

LETTER FROM CANBERRA

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Another Seasonal Edition



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Letter From Canberra is a monthly public affairs bulletin, a simple précis, distilling and interpreting public policy and government decisions, which affect business opportunities in Victoria and Australia.

Written for the regular traveller, or people with meeting-filled days, it's more about business opportunities than politics.

Letter from Canberra is independent. It's not party political or any other political. It does not have the imprimatur of government at any level.

The only communication tool of its type, Letter from Canberra keeps subscribers abreast of recent developments in the policy arena on a local, state and federal level.

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Letter from Canberra

A monthly digest of news from around Australia.
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About the editor

Alistair Urquhart, BA LLB

Alistair Urquhart graduated from the Australian National University in Canberra, in Law, History and Politics. He may even hold the record for miles rowed on Lake Burley Griffin.

He was admitted as a barrister and solicitor to the Supreme Court of Victoria, and remains a (non-practicing) member of the Law Institute of Victoria. Previously, he graduated from high school in Bethesda, Maryland, and had many opportunities to become aware of the workings of Washington D.C.

For 30 years, he listened every Sunday evening to the late Alistair Cooke and his *Letter from America*. Alistair's early career was mostly in the coal industry, where he became involved with energy, environmental and water issues, and later in the SME finance sector.

He found time to be involved in a range of community activities where he came to understand some of the practical aspects of dealing with government and meeting people across the political spectrum. He now chairs a large disability employment service, including its British operations.

About the publisher

Affairs of State

Established in 1993, is an independent Australian public affairs firm with contemporary international connections. Affairs of State provides a matrix of professional tools to multinational businesses, professional and industry associations, government agencies, pressure groups, NGOs and community causes in Australia and abroad.

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Editor enjoying coffee at
Newmarket Saleyards with friends

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EDITORIAL

Your Editor, believe it or not, is not a great footy fan or any other sport for that matter, despite the Football Charts that his firm distribute, with the chosen AFL or similar, team of Federal and Victorian parliamentarians. If you do not have one as the Season has started, please contact the Editor. He always barracks for Geelong, as he grew up there, except when Essendon is playing, which is where his father had had his earlier years. So the Game at the MCG last weekend had Essendon and Geelong both on 41 points at half time. 'Twas a good game until half time, then Geelong only with difficulty kicked some serious goals, not too many, and lots of points. And went on to win.

The Essendon supporters left the ground with a certain sense of pride, that they had really given one of the top teams a real challenge. One supporter threw an Essendon scarf at the Editor, the first he has ever worn. There is more to come out of the Governance of the Essendon Club by others in recent times. Give us Time!

And now we have another Election season, without really knowing how long each side has to kick their goals before the siren sounds. Even the timekeeper does not know when to blow whichever whistle.

As at 5 April, The Opposition lead Shorten was ahead of Prime Minister Turnbull in a Newspan for its erratic economic policies or messaging, with perhaps three months to go until an election in particular tax indecisiveness where it almost felt like he was polling the Australian electorate to find out what they liked, it 'aint taxes'!

The FEATURE item of this Season is about how the Australian Constitution has clauses which can change the way legislation can pass through the Parliament.

The other FEATURE item is the Senate not passing the legislation, which would have given large trucking companies and unions control of individual truck owners.

Cover The Seasons have only just started, AFL and the Federal Game. The green oval that you see is early in the Game, when Essendon and Geelong are kick for kick and point for point before the half time mark. Then the Cats went on to win, but under heavy pressure. Behind the sporting fence, ongoing questions are being followed up about the treatment of Essendon.

Thoughtful Reading...

FEATURE ITEM 1

Australian Parliament prorogued by Clause 5.
David Russell, public policy consultant

It is looking ever more likely that a federal election will be held on 2 July 2016 after Prime Minister Turnbull wrote to the Governor General on 21 March and sought to invoke section 5 of the Australian Constitution. Section 5 says:

The Governor-General may appoint such times for holding the sessions of the Parliament as he thinks fit, and may also from time to time, by Proclamation or otherwise, prorogue the Parliament, and may in like manner dissolve the House of Representatives.

Acting on the advice of the Prime Minister, Governor General Sir Peter Cosgrove prorogued Parliament effective from 15 April 2016 and authorised a recall for a new session of Parliament for 18 April 2016.

The full focus of the new session will be on the passing or failure of the controversial Australian Building and Construction Commission Bills in the Senate.

Prime Minister Turnbull has effectively challenged the Opposition and cross bench Senators to pass the ABCC bills or face a double dissolution of Parliament. It is an ultimatum.

If the ABCC bills are rejected twice by the Senate the constitutional grounds for a double dissolution are available for both houses of Parliament and an election at which all Senate and House of Representative seats could be spilled.

The Budget session has also been bought forward to 3 May.

But what does it all mean?

For the man in the street unaccustomed to following Parliamentary procedure and constitutional law the language can be confusing.

Prorogue means:

"All things come to an end—that is, all business on the Notice Paper lapses. Provision exists for the resumption in a new session, under certain conditions, of proceedings on bills which lapse by reason of prorogation"

Some commentators have described the prorogue as the equivalent of rebooting a computer, or using an older analogy; the slate is wiped clean and a new session of Parliament can commence.

This provision to prorogue has been used sparingly to stop and restart Parliament over the past 50 years; once in 1968 following the disappearance of Prime Minister Harold Holt, in 1970 by a Coalition Government, by the Whitlam Government to facilitate the opening of a new Parliament by Queen Elizabeth in 1974 and in 1977 at the conclusion of the term of the Whitlam government by Governor General Sir John Kerr.

The effect of the prorogue is to end the session of Parliament, remove all bills from the agenda and usually works along with a dissolution of the House of Representatives towards meeting the constitutional arrangements for a forthcoming election.

As Lenore Taylor writing for The Guardian commented on this initiative by Prime Minister Turnbull;

"the prime minister has effectively pressed control-alt-delete. On the entire parliament. The reboot is intended to make him look decisive and put the policy debate back

under some semblance of government control."

On this occasion it also works together with the prospect of a double dissolution of the Senate to create the circumstances where an election could be held on 2 July 2016.

Double dissolutions are also not all that common and occur with some complicating factors surrounding the term of office of the Senators. However, right now with the recently amended voting system for preference vote counting in a Senate election, there is a strong incentive for the Coalition Government to seek a double dissolution.

In the event of a double dissolution (all seats in both houses) the Coalition Government would be hoping it will be returned to Government and win a majority in the Senate under **the new voting rules** which should mitigate against micro parties using preference deals to manage a quota from a very low base of first preference votes. i.e. Senator Ricky Muir of the Australian Motoring Enthusiasts Party in the last election.

Matters of Constitutional interpretation are complex and confusing for the public, not many study the constitution. Therefore, there is some public misapprehension and mistrust of these politically strategic decisions, to say the least.

There has been some political commentary saying that by using section 5 the Coalition Government is "tricky". Because most voters are not across the Australian Constitution and the Electoral Act taking this route does imply for some a strategic manipulation, but Constitutional experts agree that using section 5 is valid and unlikely to be challenged.

If the new session of Parliament leads to a double dissolution, it is not without risk for the Government. The quota of votes required for a Senate candidate to succeed in a double dissolution election is reduced to 7.67%. (One thirteenth of 100% of votes divided equals 7.67%). In half Senate elections the quota is 14.29%. Some smaller parties may be advantaged in a double dissolution election under the new rules, for example Senator Nick Xenophon and his running mates in South Australia are more likely to add to the one seat won last election.

How will it all pan out, is it a gamble of long odds and high stakes? Will this strategy back fire on the Government? We can only wait and see what happens after 18 April when the Senate is scheduled to sit again in a new session. For more information; see the following: **Commentators to follow**

For some different perspectives on this issue and the election try: Antony Green at the ABC,

Chasing the Facts

This year Letter from Melbourne will have a regular feature on an area of public policy, focusing on the particular facts of an issue or circumstance. For example, South Australian Energy sources. Victoria's water resources. Public servant numbers in Victoria, where are they all. All details that Professor Google and others can provide. However, we write this magazine for very busy people, who have particular professional or business or personal or community interests so that is just a Quik Flick Through for these people, perhaps a little bit more.

Peter Van Onselen of The Australian and Lenore Taylor of The Guardian.

The Prime Minister's Letter

The Prime Ministers letter to the Governor General, advice provided by the Attorney General and the reply of the Governor General is available on the internet. It is actually an interesting read. See below:

<https://www.gg.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/gg/2016/Documents%20relating%20to%20prorogation%20of%20the%20Parliament%2021%20March%202016.pdf>

Or use google to search.

ELECTION DATE 2 July as we go to press.

FEATURE ITEM 2

Government moves to repeal Truck Safety & Remuneration Tribunal Act

We have been puzzled as to why this has taken so long to come to a head since the change of Government the other year. However a Repeal Bill was passed in the Lower House and the Senate. Owner Driver Truckies demonstrated their support for abolition of the Road Safety and Remuneration Tribunal (RSRT) on 17 April with a convoy of big rigs driving to Canberra and circumnavigating Parliament House.

The action of Government to repeal the RSRT legislation was promoted on National TV news by Prime Minister Turnbull, Deputy Barnaby Joyce and Senator Michaelia Cash on National Media with parading trucks roaring past in the background. Opposition Leader Bill Shorten was quoted as saying that the scrapping of the Tribunal will lead 'a race to the bottom' on wages.

Many industry groups including the Australian Logistics Council support abolition of the RSRT. Incidentally, Australian Industry Group and others, claiming it to be unconstitutional, had appealed a decision of the RSRT to the High Court. More next edition.

GOVERNANCE

PM seeks deal to avoid DD election

Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull** is prepared to consider anti-corruption measures for industries, beyond construction (building and construction)

in return for a Senate deal to crack down on union misbehaviour and hence avoid a 2 July double dissolution election. **Turnbull** rang, so the media tell us, **Family First** senator **Bob Day** to seek a breakthrough a week after threatening the full-Senate election unless the Senate re-establishes the **Australian Building and Construction Commission** and introduces tougher oversight of all unions and employer groups. Senator **Day** is the only unequivocal supporter of both bills. With the support of six of the eight cross benchers needed to pass the bills, **Turnbull** told Senator **Day** that it was pointless trying to negotiate individually. He asked the South Australian to talk to the others and organize a bloc of at least six to negotiate with the government, as reported in *The Age*.

Power Play or Miscalculation?

Federal campaigns usually run for 25 days. They are the only time in the election cycle when the leader of the opposition party is almost on equal footing with the prime minister when it comes to media coverage and voter interest.

Turnbull's Satisfaction on the Slide

Voter confidence in **Malcolm Turnbull's** performance has tumbled to a five month low and dissatisfaction with the Prime Minister has reached the highest level since he seized the leadership from **Tony Abbott** in September as reported in *The Australian*.

Malcolm Turnbull presented **Bill Shorten** with a gift when he told voters on Monday to prepare for a double dissolution election on July 2. Clearly, **Turnbull** believes that he has **Shorten's** measure, and his confidence is supported by the whopping 39-point lead he had AT THAT TIME over the Labor leader as preferred prime minister in the latest **Fairfax-Ipsos National Poll**.

Andrew Catsaras disagrees insisting **Turnbull** has totally stuffed this up" in his first six months in the Prime Ministership. 'What's the plan? He's going to go to a double dissolution on the back of the **ABCC (Australian Building and Construction Commission)**. Most people wouldn't have a clue with what the **ABCC** is. Most people would **PM's Risky Election Gambit**. **Malcolm Turnbull's** exercise in brinkmanship by daring Labor, the Greens and the cross benchers to reject industrial relations legislation or face a

double dissolution election makes tactical sense.

In one sense **Turnbull** is playing a game of two-up with Labor in which heads he wins and tails they lose, on the issue of well-documented union thuggery according to *The Age*. Either way, industrial relations reform will be an important issue in the forthcoming election whether it is a double dissolution poll, or an election in the normal timeframe.

Applause for PM's Bold Strategy

Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull's** gambit of bringing Parliament back for a special three-week session on April 18 is leading to a May 3 budget to exert pressure on the Senate cross benchers is regarded by Liberal elders as a smart move as per *The Age*.

A Heartland Return

The Nationals have begun a campaign to win back the one-time heartland seat of Murray in Victoria's northeast after **Sharman Stone's** decision to retire from politics at the next election according to *The Australian*.

Shorten's Bombshell Crackdown

Bombshell economic modeling shows **Bill Shorten's** negative gearing crackdown could lead to lower house prices, rent rises of up to 10 per cent, cost the budget more than it saves and cause unemployment to rise. The modeling, released by economic forecaster **BIS Shrapnel**, predicts Labor's plan to limit negative gearing to new homes from July next year will leave renters, low-income households and young people worse off and could cut gross domestic product by as much as 1 per cent, \$19 billion a year.

It predicts a decade of disruption in the housing market, tighter supply for rental premises and a string of unintended consequences. These include 175,000 fewer jobs created over a decade, lower council rates receipts and lower stamp duties for state governments, according to *The Australian*.

Labor Ready To Fight

Labor leader **Bill Shorten** will fight an election on health, education funding and climate change. But another Coalition weak point, he believes, is its apparent plan to cut company taxes in the budget. According to *The Age*,

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Greens leader **Richard Di Natale** said his party was in "good shape" for any election and said he would not lose senators in a double dissolution.

Old Rules for New Candidate

The **Maritime Union of Australia's** bid to install one of its officials as the Labor candidate in the prized seat of Fremantle is expected to succeed due to unreformed party rules allowing union power brokers and factional bosses to decide pre-selection contests in Western Australia. But rank-and-file ALP members in Fremantle will only get 25% of the votes in the pre-selection ballot. The other 75 per cent will be decided by affiliated unions and the union-heavy Labor state executive, making it more likely that **Brown** will win the battle. *The Australian*

ScMo's Cavalry

A group of conservative backbenchers has thrown support behind the embattled **Scott Morrison** following days of internal criticism of the Treasurer's performance. Five liberal backbenchers, including **Michael Sukkar**, **Andrew Astie**, **Andrew Nikolic**, **Tony Pasin** and **Zed Seselja** publicly defended **Morrison**, saying he was constructively performing well, and should be left alone to do his job. 'Scott has been a consulting in an exemplary way with the backbench on a range of economic and tax issues. In all my dealings it seems clear to me he has a very closer and strong relationship with The Prime Minister,' The Victorian-based **Zukkar** said in *The Herald Sun*.

Next

Jason Falinski, a former Young Liberals president, has beaten former Speaker and Minister Bronwyn Bishop for the New South Wales nice suburban seat of Mackellar.

