

in that it condemns all men to changes in family law as a result of the actions of one, although sadly it's not only men who murder their children ("She once escaped a killer - under today's laws she would still be trapped", April 7).

The proposed changes to the Family Law Act will bring back the behaviour that I and other fathers experienced when I went through my divorce in 2001. At that time the law encouraged mothers to maximise their income from child support and Centrelink by minimising the time the father was given access to his children.

I am a good father and I love my children. Why should I be condemned by the actions of others? The presumption of shared care is fair for all.

Name withheld

Helen Cummings is correct in highlighting the need for amendments to the Family Law Act. My former partner, a respected professional man who was emotionally abusive, used the Family Law Act to "grasp shared care [in our case custody] as a weapon to use against" me.

While the four-year legal battle took place, our son was shuttled between the two of us in a decision made by the court in "the child's best interests".

showing that the incidence of wives abusing their husbands is almost on par with the reverse situation. I have been physically and verbally abused by my wife and it only stopped when I got police intervention.

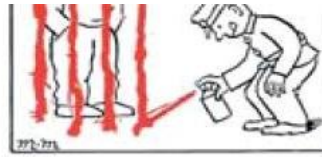
Most of the time she attacked me because I was protecting the children against her and her outbursts and drew her attention away from them, otherwise she would have been physically and verbally attacking them.

But with the focus on the women being the victim, I did not know where to go and what to do as there is very little out there for men. Finally my family assisted me. If the government is looking into things, it should do it on an even basis and put the same resources out there for men in similar circumstances.

Name withheld

### Graffiti in a pink fit

There's no doubt that "tagging" is one of the most inane and offensive examples of imported American culture from the late 20th century ("Don't jail graffiti offenders, says Crews", April 7). Like Bill Crews I don't think jail is the answer, but perhaps for a different reason. Why should society pay twice?



occasions. There's something about the colour.

My (partial) solution is for teams of pink-clad kiddies spending many weekends scrubbing this mindless scrawl off our public and private surfaces. Oh, the humiliation!

Rod Hughes Epping

### Rainbow calling

Cate Faehrmann takes one baby step forward when she asserts that the Greens must relate to voters better and develop political maturity ("Greens won't get much further if we repeat poll blunders", April 7).

But her claim that as a Greens MP in the Legislative Council, she is focusing on delivering solid results for all who voted Green or share her values shows she is still in the political kindergarten.

Elected politicians are there to represent everyone in their electorate and to work for the benefit of all people.

Roger Hayward Pretty Beach

interesting about smoking.  
Dr Corne Kriek Hornsby

### Lending a hand

It seems some microfinance organisations have become the loan sharks that they set out to fight ("Microcredit lost way, says creator", April 7). These bankers for the poorest need to give their clients a hand up to help them start up and grow small businesses, not line the pockets of their employees and owners.

Amid the loan sharks, the risk is that the baby will be thrown out with the bathwater. Leading donors to microfinance organisations like the Gates Foundation and the Scandinavian countries have now tied their support to performance measurement to ensure the microcredits are benefiting the poorest people.

The Australian government should increase its support to those organisations that can demonstrate their benefit to the poorest people. Less than 1 per cent of AusAID's budget is spent on microfinance programs. This should be increased to fund organisations and measure their performance in helping the poorest. The benchmark for microfinance shouldn't be its profitability but its impact on the lives of its clients and their families.

Daniel Mohr Gladsville

## Trolley good way to get the city moving

Chris Smith Willoughby

### Agents beware

Thanks to Jimmy Thomson in Domain for exposing the competition set up by real estate agents to see who could gouge the highest rent out of their tenants in the inner west ("Agents exposed by cruel game", April 9-10). Agents should be careful what they wish for because they may find they don't want it at all. As agents demand higher rents, tenants have less chance of buying. Higher rents and the expense of establishing house again in a region in a lower rent market diminish savings.

Those lucky enough to become buyers have learnt well from their tenancies how greedy the agents can be. They are cynical when they enter the market place.

