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Monday November 4, 2002

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Letters

Tomorrow is not such a lovely day if population soars

You do not have to be an Einstein to see that the report on a big increase in population ("We'll be right with 50 million", *Herald*, November 2-3) is entirely driven by business interests which have the almighty dollar in their impaired sights.

The report mentions "moderate lifestyle". Our lifestyle has already been eroded during the gallop from 15 million to 19 million, and those of us who remember pre-1940 would say it has been going down slowly for a long time.

Do they think that we will get more rain? We would be flat out growing enough food to feed ourselves, which would upset our balance of payments. Shortage of petrol would force most of our present cars off the road with the large increase in price, and I cannot see wind power producing enough watts to recharge the batteries of the electric ones.

Sydney is already too big for comfortable living as we used to know it.

Gone are the days of taking the family for a spin at the weekends. How was it that we lived quite comfortably with a population of 7 million but now can't manage without seven times that figure?

Without nuclear power we will always have difficulty competing in the world market unless we work a lot harder for less reward.

I feel sad for my grandchildren, but rejoice in the fact that I will not live to see the almighty mess we may get into.

D. Davies, Pymble, November 3.

I was interested in the omission of comment on the cost of increased immigration to Australia. Sydney is already a city increasingly divided by cultural, racial and economic forces. Increasing numbers of suburbs have a socially and economically deprived underclass.

It already seems difficult for our society to absorb 70,000 new Australians a year without intolerance and racism. To

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foster multiculturalism and tolerance people need time to adapt.

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Who are we kidding? I, for one, would prefer to live in a country with clean air, social harmony and prawns for all rather than some "hyper-material" megacity.

Janina Szyndler, Ashfield, November 3.

I'm amazed that anyone could think Australians would be willing to tolerate the consequences of a population of 50 million.

What about our tourist industry? Most tourists come here for access to the beaches, the scenery and the space - all that would disappear in the crush. Forget about seafood - I can't afford it now.

Maybe science will be able to keep pace with technical innovations to solve our water problems, but what about food? No exports there - we'll be eating it.

Australians will have to think very carefully about the population issue. There is a way forward, and having a bigger population isn't necessary. Clever thinking which puts ordinary Australians first is.

Gail Potter, Bondi Junction, November 3.

Less energy and having to pay a lot more for it - like private cars priced and restricted to the rich. Hoping that technology will find ways to stretch Australia's scarce and variable water supplies.

Traditional foods will be replaced with whatever can be processed and flavoured to be edible. We'll be jammed together in huge, polluted megacities with the disaffected and discontented from all over the world, knowing that if ever the growth stumbles it will all collapse. And living like this not because it's good for our quality of life but because it's good for business.

If this is what Australians really wanted we would all be heading for Hong Kong and Singapore.

Gordon Drennan, Ultimo, November 3.

This year's (modest) immigration intake is 120,000. These people will consume 16 million tonnes of water each year. Should the water come from the city or from farmers?

Is the Department of Immigration building desalination plants, or should we freeze the immigration intake until the drought breaks?

David Hughes, American River (SA), November 3.

In the race for the misleading headline of the year, "We'll be

right with 50 million" has to be well out in front.

All the CSIRO report (*Future Dilemmas: Options to 2050 for Australia's population, technology, resources and environment*) appears to be saying is that an Australia with 50 million people might be technically possible.

But a desirable place to live as your headline implies? That's another question.

I know how I would answer it.

G. Jones, Torrens (ACT), November 3.

Evidence suggests that Australia would be best-placed with a high immigration intake.

A small and declining population may put less pressure on our environment, but a large, wealthy nation has more money to address green issues.

A "middle-road" immigration path would result in the sluggish economic performance seen in chronically ageing nations such as Japan, Germany and Sweden.

It must be realised that the sole key to American wealth and power is its vast marketplace.

For Australia, a figure of 50 million by 2100 must not be seen as outrageously high when currently Britain and France each has a population of almost 60 million. The United States will have more than 550 million citizens in 100 years on current projections.

In short, a small Australia will be left behind and become globally irrelevant without revised immigration.

David McIlwain, Balgowlah, November 3.

US media silence on Bali speaks volumes

I would have to agree with Andrew Leigh and Justin Wolfers regarding Australia's rating in the US ("Coverage of Bali tragedy shows how little Australia rates in American minds", *Herald*, November 1).

Friends of mine living in the US had not even heard about the Bali bombing three days after the event and emailed me wondering if they could "hook up" with me over there for a holiday among the peace and quiet. After I informed them of the terrorist attack their reply was not to worry as I'm not an American.

John Howard? Who is he? Half my friends in the resort town I frequent in Colorado think that Mick Dundee runs this country.

Perhaps they aren't far from wrong.

