



**ADVENTUROUS EDUCATOR:** Hobart teacher Andrew Hughes will soon be paddling his kayak around Papua New Guinea. INSET: Andrew being interviewed for today's ttn program on TDT. Pictures: DAMIAN BESTER

# Adventure island

**CHRISTOPHER BANTICK**

**I**T takes a certain kind of ambition to want to paddle down the Fly River in Papua New Guinea and then circumnavigate the country.

But that's what Andrew Hughes is planning to do in May this year. More than this, he will be providing updated internet reports of his journey. The potential this offers for classroom use is considerable. So what are the educational elements Hughes sees?

"I'm a qualified primary teacher and I taught part-time at Campbell Street Primary [last year]," Andrew said.

"I came from a science background as I had done geology at university. I went to Western Australia and worked in a gold mine and, after a year, returned to Tassie," he said.

"Teaching reflected the values I think are important. I love the outdoors and teaching gives me the

opportunity of working with kids and making a difference."

So why the Fly River? Hughes says this was not an immediate choice. "After I went from Hobart to Cape York in a kayak, I had a very rough idea of 'adventure learning' at that time.

"I had a blog and some students followed along and about a dozen teachers got me started in following up the trip. This gave me the confidence as the kids liked tuning in and seeing what I'd done.

"PNG is great because it interests me but it really doesn't matter where it is. There is nothing special about PNG for me, other than it is close to Australia.

"Still, I don't think we know enough about it in Australia but Tasmania certainly. The misconceptions I hear about PNG are the obvious ones, social instability and cannibalism. It's right on our doorstep and it is a different world.

"There are crocodiles in the Fly

River. I am a little worried about this and I saw big ones at Cape York. It is my biggest concern but it also adds an element to the trip which gets me excited. It is something I suspect will engage kids."

Hughes is well organised and he has been working on educational materials which will support his journey. These will be available online.

There will also be audio on the website and images as well capturing his journey. He hopes to achieve significant educational outcomes through the trip.

"The one thing I would hope to get out of it is to give teachers a resource that they can very simply use in a classroom situation without too much thought or work on their part.

"I know how hard it is to teach material beyond what they are already doing. The age range will be Years 5 to 8 — middle school range. Beyond these levels it is a lot

harder for teachers to incorporate this into their work.

"I'd like to make the trip relevant to the students. At the end of it, I like to think students could say that we learnt a lot about climate change and Papua New Guinea, but also, what a great way to experience life.

"I remember when people came into my school when I was in their age group and they had really strong messages."

What is soon clear is that Hughes, while an adventurer at heart, has a strong sense of the need to educate. He makes reference to some of the children he has taught.

"What has struck me since I became a teacher is that there are some kids who are not enjoying life in the lower years. I want to bring them a little bit of excitement. School should be interesting and enjoyable.

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