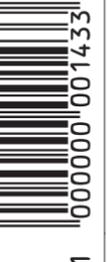




Working to live, or living to work? pg 7 ▶



## Heaters for dogs, but not for people at Hal Far detention centre

RAPHAEL VASSALLO

RESIDENTS at the tent compound inside Hal Far's closed detention centre have nothing but a blanket apiece to keep them warm, as the weather fore-

have been adopted by the soldiers – warming itself in the glow of an electric heater.

Five minutes later, I find myself in a dark, freezing tent together with some 30 immigrants from various parts of Africa. There is no heating of any kind. Nor is there any hot water in the communal bathroom nearby. And while electricity is provided, the set-up is so basic – and the tents themselves so severely waterlogged – that residents live at permanent risk of electrocution.

"Shock," one Ghanaian man says, pointing at the wiring as it snakes through a puddle on the floor. "Shock all the time..."

This situation is greatly aggravated by the fact that several of the occupants are either barefoot, or wearing only socks.

"What do you do when it rains?" I ask: and as if on cue, the sky outside darkens and rain suddenly lashes the outside of the tent. Within seconds, rainwater seeps in from all an-

cast indicates showers and temperatures of around 15°C over the Christmas period.

But the same cannot be said for dogs housed in another part of the facility. As I step into the Lyster Barracks reception area for a rare press visit last Friday, the first thing I see is in fact a dog – one of several strays to

gles, and very soon everything inside is sodden wet.

These are the general living conditions at the tent compound at Lyster Barracks: one of several isolated areas to have been converted into a living quarters for a section of the 1,000+ immigrants currently in detention.

pg 9 ▶



## THERE IS A LIGHT THAT NEVER GOES OUT

A friendly encounter between Prime Minister Lawrence Gonzi and Gejtu Mercieca, the deputy secretary-general of the General Workers Union, at yesterday's Christmas drinks for the constituted bodies at Castille. While Gonzi hailed his government's efforts towards consultation and called on unions to accept that reforms were essential, the GWU was still spearheading a call for Gonzi to go back to consultation on the hiked utility tariffs (see page 5). Also yesterday, the Labour party accused Gonzi of 'playing for time' on the tariffs, saying the prime minister wanted to reap all the revenue possible from the new tariffs before cutting them once again right before the European Parliament elections in June (see page 3)

Merry Christmas to all our readers!

## HERCEPTIN ARRIVES, FINALLY

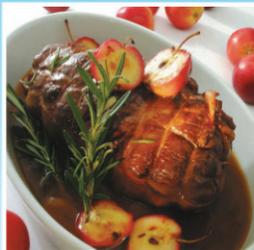
A wonderful Christmas present, as cancer patients get their first free dose today

pg 4 ▶



## Loads of goodies to celebrate the season!

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Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year!

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