September 11 was a horrible senseless tragedy; so was October 12. But is Australia needlessly suffering for a country more interested in trick-or-treats?

Fiona McWilliam, St Ives, November 1.

Get your sums right

I refer to comments from correspondents about Ed Habkoug, head of mathematics at Knox Grammar School.

Ed's comments to the *Herald* about the degree of difficulty of the HSC mathematics papers this year ("Theorem cracks them up", October 29) were directed at the 2 Unit mathematics paper, not the Extension 2 mathematics paper, an intention that was not reflected in the original article as it appeared.

The resulting impression conveyed about Ed is at odds with his sincere, dedicated and humble approach to teaching and learning in mathematics.

Philip Cummins, Director of Curriculum, Knox Grammar School, Wahroonga, November 1.

On the wrong wavelength

As I understand it, Alan Jones owns 20 per cent of, or is entitled to 20 per cent of, the profits of Radio 2GB. 2GB has a very lucrative sponsorship deal with Telstra which means that he has at least 20 per cent of a very lucrative deal with Telstra. So why is he complaining ("Public enemies", *Herald*, November 2-3) that ABC journalists are "taxpayer-funded"?

Peter Rosier, Drummoyne, November 3.

Perhaps somebody in the Government could tell me if there is any reason for the existence of the Australian Broadcasting Authority (ABA). I expect that there are several healthy salaries attached to this authority, but what does it do? Perhaps the Government could disband it, substituting *Media Watch* - thus killing two birds with one stone.

In the cash-for-comment case it was left to *Media Watch* to give the public the information on the 2UE scandals. Once again we find the ABA trailing behind *Media Watch*, which has done the investigation on yet another apparent flouting of the rules.

G. Healey, Petersham, November 3.

Discordant views on raids

Reassurances about ASIO warrants, "evidence" and "the price of vigilance" have a discordant ring to them after the children overboard inquiry report, that systematic manipulation of the "facts" by top public servants, intelligence agencies and ministers who are now sanctioning axing in our citizens' front doors.

Garry Bickley, Elizabeth Downs (SA), November 1.

Why are so many letter writers paranoid about having their doors knocked down by federal agents in the middle of the night? Do they have something to hide?

Those with nothing to hide have nothing to fear.

Ronny Schnapp, Randwick, November 2.

Fires on the backburner

The NSW Liberal leader, John Brogden, has said that if elected he would allow people to conduct their own hazard-reduction burns. This is a very dangerous move. Even professionals in the Rural Fire Service with years of service can have problems with fires getting out of control because nature can do unexpected things.

Allowing non-professionals to do this is sheer madness. Two of the Hunter Valley fires were caused or made worse by illegal back-burns.

If Mr Brogden gets in we can expect even worse problems than we have now.

Paul Bailey, Winmalee, November 2.

No free ride

Anne Lampe's article ("Free ride on the Open Road to end under NRMA deal with newspaper", *Herald*, November 1) is inaccurate in several respects.

As we advised Ms Lampe, a commercial and in-confidence expression of interest is being conducted into *The Open Road* to explore opportunities to increase revenues and to reduce expenses.

We also advised Ms Lampe that the purpose and process of the expression of interest has been communicated to the board at each board meeting.

No deal has been negotiated by NRMA management. Rather, the reverse. I have commissioned an independent external audit into the expression-of-interest process to ensure that correct protocols and procedures have been observed. Until that is completed, the expression-of-interest process will be held in abeyance.

Most recently the board was advised that, following the

report of the external auditors, the expression-of-interest process would be concluded with the shortlist invited to present to the board for a board decision. Ms Lampe's article has the potential to do considerable damage to the staff of *The Open Road*, as well as to the many commercial commitments *The Open Road* has with its advertisers and business partners. I wish to reassure all members and readers that no decision has been taken.

The NRMA is passionate about *The Open Road* and the iconic status it enjoys with our members and the publishing world. *The Open Road* brand will be fiercely protected and promoted.

Rob Carter, CEO NRMA

Rockdale a tough one for Labor to crack

According to Bob Carr the preselection of Frank Sartor as Labor candidate for Rockdale was perfectly justified. What he really meant was that there isn't one decent person from the whole of Rockdale community worthy of representing the Labor Party. Call me Cunningham, but I think the almost former Premier might be wrong.

Terry Pokorny, Concord West, November 3.

Is Eric Roozendaal, general secretary of the ALP, an undercover member of the Liberal Party? Under his guidance the previously safe seat of Cunningham was lost to Labor.

Now Eric and the admin committee have decided to repeat the performance by imposing Frank Sartor, not even a member of the ALP, on the Rockdale rank and file.

Duh! Good one, Ecka.

Lynne Poleson, Kingsford, November 2.

The ALP has lost another member. Frank Sartor is the final straw.

Judith Hansen, Port Macquarie, November 3.

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