

SATURDAY, JULY 17, 1993

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\$1*

THE RICH WHO GIVE AWAY THEIR MONEY

GOOD WEEKEND



MAESTRO EDO

THE SSO'S NEW CONDUCTOR

GOOD WEEKEND



THE DOWNS FOX THE MAN WHO MADE MODERN RUGBY LEAGUE

ROY MASTERS: PAGE 77



Packard future divides the Govt

By MARK COULTAN
State Political Correspondent

The future of the Liberal MP for The Hills, Mr Tony Packard, appeared bleak yesterday after one Independent said he would vote to expel him and the State Government was divided over whether he should resign.

Mr Packard was convicted on breaches of the Listening Devices Act last month over the use of an intercom system in his failed car dealership, which was used to spy on customers and staff.

The ALP has said it will move to expel him from Parliament when it resumes in September.

The MP for Manly, Dr Peter Macdonald, said yesterday that he would vote to expel Mr Packard in favour of the Opposition motion.

If all three non-aligned MPs voted against Mr Packard, he would be expelled from Parliament.

The Independent MP for South Coast, Mr John Hutton, was not available yesterday but has previously called on the Premier to act. The Independent MP for Bligh, Ms Clover Moore, has reserved her judgment.

As well, a Government member who declined to be named said he believed it would be better for the Government if Mr Packard resigned.

The attitude among some MPs is that if Mr Packard is deemed then this would be better for the Government than being forced into the position of arguing for his retention.

But Mr Packard also appeared to have a cheer squad gathering behind him, including the MP for North Shore, Mr Phillip Smiles, and the MP for Ku-ring-gai, Mr Stephen O'Doherty, and the Upper House MP Mr John Ryan. Mr Packard himself declined interviews yesterday. He was reported to have had a discussion with Mr Fahey.

After the Premier refused on Thursday to say whether he had sought Mr Packard's resignation, Mr Fahey's office allowed specu-



Mr Packard... MPs disagree over his expulsion.

lation about Mr Packard's future to go unchecked.

This contrasts with the attitude of Mr Fahey soon after Mr Packard was convicted, when he stoutly defended the backbencher, saying he had already been punished by the court and should not be punished twice.

If Mr Packard's future as an MP is to be cut short, the Government may prefer that it is done quickly, before Parliament resumes in September.

If it were to go to a vote, the Government would lose his vote for the three-week minimum that it would take to hold a by-election. The campaign would be during the time that the Premier and the Leader of the Opposition both intend to travel to Switzerland for the ceremony to choose the venue for the Olympic Games.

However, as Government sources pointed out, the decision about Mr Packard's resignation is solely in his hands.

The seat would require a 23 per cent swing to be lost to the ALP, which has said it will not contest a by-election. However, a by-election would be distracting for the minority Government.

Dr Macdonald became the first Independent MP to declare his position after a meeting with Mr Packard on Thursday in which the Member for The Hills presented

Continued Page 6

PAGE 6: Past catches up with Packard.

The Shed: life in the underclass

By PAUL CLEARY

About 100 kids in Carramar, near Fairfield, go to school in a place called The Shed. Most would be regarded as dunces, but their teacher says that, on the contrary, they have worked out that there are no jobs for poor people like themselves, so why go to normal school.

The Shed is a cold and draughty Girl Guides hall. Inside there are table tennis and pool tables, and a computer in one corner that is often used for games and occasionally for literacy lessons.

It is only metres away from the main railway line, and the kids, aged between 10 and 13, often throw rocks at the passing trains. For many, The Shed is the end of the line. Most have already dropped out of school.

The Shed is not part of the formal education system. It is run by the Fairfield Community Resource Centre, which is funded by ad hoc grants from the Federal and State Governments. Fairfield has the distinction of having the highest unemployment rate in Australia - 23 per cent.

A community development worker at the centre, Mr Ken Locking, said the children at The Shed could not see the point of staying on at school.

"They're not silly," he said. "The majority of their parents are unemployed and the kids see themselves as 'poor people who won't get jobs'."

