

TALKING POINT

I cannot see the justification for including golf in the Olympic Games. I find it almost an insult to real athletes
Mark Cumberbatch, of New Farm, comments on the International Olympic Committee voting in favour of golf becoming an Olympic sport

The Courier-Mail

We must stay the course in Afghanistan

THE tempo of violence in Afghanistan is escalating as this week's date for the country's crucial national elections draws closer. The weekend witnessed the first suicide attack in the capital of Kabul for months. It came in the form of a car bomb explosion that killed seven people and wounded nearly 100 others. The Taliban quickly claimed responsibility.

Losses among the 100,000 coalition troops in the country also continue to mount, with Britain suffering its 200th military death on Saturday. Australia lost its 11th soldier in Afghanistan last month, young Victorian Private Benjamin Ranaudo. It is all too easy in the face of this appalling human loss to question why Australia and its allies should continue to dedicate so much precious human capital to a country so far away. British Prime Minister Gordon Brown's answer to that vexed question was to note that the mission to defeat the Taliban was essential to his country's security because "three-quarters of terrorist plots against Britain come from the border areas of Afghanistan and Pakistan".

Essentially the same argument can be mounted for Australia's continued military involvement in the country. Australians are all too aware, courtesy of vile and deadly bomb attacks in five-star hotels in Indonesia or alleged terrorism plots here in Australia, that the web of al-Qa'ida-inspired extremism is truly global. We have little choice but to attempt to confront this violence at its source, and to help Afghanistan restore a semblance of stability and security.

The trouble is, no one knows just how long this task might take. US Defence Secretary Robert Gates has admitted he has no idea how long Western forces will have to continue fighting in Afghanistan, but believes that defeating Taliban and al-Qa'ida would take "a few years". Assadullah Hamdam, the governor of the Afghan province of Oruzgan, where Australian troops are providing security and reconstruction, believes the Australians will need to be in place for another five years to see their work through. Foreign Affairs Minister Stephen Smith has downplayed any immediate plans to commit additional troops to Afghanistan, saying Australia is already making a substantial contribution. There are now 1550 Australian troops in Afghanistan, including 120 deployed recently to provide extra security for this week's election. And that is where the immediate focus needs to be; ensuring that this benighted country of Afghanistan has the best possible chance to embrace a stable and optimistic future. For the longer term, we have little option but to provide what support we can to those committed and brave Afghans who are attempting to forge a new nation in the face of extreme opposition and violence. Many Australians are putting their lives on the line to help this process, which is an integral part of ensuring security for Australia itself, and for that, those of us back home should be eternally grateful.

Smokers under fire

BRISBANE'S cigarette smokers must know they are an unloved bunch, forced to huddle outside in small herds on city footpaths wafting toxic clouds of smoke in the way of passers-by. Still, they are within their legal rights, and so non-smokers have little option but to hold their breath as they walk on by. The least smokers could do in return is dispose properly of their butts, which make up more than half the litter on city streets. If they cannot manage that small task, then they should be prepared to face further sanctions.

Responsibility for election comment is taken by David Fagan, 41 Campbell St, Bowen Hills, Qld 4006. Printed and published by Queensland Newspapers Pty. Ltd. (ACN 009 661 778). A full list of our editors, with contact details, is available at news.com.au/couriermail/ourstaff.

Anger in India

AS an Australian about to conclude a four-month stay in India, I have experienced the fallout from the racially motivated attacks on Indians back home.

They attract vast media coverage here. Daily, I receive looks of disdain; I am met with suspicion and have been openly called a racist. The question "where are you from?" now causes me to quickly assess my security situation before sometimes replying "I am from New Zealand".

Australians who commit racial violence or use racist speech out of some notion that they are doing a service to (white) Australia should think again. It is these sort of mindless acts that entrench cycles of hatred and killing that can be witnessed in places where children ask their elders "why do we hate?" and elders genuinely can't remember the pathetic little grievances that spun their home-

lands into war-ravaged misery. When these type of things get out of control, that's how they tend to stay. Let us all do our piece to keep the peace.

Dave Bell, Delhi

Ridiculous reaction

HAS there ever been such a ridiculous reaction to a minor request as the kerfuffle about Oak Tree Village residents wanting to change Punjab Place to Oak Tree Place? Talk of racism is groundless. It is a case of minorities making the most noise about nothing solid and the great majority keeping quiet. I know a lot of Indian people and people from dozens of other origins. Most would be laughing their heads off at the reaction to an innocent act.

Alex Findlay, Kippa-Ring

Case of neglect

SO the authorities are to show mercy by granting permission to Perth quadriplegic Christian Rossiter to die.

The doctors are to be allowed to cease torturing him with a force-feeding tube and he has been granted permission not to eat.

