

# OPINION

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## EDITORIAL

### Thai rescue a lesson in what a world united can achieve

Here's to some much-needed good news. The life-affirming tale of the international mission to rescue 12 Thai boys and their soccer coach from a flooded cave has rightly captured the world's attention. At a time when we face so much uncertainty and angst about local and global events, this episode provides a moment's welcome relief.

The story of the team's stranding in the cave and rescue is being hailed as a miracle.

But we should be clear that these boys were saved thanks to a prompt international response, bringing together governments and experts from around the globe united in a single purpose.

The team's survival and rescue was the result of the brilliant professionalism, courage and skill of the rescue team.

Though the boys were Thai and the Thai Navy Seals took the lead, experts from Australia, the US, China, Britain, Israel and a long list of other nations played key roles.

This global team of divers took daunting risks, swimming far underground in complete darkness and clambering through tight choke points — the mere thought of which would give most of us nightmares.

This risk was underlined when one of the volunteers, retired Thai Navy Seal Petty Officer First Class Saman Kunan, died after running out of oxygen deep inside the cave complex.

The 12 boys, aged 11 to 16 and their 25-year-old coach entered the Tham Luan Nang Non cave complex on June 23. They were stranded in a small pocket for 10 days before being discovered.

To get them out, the international diving team needed to lead the boys — none of whom were strong swimmers — through 4km of dark and narrow passages, some completely submerged.

It was an 11-hour round trip for divers to get in and out of the labyrinth.

Driving rains pushing huge volumes of water into the caves heaped yet more pressure on rescuers, forcing them to bring their plans forward.

Despite it all, they triumphed.

Now the full scope of the Australian involvement in the rescue is becoming clear.

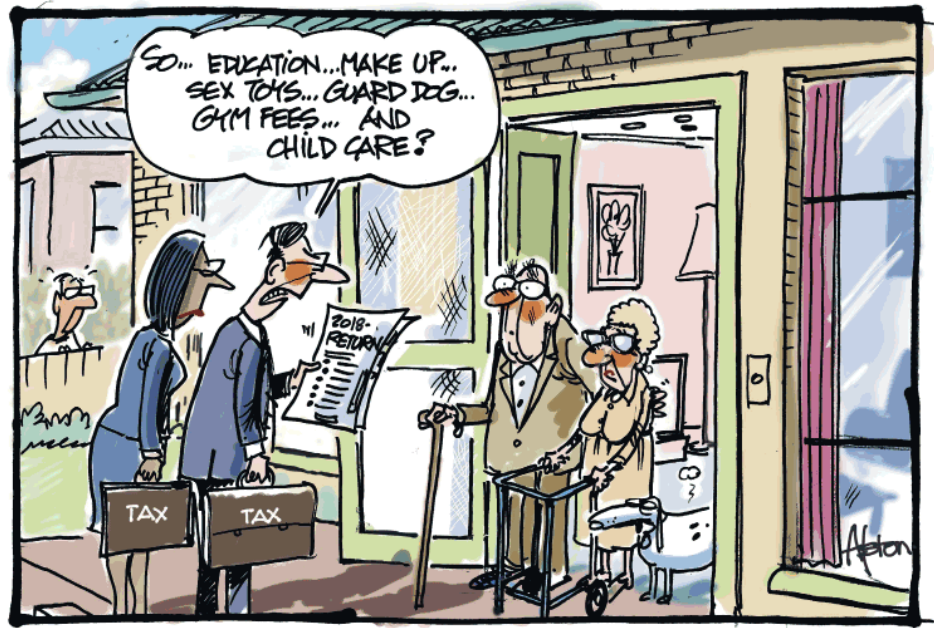
It was an Australian doctor, Richard Harris, who was one of the last men out of the cave after the rescue on Tuesday night.

On getting out, Dr Harris learnt his father had died back in Adelaide.

His dive partner in the rescue was Craig Challen, a former veterinarian from WA.

A quiet professional, he is said to be among the best cave divers in the world.

The story of the rescue of the Wild Boar soccer team will rightly continue to fascinate. And it will serve to remind us that when the world pulls together, great things can be achieved.



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## Workplace predators must be called out

■ Gary Martin

The recent announcement that Sex Discrimination Commissioner Kate Jenkins would lead a national inquiry into sexual harassment in Australian workplaces is long overdue.

According to Ms Jenkins, that inquiry will involve an in-depth examination of sexual harassment in the workplace and include an opportunity for employees, employers and members of the public to work towards developing a solution to ensure Australian workplaces are both safe and respectful for everyone.

It's now more than 30 years since the Sex Discrimination Act came into force which many believed would heal the scourge of sexual harassment and exploitation in the Australian community and our workplaces.

The Act covers myriad inappropriate and often repugnant behaviours including leering, unwelcome physical touching, suggestive comments or jokes, unwanted requests for sex, along with criminal activities such as sexual assault.

Yet despite strong measures to outlaw sexual harassment, and a heightened awareness of it, pundits argue that sexual harassment in our community remains rife.

With the results of the Australian Human Rights Commission's 2018 fourth National Workplace Sexual Harassment Survey due next month, many in the community will be bracing themselves.

In fact, Ms Jenkins has reported that early indications are that rates have increased significantly since the last



Sexual harassment in the workplace remains rife. Illustration: Don Lindsay

survey in 2012. Although the 12-month inquiry is most welcome and represents a meteoric step in the right direction, most experts will agree that at least part of the solution is staring us in the face.

Just like authorities rely on all community members to be the "eyes and ears of the street" to combat crime, we need every community member to summon up the courage to expose those who have sexually harassed others.

Just think about it for a moment. The many bystanders who have observed sexual harassment and not taken any action have given offenders unlimited continuing authority to execute their abhorrent behaviours.

They have, albeit unwittingly in most instances, contributed to embedding a culture of depravity in our workplaces.

Here's the rub: evidence is mounting to suggest most bystanders do not take action.

Many onlookers have their reasons

for not reporting sexual harassment. They might be ignorant as to exactly which behaviours constitute sexual harassment, fear that they will be the subject of reprisal, or feel that those in leadership positions will not act on their complaints.

It's time to change that. Those in leadership positions must increasingly make it clear what actions or behaviours constitute sexual harassment.

Leaders, at all levels, need to increase awareness that sexual harassment is not acceptable, and they must encourage all bystanders to take action if this scourge is to be reduced and eventually eradicated.

It goes without saying that any leader rejecting these responsibilities is akin to being an architect of a decaying Australian community.

Onlookers, let's not wait 12 months for the inquiry to deliver its findings: let's step up and expose predators now.

■ Professor Gary Martin is chief executive, the Australian Institute of Management WA.