To them, unemployment is "just a way of life".

Starting today and continuing next week, a *Herald* series examines the impact of prolonged unemployment in areas like Fairfield and the battle being waged against tremendous odds to curb its effects.

One of the issues identified by the *Herald* is the so-called welfare trap. Employers say they find it difficult to encourage some people to work because the wages they offer amount to little more than the dole, while people in the increasing number of low-paid jobs complain that their unemployed neighbours get almost as much money as they do.

This anecdotal evidence is supported by a new study by Professor Bob Gregory, a labour market expert and member of the Prime Minister's task force on employment. He found there had been a significant narrowing of the gap between low-paid workers and welfare benefits.

Education bureaucrats who devise special programs for disadvantaged students use the term "kids at risk" to refer to children in danger of dropping out of school and ending up without jobs or at best casual, menial work.

They talk of the need to "empower" kids in disadvantaged schools by giving them positive and assertive attitudes.

The School Education Department runs special tutorial centres for students with severe behav-

AUSTRALIA'S UNDERCLASS



Today the *Herald* begins a five-part series which highlights what welfare agencies have feared: an "underclass" has arrived in Australia.

The number of children growing up in families where no-one works has now reached 18 per cent.

Unemployment is now reaching into the second and even third generation of families, with many resigned to drawing welfare cheques for the rest of their lives.



School away from school where drop-outs can drop in... Ken Locking (right) and some of the kids who use The Shed.

Picture by KYLIE PICKET.

journal problems. Most have been diagnosed as having a psychological disorder, and the head teacher of the Metropolitan West Tutorial Centre at Blacktown, Mr Warwick Lindsay, says that anxiety over unemployment is the major aggravating factor.

About 18 came to the centre for just two hours a day. There are two students per teacher, with emphasis on literacy and numeracy. Within 12 months, 85 per cent go back to normal schools.

The students are aggressive, over-reactive and impulsive. The

centre tries to teach them how to reduce their stress level and to understand why they became angry.

"All of them have a psychological basis to their problem," Mr Lindsay said. "But 60-70 per cent have got a socio-economic factor that's aggravating the situation."

A novel program for "kids at risk", called Bridging the Gap, is run at a private centre at St Marys. Students from about 20 schools around the area attend a one-day course designed to help those who are about to drop out of

school. It teaches job-seeking skills. But the course is really about lifting the self-esteem of the students.

Bridging the Gap has classrooms called "The Recharge Room" and "The Powerhouse". The director of the centre, Mr Ted Cox, said that by and large these students were angry over the way they have been treated.

Students come to Bridging the Gap and spend a "whole day without being put down", he said.

Mr Cox tells the students that he would rather hear a four-letter

word than someone being called stupid - because they've "been called stupid so often".

The students talk about how they should tell their parents they love them. Mr Cox plays classical music and they meditate after lunch to Vivaldi and then talk about how they should visualise their goals.

The Shed runs its own education program, called Positive Directions, for about 30 students. About 20 are still in school but are at risk of dropping out at a young age. The others have not been to school in years. But on top of this, there are about another 70 who have dropped out of school and simply hang out at The Shed.

The Shed has three part-time tutors who offer one-to-one or two-to-one classes on literacy and numeracy. Mr Locking said the students are not there because of any psychological disorder. Some had learning difficulties but he said that this was largely the result of socio-economic factors.

Mr Locking said students as young as 12 years old cannot see the point of school.

"We're breeding a generation of helplessness," he said. "Half their parents are unemployed. They're not silly. They know there's no job out there."

"It's a cycle they're becoming trapped in. If we don't do something about it, they're going to stay there."

Professor Gregory said a full-time male worker whose income was in the lowest 10 per cent of earnings received up to 36 per cent more than the dole in 1976.

But in 1987 the same worker received a maximum of only 18 per cent more than the dole. A worker whose income was 20 per cent from the bottom would have received 51 per cent more than the dole in 1976 but only 35 per cent in 1987.

