

It's dangerous but necessary



Violence . . . destruction in Honiara

AS RECENT events in the Solomon Islands demonstrate, the service of one's country on overseas missions can be an extremely perilous undertaking.

For in Honiara, the capital of the shaky Solomons democracy, 17 Australian Federal Police officers were injured on Tuesday — some of them seriously — in an outbreak of civil unrest after the installation of Snyder Rini as the new Prime Minister.

And what should be understood is that the AFP officers are in the troubled territory not to pursue any Australian ambition but strictly at the behest of the Solomon Islands Government.

Following a request in 2003 to the Australian Government from the then Solomons prime minister Sir Alan Kemakeza, Australia committed almost 1800 defence, police and protective services personnel to the 2225-strong Regional Assistance Mission to the Solomon Islands. The sole purpose of the RAMSI deployment is to underpin the Solomons' transition to stable government.

And just as the latest uprisings show the dangers of the mission, so too do they demonstrate its necessity.

For as a durably independent and free nation, Australia has a responsibility to provide regional leadership and support for emerging states struggling to cope with the challenges of the installation of the mechanisms of democracy.

The Solomons have shuddered from one ethnic crisis to another for much of the past decade and a half, and it is evident that successive administrations have relied on the intervention of the Australian-led RAMSI contingent to sustain their authority. Were it not for the presence of Australian service personnel and police officers, the probability is that the nascent Solomons democracy would not flourish.

So, as Anzac Day approaches, it's worthy of reflection; Australians presently on station in the Solomons — where the dangers have been made abundantly apparent the past 48 hours — are following the selfless example of service set by those earlier generations of brave men and women who answered their country's call when others were in need.

That Australians are prepared to risk their lives in such circumstances remains matter of enduring national pride.

Finding the truth

NOW there's positive proof — Sydney Harbour fishermen and their families have suffered dangerously high levels of exposure to dioxins as a direct result of their work.

Blood tests on Tony Ianni, 40, a professional Sydney Harbour fisherman, showed he had dioxin levels four times the Australian average, while his six-year-old son had accumulated dioxin levels well above the adult average.

That critical information conveys a responsibility on the NSW Government — first to ensure Sydney Harbour fishermen and their families are given access to proper diagnostic blood testing, then to provide whatever support they may need in future as a result of the health risks to which they have been exposed through no fault of their own.

It is not the fault of the State Government that industries on the harbour shores were once permitted to discharge a mixture of poisons into the waterway — but the Government has inherited the responsibility for past laxity.

And that is responsibility which cannot be avoided. While there is no prospect that the polluters can be prosecuted, no chance of collecting damages from them, that — likewise — is no fault of the victims.

They need help, and it should be forthcoming.

And another thing. . .

We were all a day early — Gillespie's ton, the first by a nightwatchman since Tony Mann made 105 against Pakistan in Perth in the summer of 1977-78, was only half the story. A fast bowler making a double ton? Unheard of — before now. Now, if he can just take 10 wickets. . .

The Daily Telegraph, printed and published by the proprietor, Nationwide News Pty Ltd. A.C.N. 008438 828 of 2 Holt St, Surry Hills, NSW 2010, at 26-52 Hume Highway, Chullora. Responsibility for election comment is taken by the Editor, David Penberthy

Modern live scene is music to slightly deaf ears

MICK Jagger and Keith Richards have defied the conventional wisdom that rock'n'roll is a young man's game, as they ably demonstrated at their Sydney concert.



Kathy McCabe

That same alleged lore dictates that music is an even younger game for women, with most female recording artists refusing to divulge their age after they hit 28 for fear of being relegated.

Richards has no idea who made the decree that "you are supposed to play rock'n'roll until you are 25 and then you are supposed to croak or disappear".

It was probably some old, jaded music industry type who would prefer to flirt with a vacuous but pretty teen pop queen or handsome rapper for an ego boost than sit at the feet of musical greatness.

