

Rudd talks up stimulus

PRIME Minister Kevin Rudd has told US television network CNN that the immediate withdrawal of financial stimulus from the global economy would be "misplaced".

Mr Rudd is in New York for a climate change-focused session of the United Nations General Assembly, before heading to Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, for the Group of 20 (G20) developed and developing nations meeting later this week.

He told CNN that the Federal Government's stimulus packages and infrastructure investment

PM tells CNN cash boosts are 'critical'

had insulated Australia from the worst of the global financial crisis.

"We've managed to be the only economy across the OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development) in the last 12 months to have generated positive growth ... the only one to stay out of recession so far, the second-lowest unemployment, the lowest debt, the lowest deficit," he told his

American audience.

But Mr Rudd admitted local unemployment would continue to rise.

"We are injecting large amounts of stimulus because we believe the maintenance of jobs ... is critical, not just to human decency but critical also in terms of the path to economic recovery," he said.

Mr Rudd called for global actions - such as halting major

outbreaks of protectionism - to continue if worldwide economic stability was to be restored.

"Premature calls for the withdrawal of stimulus, which you hear elsewhere around the world, I think are misplaced in terms of the challenges which still lie ahead," he said.

Mr Rudd outlined two major talking points for the Pittsburgh meetings including a new sustainable growth model.

"To begin among us all to discuss and to deliberate on and to agree on a framework for co-ordinated withdrawal of these emergency measures over time," he said.

"And secondly ... we need a new sustainable growth model for the future, otherwise we may be looking at the prospect of flat global growth for a while to come."

Mr Rudd said he was confident that global agreement could be reached on these issues.

"There is robust spirit of co-operation," he said.

Northern Aus also short on water: study

DESPITE a popular perception northern Australia is water-rich, the region is actually water-limited and faces serious storage problems, a study shows.

Researchers from the CSIRO have found that northern Australia has little or no rain for three to six months of the year, while water loss via evaporation is very high.

More than 94 per cent of annual rainfall occurs between November and April, while there is little or no rain at all during a three to six month period.

The research covered an area of 1.2 million square kilometres from Broome in Western Australia to Cairns in Queensland.

During a few months in the wet season, daily rainfall can exceed potential evaporation, and this drives the seasonal streamflow, the study showed.

But it says that on an annual basis, rainfall is insufficient to meet evaporative demand and the landscape may be described as water-limited.

The CSIRO's Tom Hatton said while it would get worse, the problem of water availability in northern Australia won't be as bad as in other parts.

"We're going to have less rain than we've had in the last 10 years but it's not going to be the dire situation that's predicted for the Murray-Darling Basin," he said.

ABC denies poll was manipulated

THE ABC has rejected suggestions that Triple J's Hottest 100 poll was manipulated or that it tried to censor a story on the countdown.

A report in *The Australian* newspaper says insiders at the public broadcaster expected a story about the iconic countdown to go to air on radio show *Hack* on Monday night, but it was pulled at the last minute.

The reporters allegedly analysed the voting, and found a different outcome to the final list.

The story reportedly questioned whether voting had been manipulated by CD sales, after this year's list contained no female artists and the absence of big names like Bob Dylan.

ABC's head of radio Kate Dundas rejected the accusations, saying the story fell apart because the reporters were using an algorithm based on data which was missing more than 10 per cent of the votes.