How lucky we are to have a High Court with the courage to make such momentous and generous decisions. It is extremely generous of the court to permit him to perform the legal act of not eating but could we not expect a little more compassion to be shown to a man attempting to escape from an intolerable existence than to stand back while he starves himself to death?

What has this poor man done to deserve such neglect in his time of need? Is he daring to offend the beliefs or faiths of some other people?

Blair Aldis, Bundaberg

IN BRIEF

● WE watched the Western Bulldogs beat the Brisbane Lions on Saturday night on TV. Bulldogs captain Brad Johnson threw a few caps out to ecstatic Bulldogs fans and then a blonde woman came into the TV picture, laughing as she threw beer dregs at him. What disgusting sportsmanship. Perhaps it was jealousy. Johnson and Jason Akermanis played brilliantly. "Blondie" got it wrong. It should have been champagne.
Lyn Hoffmann, Widgee

● AS a long-time supporter of AFL, I was disgusted by the actions of that woman by the fence who threw a beer at Brad Johnson after the game. I would like to know what action the Lions or the AFL are going to take against her. She should be banned from attending the Gabba again.
Ross Carter, Southport

● ON Saturday night Jason Akermanis was invariably booed whenever he was involved in a passage of play. Why this should happen beggars belief. A Brownlow medallist and three-time key premiership Lions player, Aker did not leave Brisbane of his own accord. He was sacked by the club and his only option to continue to play at the highest level was to join another club. Thankfully, the Western Bulldogs realised his great value and gave him the opportunity to continue his amazing career.
Geoff Walker, Banksia Beach

● MICHAEL Voss played like a man, but he coaches like a big girl. The Brisbane Lions just play "follow the other team". They have to get an attacking game plan like they had early in the season or they are history.
Jim Dwyer, Bilambil Heights, NSW

● I WOULD be interested to see a Tax Office list of the top 100 taxpayers in Queensland. It would be great if we found they were also the richest 100. This idea was first suggested by Dick Smith, a great Australian. His worry was that those who earned the most were not necessarily those who contributed the most.
Doug Steley, Maroochydore

● WHAT'S the fuss about a street having an Indian name? In one Brisbane suburb, Wishart, the residents seem to live quite happily in more than a dozen streets with foreign names, including Copenhagen, Barcelona, Monte Carlo, Montreal, Panama, Auckland, Staffordshire, Cambridge and Colombo.
M Dwyer, Mansfield

● C.O. MORGAN laments that his carer can no longer obtain a disabled person's parking permit (Letters, Aug 15-16). He is the person with the requirement for such a permit and he should be applying and paying for it. Any vehicle transporting Morgan can use a disabled parking place, provided he remembers to take his permit with him and display it.
Barry Clifford, Moorooka

Thought for today

Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
Proverbs 4:7
Selected by the Bible Society from the New International Version.

Bring in batts to meet orders

SO home insulation products are being imported (C-M, Aug 15-16). What's the problem? If Australian producers can't keep up with demand, the obvious ploy is to source supplies from elsewhere.

If this is not done, the supply and demand factor would push the costs of insulation through the roof. Then there would be headlines bemoaning the fact that the high cost was due to a protected market. I am not batty enough to crawl around in the attic to check for a made-in-Aussie sign on all my insulation products - just so long as they work.

Brian Carpenter, Algester

Made for Australia

GARRY Beck (Letters, Aug 14) said he didn't see a weekly fuel price cycle in the UK. Australians must be the only people on the planet stupid enough to put up with this rort. There is absolutely no commercial justification for the weekly price cycle. Coles/Shell and Woolworths/Caltex would have us believe that it is so customers can receive the benefit of discounts at the bottom of the cycle. You can guarantee they are not making a loss at that point, so at the top of the cycle we are being really gouged big-time.

Chris Harris, Springfield

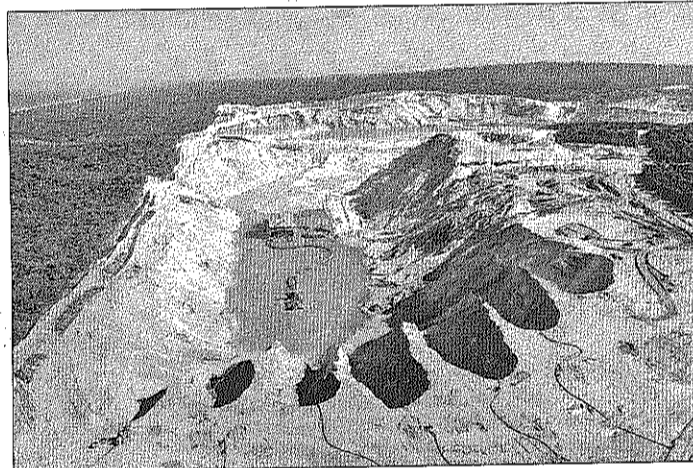
Stroll away from Games

I AGREE wholeheartedly with former Olympic swimmer Mark Stockwell (Sport, Aug 15-16). Having golf at the Olympic Games is ridiculous.

