

# Green and gold need each other

SIR, Millions of words are being written and spoken in the conservation versus development debate and on the needs for balance and sustainable development.

The phrase "In the national interest" is banded around with increasing frequency yet obviously means different things to different people.

The protagonists in

the debate should pause to reflect upon the significance of our national colors, green and gold.

The two complement each other in a perfectly natural manner. The symbolism should be very real to all Australians.

The first gold rush in the 1850s laid the foundations for the nation we have today.

Mining and other

land-related economic activity, eg "the golden grain", pay virtually all of our bills today.

To date, the quest for balance between conservation and mining interests has been rather like a tight-rope act in a circus — extremely difficult and slow.

It doesn't have to be this way. Miners accept that environmental management and rehabilitation costs are part of the overall cost of mining, that is, they have joined the green with their gold.

It's now time for conservationists to accept that the two colors are of equal significance and that they should join the gold with their green.

The two colors need each other.

C.M. Friel, Alawa.

A.J. Hosking, Nakara.

## No environment study before Timor oil pact

SIR, There is a striking incongruence between the signing of the Timor Gap agreement by Senator Evans and, on the same day, the statement by the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, that the Government intends to protect the environment.

The 8-billion barrels of oil expected to come out of that area will provide millions of tonnes of pollutants such as carbon dioxide, smog, ether gases that affect the atmosphere and many other forms of toxin and refuse.

Will those ministers charged with protecting the environment, Senator Richardson and Mr Hutton, please tell us what plans are in hand to protect the environment from this new source of degradation?

Where is the environ-

mental impact statement?

Or are we again rushing blindly and ignorantly into something we cannot control simply for some short-term monetary benefit?

C.M. Friel, Alawa.

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C.M. Friel, Alawa.

## All heart over HK refugees

SIR, Mrs Thatcher is, as we know, all heart! That is why she is providing transport, free, gratis and for nothing, to those "illegal immigrants" who have escaped from Vietnam and chosen Hong Kong as their haven.

But Mr Bush is critical of this action; though why he should be is difficult to define.

After all, Vietnam is now a fifth-world country as a result of the worst bombing the world ever knew (together with Cambodia) — all inflicted by America and for which they have long refused to pay reparations or to grant humanitarian aid.

Pol Bush has no reason to object to Kettle Thatcher's pigmentation, even if she is an Iron Kettle.

Jack Hunt, Humphry Doo.

## Sentences must mean what they say

SIR, There has been quite a bit in newspapers and other media recently about the terms prisoners are serving.

By literal definition the term "life" means the "term of ultimate existence" or "period of existence from birth to death".

By literal definition a year is a period of 365 days (366 in leap year).

By literal definition imprisonment is "to be put into or confinement in a prison".

Bearing in mind the above definitions consider the following:

A company manufactures a product and offers an unconditional guarantee for the life of the product.

If the company reneges on that guarantee it is criminally liable.

If your driver's licence is valid for 3 years, it means a period of 1095 days (or 1096 days if it includes a leap year).

If you pay your insurance premium for one

year it means 365 (or 366) days.

If this is so why, when a judge in our judicial system says "imprisonment for life", does it mean only 7 to 10 years, or when a judge says "imprisonment for 7 years" does it mean 2 or 3 years?

When was the last time someone had a licence to drive cancelled by the judicial system for 2 years and got it back in 3 months because they were good.

Come on, let's get real.  
D.L. Chonoweth, FDMAS Coconawarra.

## 00555 service could be costly

SIR, Recently, a number of local television advertisements have urged people to ring the 00555 numbers for information on a large number of subjects.

What the advertisements do not tell the general public is the cost of this service. If you ring any of the numbers during the day, it will cost \$3c a minute.

Therefore a teenager who rings the service to listen to the "top ten" of the week (allowing 3 minutes each) will add about \$18 to the bill.

If the kids decide to ring and make inquiries about sex, that will add another \$18 to the next phone bill.

If this is done on a regular basis of once a week, your next phone bill will be more than \$400 higher than you expect.

On inquiring about

this service, I was told it is not a legal requirement to advertise costs for services.

I was also told that the costs would appear in the (front of the 1990) phone book. That book will not be delivered to Darwin residents until May or June 1990.

I was also told that it is not the responsibility of the company to worry about whether people can afford the service.

I asked Telecom how I could have access to these numbers removed from my service.

I was told the only way I could do this was by having my STD access removed.

