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Since 1994, a monthly public affairs newsletter distilling public policy and government decisions which effect business opportunities in Victoria, Australia and beyond. 2,000,000 words available to search digitally.

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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 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.

The firm works with many engineering and information technology firms and other professional association and industry groups on a wide range of issues in Victoria, Canberra and overseas.

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Editorial
Your editor was fortunate, perhaps, to recently be involved in a cyber security scam involving VicRoads, union officials and a property developer, and was interested to see how the deal worked. The final stretch at this stage is that all of the involved could not care less about resolving this issue. Its too small perhaps The documentation develops and continues,. You might hear more.

For some years, your editor has been receiving/getting emails from the left and the right of politics and some of the more particular groups in between. They each have this passion for money, getting you out to the event and to fill in surveys, their perspective only and the other guys are worse that hitler.

Now the Tsunami has move along a little and the Big Two are now moving into mid-river with similar passion and requests. Labour is perhaps a little ahead of the Liberals, but it sure is going to get so much larger. I can feel it. And I am wondering just exactly where it might develop, which coastlines,et,

STATE GOVERNMENT POLITICS
Mourners Remember Joan Kirner
‘They came in great numbers,’ said The Age’s reporter Shane Green, ‘to the Williamstown Town Hall [on June 5] to farewell Victoria’s first and only female premier, education crusader, community leader and encourager of women everywhere. The 1,000-or-so spaces in the civic heart of Joan Kirner’s home town were soon taken, with the overflow heading to the gym at the nearby Williamstown Secondary College. As befitted her, the biggest names in the political life of Victoria were there.

Premier Andrews was joined by former Labor premiers Steve Bracks, John Brumby, and John Cain. Former Liberal premiers Ted Baillieu and Jeff Kennett – who defeated Kirner at the 1992 election – joined their number. And the first women to lead their states – Queensland’s Anna Bligh and Tasmania’s Lara Giddings – ... The queue formed two hours before the service.’

Mr Andrews told the Herald Sun that the deceased ‘stood proud in the face of difficulty … She was our first female premier and because of her work, she won’t be the last.’ (For a short account of Mrs Kirner’s political rise and fall, see the VALE section later in this issue.)

The Bully Row
Allegations in the Herald Sun that Adem Somyurek, Victoria’s Small Business Minister, became enraged about a lack of preparation by his office for a public hearing have emerged as ALP factions go to war over Mr Somyurek’s standing-down. The Minister says, ‘These allegations are completely baseless and untrue. I welcome the review and the opportunity to clear my name.’ But Daniel Andrews has observed, ‘These are serious matters, they relate to allegations about inappropriate conduct on the part of the Minister of an intimidating, aggressive, threatening nature.’ One of the players is overseas for a few weeks, so this matter is on hold.

Theophanous clear view
Former ALP minister Theo Theophanous is now working as a ‘political adviser’ to an energy company that, according to The Age, is a vocal advocate for Victoria to abolish its onshore gas moratorium. He remains in communication with the highest levels of the state’s government, despite his own legislative career having finished during John Brumby’s premiership.

Call For Submissions
The Victorian Parliament has placed an advertisement in The Age seeking submissions for its Electoral Matters Committee Inquiry into the 2014 state election. Chaired by prominent Liberal MP Louise Asher, the committee has been asked to report to the legislature as a whole on or before December 1. It invites written submissions from individuals and organisations, by early July 8. They can be sent to Parliament House, Spring Street, East Melbourne 3002, or emc@parliament.vic.gov.au.

Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee’s inquiry into Fuel Drive Offs
An inquiry is being conducted with particular reference to (a) a review of fuel drive offs in Victoria and other Australian and overseas jurisdictions to understand the extent, nature and costs of the problem; (b) best practice approaches to prevent fuel drive offs in Australia and overseas, including educational and technological measures; (c) Examinations of loss prevention measures in other industry sectors in Victoria, and other jurisdictions; (d) Current civil and criminal remedies available to address fuel drive offs and theft, and the efficacy of those remedies. Closing date for submissions is 17 July 2015.

Labor Under Strain
The Victorian Labor Party is nonetheless ruled by internal structures that run along factional fault lines, with tensions constantly simmering below the surface. Seven months into Andrews’ first term, cracks have started to appear. First there was Andrews; decision to stand down Adem Somyurek over bullying claims made by the minister’s chief of staff, which was automatically portrayed as payback for a factional split that had weakened the influence of the shop assistant’s union.

There was growing pressure to apply the same leadership standard by removing government whip Cesar Melhem, and consequent frustration in caucuses over Daniel Andrews handling on both issues. This has been exacerbated by the ALP’s factional system, where power is formed through allegiances and loyalty, fear
and favour. Put simply, the Premier hails from the Socialist Left, but his position is largely dependent on a so-called ‘stability pact’ between the left and the right to keep things in order. As a result, Andrews has already been loath to rock the boat, even if it means stamping his authority when it’s clearly required. This is also coupled with the Premier’s inconsistency.

Puppet Master Revealed
Secret emails have unmasked a union boss as a puppet master who regularly summons the Deputy Premier and other senior state government figures to meetings. The emails obtained by the Herald Sun, suggest that conservative Shop, Distributive and Allied Employees Association boss Michael Donovan’s tentacles of influence stretch into the Premier’s office.

Labor figures who have raised concerns about the extent of Mr Donovan’s influence say government policies to make Easter Sunday a public holiday and give a multi-million-dollar funding boost to Catholic schools were driven by this union, which has 50,000 members in Victoria. They say the revelation of the emails, which cover a two-year period and reveal who is at the heart of the Donovan-aligned Right-wing faction, strengthen the claim that Small Business Minister Adem Somyurek was dumped as part of a political hit.

Inquiry into Unconventional Gas
Should there be an onshore unconventional gas industry in Victoria? ‘Unconventional gas’ includes coal seam gas, tight gas and shale gas. The Legislative Council’s Environment and Planning Committee is interested in the community’s views, insights and experiences in relation to this issue, to inform its recommendations to the Parliament.

FEDERAL
Free Schooling Threatened
Wealthy parents could be required to pay for their children to attend public schools under a radical Federal Government proposal that would open the door to means tested free public education. The idea is outlined in a confidential discussion paper, developed within the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, that is set to spark a new national debate on school funding.

The schools chapter of the government’s green paper on federation reform, obtained by Fairfax Media, also contains a proposal for the Commonwealth to abandon funding for all schools or for public schools. Ending Federal funding for public schools would leave the states $2 billion a year worse off and kill off the Gonski review’s national needs-based, sector-blind funding model for schools.

The green paper, which has been circulated to state and territory governments for consideration, presents four reform options (a) Giving states and territories full responsibility for all schools; (b) Making states and territories fully responsible for public funding while Canberra funds private schools; (c) Reducing Commonwealth involvement in schools but without significant structural change; (d) Making the Federal Government the dominant funder of all schools.

AGRICULTURE
Food Source Announced
Minister for Agriculture, Jaala Pulford, unveiled Food Source Victoria in the presence of more than 700 stakeholders at the Royal Agricultural Society of Victoria and Victorian Farmers Federation’s Heart of Victoria dinner. Food Source Victoria will allocate $18 million in grants to support agricultural businesses across regional Victoria to conduct research, develop marketing plans, produce innovative products and build skills to better compete in an export market.

Grants will be available to support alliance of agri-food businesses in regional Victoria and value chain partnerships. In addition, Food Source Victoria’s scholarship programs will provide $2 million to better equip regional Victorians to develop the skills and knowledge they need to develop in-demand products and grow the economy according to a press release from the Premier’s office.

Northern Rains: Hope
Steady rain has drenched a vast area of north-west Victoria, delivering a much-needed lift to struggling crops and a huge morale boost to communities. Many places received nearly a month’s rain in 24 hours, where Swan Hill had more than its average June rainfall in one day as reported in The Age.