While I like golf, I cannot see the justification for its inclusion. I find it almost an insult to real athletes who put in hour after hour at the gym, in pools and on tracks and roads. To have multi-millionaire golfers turn up at the 2016 Olympics and stroll around a course seems out of line with what the Games are about.

Let's get real. The Olympics are for elite athletes, and to use a golf term, those guys just don't make the cut.

Mark Cumberbatch, New Farm



MARRED BEAUTY: A Consolidated Rutile mine on Stradbroke.

Scale back the mining

ONE wonders what the late Oodgeroo Noonuccal would have to say about the extensive sand mining on her homeland of North Stradbroke.

The aerial shots of areas being mined (C-M, Aug 15-16) were staggering. The article mentions "man-made" lakes. Are these where the tailings rest?

Claire Jolliffe, Buderim

PEOPLE don't realise that, over the past 50 years, nearly half of North Stradbroke Island has been clear-felled and mined.

It can never go back to what it was but we have a chance to keep

what is left intact. I also worry about the levels of heavy metals such as aluminium at the Yarraman mine and it getting into the aquifer and going over to Brisbane in the water supply. Someone really has to look into that.

David Hannan, Dunwich

I AM disgusted that mining has been allowed to continue on the island for more than 50 years to date. I feel that if it is not stopped, the island will surrender to the ocean. I suppose we all need to share the responsibility for letting it go this far.

Estelle Harder, Ferny Hills

Farmland never recovers

IT is pleasing to see the Queensland Government sitting up and taking notice of the mining havoc being caused on Stradbroke Island (C-M, Aug 15-16).

Unfortunately, this is the nature of mining and all too often the damage is done before notice is taken. While it is important to preserve beautiful areas and fragile ecosystems, mining is a necessity and rehabilitation of mined areas has to be undertaken to return country to its pre-mining status. In some instances, this is a possibility.

Hopefully, Stradbroke Island will be one of these. Rehabilitation is often only a veneer which soon erodes away.

When mining is allowed to

proceed on our most fertile and very limited farming areas, nothing can return it to its previous productivity.

There is nowhere in Australia that this has been done.

This country is important, as without food production any other consideration is irrelevant. While we cannot mine black soil plains for the minerals obtained from sand mining, we also cannot grow staple crops on sand dunes.

It is hoped that the State Government takes action now to prevent the mining of the 2 per cent of Queensland that is prime agricultural land and not wait until the damage has been done.

Janet Cox, Warra

As a supporter of AFL, I was disgusted by the actions of a woman who threw a beer at Brad Johnson
 Ross Carter, of Southport, says the spectator should be banned from the Gabba for an incident after the Brisbane Lions-Western Bulldogs game



Blogger's view

Straddie scarred by mining

LARGE parts of eco-sensitive North Stradbroke Island are resembling a barren moonscape after a tripling of land clearing for sand mining.

Pam

This is dreadful and must be stopped. I hope the State Government does go ahead and prosecute. They have a responsibility to guard and properly administer Queensland's natural resources, not sit idly by and watched such desecration.

Little Joe of Keperra

I know how much money and time sand mining company Consolidated Rutile Ltd puts into bush regeneration. Mined areas are regenerated by professionals using carefully managed techniques.

No surprise

Is it surprising that mining companies are butchering the land and leaving it an environmental disaster? This happens when you mine.

M of Brisbane

The whole coastline between Coolangatta and Noosa has been obliterated by developer greed and poor planning. Might as well finish the job. Future generations will curse us.

CJ of Ayr

Do yourselves a favour and visit Google Earth. After being horrified by the photo, I checked it out. Seems someone has done an enormous job of replanting trees in the mined area.

Andrew north Queensland

Residential development is worse. At least when the mining is done the landscape can be restored.

Alayna Hague of North Stradbroke Island

Look at all the money CRL has spent in restoring the land

Jerry Dean Smith of Glass House Mountains

The social value of sand mining the ancient dunes is negligible. The business value benefits only a few people. It shouldn't have been allowed at all. It should be stopped immediately.

Island resident of Straddie

Get all the facts and tell everyone about the good that CRL has done for the island. Come look at the regeneration that has happened and will continue long after mining has finished.

Seachange of Capricorn Coast

So what's new? The coalminers in the Bowen basin have been doing the same for years. This Government has just approved a gas storage plant on Curtis Island off Gladstone. If it has problems, the southeasterly winds will blow all the pollution on to our beautiful Capricorn Coast.

Simone

Smelly old blow-in hippies and journalists once again can't get their facts straight. CRL is committed to land regeneration and supporting the Straddie community as a whole.

Jim in Hervey Bay

Is it my imagination, or is it foreign-owned mines that seem to escape scrutiny?