Twenty two or three federal parliamentarians have retired or ben replaced in the pre-selection process

Turnbull Must Stick With What He Believes

In the past few weeks a couple of people have accused me of being a supported of the Labor party. Nothing could be further from the truth. There is nothing the ALP could promise Australia, Victoria or me, that would convince me that it would be better economic manager of our affairs than the Coalition. The last Labor administration that achieved something positive for the nation was the Hawke/Keating government. There has been none in our state in my memory.

Malcolm Turnbull has my full support and will get my vote in the next election. But increasingly I wonder if the extraordinary goodwill that accompanied his rise to the prime ministership has been lost, and worse, whether the opportunity for good government has been lost. Unless he pulls a rabbit from the hat in the May Budget, it will be clear that by his key performance indicators, which he outlined when assuming the leadership, he is failing. "We need an economic vision." Nothing so far, according to **Jeff Kennett** for *The Herald Sun*.

Stop Having A Lend Of Us

One of the great mysteries of federal politics is how the debt and deficit crisis, of which we used to hear so much, has disappeared from the national political agenda. But avoiding the issue doesn't mean it will go away, no matter how convenient it might be for the major parties.

In a low-key but sensible intervention, **NAB** chief executive **Andrew Thornburn** said that business leaders, and all Australians, for that matter, had the right to expect a credible plan from the Coalition and Labor to return the budget to surplus.

The big danger, he said, was an acceptance that the task was too hard, leading to incrementally larger deficits until the nation lost its cherished AAA credit rating as per *The Financial Review*.

Kroger open to Greens

Liberal **Michael Kroger** says a preference deal with The Greens would be acceptable because they are not "the nutters they used to be" according to *The Age*. The Victorian Liberal Party President is under pressure to rule out any agreement with the far-Left party that could help the Greens win inner-city seats in exchange for help in marginal suburban electorates.

'Bob's Bank'

The Greens' spiritual leader **Bob Brown** has heaped praise upon **Malcolm Turnbull** for delivering 'a feather in the Greens' cap' with the decision to retain the \$10 billion **Clean Energy Finance Corporation**. But the announcement has created a divide in the Greens with current party leader **Richard Di Natale** branding the Prime Minister's move a "con job". The **CEFC** was derided as "**Bob Brown's bank**" by the **Abbott**-led Coalition, which had campaigned to abolish the agency devised by the Gillard government as part of its carbon tax deal with the Greens as reported in *The Australian*.

'Efficiencies, not cash, the key for hospitals'

The former Queensland health minister who engineered a massive drop in growth in public health costs while reducing surgery and dental waiting lists has warned against "just throwing more money" at public hospitals, saying it won't work without a corresponding drive to improve efficiency in the delivery of services.

Queensland Opposition Leader **Lawrence Springborg**, who was health minister in the **Newman** government from 2012-2015, said state and federal leaders needed to widen the debate on how to keep health from overwhelming government budgets. **Springborg** cut annual funding growth of about 10 per cent to an average of just over 5 per cent in his three years in the portfolio, and delivered rare annual surpluses in the health budget.

And while the **Newman** government was politically savaged over its agenda, including the sacking of more than 4000 health workers and a bruising battle to force public hospital doctors on to contracts, **Springborg** said it produced a better system for taxpayers and patients.

When the **Newman** government won power after almost two decades of Labor rule, independent reports found widespread rorting within the system including the existence of funded "ghost" positions and doctors being paid hundreds of thousands of dollars in overtime. **Springborg** said he did not oppose tax reform to pay for hospitals into the future, but that it could not be sustainable "without expenditure reform" as reported in *The Australian*

Savva Right Not to Play

What is compelling about **Niki Savva's** new book is the number of sources who have gone on the record, expressing concerns about the dysfunction within **Tony Abbott's** prime ministerial office. **Savva** has already said that she didn't seek responses from **Abbott** or **Credlin** because they had numerous platforms to tell their side of the story.

She wanted to give a voice to the many staffers who lived through the dysfunction but didn't have a platform. I am amazed at how forthright so many are. Both **Abbott** and **Credlin** have already responded to the book, and will no doubt do so again and again as reported in *The Australian*.

Pay Brawl looms as poll issue for Barnett

Unions are threatening industrial action in

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Western Australia in the lead-up to next year's state election as the prepare to fight a hardline government wages policy that will leave public servants worse off.

Treasurer **Mike Nahan** revealed the government had scrapped its policy of linking wage increases to the forecast rate of inflation, and would instead offer pay rises of no more than 1.5 per cent a year. He said the move would save the government about \$825 million over the next three years. Most of WA's enterprise bargaining agreements are set to expire before next year's state election, including those for nurses, prison officers, doctors, police officers, teachers, firefighters and general public servants.

Dr Nahan said the state's public servants were among the highest paid in the country and the new policy was "reasonable and appropriate" in the current fiscal environment.

But the state's biggest union, the **Australian Nursing Federation**, described the move as a "direct path to industrial action". *The Australian*

Sinodinos Case Exposes Threat of Double Jeopardy

The full list of the secret donors involved in almost \$700,000 worth of payments at the heart of the NSW Liberal Party election donations scandal has been revealed in leaked financial records. Documents obtained by *The Australian* show 73 payments by individuals and companies were funneled through the Liberals' controversial Canberra-based trust, the **Free Enterprise Foundation**, to the party's NSW division before the 2011 state election. As the **NSW Liberal Party** attempts to reach a settlement with the **NSW Electoral Commission** in order to receive \$4.3 million in funding it is withholding in the lead up to **Turnbull's** election campaign, the party is facing the prospect of legal action by property developers, furious they were encouraged to make the donations via the trust.

The **Independent Commission Against Corruption** and the **Australian Electoral Commission** have previously disclosed donors to the **Free Enterprise Foundation** but, for the first time, *The Australian* can reveal which donations were funneled into the **NSW Liberal Party** coffers, potentially unlawfully according to *The Australian*.

Finance Director Stands Down

NSW Liberal Party finance director **Simon McInnes** will stand down from his role as the

party executive with responsibility for campaign finances. His resignation as party agent comes ahead of the NSW Liberals amending their disclosures to admit receipt of illegal donations from property developers, which will see them face a fine of nearly \$700,000 or equivalent to the dollar value of the donations unlawfully received as reported in *The Australian*.

Abbott Legacy Exclusive

Amid mounting alarm in the **Liberal Party** about **Tony Abbott's** aggressive defence of his legacy, the former prime minister has sent a message of assurance to **Liberal** MPs and supporters worried that the government's election campaign will be derailed by disunity as per *The Australian*.

Here to Help

Over the past year, reports have gathered pace that **Rudd**, an epic networker, is preparing the groundwork to replace UN Secretary-General **Ban Ki-moon**, who retires at the end of the year. The reports have prompted derisive jokes in Australia about **Rudd's** reputation as a megalomaniac. His aspirations are dismissively filed in the "typical Kevin" basket.

Despite the UN being a target of conservatives who regard it as a time-wasting, left-leaning bureaucracy filled with fellow travellers, the role of secretary general remains one of the world's most prestigious public positions. **Rudd**, thus far, has declared repeatedly that he is not a candidate. He has left open the question of whether that will change. **Rudd** holds an array of significant international roles, which take him around the world, simultaneously building a solid game-work for his candidacy.

Rudd is president of the **Asia Society Policy Institute**, an offshoot of the **Asia Society**. Circumnavigating the world as the head of the **ASPI** think-tank; chairing conferences, lecturing, producing papers which all gives **Rudd** an open door to the top ranks of business and political leaders and foreign ministries.

As chairman of the **Independent Commission on Multi-lateralism**, a project of the long-time New York-based **International Peace Institute**, **Rudd** is on the board of directors according to *The Australian*.

Plebiscite Pause for Election

The Federal Government has shelved plans to produce the framework and wording for a plebiscite on same-sex marriage until after the election that is now expected on July 2

according to *The Australian*. Previously, the Attorney-General's Department had been working towards presenting a draft bill for the wording of a same-sex marriage plebiscite before Easter, as well as establishing the ground rules for the public campaign, including on the funding for the two sides.

The threat of divisions within the Coalition and fears that the issue will distract government ministers and MPs from focusing on the key election issues of economic management and union lawlessness have, however, delayed the process.

Tough Agenda Ahead for Sims

Competition boss **Rod Sims** intends to use the next three years to secure a tenfold increase in penalties for breaches of consumer law while seeking through the planned shake-up to competition rules, including rolling out the so-called effects tests according to *The Australian*.

Sims who has been nominated by the Federal Government to chair the Australian Competition & Consumer Commission for another three year term, also defended his time as head of the regulator and laid out his commitment to "robust capitalism".

Dissent in Labor Ranks over Gender Program

West Australian Labour Senator **Joe Bullock** has defied **Bill Shorten** by joining conservative senator **Cory Bernardito** to oppose a contentious anti-bullying program that teaches school kids about sexual orientation and transgender issues. The Opposition leader suggested in a venomous exchange in Parliament House that Senator **Bernardi** was a "homophobe" for opposing the scheme, but must now face the reality that Labor MPs hold concerns too as reported in *The Australian*.

Name a Stain

Veteran liberal MP **Russell Broadbent** has written to the **Australian Electoral Commission**, asking for the electorate's name to be changed during the next redrawing of boundaries in 2017. He told *The Herald Sun* it was no longer "appropriate" for **Angus McMillan's** name to be associated with the electorate. The seat should be renamed **Gunai Kurnai**, the native Aboriginal people of the region. **McMillan** and his men, known as the "Highland Brigade", were said to be responsible for multiple massacres including the killing of up to 35 at Butchers Creek and "hundreds" and Bruthen Creek and Warrigal Creek as per *The Herald Sun*.



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Sophie not doing well

Ousted Liberal politician **Sophie Mirabella's** hopes of a comeback appear to be fading as a new poll shows the independent MP **Cathy McGowan** seized her seat is on track to retain it. **McGowan** shocked the political establishment with a famous victory over the Liberal MP in the 2013 election, taking the rural Victorian federal seat of Indi by 439 votes. A new opinion poll has found support for **McGowan** has since grown according to *The Herald Sun*.

John Howard best PM of modern era

34 per cent of voters judge **John Howard** (1996-2007) as the best prime minister since 1972, followed by **Bob Hawke** and **Gough Whitlam**. A new essential research poll provided exclusively to *The Australian* finds that 34 per cent of voters judge **Howard** (1996 to 2007) as the best prime minister since 1972. **Hawke** (1983 to 1991) was selected by 13 per cent as the best, and **Whitlam** (1972 -1975) by 10 percent. **Tony Abbott** (2013-2015) was again ranked last, with just 2 per cent of voters seeing him as the best prime minister. **Malcolm Turnbull**, who has been prime minister for six months, was rated highest by only 3 percent of voters. In the middle of the prime ministerial pack is **Paul Keating** (1991-1996). The online poll of 1017 respondents showed some significant variations in support when choices of respondents were broken down by party, gender and age.

Howard was rated best prime minister by 64 per cent of Liberal voters. **Hawke** received the support of 7 per cent of Liberal voters, followed by **Turnbull** with 6 per cent support.

The favorite among Labor votes was **Hawke**. Greens votes rated **Keating** as the best prime minister, with 18 per cent support. Although **Gillard** is the only woman prime minister, she was rated by just 6 per cent of women as the best since 1972, as reported on by *The Australian*.

Lawler Resigns

Besieged Fair Work vice-president **Michael Lawler** has resigned from his \$435,000-a-year position in an unprecedented finale to more than a year of controversy over his extended paid sick leave. One of Australia's most senior members of the quasi-judicial industrial tribunal, with all the status and perks of a Federal Court judge, **Lawler** has taken almost a year of sick leave while regularly assisting his partner, disgraced unionist **Kathy Jackson**, to fight allegations of theft.

Labor picks its next RBA governor

Treasurer **Scott Morrison** is refusing to consult the opposition over a raft of top economic appointments in the lead-up to a likely election in July, including the promotion to governor of Reserve Bank of Australia deputy **Phillip Lowe** who has won Labor's backing. Shadow treasurer **Chris Bowen** demanded the government stop naming senior Treasury portfolio positions without consulting the opposition, because the government is effectively on an election footing.

Over there

Former federal Labor minister **Stephen Smith** has launched an extraordinary pitch to wrest the Labor leadership from opposition leader **Mark McGowan** in a bid to become the next Western Australian premier. **Smith**, who is not a sitting local member, would need to gain

majority support from WA's Labor's 32 member caucus and majority support from rank-and-file members, according to *The Australian*.

Police Probe

Shadow Attorney General **Mark Dreyfus** referred the matter of Stuart Robert to the Australian Federal Police on February 14, citing sections of the law that deal with abuse of public office by Commonwealth officials. Robert had been on a trip to China which drew conflict of business and his role as a parliamentarian. He was until 12 February Minister for Human Services. On February 16 the AFP advised that the matter was still being evaluated. An investigation is now underway, as reported by *The Herald Sun*.

Robert Declines to provide paper proof

Sacked federal minister **Stuart Roberts** has refused to produce any documentary evidence to support his justification for charging taxpayers more than \$1,600 to visit the site of a gold mining company in which he had bought shares for himself and his family, as per *The Australian*.

PARTY HAPPENINGS

Barnaby Vs. The Bush Baron

It has been characterized simply as an unequal match-up, as a bitter contest between an independent challenger and deep establishment figure, or a political cage fight between an opportunistic turncoat and a hyper-energetic buffoon. None of that is strictly true when it comes to the impending battle for New England between **Tony Windsor** and Deputy Prime Minister **Barnaby Joyce**. The New England brawl will in fact pit against each other two wealthy families, both stalwarts of the fertile NSW region's agricultural community, according to *The Australian*.

Windsor back to torment Coalition

Tony Windsor has political pundits salivating at the prospect of a knockdown, drag-out political battle with Deputy Prime Minister **Barnaby Joyce** in the seat of New England.

The former Independent, who retired in 2013 and has threatened a comeback over a raft of issues including coal mining on the Liverpool Plains, has been testing support in his electorate. **Joyce** won a 54.2% of the primary vote in New England in 2013 after Windsor retired, *The Australian* reports.

Reith: Pull Your Head In

Former Liberal federal minister **Peter Reith** says ex-PM **Tony Abbott's** decision to tour marginal seats was a bad idea, and he would be "doing himself a disservice and a disservice to the country" according to *The Herald Sun*.

Vile Attack Stinks of Hypocrisy

The smearing of **Peta Credlin** in a new book as a hysterical control freak who probably slept with **Tony Abbott** has backfired. This vile attempt to destroy **Credlin**, chief of staff to **Abbott** as prime minister, has instead exposed the author as a self-confessed liar.

