

A look at life on the inside at ... MALAK HOUSE

Exclusive by
CHRISTOPHER
TAYLOR

The grim reality of life inside a juvenile detention centre would be enough to turn the most rebellious teenager a long way from a life of crime.

Malak House is no Hilton but then it is not supposed to be.

It is a world of wire mesh, bolted doors, bare and unwelcoming "bedrooms" and uniformed children.

If you are over 10, under 17, this is where you will end up should you continually flaunt yourself on the wrong side of the law.

But the appearance of the centre is in stark contrast to its atmosphere.

The sounds of chatter — even laughter — fill the air as the centre's inmates take a craft course in the bare dayroom.

The inmates are often from broken homes.

They are almost always repeat offenders — many with alarming records for housebreaking and theft.

Many have alcohol or chronic petrol-sniffing habits.

Their average age is 14.

Alcoholics Anonymous runs a course at the centre.

The AA representatives are not always treating the children's problems but the psychological nightmares left over from a life with alcoholic relatives.

Superintendent Mr Kerry Grace rules Malak House with a calm but iron hand.

But he is far from the full-blown giant of a prison boss you would expect — quite the opposite in fact.

He seems always ready with an understanding ear, advice for his inmates.

He is respected. But muck about with the centre's rules and you could find yourself in "time out" — a tiny, depressing isolation cell — courtesy of Mr Grace.

He has the final say on who enters and leaves the cell.

If the message is not delivered by solitary confinement, an inmate may be transferred to the Giles House centre in Alice Springs where security is geared to cope with high-risk prisoners.

Malak House works on a theory — the better behaved you are, the more you get.

It is a system of levels.

Level one inmates are usually new to the centre.

They are at the level because they are not known to staff — it is not known if they can be trusted.

Level one means bed at 8 pm, confinement to the compound, very few privileges outside of television.

A step up the ladder to level two can mean bed an hour later, use of the centre's swimming pool, possible work detail in the kitchen.

Level three inmates can be entitled to day passes for outside work, school or a visit to their families.

Each prisoner under the age of 16 must attend the centre's school.

It is geared toward personal development, personalised education and specialised treatment for illiteracy.

Bed time means a room devoid of furniture or color.

A single bed, wire meshed security windows and heavily bolted barred doors.

Designed

The centre is designed to hold 12 inmates but can hold up to 20.

At the request of many of the young Aboriginal inmates — and in line with a recommendation by the former Aboriginal Deaths in Custody Commissioner James Muirhead — the children sometimes share a cell.

Although security at the centre appears to be tight, the long list of escapes this year stands as a damning indictment.

The inmates claim escape is easy — some of the time anyway.

Corrections Department officials claim the many escapes this year can be blamed on a group of ring-leaders who have since left Malak House.

They say security is as tight as it can be — as tight as it is at any other Australian juvenile facility.

The department has high hopes for the new \$1.6 million Don Dale Juvenile Detention Centre, to be opened at Berrimah next year.

If you are over 10 and under 17, this is where you will end up should you continually get on the wrong side of the law.

Bradley: Locked up for 4 days

Eight months ago Bradley was thrown into a small, barred, cold cell where he was to stay for four long days.

It was the result of an ugly confrontation with the boys in khaki.

Bradley (not his real name) bashed a cop in the Malak House car park.

The police had been returning the 16-year-old from a court appearance where he was sentenced for breaking and entering and stealing cars.

He says it was not his fault.

"The cops started it," he said.

It taught Bradley a lesson, but he still complains that stints in solitary are far too long.

Under the law, prisoners can be held in solitary confinement only for 12 hours without a break.

Bradley's four days were broken by short trips to the shower and dining room.

"It was still too long — especially when I didn't even start the fight," he said.

Bradley — like most Malak House inmates — is a repeat offender.

He has spent many months at the institution.

But in many ways he is one of the juvenile justice system's greatest success stories — breezing through the system with only the odd hiccup.

He is looking forward to his release in nine days.

His complaints about Malak House are many, but seem trivial.