ARTS
Why is the Money Gone?
Cuts of $105 million to the Australian Council will ‘rip the heart out’ of Victoria’s Creative Industries Minister Martin Foley has warned in a letter to federal Arts Minister George Brandis as reported by The Age. The move comes as federal Labor increases the pressure on the arts minister with a Senate inquiry into his move to divert funding from the Australia Council to a fund administered by Senator Brandis’ office.
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**The Astor Is Back**

‘Zak Hepburn,' announced The Age, ‘is a man on a roll. ... Specifically, he’s the new manager of St Kilda's Astor Theatre, the last single-screen revival cinema in Melbourne, which [re-opened] after a two-month break for refurbishment. The Astor has been through a long period of uncertainty, which climaxed last year when the cinema's long-term manager, George Florence, and the building's owner, Ralph Taranto, were unable to agree on terms for a new lease ... One of his [Hepburn's] goals is that long-term Astor patrons should feel nothing essential has changed.

There are the same classic movie posters in the foyer, the calendar still offers nightly double features, and even the choc-tops will be made to the same recipe as before. Something that is changing is the availability of 35-millimetre and 70-millimetre film prints. Roughly a quarter of the films on the new calendar will be presented in this traditional fashion, with the rest projected digitally. Hepburn is committed to both formats, saying that while digital projection gives access to a wider range of material, film will always be his first preference. The Astor will also maintain its tradition of showcasing classic Hollywood cinema.'

**EDUCATION**

**Looking for a CEO**

VETNetwork Australia is a not for profit professional association that has been in operation for twenty years and is one of the most important peak bodies representing Vocational Education and Training teachers and practitioners in Australia. VETNetwork provides a range of membership services across Australia including the provision of professional learning for its members, the development of distribution resources, and the facilitation and management of VET programs for secondary students and are currently seeking a CEO for a period of 12 months based in Adelaide. Applications close on Jolly.

**International Student Growth**

The number of overseas students studying at Australian higher education providers has hit a record high, and total international student numbers have surged by 11 per cent in the last year as reported in The Age.

**Docklands School**

A new school for the Docklands area is at least another study away, The Age has announced, with the Andrews government vowing to restart planning for the sought-after education facility. But there is no clear time frame or funding scheme for the state primary school that Docklands residents have been calling for.

**Official Resigns**

The boss of the Education Institute at the Royal Children's Hospital has quit in the wake of evidence given during an anti-corruption inquiry. According to the Herald Sun, Glenda Strong resigned as executive director of the institute two days after the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission was told that money had been funnelled to it through a primary school. The hospital told the newspaper that it appeared to have been caught up in what is alleged to have been misuse of public funds distributed to various organisations by a network of ‘banker schools.’

**Napoli Rehired ‘On Merit’**

A former Education Department official, Nino Napoli, who is at the centre of a corruption inquiry, was previously rehired ‘on merit’ while he allegedly ripped off state schools. In 2010 he took advantage of the 54/11 superannuation scheme, which lets public sector employees resign, use their retirement funds, and then reapply for their old jobs. Mr Napoli, The Age said, was dismissed by the department during April. He stands accused of running a $2.5 million fraud ring, which funnelled money away from government schools between 2007 and 2014.

The Herald Sun quoted Mr Napoli as having said that ‘Victoria’s state education system is better for having employed him.’ Addressing the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission in early June, he extolled the virtues of a ‘tight foursome’ of public servants, including himself. ‘Sure, they had some really bad qualities, including myself.

But they had some extremely good qualities, and public education is better off for it.’ The other departmental executives to whom Mr Napoli referred were former acting director Jeff Rosewarne, sacked south-eastern regional director John Allman, and former deputy secretary Darrell Fraser.

‘I think,’ Mr Napoli said in response to a question from inquiry counsel, ‘the concept of co-ordinator or banker schools needs a pretty good review.’ He also said that banker or co-ordinator schools – some of which legitimately held funds for projects in their local areas – were administratively simple, and he believed the concept should be retained. But better guidelines and accounting procedures were needed. In addition, he said the department did not know exactly how many co-ordinator schools there were, let alone how much money they held.

Especially problematic for Mr Napoli is the quantity of false invoices riddled with spelling errors, these invoices having been now presented to the commission as formal evidence. Barrister Ian Hill QC was reported by The Age as saying of this material: ‘I’ll tell you why it’s been prepared by Mr Napoli. He can’t spell. He might be involved with the Education Department, but he can’t spell.’

**Principals Face Travel Crackdown**

Victorian principals have been hit by the government with tough new restrictions on overseas and interstate travel. Principals have slammed, The Age notes, the recent tightening of
travel rules. They say that the tightening bans professional development trips and punishes them for the bad behaviour of a few allegedly corrupt Education Department executives. The Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission heard that officials Nino Napoli and Jeff Rosewarne, along with the latter’s then wife, went on a taxpayer-funded trip to Britain.

There have also been allegations of principals and a business manager globe-trotting around, after having signed off on false invoices for allegedly corrupt department officials. Kym Peake, the department’s acting secretary, emailed principals, school council presidents, and business managers recently, warning them that travel permission will not be granted save in ‘exceptional circumstances.’ ‘One of the issues raised during the hearings relates to school-based interstate and international travel as part of staff professional development,’ she said.

‘Thisrestriction on international and interstate travel undertaken by department and school staff takes effect immediately for all travel which has not already been approved.’ Henceforth, overseas travel will be allowed only if those seeking permission for it can prove that it has ‘a direct economic benefit to Victoria.’

No Hands Up, That’s An Order
Some Victorian schools, according to The Age, are banning students from putting up their hands in classrooms, as part of a progressive global experiment in changing how classes are run. Having the smart kids answer every question can fool teachers into believing that the whole classroom – as opposed to those more vocal – is learning. About a third of the teachers at Frankston High School are dumping the old habit, by writing the students’ names on icy-pole sticks and pulling out names at random for answers. There is one exception to the rule. The students are allowed to raise their hands when they have a question.

Training Hub To Close?
The Age announced that while the ALP came to power at last year’s election promising that it would build 10 more tech schools in Victoria, an existing training centre in an area of high youth unemployment (Hamilton) said during late May that it was on the brink of closing. The Hamilton District Skills Centre, on the grounds of Bairnbridge College, provides at present vocational training to around 200 students every year from state and independent schools in the region.

In a letter to Education Minister James Merlino, the college’s principal, Robert Vecchiet, said that the centre could not offer courses for 2016 unless it received funding by July. Some students, he said, might not be able to complete their courses. According to Mr Vecchiet, the centre had helped raise school retention rates in the Southern Grampians Shire, from 35 per cent in 2009 to 68 per cent last year. ‘The Hamilton District Skills Centre has made a significant difference to schools and students in the district.’

Labor campaigned heavily on tech schools ahead of the election. But the first of the promised 10 new tech schools will not open until 2017. Mark McGinnity, of the centre’s advisory board, pointed out that the centre was in a state Nationals seat and a federal Liberal seat. The opposition’s training, skills, and apprenticeship spokesperson, Steph Ryan, said that Labor was putting politics ahead of the needs of some of Victoria’s most disadvantaged students.

Changes to School Religious Instruction
According to The Age, controversial volunteer-led Christian education classes could be phased out, as the state’s Education Department considers introducing a ‘less preachy’ general religion class as part of the curriculum. The class, which would discuss Islam, Judaism, Buddhism, and Hinduism as well as Christianity, is being explored as a potential subject that would be taught by qualified teachers, rather than volunteer religion-based agencies.

Abuse At Scotch College
One of Melbourne’s – and indeed Australia’s – most celebrated, prestigious private schools recently acknowledged for the first time that at least five students had been abused on the school’s grounds. The Age commented that the news ‘is seen as a breakthrough for abuse survivors and their advocates.’ Scotch College’s administrators admitted that the school had settled a handful of historical claims, mostly relating to sexual abuse and dating back to the 1960s.

Rise in School Deals
Drug dealers and users are being arrested in Victorian schoolyards more than twice a week as students become an increasingly lucrative market for ice and other dangerous street drugs according to The Age. New data from the Crime Statistics Agency shows that drug trafficking arrests involving Victoria’s public and private schools have almost doubled over the past five years, while drug use and possession...
offences have soared by more than 30 per cent.

ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION Numbers Will Count
Residents’ groups objecting to developments in big numbers will be given more power in cases before the state’s planning tribunal, a recent Herald Sun report notes. Under Andrews government reforms, the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal will have to consider the number of objections and the social impact of a project. The issue was highlighted in 2012, when 600 objections were received against a massive Lend Lease housing development in Armadale, but VCAT said: ‘the extent of resident opposition ... was an irrelevant consideration to which it could not have regard.’

Long And Winding Road
A landmark 144-kilometre walking trail – which authorities hope will become a tourist magnet in the same manner as Tasmania’s famed Overland Track already is – will be built in the Grampians in north-western Victoria. According to The Age, Andrew Broad, the Nationals’ MP for the region, recently described the project as an ‘incredible development for the Grampians and the country as a whole.’

Bird’s-Eye View Of Gannets
Researchers have attached cameras and tracking devices, according to The Age, to the tails of Australian gannets, hoping thereby to get a bird’s-eye view of how they forage for their good in Victorian waters. The findings of these researchers revealed differences in hunting behaviour between the sexes. They are important because they show that the seabirds can change their behaviours to suit different environments.

Plane Trees To Be Felled
The Herald Sun reports that Melbourne is set to lose, eventually, most of its traditional plane trees under a city council plan to diversify the Central Business District’s green canopy. Altogether 16 London plane trees have been removed from Flinders Street above the rail yards, after the council said that vehicles had damaged them, and that they posed a safety risk. Lemon-scented gums, 20 in number, will take their place. This is part of a streetscape works project that will include a new tram super-stop between Russell and Exhibition Streets. Melbourne City Council environment portfolio chairman Arron Wood said that the council had taken advantage of the need for the tram stop to bring forward works under its urban forest strategy. About 75 per cent of the inner city’s trees are planes, but the urban forest long-term plan aims for one species to have no more than five per cent coverage. Almost half the city’s tree population will be lost over the next two decades, thanks mainly to extreme heat, damage, and ageing. These expected losses will provide the opportunity to diversify the stock. Cr Wood said that the council had added 15 new species over the past four years, with a total of 12,000 trees planted.

More Culling Of Koalas
At one of the biggest koala colonies in Australia, let alone Victoria, a second cull appears imminent and was discussed by The Australian. Recently the Andrews government announced that numbers of koalas at Cape Otway, near the Great Ocean Road, had risen to ‘unsustainable levels’. Health checks will be carried out on the animals, and those that are sick or injured could be put to death. The koalas live in ravaged gum woodland, which the state’s Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning said was suffering as a result of feeding by the booming koala population.

Close Hazelwood, Columnist Urges
Veteran Age columnist Kenneth Davidson has recently asked: ‘Is Victorian Labor serious about cutting emissions?’ If it is, Mr Davidson argues, then it should close down the Hazelwood coal plant, ‘the dirtiest coal generator in Australia and the third-dirtiest in the world.’

Call For Coast Protection Fund
Some of the billions of dollars which the Andrews government expects to rake in from leasing the Port of Melbourne should be banked to pay for the threat of climate change and booming population growth on Victoria’s coastline. This is the verdict of Jon Hickman, the outgoing head of the Victorian Coastal Council, who says that while the coast is not yet at crisis point, increases in local population and rising sea levels will put huge financial pressure on governments in coming decades.

Judas Goats In Firing Line
The Age reports that Parks Victoria has hired an experienced interstate shooting team to conduct the program of culling Judas goats, this program being the first of its kind carried out in a Victorian national park. ‘Aerial shooting has been used successfully in other states for many years,’ said Brendan Rodgers, a project manager. A ‘control area’ of about 500,000 hectares within the Murray Sunset National Park will be closed during the shooting. Mr Rodgers went on: ‘A helicopter survey in 2012 estimated there were over 8,000 goats in the park, and if left unchecked, the population will increase at an alarming rate. So it’s important we control feral goats to minimise environmental damage to the park and on neighbouring properties. Given the park is so large, aerial shooting is considered the most effective way to do this.’

Male Gorilla Kills Female Gorilla
At Melbourne Zoo, according to The Age, a female gorilla recently succumbed to injuries caused by one of the zoo’s young male gorillas in an unexpected display of aggression. Julia, 33, died on May 24 after suffering extensive trauma from the attack, which happened two days earlier.

RSPCA Under Fire In Rural Victoria
The Herald Sun column by Ed Gannon, who also edits The Weekly Times, concerning the state’s rural affairs mentioned on June 3 that the RSPCA ‘is having a rough trot at the moment. And for many in rural Australia, particularly among farmers, respect is running short. [Hitherto it] has always held a fairly esteemed position in society. How could an organisation devoted to preventing animal cruelty not? But in recent years it has come under pressure from other, more radical, animal rights groups that have stolen a march on the RSPCA ...’ [the RSPCA] appears to have decided it needs to get back in the game by adopting a tougher stance on issues such as the live export trade and recreational activities such as duck-shooting ...

‘So on the nose is the RSPCA that one federal Coalition MP is writing to Buckingham Palace this week to ask
the Queen to remove the word "Royal" from the RSPCA title. Nationals Senator Bridget McKenzie said she was "fed up" with the RSPCA "demonising" rural communities with its opposition to the live cattle trade and recreational hunting. "There is no doubt among regional and rural communities that the RSPCA has crossed the line as an independent animal welfare group and lost the trust of those communities'."

Call For Submissions Re Dangerous Dogs

Stink Over Pooch Wars
As Karl Marx might have put it: a spectre is haunting Melbourne, the spectre of dog droppings. The Herald Sun has revealed that a turf war – turd war? – is gathering pace across the city, as dog walkers and sporting clubs clash over a dirty business. An alert has been called at some public sporting venues that double as off-leash walking zones, because youngsters there taking part in sporting events have been forced to dodge dogs’ faeces. Some of these youngsters’ parents have become involved in the, ahem, dogfight and maintain that it’s a health and safety issue. They want irresponsible pet owners banned.

World’s Most ... Liveable City?
Melbourne’s status as ‘the world’s most liveable city’ could be threatened, according to the Herald Sun, by such factors as terrorism, rising domestic violence, joblessness, and climate change. This warning comes from a City of Melbourne report called Resilient Melbourne, which said that increasing globalisation and social inequality could also heighten the risk of influenza pandemics and civil unrest.

EVENTS
Racing Chief Smash Up
Grand Prix chiefs have been plunged into chaos amid claims the State Government was trying to insert Essendon chairman Paul Little into the position of chairman of the Grand Prix Corporation. Cricket World Cup chief executive John Harnden had long been favoured for the position and had been anointed as Ron Walker’s replacement by the Australian Grand Prix.

The Victorian Government has refused to lock in Mr Harnden as Mr Walker’s successor, embarking instead on an international search for the best candidate according to The Age. Mr Harnden has a long and successful track record with major sporting events including as chief executive of the ICC Cricket World Cup in Australia this year and the Commonwealth Games in Australia in 2006.

The St Petersburg Ballet performed Swan Lake at the Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre in June.

Fighting For Major Events
Victoria will fight other states for every major sporting and cultural event ‘worth taking’ as part of an aggressive strategy to kickstart the state economy. Premier Daniel Andrews used a speech to the Melbourne Press Club to warn the rest of Australia that Victoria will be relentless in pursuing big events, big projects and big investments.

Grandmothers in Force
On 21 June, a group of outraged grandmothers were among the hundreds who gathered in Melbourne to mark World Refugee Day. Grandmothers Against Detention of Refugee Children co-chairwoman Clare Forbes said to The Age they were all ‘women of courage’.

Drip that Stopped a City
A minor water leak, which took only minutes to plug, shut down Melbourne’s entire train network and triggered chaos as the editor was on his way to work on Thursday 18 June 2015. Public Transport Minister Jacinta Allan ordered a review, demanding answers into the cause of the leak, how it was handled and what would be done to prevent a recurrence.

And the Herald Sun revealed more passenger pain may be ahead with the rail union foreshadowing a network wide shutdown and a controversial ‘open myki gates’ policy in its campaign for a yearly 6 per cent pay rise. Other union demands include a new plain clothes allowance for ticket inspectors and a free union picnic. The current enterprise agreement expires at the end of June.