So Darwinians beware, your next phone bill could be your last.  
Kath Schneider, Moli.

## Professionals at Malak House

### LETTERS

The Editor  
Box 1500 GPO  
Darwin 0801

SIR, In the light of your recent spate of articles about Malak House, your readers could be forgiven for not realising that the Northern Territory leads Australia in the treatment of juvenile offenders.

The distortion of reality in some of the reporting is of great concern, particularly because it places a slight on the team of highly professional people who work in the most difficult area of juvenile detention.

Half your December 14 article reflects a level of journalism one would expect from a southern "scandal sheet" and presents as the classic case of not ruining a good story for the sake of the facts. This is far from the high standard of journalism locals have come to expect from the NT News.

Youth workers (not guards), a group of highly trained professionals, do not spend every minute of the day manacled to their young charges.

Our detention centres exist to protect the com-

munity from the unacceptable behavior of a few. The surveillance procedures used are those appropriate to each individual's needs, in line with the purpose of community protection.

Many of the incidents publicised from time to time, simply reflect the difficulty of running juvenile custodial programs in a building designed as a welfare hostel. The staff also labor under this added burden.

Though much work has been done to upgrade security at Malak House, the Government has recognised the centre's shortcomings and its inappropriate location.

The new purpose-built Don Dale Centre will, within two years, become a showpiece for detention programs for those few juveniles the community believes deserve or need that type of treatment.

From 20 years of experience in this field, I can assure you that young people are the most difficult of all to manage in any Correctional Services program.

There is a "devil-may-care" attitude as part of their normal youthful exuberance and some rarely consider the consequences of their actions, whether it be wagging school, "nicking" a lolly from the local supermarket, stealing a car, or escaping from custody.

Correctional Services in the Northern Territory offers the broadest range of treatment options, both community-based and custodial, in the nation.

Government policies are aimed first at diverting young people at risk of coming into conflict with the law away from such a course and, second, at breaking the

nexus of graduation from juvenile to adult involvement in crime.

The rest of Australia is now looking at the Territory's lead and we can expect a number of States to fall into line in the future with our model for the treatment of juvenile offenders.

Our detention centre custodial programs, including the acclaimed Wildman River Wilderness Work Camp, are particularly targeted at lifting the self-esteem of juveniles, many of whom come from dysfunctional families.

Clearly, the vast majority of juveniles in our general community are well-adjusted, young achievers, who are on a direct path to becoming tomorrow's upstanding adult citizens.

In the Correctional Services sphere, there have been the failures but there have also been, and will continue to be, the many untold success stories of young offenders rejoining the community as well-behaved, model citizens.

To give credit where it is due, your December 14 article did report one of the many success stories of Malak House.

Your newspaper has a positive role to play in these endeavors. The Government has an open-door policy for the media in relation to Correctional Services. (Witness your recent excellent series of articles on the three Top End prisons).

The community has a right to know how effectively its correctional institutions and programs are being managed.

The media's role is to provide the truth, not pander to the interests of disgruntled former employees or to display as facts, unsubstantiated allegations. Your newspaper has been given every opportunity

to uncover and examine the facts.

Like parents, youth workers are not aided by any ideal academic training to prepare them for the job, although Correctional Services has introduced a comprehensive training course to address possible problem areas. These people work in a potentially hostile environment in which they need to cope from time to time with assaults, abuse and the vehemence of parents who cannot accept that their children are capable of anti-social or criminal behavior.

Perhaps next time you go to press on this subject, you might spare more thought for the dedicated, committed and professional teams who run juvenile detention centres and for that matter, our prisons as well.

D.R. Owsen, Secretary, Correctional Services Department.

## Christmas wish for politicians

SIR, With Christmas upon us and the new year just around the corner, it would be appropriate to wish all our erstwhile politicians the best of luck for the coming year.

All would agree that Christmas is a time for families to be together, sharing the festive season united.

It could also be a time when they listen to the grass-root philosophies of the working-class people and come back to the political arena rejuvenated and full of concern for the battler.

A millionaire can cast only one vote, the same as a laborer who lives from hand to mouth.

In essence what one is

saying is that many people are hard up against it, compared with the money-manipulating minority.

Votes are the most important commodity in politics, not empty political promises, so the excited members of the "Air-Condition Brigade" should take heed and come back to us voters in the new year with a genuine approach to vote-gathering.

Wishing all readers a merry Christmas and happy new year and a return to democratic values.

Mick Martin, Jabiru.

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