He says occasionally the youth workers (guards) pick on kids for no reason.

He said they are sometimes deliberately provocative, attempting to rile the inmates and punish them.

He does not like the female inmates either, calling them "little bitches".

He, like many others, has escaped. "I kicked out a mesh window and they sent these two blokes around to fix it," he said.

"They left it open and they weren't watching so I just bolted."

He was on the run for three weeks but eventually gave himself up — he could not see the point in running any longer.

He believes it is far too easy for inmates to escape.

"But this place is not too bad — it's all right sometimes."

"Over all they treat us pretty well."



The controversial juvenile detention centre, Malak House.

Girl, 13, prefers prison to home

She reckoned she had stolen 20 cars since she was 11 and she giggled as she said it. She did it because she hated her mother, hated her home and did not want to live on the street.

Juvenile prison meant a hot meal and a roof over her head. It was her fifth time in Malak House. She is 13 years old.

But Tracey (not her real name) says she wants to get her life sorted out before she reaches 17.

She does not want to graduate to the adult prison system.

"I can't stand living with my parents and I don't want to live on the street," she said.

"I prefer to be here than at home."

But despite the fact that Tracey has led a frightening life of crime and prefers to be behind bars than with her parents, who keeps breaking out.

She was on the outside for three days staying with friends, robbing houses and stealing cars.

She gave herself up for the same reason she says she escaped — boredom.

"There was nothing to do

except sit around and watch television," she said.

Another time she was dragged into solitary confinement for a two-day stint.

It was punishment for beating a guard.

She said it was tough but admits she deserved it.

But despite her tough exterior and her long record, Tracey's major complaint about Malak House is disarmingly childish.

"We should be allowed to smoke," she said.



Malak House denies claims of cover-ups

By CHRISTOPHER TAYLOR

The doors of the controversial Malak House juvenile detention centre were opened exclusively to the *Northern Territory News* yesterday, ending a year of public debate and allegations of lax security at the facility.

The Correctional Services Department opened the centre after alarming claims of huge departmental cover-ups by a Malak House youth worker.

The youth worker, who refused to be identified, approached the *NT News* with the allegations.

The youth worker said physical violence against inmates, the rape of an inmate by another prisoner, a rash of escapes and escape attempts, and barbaric prison procedures, were being hidden by staff from the department and the media.

The youth worker also claimed the centre was a health risk. Inmates as young as eight were subject to violence at the hands of the centre's staff and the spate of recent escapes could be blamed on the failure of officers to do their job adequately.

Correctional Services Department officials have angrily denied the employee's claims.

They say Malak House is being run as efficiently as possible. The officials accompanied the *NT News* on a tour of the facility to try to dispel the claims.

The Probation, Parole and Juvenile Justice director, Ms Lyn Keogh, said the department had nothing to hide in its running of the centre. Ms Keogh said children younger than 10 by law could not be housed at the centre.

"So any claim about the mistreatment of children as young as that is without foundation," she said.

She also denied claims of beatings and rapes of prisoners, saying if they were true police would have become involved.

She said security at the centre was as tight as could be expected at a juvenile detention facility.

The youth worker who spoke out claimed to be acting in the interests of the centre's inmates.

"I know I will probably lose my job - I'm prepared for that, I'm prepared to pack up and leave town," the guard said.

"I feel dirty having to come to the press but where else is there to go?"

"Malak House doesn't need stories like this - it's just the administration is not doing its job."

"I know it looks like we are all doing a bad job - we probably are."

"But without the numbers of staff that are required and without the funding for extra staff it is impossible to do."

The rash of escapes was a direct result of low staffing numbers, the guard claimed.

"Security is a joke - it is rotten," the worker said.

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NORTHERN TERRITORY News

NORTHERN AUSTRALIAN COLLECTION

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A milestone for two countries

The signing of the Timor Gap treaty by Senator Gareth Evans and Mr Ali Alatas yesterday (below) was a milestone in Australian-Indonesian relations.

One of the most prospective oil and gas regions in the world, the Gap should have major benefits for the NT.