More importantly, it has exposed the ABC as two-faced and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull as a small man gripped by hate. **Credlin** is the target of journalist **Niki Savva**, who obsessively attacked her as a columnist on *The Australian*, and now savages her in her book, *The Road To Ruin*, purporting to explain why the **Abbott** government fell.

But there's more. Six years ago **Savva** wrote another book in which she confessed that "as a journalist I lied often, usually about my sources,

but about other things, too." She admitted she had a rule that politicians were either sources or targets and that "I learned to slice and dice anyone who... spoke to others and not me".

Nor can **Credlin** be the office monster that **Savva** describes given her successfully serving three opposition leaders, including **Turnbull** himself. Indeed, **Abbott** as a PM had a lower turnover of staff than either **Kevin Rudd** or **Julia Gillard**. Why has **Turnbull** refused to stick up for **Credlin**, saying only: "I don't want to buy into all that commentary"? **Savva** was treated as the oracle on ABC's *The Insiders* as she continued to shop these rumours, "perceptions" as she calls them, of **Abbott's** sexual relationship, writes **Andrew Bolt** for *The Herald Sun*.

Abbott Hits Back At Book

Former Prime Minister **Tony Abbott** has responded to claims made in **Savva's** new book about his "weird" relationship with chief of staff **Peta Credlin** by denying his government was dysfunctional.

Credlin later joined the fray by blasting rumours that she and **Abbott** had a sexual relationship. "Completely false, utterly untrue, unfounded and wrong," **Credlin** told *The Australian*. "I cannot be any clearer, it is about as low as it gets. It's vicious and malicious."

Same Club But Different

Malcolm Turnbull and **Tony Abbott** are very different. Bear with me and read on after that statement of the bleeding obvious because there is an important point to be made.

Despite the stark differences in personality, background, manner, social views and management style, both men as prime minister have faced some of the same, self-generated political problems.

The **Abbott** and Federal Governments have seen policy retreats, contradictory messages sent through the media, internal criticism of their treasurer, uncertainty about the budget, speculation about an election date, failed expectations and a resultant decline in the polls (disastrously for **Abbott**).

The one great political failure of the **Abbott** government was the lack of a clear political message. The priorities seemed to shift on budget and economic management; there were confusing and contradictory messages on what **Abbott** wanted to do, what **Joe Hockey** wanted to do, and what policies were being pursued and what was being dumped.

Simply, **Abbott** didn't talk enough or to enough people. What's more he didn't listen when he did consult. Now, six months after **Turnbull** replaced **Abbott** as Prime Minister the coalition is facing a similar set of problems, though they are not nearly as dire according to an opinion piece in *The Australian*.

Bullock quits over gay marriage

West Australian Labor senator **Joe Bullock** has announced his shock decision to quit parliament less than two years into his six-year term, saying he could not remain a member of a party that would force him to support gay marriage as reported in *The Australian*.

Plum UN Job for Bernardi

Outspoken Liberal senator **Cory Bernardi** has been handed a three-month secondment to

the **United Nations** in New York. He will spend three months as parliamentary observer of the **United Nations General Assembly**. *The Herald Sun*.

Dirt Sheet Smears Gay Libs Candidate

Former human rights commissioner **Tim Wilson** voiced concerns about the **Safe Schools Coalition** with the government early last year ahead of the current review, still facing a vicious internal smear campaign over the issue as he fought for Liberal pre-selection.

The smear campaign attempted to paint **Wilson** as a overt supporter of the **Safe Schools Coalition** when the truth is he has privately advocated for reform according to *The Australian*. He won his pre-election and will win his federal seat.

PM Faces Revolt over Safe Schools

Malcolm Turnbull faces his first genuine backbench revolt involving as many MPs as the numbers who moved against **Tony Abbott** as Liberal leader.

A majority of Coalition backbenchers has rejected a snap review of an anti-bullying program for gay and transgender children ordered by the Prime Minister. They have put their names to a petition that details their concerns and was delivered to Turnbull yesterday afternoon.

Some 43 MPs, including former prime minister **Abbott**, have demanded a parliamentary inquiry to allow submissions from parents and teachers concerned about the scheme and pushed for a suspension of the program's funding according to *The Australian*.

Senator Spills the beans but backed by Abbott

NSW Liberal conservative **Concetta Fierravanti Wells** has used a reference from **Tony Abbott** to back her pre-election for the next election in the week it was revealed she provided damning comments for a contentious book. 'Politics is about perceptions,' Senator **Fierravanti Wells** told **Abbott**, 'Rightly or wrongly, the perception is that you are sleeping with your chief of staff. That's the perception, and you need to deal with it.'

Abbott and **Credlin** have denied the rumours and described parts of the book as salacious rumours not put to them for denial or correction according to *The Australian*.

What is worse than violating someone's trust and disclosing a private conversation about a sensitive information you raise with them? How about seeking a raise from that same person before they know you have breached their confidence?

Pat and his dress code limits

Pat Dodson's trademark, black-brimmed Akubra poses a new test for parliament's evolving standards that already prohibit the wearing of shorts by senators and the distribution of apples in the lower house.

Dodson would become one of the first senators to wear a hat in the chamber since Federation-era rules governing MP's headwear were abolished in 1988 as a "relic" of their time. **Dodson** has described the Akubra as both a "practical" safeguard against the northern sun and a cultural aide-memoire. "It is a reminder that Aboriginal people are part of this country,

and particularly the band, which was knitted by my older sister," he told the **University of NSW** magazine *Uniken* in 2009. "It's second nature to me – I feel a bit undressed when I don't have it on my head. I get very annoyed when I see people carrying a hat instead of wearing it" he said to *The Australian*.

Gay rights a maiden issue for new MP

Trent Zimmerman, the newest member of federal parliament, has used his maiden speech to call for greater acceptance of gay people and said that nobody should feel "compelled to live a life that is not their own". Replacing **Joe Hockey** in the seat of North Sydney, **Zimmerman** backed four-year parliamentary terms, more federal funding of public transport and looked forward to a day when Turkey "properly recognises the Armenian genocide" of 1915.

Zimmerman used the occasion to acknowledge he was the first openly gay man or woman to take up a place in the House of Representatives, according to *The Australian*. He did not refer to Penny Wong.

We Lost Millions

Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull** and his family have retrieved some of their investment in a failed tech start-up as other wealthy and famous investors face losing \$100 million thanks to an argument with the company's former chairman, ex-NSW premier **Nick Greiner**, as reported by the *Financial Review*.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS & EMPLOYMENT

Jobs cut as aluminum plant faces closure

A Portland smelter risks closure and a mass shedding of jobs, with the aluminum plant now running at a loss and facing a huge surge in costs later this year.

The smelter, which supports 2000 jobs, is set to lose as much as \$40 million this financial year due to a collapse in aluminum prices according to **Macquarie Bank** analysts.

Albanese cans CFMEU attack on PM

Labor's **Anthony Albanese** has condemned the construction union's claim **Malcolm Turnbull** is 'happy for workers to die'. The **Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union** has launched an aggressive social media campaign targeting the Prime Minister over plans to bring back the **Australian Building Commission**.

"**Malcolm Turnbull** is happy for more workers to die, if it makes more profits for his donors. The **ABCC** will cut jobs, kill workers, and let big business off the hook," says one of the union's tweets. **Albanese** acknowledged the left-wing unions efforts to protect workers, but rejected the rhetoric. "Without unions, I tell you what, the catastrophic consequences for the health of people who go to work, and their families who expect them to come home at the end of the day, would be much great. But that doesn't mean, because you have to acknowledge that, you can support the sort of language, which I don't" as reported in *The Australian*.

Union Threat to \$48b NT Gas Project

Unions are preparing to ramp up a campaign for about 30 per cent more time off in **Inpex Corp's Ichthys** liquefied natural gas project in northern Australia, which could send on the of the most costly energy projects in Australian history even further over budget as per *The Age*.

Premier Backs Workplace Law Reform

Australia's workplace laws should be overhauled to include family violence leave as part of sweeping reforms proposed by the country's first royal commission into domestic abuse.

The royal commission, which was established by the Victorian government last year after the death of 11-year-old **Luke Batty**, made 227 recommendations, all of which Premier **Daniel Andrews** has promised to implement.

Among the recommendations was an amendment of the **Fair Work Act** to include an entitlement to paid family violence leave for employees and unpaid family violence leave for casual employees as reported in *The Australian*.

Worker Exploitation Disgrace

Over the course of a year and 10 public hearings, the Senate inquiry, chaired by Senator **Sue Lines**, heard first-hand evidence from victims, regulators, unions and academics, outlining cases of wage fraud, worker exploitation and in some cases slavery. It has now released a report titled *A National Disgrace: The Exploitation of Temporary Work Visa Holders*.

Over in Britain, your Editor met the Minister for Slavery last year. The British have a Minister with that title in 2016 to look into such issues.

The more controversial recommendations relate to labour hire companies and the \$170 billion franchise industry. A key recommendation is that **Treasury** and the **ACCC** reviews the franchising code of conduct and "whether there is scope to impose some degree of responsibility on a franchisor and the merits or otherwise of so doing" according to *The Age*.

Unions must strategize, not just merge

The union movement's strategy of mergers has generally been a failure, as it has not rebuilt or maintained the power of organised labour, says **Tim Lyons**, a former senior **ACTU** official. He said the union movements arguments for mergers such as "bigger is better" and 'stronger together' deserved to be shaken by the evidence. 'You can see enormous benefits of consolidation everywhere except in the hard numbers and real-life experience about what happens after you do it. As a strategy to rebuild or maintain the power of organised labour, consolidation, at least as it has been practised up to now, has generally been a failure. **Lyons** proposed a detailed framework for future mergers, saying unions must comprehensively assess the drivers, establish clear objectives and develop strategy to remove risks, as published in *The Australian*.

Shipyard Dumps Workers

Defence, security and aerospace company **BAE Systems** will cut 50 jobs from its Williamstown shipyards. The job cuts reduce the total shipyard workforce to just 150. The company has been bleeding jobs over the past 18 months, with more than 800 jobs lost. The **BAE Systems** blow comes up as 80 jobs will also be lost at **Treasury Wines** packaging and warehousing centre in Mildura according to *The Herald Sun*.

'If ABCC Does Nothing But Clean Up, It's A Win'

The managing director of **Perkins Construction** employs 300 people at the business his father and uncle founded in Bunbury, 180 km south of Perth, in 1965 – jobs

he said would be safeguarded by the **Australian Building and Construction Commission** watchdog.

The long-running battle between employers and unions over the **ABCC** comes down to "power" and "the long-term preservation of jobs". **Perkins** told *The Australian* from Bunbury last week. As national president of the **Master Builders Australia** industry group, he is lobbying hard for the reinstatement of the regulator the **Gillard** Labor government scrapped in 2012, which is fiercely opposed by the **Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union**. "The unions criticize the **ABCC** in the name of protecting jobs and about safety, but from my firsthand experience this issue isn't about either of those things," **Perkins** said, "If the unions were serious about jobs they'd want to protect the companies so they stay viable".

CFMEU accused of targeting contractor

The NSW state secretary and a dozen other officials of the **CFMEU** have been accused of targeting a contractor company with an extraordinary range of malicious workplace disruptions including kicking down safety rails to then declare a concrete pour unsafe, according to *The Australian*.

Turnbull To Increase Spending on Industry

The federal government has presented its defence white paper as the centre piece of an election strategy about jobs and local industry, arguing increasing strategic pressure and a reduced defence capability justify extra spending of \$30 billion over 10 years, as per *The Age*.

The spending will surely kill any chance of putting a date of return to budget surplus, and will be utilised to fund Australian manufacturing reported in *The Australian*.

Coalition Fails To Deliver On Workplace Promises

Australia's foremost workplace law experts, Professor **Andrew Stewart** declares the Coalition has largely failed to deliver its election agenda. Since September 2013, just four pieces of industrial relations legislation have been passed into law. The **Fair Work 2014** bill amended the rules around unpaid parental leave, changed so-called "strike first, talk later" provisions and changed the rules on negotiations between employers and unions on so-called "greenfields" agreements for new building projects. In contrast, the Coalition's 2013 policy promised to restore the **Australian Building and Construction Commission** and to establish a **Registered Organisations Commission** to monitor unions, but both bills have been blocked by the Senate.

A promised 'urgent' review of the **Road Safety Remuneration Tribunal** took place, but the report has never been released. A pledge to introduce a paid parental leave scheme was dumped, as were plans for an appeals body to be attached to the **Fair Work Commission**. Proposed changes to union right of entry laws and other recommendations have stalled in the Senate. Professor Stewart said the long list of unmet promises said something about their ability to deal with the crossbench. There are not a lot of achievements. Yes, they have failed, but the key test remains what will they propose from the **Productivity Commission** review - the action is yet to come," he said.

Workplace Minister **Michaelia Cash**, who replaced **Eric Abetz** when **Malcolm**

Turnbull took over as prime minister, conceded in *The Australian* that "clearly there is scope for improvement."

Unions Block Police

The **Forestry Mining and Energy Union** are fighting to block police permanently from accessing files that could incriminate two of its senior officials. **Australian Federal Police** officers last year raided the union's Brisbane headquarters amid claims former Queensland boss **David Hanna** and CFME state secretary **Michael Ravbar** burned and dumped potential damning documents that would have been required for the royal commission on trade unions, as per *The Australian*.

ACT Labor's Union Deal

The ACT Labor government has signed a secret deal giving all the unions in Canberra the right to veto tenderers for government goods and services, including in the building industry that has been identified as a hotspot of union corruption and stand over tactics. All ACT government agencies have been told to decline to award a tender proposal for ACT government works or services if the tenderer does not undertake to meet a list of union demands, reports *The Australian*.

Unions are also to be supplied with the names of companies and contractors tendering for business before any contract is let, to advise the government if the tenderer fails the union test and can ask for a contract to be cancelled if the company breaches the union requirements. The department responsible for procurement is also required to give the unions a list of employers who breach the agreed government-union conditions.

Federal Employment Minister **Michaelia Cash** said the deal was "deeply disturbing. It is clear from the **MOU** that Union effectively been given the ACT government business," reports *The Australian*.

BUSINESS, ECONOMY, MANUFACTURING & FINANCE

Got Franchisees Back

Former federal small business minister **Bruce Billson** hopes to revive the nations' \$144 billion franchise sector as he takes reins of a prominent industry lobby group. **Billson** has been appointed executive chairman of the **Franchise Council of Australia**.

