Stephen McIntyre AM is one of Australia’s most eminent pianists and teachers. He is an Associate Professor in the Conservatorium of Music at the University of Melbourne. Stephen was the Artistic Director of the Port Fairy Spring Festival from 2005 to 2009. At this 2015 Festival, he gave a brilliant story of Dame Nellie Melba, as she hit Europe at the end of the nineteenth century, and many of the stories of her interesting life thereafter. Often interrupted by a wonderful pianist and three young Australian opera singers.
Letter from Melbourne

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.

3 Editorial 9 Justice & Police
3 State Government & Politics 10 Local Government
5 Federal 11 Melbourne
5 Agriculture 11 Events
6 Arts 12 Planning
7 Education 13 Sports
7 Energy 13 Transport – Ports
7 Environment & Conservation 13 Transport – Rail
8 Gaming 14 Transport – Road
8 Health 14 Utilities
8 Business & Investment 14 Society
9 Industrial Relations 15 Vale

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

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EDITORIAL

Though named Letter From Melbourne, this digest covers the public policy and related issues and facts of all of Victoria.

As we head into late Spring and Summer, and perhaps the normal Derby Day drenching, Melburnians will these days be so much more conscious of the word Energy, whether it be to cool things or heat things or move things around. The Energy word is so much more talked about each day. A current tsunami of public speaking presentations in Melbourne by a whole raft of organisations has an aspect of energy as the focus.

Out in the Bush, the thinking is different, more old school or traditional thinking, where we are heading towards a big Drought (conditions) in much of Western Victoria and other places of Victoria, and in the other states. The El Nino effect is often used in this context. As defined by the (Australian) Bureau of Meteorology, El Niño refers to the extensive warming of the central and eastern tropical Pacific that leads to a major shift in weather patterns across the Pacific. El Niño events are often accompanied by cooler than normal sea surface temperatures (SSTs) in the western Pacific, and to the north of Australia. Over much of Australia, but particularly eastern Australia, El Niño events are associated with an increased probability of drier conditions.

A touch of History. Some twenty two years ago, your Editor was drinking beer and sitting on the grass at the home of his farmer brother just over the Murray River in New South Wales. The Conversation wandered onto poor bloody Victoria, and what might change as a result of new Premier Kennett, if anything. This was a spark which on his returning to Melbourne, was the basis of this very magazine. Professor Geoffrey Blainey launched the 200th Edition of Letter From Melbourne on Tuesday 27 October at The Windsor Hotel. Thank you Geoffrey. (The fact that this is Edition 207 is another story).

Back to the modern day in Spring Street, there is in the Coffee Shops a bit more detail than appears in the press about significant changes in the Victorian Public Service, with various senior and senior/ish folk moving on from their jobs and staying within the VPS and others who are moving out. There is some restlessness about.

The Royal Commission into trade union governance and corruption is a federal activity, being played out more in Canberra than down here. Though it is giving some interesting insights into the union way of doing things, as we have had good insight into business activities over the years. More in the headlines here in Victoria is the union emphasis/role in a multitude of Government decision making. Not just wages and the extras, but across other changes in focus on policy and infrastructure.

Anyway. On with the Show. Happy Reading.

STATE GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Lay to Ambulance

Former Police Commissioner Ken Lay is to be appointed chairman of Ambulance Victoria. The Premier sacked the entire board of Ambulance Victoria last year because of poor response times and ongoing paramedic pay disputes, reports The Age.

Firm Dabbles in Politics

Law firm and prominent ALP donor Slater & Gordon is supporting Labor campaigners embroiled in the rorts for votes saga. Several sources told the Herald Sun the law firm had contacted more than two dozen campaigners, known as field organisers, who were employed as tax payer funded electorate officers last year. Police have started probing a complaint made about the ALP’s use of those workers and investigators have been speaking to witnesses.