Senior NT News reporter FRANK ALCOOTA and award-winning photographer LYNDON MECHIELSEN were on board the RAAF VIP jet for the signing by Australia and Indonesia over the Timor Sea yesterday.

For the full report and more pictures, see P3.

Phone 82 8200 DARWIN: Tuesday, December 12, 1989 50c (COUNTRY 33 cents) TERRITORY EDITION



CANE TOAD PLAGUE THREAT

By LEONIE BIDDLE

A north Queensland scientist has warned that the next Wet season could boost cane toad numbers to almost plague proportions throughout the Top End.

James Cook University research fellow, Dr Rick Speare, urged authorities to mount a search-and-destroy campaign for cane toads at Borroloola following their arrival there.

Dr Speare said cane toads were advancing

across the north Queensland gulf area at the rate of 30 km a year.

He said the toads would have been relatively dormant during the cooler dry season but once the weather warmed up and the rain started they would multiply rapidly.

He said if the advance continued the effect on the Territory's wildlife, particularly carnivorous marsupials such as goannas and snakes, would be catastrophic.

Dr Speare, heading a research project into cane toad diseases, said urgent action was essential to curb the numbers.

A mass collection and eradication campaign in the Borroloola area

was one way of reducing numbers to buy time.

He said similar campaigns were under way in Queensland centres.

"Science is still trying to find a biological answer to the ecological threat posed by the cane toads," Dr Speare said.

In the meantime collection programs were worth a go until a long-term solution was found.

He said the Territory and Federal Governments should consider starting a collection program at Borroloola and paying people to collect and destroy cane toads.

Dr Speare said his team's disease research had identified a

soil fungus which was fatal to cane toads.

But he said the fungus did not spread significantly through cane toad populations and only between 1 and 6 per cent of toads died of the fungus in an area where it was prevalent.

NT Conservation Commission wildlife researcher, Dr Bill Freeland, is also involved in the research project.

Dr Freeland had helped identify a virus in frogs he collected in Costa Rica which could be used in conjunction with an Iridovirus found in native Australian frogs.

The Iridovirus has been found to kill tadpoles and toadlets.

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Green and gold need each other

SIR, Millions of words are being written and spoken in the conservation versus development debate and on the needs for balance and sustainable development.

The phrase "In the national interest" is banded around with increasing frequency yet obviously means different things to different people.

The protagonists in

the debate should pause to reflect upon the significance of our national colors, green and gold.

The two complement each other in a perfectly natural manner. The symbolism should be very real to all Australians.

The first gold rush in the 1850s laid the foundations for the nation we have today.

Mining and other

land-related economic activity, eg "the golden grain", pay virtually all of our bills today.

To date, the quest for balance between conservation and mining interests has been rather like a tight-rope act in a circus — extremely difficult and slow.

It doesn't have to be this way. Miners accept that environmental management and rehabilitation costs are part of the overall cost of mining, that is, they have joined the green with their gold.

It's now time for conservationists to accept that the two colors are of equal significance and that they should join the gold with their green.

The two colors need each other.

C.M. Friel, Alawa.

A.J. Hosking, Nakara.

No environment study before Timor oil pact

SIR, There is a striking incongruence between the signing of the Timor Gap agreement by Senator Evans and, on the same day, the statement by the Prime Minister, Mr Hawke, that the Government intends to protect the environment.

The 8-billion barrels of oil expected to come out of that area will provide millions of tonnes of pollutants such as carbon dioxide, smog, ether gases that affect the atmosphere and many other forms of toxin and refuse.

Will those ministers charged with protecting the environment, Senator Richardson and Mr Hutton, please tell us what plans are in hand to protect the environment from this new source of degradation?

Where is the environ-

mental impact statement?

Or are we again rushing blindly and ignorantly into something we cannot control simply for some short-term monetary benefit?

C.M. Friel, Alawa.

mentalist impact statement?

Or are we again rushing blindly and ignorantly into something we cannot control simply for some short-term monetary benefit?

C.M. Friel, Alawa.

