



A YOUNG Australian, Chris Boyd, 24 was kept captive recently, by four men in a sleazy Bangkok hotel after allegedly losing \$25,000 to them in a 'black' scam. His father, Les Boyd of Perth said Chris made a frantic midnight call to him asking for money. He couldn't say much to his family because he was under guard, told what to say, and it was made clear to him that if he didn't do what they said he would be in real trouble. His parents immediately called the West Australian police, who in turn contacted the Australian Federal Police. Chris was rescued by the AFP and Thai police officers when his captors (who got away) took him to a Bangkok bank to collect the 'ransom' money which had been transferred there by his family. Chris' nightmare began when he was shopping in a Bangkok bazaar and was approached by a young woman who asked him to have a coffee with her. Chris, who was travelling on his own, was later enticed into a 'friendly' game of cards in which the stakes were progressively raised and rules obviously crooked. When rescued Chris said: "My situation was unreal, they said they were going to fill me up with heroin and have me busted if I tried to leave the country." A lesson for us all? But I can't help feeling Chris was awfully naive.

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I GET a kick out of some of the answers motorists give when trouble comes along. The vehicle insurance files of the NRMA of NSW, are brimmed with odd explanations. "Coming home, I drove into the wrong house and collided with a tree I haven't got," reads one extract from the files. Another explains: "I thought my side window was open, but it was up, as I found out when I put my head through it." Some defy belief: "In an attempt to kill a fly, I drove into a telephone pole." Motorists can also be a trifle mercenary: "The pedestrian had no idea which direction to run, so I ran over him."

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THE NRMA certainly wouldn't approve of the idiot suggestions of driving techniques by comedian Nick Off, (I kid you not!) from Melbourne. Here are some non-approved Nick Off driving tips: 1. Reduce the amount of traffic on the road by driving to your destination really, really fast. 2. Conserve energy - disconnect your headlights. 3. Driving requires concentration - keep children locked in sound proof containers. 4. When low on fuel, drive home really fast before it runs out. 5. Fog is dangerous; drive through fog quickly and back out into safe areas again.

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DOUBLE booking can be a hassle. It wasn't for 40 Canadians visiting Australia. They were double booked as a result of an error by a interstate reservation agency, on the Indian Pacific train from Sydney to Perth, but they were able to enjoy a wonderful trip thanks to the staff of Australian National Railway.

Special arrangements were made and their train was extended by two passenger coaches, a extra dining car, lounge car and extra crew. The Canadians were overwhelmed at the trouble the railway went to, to ensure they were not disappointed. To show their appreciation they arranged a special dinner in Sydney for the whole train crew. The card at the dinner placing read: "Thanks a lot for making our train ride so much fun - Aussies are wonderful people, second only to Canadians."

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THE world's top soccer players have packed up and left Rome. The football season will have a brief rest in the northern hemisphere. But not so in Australia, the season is in full swing there. It's a Saturday afternoon at the Horsly Drive ground, in Sydney's south-western suburbs, club officials, families and friends of the local team - The Smithfield Hotspurs - are preparing for a home game. The club secretary Sylvia Bennett is as sick as a parrot. Overnight vandals had kicked in the roller shutters in the refreshment kiosk and no-one can find the key to open the gents toilets. Furthermore there's a report in the local rag that the council, far from removing the concrete-based cricket strip in the middle of their soccer pitch as promised, now plans to bulldoze a freeway straight through it. "It's a fair cow, and no risk," said hubby John Bennett, who has been boss of the team for many years, and has ensured that they are listed with the NSW Amateur Soccer Federation, whose rules they play by. "What bugs me, is the lack of money," said Sylvia as she took the team's freshly laundered uniforms out of a black plastic bag. "These cost a fortune, they usually last a couple of years with a few mends, unless you get hospitals chopping the arms off (or worse) after the occupant has been admitted." "And then," said Bennett, "breaking in, it's microsurgery by Sylv that saves the day and the jersey." "You ever thought of giving it away, Sylv?" one of the wives asks. "Often, often," sighs Sylvia. "But you don't want to see the team fold and anyway we have written permission from Tottenham Hotspurs to use the name, black and white colours and the fighting cock emblem. We don't want to let them down." It was time to stop talking, they still had a lot to do - making up pitches, erecting posts and nets and cleaning out the changing sheds, before the teams arrive.

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AUSTRALIAN TV highlight of last week was on Sale of the Century. Smiling Tony Barber says to the leading male contestant with mega-buck prizes already won: "How'd you like to jump on this?" Instead of the intended prize (a bicycle it would seem) the director cuts to a full-length shot of Alyce Platt, looking stunned. Despite the generous offer, the contestant was not tempted and didn't press his button.

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OUTSPOKEN 2KY talkback radio host Ron Casey has received a bitter birthday present - suspension. Casey was taken off the air by management after last week's morning show, 24 hours after his birthday knees-up! Staff were told Casey had been cut in a memo from general manager Nola Barber which said: "Ron Casey is off the air from today due

to a dispute with management concerning his contract and program.' It is known, tapes of at least four of Casey's shows broadcast last month were listened to by management earlier this week. The shock decision comes just two months after the Australian Broadcasting Tribunal removed special monitoring controls on his morning show. A 'dump' button - to cut Casey off the air if necessary - had been set up and manned whenever he was on the air.

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A RECENT graduate with first-class honors in civil engineering from Sydney University, Geoffrey Lovell, won the first Bradman Scholarship, which will be awarded annually to a young Australian cricketer to study at Oxford. Lovell, a first-grade cricketer who bats at No. 3 for Sydney Uni won the scholarship in competition with a large number of contenders from all mainland states. In spite of his academic achievement in engineering Geoff wants to pursue a career in management. Starting in October at Oxford University, he will attend a three-year course in politics, philosophy and economics, leading to an MA degree. The Bradman Scholarship scheme has been organised by the Bradman Trust at Bowral, which will pay all costs of sending each Bradman scholar to Oxford for three years, including airfares, tuition fees and accommodation.

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\* WALKING from the street into Rebecca Hosack Gallery to view Clifford Possum Tjapaltjarri's Aboriginal paintings is to step into a small world of Possum magic. The walls are aglow with light and colourful paintings that jostle for the best position, while tucked away in a corner can be found small modest works of exquisite elegance. I was also at the gallery to meet the artist, Clifford Possum, as were other guests. I spotted Lord and Lady Harwood (Lady Harwood hails from Melbourne), Malcolm Williamson, Master of the Queen's Music, appropriately dressed in his Aboriginal land-rights jumper. I enjoyed my talk with Clifford - a good bloke, who has a strong presence and carries himself with quiet, unpretentious dignity and a genuineness that he also demonstrates through his art, which in turn represents Aboriginal law, the land and their way very being. Thanks must go to Rebecca for getting Cliff over here. I like visiting her gallery, it alludes a true air of comfortable affluence. Certainly nowhere else in London would you find such a friendly gallery. It lacks the snobbish aspect that permeates many top London galleries. I daresay Rebecca's being Australian has something to do with it.

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THE Australian Film Society will screen this Wednesday, July 25, at 6.30 for 7pm, at Australia House, The Crossing, directed by George Ogilvie in 1989. It's a great movie and I hear it's up, or in contention, to win a couple of prizes in this year's Australian Film Awards. In case you haven't heard, The Crossing is a love story which unfolds over a single day - Anzac Day - in a small Australian country town in the mid 1980s. A new look Sam returns to the town from the city to find his hometown sweetheart Meg, dating his best mate Johnny. Info 071 388 6080. Tickets £2 members £3 all others.