Pay Aims High

Victoria’s public sector workers want a 20 per cent pay rise over the next four years and for every worker to be promoted up to two pay scales. The state’s 23,000 department and agency workers also want five weeks of annual leave, up from the standard four, with a sixth week for shift workers.

The pay claims, including a rise of 4.7 per cent each year for four years, were put to the State Government during September as the two parties began negotiations for a new enterprise agreement. The Community and Public Sector Union said workers needed more annual leave to help cater for the 12 weeks of school holidays every year according to the Herald Sun.

Conflict Fear in Appointment

Victoria’s new infrastructure advisory body will have three chiefs of state government departments on its board, despite a Labor promise it would be independent. Infrastructure Victoria has been set up to assess major projects based on merit rather than on party politics.

The Opposition’s infrastructure spokesman, Ryan Smith, said the appointment of government department heads raised questions about the board’s independent status. According to the Herald Sun, the department heads joining the board include head of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, Chris Eccles; Land, Water and Planning secretary Adam Fennissy and Treasury and Finance secretary David Martine.

Labor Staffer Running Police

Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton has seconded the Premier’s former right-hand man to be his chief of staff, sparking a Coalition backlash and reviving a rift with the force that goes back to the ill-fated Simon Overland era. Brett Curran is the former chief of staff to Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews and was one of the architects of Labor’s return to office within one term, working in opposition in the most senior administrative position.

When he left the then Labor opposition, Curran returned to Victoria Police where he had originally worked. The staffing decision, which the force says will be temporary, has horrified the Coalition, which has privately questioned whether it can deal with Ashton’s office and is examining what steps it needs to take to engage with the force according to The Australian.

Rorters Gagged

State MPs have been gagged from uttering the word ‘rorter’ in the Legislative Assembly after speaker Telmo Languiller deemed it unparliamentary. In what the Opposition called a
‘protection racket’ the Speaker, a Labor MP, ordered two Liberal MPs from the chamber for shouting variations of the word.

Coalition Ps were referring to Labor’s use of electorate officer staff budgets to hire casual employees to work as field organisers during the last election campaign, against parliamentary rules. The Herald Sun revealed details of the scheme in September, after Labor MPs and field organisers blew the whistle. During the last Parliament Labor MPs, then in Opposition, frequently referred to the then Frankston MP Geoff Shaw as the ‘rotting member for Frankston’.

In another day of political drama, the Speaker also ruled that questions without notice during Question Time must relate to ministerial duties or government business. ‘In future, I will rule questions out of order if I’m not convinced that they relate to government business and if they are not within the current responsibilities of a minister to which the question is directed.’

It’s All About Melbourne
One in five bridges to be upgraded using a State Government country bridges fund are within four kilometres of Daniel Andrews’s city electorate of Mulgrave. In February, Andrews said a $35.8 million country bridges program would be ‘fast-tracked to strengthen 48 bridges in regional Victoria.’

Opposition roads spokesman Ryan Smith attacked the program as a farce. He claimed that this was more evidence Andrews had been running a Melbourne-centric government, having scrapped the Coalition’s Country Roads and Bridges Program that provided funding for upgrades to rural councils according to The Age.

Don’t Be Fooled
Borrowing to fund level-crossing removals makes a lot more sense according to Kenneth Davidson in The Age, Premier Daniel Andrews and his treasurer, Tim Pallas, have both made speeches recently saying that the State Government should take advantage of its triple-A credit rating to raise public debt to finance infrastructure, where the benefit to the state is likely to exceed the cost of borrowing.

It is a pity they haven’t followed their own advice when it comes to the financing of the removal of suburban level crossings around Melbourne. Greater Melbourne has more than 100 level crossings, compared to two in outer Sydney. Now, the lease of arguably Melbourne’s 100 level crossings, compared to two in outer Melbourne. When it comes to the financing of the removal of 50 level crossings, rather than going into debt.