His figures do not take into account taxes, work-related expenses such as transport and additional benefits paid to the unemployed, such as rent assistance or lower rent in public housing. All these would further narrow the gap.

Professor Gregory stressed that he was not calling for a cut in dole payments.

The Federal Government says that no-one earning more than \$260 a week net should be better off on welfare benefits but this does not cover all the extra expenses many people face when they go back to work.

The Federal Government has become conscious of the need to make the transition from unemployment to work easier, and is understood to be considering some measures for the forthcoming Budget. One option is to allow people to move more freely between unemployment and work, without having cut-offs and waiting periods.

More reports in Spectrum, Pages 39, 42 and 43.

COLUMN 8

WILDLIFE in the City, Part I: Felisia Rubbo and other staff at the financial services company Roach Graham and Associates watched from their 20th floor offices in Piccadilly Court yesterday in horrified fascination. A hawk perched on the top ledges of the Park Lane Hotel opposite had snaffled a pigeon and proceeded, right at the staff's morning tea break, to devour the hapless prey. "There was blood and feathers everywhere," Ms Rubbo said. "Now we're worried he's going to toss the carcass down on to Castlereagh Street and hit some poor pedestrian. It's not what you expect to see in the city."

PART II: Sally Wilson is the animal welfare rep on the Free Range Egg Producers' Association. But even she was startled to find free-range chickens in a back lane at Kings Cross last weekend. According to locals, they are permanent residents of the area, paying their rent with a supply of eggs. But, says Sally, "one wonders at their life expectancy in that area!"

ABOUT 10 days ago, workers delivered a three-metre poplar tree, designed to be planted in a grating in Sussex Street, opposite the Nikko Hotel. They propped the tree against the nearest building, then went away. Yesterday, city worker Matthew Brownlie observed that the tree, its roots still wrapped in plastic, was still propped against the building and now looking "decidedly ill". Spokeswomen for both the city and South Sydney councils (the latter is normally responsible for city plantings) confirmed that the planting was part of a development approval. Both councils sent inspectors to the site and the ailing tree was finally planted yesterday afternoon.

CHUFFED at securing the amateur premiere production rights for the hit musical *Les Mis*, the Miranda Musical Society this week celebrated with a bash at a local watering hole. Normie Rowe was guest of honour and a great time was had by all. When president Doug Nicholson came to sign the cheque for the evening's entertainment, it came to \$1,832 - and as students of literature, or history, will know, most of *Les Mis* is set in Paris in 1832.

A STANMORE reader, tuned to Channel 9's Friday morning newscast of the American ABC news was intrigued by a "very interesting" report on the possibility of homosexuality being genetically transferred. Even more intriguing, he said, was the name of the presenter: George Strait.

INDULGING in some light reading, Apostrophe Man found in *Yearbook Australia*, on page 244, the definition of pensioners as "mothers, widows, divorcees, wife's...". At a retail price of \$69, that's one apostrophe too many.

Born gay: it's all in the genes

By DEBORAH SMITH
and agencies

Scientists have discovered evidence that some men are born with a genetic predisposition to homosexuality and believe they will eventually be able to isolate a "gay gene" which men inherit from their mothers.

The research, published yesterday in the journal *Science*, raises ethical issues on the genetic influences on human sexual preferences.

Finding a gene that predisposes a person to homosexuality may lead to prenatal diagnostic tests which may, in theory, be offered to pregnant women to determine whether to abort a foetus carrying the gene.

The scientists, led by Dr Dean Hamer, an AIDS researcher at the US National Cancer Institute in Maryland, are confident of being able to identify one or more genes involved in a tendency towards homosexuality, but emphasised that their findings could not explain all male homosexuality.

Dr Hamer said it was likely homosexuality arose from a variety of causes, both genetic and environmental.

Two years ago, Dr Simon



LeVay, a scientist at the Salk Institute for Biological Studies at San Diego, California, found slight structural differences in the hypothalamus of the brains of gay men.

Other researchers have also identified structural differences in other areas of the brain, but were not able to say whether this resulted from environmental influences or genetic inheritance.

