

criticising the federal Health Minister's decision to require midwives to hold indemnity insurance (Extra, *The Sun-Herald*, August 16) is an example of the dangerous politicisation of birth and the turf war between midwives and doctors. This turf war is appalling to me both as a husband and father.

The arguments for home birth and criticism of doctors ignore the reality that women who choose home births do not have the immediate support of anaesthetists, nurses and obstetricians. The arguments also ignore the historical fact that one in three women used to die during childbirth from simply avoided problems.

My father, a retired general surgeon, has told me of his training (and work done) in the 1950s and '60s to terminate a foetus to save a mother in labour. If you visit a cemetery and read the headstones, you

will be struck by how many young women "died with child".

The arguments for home birth also ignore the devastating consequences of complications such as those that may result in brain damage. Such complications may be avoided in a hospital but be unavoidable in home birth. And they may occur rarely, but for the mother and child one complication is one too many.

The warnings by doctors of the dangers of home birth are not just those of a "vested interest" but also from lay people with experience. My wife's first labour lasted 37 hours and required intervention. Had medical support not been available she could have died along with our now healthy and happy daughter. Our second child is due in October. My wife is determined to give birth in a hospital with all the support modern medical care provides.

**ANDREW COMBE**  
Sydney

experience ("We are on the right track", Extra, *The Sun-Herald*, August 16). I regularly travel from Martin Place to Bondi Junction between 5pm and 6pm on weeknights and the carriages often look like they have been trashed. There are torn and shredded newspapers spilled water and other drinks, food scraps etc. The improvements talked about seem more theoretical, rather than following through in practice.

**KEVIN CALLAGHAN**  
Bondi Junction

## FLAWED LEADER

NICE try, Charles Waterstreet. Your effort to prop up Malcolm Turnbull is commendable ("No-bull warrior", *The Sun-Herald*, August 16) but you've failed to mention a few minor aspects of his character

that have led to his impending downfall. He's far too boof-headed to be a credible long-term leader, is short on ethics after sensing an opportunity to further his goals, and cannot be counted on to admit to (and apologise for) his mistakes.

**JOE PALAGY**  
Nelson Bay

## DOUBLE STANDARDS

MY FAMILY recently experienced events similar to last week's "kidnapping" by a father in Kingsford, although ours involved greater offences, criminality and fear. A parent with psychiatric problems and a history of violence towards the children and spouse broke into a family member's home, bashed the grandmother minding the children, causing severe injuries, and ran off with

assistance provided to solve last week's incident – no media barrage, no police manhunt, no assault charges laid, and the child was not returned to the stable parent as ordered by the Family Court. The major difference in our instance? The perpetrator was a woman. Apparently when women take off with the children, it is a rescue. When a man does the same to escape a violent household, it is kidnapping.

**NAME AND ADDRESS SUPPLIED**

## LET THE RIVERS RUN

KEVIN RUDD promised to fix the Murray-Darling river system. Well, he will never have a better chance. Buy that cotton farm in Queensland, put the water in the river system, bulldoze the cotton fields and sell the land off to farmers – but not to grow cotton. Cotton needs too much water.

**BARRY SPAULDING**  
Cardiff

## BUYER'S BURDEN

NSW MP Matt Brown called for the State Government to make it mandatory for auction vendors to provide pest and building reports to prospective buyers (*The Sun-Herald*, August 16).

As a buyer's agent in Sydney I regularly see people who spend hundreds if not thousands of dollars on pest and building inspections. Unfortunately the price guide is often well below the property's true value, or a value the vendor would accept, thereby misleading people into thinking the property is in their price range.

Why should the buyers who are misled bear the cost of these reports? Maybe the selling agent and/or the vendor should be jointly responsible for these costs if the reserve on auction day is higher than the "market price guide".

**PATRICK BRIGHT**  
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