New CFA CEO
Minister for Emergency Services Jane Garrett has welcomed the appointment of Ms Lucinda Nolan as Chief Executive Officer of the CFA who has had senior roles in Victoria Police over the past 30 years according to a State Government Media release.

He Quit During a Probe
An investigation into the conduct of Auditor-General John Doyle will continue despite his sudden resignation as Victoria’s public sector watchdog. Doyle told State Parliament’s Public Accounts and Estimates Committee that he wouldn’t step down. Details of what is alleged about Doyle’s conduct towards the staff member remain murky, but in an initial statement Doyle described it in the Herald Sun as a ‘personal grievance matter.’

Party Hoppers Bid
Woollahra dairy farmer and nurse Roma Britnell will run for the Liberal Party in the South-West Coast by-election. Britnell won preselection for the safe Liberal seat, vacated by former premier Denis Napthine, after two rounds of voting at a meeting of party faithful in Warrnambool.

Until recently, she was the United Dairy Farmers of Victoria vice-president, joined the Liberal Party in August and will contest the seat against Nationals candidate, Warrnambool mayor Michael Neoh. Neoh had been a member of the Liberal Party until two weeks ago, when he resigned and was endorsed as the Nationals’ candidate.

The Liberal Party, which hasn’t won a Victorian by-election since the late 1980s, preselected Colac small business operator Richard Riordan to contest Polwarth, the safe Liberal seat vacated by Terry Mulder. The National Party has endorsed former Upper House MP David O’Brien, and Joe Miles will contest Polwarth for the Greens. In what is believed to be a first for a Victorian election, pre-poll voting will be open in both electorates for four weeks prior to the by-elections on October 31.

Andrews to be Grilled
Senior ministers and even Premier Daniel Andrews face a grilling after Parliament ordered an investigation into Labor’s rorts-for-votes scandal. The Parliamentary Audit Committee could call Labor heavyweights to answer questions over the diversion of hundreds of thousands of dollars of public funds used for party campaigning in the 2014 election, which was exposed by the Herald Sun in early September.

Former Treasurer John Lenders, Sports Minister John Eren and Deputy Premier James Merlino have all been identified by whistleblower staff and MPs as being involved in the scheme that helped propel Andrews to victory last November. Labor’s leader in the Legislative Council, Gavin Jennings, pledged the Government would co-operate with the investigation, ordered by Speaker Telmo Languiller and Legislative Council president Bruce Atkinson.

Corruption Probe
All Victorian MPs could be investigated over their use of taxpayer-funded staffing entitlements by Victoria’s anti-corruption authorities after claims Labor campaign workers were asked to lie about how they were being paid. A former Labor employee who worked briefly on Labor’s successful 2014 election campaign says he was paid by the Parliament as an electoral officer for two days a week, with the remaining three days funded by Labor according to The Age.

PTV Head Quits
Public Transport Victoria chief executive officer Mark Wild has resigned less than five months after Ian Dobbs resigned as PTV chairman. Wild is taking up a new position as an adviser within the Transport Group of the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources. Former VicRoads chief executive officer Gary Liddle will be the interim head at PTV according to the Herald Sun.

Andrews Looking for Present
Victoria hopes to secure billions of dollars of Commonwealth cash for the Melbourne Metro project under Malcolm Turnbull. An upbeat Premier Daniel Andrews welcomes...
Turnbull’s rise to the top job, labelling the new PM ‘an undoubted fan’ of public transport. As reported in The Age, he hailed the change as a chance to improve the sore relationship between Spring Street and Canberra.

**Application to Change Party Name**

The Victorian Electoral Commission has received an application to change the name of a registered political party in accordance with the Electoral Act 2002 and given notice in The Age. The ‘National Party of Australia - Victoria’ currently abbreviated to ‘The Nationals’ proposes to be called the ‘National Country Party of Australia - Victoria’ with a proposed abbreviation of the ‘National Country Party.’