Writers in the weekend edition say there are 30 per cent more apartments on the market than this time last year, that first-home-buyers numbers across NSW are at their lowest level since assistance was granted in 2000 and that properties are selling for less than 10 per cent of the reserve. It would be informat-

Medical research confirms that children of smokers have an increased risk of SIDS, respiratory disease and impaired lung and brain development.

There is no risk-free level of exposure to second-hand smoke for anyone.

Even short exposure to cigarette smoke can cause blood platelets to become stickier thereby increasing the risk of heart attack.

Long-term passive smoking increases the risk of a smoking-

cigarette smoking.

As a nurse who has worked in numerous emergency departments, I know only too well the ugly side of alcohol and its effects on people. I'm sure doctors working in emergency departments would appreciate anything to cut down on admissions due to over-indulgence of alcohol.

Unfortunately, the large multinational companies making and selling alcohol, particularly those aimed at young people, and the

change refers to the resulting effects on climate. This may seem a trivial distinction to some but the specific nature of science requires such carefully defined terms. As 2010 was the hottest year of the hottest decade, claims that the Earth is no longer warming are rather premature.

Peter Patonai Annandale

I find John Clark's claim that "the world is no longer warming" rather alarming, considering 2010

Reet Simmul Naremburn

### Fuzzy logic

Friday, 7.30pm, King Street, Newtown. I have just walked up the road to have dinner with friends and watched a group of 12 police officers with a dog walking up and down the street, milling about the entrance to the station (welcome to Newtown!).

Returning to the street to walk home after dinner, the same group of police are going in and out of pubs and other venues. People are disturbed by the sight: angry, uncomfortable, shocked.

Can the (new) government or the police force please provide us with some data about the outcomes of this policing policy?

Catching someone with a joint? An ecstasy tablet? What are you saving us from? Give me a break. Spend my taxes on something serious. Like funding the over-worked teachers at my daughter's public high school just down the road or the underfunded public hospital at the other end of the street. We worry about others living in a police state. It felt like that here tonight.

Lisa Carrick Camperdown

## Credit where it's due for helping world poor

I disagree that the "Poor can no longer bank on microcredit" (April 9-10). Created to defeat the traditional moneylenders, not join them, micro-finance lending works in Bangladesh and around our world of poverty.

Any bad news about lending practices in India, Nigeria or Mexico should be balanced by recent good news from Bangladesh. It is a positive contrast to the extraordinary assertion by the Prime Minister of Bangla-

desh, Sheikh Hasina, that micro-lenders are "blood suckers of the poor" ("Microcredit lost way, says creator", April 7).

Recently the Microcredit Summit Campaign reported that more than 4000 Bangladeshi households moved out of poverty between 1990 and 2008. Nearly 2 million households and 10 million family members benefited from micro-finance by creating their jobs and crossing the World Bank's poverty threshold of "\$US1.25 a day".

This new evidence demonstrates the poor of Bangladesh can lift themselves out of their poverty with the help of micro-financing. It is a hand-up out of poverty for the 1.4 billion people around our world who try to exist on less than \$US1.25 each day.

Dr Muhammad Yunus's 2006 Nobel peace prize was for a noble cause. It is time to stand with a champion of giving some small credit to the world's poor.

Peter Graves Curtin (ACT)

# COMMENT & DEBATE

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## Microfinance is only option for the poor

REGARDLESS of the differences between the Grameen Bank and Dr Muhammad Yunus, the reality of global poverty remains a depressing fact ("Court ruling ends microcredit pioneer's career", *The Age*, 7/4). In the developing world, 2.7 billion adults (almost three-quarters of the adult population) don't have access to any financial services due to their poverty, illiteracy or gender, or because they live in a remote region.

For these people, microfinance (provision of fair borrowing, safe saving, relevant and meaningful financial education and appropriate insurance) can

fill this gap. The latest *State of the Microcredit Summit Campaign Report* indicates 128 million of the poorest families obtained credit by the end of 2009. The campaign is on target to provide financial services to 175 million of the poorest families by 2015. Of course make sure microfinance organisations are not preying on the most vulnerable, but for the world's poorest these organisations are the only financial services on offer. There is no alternative.

Steve Gallagher, Hobart, Tas