Record Crowd
On June 17, the MCG hosted the biggest State of Origin rugby league clash in history, cementing Melbourne’s place as the sporting capital of Australia with a massive crowd of 91,513, where NSW defeated Queensland 26-18 to even the series.
1-1. The game had a minutes silence to honour distance runner Ron Clarke who passed away on the day aged 78 according to the Herald Sun.

State Opera Sings
The Ring Cycle opera event, which was held in Melbourne in 2013, will be conducted in November and December to draw dedicated drama lovers from around the world. It is expected to generate up to $15 million in the economy according to the Herald Sun. Premier Daniel Andrews also said he would make his first international trip to China to boost its relationship with the trading partner.

HEALTH

WorkSafe’s Move To Geelong
Robin Scott, State Minister for Finance, announced during late May that WorkSafe would be seeking expressions of interest from architects wanting to design and build its new Geelong head office. The Premier’s press release on the topic said: ‘This move will bring jobs and growth to the region, with the entire headquarters and the majority of staff to be relocated.

The expression of interest also explores the possibility of WorkSafe co-locating with the National Disability Insurance Agency. Scott observed: ‘Our priority is to ensure that WorkSafe secures safer workplaces and a fair compensation scheme for Victorian workers, while bringing benefits to the Geelong region.’

Sweet Smell of Hell
Young children getting high on underarm deodorant is now one of the biggest challenges confronting youth workers on Melbourne’s streets. Frontline welfare organisations told the Herald Sun that chroming, or sniffing inhalants has regained popularity in the past six months, despite bans and restrictions on purchases of some paints and aerosols.

Beds Empty, Lists Full
One in ten hospital beds in Victoria are not being used, a review into the state’s hospital capacity has found as reported in The Age. The interim report of the review, commissioned by Labor while in opposition found 1436 of 13,981 useable inpatient beds were empty. More than one-fifth of beds at Barwon Health were vacant earlier this year, as were 19 per cent of capacity at Eastern Health and 13 per cent at Western Health.

Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation Victoria’s assistant branch secretary Paul Gilbert said many unused beds appeared to be in metropolitan hospitals where there would be demand. The review was carried out by Australian Medical Association Victoria president Doug Travis, who surveyed the state’s 86 public services.

Fewer Delays For Male, Or Possibly Female, Patients
A children’s transgender support service that has experienced surgeing demand has received a cash boost from the state government, to reduce its waiting list. The waiting list for the gender dysphoria clinic at the Royal Children’s Hospital in Melbourne has blown out to more than 14 months. The money would go towards subsidising psychologists, psychiatrists, and paediatricians and pay for medication, according to The Age.

Such medication would include puberty-blockers. The service had been able to take only one new patient a week, and a physician at the hospital, Michelle Telfer, hoped that the new funding would reduce the waiting list to four to six months.

The Sickest Place In Victoria
The regional municipal region of Wyndham in Melbourne’s far west was, as recently as the 1980s, dubbed ‘the pleurisy plains’ because of the sheer number of pleurisy cases within its borders, cases aggravated by heavy industry and pollution. Now the heavy industry is much less significant than it was three decades back, but whilst pleurisy has declined in prevalence, the health of the locals hasn’t perceptibly improved overall. Medical problems just take different forms from the forms they took back then.

Nurse Sam Read recently took another of her health classes for at-risk teenagers, and The Age reported on her doings. She says that teenagers in the vicinity may not have spent much time in a family unit or school community, ‘so they have basic gaps in their health care and knowledge.’ On the Social Health Atlas of Australia, the area ranks as Victoria’s unhealthiest.

Grey Matters
The Age has announced that Rosebud and Keilor East are the suburbs with the oldest populations within the Greater Melbourne Area, the latest figures show. Keilor East is home to the highest number of people aged 65 to 74, according to a report presented on June 3 to the Australian Property Council. But at Rosebud, on the Mornington Peninsula, no fewer than 1,300 residents are aged 85 or over. Based on the last census figures, the locals’ mean age is 50.7 years, almost 15 years older than people living in your average Melbourne suburb.

Almost one in three people is over 65. Over the next 15 years, Victoria’s elderly are set to migrate north, settling – on current trends – in the semi-rural Plenty and Yarrambat. As Melbourne’s population ages, new “hot spots” of concentrations of elderly people will begin to emerge and, in turn, this will re-draw the demographic map of Melbourne, the report says.

New Health Appointments
The following appointments and re-appointments, made by Health Minister Jill Hennessy will come into effect from July 1, and are each for three years, to June 30, 2018: Ms Judith Troeth as Chair of Austin Health; Dr Joanna Flynn as Chair of Eastern Health; Ms Barbara Yeoh as Chair of Monash Health; Mr Bob Cameron as Chair of Bendigo Health Care Group; Dr Zoe Wainer as Chair of Dental Health Services Victoria; Ms Jennifer Williams as Chair of Northern Health; The Hon Maxine Morand as Chair of the Peter MacCallum Cancer Centre; and Ms Lynette Swinburne as Chair of the Royal Women’s Hospital.

JUSTICE/ POLICE

Smoking Hot Riots
An independent investigation into one of Victoria’s worst prison riots is being launched by deputy commissioner Kieran Walsh who will investigate the Metropolitan Remand Centre riot, which raged for 15 hours until police took control of the prison and battled armed inmates. The riot at the maximum security remand centre for men, widely believed to have been sparked by smoking bans, caused millions of dollars worth of damage according to The Age.

Gun Found Every Two Days
They call it the ‘red zone.’ This is the phrase which police officers who work
the beat in Melbourne's north-west use to describe its high crime rate. From a front-page report that The Age published on June 19, it emerged that police are discovering guns in cars within this region every two days. The figure comes from the Police Association, and it follows anecdotal and statistical evidence of a burgeoning gun culture among young men there.

**Weekend Protests At Richmond**

On May 31, as reported by The Age, a violent scuffle broke out on the steps of Richmond Town Hall as several dozen police fought to keep the combatants apart. Approximately 70 supporters of the United Patriotic Front, which opposes further immigration – above all further Islamic immigration – and is affiliated with the Australia First Party as well as with the group Reclaim Australia, tried to storm the building. They were thwarted, though, by hundreds of counter-protesters, many of them involved with the Campaign Against Racism and Fascism.

A Herald Sun article dealing with the same protests was headlined ‘More race rallies ahead.’ It mentioned that the protests ended after officers created a safe passage for the UPF members to leave. About 50 people chanted ‘Aussie, Aussie, Aussie’ and ‘I Am Australian.’ The larger crowd from the CARF drowned out their chants with slogans such as ‘Muslims are welcome, racists are not’ and ‘F**k off, Nazis.’

**Increased Jailings**

More people would be jailed, and the overall cost of Victoria’s corrections system would rise, after baseline sentences begin in July. So the state’s Supreme Court has warned the Andrews government in its annual report, according to a Herald Sun article.

**Cops Slam Soft Courts**

The Herald Sun announced that fed-up police officers have criticised the court system for going too soft on domestic violence offenders. They fear that a shortfall in police sources is leaving women and children exposed.

In connection with the problems raised there, the Andrews government has proposed a tough new anti-family-violence move that, if carried through, would involve the Royal Commission Into Family Violence recommending a ‘dangerous partners’ register. This move – the topic of a front-page Herald Sun report – is discussed at length in the government’s 63-page submission to the commission. A register of the sort that the government envisages would be analogous to the existing police documents, whether in Victoria or in other states, which list the names of convicted sex offenders.

Meanwhile, according to The Age, family violence continues to plague Victoria, with crime statistics revealing that the number of incidents reported has climbed to an average of more than 190 a day. Crime Statistics Agency figures released on June 18 showed 69,422 incidents in the past year, a staggering leap of more than 30,000 compared with the same time four years beforehand.