'I'm a huge fan of the franchise sector and it's enormously important to the Australian economy,' **Billson** told *Business Daily*. The **Franchise Council** was looking for refreshment and renewal and I felt helping to lift the sector to the next level was something I could really support.' **Billson** said the council aimed to ensure the 79,000 independently owned and operated franchise outlets across the nation had access to opportunities to grow their businesses, while encouraging more entrepreneurs to consider entering the industry, according to *The Herald Sun*.

Online alcohol good cheer for Woolies

Dan Murphy's online liquor sales are growing at three times the rate of its 204 physical stores in a rare example of an entrenched retailer repeating its success on the internet.

Dan Murphy's, which is owned by **Woolworth's**, is Australia's biggest online liquor business and has an estimated 2 million customers and 1.4 million loyalty program members. It has captured more than 50 per cent of the online liquor market and is the

fastest growing part of **Woolworths** business, which includes the **BWS** chain according to *The Financial Review*.

Oz Banks Snared

Two of Australia's biggest banks, **ANZ** and **NAB**, have been drawn into a Singaporean money laundering investigation into the **IMDB** scandal, in which the Prime Minister of neighbouring Malaysia, **Najib Razak**, has been accused of stealing \$US1 billion from the country's sovereign wealth fund as reported in *The Australian*.

New VW Recall hits reputation

The **Volkswagen** group is recalling 800,000 SUVs worldwide in the latest blow to the reputation of the German car making giant. The recall takes in 391,000 **Volkswagen Touaregs** and 409,477 **Porsche Cayennes**, model series 2011 to 2016 and involves a fault with the pedals as reported in *The Australian*.

Hands-on Chairman to guide Telstra

Telstra's chairman-elect **John Mollen** is a master of timing, stepping in after **Catherine Livingstone's** retirement as the chairman of **Telstra** after a seven year term.

Take Business Ethics Seriously, ASIC preaches

The corporate regulator will accuse the banks and big business in general of failing to fix fundamental flaws that have led to a string of corporate scandals. In a sign that the **Australian Securities and Investments Commission** is toughening its stance against what it regards as corrupt company cultures, the regulator will accuse large wealth companies of presiding over conflicts of interest. Vertically integrated fund managers will be put on notice that **ASIC** will investigate if it finds that cultural problems are behind the conflicts. **ASIC** chairman **Greg Medcraft** will hit back at company directors who have complained that the corporate regulator is trying to become the "culture blame police" and warn them that simply blaming scandals on a "few bad apples" will no longer be acceptable as reported in *The Australian*.

Macquarie rejects junk yard-dog tag

Macquarie group denied it had become one of the world's biggest holders of "high yield" or "junk" debt after reports it had invested over \$30 billion in the securities over several years, and its loan default rates had blown out to five times as high as Australia's big four banks. The investment bank said it was unfair to describe the loans and investments in the article as junk because they were diversified, secured against high-quality assets and had numerous covenants as reported in *The Australian*.

Infrastructure Investment Taking Off

Infrastructure investment at the end of 2015 recorded the largest increase since the end of the resources boom. **Australian Infrastructure Metric** forecasts a construction recovery ahead, led by large transport infrastructure projects in NSW and Victoria, based on data produced by **Infrastructure Partnerships Australia** and **BIS Shrapnel**. The report shows transport infrastructure investment is forecast to increase by \$3.2 billion next financial year, with NSW expected to dominate during that period as per *The Australian*.

Think Tank Warns of Economic Hazard

The economy is facing hazards unlike any seen in more than 20 years, and is starting from a position of income weakness, according to a drank new report. It means incomes and the tax

base will grow much slower than governments have become used to, making budget repair harder at the federal level. The views appear in the **Committee for Economic Development** of Australia's economic and political outlook for 2016, as reported on by *The Age*.

Foul Over Effects Test

Coles managing director **James Durkan** has warned the grocer could struggle to keep prices consistent around the country if hit by the proposed "effects test". **Durkan** said the federal government's intended changes to competition law were "disappointing" and brought "considerable uncertainty to businesses" according to *The Herald Sun*.

ACCC head furious over Coles criticism

Australian Competition and Consumer chairman **Rod Sims** responded aggressively to **Coles** managing director **John Durkan** over his criticism of the government's tough misuse of market power laws. **Sims** said **Durkan's** assertions last week that the laws might hurt his ability set standard process in **Coles** stores regardless of whether they were in remote or city locations were "extraordinarily strange" and "extremely disappointing stuff". He said **Durkan** was undermining sensible debate.

Woodside shelves \$500bn Browse

The nation's unprecedented run of LNG export project investment approvals has come to an end with **Woodside Petroleum** officially shelving the **Browse** floating LNG project off Western Australia after development costs of more than \$50 billion could not be justified during the current oil price rout. The decision by **Woodside** led **Browse** venture, which includes oil giants **Shell**, **BP** and **PetroChina**, means there are no longer any major gas export projects under serious consideration in Australia after a \$220bn-plus run of investment decisions unprecedented anywhere in the world. The run, which started with **Woodside's** \$15bn **Pluto** project in 2007, saw nine LNG projects approved across northern Australia and will make Australia the world's biggest LNG exporter as reported in *The Australian*.

End looms for ASX monopoly position

Markets operator **ASX** has been given at least 18 months to prepare for competition to its clearing services under a raft of regulatory changes that also lower the hurdle for exchange to be taken over as per *The Australian Business Review*.

PwC can count on same-sex cause

PriceWaterhouseCoopers has conceded that its modelling of the cost of the same-sex marriage plebiscite excluded key data and was triggered internally to meet a diversity target, as marriage traditionalists slammed the auditing firm for being biased and activist in its approach. The report, which projected a \$500 million cost of holding an Australia-wide vote on changing the definition of marriage, was released to a chorus of praise and derision as reported in *The Australian*.

ANZ to pay back \$5m in card fees

ANZ will be forced to refund about \$5 million to about 25,000 customers, including pensioners and some of the nation's lowest paid workers after wrongly applying credit card fees as reported in *The Age*.

Goyder pulls merger lever

Wesfarmers has effectively merged its twin department stores **Kmart** and **Target** in an

effort to drive more earnings from its retail operations.

Wesfarmers chief executive **Richard Goyder** says the 100-year-old conglomerate, which owns **Coles** and **Bunnings**, would always "march to the beat of its own drum" as reported in *The Australian*. This year the privately owned **Jayco** which has rejected several advances from private equity expects to manufacture 11,600 caravans, camper trailers, pop tops and motorhomes worth about \$600 million.

They range from the \$10,000 compact **JPOD** caravan right up to the \$190,000 **Optimum Motor Home**. Far from being a relic of the past, the caravan business is on a roll in Australia. As more cashed up baby boomers hit retirement, many choose to hit the road with all the creature comforts. At the same time, young families are flocking to caravans for a cheap summer holiday. But the industry faces growing pains. Many popular coastal caravan parks are clogged by permanent on-site villas, according to *The Herald Sun*.

Aviation Overhaul Required

A dramatic overhaul of aircraft maintenance traineeships is urgently needed if Australia is to dodge a chronic shortage of aviation engineers, according to researchers and industry groups. The call comes from government department statistics showing sharp declines in the number of engineers completing training for aircraft maintenance roles over the last ten years, according to *The Australian*.

ANZ nabs Google Australia Chief

According to *The Age*, the **ANZ Banking Group** has hired the head of **Google's** Australian operations, **Maile Carnegie**, to help it catch up to rivals in the multibillion-dollar technology arms race between banks.

Policy Reform Shakes Business Sector

Malcolm Turnbull has triggered a rift with the nation's peak business group after delivering a policy victory to the Nationals in a surprise reversal on a major competition policy, sparking a fight over whether his new plan will push up consumer prices.

Embracing a reform the **Abbott** government shelved just six months ago, the Prime Minister unveiled tougher competition laws that were cheered by small business groups but flatly rejected by the **Business Council of Australia** and independent experts according to *The Australian*.

Surprise as Walsh rides into Rio sunset

The company's 44 year old copper and coal boss **Jean-Sebastien Jaques** has made a move that sees **Rio Tinto** chief executive **Sam Walsh** step down. Despite **Walsh** being 66, the timing of his departure will surprise many because as recently as last month he declared retirement was "not on the agenda" and that he wanted to stay as long as the board would have him, as reported on by the *Financial Review*.

Commonwealth Insurance Under Scrutiny

The culture and remuneration structures at **Commonwealth Bank's** insurance arm will face scrutiny from the prudential regulator in the wake of the insurance giant's claims mishandling scandal.

The **Australian Prudential Regulation Authority** has told a parliamentary inquiry it will take a close look at the insurer's business

culture, which comes under scrutiny after a **Fairfax** and **Four Corners** investigation found false claims, according to *The Age*.

Australia Too Expensive, Atlassian Guru Claims

Atlassian co-founder **Mike Cannon-Brookes** has called on the government to lower the cost of living for skilled foreign technology workers as he warned that Australia risked becoming an unattractive location for fast growing companies to do business. **Atlassian** employs about a quarter of its Sydney workforce on 457 visas but **Cannon-Brookes** said experienced technology professionals were deterred from relocating **Down Under** by the excessive price of moving their families.

In 2014 **Cannon-Brookes** also sparked controversy when he told a conference that Australia needed one well-supported start-up hub in Sydney, rather than a few scattered between other cities. He has stood by those views and reasserted that it was important to create one centre of innovation because they required a high density of people knowledge and ideas in one space to thrive, according to *The Australian*.

MINING

Resources surge offers hope to PM

A revival in prices for Australia's biggest exports is raising government hopes it will be able to claw back at least the \$7 billion in revenue lost when prices slumped last year and help it to assemble a budget that boosts **Malcolm Turnbull's** political fortunes as he considers an early election, as per *The Australian*.

Concerns Grow over China IPOs

A court ordered the wind-up of **Sino Australia Oil and Gas**, a Chinese drilling services company listed on the **Australian Securities Exchange**, after the chairman tried to transfer \$7.5 million to a bank account in China without disclosing why.

Cases like **Sino** are adding to concern among regulators and professional investors that some Chinese companies that have or are seeking Australian share market listings don't meet Australian probity standards as per *The Financial Review*.

TRADE

Prime Minister Turnbull visits China

The Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull** made his first official visit to China on April 14 and 15. He attended the Australia Week in China event in Shanghai which hosted over 1000 Australian business representatives. The Prime Minister also met with President **Xi Jinping** and the annual leaders meeting with Premier **Li Keqiang** in Beijing. Matters of trade and Australia's trade with China worth \$150 Billion last year were high on the agenda.

REFUGEES & IMMIGRATION

Gay refugee pair virtual 'prisoners' on Nauru

Two gay refugees who fell in love at the Nauru detention camp say they are virtually prisoners in their home: holed up in fear for their lives after being bashed and verbally abused in a nation where homosexuality is illegal, as per *The Age*.

Churches United On Offer of Sanctuary

More than 100 churches across Australia and two orders of Catholic nuns are preparing to invoke the ancient Christian doctrine of "sanctuary" in defiance of a federal government attempt to deport 267 asylum-seekers at the centre of a High Court case over offshore detention. The churches, mostly **Uniting**,

Anglican and Salvation Army, as well as **Baptist, Lutheran and Quakers** have received 'very high quality legal advice from senior counsel' to bolster plans to shield asylum seekers on archaic religious grounds, according to the **Australian Churches Refugee Taskforce**, as reported in *The Australian*.

TAX

Lower taxes to wait for spending cuts

Meaningful personal and company tax cuts over the long term will have to be funded by the government spending restraint rather than increases in other taxes, Treasurer **Scott Morrison** has declared in *The Age*.

PM Ignores Tax Reforms

Malcolm Turnbull has given a taste of how he will conduct the election campaign, using an economic speech in Adelaide to highlight more than a dozen initiatives resulting in federal money being spent in South Australia according to *The Australian*. The Prime Minister made no mention of future tax reform or plans to narrow the budget deficit but focused instead on the local benefits flowing from the federal government's infrastructure, defense and innovation programs.

Why the States should charge income tax

Face reality: we can't vote for better schools and hospitals in state elections and lower taxes in federal elections and expect to get both. By presenting states with hard choices **Turnbull** will not only make the experimentation more real, he'll also make the states run things better. *Peter Martin, Economics Editor for The Age*.

Call for Tax Change Has Not Faded

The **Business Council** was "very surprised" when **Malcolm Turnbull** took full-blooded tax reform off the table a month ago according to *The Age*. And dismayed that a cut to Australia's 30 per cent company tax rate is not clearly on the agenda.

Abbott weighs into tax debate

Former PM **Tony Abbott** has intervened in the Liberal Party's ructions over negative gearing, supporting the conservatives who want no change to existing arrangements as per *The Herald Sun*.

Idea Never Goes Away

Ben Chifley (As treasurer), May 15th, 1942: "Nothing short of complete control of the taxation field by the commonwealth during the war will enable the huge financial demands made on the country to be met."

Bob Hawke, February 18, 1991: "The question of income tax powers between the state and the commonwealth has been on the public agenda for about half a century. We are looking at the question of vertical fiscal imbalance."

Tony Abbott, October 25, 2014: "Collectively the Australian states currently spend about 230bn a year but raise only about \$130bn from their own taxes... Can a more rational and better managed system be devised, or is change more trouble than it's worth?" – *The Australian*

\$350m cuts from taxpayer religious funding?

The Federal Government could improve the budget bottom line by \$350 million by scrapping taxpayer support for religious organisations.

The **Parliamentary Budget Office** has found the government could raise an extra \$390

million over the forward estimates by scrapping tax concessions for religious organisations, although about \$100 million would go to the states as GST. It could also save \$60 million by ending support for the controversial **National School Chaplaincy Program** according to *The Age*.

Radical tax plan to fix hospitals

States are divided on a radical tax plan to levy their own income taxes to secure hospital funding as premiers warn they want the federal government to foot the bill for their long-term health needs.

Malcolm Turnbull is proposing only a short term fix to the states hospital funding crisis with a four-year deal to 2020, but has suggested states would be allowed to levy their own income tax surcharge beyond that to cover health and education costs. State officials were provided with details for the first time with meeting of the **Council of Australian Governments** in Canberra expected to sign on a deal to resolve the impasse over hospital funding. The Prime Minister is proposing the states would assume greater responsibility for supporting their hospitals beyond 2020 through a personal income tax system similar to Canada's allowing the different levels of income tax across the states and territories. The **Australian Taxation Office** would still collect the revenue on behalf of the states, but they would each legislate their own income tax surcharge. as reported in *The Australian*.

