and teachers that covers talking about feelings, supporting independence, building closeness with family and friends, and promoting "healthy thinking habits."