Dr Hamer and colleagues studied the genetic material from 40

pairs of gay brothers and found that in 33 of the pairs the brothers had identical pieces of the tip of the X chromosome, which is inherited from the mother.

Under ordinary circumstances ruled by chance alone, only half of the pairs should have shared that chromosomal neighbourhood, a region designated Xq28.

The odds of Hamer's results turning up randomly are less than half a per cent, indicating that the chromosomal tip probably harbours a genetic sequence linked to the onset of the brothers' homosexuality.

Reaction to the finding has been mixed, but gay rights activists and geneticists have acknowledged that the findings warrant further investigation.

An Adelaide geneticist, Professor Grant Sutherland, of the Women's and Children's Hospital, who has a major involvement in the international project to map the human genome, said that more research was needed to confirm the findings.

"As we identify more and more genes we will undoubtedly come across ones that affect behaviour," he said.

He said any discovery of a

genetic basis for sexual preference would mean it might no longer be regarded as a psychiatric disorder which could be treated with psychotherapy.

"And it may remove any feelings of unease among parents who have gay children and think it was their fault in the way they raised them."

A gay activist and lecturer in government at the University of Sydney, Mr Lex Watson, said the research was "interesting providing it's irrelevant".

It had an upside and a downside. If it was established that sexual preference was genetic, and not a matter of choice, critics of homosexuals would no longer be able to say that homosexuals might influence young people in schools and other institutions to become gay.

"That goes out the window," he said. "The danger is if they start to say, 'Now we can do something about it'."

Mr Watson, however, said he believed it unlikely that any research would be funded in Australia that was aimed at eliminating homosexuality.

PAGE 3: Genes get credit for the way we vote.

Judges split over junkie sentencing

By KATHLEEN HICKIE

Two of the State's most senior judges disagreed yesterday over the appropriate sentences for people who commit armed robberies to feed their drug habits.

Justice Hunt, in dismissing an appeal by an armed robber against his minimum 6-year sentence, said "the citizens of this community are sick and tired of armed robberies conducted by criminals in order to feed their drug habits".

He said the legislature allowed a maximum 20-year jail sentence for the crime, which "indicates that it expects the courts to impose severe sentences for these offences" and "this court will support judges who recognise these as serious crimes and who impose heavy sentences for them".

However, Justice Kirby, the Court of Criminal Appeal's president, said the sentence should be reduced to a minimum five years for consistency because other cases suggested that it was "so high as to show error".

He said the court "should not be diverted from its legal duty by appeals to populist notions of what the court conceives the community to be 'sick and tired of'".

The appeal was dismissed by the majority decision of Justice Hunt and Justice Studdert.

Michael John Ellis, 29, was sentenced in the District Court after pleading guilty to the armed robbery of a Campbelltown credit union in 1990. He had a sawn-off rifle but no shots were fired.

The Court of Criminal Appeal heard Ellis had made a remarkable rehabilitation in jail, including beating his heroin addiction. Justice Hunt and Justice Studdert agreed that although the sentence was "heavy" it was not inappropriate.

However, Justice Kirby said courts had to consider the proper approach to sentencing drug addicts who resorted to armed robbery to fund a habit "made expensive by its illegality".

He said a large body of case law confirmed his view that the sentence was too high.



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WEATHER
TODAY Sydney: 10 to 18. Cool to mild and cloudy at times with the chance of a light shower. Liverpool: 6 to 19. NSW: Coastal showers. Early fogs inland, then sunny.
SMH 15
S/M CTRY 24
S/M METRO 21

TOMORROW Sydney: Cool to mild with showers and a maximum of 16. NSW: Isolated coastal showers. Fine over the interior of the state. FULL DETAILS 28.