Ann of Deception Bay

If we didn't know better it would seem that mining companies run this country, not elected governments. When we have been mined to nothing but an empty shell these countries plundering our land won't want to know us. Mining the guts out of an area that could sustain tourism for generations is just plain dumb.

Tony

Another classic media beat-up with most information coming from a community group with an axe to grind. No consideration of the long history and superb remediation work of these miners, no understanding of 600ha in relation to the size of the island, no real information at all.

Kate Campbell of Bardon

It is time to protect North Stradbroke Island so it can be enjoyed by Queenslanders for generations to come. The island should be preserved as green space for recreation and conservation. If the Government does not act now to make the island a national park it will be further degraded by mining and will be a tempting prize for developers.

Scrap logbooks

THE system of learner-driver logbooks is a farce.

Having had recent personal experience with this process, I would like to suggest an alternative that would be beneficial to learners.

Instead of logbooks showing 100 hours of supervised on-road driving, which is very expensive, time-consuming and not always the best instruction, learners should be required to take eight to 10 lessons from a qualified instructor and hold their learner's permit for one year.

That way they would be sure to receive accurate information and not some outdated advice from parents who learnt to drive before the invention of roundabouts. This would negate the need for the tedious filling out of data in the logbooks and just require the presentation of receipts for driving lessons taken from licensed instructors.

Graham Farrell, Calamvale

I HAVE spent 31 years teaching and 11 years working as a teacher aide in high schools.

During this time I have seen a dramatic fall in student behaviour, responsibility and maturity. Citing a year 12 class with which I have quite a bit of contact as an example, I fear for their lives and that of others when they attain their driver's licences.

The attitude of a large percentage of this group shows little or no maturity to be driving anything. They take no responsibility for work standards and show little ambition to achieve.

Their behaviour is extremely juvenile. No logbook that they had filled in themselves would mean anything.

I feel there should be some form of psychiatric testing of licence applicants to assure suitability or at least raise the driving age a couple of years and hope that the required maturity comes.

Harry Davis, Shailer Park

Big role for small creature

I REFER to the poll (Place & Time, Aug 14) on whether flying foxes should be culled to prevent the spread of Hendra virus. Perhaps people should have had the full facts before answering.

Fruit bats (flying foxes) are ecologically integral to the successful pollination and seed dispersal of native tree and shrub species, many of which are endangered and could become extinct if bats ceased to exist.

The bat is already under pressure due to habitat loss as a result of human over-population.

I applaud the fact that those directly affected by the Hendra virus have shown a mature understanding of bats and not called for a cull. We need to think before we act or speak, respect and learn to live with all species that share our world, not just those that look good, bring us enjoyment and economic benefit.

Anthony Muyt,

naturalmedicine33@yahoo.com.au

Letters

CONTACT US

Mail: The Courier-Mail GPO Box 130 Brisbane 4001.
 Fax: 3666 8625
 Email: letters@couriermail.com.au
 Online: couriermail.com.au/letters

Letters and email must be dated, carry the full address of the writer and a daytime telephone number for verification. Letters should be concise and topical. Writers may choose to have their email address published rather than suburb or town. Letters are submitted on condition that Queensland Newspapers as publisher of *The Courier-Mail* may edit and has the right to and license third parties to reproduce in electronic form and communicate these letters. The winner of Letter of the Month wins a zippered A4 leather compendium, valued at \$80, courtesy of *The Courier-Mail*.

Place & Time

New Farm Park, Brisbane, Sunday, 1.30pm

Street vote. Cast your vote at couriermail.com.au

TODAY'S QUESTION»

SHOULD TEACHERS BE PAID MORE FOR TEACHING IN DISADVANTAGED AREAS?



Sarah Baqla

35, TEACHER,
 NEW FARM

I work with well-off children and that can be as hard as teaching disadvantaged children so, no, I don't think they should be paid more.



Tristan Smith

25, PROJECT MANAGER,
 GREENSLOPES

If they are having trouble getting people to work there, then money is probably a good way to do it.



Amanda Burns

25, PHYSIOTHERAPIST,
 EVERTON PARK

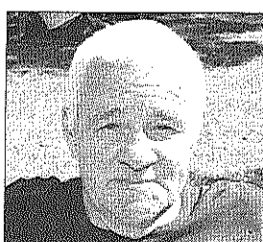
Teaching in lower socio-economic areas comes with its own set of challenges, like family and behavioural issues, so they should be rewarded.



Ben Kearney

29, ARCHITECT,
 EVERTON PARK

Doctors, engineers and most professionals are paid more for working in rural or disadvantaged areas so I think teachers should be, too.



Rod Gardiner

60, BUSINESS ANALYST,
 NEW FARM

Yes. They are not recognised for the effort and hours they put in and the lack of discipline that they have to put up with from students.