All heart over HK refugees

SIR, Mrs Thatcher is, as we know, all heart! That is why she is providing transport, free, gratis and for nothing, to those "illegal immigrants" who have escaped from Vietnam and chosen Hong Kong as their haven.

But Mr Bush is critical of this action; though why he should be is difficult to define.

After all, Vietnam is now a fifth-world country as a result of the worst bombing the world ever knew (together with Cambodia) — all inflicted by America and for which they have long refused to pay reparations or to grant humanitarian aid.

Pol Bush has no reason to object to Kettle Thatcher's pigmentation, even if she is an Iron Kettle.

Jack Hunt, Humphry Doo.

Sentences must mean what they say

SIR, There has been quite a bit in newspapers and other media recently about the terms prisoners are serving.

By literal definition the term "life" means the "term of ultimate existence" or "period of existence from birth to death".

By literal definition a year is a period of 365 days (366 in leap year).

By literal definition imprisonment is "to be put into or confinement in a prison".

Bearing in mind the above definitions consider the following:

A company manufactures a product and offers an unconditional guarantee for the life of the product.

If the company reneges on that guarantee it is criminally liable.

If your driver's licence is valid for 3 years, it means a period of 1095 days (or 1096 days if it includes a leap year).

If you pay your insurance premium for one

year it means 365 (or 366) days.

If this is so why, when a judge in our judicial system says "imprisonment for life", does it mean only 7 to 10 years, or when a judge says "imprisonment for 7 years" does it mean 2 or 3 years?

When was the last time someone had a licence to drive cancelled by the judicial system for 2 years and got it back in 3 months because they were good.

Come on, let's get real.
D.L. Chonoweth, FDMAS Coconawarra.

00555 service could be costly

SIR, Recently, a number of local television advertisements have urged people to ring the 00555 numbers for information on a large number of subjects.

What the advertisements do not tell the general public is the cost of this service. If you ring any of the numbers during the day, it will cost \$3c a minute.

Therefore a teenager who rings the service to listen to the "top ten" of the week (allowing 3 minutes each) will add about \$18 to the bill.

If the kids decide to ring and make inquiries about sex, that will add another \$18 to the next phone bill.

If this is done on a regular basis of once a week, your next phone bill will be more than \$400 higher than you expect.

On inquiring about

this service, I was told it is not a legal requirement to advertise costs for services.

I was also told that the costs would appear in the (front of the 1990) phone book. That book will not be delivered to Darwin residents until May or June 1990.

I was also told that it is not the responsibility of the company to worry about whether people can afford the service.

I asked Telecom how I could have access to these numbers removed from my service.

I was told the only way I could do this was by having my STD access removed.

So Darwinians beware, your next phone bill could be your last.
Kath Schneider, Moli.

Professionals at Malak House

LETTERS

The Editor
Box 1500 GPO
Darwin 0801

SIR, In the light of your recent spate of articles about Malak House, your readers could be forgiven for not realising that the Northern Territory leads Australia in the treatment of juvenile offenders.

The distortion of reality in some of the reporting is of great concern, particularly because it places a slight on the team of highly professional people who work in the most difficult area of juvenile detention.

Half your December 14 article reflects a level of journalism one would expect from a southern "scandal sheet" and presents as the classic case of not ruining a good story for the sake of the facts. This is far from the high standard of journalism locals have come to expect from the NT News.

Youth workers (not guards), a group of highly trained professionals, do not spend every minute of the day manacled to their young charges.

Our detention centres exist to protect the com-

munity from the unacceptable behavior of a few. The surveillance procedures used are those appropriate to each individual's needs, in line with the purpose of community protection.

Many of the incidents publicised from time to time, simply reflect the difficulty of running juvenile custodial programs in a building designed as a welfare hostel. The staff also labor under this added burden.

Though much work has been done to upgrade security at Malak House, the Government has recognised the centre's shortcomings and its inappropriate location.

The new purpose-built Don Dale Centre will, within two years, become a showpiece for detention programs for those few juveniles the community believes deserve or need that type of treatment.

