

Cartoon: Keanu Offen

A country divided over death penalty

EDITORIAL

By **HARRY MCGRATH, ZACHARY PAIN-WOODWARD, KEANU OFFEN** and **BLAKE JONES**

THE Australians found guilty of attempting to smuggle drugs out of Bali should never have paid for the crime with their lives.

The execution of the Bali 9 ringleaders, Andrew Chan and Myuran Sukumaran by firing squad on April 29 has divided people's opinions. However, many have condemned the violent end these two young Australians and their families have had to endure.

And rightly so, after all, the death penalty for drug smuggling is seen by the majority of countries as inhumane. In fact, only 31 countries worldwide retain capital punishment as a hard-line deterrent to violent crime.

Chan and Sukumaran were arrested along with seven other Australians in 2004 attempting to smuggle heroin into Australia.

They were sentenced to death in 2006. The men were aged just 20 and 23 at the time.

Here in Australia, public opinion was divided. On one hand, people wanted the men to face the

firing squad, saying that they knew the consequences of their actions. On the other hand, there was public support for the men. No one has the right to take away the life of someone else, regardless of the situation.

The impact of these men's deaths is immeasurable on their friends and families. Can you imagine losing a loved one this way? The families supported the men in Bali when they could, but even from Australia, they never gave up on them getting off death row.

While the men were serving their time, they accepted what they did was wrong and they worked very hard to rehabilitate themselves. A prison governor described Chan and Sukumaran as model prisoners and testified in court that they should not be executed because of the positive influence they have had.

Now is not the time to make any rash judgements on another country's punishments for crime, but it might be the time to let our thoughts be known in a productive and rational way.

Australians have every right to speak out and condemn Indonesia for putting to death two reformed and rehabilitated men who, in the end it seems, accepted their fate with a sense of dignity and self-respect.

A push to stop sand mining at Bobs Farm

By **ELLIE DUFFY, KOBİ LE GRANGE** and **DYLAN MARSH**

THE residents of Bobs Farm and the surrounding district have a fight on their hands of mammoth proportions.

A Sydney-based company, Ammos Resource Limited, has applied to mine 750,000 tonnes of sand a year on 40-plus hectares of land near Marsh Road and within close proximity to the Bobs Farm school.

While sand is plentiful in Port Stephens, the Department of Planning and Environment has to decide whether the promise of more jobs and more money for the community outweighs the damage that could potentially be done to the surrounding land.

Shea Brunt, secretary for the Say No To Sand Mining In Bobs Farm group, claims that the new venture would only employ around eight people on site, not the influx of employment that locals are led to believe.

This group is not against development in the area, or even sand mining, but they are questioning why it has to be where it is, and on such a grand scale.

"The development is expected to have up to 200 trucks leaving the site every day. The exit from the site is approximately 50 metres from the local school, and right next door to a residence, so the impact on residents and school students will be huge," Ms Brunt said.



Kobi Le Grange, Shea Brunt, and Ellie Duffy outside Bobs Farm School on Marsh Road. Picture: Jacinda Summers

"Not to mention the impact on the local environment, the road and the noise pollution."

Ms Brunt also said that silicosis could be a byproduct of sand mining and was a real threat if the development went ahead, "particularly if it is there for the 15 years that they are proposing".

Then there is the potential threat to the local wildlife. The proposed area to be cleared is home to a number of threatened species, such as the Squirrel glider and the Little Bent Wing Bat.

As a local avocado farmer, the Brunt family fear that their future crops will be compromised if the development is approved, along with the surrounding farms.

Locals also believe a mine would severely impact on the prices of their homes.

Already some are selling up in anticipation that their properties would be directly affected.

The Say No Sand Mining group says it is prepared to continue the fight for as long it takes in order to retain the natural environment.

Super storm damage to Port Stephens

By **ELLIE LYME** and **VANESSA FRARY**

THE strength of a community can be tested in times of turmoil, and the communities of Port Stephens and surrounding areas certainly have been tested in recent weeks.

Kristine Glen, a deputy captain with Anna Bay Rural Fire Brigade, said that the April storm was one of the worst that she has experienced and it will take communities a long time to clear the damage. "It is however,

encouraging to see locals helping each other out in times of need," Ms Glen said.

On April 21, a weather pattern began to unfold forming a super storm, inflicting millions of dollars worth of damage, as well as taking lives.

The storm covered a vast area from Wollongong all the way up to the Hunter Valley. The SES had thousands of emergency call-outs to attend to.

Ms Glen and her team worked non-stop through the disaster. "Our team



Storm damage at Anna Bay. Picture: Vanessa Frary

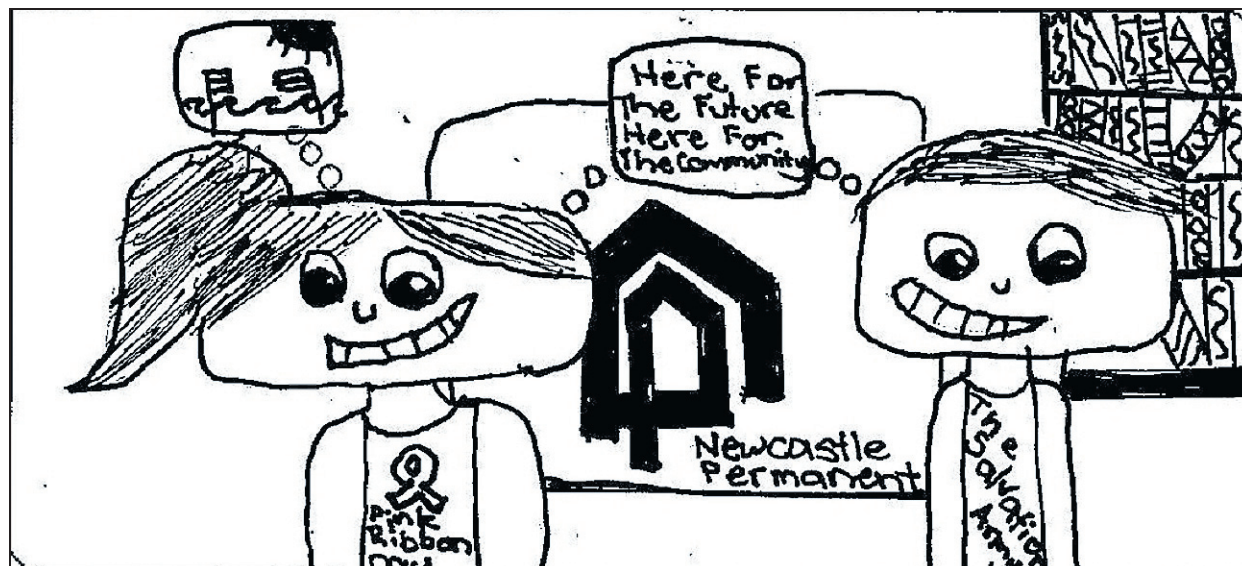
started in Port Stephens but completed jobs in Newcastle as well.

"The loss of power and damage to people's properties were our biggest hurdles. It was also heartening to know that the Port Stephens community spirit shone through."

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