

All work and no

play as Aussies don't go on holiday

# Have we forgotten how to enjoy life?

AUSTRALIANS are turning into unhealthy hoarders – of their holidays.

While many people will take a break this Christmas, almost a third of us plan no leave over the next year, and the average Australian is taking fewer days off than they did last year.

Travel company Expedia this week released figures which put Australians among the most holiday-deprived people in the developed world.

The study found Australians were taking 15 days annual leave a year – 1.5 days less than they did last year – while the French, who take the most holidays each year, were enjoying an average of 30 work-free days.

Australians blamed uncertain economic times and tightened purse-strings for not taking leave.

According to psychologist and life coach, Darryl Cross, the result is that we are risking our health.

"It's a bit like a car engine, but you are a more sophisticated example," Dr Cross said.

"If you are really

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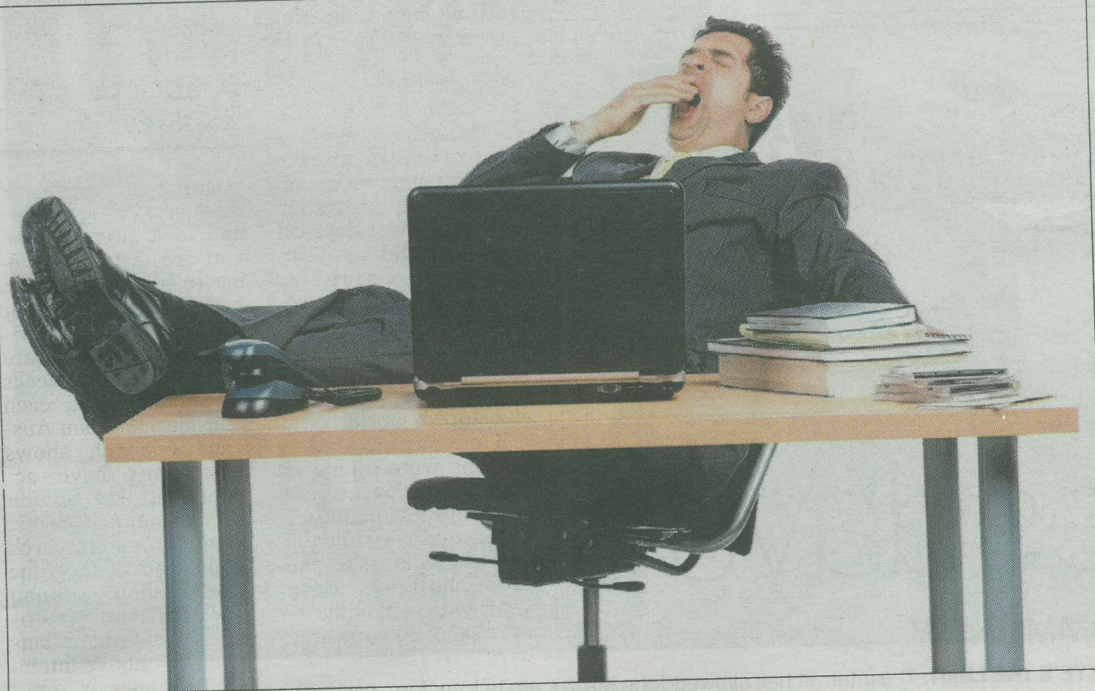
pushing it hard and don't service the engine and look after the car, you are eventually going to blow the motor. "It's the same for you."

Most Australians are entitled to four weeks of annual leave each year, but Tourism Australia research shows Australians have accumulated 129 million days of annual leave.

Roy Morgan research to the end of the June quarter shows around 12.4 million (two-thirds) of Australians aged 14 or above intend to take at least one holiday during the next year – down 2 per cent on June 2010.

That leaves another third of Aussies who could be risking their health.

It wasn't all bad news – the research also shows the intention of Australians to take an overseas holiday is at an all-time high, with 10 per cent planning to pack their bags and



**OVERDUE BREAK:** A study has found almost a third of all Australians have no holidays planned for next year.

head across the oceans.

Dr Cross said even planning a holiday was beneficial.

"It's really good for your psyche to have a holiday planned in advance," he said.

"If something is within the six-month window you can work towards that, but if you don't have any leave planned at all it becomes a problem, because other things in your life tend to drag you down more easily."

Dr Cross said the ideal block of leave was four weeks – a week to begin relaxing and wind down and two weeks to enjoy yourself before work creeps back into

your mind during the fourth week.

"Anything under four weeks tends not to provide the rejuvenation that you would find is necessary," he said.

For the most benefit, holidays should be free of hassles from the office. Dr Cross said real down-time means an escape from work-related phone calls and emails.

Also important to remember is that a break is not really a period of refreshment and rejuvenation for the body and mind without slowing down your pace, he said.

"Holidays are meant to be a change of pace, where you actually do

slow down. Some people will go overseas and come back exhausted because they travelling around trying to see as much as they can and not relaxing."

The period over Christmas and New Years is also the perfect time to start planning your next holiday, Dr Cross said.

"It's not making New Year's resolutions but sitting down with pen and paper thinking about the various aspirations you have for your health, finances, career, sport, recreation and social life.

"Most people will spend more time planning their weekend bar-

becue than they will planning their life."

Tourism Australia this weekend will launch season three of the *No Leave No Life* television series – their latest bid to encourage Aussies to use accumulated annual leave for trips in Australia.

Tourism Minister Martin Ferguson hoped the program, which airs on Channel 7 tonight, would be a reminder for Aussies to think locally.

"*No Leave No Life* is a reminder to consider using the Christmas break to rest and relax and spend time with friends and family closer to home," he said.