

Sydney's water safe

SYDNEY'S water supply is safe despite high levels of metals and salt in a river feeding it, the catchment authority insists.

University of Western Sydney research has found high levels of arsenic, copper and boron in the Coss River, near Wallerawang power station west of Lithgow.

Despite the pollution concerns, Sydney Catchment Authority spokeswoman Alison White said yesterday the city's water supply complied with Australian testing guidelines and posed no danger.

"We have been aware of community concerns about water quality in the upstream area," Ms White said. "Our water quality monitoring... shows conclusively that there is no problem with the water quality downstream."

Chaps thin on grounds

THE majority of nursing home residents are women who are likely to be over 85, widowed and on a government pension, a new report shows.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare report looked at aged care services over the 2007-08 financial year.

Of the 160,250 residents at the end of June last year, 98 per cent were permanent residents and more than half of those were 85 years or older.

Women made up more than 70 per cent of residents and were, on average, older than the men.

Sixty per cent were 85 or older, compared to 40 per cent of men.

A high proportion of residents received a government pension. About 25 per cent of residents were born overseas.

Kids' TV by Christmas

ABC TV will launch its new digital channel in time for Christmas, featuring dedicated children's programming for 15 hours a day.

The new channel, ABC3, will be aimed at 6 to 15-year-olds, with a focus on 8 to 12-year-olds.

Programming will start daily at 6am and continue ad-free until 9pm, with comedy, drama, sport, music, wildlife and quiz shows.

"ABC3 is the newest kid on the block in the world of Australian television," ABC director of television Kim Dalton said yesterday.

"This channel is about information, it's about having fun.

"We're describing it as a Christmas present to the nation, so it will be unwrapped in the lead-up to Christmas."

The Government has provided \$67 million over three years.

No-show Rees in Budget reply snub

Simon Benson
State Political Editor

PREMIER Nathan Rees has been accused of being petty and mean-spirited in an unprecedented snub of Opposition Leader Barry O'Farrell's Budget reply speech yesterday.

Only two of Mr Rees' Labor MPs turned up for the Liberal leader's speech, breaking the traditional courtesy of having Government members present.

The embarrassing snub prompted Labor MP Phil Koperberg to apolo-

gise to Mr O'Farrell for the absence of Labor MPs, including the Premier.

Two Labor MPs, Richard Amery and Ninos Koshaba, sat in the chamber for part of the speech.

"With only 54 sitting days in the year you think they could turn up occasionally," Mr O'Farrell said.

"It doesn't offend me personally but it's an insult to the Parliament and the community it represents."

The Opposition was forced to move MPs to fill the Government benches to avoid having the chamber appear empty on television.

Mr O'Farrell said that on becoming premier he would ensure all members of his government attended Parliament — out of courtesy — for the opposition leader's reply.

Mr Rees said that he had "far more important" things to do than be present for the Opposition reply.

Mr O'Farrell called the Government's Budget a fraud and declared that he would scrap Mr Rees' plan for a CBD metro and divert funds to restore plans for a northwest and southwest rail line.

"I call on the Premier not to bind

taxpayers into an irresponsible contract without appropriate termination provisions," Mr O'Farrell said.

The Coalition has also vowed to establish a new infrastructure body made up of independent specialists along the lines of Infrastructure Australia. It would be established within the first six months of a Coalition government and would report directly to the premier.

Was Labor wrong to snub Mr O'Farrell's speech?
dailytelegraph.com.au



Slip, slop, slap song not a whale hit

Injured: This humpback whale with a skin condition may have sunburn, according to experts from Southern Cross University's Whale Research Centre

Malcolm Holland

TOO much time in the sun is as bad for whales as it is for humans.

Experts believe this humpback seen off Port Macquarie last week is displaying signs of severe sunburn.

The white areas are where the skin has gone, exposing the blubber, centimetres thick, underneath.

"It's very likely this whale has

become stranded in shallow water for some time with its back out of the water and exposed to direct sunlight," Southern Cross University Whale Research Centre's Wally Franklin said yesterday.

"It could have been stuck on a sandbank. Their skin contains a huge concentration of oils, which dry out quickly under the sun. It's seen in dolphins and other whales too.

Mr Franklin said whales have an amazing ability to deal with injuries.

"They can stop the blood supply to the area where there is damage and we think this has evolved as a way to deal with shark attacks — You don't want to be trailing blood," he said.

"It helps them with sunburn and traumatic boat strike. "They are swimming in a warm saline bath, which is good for the skin."

Mr Franklin said the whale seemed healthy despite appearances.

■ AUSTRALIA and New Zealand will send a research ship to the Southern Ocean to study Antarctic whales early next year and they won't kill a single creature doing it.

The Antarctic Whale Expedition yesterday said it would conduct six weeks of research on NZ's boat RV Tangaroa.

Feed your inner foodie



This year's Show is a celebration of good food, good wine & great times! See Gordon Ramsay* and other celebrity chefs demonstrate live. It's like Sydney's biggest gourmet deli, most fascinating kitchen shops and award winning cellar doors — and it's all waiting for you to enjoy!

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Call Ticketek on 13 28 49 or book online. Quote 'TELEGRAPH' when booking to be in the draw to win a \$1000 gourmet food & wine hamper.

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