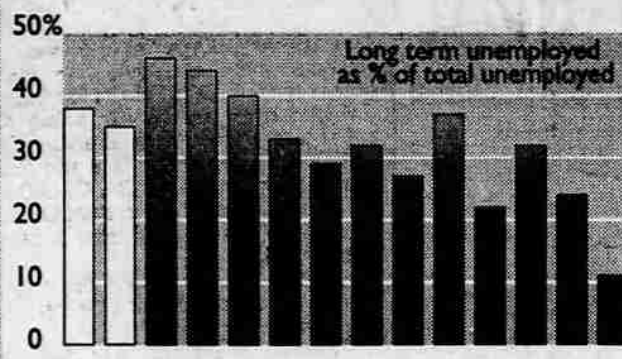
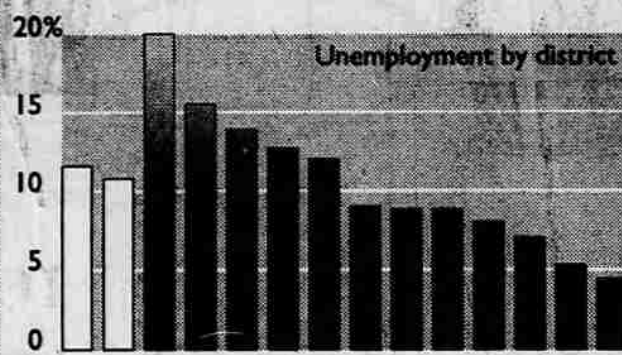
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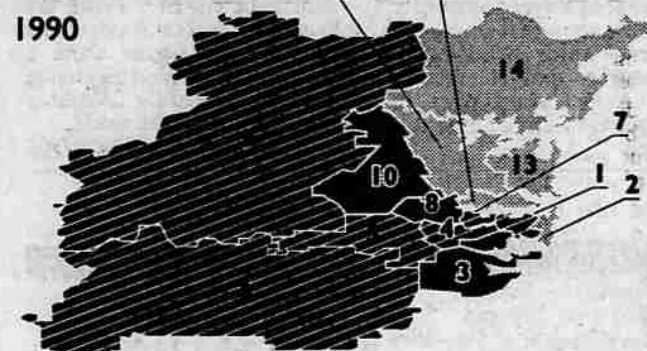
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WHERE THE UNEMPLOYED ARE



Source: ABS, March 1993.

HOW WORKLESS FAMILIES HAVE SPREAD



% of dependants aged 0-24 who do not have a working parent*

*Figures for one- and two-parent families

- 1 Inner Sydney
- 2 Eastern Suburbs
- 3 St George/Sutherland
- 4 Canterbury/Bankstown
- 5 Fairfield/Liverpool
- 6 Outer South-west
- 7 Inner Sydney
- 8 Central Western Sydney
- 9 Outer Western Sydney
- 10 Blacktown/Baulkham Hills
- 11 Lower North Shore
- 12 Hornsby/Kuring-gai
- 13 Northern beaches
- 14 Gosford/Wyong



AUSTRALIA'S UNDERCLASS

PART 1
SERIES EDITOR: MIKE STEKETEE

FRED RAHMAN is a security guard at Emerton shopping centre, 50 kilometres due west from the Sydney GPO. He doesn't stand outside the bank, where you would expect to see a security guard. He's there, with a colleague, both of them armed with batons, to catch shoplifters.

The Emerton shopping centre is modern — a small plaza with about 25 shops surrounded by a car park. It is not very big, but there's always something for Fred Rahman to do. The day before he spoke to the *Herald* the 19-year-old guard had detained a middle-aged man who had stolen two packets of Panadol. Rahman, who talked about his work with some amusement, said the man was unemployed. The people Fred Rahman detains are always unemployed.

St Vincent de Paul occupies the ground floor of a small block adjacent to the main arcade. As well as selling secondhand clothes, it deals with more than 1,000 requests for emergency assistance each week. Above it is a pawnbroker and a charismatic church. They have taken up leases in the past 12 months. Business is booming.

Across the road from the Emerton shopping centre is Mount Druitt High School, which was built in the early 1970s. A barbed-wire fence, more than two metres tall, surrounds the school. The barbed-wire is horizontal, not in the deadly serious v-shaped configuration found at other schools in the area.