**Stepping Off the Train**

The head of Public Transport Victoria is the second senior figure to quit the fledgling authority since the new government assumed power last year. Mark Wild will step down after 22 months as chief executive and leaves less than five months after his predecessor in the role, Ian Dobbs, resigned as PTV chairman.

**Executive Director, Policy, Planning and Performance with the Victorian Government, www.sacsconsult.com.au / candidates.**

FEDERAL

**Victoria Letting Down the Team**

The failure of Victorian and Queensland authorities to monitor dangerous heavy vehicles is creating huge risks across the country’s roads, according to NSW officials. The number of trucks caught speeding since 2012 in NSW has dropped about 90 per cent with a defect rate of trucks having halved in the same period.

But NSW authorities are increasingly frustrated at the refusal of interstate jurisdictions to adopt similar methods. ‘If there were a couple of cameras in Victoria, then we’d know, and we wouldn’t have Victorian drivers killing themselves in NSW because they fall asleep’ as reported in The Age.

**Give It Back**

The Liberals will launch an all-out assault on the Labor-held seat of Bruce, with former senator Helen Kroger joining the pre-selection battle in the outer-Melbourne electorate. According to The Age, the impending retirement of popular local member Alan Griffin has given the Liberals hope they may be able to take back the seat Griffin wrested from them in 1996, and successfully defended for another six elections.

**New Justice League**

Controversial broadcaster Derryn Hinch is heading into politics. The 71 year old is forming his own party, the Justice Party, which will stand Senate candidates, including himself, in every state at next year’s federal election. The party has employed a four-word slogan: ‘It’s just common sense.’ Hinch has long railed for the public to be informed of the identity of sex offenders reports the Herald Sun.

‘We will fight for a national public register of convicted sex offenders... but we’re not just a one issue party’ he said. ‘The Justice Party will stand for equality and justice for all. We believe our courts should show the same compassion and understanding for victims that they seem to show for criminals... We’ll campaign for parole reform and bail reform. The Lindt cafe siege should never have happened. Jill Meagher’s killer should not have been walking the streets.’

**Fine Tune the Federation**

Ahead of the release of the green paper on federation reform later this year, South Australian Premier Jay Weatherill said he believed the change in prime ministership was ‘cause for optimism’ for the shake of state and federal relations. West Australian Liberal Premier Colin Barnett said that while his state supported the work continuing on federation reform, the biggest issue remained ‘fixing the GST’ as reported in The Australian.

**NDIS One Step Closer**

Federal and State leaders have signed a historic funding agreement which will benefit more than $200,000 Australians living with a disability. In his first major act as Prime Minister, Malcolm Turnbull joined NSW Premier Mike Baird and Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews together with Social Services Minister Mitch Fifield, to sign the long-awaited funding agreement to roll out the National Disability Insurance Scheme in Victoria and NSW.

The program, which is expected to reach more than 460,000 people across Australia when fully implemented, will provide personalised care and support for people with a disability. In Victoria, the northeastern Melbourne, Central Highlands and Loddon regions will be the first to access the scheme next year. Bendigo will benefit from May 2017, with the rest of the state to follow according to the Herald Sun.

**More Planned Railways**

The Melbourne-to-Brisbane inland freight link will cost about $10 billion to build but an early commitment is crucial to give business clarity as a landmark analysis of the railway plan is set to be revealed. The Australian has revealed that analysis by a high powered group, chaired by former deputy PM John Anderson, suggests the project could generate economic benefits of about $22.5 billion. Documents estimated the project would cost about $10 billion, more than double the estimated $4.7 billion estimated in a 2010 study into inland rail.

**Victorian Snippets**

Three Victorian MPs will lead a new generation of politicians chosen by PM Malcolm Turnbull including; Kelly O’Dwyer, 38, Josh Frydenberg, 44 and Mitch Fifield, 48 who have been appointed roles in the Cabinet.