**Ex-Appeal Judge On Corruption**

Recent travails concerning Education Department officials moved Stephen Charles QC, a former Court of Appeal judge, to assert in an Age column that ‘our state has the worst, least effective government integrity system in Australia. Until recently it had no anti-corruption commission; a Freedom Of Information system subverted by governmental practices enabling exemption from disclosure; no regulatory system requiring disclosure of political donations (we have to rely on inadequate Commonwealth legislation); a Public Disclosure Act that fails to protect whistle-blowers, and an Audit Act that prevents the Auditor-General from making proper investigations by “following the dollar” ... The IBAC needs a well-informed tip-off before it can start a full investigation. The IBAC Act requires significant amendments as soon as possible. A much broader definition of “corrupt conduct”, including misconduct in public office, must be introduced.’

**Drug Drones Fly Free**

Prison authorities in Victoria have warned that they are powerless to stop drones being flown over the state’s jails. Rod Wise, Corrections Deputy Commissioner, outlined the serious security black spot in a memo – to Daniel Andrews’s Corrections Minister Wade Noonan – which was obtained by the Herald Sun under Freedom Of Information laws. The memo was written after a four-engine drone guided by an iPhone was repeatedly flown over the wall of the maximum-security Melbourne Remand Centre, in an attempt to deliver ice to one of the centre’s inmates.

**They Come To Bury Cesar, Not To Praise Him**

‘Daniel Andrews is looking like a man in hiding.’ That is the blunt opening sentence of an Age column by Spring Street political correspondent Josh Gordon. It discusses the continuing controversy over Cesar Melhem, the ALP’s Upper House whip. A key figure in Bill Shorten’s faction within Labor’s right wing, Melhem is also the convenor of a group of eight Victorian parliamentarians who are linked to Shorten’s own AWU.

Shorten, in fact, has been central to his protégé’s rise from union office-holder to state legislator. Later in the column we read that the Premier ‘came to power promising to be better, more transparent, more mindful of working people who often lack a voice. He campaigned on “putting people first.” By refusing to take action, Andrews is making a mockery of these and other promises.’

As for the federal government’s royal commission into union activity, it has done Melhem’s media profile no good at all. Jeremy Stoljar SC, counsel assisting the commission, was described by the Herald Sun as having ‘spent more than five hours questioning Mr Melhem, accusing him of using the extra members [said to have been recruited, without their knowledge, for Melhem’s own union] to boost his influence.’

On a staggering 97 occasions during this grilling, the beleaguered parliamentarian said that he did not recall details of deals signed while he was a union boss. And the Herald Sun’s headline? ‘Fail Cesar 97 times.’

**Ashton On Crime**

Victoria’s new top cop, Graham Ashton, has warned people that the threat of terrorism on home soil will not go away and will probably only get
worse. In a front-page Herald Sun report, the recently appointed Chief Commissioner of Police identified home-grown terrorism, the ‘ice’ scourge, the outlaw motorcycle gang menace, domestic violence, and cold murder cases as being among his priorities.

Shortly before leaving Australia for Europe – for counter-terrorism briefings – he made clear the magnitude of the local terror challenge confronting Victorians. Aged 52, he has a long history of anti-terrorism policing, including a role as co-leader of the 2002 Bali bombings investigation.

**Wannabe Jihadis**
State Opposition Leader Matthew Guy has slammed parents of aspiring jihadis who fail to take responsibility for their children’s descent into radicalisation. The Herald Sun announced that he has called upon parents of disaffected youths to be vigilant, and to play a greater role in shaping their children’s attitudes. ‘It’s simply not good enough,’ according to Mr Guy, ‘to blame federal or local governments or ethnic or religious communities. There is only so much the government and communities can do.’

As for Andrews, his cabinet is examining a new bill which, if carried into law, would enable police to force wannabe jihadis into de-radicalisation programs, and would ban them from the Internet.

Another Herald Sun article, this time a front-page report, said that a dozen young women have fled suburban Melbourne in order to join the Islamic State. That’s the finding of a recent Victorian College of the Arts.

**Access All Areas**
Melbourne’s mounted police are on the move, according to the June-July 2015 issue of the colour magazine called simply Melbourne. This year’s Open House Melbourne is the last time visitors will be able to see the Southbank Victoria Police Mounted Branch in operation, before the premises pass under the control of the Victorian College of the Arts.

**Medical Cannabis Suppliers Charged**
A recent Age report stated that one of Victoria’s largest suppliers of medical cannabis has been charged with serious trafficking offences, despite a push by federal and state governments – this push being actively favoured by the Victorian Law Reform Commission, among other bodies – to decriminalise the drug for those suffering from terminal illnesses and chronic pain.

On May 20, police raided the Carrum Downs home of Matthew and Elizabeth Pallett, and seized more than five kilograms of marijuana and derivative products, before charging the couple with possession, cultivation, and trafficking offences. Both the Palletts are disabled pensioners, and they openly provided cannabis-based tinctures, chocolates, and butters to about 80 regular clients who suffer from medical conditions including multiple sclerosis, cancer, epilepsy, and Crohn’s disease. Mr Pallett, 54, said: ‘We only accept donations.'

And we only give it to people who show us a medical report confirming diagnosis with legitimate medical needs.’ He has self-medicated with cannabis for more than 35 years after suffering a spinal injury, while Mrs Pallett, 65, uses the drug to manage chronic back pain.

**Call For Submissions**
The Victorian Parliament’s advertising department recently placed a notice in The Age calling for submissions to the Family and Community Development Committee, which has been entrusted with the carrying-out of an inquiry concerning abuse occurring within disability services. Electronic submissions should be sent via the eSubmission form on the Committee’s website: [www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdc](http://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/fcdc) or by email to fcdc@parliament.vic.gov.au.

**Expressions Of Interest**
The Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation has placed an advertisement in The Age seeking expressions of interest from persons wanting to be appointed to the role of Commissioner.

**Judge Appointed**
State Attorney-General Martin Pakula announced late in May the appointment to the County Court of Sara Hinchey. This fills a vacancy created by the recent retirement from the Court of Judge John Bowman. Judge Hinchey brings more than 19 years’ legal experience as a trial and appellate barrister to the role, having specialised in commercial litigation, insurance, professional negligence, and white-collar crime.

**Syndicate Disappearance**
A Herald Sun article noted that the Geelong man who has been accused oflegging it with $16.7 million from a winning workplace lotto syndicate is hiding out from his former colleagues, it has been claimed. The ‘Powerball 14’ has announced that it will fight in court in order to uncover the name of a man who shared in Tattersalls’ $50 million draw last October.

**New Parole Chief**
Children’s Court president Peter Couzens has been named as the new head of the Adult Parole Board. Mr Couzens take the place of former parole board chief Bill Gillard, who resigned in April amid revelations that he had given legal advice to alleged crime boss Tony Madrafferi.

**Camberwell, Licences And Drinking**
An editorial in The Age on May 15, called ‘Camberwell diners can raise their glasses,’ included the following remarks: ‘In 1920, when Victoria was divided into licensing districts and the boundaries of those districts corresponded with the borders of electoral seats, more than 60 per cent of the good denizens of Camberwell and nearby suburbs voted to ban all sales of alcohol in their leafy neighbourhoods …

In 1999, a poll in the City of Whitehorse handed responsibility for small venue liquor licences (for cafes and restaurants) to the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation, and now the VCGLR has scrapped the long-standing requirement for residents of the City of Boroondara to vote on new liquor licences. It’s about time too ... repeated polling on liquor licences has become expensive for the government and frustrating for the local residents. Importantly, the community’s mood has changed. The VCGLR says that since 2010 the polls on liquor licence applications in Boroondara have consistently demonstrated support for
cafes and restaurants wanting to serve alcohol.'

**FOI Watchdog Watched**

The Premier's Department, ordered during April, an investigation into the office of Freedom Of Information Commissioner Lynne Bertolini, after a complaint over internal matters that the government is – so The Age says – refusing to disclose. Department boss Chris Eccles recently told a parliamentary committee that the allegations were ‘sufficiently serious' to inspire the initiation of a review by former public sector standards commissioner Peter Allen. Mr Allen is the same senior bureaucrat who is helping to investigate cabinet minister Adem Somyurek.

Ms Bertolini was appointed by Ted Baillieu's government three years ago, in a move which, the Coalition promised at the time, would 'end the culture of secrecy' within state departments. But the office was later on branded a toothless tiger, because it did not have the powers needed to review decisions by ministerial offices or department heads. At one point, it was actually unable to meet its own review guidelines, because of the volume of requests it had been receiving.