PM's State Income Tax Gambit

Malcolm Turnbull is pushing for a radical plan to give states and territories the power to impose their own income taxes for the first time since World War II. The Prime Minister is warning of a "failure at the heart of the federation" in the way states and territories rely on Canberra for \$50 billion in tied grants, declaring it would be better to give them a share of income tax revenue and full control over how it was spent.

In a day of conflicting signals over an enormous reform, **Turnbull** acknowledged that the states would be free to raise income taxes while the Treasurer insisted there was no intention of increasing the tax burden. The Prime Minister released a statement declaring there would be no increase in the total tax because any revenue sacrificed by Canberra would be offset by reductions in payments to the state.

State premiers wary of the proposal include **Jay Weatherill** of South Australia, **Daniel Andrews** of Victoria and **Will Hodgeman** of Tasmania. Western Australian Premier **Colin**

Barnett said the idea had merit while NSW leader **Mike Baird** offered cautious support but warned against an increase in overall taxation as per *The Australian*.

Bad time for tax reform?

The government's chief tax policy adviser has criticised the tax reform process, saying an election year was a poor choice of timing for a public debate about tax and it was a mistake to allow the Treasury department to conduct the review in-house.

According to the Treasurer, "The **Board of Taxation** had been working closely with the Treasury on a series of really well researched, well-argued policy positions according to *The Age*."

Treasurer's budget tactic change

Fresh from abandoning a higher GST to fund lower income taxes, the Coalition has now ditched action to avert a "debt and deficit disaster", with Treasurer **Scott Morrison** declaring the path back to a surplus was more akin to Test Match cricket than a Twenty-20 game. He said that this meant any budget savings would be spread over multiple budgets stretching years into the future. With the government moving towards an election later this year, **Morrison** revealed existing programs would be spared the axe with cuts limited to proposed spending, according to *The Herald Sun*.

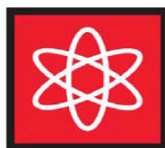
Tax Guru Heferen, Lost

Treasury has lost one of the nation's most experienced tax officials just as the government retreats on a package of income tax cuts and other reforms to the system. At a time when the Federal government's debate has reached a nadir, the department told staff the highly respected **Rob Heferen** would be leaving his post as head of Treasury's revenue group at a date still to be confirmed. **Heferen**, whose calm demeanor and command of detail on complex tax issues has made him a standout in senate estimates hearings, will move to the **Department of Industry, Innovation and Science**, where he will focus on energy resources in northern Australia. The exit will be seen as a blow for Treasury secretary **John Fraser** because it robs the department of one of its key thinkers on taxation and an important store of corporate memory for an institution that has undergone substantial staff cuts in recent years.

TOURISM

Campaign Urges Victorians To Go Wandering

The State Labor government is leveraging the low Australian dollar and cheap petrol prices to



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launch a \$3 million advertising campaign called **Wander Victoria** to lure tourists back into their cars and out to the regions. The quirky television ad, which recently began screening, follows two idle aged men who decide to walk off a meal with their wives at a winery and find their own way home. They embark on an epic journey traversing the length and breadth of Victoria from the snowy peaks of Mount Hotham to the Great Ocean Road, describes *The Australian*.

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT & ENERGY

Afloat In The Murray

A basin plan aims to protect agriculture while returning water to the environment. The committee recommended the **Productivity Commission** undertake a cost-benefit analysis of the basin plan, including analysis of the value of forgone production and food processing due to reduced irrigation water. The dairy industry in northern Victoria has lost so much irrigation water that production has not returned to levels preceding the millennium drought, notwithstanding growing global demand for dairy products.

Another recommendation is for a study into whether the **Ramsar** listing on South Australia's Lower Lakes should be estuarine rather than freshwater, and whether the barrages near the Murray's mouth, which prevent the Lower Lakes from returning to an estuary, should be modified or removed.

The committee heard evidence that much of the freshwater sent down the river to the Lower Lakes simply evaporates and could be replaced by seawater according to *The Australian*.

The Trillion Dollar Industry

If there has been a meeting of minds in Paris, a common link for the developed and developing world, the communists, big business and the Greens, it is the firm belief there is a lot of money in climate change. Like a magic pudding, the climate change response will unleash economic forces to rival the Industrial Revolution, liberate continents from poverty, boost food security and right historical wrongs.

In the nuclear-powered corridors of the **COP21 UN conference**, industrial and economic transformation is the dominant narrative that does not lack ambition. It is a seductive echo chamber where the political lessons of high electricity prices, failed government subsidy programs, reduced energy security and major renewable energy company bankruptcies don't seem to cut through the groundswell of good

feelings for change.

Trillions of dollars will be marshalled in but no one asks if \$650 billion a year being promised by US banking institutions will ever be expected to make a profit and, if so, will it need public support to do so. Government aid budgets have pledged the world's poorest developing nations new energy system at a cost of billions, but it is impolite to question whether it is value for money and what happens if they don't work. US Secretary of State **John Kerry** sees it as "the most extraordinary market opportunity in the history of mankind".

It is the sort of heady atmosphere that allows Australia Greens leader **Richard Di Natale** to declare: "There's almost a universal consensus that coal has no long-term future." The reality check is that China, India and even Germany are still looking to coal for baseload power.

China has approved 155 coal plants with a capacity of 120 gigawatts this year alone. India has plans to double domestic coal production, and all the long-range forecasts have coal providing the biggest share of electricity for decades to come as published in *The Australian*.

Events Align to Plunge Tasmania into Energy Crisis

Tasmania is now firmly in the grip of an energy crisis and even with this injection of up to 200 megawatts of dirty diesel energy, costing up to \$22m a month, the state's three major manufacturers have "voluntarily" agreed to cut production to conserve power. It is a crisis blamed on extraordinary weather events, power company mismanagement, the desire for profits before energy security, catastrophic technical failure, even the carbon tax. And the impact is multiplying, already thousands of Tasmanians are left with slow internet speeds.

The state's once mighty hydro-electric dams, source of the cheap power that drove industrialization, are approaching impotence, with storage levels falling to a record low of 14.8 per cent as per *The Australian*.

Murray's Not So Mighty

The mighty Murray River is covered in blue-green algae from Albury Wodonga to nearly Swan Hill. It is feared it will stretch to the South Australian border within weeks. Consider 700 km of the nation's greatest river engulfed in toxic slime. The Victorian government has released its draft water plan. The overriding theme is that it is going to have to work out ways to send water around the state, beyond the natural river

systems. That means pipelines.

We've already had a surge of pipeline construction across Victoria in the past decade, mainly in the north and west. The aim of the pipelines, namely the Wimmera-Mallee pipeline, the Goldfields Pipeline and the Goulburn Valley water-saving project, has been to ensure farmers and towns receive water, even during a drought. But what the pipeline designers hadn't banked on was when the source of the piped water was hit by an outbreak of blue-green algae. The problem currently is with the Wimmera-Mallee pipeline, which gets some of its water from the Murray.

As you'd expect, residents they were angry they weren't given any notice to fill tanks or dams before the pipeline was shut. Many people are skeptical of climate change. Most don't want to believe, in the hope the grim picture painted by scientists is not true.

But something is happening. We've hit March and our biggest waterway is covered in slime as reported in *The Herald Sun*.

Bin Wars: 'lawns to be strewn with litter'

A container deposit scheme could lead to scavengers picking through people's recycling bins on garbage night, according to the **Food and Grocery Council**. The council is lobbying the NSW government to adopt its scheme for increasing recycling and reducing litter instead of a 10c container deposit scheme, which exists in South Australia and The Northern Territory. The **Baird** government made an election pledge last year to introduce a container deposit scheme, a major breakthrough for environmental groups calling themselves the **Boomerang Alliance**, which has been campaigning for action for 12 years.

The ACT says it will join the NSW scheme and Queensland is also working with the NSW government. Instead, the **Food and Grocery Council** is offering a \$15 million-a-year scheme it says would reduce litter by 30 percent within 12 months. The council scheme would fund 100 rubbish collectors for litter hot spots such as highways, 2000 additional yellow topped bins in public places, 100 reverse vending machines and a scheme in which community groups would be paid \$300 per trailer for collecting containers, according to *The Australian*.

Fitbit For a Chook

Farmers have said the cost of free-range eggs could surge to \$10 a dozen if politicians decide the test for the term is whether "most hens go outside on most ordinary days" They said satisfying such a definition may require tracking birds with expensive radio frequency identification or GPS technology, as well as employing 'chicken wranglers' to force flocks out of barns according to *The Herald Sun*.

Plastic bags off shelf

Victorians face a supermarket plastic bag ban after the State government committed to developing a national approach to bin them. *The Herald Sun* revealed that the government favours a ban over a levy, to stamp out as many of the 3.9 billion single-use lightweight shopping bags used every year in Australia.

The change is likely to elicit a heated reaction from shoppers and would come more than seven years after a 10c levy on bags was tested in a handful of supermarkets. Victoria has joined a group set up by NSW and Queensland

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governments to plan for bagless shopping, after being told a federal government ban would not be established.

Supermarket giant **Coles** said it was “committed to reducing consumer reliance on single-use lightweight plastic bags” and provided other bags for sale. But while the firm said it complies with bans in the four states and territories that have them: SA, Tasmania, ACT and Northern Territory, customers prefer choice.

Lights Out for Coal

Coal-fired power generation is quietly being phased out, with eight of the nation's 12 dirtiest coal fired stations already skittered and emissions set to fall by a fifth by 2022. Environment Department figures indicate 11 of Australia's 30 coal-fired power stations have closed or have announced a closure date in the past five years. Based on announcements already made, the Environment Department estimates emissions from coal-fired power stations will be 19 per cent below 2010 levels by 2022. The closures mean more than 2700mw of the most emissions intensive electricity generation has been taken out of the system in the past five years.

Closures include the **Energy Brix** plant in Victoria, which produced more than 3.2 tonnes of carbon dioxide for every megawatt hour of electricity. It closed in 2014. **Playford** in South Australia, the nation's third most polluting plant at 1.39 tonnes of carbon dioxide for every MWh, and **Redbank** in NSW, the fifth most polluting station, also closed in 2014 according to *The Australian*.

AGRICULTURE, CATTLE & WATER

La La Land over Live Exports

A little known reason that countries want to import live stock is that many countries want live breeding animals so they can start their own livestock industries. Australian farmers would like nothing more than to have their livestock slaughtered locally before export. It would mean more income and more local jobs. But many overseas customers don't want that. They want live animals.

Another fact activists won't acknowledge is welfare standards. Australia has the highest live-export welfare standards in the world. “Australia is the only country that requires specific animal welfare outcomes for livestock exports,” according to the *Herald Sun*.

In saying they want Australian exports banned, activists are really demanding that animals should be exported from other countries under lower welfare standards. The next time **Julie Bishop** is ambushed by ill-informed attention seekers she should ask them why they want live-export animals to suffer. Because if Australia pulled out of the live sheep, cattle or goat export business that is exactly what will happen.

Tighter Knitted Wool Called For

There is loud support across the country for the physical wool-selling system to be centralised in Melbourne. The declining wool clip has fuelled debate regarding the amalgamation of Fremantle, Sydney and Melbourne wool factions following the **Australian Wool Innovation Wool Selling System Review (WSSR)** which highlighted the need for urgent industry attention. The national wool clip has contracted by 60-70 per cent below the peak levels of the

1980s to an estimated 322 thousand kilograms in the 2015/16 season.

Last 2014/2015 season 1,813,186 were sold through the **Australian Wool Exchange**. Of the bales sold, 946,010 were through the Melbourne auction house, 526,156 in Sydney and 311,000 in Fremantle, according to *The Australian*.

MEDIA

Prime minister dictates radio guests

An **ABC** radio presenter says the **Prime Ministers Office** tried to dictate who would appear on panel out of desperation over Senate voting reforms.

As the upper house descended into insults and fiery exchanges over the government's proposed changes to the way Australians elect senators, a battle was unfolding behind the scenes of Adelaide's top-rating radio breakfast program.

Amid confusion over who from the Coalition was slated to appear on **ABC 891** Adelaide's “Super Wednesday” segment where South Australian federal politicians dissect Canberra goings-on, broadcaster **Matthew Abrahams** said the **PMO** had tried to replace former cities minister **Jamie Briggs** with Assistant Agriculture Minister **Anne Ruston**.

“We had a message from one of the Prime Minister's media advisers... There was a slight mix-up,” according to *The Age*.

Female Star Replaces Lyon As Footy Show Co-Host

Rebecca Maddern is the surprising new co-host of *The Footy Show* – and the former Channel 7 newsreader has **Gary Lyon's** blessing to join the **Nine Network's** program alongside **James Brayshaw** and **Sam Newman**. Nine management decided it had to replace **Lyon**, who had stepped down indefinitely as per *The Herald Sun*.

Sporting codes hit protected TV for six

The federal government is facing renewed calls from the nation's most powerful sporting codes including the **AFL**, **NRL** and **Cricket Australia** to reduce the number of events that are restricted to only being screened on free-to-air television. The codes are concerned that their media reform bill limits their ability to achieve the best possible prices for their TV rights by leaving anti-siphoning legislation untouched even after securing recent record-breaking deals as reported in *The Australian*.

Anger over Ricketson's appointment

The journalists union is facing a backlash after one of the architects of the **Finkelstein** report agreed to re-present it on the **Press Council** in a shock appointment that has confounded members and publishers.

Professor **Matthew Ricketson** helped former judge **Ray Finkelstein** draw up a report in 2012 that called for the establishment of a statutory regulator of all news media that would have been empowered to enforce its decisions through court orders exposing journalists to the risk of fines or prison sentences.

The **Media Entertainment and Arts Alliance** invited Professor **Ricketson** to represent it on the **Press Council** despite its consistent opposition to the **News Media Council**. It did so after **Professor Ricketson** agreed in writing to be bound by the union's policies. However, some members of the **MEAA**

Federal Council are mystified as to why **MEAA** chief executive **Paul Murphy** pushed for the union to be represented on the press regulation body by person who opposes the union's views on press regulation.

Merge More Media

Major media companies will be given the green light to merge under sweeping changes to media ownership laws to be introduced to parliament. The Federal Government has confirmed it will scrap the “reach rule”, which bans broadcasters from controlling television licenses that reach more than 75% of the Australian population. But the government will boost local content initiatives after some National MPs raised concerns about broadcasters closing regional bureaus if the reach rule was relaxed as published in *The Herald Sun*.

Scott Says ABC Coverage ‘Too Narrow’

Departing **ABC** managing director **Mark Scott** says the public broadcaster must continue to challenge itself to ensure editorial coverage is not “too narrow” as he warns budget cuts could cut 10 per cent of its news funding.