Scott Ryan and another disciple of former treasurer Peter Costello, Senator Mitch Fifield, were influential in joining Turnbull for his walk down a Canberra corridor to assume the prime ministership. Others emphasise the role of Victorian Liberal president Michael Kroger, a long term admirer and ally of the new PM.

Until just a few weeks ago, the Costello faction had been agitating for the rise of Scott Morrison as Liberal leader. Dire polling in Victoria, combined with a perceived lack of opportunity and career advancement under Abbott had galvanised the group against the Prime Minister.

According to one source in The Age, the polls for Abbott were horrific in Victoria, with the party indicating of marginal seats including Deakin, Corangamite, La Trobe and Dunkley, Casey and Aston. Thus a small clutch of Victorians played a central role in giving Turnbull the numbers, as well as a sufficient enough buffer to kill off any hope of an Abbott return.

**AGRICULTURE**

**Another Dry Patch**

Western Victoria has a severely dry core that is ‘ready to burn’ with some farm dams and creeks already dry, paddocks parched and forests starved of moisture. With its large number of bushland reserves, forests and open farmland carrying fuel, coupled with many towns scattered across the landscape and significant population, the vast area is a major concern ahead of what is expected to be a significant dry summer. Documents estimated the project would cost about $10 billion, more than double the estimated $4.7 billion estimated in a 2010 study into inland rail.

**Professor Geoffrey Blainey his wife Ann, the Editor and Kevin Adams at the 200 Launch.**
a severe and longer than normal bushfire season.

Western Victoria has missed out on meaningful rain for months and a large part of it has just recorded its driest three-year period on record. Emergency management commissioner Craig Lapsley said a large part of this wedge of Victoria was old gold mining country, which could present extra difficulties to firefighters because of old mine shafts and mullock heaps as reported in The Age.

Water From the Rock
Victoria’s $4 billion desalination plant might be switched on for the first time, to relieve areas hit by the driest conditions on record. Particularly in the north-west, in some parts storage levels have shrunk by half in a year, to just 30 per cent. The draft report leaked to The Age, says the Wimmera Mallee region has experienced the lowest rainfall on record over the past 14 months, with the Wimmera and Glenelg rivers likely to stop flowing altogether over the summer.

Although the outlook for Melbourne is relatively benign, with storage levels down to 74.5 per cent from 80.4 per cent last year, the situation facing some country towns is so severe the government is considering ordering water from the desalination plant for the first time. Some farmers argue that Labor’s controversial North South Pipeline should be reversed, allowing it to pump water, including desalinated water, to the north from storage south of the ranges.

This would be a radical departure from the original intention of the pipe, which was to send water south of the Great Dividing Range. Melbourne Water recently pointed out that upgrading the pipe to allow a two-way flow would need more pumps, energy and water entitlements making it a costly exercise.

Dairy Farm Black Hole
Soaring irrigation water prices and a water shortage in northern Victoria are forcing hundreds of dairy farmers to sell cows, cut milk production and stop irrigating once-green paddocks despite booming demand for Australian food in China. The cost of irrigation water has jumped nearly 400 per cent from $80 a megalitre (one million litres) last year and $200 a megalitre a month ago, to more than $300 last week, throwing the viability of many dairy farmers and fruit growers in the Goulburn Valley into doubt as reported in The Australian.

The triple whammy of water supply uncertainty, rocketing prices and an intensifying El Nino drought is forcing many dairy farmers and fruit growers to give up in despair. Irrigated dairy farms are being left to ‘go dry’, dairy cows are being sold by desperate farmers at abattoir cattle sales in Shepparton, with local jobs and communities linked to major northern Victorian food processing companies such as SPC and the Murray Goulburn are at risk and there are fears of an imminent wave of rural suicides.