Before the last election, the ALP promised to get rid of the agency altogether, and to put in its place a new organisation – the Office of the Public Access counsellor – which would subsume the FOI Commissioner's functions, but which would also have the power to examine ministerial and departmental decisions against releasing documents under the often used 'cabinet-in-confidence' exemption. Now that Labor is in office, the lack of transparency surrounding the review into the FOI has left the government exposed to allegations that it is planning yet another senior official's departure.

**Insurance Costs Denounced**

Disputes are rife within the Victorian building industry. The Age mentioned late in May that more than one-quarter – to be exact, 28 per cent – of the state's users of construction services, for home-building or home-renovating tasks, experience problems. And the most common single problem which confronts them has been poor workmanship; 63 per cent of complaints fall into this category.

Victoria's Auditor-General John Doyle said that more than 101,000 building permits, worth more than $25.3 billion all in all, were issued in the state last year. Of those, 82 per cent involved domestic work. But the relevant insurance system has been exposed as a highly expensive rip-off. Whilst there is only one insurance provider involved, people are still forced to pay for an agent and brokers, Mr Doyle said. 'This means that the model is significantly more costly than if it did not include intermediaries, and has cost consumers an estimated additional $21.6 million over the past four years ... for little, if any, tangible benefit.'

**Tenants Could Get Leases of 10 Years**

Under a proposal being considered by Victoria's government, renters could secure tenancies for 10 years at a time. According to The Age, the Andrews cabinet is reviewing residential rental laws to ensure that Victorians can get access to 'safe, affordable, and secure housing.'

**Conspiring to Defraud Uncovered**

Victoria's anti-corruption watchdog has charged nine people for allegedly conspiring to defraud taxpayers by rigging tenders and inflating contract prices for dozens of public transport projects. The Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission has laid more than 100 charges over an alleged scam run from within the Department of Transport and Public Transport Victoria awarding contracts for work such as bus shelter installations and railway station upgrades to a web of family-run companies.

The commission confirmed the charges include obtaining financial advantage by deception, misconduct in public office, giving and receiving secret commissions and furnishing false information. IBAC commissioner Stephen O'Bryan QC previously warned poor supervision and a culture of expediency within the department of Transport and Public Transport Victoria has allowed the behaviour to flourish. The alleged malfeasance was only thinly disguised. The department was warned as early as 2008 that its project offers had been awarding contracts to companies run by their children, but failed to investigate.

**Push for Sustainability**

The Council Alliance for Sustainable Built Environment has developed a scorecard for use by councils for building designers, sustainability consultants and other built environment professionals. Municipal Association of Victoria President, Cr Bill McArthur said in a MAV press release that the tool will help support the important role councils have in the transition to be productive, sustainable and resilient communities.

**Pity**

Martin Stockdale, a father of four, has been making the trek to the Hawthorn Small Bore Rifle Club for 33 years, as the fifth generation of his family to shoot at the 100 year old club, and the last. The club has shut its doors after the City of Boroondara deemed the club house unsafe. In The Age, Mayor Coral Ross said the council acknowledged the history of the club, and the important role it has played in the community, but given the low patronage, with 19 members, the council could not justify the expense of bringing it up to a safe standard.

**Yours Disgustedly, Shepparton**

The Herald Sun reported recently that Shepparton's Mayor, Dennis Patterson, has hit back angrily at claims – made in a TV documentary – that 'everyone in the town' is on drugs. Mr Patterson says that Shepparton, 180 kilometres north-east of Melbourne, is 'a great place to live.' He was appalled by an episode on SBS's Insight program which alluded in its title to the town's postcode. This episode was called 'Shepparton 3630,' and painted an unfavourable picture of local substance abuse.
FPI’s Under Pump
Melbourne City Council, according to the Herald Sun, has been exposed as shaming its parking inspectors (unofficially known as ‘grey ghosts’) into increasing the number of fines which they issue to motorists. Maybe the F is an adjective for PI.

Wimmera’s Future
On May 28, the Premier’s Department issued an outline of the vision and priorities for the future concerning Wimmera Southern Mallee. Jaala Pulford, Minister for Regional Development, launched the region’s investment plan that day at Parliament House. She said that the area’s immediate focus on increasing the numbers of jobs and investment opportunities was aligned with the government’s agenda for regional Victoria as a whole.

The government’s $500 million Regional Jobs and Infrastructure Fund will, she maintained, support projects across regional and rural Victoria that will build critical infrastructure, boost employment levels, and support emerging industries. Best known for its cereal, oilseed and pulse production, the region ‘also offers excellent health, retail and education services, safe communities and a positive environment for growth.’

Mega-Ramp Future in Doubt
Peter Wilson has built a teenager’s dream in his own backyard - one of the biggest skateboard ramps in the world. But a neighbourhood stoush has threatened the future of the ‘mega-ramp’ on his country property in Nyora, South Gippsland. Within months he will go to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to face off against neighbours opposed to the huge structure.

The South Gippsland Shire Council has approved the ramp. But in September the matter will go to VCAT. Nyora resident Julie Clarke said she was one of about 20 signatories to the VCAT action. She said ramp was ugly and noisy, and the council should not have allowed it on Mr Wilson’s property according to The Age.

Community Built in School
The City of Whitehorse has announced that it will transform a former school site into a community hub following its purchase of the site from the Department of Education and Training according to a media release from the Premier’s office.

CBD News
Worth anyone’s time in Melbourne is CBD News, a 20-page monthly publication which calls itself ‘The voice of postcode 3000’. In many venus it’s actually free, and it warrants the attention of anyone with a concern for the city’s activities. Hard-copy too: the Internet has by no means eliminated the need for a useful periodical on conventional paper.

PLANNING
Hotel Project Nod
A $245 million hotel and apartment complex has been approved for construction near the Queen Victoria Market. But the developer had to make design changes to avoid overshadowing the Flagstaff Gardens. According to The Age, located on William Street near the Franklin Street corner, the project comprises an 18-storey tower at the front and a 38-level building at the back.

Heritage Exceptions Tighten
The first review of Victoria’s heritage laws in 20 years is set to see ‘undue financial hardship’ removed as a reason developers can use to justify knocking down or dramatically altering historic buildings according to The Age.

Billion Dollar Plan
A vast Southbank car park the size of the MCG will be transformed into a citadel of apartments, hotels and commercial office towers under final plans put forward by a Malaysian
How to Get Fishermans Bend Right

In redeveloping Fishermans Bend, no one wants to repeat the mistakes made at Docklands. One of Melbourne’s leading thinkers in design and making community spaces, Lucinda Hartley, founder and chief executive of Co Design Studio, has nominated the ReSurfaced initiative in Louisville, in the US state of Kentucky, as a fine guide for Fishermans Bend. Michael Short recommends in The Age that planners put people first, learn from the mistakes of Docklands, keep politics out of it, get developers to invest in infrastructure, respect the past and embrace diversity.

Royal Competition

Small traders fear being squeezed out by big business during the $250 million redevelopment of the Queen Victoria Market. Some of the 700-plus stallholders are concerned that the renewal has taken the focus off established businesses, some of which are ‘struggling’ with tough retail conditions. There are claims that the market has already sold out one of its loyal traders for financial gain, such as exclusive sponsorship agreements with alcohol companies.

Recently the final draft master plan for the renewal was endorsed by Melbourne City Council. At the meeting, according to the Herald Sun, a handful of traders expressed frustration over how the transition was being managed.

SPORTS

Racing Victoria, Telstra Sign Tech Deal

The Financial Review noted recently that Racing Victoria will push for live horse-racing vision to be streamed to customers, via multiple camera angles and with enhanced digital statistics, after signing a broadcast, media and data services deal with Telstra.

Hawks Leave Nest And Fly To Dingley

Hawthorn revealed in early June well advanced plans, reported by The Age, to move its headquarters from Waverley Park to a massive new facility at Dingley, where it has signed a contract of purchase.