As he ends his decade-long reign, **Scott** told *Media Watch* that the **ABC's** expansion into digital platforms and the creation of a television channel **News 24** had created a “tension” in balancing resources. The **ABC** had “strong editorial standards” that demanded fairness, he said, but challenges remained for the service in appealing to the wider public.

Fairfax Editor-in-Chief Steps Down

The Age's editor-in-chief, **Andrew Holden**, will leave **Fairfax Media** after 13 years, as the media company prepares a restructure of its metropolitan newsrooms that will not involve job cuts. **Mark Forbes**, currently news director, will become the acting editor-in-chief of *The Age*.

JUSTICE

Jenkins in Top Job

Victorian lawyer and Carlton Football Club board member **Kate Jenkins** has been named Australia's new sex discrimination commissioner. The position has been vacant since September when former commissioner **Elizabeth Broderick** finished. **Jenkins** was appointed the **Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commissioner** in 2013 after two decades as a lawyer according to *The Herald Sun*.

Same Registrar Signed 10 times – ICAC's Warrants Practices Revealed

The NSW corruption watchdog has been accused of a practice akin to “judge shopping” by using the same registrar at least 10 times to authorise raids on high-profile politicians, a crown prosecutor, businessmen and public officials. The court registrar **Stephen Lister** also authorised the seizure of NSW Deputy Senior Crown Prosecutor **Margaret Cuneen's** mobile phone, enabling the **Independent Commission Against Corruption** to re-seize the phone after taking it a week earlier.

Whistleblower Watchdog called into question

Dumped NSW State Emergency Service Commissioner **Murray Kear** has called on NSW Premier **Mike Baird** to do something about the NSW corruption watchdog, after he was found not guilty of sacking a whistleblower. **Kear** was the first person to be charged under the whistleblower legislation and faced the prospect of two years in jail. He was finally cleared by

Magistrate **Greg Grigin**, on finding there was no element of revenge, payback or retaliation against the whistleblower as reported in *The Australian*.

Leighton's bribery ran into millions

The Australian revealed that the offshore arm of Australian company **Leighton Holdings** paid millions of dollars in bribes to middlemen as part of an audacious strategy to influence Iraq's deputy prime minister, oil minister and other senior officials, and win more than \$1.3 billion of oilfield contracts.

Exposed At Last: Dirty Deals

A massive leak of confidential documents has for the first time exposed the true extent of corruption within the oil industry, implicating dozens of leading companies, bureaucrats and politicians in a sophisticated global web of bribery and graft. After a six-month investigation across two continents, *Fairfax Media* and *The Huffington Post* can reveal that billions of dollars of government contracts were awarded as the direct result of bribes paid on behalf of firms including British icon **Rolls-Royce**, US giant **Halliburton**, Australia's **Leighton Holdings** and Korean heavyweights **Samsung** and **Hyundai**.

Construction Unionists face prosecution

The number of militant construction unionists facing prosecution for allegedly wreaking havoc on the nation's building sites has soared to 100, as **Malcolm Turnbull** places industrial lawlessness at the heart of his election campaign.

The **Construction Forestry, Mining and Energy Union**, its state branches and officials have also been fined a total of \$7 million for industrial breaches which have been dealt with by the courts since 2002. *The Australian* revealed the **Fair Work Building and Construction** agency has launched action against 100 **CFMEU** officials and delegates who are before the courts, accused of more than 1000 industrial breaches.

Acute Arthritis claims denied

In a development that widens the scandal engulfing **Commonwealth Bank's** life insurance division, *Fairfax Media* reveals that **CommInsure** and other insurers including **AMP** and **Zurich** have been using definitions for severe rheumatoid arthritis that medical professionals say unfairly prevent customers from receiving payouts. The trauma insurance policies require customers to be "deformed" by the condition, and meet other criteria, including blood tests, before they can receive a payment. However, modern treatments prevent many patients with severe rheumatoid arthritis becoming deformed, even as they continue to suffer from the pain and debilitation brought on by the condition, as reported in *The Age*.

BROADBAND & IT

Turnbull NDIS Control Bid

The Federal Government has made a bid for effective control of the **National Disability Insurance Scheme** in a move that would allow it to rein in its scope and cost, after successfully pushing out the board that has overseen the founding of the scheme.

At the same time, it has won agreement from the states for the board of the **NDIS** to be expanded by three places, a move that could give it effective immediate control over the scheme ahead of the federal budget and the

currently planned massive scaling up of operations in July. Those board directors whose terms will be extended until the end of 2016 include the chairman of the **NDIS** and the man regarded as the father of the scheme, businessman **Bruce Bonehady** as reported in *The Age*.

\$1.4m blown on Ulnetnet promotion

The **Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC)** is investigating how contract for the **Ulnetnet** project were awarded and tendered, whether education department employees received gifts, travel and job opportunities, and whether they purchased shares in the company that won the multimillion dollar IT contract.

The **Ulnetnet IT** project was meant to deliver an online platform that connected teachers, parents and students, but it was plagued with technical difficulties and rarely used after its rollout in 2010. The former Naphthine government dumped the **Ulnetnet** project in 2013.

The costs of the project blew out from \$60 million to a maximum of \$240 million, the inquiry heard, far more than the \$180 million previously reported.

A video played at the County Court showed professional singers and dancers performing at the **Ulnetnet** "Big Day Out" launch at the **Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre** in August 2010. The inquiry was told that education department senior executives bought shares in Darwin-based company **CSG Limited** shortly before and after it won the tender for the botched **Ulnetnet** project.

In the hearing's opening address, **Hill** heard questions about the integrity of the **Ulnetnet** tender process, alleging **Darrell Fraser** may have leaked 'confidential' information to **CSG Limited**, while the company was tendering for the contract according to *The Age*.

WELFARE

Painful fees at heart of reform push

Privately insured patients being lumbered with high out-of-pocket costs which in some specialties average \$2000 for just one item on a hospital bill, have prompted Health Minister **Susan Ley** to focus key reforms on "empowering" consumers. Ahead of insurance premiums rising by an average of 5.59 per cent next month, and amid concerns over policy coverage and the impact of restrictions and exclusions, new data reveals the biggest gap fees after **Medicare** rebates and health fund contributions are taken into account. *The Australian* revealed that **Medibank Private** and **Bupa** had sought to contain costs by asking doctors to sign a declaration before surgery that the procedures were clinically necessary and not purely cosmetic.

Middle Class Aged Welfare Under the Knife

Retirees with substantial wealth tied up in their homes might soon face the prospect of losing their pension, the head of the **Productivity Commission** says. Chairman **Peter Harris** will tell a breakfast in Perth this morning that Australia is ill-prepared for the coming flood of relatively healthy long lived retirees, as reported by *The Age*.

TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE

Hydro Tasmania Fails Questions Over Crisis

Companies that use a lot of electricity want to know why **Hydro Tasmania**, the state-owned electricity monopoly, sold power to Victoria last

year only months before shortages hit the island, as reported in the *Financial Review*.

Infrastructure Plan Lacks Critical Funding

Infrastructure Australia's new 15-year development plan may lack a crucial ingredient, being political funding. It classifies two of its highest priority projects as the **East-West Link** route to Melbourne's airport, and Perth's \$1.6 billion **Freight Link** road project, which is behind schedule after a court decision in December that environmental approvals were invalid.

Car manufacturers diversify

More than half of the car component makers in Victoria are likely to survive the looming shutdown of the car-makers, diversifying their operations and reducing forecast job losses. 51 of Victoria's 136 component suppliers have diversified, as per *The Australian*.

Pay To Drive on the cards

Treasury secretary **John Fraser** has swung his weight behind the concept of directly charging motorists for the miles they drive, declaring it an inevitable solution as governments seek more stable and fairer ways of funding roads, bridges and tunnels.

In a speech **Fraser** warned that infrastructure spending shouldn't been seen as a panacea for a lack of short-term economic growth, he also backed the use of so-called revenue capture funding for projects, according to *The Australian*.

EDUCATION

Safe Schools Controversy Continues

The Federal Government has announced widespread changes to its controversial anti-bullying **Safe Schools Program** despite a review finding the content to be generally suitable, educationally sound and age-appropriate for schools. The **Safe Schools** program will now be limited to secondary schools, after an independent review of the program led by Professor **Bill Louden**, found that a number of the resources had lessons and content not necessarily appropriate for all children.

Education Minister **Simon Birmingham** said the government had ordered that several sections of the program be redesigned and all references to external websites omitted except for mental health support. Senator **Birmingham** said the program would be restricted to high schools only, and require schools to obtain parental consent, and undertaking actions that will see the official resources of the program moved from the **Safe Schools Coalition** website to the **Safe School** hub.

The controversial anti-bullying program was launched by then education minister **Christopher Pyne** in 2014, and was intended to increase support for and reduce prejudice against LGBTI students. It has been rolled out in 526 schools 'across the country, and has faced staunch criticism from conservative backbenchers, including **Cory Bernardi** and **George Christensen**.

The review refers to some of the lessons in the "All of Us" resource for teachers. In one lesson, students were asked to role-play what it would be like to be same-sex attracted. That lesson was deemed problematic for students from conservative cultural groups. South Australian **Bernardi's** staunch stance against the Coalition saw his office stormed by angry protesters.

What Is Safe Schools?

- An \$8 million taxpayer funded sexuality program that teaches years 7 and 8 students about sexual diversity and inclusion.
- Nearly 500 schools are part of the program.
- Pitched as an anti-bullying program to support lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex students who make up at least 10 per cent of the school population.
- Students' participation does not require parental consent because it's not deemed to be sex education.

Safe Schools judge gay youth co-chair

An academic paid with government money to independently evaluate the controversial **Safe Schools Coalition** anti-bullying program is the co-chair of a gay and transgender organisation that was promoted in the school material.

University of Sydney academic **Crysten Davies** is one of the researchers undertaking a \$270,000 evaluation of the program. She is also the co-chair of **Twenty10**, a counseling service for young gay and transgender people as reported in *The Australian*.

Phoenix Institute fails to rise from the ashes
Training college **Australian Careers Network** was placed into administration, leaving 15,000 students in limbo after 16 troubled months on the share-market. The federal Department of Education pulled the company's funding following concerns from regulators about its treatment of students. Its **Phoenix Institute** signed up students in an indigenous community with limited internet access to online diplomas that carried debts of almost \$30,000. Federal Vocational Education Minister **Scott Ryan** and Victorian Vocational Educational Minister **Steve Herbert** have lashed out at the "shonky" and "cowboy" operators plaguing the industry as per *The Financial Review*.

Transgender 'Brainwash'

A mother has withdrawn her children from **Frankston High School** over a new transgender awareness program. **Cella White** says her son, 14, was told he could wear a dress and boys who identified as female could use the girls' change room and toilet. Principal **John Albiston** denied pupils were being brainwashed. He said all state schools must join the **Safe Schools** coalition by 2018 and his was showing "we openly celebrate differences and support students who identify with the LGBTI community"

Education Minister **James Merlino's** spokesman expressed pride in the **Safe Schools Coalition**: "Discrimination, harassment and bullying have no place. It is up to all of us to establish safe and inclusive learning environments for every one of our students" according to *The Herald Sun*.

Bullies Pront to lean to the left

Socialist students stormed the Adelaide office of conservative Liberal MP **Cory Bernardi** and trashed it. This was not just a protest, it was intimidation. A protest does not need such violence. It can be called in a park or at your home or office, where speeches can be made and interviews given.

Intimidation, though, is when you go to someone else's home or place of work and make people there feel too frightened to be able to go about their lawful business.

That's what we're now seeing in the US, with Leftists using force to try to shut down rallies of

Republican contender **Donald Trump**. Some have sent death threats to his son **Eric**, and released **Trump's** personal data on the internet.

These people don't want to debate Trump. They want to silence him. These protesters don't betray their principles, but advertise them. This was their totalitarianism at work: that itch to make people do what you say, not by persuasion but by force.

The real goal of protesters like this is obviously not the one they gave, to stop bullying. Not when they are bullies themselves. No, the real goal is power over others.

As philosopher **Bertrand Russell** famously said: "Much that passes as idealism is disguised hatred or disguised love of power." True, these were just students, in the main, but behind them is the **Socialist Alternative**, run by older people.

It seems **Bernardi** is more or less fair game, being conservative and opposed to a safe schools program that is designed less to stop bullying and more to redefine sexual identity on neo-Marxist principles. *Andrew Bolt for The Herald Sun*.

Parents call for Safe Schools program in primary schools

Under pressure from the Coalition's conservative wing, Federal Education Minister **Simon Birmingham** ruled mid-March that the **Safe Schools** program would be banned from primary schools. Victorian Education Minister **James Merlino** staunchly defended the program, and upheld a promise to make **Safe Schools** compulsory for all secondary state schools by the end of 2018. But he has fallen short of making it compulsory for state primary schools as published in *The Age*.

Remove Textbook Import Ban

The **National Union of Students** has launched a campaign to make textbooks cheaper, and is calling for the removal of import restrictions on books. But they are at loggerheads with the **Australian Publishers Association**, which says removing "parallel import restrictions" will damage the local publishing industry. More the 4200 people, including **RMIT** psychology student **Abena Dove**, have signed a petition calling for the federal government to repeal import restrictions on textbooks. Research released by **Universities Australia** in 2013 estimates that the average full-time student spends about \$602 a year on text books, making it one of the most expensive study-related costs. The **NUS** said the rules meant local publishers had a monopoly on the industry. Booksellers are unable to import copies of the textbooks if they have already been published and are available in Australia according to *The Age*.

Runner to Riches

15 year old Ballarat schoolgirl **Talia Martin** claimed a thrilling **Stawell Gift** victory. The **Loreto** college student received \$40,000 for her efforts and plans to save most of it. **Martin's** victory wasn't without controversy with Martin, who ran off 13 metres, being fined \$2000 of her winnings by **Victorian Athletic League** stewards for "inconsistent running" according to the *Herald Sun*.

Dogma Invades Unis

At the **University of NSW**, students of subjects such as criminal law are required to learn about "appropriate" and "inappropriate" words. Phrases such as "pre-invasion history" are

preferred, and it is offensive to say Captain James Cook "discovered" the country was published in *The Herald Sun*.

Cost Aside, Laptops a Curse, Say Teachers

As it questioned the ubiquitous use of computers in classrooms, the **Australian Education Union's** president, **Correna Haythorpe**, said she was concerned parents were required to pay for laptops, initially provided free by the former **Rudd** government through the \$2.4billion **Digital Education Revolution Scheme**. **Haythorpe** said some public schools now required parents to buy \$1500 laptops even though they were not essential in every class. "If you're in an English literature class that requires deep thought, conversation and analysis, it might be that the best thing is to check laptops at the door," she said as reported in *The Australian*

Safe Schools Hard-Left Leader

The architect behind a contentious sexual diversity program set to become mandatory across all Victorian schools is an outspoken Hard-left warrior who has publicly denounced Immigration Minister **Peter Dutton** as a "sexist". **Safe Schools Coalition** Victoria co-founder **Roz Ward** has also conceded the **Safe Schools Coalition** program is part of a broadly Marxist strategy to change society.