Farming Water for Export
There’s a new battlefront opening up beneath rural Victoria. Beneath the small town of Stanley, near Beechworth, lies a reserve of water that is so good, you could bottle it. Or so think at least two farmers who have applied to extract water they would usually use to irrigate their crops and, instead, put it into bottles and sell it.

In one case the water will be sold to a bottled water company Mountain H2O, owned by Japanese company Asahi, while on the other the farmer will bottle and sell it under his own brand. However, some residents of Stanley and the local shire are not happy and are determined to block their plans. The opposers believe the water in acquirers beneath Stanley and surrounds should stay local.

They are happy for it to be used for irrigation but not for export according to Ed Gannon, editor of the Weekly Times. Basin Flood Farce
Victoriaan farmers say they will not sell their land or sign rights away for the sake of the plan, under which the Murray-Darling Basin Authority wants to run over bank flows and ‘minor’ man-made floods, which it says will improve river health. It is up to the states to find ways to achieve those higher flows, up to 40,000 mega litres a day in some instances, without damaging property or exposing themselves to liability.

It’s understood the Victorian Government would prefer to buy easements, but has not ruled out covenants, which would stop landholders making claims if floods don’t follow intended paths. Landholders are making it known they do not intend to give up their property, and want someone to be liable if things go wrong.

According to The Weekly Times, the farmers are refusing to sign anything which is backed by the Upper Goulburn River Catchment Association, whose landholder members are united in refusing easements.

Sheep to be Tagged
A debate over mandatory electronic tagging for sheep and goats has the Victorian Farmers Federation at loggerheads with Agriculture Minister Jaala Pulford. ‘We need the Minister to make a clear statement whether her intent is to mandate electronic tags or not,’ VFF livestock president Ian Feldmann said, after a meeting with Pulford.

The VFF wants electronic tags to be optional, but after the meeting, Pulford maintained that ‘this change is inevitable’. No date has been set to enforce electronic tagging. Pulford’s support for electronic tagging, following the recommendation of the Auditor-General during August, has angered industry groups according to The Weekly Times.

ARTS
Queensbridge Square Development
A ‘sculptural’ pedestrian bridge will soar above a busy Southbank road under Crown’s plan to add a new six-star hotel to its entertainment complex according to The Age.

Push for New Centre
The long-dormant ‘triangle site’ on St Kildas foreshore has been put forward by Port Phillip Council as a potential site for a new contemporary art centre being touted by the National Gallery of Victoria as reported in The Age.

The NGV has indicated an appetite to establish a...
third arts space for Melbourne, for contemporary
work, to add to its Australian art gallery
at Federation Square and its St Kilda
Road international centre. But a site for the new
gallery has not been identified.

EDUCATION
Scratching the Surface
A Victorian state government visa nomination
scheme designed to ease acute shortages of maths,
physics, science, language and special education
teachers resulted in only eight successful
applications last year and seven the year before,
according to figures released from the Department of Economic
Development in The Age.

Portable Problem
The Education Department has written to dozens
of principals, advising 175 of their portable
buildings will be moved to Melbourne’s growth
corridors. Another 125 new portables, which cost
$35 million, will also hit the road according to
The Age.

Government figures show there will be 14,500
more school-aged students in 2016 than this year,
which has 915,200 enrolled students. By 2020,
there will be one million five to seventeen year
olds. Education Minister James Merlino said the
department would work with schools to ensure
minimal disruption.

Department Grades Parents
Parents’ education levels and students’ NAPLAN results will determine how
much money Victorian schools receive under a State Government overhaul of education funding.
State schools will receive a share of $566 million over four years to help disadvantaged students.

According to Premier Daniel Andrews in The Age, a new ‘catch up’ loading will give Victorian
secondary schools $2000 for every student who
did not meet minimum NAPLAN standards when
they were in year 5. ‘We know that often these factors are linked to the disadvantage that students
and school communities face.’

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ENERGY
Stand Made on Gas
The Victorian Liberal Party looks set to announce
a tougher stance on onshore gas. The Liberals
support the moratorium on onshore gas, but has not said what it would do if it formed government
according to The Weekly Times.