Up the road at Bidwill there are just 10 shops in the arcade, but it also has a uniformed security guard, and no bank. A vacant shop next to the arcade has been burnt out, and so have the small pine-log fences in the car park.

Chronic unemployment has made west and south-west Sydney look and feel different. The people are different; the shops are different; the attitudes are different. To middle-class Australians it can seem like another country.

Shopping centres in the area are dead quiet in the morning. They don't come to life until lunchtime. As one social worker put it, if you're unemployed, there's no point in getting out of bed before 10 or 11.

□ □ □

In the United States they call it the underclass. It is a controversial label, but it means something everyone understands: black, inner-city communities of people who are born, grow up and die excluded from mainstream society, inured to poverty, prone to crime, the victims and perpetrators of violence.

In Australia things haven't quite got to that. For one thing, the poorest of the poor cannot be identified by colour. But their characteristics are becoming frighteningly similar.

There is already a significant and growing stratum of Australian society which is dependent on welfare — either the dole or sole-parent benefits. Call it a welfare society, a workless class or an underclass, it is the same thing: a large, identifiable block of the community from which an individual has little or no chance of being readmitted into the mainstream.

In Australia, as in the US, the unemployed and the unemployable are highly concentrated (in Australia they are in outer rather than inner suburbs); they often come from one-parent families headed by women; they often have serious handicaps, such as illiteracy; many are resigned to living off welfare for the rest of their lives; and unemployment is passed from generation to generation.

These characteristics are almost

No work, no hope, no escape... this is the prospect facing a growing number of Australians. Call it a welfare society, a workless class or an underclass, it is the same: a group of people excluded from mainstream, working society. It is a way of life that is now being passed down from one generation to another. **PAUL CLEARY** investigates the tragedy of our times — the human cost of the recession.

identical to those found by the leading authority on the American underclass, Professor William Julius Wilson, in his book *The Truly Disadvantaged*. Wilson, a black American academic, argues that race contributed less to the emergence of an underclass in the US than did these other factors.

Australians have become accustomed to double-digit unemployment, but that tells only half the story. The proportion of children growing up in families in which no-one works now stands at a staggering 18 per cent — about 845,000 children or almost one in five, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

Invariably, these children live in families which depend either on the dole or on sole-parent benefits for income.

When the Bureau of Statistics first put these figures together in the mid-'80s, the number was just over 400,000, or one child in 10.

Slightly more than half the 845,000 children live in two-parent families in which neither parent has a job.

The rest live in sole-parent families, of which 94 per cent are headed by females and 80 per cent are not actively seeking work. They are classified as "not in the labour force".

This disadvantage is highly concentrated. The *Herald* identified schools in western Sydney where half the children come from families in which no adult works. We found church congregations where three-quarters of the members come from such families.

The accompanying maps and table, drawn from information prepared for the *Herald* by the ABS, show how the percentage of families dependent on the dole or sole-parent benefits is now approaching 40 per cent in many parts of western Sydney.

□ □ □

In the south-western suburbs of Sydney the shops are slightly different. There are a lot of three types in particular: pawn shops, discount stores (or junk shops) and amusement parlours.

There are three pawn shops in the Mount Druitt area alone, another two at Blacktown and one at St Marys. One pawn shop owner said most of his customers came in seeking \$40 or \$50. There was always a big rush early in the week — a few days before Thursday's social security payments.

The working pattern of the pawnbroker has seen fewer fluctuations since the beginning of this year when the Government began paying the dole and

sole-parent payments one week and family allowance the next. When the Government paid both payments on the same day each fortnight, there was a mad rush of customers in the days leading up to the second Thursday.

Nonetheless, the business cycle for a pawnbroker in these parts begins on Monday with a stampede of people pawning goods, and finishes the week with about half as many redeeming their possessions. About half of the goods deposited at pawn shops is reclaimed.

Social workers say unemployed people are very bad at managing their finances. Welfare groups put a lot of resources into teaching people how to organise their budgets, often by taking them shopping.

One pawnbroker said the people who came to his store "always pulled out a concession card". The broker showed the back room of his shop to the *Herald*. The most common consumer durables were video recorders and computer games — they helped pass the time away, he said. In these areas you could hire current release videos for \$1 a night.