Ward is a **La Trobe University** academic who moonlights as a writer for **Red Flag**, the publication of the **Socialist Alternative**, a Trotskyite self-described Marxist organisation that has become a dominant force among university radicals and the broader activist movement. **Ward's** recent contribution include an article published in January, titled "Sexist Messages" are the least of **Peter Dutton's** crimes where she accuses the minister of being responsible for instances of sexual abuse being experienced by refugees at the Nauru processing centre.

"He is responsible for these horrors," she writes. "Sure, call out casual sexism, but we should rage longer and harder against his ongoing crimes against refugees."

In another article, **Ward** accused the Liberals of turning train stations into prisons after the introduction of a safety policy in 2012 of manning platforms with armed guards. She denounced the guards, known as "protective services officers" as "uniformed thugs, as reported by *The Australian*.

\$640m lost in schools

Victorian independent schools received \$640 million in grants, but a report has warned no one is tracking how the money is spent. Victorian Acting Auditor-General Dr **Peter Frost** said the Education Department needed to follow the money to make sure schools were spending it as intended. "There are significant weaknesses in **DET's** funding agreements with system authorities and non-government schools, and it's grant management has been poor," he said. "My audit found limited assurance grants are used for their intended purpose."

Australian Universities beaten only by US and UK

Australian universities are the third best in the world after the United States and Britain, based on a ranking of subject disciplines according to *The Age*. Australia is stronger in the social sciences than in technology, life sciences and natural sciences. In computing science and information systems, the University of

Melbourne is Australia's leading institution, ranked 13th in the world.

Settlement, not climate

Paleontologists examining two caves on South Australia's **Fleurieu Peninsula** have proved Europeans killed off far more native species than first thought, debunking theories climate change might also have been to blame. It has long been thought that up to 25 per cent of native mammal species became extinct after European settlement, but **Matt McDowell** from **Flinders University's** school of Biological Science said the figure was closer to 50 per cent as reported in *The Australian*.

Australia: You're Failing

A new report from the **Grattan Institute** gave Australia's educators plenty more to think about. Amid declining standards in a global context, Australia's own domestic assessment system was also found wanting. The report found many of the nation's students were incapable of reaching benchmarks set by the **Australian Curriculum, Assessment and Reporting Authority**.

According to **The Grattan Institute**, year 9 students were meeting the minimum standard even if they were actually achieving below the level of a typical year 5 student. "Australia must raise its sights," says the report's author **Peter Goss**. All the while the computer literacy of the nation's students has reached a crisis point. The 2015 results showed that in an area crucial to the nation's future prosperity, only 55 per cent of 10,000 students tested by ACARA were considered IT proficient.

As published in *The Age*, the chair of the **National Committee for Mathematical Sciences**, **Nalini Joshi**, says that compulsory mathematical subjects "absolutely have to become a national policy".

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Australia joins UN on China's Human Rights

Australia has joined the US, Japan and nine European nations in condemning China's deteriorating human rights record at the **United Nations Human Rights Council**, saying China had violated its own laws and international commitments, according to *The Australian*.

Karadzic gets 40 years for murder

A UN war crimes court yesterday convicted former Bosnian Serb leader **Radovan Karadzic** of genocide and nine other charges for orchestrating a campaign of terror that left 100,000 people dead during the 1992-1995 civil war as reported in *The Australian*.

US is making a second Middle East, says China

China has reacted angrily to an agreement between Washington and Manila, which will allow American military forces access to disputed areas of the South China Sea. State owned news agency **Xinhua** accused the United States of fuelling tensions after Washington announced five locations that its forces can have access to under a 10-year security deal with the Philippines.

"Muddying waters in the South China Sea and making the Asia-Pacific a second Middle East will do no good to the United States," **Xinhua** said in a commentary posted on its website as per *The Financial Review*.

Garland Nominated to US Supreme Court

Washington President Barack Obama announced he is nominating **Merrick Garland** to serve on the Supreme Court, setting up a protracted political fight with Republicans who have vowed to block any candidate picked by **The White House**. **Garland**, 63, was a longtime Washington lawyer and jurist who is chief judge on the US Court of Appeals for the District of Columbia Circuit. Considered a moderate, he is widely respected in the DC legal community and was also a finalist for the first two Supreme Court vacancies **Obama** filled, as per *The Australian*.

Rio Grand

Our Olympic athletes will be wearing a classic Aussie colour combination when they step out at the opening ceremony of the Rio Olympics this year according to *The Herald Sun*.

Nuke Sales to Ukraine

Australia will soon sell uranium to Ukraine for power generation as per *The Herald Sun*.

Dump Complex Regulation, urges former Bank of England Boss

Mervyn King, governor of the **Bank of England** for a decade to 2013, has slammed the futile complexity of bank regulation, calling for its replacement with simple, robust rules to prevent financial crises and restore confidence in what he calls "The Achilles heel of capitalism".

In what will be awkward remarks for Australia's and the world's largest banks and regulators, **King**, now economics professor at **New York University**, says regulators should "scrap the tens of thousands of pages of financial regulation" in favour of two rules: that leverage be capped and bank deposits backed by safe, liquid assets at or pledged to the central bank.

Speaking to *The Australian* about his new book on the flaws of finance, *The End of Anarchy*, **King** implicitly damned prevailing regulation that permits banks to be leveraged up to 33 times and allows them, via complex risk-eights, to influence their own capital levels.

King, who also sits on the **House of Lords** cross bench, blames "partly vested interest but also lack of intellectual imagination" for the lack of meaningful reform in the wake of "the biggest financial crisis the world has ever seen", in contrast to dramatic reforms after the 1930s depression.

The book also argues that central banks should become "pawn brokers for all seasons" rather than "lenders of the last resort" – a practice that has exposed them (and hence taxpayers) to losses by compelling central banks to make loans against potentially bad assets in crises. "When **Walter Bageshot** and **Henry Thornton** invented this idea in the 19th century, the banking system looked very different: it had a very large slug of safe, short-term assets", he said in *The Australian*.

Bar lifted for foreign asset buyers

Private foreign investors seeking to buy major state assets will have to jump new hurdles under a rule change.

The change comes in the wake of the controversial approval of the sale of the **Port of**

Darwin to Chinese Investors, which attracted criticism from defence officials.

From March 31 the **Foreign Investment Review Board** will review what are known as "critical infrastructure assets" sold by state and territory governments to private investors, as per *The Age*.

FIRB queried Defence

The national security implications of leasing Darwin's port to a Chinese company so concerned the **Foreign Investment Review Board** that it questioned the Defence Department three times before deciding the transaction did not fall into its remit.

Because of its structure, which has been criticized as opaque and as escaping proper scrutiny, **FIRB** chairman **Brian Wilson**, appearing before a Senate enquiry into foreign investment framework, said the agency had made preliminary inquiries when it was not clear who the successful bidder for the port would be.

Wilson said he would have asked the navy "a fourth time to be sure they were comfortable" if he had known an agreement giving Defence access to the port would expire in just 25 years while **Landbridge's** lease would still have 74 years to run as reported in *The Australian*.

Trump's Foreign Policy

Republican presidential frontrunner **Donald Trump** has declared a disastrous foreign policy approach for Australia, saying his country can no longer afford its military involvement in Asia and that **NATO** is a waste of money, according to *The Australian*.

Would anyone mind if the trade deal fell over?

Hillary Clinton is misguided. Her opposition to the **Trans-Pacific Partnership** is based on "misinformation". **Malcolm Turnbull's** new Trade Minister says so. Within hours of being sworn in, **Steven Ciobo** eschewed the traditional approach of getting up to speed and consulting widely, and blundered into the US presidential race.

"I am not surprised that the trade union movement and, of course, the political arm of the Australian Labor Party is on a similar platform to, for example, **Hillary Clinton**," he told *The Financial Review*. "They both derive their key support from the union movement."

Asked directly whether his opposition to the TPP was based on misinformation, he replied: "absolutely". And he was going to bake it up.

"I will not take a backwards step in terms of putting forward the clear, truthful situation in the face of an ongoing campaign of misinformation," he said, according to an editorial by **Peter Martin** of *The Australian*.

Innovate and take risks to get growth going: leaders urge

Australian business needs to be more bold in Asia, embrace the risk of failure, and incentivize employees to inject a start-up culture, leading business figures told the **Financial Review Business Summit**. Tech billionaire **Mike Cannon-Brookes** took aim at the high cost of living while the **Business Council of Australia's Jennifer Westacott** called on the federal government to tackle Australia's lack of tax competitiveness. But Treasurer **Scott Morrison** warned the summit that tax reform could only be delivered over a "multi-budget" timeframe, despite the business leaders warning Australia risked being left behind.

China deserves more work

Australia should be at the top of the list of countries benefiting from China's consumption boom but companies are not investing enough capital and resources on the ground, a panel of China specialists has told the summit. Australian companies need to get over their fear and reluctance to spend on opening offices in China according to the *Financial Review*.

DEFENCE

Germany Behind Turnbull's Sub Position

Germany has backed the Federal government's decision to rewrite **Tony Abbott's** draft defence white paper to delay the timetable for future submarines, saying the move was sensible and prudent. Germany, which is bidding to build the new subs, has also rejected claims that the US is quietly backing Japan in its bid to build Australia's new submarines, saying US officials promised Germany that Washington would remain neutral.

John White, chairman of German shipbuilder **TKMS Australia**, defended the rewriting of the submarine schedule, saying it made good sense because of the risks involved, as reported in *The Australian*.

Spies to take attack to cyber terrorists

An aggressive new plan to deter the escalating rate of criminal and state-sponsored cyber attacks targeting Australia's critical infrastructure will be launched within weeks. The **Prime Minister's Cyber Security Strategy**, the government's first cyber security update since 2009, will include details of \$400 million in defence spending over the next 10 years as part of the push to drive industry, defence and academia to co-operate in defending Australian interests and developing the capability for Australia to launch cyber offensives against enemy combatants such as terrorists groups.

While financial markets, communications, defence industries, transport and water have all been targeted, the secretive **Australian Signals Directorate** and the government's **Australian Cyber Security Centre** have found the nation's energy networks have been a particular interest to cyber attackers. Energy networks were attacked at least 60 times in 2014-2015 according to *The Financial Review*.

Collins Subs Retirement

The **Collins Class** submarine fleet's life will need to be extended and its systems upgraded while the nation waits for its replacement and potential regional rivals develop their own fleets, Defence chiefs have acknowledged. Their remarks came as a former prime minister **Tony Abbott** faced backlash over his endorsement of Japan's submarine bid, despite having established a supposedly impartial "competitive evaluation process" in office. In a briefing on last week's Defence white paper, Chief of the Defence Force **Mark Binskin** confirmed that the **Collins** fleet would need to be extended well past its planned retirement starting about 2026. The white paper revealed that the 12 new submarines will not come into operation until the early 2030s. Meanwhile half the world's submarines will be in the Indo-Pacific region by 2035 according to *The Age*.

No Favourites In Subs Race: Richardson

Defence secretary **Dennis Richardson** has tipped cold seawater on speculation Japan is the clear frontrunner in the \$50billion race to supply replacement submarines for the Australian navy. Under **Tony Abbott's** prime

ministership it was assumed Japan would prevail because of an understanding between **Abbott** and Japan's Prime Minister **Shinzo Abe**, but that nexus appears to have been eroded.

Richardson has declined to meet representatives of the respective bidders, including government ministers, industry leaders and lobbyists who have been swarming over Canberra for months. "If I met one I would have to meet them all," he says.

Considering its growing military ties with Australia, Japan may well emerge victorious in the bidding war, but **Richardson** makes it clear all contenders have some way to go to convince Australia their bid is superior according to *The Financial Review*.

Japanese Subs' Batteries May Explode: Rival

Japan's avowed intention to put high-tech lithium ion batteries in the replacement fleet for the **Collins Class** submarines could put Australian navy personnel at risk, the rival French bid has said in a dramatic escalation of the public battle for the \$50 billion project. Signalling the gloves are well and truly off in the contest between France, Japan and Germany, the French ship-builder DCNS has also warned Australia that it would be taking on Japan's strategic baggage if it tightens its relationship with China's historic rival through a submarine deal.

The firm has even raised the spectre of Australia's being dragged into a future conflict between the north Asian giants if it becomes wedded to Japan through any submarine deal. Speaking to Australian journalists in Paris, the firm's chairman **Herve Guiliou** and deputy chief executive **Marie-Pierre de Baillencourt** said lithium ion battery technology was not yet sufficiently developed to use in submarines and doing so before it was perfected would be dangerous.

De Baillencourt and **Guiliou** said a partnership with France would also bring strategic benefits according to *The Australian*.

It's About A Rules-based Order

The Head of the defense department, **Dennis Richardson**, discusses the new white paper with **Tony Walker**. **Dennis Richardson** resists the phrase "blue-water navy" to describe the defining characteristic of the 2016 Defence white paper, but the planned acquisition of vastly enhanced maritime capabilities is at the core of the most significant document to come out of the defence establishment in many years.

And one that is being driven by concerns about China's rise, and in particular its growing assertiveness in the South China and East China seas through which passes the bulk of Australian seaborne trade.

Richardson describes the white paper as a watershed moment in defence planning. It includes the decision to institute a "continuous build" capability for warships in Australian dockyards in contrast to a previous ad hoc approach. "For the first time in Australian history we are establishing a permanent naval shipbuilding capability in Australia," **Richardson** tells *The Financial Review*.

Neither **Richardson** nor his deputy, **Peter Baxter**, want to characterize far-reaching naval

investments as an indication Australia is intent on projecting over vast areas well beyond our shores, but this is precisely what is described in the document itself. "Highly capable and versatile naval and maritime forces are vital to our defence strategy."

Jobs Cut as Subs Delayed

Australian shipbuilder **ASC** will axe 110 jobs in South Australia as it awaits access to the location to build offshore patrol vessels and future frigates. About 70 positions will come from the **Air Warfare Destroyer**, with a further 40 jobs to be cut from the Collins-class submarine maintenance program. **ASC** has 2296 permanent employees in South Australia working on the AWD project, Collins maintenance program, future submarine project and in the corporate head office.