With two by-elections playing out in western Victoria, where the gas debate is a major issue, it’s likely the Liberal Party will attempt to
reposition itself on the matter. Opposition energy
spokesman David Southwick said the Coalition
would have ‘more to say on the issue in due
course’, but it would not support any development of
any initiative that challenges Victoria’s agricultural assets.’

Opposition Leader Matthew Guy, said he did not agree with the manufacturer’s claims that he was
contributing to a gas shortage, and he accused the
resources industry of failing to convince country
Victorians of the safety of gas exploration.

Liberals Told to Stand Down
The gas industry has savaged the decision by the Victorian Liberal and National parties to push for a
moratorium on onshore exploration to be extended until 2020 amid two-by-election
campaigns in the gas-rich west of the state. The Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration
Association said in a statement that the decision had exposed a dearth of leadership as reported in The Australian.

APPEA Eastern Australia chief operating
official Paul Fennelly said ‘the experience of
Queensland also shows that onshore gas can successfully coexist with farming and other land uses.’ ‘Natural gas supply has become a political
football, a race to the bottom that ignores evidence based on science, technology and world-
class professional standards.’ Birregurra beef
farmer Brian Bowtell, whose 243ha property east
of Colac sits in the Polwarth electorate, said the
Coalition should have opted for a permanent ban.

Gas Ban Infuriates Business
Victoria is unlikely to get coal seam gas
exploration, let alone mining, until the next
decade, after the Coalition Government declared
the moratorium should stay in place until June
2020, angering business. The head of the oil and
gas industry peak body said the decision raised
serious questions about political leadership and
whether Victoria welcomed investment.

Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration
Association chief operating officer eastern Australia Paul Fennelly said a political
football and the moratorium would serve only to
curb supply, push up gas prices and make
manufacturing less competitive. ‘Victoria is the
largest consumer of natural gas in the nation, with
1.8 million households and hundreds of
manufacturers reliant on it for their energy supply ...
but it remains the only mainland state in
Australia with a ban on exploration.’

Australian Industry Group Victorian
director Tim Piper said the move was a political
decision and the effect would be ‘quite
significant’ on Victorian industry. ‘We have been
asking both parties to consider removing the
moratorium and both parties understand the
implications of not removing it in that gas is
going to become very expensive because of a lack of supply in the state.’

Piper said companies such as Australia Paper
and Qenos, which use large amounts of
gas, would be forced to decide whether to stay in
the state. Research showed the moratorium would
cost industry $23 billion by 2020 according to
The Financial Review.

ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION
Don’t Burn My Land
In the wake of the 2009 Black Saturday bushfires, Victoria introduced a goal of burning off 5 per
cent of public lands each year. Yet new research
published in the Journal of Biogeography,
throws into question the worth of prescribed burns such as the one carried out in a state forest near
Lancefield that escaped into a bushfire, which
destroyed five homes, burnt around 4000 hectares
and generated fury among residents. Country
Fire Authority chief officer Euan Ferguson has,
however, vigorously defended the state’s fuel
reduction burning program, saying it saved lives,
could reduce the intensity of bushfires and made
them safer for firefighters to combat according to
The Age.

Targeting Those At Risk
Communities and firefighters could soon receive
real-time warnings of risks from bushfires down
to a matter of kilometres, according to a new
model being tested this fire season. As fire crews
across south-east Australia prepare for an
unusually active bushfire season amid an
abnormally warm spring and an intensifying El
No Wrecking Ball

The fire-ravaged South Melbourne Hotel partly owned by Collingwood footballer Dane Swan has been spared destruction according to the Herald Sun.

Adieu

Ngura, the century old Kew home that was the birthplace of Australia’s 21st prime minister, Gough Whitlam, who died almost a year ago, will be up for demolition as of mid-October according to The Age.

