

# *Dirtgirlworld*

***Dirtgirlworld*** was produced by Mememe Productions for Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC). ***Dirtgirlworld*** is a celebration of life outside. The music-centric series is a distinctive blend of animation, photomontage and illustration that takes children to a world where the real and unreal collide. The series has an environmental focus, contemporary and exciting music for children and provides an invitation for people who want to encourage their children to step outside and go get grubby!

Everyone in ***Dirtgirlworld*** knows just how important saving water is. So when Dirtgirl's water tank springs a leak, everyone springs into action. At the end of the day, Dirtgirl's leaky harvest meets some potatoes in a special soup for a very soggy ken...delicious!

***Dirtgirlworld*** was one of the PRIX JEUNESSE INTERNATIONAL 2010 finalists in the "up to 6 fiction" category.

## International experts' opinions

The program generated a lot of discussion among the international experts who expressed extreme views. Some of them simply loved the program: "It was unique and really grabbing" (male expert, USA). They appreciated the fact that the program dealt with the topic of scarcity of water in the coming years in a very "engaging environment and kid-centric way" (female expert, USA). It dealt with a child's way of dealing with the environment and educated children of the possibility of a time where there may not be enough water in Australia. Such themes are deemed important for children as they could be growing into a world which could be totally different from what previous generations had experienced. However, it is quite a challenge for producers who are interested in environmental issues to present such complicated themes.

The producer wanted to create a program which educates children about sustainable living using characters and themes in both real and virtual surroundings. "We wanted to tell a fantastic story for children that had lots of music in it and that was about the environment" (female expert, Australia). According to a male expert from USA, "you have done the curriculum beautifully. You did it in a way that empowered kids and is creative and beautiful. You did it in a way that is not horrifying". "I believe it is a crucial topic for humanity or for education of the future generations" (male expert, Germany).

The program was also a lesson to other producers on how to introduce environment-friendly messages in their programs to educate children about the importance of these issues. The program encouraged the producers "to just make tiny changes in how we tell stories" (male expert, USA).



Figure 1: Scrapboy finds a water leak in the tank and tries to save water.



Figure 2: Scrapboy and Dirtgirl's are unable to resolve the problem on their own.



Figure 3: The chicken helps Dirtgirl to save the water.

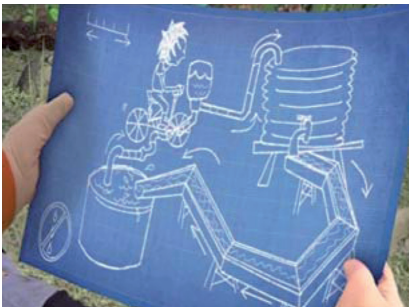


Figure 4: Scrapboy decide to fix the leak via a systematic plan.



Figure 5: He first channels the water to another tank.



Figure 6: Ken and Grubby use the diverter for a stunt.

The protagonist of the program was perceived as a very interesting and enthusiastic character. “Just whatever she is doing: she is writing in her books, she is taking a picture, she is just so immersed in this whole enthusiasm of that world. It is infectious” (female expert, USA). The international experts also loved the music of the program. “I thought the musical piece was just magnificent. It was a very sophisticated piece of music and the dance” (female expert, USA).

The program has practical implications and is promoted across different media. It has two websites. One, which is an interactive play-site that is all about sustainable gaming and another site which is where kids can join together to do little things that make a big difference. However, there were some opposite views of the program as well. Some experts raised doubts about the suitability of the program for the target audience. “I just have the feeling that there was still something that wasn’t really in harmony with the age group” (male expert, Germany). Some argued more specifically that the theme of the program was not appropriate for the target audience. “They cannot do a thing about it, but you are teaching up to six-years-old about water spill – about spilling water” (female expert, Denmark).

Some also thought that it was “artificial” (male expert, Sweden) and a complicated story for pre-schoolers to grasp. “I think that the story could be a little bit simpler for preschoolers. I didn’t get the sense that the onus was on children solving the problem like the problem Dirtgirl had” (male expert, USA). They also felt that the children of this age would not be able to comprehend the meaning of the program: “I think the play on words: ‘the leak’, as in water dripping versus ‘leak’: onion-like vegetable. That word play, its double meaning, is very difficult for young children” (female expert, USA).

*Prof. Dr. Dafna Lemish, Namrata Bansal, and Hao Cao  
(Southern Illinois University, Carbondale, USA)*



Figure 7: Dirtgirl sings a song to urge saving every drop of water.



Figure 8: In the end of the day, Dirtgirl enjoys a special soup with Ken.