Very Nasty Dog Traps

Five metal hooks were recently found in sausage meat at Allan Bain Reserve – a sporting field and off-lease area for domestic dogs – near Barkly Gardens in Richmond. The Age mentioned the finding, the first of these hooks having been discovered on June 1 and reported to Yarra Council, which despatched employees to search the site.

Carlton In Disarray

Former AFL powerhouse Carlton is in disarray after the dismissal of coach Mick Malthouse, less than four weeks after he broke the record for the most games coached in the league’s history. The Age reported that Malthouse, already under pressure after Carlton’s season had started badly, lost his job following an interview he gave, during which he questioned the club’s board and recruiting decisions.

NBA Hope For Arena

The Herald Sun announced that plans for the second stage of a $700 million revamp of Rod Laver Arena have been revealed, and Sport Minister John Eren has declared he wants to use the venue to score more major events.

Swim For Your Lives

A coroner has urged the Victorian Government to make primary school swimming lessons compulsory following the drowning death of a nine-year-old boy in the Herald Sun.

End Live Baiting

Greyhound live baiting was unlikely to be limited to a few rogue operators, but there was no evidence of corruption or a cover-up, a report to State Parliament has found. However, Racing Integrity Commissioner Sal Perna called for a new watchdog to stamp out the barbaric practice, saying more must be done to protect animal welfare. He said Greyhound Racing Victoria had a clear conflict of interest in both promoting and regulating the industry. The Age reports that his review was ordered after secretly shot footage showed dogs being baited with baby pigs, rabbits and possums.

Endurance Sport Trial

Australian Sports Anti-Doping Authority head Ben McDevitt says he is very confident that Essendon players received banned drugs in a 2012 injection program, despite a tribunal finding to the contrary. In a further sobering statement for those believing Essendon, the AFL and 34 footballers who were pronounced not guilty of taking drugs were entirely in the clear, Mr McDevitt told The Age, ‘My sense is that we’re still only part-way through the journey.’

TRANSPORT - PORTS

Rocky Reception for Ports Plan

The Federal Coalition has intervened in the Victorian Government’s plan to lease the Port of Melbourne, citing concerns about environmental damage to Port Phillip Bay. Environment Minister Greg Hunt said Labor’s proposal would mean the ‘blasting’ of Port Phillip Heads to accommodate the bigger ships coming in over the years. ‘It is certain that there will be blasting of the heads and there will be an impact on the beaches and the bay.’

But Ports Minister Luke Donnellan rubbed the claims in The Age, saying they were ‘simply wrong’. ‘The blasting of the heads was carried out to deepen the shipping channels and hasn’t been done for 80 to 100 years.’ The State Government has already introduced legislation for a long-term lease of the port. It plans to use the proceeds of the lease to fund infrastructure projects. The proposed lease would last 50 years with an option for another 20 and is expected to raise $7 billion. However, the State Opposition has threatened to block the legislation. It says that the contract would expose Victorians to ‘massive compensation’ if a second port is built during the lease.

The Opposition supports a medium term lease of the Port of Melbourne together with the development of a second container port at Hastings. The Greens are also opposed to the lease which means Labor cannot get it through the upper house without Coalition support. The government has insisted that it can bypass Parliament and proceed with the lease, although this is not preferred.

Showdown With Farmers, Unions, And Politicians

According to The Age, the Andrews government is headed for a showdown with farmers, unions, and indeed most of parliament over plans to privatise...
the Port of Melbourne for the next 50 years, which would place billions of dollars of transport promises in debt. Only weeks after unveiling a contentious deal that could force Victorians to pay compensation if a second port was built during the life of the lease, the government is facing the prospect of lacking sufficient numbers to get the privatisation bill through the state’s Upper House.

Fast Lane For Transurban
Transurban’s plan to build a $5.5 billion freeway through Melbourne’s west has been fast-tracked by the Andrews government, according to The Age, even though the toll road operator has not tested soil or drilled for the project. Last April, the Premier revealed that his cabinet was working with Transurban on the 2.3 kilometre tunnel and elevated freeway. The new toll road would connect the West Gate Freeway to CityLink, via a new northern road.

Ticket Crackdown Victory on V/Line
A report in The Age on June 5 stated that an $8 million master plan for the rail corridor between Richmond’s railway station and E-Gate in West Melbourne, this corridor having been begun by Denis Napthine’s government but left incomplete, will not be pursued by Daniel Andrews’ government.

Richmond Revamp In Limbo
The master plan included an assessment of ways to ‘revitalise this ageing station and surrounds’ and better connect it to the sports precinct that includes the MCG, AAMI Park, and the National Tennis Centre. At present, the Melbourne Cricket Club is pushing ahead with its own investigation of the feasibility of deck the railway corridor west of Richmond station.

Plagued by Sick Passengers
Sick passengers are delaying more than 12 services a day on Melbourne’s train network, holding up thousands of commuters each year. Illness is one of the leading causes of trains running late and there are concerns the issue will only get worse as services become more crowded in peak hours. There have been 185 ill passengers so far this year, according to Metro, leading to delays on 2038 services across the network.

The most common illnesses on the trains are fainting, seizures and injuries sustained from falling over, as well as more serious illnesses such as heart attacks and pre-existing conditions. The biggest spike in customer illness comes in the colder months between March and June. Public Transport Users Association spokesman Daniel Bowen said in The Age that trains were delayed to ensure a passenger is looked after until paramedics arrive.

Skipping Derailed
Metro’s controversial practice of station skipping is being slowly derailed in the face of commuter backlash from thousands left stranded. Public Transport Victoria released its figures showing 48 trains were switched to express in May, compared to 97 in April. This is compared to May 2014 when the figure reached 322 services altered according to the Herald Sun.

New Line, Delayed Time
A new rail line through Melbourne’s west that was meant to free up capacity for both regional and metropolitan services has resulted in just two extra Metro Trains services being added to the city’s timetables. The Regional Rail Link, the city’s first major new suburban rail line in 80 years, ushered in services to Geelong at an unprecedented interval of every 20 minutes during weekdays.

And trips on Ballarat and Bendigo trains will also become more reliable as they will be separated from the metropolitan rail lines according to The Age. The new timetable, meant to start in April, has been delayed until at least the end of this year.

Transport - Road

Death Of The Emergency Telephone?
The Age reported that the emergency telephones which dot Melbourne’s freeways, and have done so for decades, could soon become a thing of the past. At least, this will be the case if a VicRoads review deems that keeping the old roadside phones in service is not worth the expense.

Although there are still 590 emergency telephones on Melbourne’s freeway network, VicRoads says that these are rarely used, because of the very high proportion of Victorians possessing mobile phones today. Yes, but what about when mobile phones don’t work? Or when they work only patchily, as is too often the case even in 2015? Delays of mere seconds with phone-call connections can make the difference, in a street accident, between life and death. Sometimes drivers leave their mobile phones at home. And not every Australian owns a mobile phone anyhow.

AAA Backs Petrol Levy
Australia’s premier motoring lobby has backed spending some revenue from petrol excise on public transport, arguing the latter is a vital ingredient in reducing road congestion. The AAA has dropped its trenchant opposition to an excise increase which was announced in the 2014 budget according to the Financial Review.

Double-Decker Comes To Town
Melbourne’s first double-decker bus service is on its way. According to the Herald Sun, the double-decker bus is the first of its kind in the state, and it will operate as part of a trial to test how the service will work. This bus will be operated by CDC Victoria, which runs services in Melbourne’s western suburbs as well as in Geelong and Ballarat.

Public Transport Users Association Daniel Bowen said that the trial was a positive step to tackle the ‘bad overcrowding’ on buses. He also mentioned that double-deckers were already a popular feature in Europe and would suit Victorian bus stops. The locally built bus can carry more than 100 people, and it has hi-tech features which include a digital display showing boarding passengers how many seats are available. It was built by Volgren at a plant in Dandenong.

Uber Guy Inside
State opposition leader Matthew Guy has backed the controversial ride-sharing app Uber and hit out at a growing number of reviews being ordered by the Government. Mr Guy said Labor should regulate to allow the popular transport service to operate, rather than continue with a working group established to assess ride-sharing apps according to the Herald Sun.

