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Board Game With a Fair Go

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A retired school teacher has created a board game that she hopes will help bridge the gap between the Not for Profit and for-profit worlds.

Andrea Thompson, a Sydney-based woman with a passion for social justice, said she created her own board game, Fair Go, to help teach children that they don't need to destroy their competitors to be successful.

Players compete to become the best at a range of different industries, including mining, banking, tourism, manufacturing and media.

Like other board games, there can only be one winner, but unlike most of them, players need to have a social conscience.

"Very simply, it's fair because there's two sets of industry cards, so you could have Health and I could have Health, you could have Mining and I could have Mining, but only one of us could be the best at those industries. If I have Health and you land on me you have to pay me a little bit, but once I become the best I put a ring on that square, and if you happen to have the same card, your card is worthless, so I'm the best in that industry," Thompson said.

"But to be the best in an industry I have to have done something great. If I want to be the best in mining I have to restore land, or if I want to be the best in tourism I have to protect the coral reef.

"So it's not a way of amassing fortune, you actually have to do something great to be the best."

The difference between Fair Go and games like Monopoly is that players do not simply make more money as they start to dominate the board.

"The trick of the game though, is that once I am the best in an industry and I have a ring on that square, if you land on me I have to pay you because I have social responsibility.

"Once you become the best at something you have a great reputation and you actually have to give back to society if you want to win. You cannot be the best without having contributed."

Thompson said she had been wanting to create Fair Go for 30 years and was inspired to make it after playing board games with her father, who instilled a sense of social justice in her.

"When I was a kid and I used to play chess with my dad he used to take all the pieces off the board except for his king and just one pawn and then every time I beat him he would put one more piece on, so he played with a handicap," Thompson said.

"And while we were playing we used to talk about different things, especially social justice and what was wrong with the world and how we could make it a better place.

"I'd say someone was mean to me, you know they didn't lend me their pencil or something and dad would say "Well there's a reason they didn't, maybe they only had one set and they weren't going to have another one for the whole year", and things like that I'd never thought of before. I just thought they were being mean to me.

"He used to always say "Well, what was the reasons for their actions?" So I remembered all these discussions we had and when I had kids of my own I wanted to find a game where there was a handicap where people of different ability levels could play together.

"It started from the conversations I had with my dad."

But Thompson said she did not feel that the game would be contributing to the creation of generations that think they deserve to win at everything, because in the end there is a clear winner of Fair Go.

"I'm a mum as well and I'm a realist. This means that everybody is a winner in one particular industry, they will all have a ring on one particular square for doing something great, but there is only one winner of the game," she said.

"No, I think you've got to give them all a little bit of winning but then only one person can actually win."

Thompson said she hoped the game would help teach children that they do not need to be ruthless business people to be successful in life.

"Often with the Not for Profit sector… people are thinking there are only two types of businesses, one where they can make a profit, or those that don't make a profit," she said.
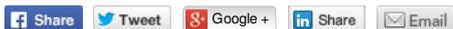
"I suppose what I'm trying to say is that if we also teach people that if they make a profit they should also give back as well.

So I suppose it's trying to have a bridge between the two. Rather than spending your time destroying the opposition you should be be spending your time trying to be the best you can and find your own niche."

More information on Fair Go can be found here.

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