But what the ageist cynics fail to appreciate is that the audience is getting older and their appetite for music remains not only healthy but voracious.

At least half of the punters who attended either the East Coast Blues and Roots festival in Byron Bay or The Great Escape at Newington Armory over the Easter weekend were more than 25 years old.

In fact, the Sunday crowd at the Great Escape was as populated with prams as a shopping mall at morning tea time.

Seasoned festival-goers like Kate van Rensburg and Jay Kaufman brought their 14-month-old daughter Georgia and some friends — big and

little — to The Great Escape and were pleased to find it was as "kid-friendly" as the annual Woodford Folk Festival in Queensland.

"We were after something different and it is rare to get this kind of music for a one day festival, let alone a three-day one," van Rensburg said as Georgia boogied to the nearby percussion group.

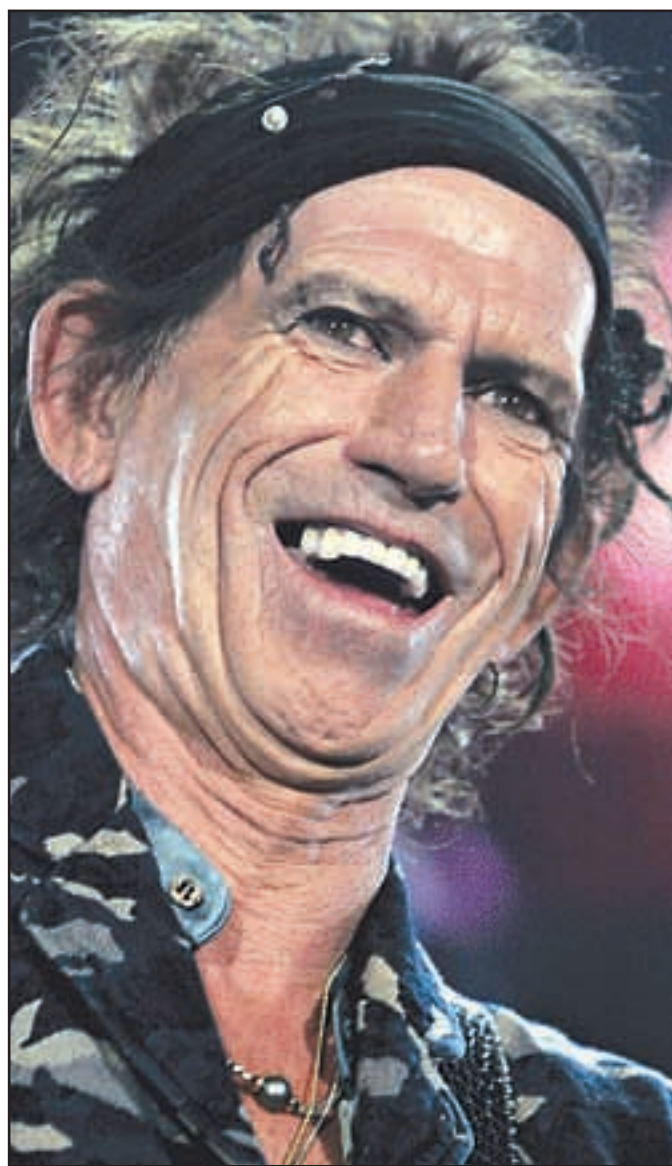
"We wondered if this festival would be kid-friendly and so far it seems like it is a good set-up."

Both festivals featured line-ups that proved attractive to a wide demographic, whether it was the more commercial roots rock sound of Bernard Fanning, the atmospheric dreamscapes of Sigur Ros or the surf folk blues of Donovan Frankenreiter and Lior.

And there was plenty of good food on offer, no beer queues and loads of loos — although couldn't we lose the portaloos and bring in the more adult toilet trailers? Please?

It was great fun watching the mums and dads with their tween and teen sons and daughters shuffling between stages to check out a dash of hip hop, electronica or world music after soaking up the laid back blues and roots tunes.