Family vows to find killer

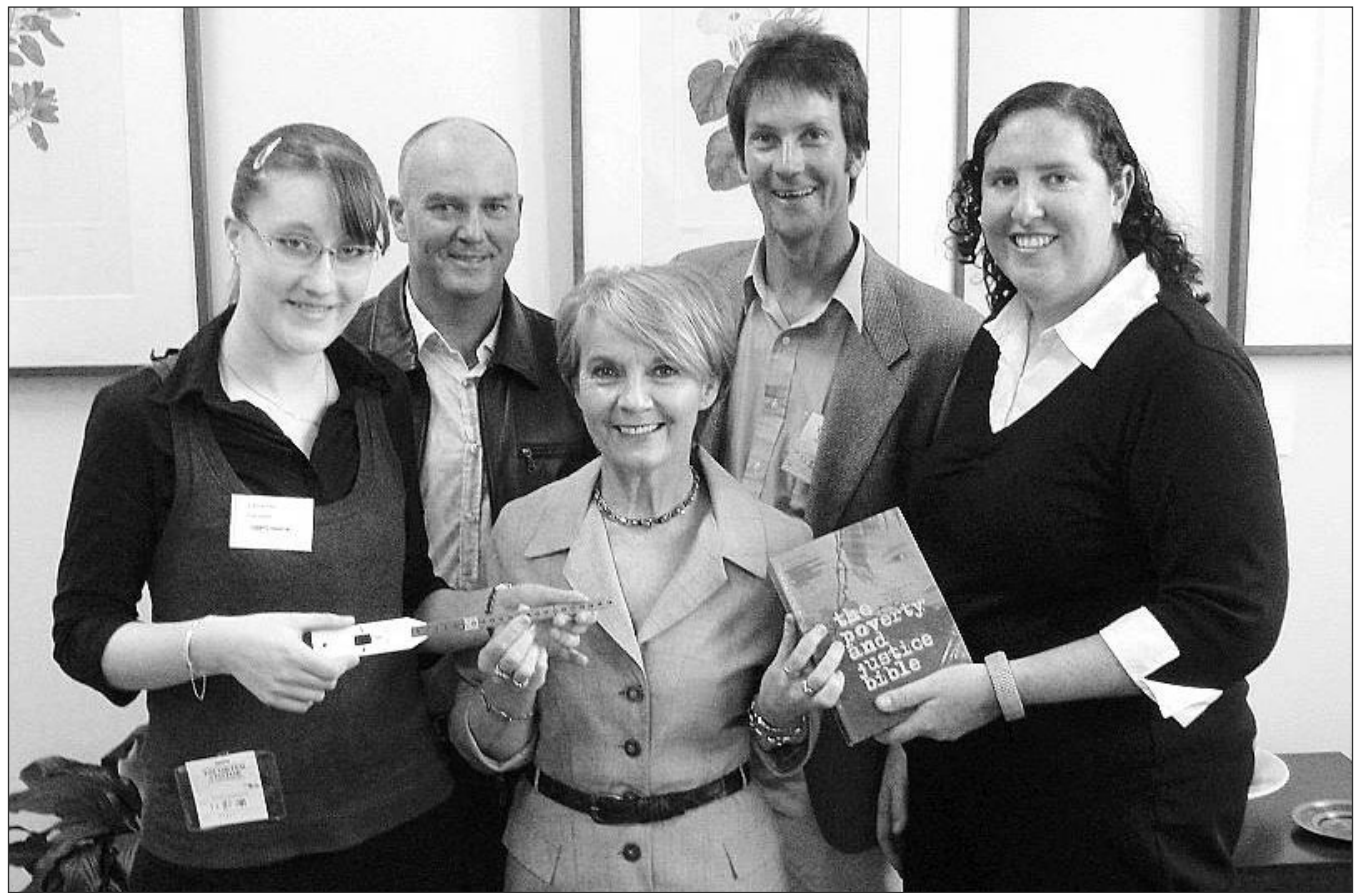
THE family of a woman who disappeared eight years ago from Bathurst in central western NSW has vowed to continue the fight to solve her murder.

State Coroner Mary Jerram concluded yesterday that Janine Vaughan, 31, was murdered but the circumstances of her death remained a mystery because "the trail has

gone cold".

"The only available conclusion is that Janine Vaughan disappeared ... and that she was murdered by person or persons unknown and her body disposed of in such a way that it has not been found," Ms Jerram said.

Ms Vaughan vanished from Bathurst in the early hours of December 7, 2001.



CAMPAIGNING: Caroline Faulder, Greg Trainor, Member for Riverina Kay Hull, James Wood and Natalie Oliver visited Parliament House in Canberra to share their concerns about global poverty as part of the Micah Challenge campaign.

Poverty campaigners meet MPs

NOT many Australians have the chance to walk the nation's corridors of power, but this group of four average, everyday Australians met with MPs in Parliament House, Canberra last week to share their concerns about global poverty.

Caroline Faulder, Greg Trainor, James Wood and Natalie Oliver were in Canberra as part of 'Voices for Justice', a gathering of supporters of the Micah Challenge campaign.

The event has brought together hundreds of campaigners from around the nation who want to see the government act on issues of extreme poverty, and are calling on world leaders to fulfil their commitments to the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

The group met with Member for Riverina, Kay Hull. Mrs Hull shared an interest in HIV/AIDS issues, particularly on how it can affect the Australian-Pacific region. Mrs Hull also raised issues of food protection

and security.

Voices for Justice helped participants see that they have a part to play in affecting the decisions of our leaders.

The Micah Challenge campaign is a global movement of aid and development agencies, churches, schools, groups and individuals who want to deepen their engagement with poor communities and influence world leaders to meet their commitments to the MDGs.

- Laura Suckling

Pregnant women being dismissed: watchdog

SOME employers are unlawfully sacking pregnant women while they are on maternity leave, the workplace watchdog says.

Ombudsman Natalie James, who investigates discrimination claims under the new Fair Work Act, says she is concerned about the number of women in this position.

"Our early cases suggest some employers are attempting to avoid their obligations to women when they return to work after the birth of a child," she told a workforce conference in Melbourne yesterday.

Ms James spoke about one case

in which a female employee was reluctantly granted maternity leave by her employer after she questioned his legal obligation to do so.

Eight months into her leave, the woman was told her position was no longer available despite being advertised.

"We investigated this matter and after explaining to the employer his responsibilities ... the case has now been successfully resolved," Ms James said.

The agency of the fair work ombudsman deals with about 30 calls a week from workers who believe they have been discriminated against.

Study raises questions over shelf-life of blood

QUESTIONS have been raised over the shelf-life of blood, after a study found the risk of death was almost double in trauma patients given a transfusion stored for more than a month.

The accepted global standard surrounding the use of blood was that it be less than 42 days old, but the US research has raised concerns that blood well within this storage time carried an increased risk.

Commenting on the study, Australian Red Cross Blood Service (RCBS) says it already had a "last in, first out" policy for the way blood was used in the nation's hospitals.

"The Red Cross Blood Service earlier this year made some changes to its distribution policy so that the freshest products were the first to be used," RCBS spokeswoman Kathy Bowlen said.

"The RCBS closely monitors international research concerning blood and implements changes as required, we are in a constant state of review."

Ms Bowlen said the RCBS was yet to review the research, which will be published today in the journal *Critical Care*.