The store had amassed about 130 video recorders in six months, just as many TV sets, about 35 electric grass-cutters and 40 Electrolux vacuum cleaners. The broker said the Electrolux salesman did a roaring trade in this area of high welfare dependency. He could sell models on hire purchase that cost more than \$2,000. The salesman could "sell Jesus off the Cross".

But the existence of discount stores — junk shops — in these regions seems to be more psychological than financial. The best way to categorise what they sell is the word miscellaneous — nearly everything is plastic and it's all dirt cheap.

In Fairfield, the suburb with the highest unemployment rate in Australia, there are 11 such stores; in St Marys there are four; and in Blacktown there were at least four that could be identified.

Karen Ross, a pastor with the Alive Christian Church at Mount Druitt, says unemployed people spend their money on this "junk" because it makes them feel better.

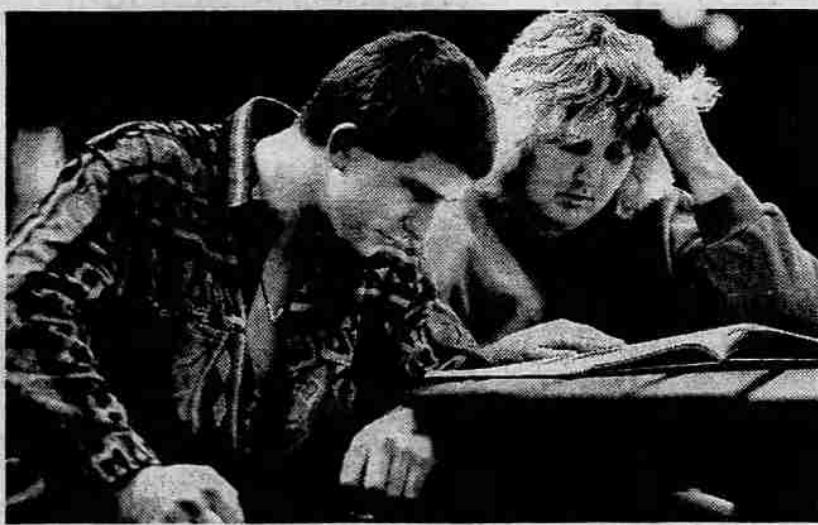
"They spend their money on lots of little things: bits and pieces," she says. "Junk shops do really well because the woman who's depressed can go and buy lots of little things; spend their money; feel good for spending it. It's the same terrible caught-in-a-rut syndrome."

□ □ □

Anyone out of work for less than a year is entitled to a Jobsearch allowance, provided he or she is making an effort to find a job. Those out of work for more than a year have to sign an agreement to undertake formal training to qualify for a Newstart allowance.

An analysis of the Newstart and Jobsearch figures shows there are now more children growing up in families where the parents have been out of work for longer than a year — the Government's definition of long-term unemployment — than those in families who have been without a job for less than 12 months.

A vicious circle



Living with illiteracy... Gloria Swift and Michael. Picture by KYUE PICKETT

WHEN Gloria Swift goes shopping, she looks for the pictures on the labels. Unable to read or write, it may be the only way she can distinguish a bottle of detergent from a bottle of cordial.

Swift, 40, is a sole parent with five children. Three of them have serious reading problems, and two of these go to a special literacy centre, which she also attends.

The family is part of a debilitating cycle of illiteracy and unemployment: it is a cycle that is passing from generation to generation.

Swift's 19-year-old son, Michael, has been unable to hold down a job since leaving school at 14. She describes him as "a bum" with "no hope" of getting a job, although she recently persuaded him to take literacy classes.

Swift began attending classes last October, and now has a goal as a result of taking this step. Learning to read will be "a slow process", but she aims to get back into the workforce for the first time in 20 years. Her 10-year-old son, Wayne, also attends the centre.

She has learned to live with illiteracy. Swift has a car and can find Continued page 42

Keith Lord

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