Those same mums and dads are battling their kids each night for access to computer



time to check out iTunes, as demonstrated by the first two weeks of the ARIA Digital Track chart.

The Red Hot Chili Peppers — bar one member — are all over 40 and have been in the game for more than 20 years.

Their latest single *Dani California* — released in the shops early next month, came in at No. 3 on the track chart and there is no possible way that could happen if it was just the kiddies downloading their little hearts out.

Nor would Youth Group's cover of the Alphaville hit, *Forever Young*, be back at No. 1 on the chart this week if it wasn't for the efforts of wrinkly rock fans.

Teens tend to be early adopters — get it first, get it now — while their parents are more likely to download or buy the track after hearing it for weeks on radio.

And that's another weird thing that is happening.

In the second survey for the year, thousands of 25 to 39-year-olds switched back to Triple J (looking for new music) and Triple M and MIX (looking for old hits).

The more interesting aspect of the demographic shift is the fact that the "hip" older music fan is actively seeking new

music and so return to the station of their youth to find it. Good luck putting up with some of the abject gibbering of their younger announcers.

But it seems the only sector of the Australian music industry which is aggressively marketing to the older music fan is the live scene.

Promoters are bringing the acts the over-25s want to see to suitable venues, whether it is a small club, theatre or winery.

And they are selling out faster than you can say "It's Only Rock'n'Roll But I Like It".

Everyone else is stuck in the trap of thinking popular culture belongs to youth, who have less disposable income and more competition for it — whether it be video games or their mobile phone bills.

The seasoned music fan doesn't want nostalgia shoved down their throat at every turn.

No more "heritage" acts murdering the standards of Motown, Irving Berlin or the Gershwins, because that dead horse has been well and truly flogged. And no more remixes of Leo Sayer tunes please — you know how I feel about Leo.

Offer good music in a comfortable environment and watch them have a ball — zimmer frame and all.

Peanuts, monkeys and unfair slurs

By MAUREEN SHELLEY

SCRUTINY at all levels of government is an important part of democracy and *The Daily Telegraph's* examination of the spending of local councils is integral to transparency at the grass-roots level.

However, statements about how rates are abused and conferences of often dubious worth demonstrate how far from impartial reporting these articles have strayed.

It is easy, as a journalist or other bystander, to turn local councillors and senior management into punching bags.

After all, local government pays peanuts, thereby attracting monkeys, and such people in public life are fair game.

While not defending anyone, anywhere at any level of government who has rorted the system, this attack on local government is neither balanced or fair.

First, *The Daily Telegraph* would be the first to berate councillors and local government managers if they didn't keep their

skills up to date or didn't invest in training and retraining of councillors and staff.

Attendance at local government conferences — particularly the peak-bodies conferences are one way that councillors and staff can do this.

Second, there has been no analysis of how many people attended the conferences — that is how much was spent per person on what is essentially staff development and training.

Nor is there any statement from attendees at the conferences about what they learned or how the practices of the councils improved as a result of the knowledge gained at these events.

While not defending overseas travel by councillors and staff, it should be noted that attendance at conferences in places like New Zealand can be as economical as travel to interstate destinations or indeed intrastate locations.

It should also be noted all councils spend money on sending councillors and managers to attend conferences and training —

some choose, for financial management reasons, to pay for such training via credit cards and others by normal accounting methods of invoice, electronic transfer or cheque and paper receipt.

Some argue paying by credit card is cheaper and more efficient than the other methods. It seems *The Daily Telegraph* has singled out councils that use credit cards.

My experience as a local government councillor is most councillors receive little financial benefit for their work, they contribute significantly to their local communities through their time and effort and most try to maintain their skills by undertaking at least one form of training each year.

It would be regrettable if *The Daily Telegraph's* efforts at greater transparency and accountability were to deter these hard-working and decent people in carrying out the jobs they were elected to do.

* Maureen Shelley writes as an individual councillor and does not represent the views of Ku-ring-gai Council shelley@newsitd.com.au