From 20 years of experience in this field, I can assure you that young people are the most difficult of all to manage in any Correctional Services program.

There is a "devil-may-care" attitude as part of their normal youthful exuberance and some rarely consider the consequences of their actions, whether it be wagging school, "nicking" a lolly from the local supermarket, stealing a car, or escaping from custody.

Correctional Services in the Northern Territory offers the broadest range of treatment options, both community-based and custodial, in the nation.

Government policies are aimed first at diverting young people at risk of coming into conflict with the law away from such a course and, second, at breaking the

nexus of graduation from juvenile to adult involvement in crime.

The rest of Australia is now looking at the Territory's lead and we can expect a number of States to fall into line in the future with our model for the treatment of juvenile offenders.

Our detention centre custodial programs, including the acclaimed Wildman River Wilderness Work Camp, are particularly targeted at lifting the self-esteem of juveniles, many of whom come from dysfunctional families.

Clearly, the vast majority of juveniles in our general community are well-adjusted, young achievers, who are on a direct path to becoming tomorrow's upstanding adult citizens.

In the Correctional Services sphere, there have been the failures but there have also been, and will continue to be, the many untold success stories of young offenders rejoining the community as well-behaved, model citizens.

To give credit where it is due, your December 14 article did report one of the many success stories of Malak House.

Your newspaper has a positive role to play in these endeavors. The Government has an open-door policy for the media in relation to Correctional Services. (Witness your recent excellent series of articles on the three Top End prisons).

The community has a right to know how effectively its correctional institutions and programs are being managed.

The media's role is to provide the truth, not pander to the interests of disgruntled former employees or to display as facts, unsubstantiated allegations. Your newspaper has been given every opportunity

to uncover and examine the facts.

Like parents, youth workers are not aided by any ideal academic training to prepare them for the job, although Correctional Services has introduced a comprehensive training course to address possible problem areas. These people work in a potentially hostile environment in which they need to cope from time to time with assaults, abuse and the vehemence of parents who cannot accept that their children are capable of anti-social or criminal behavior.

Perhaps next time you go to press on this subject, you might spare more thought for the dedicated, committed and professional teams who run juvenile detention centres and for that matter, our prisons as well.

D.R. Owsen, Secretary, Correctional Services Department.

Christmas wish for politicians

SIR, With Christmas upon us and the new year just around the corner, it would be appropriate to wish all our erstwhile politicians the best of luck for the coming year.

All would agree that Christmas is a time for families to be together, sharing the festive season united.

It could also be a time when they listen to the grass-root philosophies of the working-class people and come back to the political arena rejuvenated and full of concern for the battler.

A millionaire can cast only one vote, the same as a laborer who lives from hand to mouth.

In essence what one is

saying is that many people are hard up against it, compared with the money-manipulating minority.

Votes are the most important commodity in politics, not empty political promises, so the excited members of the "Air-Condition Brigade" should take heed and come back to us voters in the new year with a genuine approach to vote-gathering.

Wishing all readers a merry Christmas and happy new year and a return to democratic values.

Mick Martin, Jabiru.

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Northern Territory News, Thursday, December 21, 1989 - 9

Air disaster probe after family dies

BRISBANE.—Investigators will try today to determine what caused a helicopter to crash off the south Queensland coast, killing a family of six and the pilot.

The Bell Longranger helicopter operated by Sea World Aviation plunged on to a beach on the southern tip of South Stradbroke Island yesterday afternoon while taking the family on a joyride.

The bodies of the seven people were taken to Brisbane last night.

The family members were three men and three women, and the male pilot was believed to have been a friend of the family.

No names have yet been released.

Yesterday's crash brought to nine the number of people killed in helicopter crashes in Queensland at the weekend.

Two men died when a helicopter being used on

a mining survey crashed near Mount Isa in the State's north-west on Saturday.

Their names had also not been released last night.

In the third helicopter crash, near Mareeba in far north Queensland on Saturday, two men suffered only minor injuries.

Experts probing the crash on South Stradbroke will interview witnesses today as well as comb through the wreckage.