Motorists: Fines Versus Cautions
Thousands of motorists who could get their speeding fines scrapped are still paying up, because they simply remain unaware that they can ask for a warning instead. Traffic Camera Commissioner Gordon Lewis told the Herald Sun that he would do all he could to fix the problem.

Motorists who are eligible to apply for an official warning include those who speed by less than 10 km/h without having incurred any other traffic fines in the preceding two years, and those speeding between 10 km/h and 14 km/h over the limit who, nevertheless, haven’t been booked in the previous three years. Mr Lewis announced that he would recommend the changing of infringment notices, so as to include prominently displayed advice on how motorists who meet the above criteria can ask for a review.

Talking of fines, if recommendations made in a new VicRoads report are introduced, cyclists could get on-the-spot fines for using their mobile phones while riding. At present, The Age notes, using a mobile phone while cycling is already illegal; but the lack of on-the-spot fining powers makes it hard for the police to enforce existing laws.

RACV Plans And Conflicts Of Interest
Plans for a $135 million RACV conference centre at Cape Schanck have been put on hold. The Age announced that this delay occurred after various Mornington Peninsula councillors admitted to having conflicts of interest, because of their memberships with the motoring group. In the latest instance of Victoria’s tough regulations covering councils, the shire abandoned a planned vote on the project, which in any event is being opposed by neighbours.

In the meantime, the June issue of Royal Auto, the magazine of the RACV itself, included a column from President Kevin W. White. This said, among other things: ‘While we were disappointed that the government has scrapped the East-West Link project, we welcome the commitments made to widen Tullamarine Freeway-City link and to construct a new Chandler Highway Bridge ... In regional Victoria, the Budget includes additional funding for the duplication of the Western Highway, Princes Highway East, and Princes Highway West, projects that are well overdue.

We also welcome the increase in the road maintenance budget which will be a step towards fixing the state’s deteriorating regional road network ... RACV is disappointed that the missing link in the Metropolitan Ring Road from Greensborough to Ringwood has not been funded.

This vital link in the Ring Road is required to address the growing freight truck traffic from the Dandenong area to the Hume and Western Freeways and relieve crippling congestion in Melbourne’s north-eastern suburbs. RACV calls on both the state and federal governments to commit to deliver this critical project for Victoria as part of a long-term integrated strategy to cope with Melbourne’s growing population which is expected to grow to six million by 2031.’

Libs’ U-Turn On East-West?
The Victorian Liberal Party has indicated, an Age report says, that it could well dump its policy of constructing the East-West Link. Although it advocated building this link when it was still in government, and although current Liberal leader Matthew Guy continues to believe that the link is needed, he is now saying that there might not be enough money for the road to be practicable.

Six-Lane Freeway Planned
Melbourne may be getting a new, multi-million dollar fast route to the airport which is a road, not the long discussed rail line. This road would cover over a portion of the national reserve, the Woodlands Historic Park. The Melbourne Airport Link is a proposed six-lane road that would see the existing Tullamarine Freeway extending past the airport therefore making access easier from the north.

The road, which would need 37 properties to be acquired, has been put forward by VicRoads as part of its long-term planning for the city.
According to The Age, it would not be built for more than a decade, and perhaps take 30 years to get anything started.

**SOCIETY**

**The Age 'Spectrum'**

This regular (fall out) edition really does take two coffees when Alistair can fit it in. So many features including towns and suburbs, their art and culture with references to Port Fairy and Newport. Great articles. Well worth reading.

**Five Things You Didn’t Know A Dog Could Do (The Age)**

1. Seizure assistance: Dogs help people who suffer from epilepsy. They can be trained to break their human’s fall in the event of a seizure.
2. Mobility assistance: Help with a range of tasks to make life easier for people in wheelchairs.
3. Diabetic assistance: Can sense when a human is about to have a hypoglycaemic episode.
4. Mental health assistance: Used to support patients suffering from illnesses including Post Traumatic Stress Disorder.
5. Allergy Assistance: Can sense when dangerous allergens are present.

**VALE (OBITUARIES)**

Amery, James Henderson
Bailieu, David McArthur - Historian, author, shiplover, and youngest oarsman ever to row in a winning Head of the River eight.
Bird, John - Aged 58 and was an industry leader with Almonds.
Browne, Allan Vincent - Legend of Australian jazz.

Clarke, Ron - aged 78. Part of his legacy was the 1956 Australian mile championship at Olympic Park, where he fell and was helped back onto his feet by Landy, who went on to win the race anyway. It has been immortalised in bronze at Olympic Park.

Cotton, Richard - A Brilliant Scientist.


Harry, Curtis - Died at 78, and was a partner of law firm Lander and Rogers.
Horsburgh, Bruce Edmond - Aged 89.

McDougall, GH Graeme - Legacy member.

Pittard, David Charles - Aged 88.

Swan, John Meville - Aged 91 and a respected Monash Emeritus Professor.

Joan Kirner, aged 76. Victoria’s sole female Premier so far (and only the second female Premier anywhere in Australia; six months beforehand, Western Australia’s Carmen Lawrence had become the first). She got the state’s top political job in 1990 when John Cain Junior resigned, but she could not transcend the economic collapse which had already forced Cain out, and her government was crushed in the 1992 landslide that brought Jeff Kennett’s Liberals to power. Early the following year she quit the ALP leadership, James Kennan succeeding her in that role. On Mrs Kirner’s death from oesophageal cancer, those who paid her tribute included the ever-unpredictable Mr Kennett himself, who told the Herald Sun of his anger at ‘the males in the Victorian Labor Party after they had so failed her by handing it [the Premiership] to her in a hopeless position ... In the end, we didn’t beat her, her male colleagues beat her.’

Dulcie Brookshaw, aged 86. Former headmistress of Morongo Girls’ College in Geelong.

Dr Lexia Bryant, aged 74. General practitioner who in 1999 became the second president of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine. She achieved her greatest fame in 2009, when she was one of the first rescuers on the spot to deal with the carnage caused by Victoria’s Black Saturday bushfires. The Age’s obituary noted: ‘She retired briefly to indulge her interests in music and gardening but soon realised she had “failed retirement” and returned to work.’

Ronald Leonard Duprey, aged 87.

Amirah Inglis, formerly Turner, née Gutstadt, aged 88. Former Communist Party of Australia member, wife of historian Ian Turner (who was expelled from the CPA after Stalin’s death), and, following a divorce, wife of another historian, Ken Inglis; herself the author of several critically lauded books including Australians in the Spanish Civil War and a memoir, Amirah.
Avalon seizes golden aviation opportunity, however tourism disappointed by shelving of Point Nepean project

This month the Victoria Tourism Industry Council (VTIC) welcomed the announcement that Jetstar will introduce daily flights between the Gold Coast and Avalon Airport, as a result of its agreement with the State Government that sees the continuation of the airport’s passenger operations.

It is wonderful for Western Victoria to have direct access to a population of more than 500,000 people around the Gold Coast airport. The additional 65,000 seats a year coming into Avalon will provide a significant opportunity to showcase all the region has to offer throughout greater Geelong, the Bellarine Peninsula and the Great Ocean Road.

VTIC applauds Jetstar’s commitment to work closely with local and state tourism bodies to promote the greater Geelong region in the South East Queensland market and looks forward to the release of the second of the two additional routes under the agreement.

However, Victoria’s tourism sector was disappointed that a compromise was not reached to continue with an innovative project in Mornington Peninsula’s Point Nepean site, following the State Government’s decision to walk away from an agreement with the private sector.

The plan centred on the Quarantine Station part of this National Park and entailed a sustainable development that was sensitive to the local environment. Its focus was to preserve the integrity of the site’s natural and cultural heritage and to create more access for people to experience this wonderful place. However the failure to reach a compromise means the state is delayed in realising the benefits of sustainable tourism.

Public private partnerships are vital to the growth and prosperity of our sector. Point Nepean is a significant cultural and heritage site and the private sector was positive about working with government on a great project for Victoria.

The State Government has delayed this Point Nepean development, which has the potential to diminish private sector confidence in investing in Victorian tourism projects.

Our industry saw this as a litmus test for future developments of this nature and there is now concern regarding investment in innovative, job creating new tourism projects in Victoria.
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