The announcement on job losses to be implemented from next month came a day after briefings from **Australian Defence Force** chief **Mark Binskin** about a decision to keep six Collins-class submarines in operation until they are replaced in the 2030s. Under the current maintenance regime, the boats enter full-cycle docking two years after 10 years of active duty, spending a further six to 12 months out of water every five years for a mid-cycle docking, according to *The Australian*.

Denmarks and Warships

Denmark will need to fend off at least five other larger nations circling like vultures to grab the second largest Defence contract in Australia's history, the \$30billion project to build nine new frigates. Since the defence white paper was released, the headlines have all been about the \$50bn future submarines, while the **Future Frigate** project largely sails under the radar. But in many ways the stakes involved in building the fleet of navy frigates to replace the eight Anzac class frigates are just as high as for the submarines, and certainly more immediate, reports *The Herald Sun*.

US Department's Secret Poll

The US State Department secretly polled nationwide opinion of the Northern Territory's deal to lease Darwin port to Chinese firm **Landbridge**, predicting it would "likely force Australians to rethink their choices of when to put national security ahead of economic gain." Almost half those surveyed said allowing a Chinese company to manage the port posed "a lot of risk" to national security and nine in 10 said it posed at least some risk, according to internal US government research obtained by *The Australian*. Only 11 per cent said it did not pose any risk at all.

Digger Disease: Alarm at suicide stats

Returned Diggers are nearly three times more likely to take their own lives or consider suicide, a damning report into the state of veteran's mental health has revealed as per the *Herald Sun*.

A Senate inquiry, prompted by the high rate of mental health problems among veterans and the high rate of homelessness, has recommended drastic intervention.

INDIGENOUS

Council Recognition to miss deadline

Secret documents reveal the body responsible for managing Australia's next steps towards recognizing indigenous people in the Constitution has missed its own deadlines and privately conceded it may need more time, prompting **Malcolm Turnbull** and **Bill Shorten** to warn against losing momentum.

The Prime Minister and Opposition Leader last night called on the **Referendum Council** not to lightly abandon a May 27, 2017 recognition referendum date, while also stressing the need to ensure consultations ahead of any vote were thorough and built widespread support, particularly among indigenous people according to *The Australian*.

SPORTS & ARTS

MCC Still Sitting on the fence

The **Melbourne Cricket Club** will soon decide if cyclone fencing will surround the **MCG** for the football season, as per *The Herald Sun*.

Pies Drug Shock

A quarter of Collingwood's playing list recorded positive to tests to illicit drugs over summer. The bombshell is evidence that the AFL and its 18 clubs are losing the fight against their use according to *The Herald Sun*.

Mother of all coups for gallery

In its first showing in Australia, *Arrangement in Grey and Black No 1: Portrait of the Artist's Mother*, more popularly known as *Whistler's Mother*, was unveiled in all its somber glory at the **National Gallery of Victoria** recently. A delighted **Tony Ellwood**, the **NGV's**, said of *Whistler's Mother*, "We all know it is one of the most iconic and well-known paintings in art history... So there's a great deal of excitement for the NGV to have it here in Australia" as per *The Australian*.

Live Sports Betting Ban Until Poll

Online betting on live sport will be banned until at least the federal election and unlicensed foreign bookmakers barred from taking bets from Australians under sweeping reforms to be announced by the Federal Government. In a bid to regulate the rapidly growing \$3 billion a year sports betting industry, the reforms are expected to bring an end to online bookmakers ability to offer punters credit according to *The Australian*.

NRL Star Abused Peris' Daughter

The daughter of former Olympian-turned Labor senator **Nova Peris** has told a Sydney court her ex-boyfriend, **Roosters NRL** star **Shaun Kenny-Dowall**, kicked her, pulled her hair, threw drinks at her and abused her as reported in *The Australian*.

Opera House tie-in Praised

Etihad has strengthened its most lucrative international partnership, forging closer ties with **Sydney Opera House** as its major sponsor for the next five years as reported in *The Australian*.

SOCIETY

'The Right Thing To Do'

Brendan "Bumper" Farrell says he's an ordinary bloke with a truck. The down-to-earth truckie from near Leeton in southern NSW, who during the past two years has organized 11 volunteer convoys of road trains carrying \$10 million worth of donated hay for those farmers doing it hard. The biggest hay run yet heads north from the Murrumbidgee River south of Griffith to dry Ilfracombe, near Longreach in western Queensland. Standing among 14,000 bales waiting to be loaded on to 400 trailers and trucks for the start of the convoy, **Farrell**, a father of three, makes it clear he wants no accolades, no glory and no pay for a cause that has become a full-time obsession. The countdown to the 11th **Burrumbuttock Hay**

Runners trip draws near, as reported in *The Australian*.

Pell Allowed Pedophile Priest To Retire

Cardinal **George Pell** allowed a pedophile Catholic priest to retire on the grounds of ill health despite knowing of complaints made against him over several years and without asking to see evidence of his medical condition as per *The Age*.

Portrait Of An Abuser

Family violence has a face and we now know what it looks like: an unemployed, 34-year-old Australian born man.

The **Royal Commission into Family Violence**, a vast compendium of more than 2000 pages and eight volumes, draws on a wealth of data about the perpetrators – and victims – of family violence, collected over more than a decade according to *The Age*.

Putting a price on democracy devalues the intelligence of voters

We hit peak stupidity in the same-sex marriage cause when accounting firm **PwG** tallied up the apparent financial costs to the country of Australians voting on same-sex marriage little more than half a billion dollars.

Apart from the administrative costs of holding a stand-alone plebiscite (\$158 million), the number crunchers at **PwG** guessed that \$281m in total costs to the economy because people have to take time out of their Saturday to vote. By that logic; we should get serious about saving money and do away with elections altogether.

Just think of the savings. If we scratch all local, state and federal elections, we could fund extra health and education services, higher pensions and so on. And consider the lost costs from millions of Australians having to find a car park, queue to vote, then completing the ballot paper at every election. The lost costs alone of Australians trying to decipher the Senate toilet roll ballot paper alone could surely fund handsome handouts to the middle class.

What about a refund for this tosh from **PwC**? You may as well try to calculate costs of watching your kids play Saturday sport rather than sleeping in. Or why not determine the lost costs over the course of history of all the great thinkers sitting quietly and think about the importance of free markets, the rule of law, property and so on. This report is an embarrassment to **PwC** and its CEO **Luke Sayers** who imagined a specious set of numbers would sway the debate their way.

Come Home Cardinal Pell Controversial Hit

Comedian **Tim Minchin** takes aim at Cardinal **George Pell** in a provocative song in which he calls Australia's highest-ranking cleric in the **Catholic Church** scum and a hypocrite. The musical attack aired on **The Project** and immediately attracted a swell of support from viewers and social media users, despite outrage from **The Project** co-host **Steve Price**.

Within hours, a crowdfunding page set up to pay for abuse victims to travel to Rome to front **Pell**. **Cardinal Pell** has claimed he is too ill to travel to Australia to give evidence to the **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**, as per the *Herald Sun*.

Hear No Evil

Cardinal **George Pell's** memory, credibility and truthfulness have been challenged by the royal

commission into child abuse. In an extraordinary exchange at the commission hearing, the third-most powerful Catholic in the world said of a prolific pedophile priest's abuses in Victoria in 1975: "I couldn't say that I ever knew that everyone knew. I knew a number of people who did (know). I didn't know whether it was common knowledge. "It's a said story, and it wasn't of much interest to me," he said by video link from Rome, to gasps of those attending the hearing in Sydney as per *The Herald Sun*.

We Must Never Forget This

Parables like **The Good Samaritan** and **The Prodigal Son** describe the important moral lessons like helping others. Expressions like "turn the other cheek" and "let him whom is without sin cast the first stone" helped me understand human nature and the importance of forgiveness according to **Kevin Donnelly** for *The Herald Sun*

Good Works of Christianity

Australian Catholic schools enrol 20 per cent of students, while charitable organisations lie the **Salvation Army** and **World Vision** help missions of poor and disadvantaged both here and overseas. Whether health, medicine, social welfare or helping those who are victims of domestic violence or drug abuse, it is Christian groups and bodies like **Compassion Australia** and the **St Vincent de Paul Society** that underpin Australia's social services and welfare sector and without which governments would be unable to cope.

The English poet and mystic **William Blake**, while no defender of organized religion, argued: "He who sees the infinite in all things sees God. He who sees only the Ratio sees himself only."

Dr Kevin Donnelly is a senior research fellow at the Australian Catholic University and author of Taming the Black Dog, as per The Australian.

White, male and increasingly discriminated against

As more groups receive special protection, others are being singled out for attack. Neo-Marxists use the minority politics of race and gender as communists used class, sowing envy and victimhood to create a revolutionary mass primed to attack a selected target. An extreme consequence of the PC bigotry came to light last year when academic journals refused to publish research demonstrating a steep rise in the suicide rate of white men.

The greatest erosion of human potential arises from the belief that some of us are born more equal than others. The creed was captured best by **George Orwell** in his satire of the Russian Revolution *Animal Farm*: "All animals are equal, but some animals are more equal than others."

In the 21st century West affirmative action regimes bestow state-approved minorities with rights and advantages denied their fellow citizens. They are more equal than others. We used to call that inequality. We once fought against it. *Jennifer Oriel for The Australian.*

Business and Industry Associations

~ by David Russell

Brand Name Business Associations

The collective representation of employers by associations is essential to active and successful business advocacy in Australia. It is a complex landscape of representation, advocacy and lobby in Canberra. Nationwide numerous businesses are members of Trade Associations, a local Chamber of Commerce or a State-based Chamber of Commerce.

Historically, registered organisations of employers were formed to negotiate industrial agreements with Trade Unions, appear in Industrial Court wage case hearings and represent employers in employment matters. Today they also lobby Governments on various topical matters of public policy and industry.

Nationally the most recognisable "brand name" associations are the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI), Business Council of Australia (BCA), Australian Industry Group (AI Group) and the National Farmers Federation (NFF). They are not formally aligned with each other and don't always agree on policy issues, but have similar objectives for the advancement of their members. They are some of the most powerful and effective speakers for employers in the country.

There are also many effective single industry associations, for example the Master Builders Association (MBA), Master Grocers Association (MGA), Housing Industry Association (HIA), Motor Trades Association of Australia (MTAA). There are also other small business associations that most readers have probably never heard of, like the Asphalt and Paving Association, Kangaroo Industry Association of Australia and Australian Fishing Tackle Association. The Council of Small Business of Associations of Australia (COSBOA) comments on small business issues across all industries.

As we approach a Federal Election it is most likely that the "brand name" associations will be sending messages to voters and candidates via political advertising and lobby campaigns. So it is helpful to know a little more about them.

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Based in Canberra the ACCI have recently announced the appointment of James Pearson as CEO. His predecessor Kate Carnell, was appointed by the Government to the position of Australian Small Business and Family Enterprise Ombudsman. Pearson was formerly CEO of the Western Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

ACCI has over 50 member associations within its national membership. All of the State and Territory based Chambers of Commerce are members. At present of the 10 ACCI Directors all but one represents a State-based Chamber of Commerce:

- Mr Terry Weatherall – President (NSW)
- Mr Jeremy Johnson - Vice President (VIC)
- Mr Peter Hood - Immediate Past President (WA)
- Ms Deidre Willmott (WA)
- The Hon Mark Birrell (Vic)
- Mr Stephen Cartwright (NSW)
- Mr Mark Stone (VIC)
- Mr Steve Knott (Metals and Mines Association)
- Mr Agu Kantsler (WA)
- Professor Trevor Cairney OAM (NSW)

Business Council of Australia

Members of the BCA are represented by their Chief Executive Officers, there are currently over 100 members including some of Australia's largest companies. The BCA is a prolific and active researcher, an effective lobbyist and frequent commentator on public policy.

Current Board members are:

- Catherine Livingstone AO - President
- Richard Goyder (Westfarmers)
- Alan Joyce (Qantas)
- Ian Narev (Commonwealth Bank)
- Allison Watkins (Coca-Cola Amatil)
- Jennifer Westacott is CEO of BCA.

The BCA head office is in Melbourne at 120 Collins St.

Australian Industry Group

AI Group has a strong base of members in the metals and manufacturing industries representing over 60,000 businesses. It was once called the Metal Trades Industry Association (MTIA).

A Registered Organisation under the Fair Work Act, AI Group and its predecessors have long covered Australian manufacturing industries.

The AI Group operates branch offices in Victoria, NSW, SA and a head office in Walker Street, North Sydney. CEO Innes Willox is an active participant in public debate and in media commentary on business and economics.

AI Group National Executive members include the following Office Bearers:

- Noel Cornish - National President
- John Dixon - National Vice-President (VIC)
- Ross Pilling - Deputy National President
- Chris Jenkins - National Vice President (NSW)
- John Ingram AM - National Secretary & Treasurer
- Alexander Kachellek - National Vice-President (SA)

National Farmers Federation

Always an active lobby group consisting of the broad based Australian agricultural industries, the NFF includes member associations from the States and different agricultural sectors including dairy industry, cattle council, cane growers, rice growers, wool producers, dried fruit, pastoralists and many more.

Tony Mahar is the recently appointed NFF CEO.

NFF is a household name but It was announced on March 23 that it will soon change its name to "Australian Farmers".

NFF President, Brent Finlay said settlement upon the name was a significant milestone in the development of a unified organisation for the agricultural sector and laid further foundations for a more efficient and powerful lobbying force.

The NFF Executive currently consists of the following member representatives:

- Brent Finlay - President (Wool producer – Queensland)
- Fiona Simson - Vice President (NSW Farmers President - Liverpool Plains NSW)
- Grant Maudsley - Director (Ag Force Queensland - President)
- Mark Horan - Director (NSW Farmers, Beef cattle- Braidwood)
- Peter Touhey - Director (Victorian Farmers Federation President- fifth-generation grain, wool and prime lamb producer - Pyramid Hill in Victoria).
- Les Gordon - Director (Rice grower- Barham NSW)
- David Jochinke - Director (VFF Vice President farms at Murra Warra, 30 km North of Horsham producing various broad acre crops and finishing prime lambs).

Small Business Associations

Many small business owners do not identify with the larger National Employer Groups and therefore a variety of coalitions of small business associations like COSBOA have emerged over the years.

It is also significant that industry associations like the Master Grocers' Association, the Restaurant and Catering Association, the Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce, the NSW Business Chamber have vigorously supported small businesses with campaigns which have identified the need for Government intervention in the unbalanced relationships between big and small businesses. Inclusion of an effects test in the misuse of market power sections of the Consumer and Competition Act was a win for small business lobbyists against the opposition of the BCA.

More about COSBOA and the most effective small business associations in the future.

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