

## Drug ring stopped

Taiwan police say they've busted a drug smuggling ring responsible for transporting \$US70 million (\$A66 million) worth of narcotics to Australia, New Zealand and Japan. A total of nine suspects have been arrested, including the suspected leader of the ring, 40-year-old Fan Chu-lin, the Criminal Investigation Bureau said yesterday. Over a 10-year period, the group allegedly smuggled hundreds of kilograms of ecstasy and amphetamines from Hong Kong and China to Japan, New Zealand and Australia.

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### CAPITAL BRIEFING

## Drink-driver nabbed

A 38-year-old recidivist drink-driver was caught nearly five times over the legal limit early on Sunday morning, police allege. The man, who has been convicted of five previous drink-driving offences, was pulled over at about 2.15am on Streeton Drive in Weston. He failed a breath test and was arrested by police and taken to Woden Police Station, where he returned a reading of 0.241. He will face the ACT Magistrates Court at a later date for what could be his sixth drink-driving conviction. Police have nabbed 17 drink-drivers over the past week, 11 of whom had prior convictions. Eight of those drivers also held restricted licences. The arrests come days after *The Canberra Times* revealed the worst recidivist drivers caught in the ACT over the past two years. A 53-year-old man had been convicted of drink-driving 13 times, and was let off with a three-month licence suspension and a \$200 fine for his last offence. Two drivers were also allowed to remain on the roads on restricted licenses despite having five previous convictions each.

Robert Willson, Deakin

## Needle exchange

I don't understand why Stanhope is prepared to die in a ditch over the needle exchange program.

In a recent column in *The Canberra Times*, he asked: "Why should one of our most marginalised groups, prisoners, be denied access to the same preventive health measures [as regular citizens]?" Although it was clearly a rhetorical question, I'll give him my answer. Prisoners are in jail because they have committed crimes. These prisoners are not in there for their first mistake. They are given multiple "last chances" by ACT courts.

They get no sympathy from me.

Mathew Elliot, Murrumbateman, NSW

Jon Stanhope has discovered a new human right: the right to have a

lifelong addiction to an illegal drug and to be actively supported in this addiction by our Government (Letters, September 3).

This is not a human right any more than Stanhope's idea that by supporting drug addiction, the Government is assisting public health.

Public health would be best served by not allowing drug addicts to continue using drugs.

Of course this would cost the Government a lot more than giving needles and syringes away, but addicts might get a life instead of another needle, which seems a good public health aim.

Terry Craig, Hott

A needle exchange program in the ACT prison tries to ensure that efforts to reduce HIV and hepatitis C infections among inmates and staff in the Alexander Maconochie Centre are just as vigorous as in the community.

Critics of this proposal are condoning the current failure to stop these preventable infections. For a small cost, the ACT Government could improve efforts to protect the health of inmates, corrections staff and the community with potentially huge financial savings. The community needle syringe program saves \$4 in health care costs and \$27 for every \$1 spent.

The critics of this proposal do not have the wisdom to distinguish between their utopian wish for a drug-free prison and reality.

The ACT Government must regard the interests of the whole community as a higher priority than the advocacy of the prison guards' union.

Dr Alex Wodak, St Vincent's Hospital, Darlinghurst, NSW