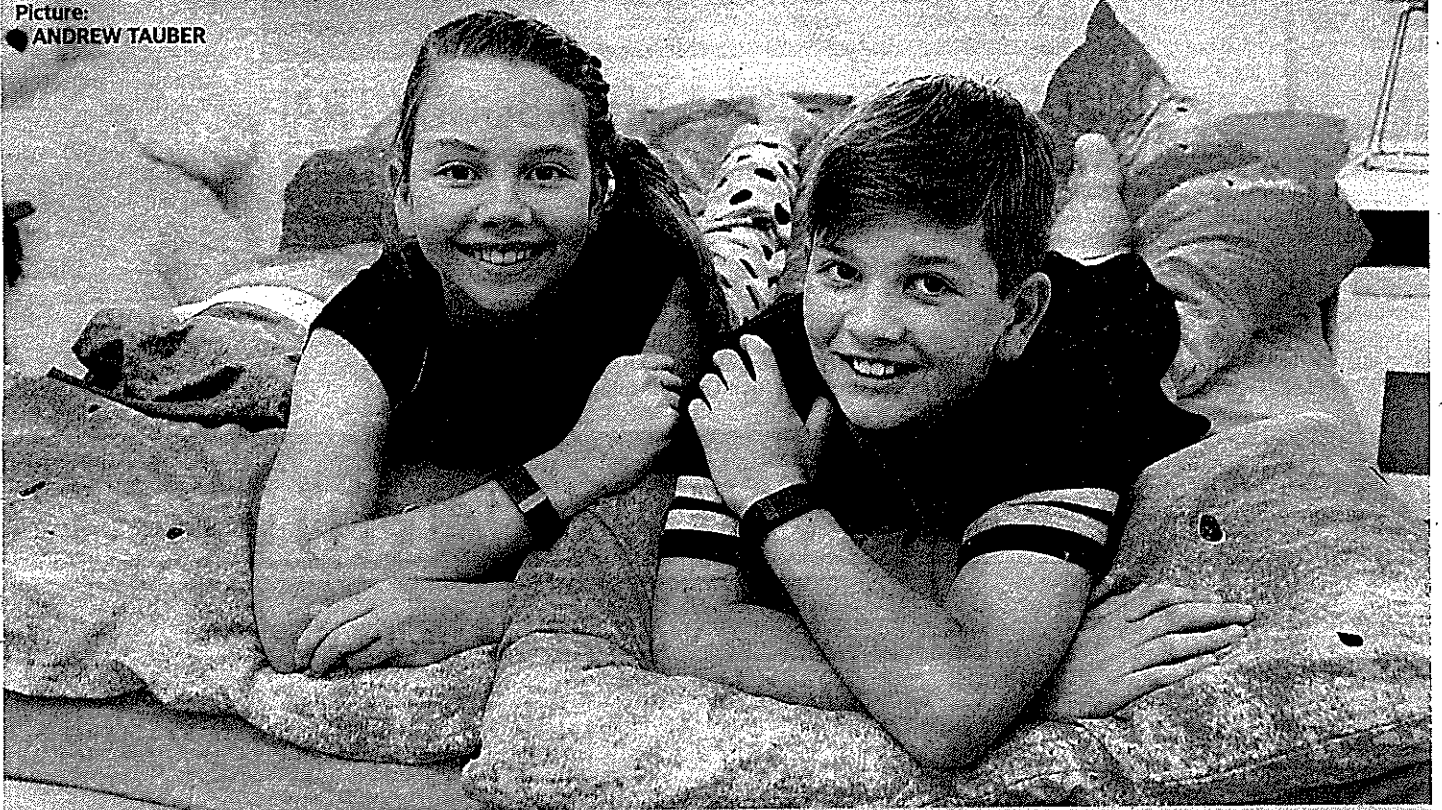


Hannah, 11, and Sam, 9, sport their Fitbits, which may be useful in helping identify sleep disorders.

Picture:
● ANDREW TAUBER



HEALTH TRACKERS AID A GOOD NIGHT'S SLEEP

FITBIT-style activity trackers and mobile phone sleep apps may have a role to play in diagnosing childhood sleep problems.

Victorian children face a four-month wait for an overnight stay at Victoria's only paediatric sleep study unit, which sees more than 1000 children each year.

Sleep experts from the Ritchie Centre, based at the

BRIGID O'CONNELL

Hudson Institute of Medical Research, along with clinicians and visiting US sleep expert Hawley Montgomery-Downs, will present the latest research on the effectiveness of commercial sleep trackers at a public forum next week.

Forum chair Professor Rosemary Horne said while

the gold standard for assessing sleep disorders was an overnight sleep study, it was important to understand how popular technology like wristband, health trackers and apps could help improve a child's sleep — and consequently their behaviour and education — given how expensive, disruptive to families and highly sought

after sleep studies were.

"About 40 per cent of children have a sleep problem, but it's often quite difficult for clinicians to identify if they really do have a problem," Prof Horne said.

"There is a lot of new technology out there and a lot of health claims."

A recent study at the Melbourne's Children's

Sleep Centre, based at Monash Medical Centre, found a wristband monitor to be highly accurate at measuring sleep-wake patterns, compared to a mobile app.

The forum will be held at Monash Medical Centre next Wednesday, May 11, at 6pm. To book phone 8572 2877 or email caroline.menara@hudson.org.au