A Bureau of Air Safety Investigation spokesman said last night the Bell Longranger helicopter exploded on impact when it hit the beach.

"It could be some weeks before the full circumstances surrounding the accident are known," he said.

Witnesses' reports tend to vary when recalling how the helicopter came to crash.

However, all agree the tail of the chopper separated from the craft before impact.

According to some ac-

counts the helicopter exploded in mid-air.

It is believed to be Australia's worst helicopter crash.

Sea World general manager, Dr Fabian Fay, said in a statement that Sea World was conducting its own investigation into the crash together with relevant authorities.

Everyone at Sea World was in a state of shock, he said.



An air safety bureau official carries the tail rotor away from the horrific crash scene where seven people died



The gruesome task of sifting through the wreckage begins late yesterday

Police hunt escapees

Police from Darwin to Katherine were still searching today for two escapees from the Malak House juvenile detention centre.

Police believe the two 15-year-old boys may have fled to their homes at Katherine.

They escaped about 11.45 am on Saturday by climbing a fence at the centre and were believed to be on foot.

One is described as

part-Aboriginal, 164 cm tall, weighing

60 kg.

He was last seen

wearing a blue-and-

white floral shirt and

blue-and-green shorts.

The other escapee is

174 cm tall and was

last seen wearing a

red T-shirt and blue

shorts.

Japanese military uninvited, CM says

The Chief Minister, Mr Marshall Perron, confirmed today that his Government would not be inviting Japanese military personnel to attend special commemorative services in 1992 of the 50th anniversary of the bombing of Darwin.

Mr Perron said he had explored the issue in Canberra last month in separate meetings with the RSL president, Brigadier Al Garland, and the Japanese Ambassador, Mr Hiromu Fukuda.

"Both offered the opinion that the events of 1942-43 period remain sufficiently sensitive to Australian veterans that any official Japanese delegation at our planned services of commemoration would not be appropriate," Mr Perron said.

He said the Territory Government was working with the RSL to the Territory to plan a year long memorial to those who served in the Territory during the war.

"Darwin was devastated by air attack on February 19, 1942, by the same forces which raided Pearl Harbor," he said.

"In all there were 64 air attacks on the Territory, as well as raids in northern Western Australia and north Queensland."

Budget deficit looms

Keating admits monetary fears

CANBERRA.—The Federal Treasurer, Mr Paul Keating, admitted today his frequently revised and shrinking Budget surplus could turn into a deficit.

He made the admission amid warnings one million Australians would be living off unemployment payments by June.

The January balance of payments figures, due to be released on Wednesday, are ex-

pected to show further deterioration in the economy and a wave of recession-ravaged company results is also due out this week.

Mr Keating said a Budget deficit was a possibility, although he expected to maintain a surplus.

Rapidly increasing spending on unemployment benefits and falling tax income has eaten away at the surplus, originally forecast at \$8.1 billion, but last week revised by Mr Keating to about \$1.7 billion.

Mr Keating said the

surplus was being used to cushion the impact of the recession and would pick up as soon as the economy improved.

However, he said measures to be announced in the March 12 Industry statement had not been taken into account when reaching the new \$1.7 billion estimate.

Major factors eating into the surplus were increased unemployment benefits and lower tax receipts.

"I don't think that's serious. I think that's good but it means the surplus will be lower,"

Mr Keating said.

"The main thing is that the structure of the Budget is in a strong position, which it is, so as the economy picks up the surplus will grow again."

Asked if there could be a deficit, he said: "That's always a possibility but I think we may well see a position where this country will have gone into a recession in surplus and come out in surplus."

A surplus slide into a deficit would not be a calamity.

"But, by the same token, if we could keep

the surplus as large as possible in terms of national savings I think that's good," he said.

The Opposition treasury spokesman, Mr Peter Reith, described Mr Keating's admission of the possibility of a Budget deficit as a step on the road to his fiscal humiliation.

He said Mr Keating had contradicted his previous insistence that fiscal policy must remain tight.

