

## ***Contribution to SMH "The Heckler"***

### **My Bloody Problem**

Heckler is about what makes one's blood boil. I'm not sure whether my blood does boil, because the blood bank refuses to collect it from me.

As I get older, more of my friends need blood transfusions. I would like to contribute to the blood bank – a great Aussie institution – but, despite my best efforts, I cannot.

I have a fear of needles – it's as simple as that. Most of us harbour a phobia of some sort. Every time I try to give blood I am turned away, and usually told not to return.

At school when they administered compulsory inoculations, I had strong friends in front of and behind me. After they bared their manly biceps without flinching, they carried me to the quad and laughed until I recovered.

When the blood truck came to the first factory I worked in, I told the nurse, "If you give me that lolly, you will have to get it out of my throat if I faint." She did, and told me not to bother coming again.

When I took my young son to the doctor – a locum, not the regular GP – he said the boy needed an injection. My little son ended up looking after his shame-faced Dad.

On the day of the fateful Granville train disaster, everyone in the office rolled up their sleeves and went down the road to the blood bank. I was left to answer the phones. When I tentatively went down a while later, they took one look at me and said no.

I gave up for a while but had a spell in hospital some years later. I became better at being a pin-cushion and figured I was then on top of needle-phobia, so I made an appointment with the blood bank. I got up early, ate breakfast and drank lots of water, but promptly threw it all up. I turned up, trembling and some pale shade of green. I was told, "Go home, go to bed, and please don't come back."

It took years to get them to stop sending letters asking me to give blood. I spoke to Red Cross people by phone, letter and email – lovely, interested and caring people.

I have suggested a special time for people like me to donate. I have offered to contribute the extra cost of being a difficult patient – to pay to donate my own blood!

The blood bank is a wonderful, egalitarian, typically Australian institution. People contribute if they wish to, and others withdraw if they need to – all without cost to recipients or benefit to contributors.

Surely there must be a way for us bloody wimps to contribute to this great system.