In further bad news, the ANZ Bank's latest job advertisement survey says job ads plunged 11 per cent last month to less than 14 000 — 50 per cent down on a year ago. (See Page 3).

Editorial P 8

2 senior ministers seek ALP overhaul

CANBERRA.—Two senior Federal Cabinet ministers pleaded yesterday for an overhaul of the ALP to give ordinary members more say and woo back disillusioned supporters.

"To say that they are disillusioned is to underestimate the situation. They are desperate to see change," the Health Minister and senior Left faction member, Mr Brian Howe, said.

The Treasurer, Mr Paul Keating, backed Mr Howe, saying growing disenchantment could threaten the party's political viability, unless party members were given more

say. "The trick is to try to keep people interested, keep it (the party) responsive, let people in the party believe they have got a piece of it and that the leadership of the party does care about what they think," he said.

Mr Howe supported the thrust of the plan of the ALP national secretary, Mr Bob Hogg, to revamp the selection process for delegates to the party's supreme decision-making body, the national council.

"They (delegates) are more representative than they used to be, but I think they could be more representative again and that's what I think Hogg is trying to do," he said.

APOLOGY

In the Woolworths "Manchester Pricebusters" variety catalogue, on sale Monday 4th March, we regret the following lines will not be available until approximately mid-week, due to late deliveries:

Matthew Protectors, \$8.98, \$8.98 (page 2)
Cosy Polyester Quilts, \$8.98, \$8.98 (page 3)

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See pages 22-25 and page 47 for details.

SUNDAY Territorian

27 JUN 1989



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MOVE IT!

'Rules too harsh'

Teenagers at Malak House break out because the rules are too harsh, according to a youth who has spent time in the detention centre and at the Wildman River wilderness camp.

The 15-year-old boy said rules at Malak — such as no smoking — made the inmates tense.

"There's not much to do," he said.

"Just play pool — and that always causes fights."

"And you can't smoke and you get all worked up."

"If you swear they can put you in 'time out' which is a little room on your own."

"When you first got there you have to go to bed at 7.30."

"At Wildman they trust you a lot more — they don't do things like count the cutlery which they do at Malak House."

Palmerston's Mark Chatfield, who once worked at Wildman River, said: "You can't wield a big stick to these kids because they'll only rebel against it."

Malak House under attack

Darwin's trouble-torn Malak House faced another crisis last night.

Local residents banded together and demanded the detention centre be moved.

Spokesman John Baban said: "We don't want to live next to an institution full of young criminals."

"We have young children and they shouldn't have to grow up with screaming and swearing on their back doorstep."

"The other night it sounded like a circus to there."

Mr Baban said residents were also worried about the security of their homes and their personal safety following a spate of copycat break-outs by inmates.

"When they get out, they need money so they could break into your home or anything," he said.

Confines

He said Malak House should be moved to within the confines of Darwin Prison at Berriam.

"I don't mean mix them with adult offenders but there should be a separate facility," he said.

"The system of holding them in a residential area obviously isn't working."

Meanwhile, a prison chief brought in to investigate security at Malak House may have some answers by the end of the week.

Alice Springs Prison

By BRUCE GRANT

Superintendent Tony Booping is heading the probe into security procedures.

He was an adviser on the full-scale internal security upgrade at Giles House detention centre in Alice Springs earlier this year.

There have been at least 10 juvenile escapes from Territory detention centres this month alone.

Three youths run away from Giles House on Thursday night by scaling a fence.

They were recaptured a short time later.

A Moulden couple whose 17-year-old son is in Darwin Prison said they are pleased he is in jail rather than a low security detention centre.

The boy's father said he would rather see his son serve his time in a secure institution where he can be rehabilitated.

"He's absconded from detention centres before," he said.

"If he has to be locked up, I'd rather it was somewhere secure where he can't escape."

The youth's mother said she thought her son was "safer" in prison.

"When he was in a detention centre I was always afraid he would get out and get into more trouble," she said.



□ ABOVE: Malak House ... scene of a spate of break outs over the past few weeks

□ LEFT: John Baban ... wants the detention centre moved to Darwin Prison

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