Upgrade in Progress

Although the station’s historic ballroom will not be included in the restoration, a $100 million facelift of Flinders Street Station will instead focus on making the station more user-friendly for commuters, with improved signage, better access to platforms and upgraded public toilets. According to The Age, the tired facade of Flinders Street Station will also be repainted, as well as repairs to the 105-year old building’s clock tower and leaky roof.

A Quiet Victorian Boom

Victoria’s critically endangered bird emblem has been spared destruction according to The Herald Sun.

Bob Anderson, from the group Friends of the Helmeted Honeyeater, said this year’s release follows several successful breeding seasons. The wild population is on the rise, having been as low as 60 a few years ago according to The Age.

Heritage Trumps

An inner-city resident’s bid to live green has been curbed by his local council, with planning laws forcing him to tear down $6000 solar panels he has installed on his heritage home. The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal upheld a decision by the City of Melbourne to refuse a permit for the panels, on the basis that they had an unacceptable impact on the heritage values of Paul Leitinger’s house and his neighbours’ homes according to The Age.

Review the Game

Saturation advertising for gambling, particularly attached to sport, is exposing young people too early to a gambling culture, Victoria’s Minister for Gaming & Liquor Regulation, Jane Garrett says. Self-regulation of sports adds in live broadcasts has failed to satisfy community concern and a recently announced review of online gaming regulations should be expanded to include advertising rules according to comments in The Age.

Avoidable Deaths Prove Stress

The problems at Bacchus Marsh and Melton Regional Hospital appear to have been a long time in the making. An investigation into the hospital makes it clear, the mortality rate at the hospital has been significantly higher than the state average, and much higher than would be expected for a ‘low risk’ unit. It blamed this unusually high death rate on a lack of training, a lack of after hours emergency paediatric cover for neo-natal resuscitation and care, staff who were ‘inadequately skilled’ in foetal surveillance, a lack of ‘high quality staff education’ and an issue with the clinical governance framework.

But the revelations also highlight a much bigger issue that our state is struggling to come to confront: how to maintain services as the state’s population and health costs continue to soar. This challenge is particularly acute in Melbourne’s west, which is one of the fastest growing districts in the nation according to analysis conducted by Josh Gordon in The Age. The Bacchus Marsh hospital is under investigation currently for the death of 11 babies in the past three years.

Ambos Lagging Behind

One in four emergency ambulances arrives late, prompting an apology from paramedic bosses with some regional communities facing average waits of up to 25 minutes for a Code 1 call which are supposed to arrive in 15 minutes.

Revealing the failed response time targets in the Ambulance Victoria annual report, acting chief executive officer Associate Professor Tony Walker said the service attended more than 10,000 emergency cases each week over the past year, but admitted to the Herald Sun that times had to improve.

Ambulance Stations Upgraded

Six ambulance stations will be rebuilt as part of a $20 million investment to modernise and upgrade ambulance facilities across Victoria. In metropolitan Melbourne, ambulance stations will be rebuilt in Kew, Dandenong and Preston. In regional Victoria, stations will be rebuilt in Echuca, Orbost and Sale as reported in Health Victoria.

No Jab, No Play

Legislation will be introduced to the Parliament to require children to be fully vaccinated in order to attend childcare and kindergarten from January 1. ‘No Jab No Play’ has been expanded to include kindergartens and to close the conscientious objector exemption as reported in Health Victoria.

Bypass System Ends

Victorian hospitals are no longer able to refuse patients by ambulance this month even if they are full, as part of widespread changes to free up ambulances. The change will force hospitals to reduce ‘bed block’ and create room for new patients, which should reduce the time people wait for ambulances by getting paramedics back on the road more quickly.

The Government will spend $800,000 to help hospitals adjust to the change by rostering extra nurses on during peak periods, more doctors on weekends and extra administration support as reported in The Age.

BUSINESS & INVESTMENT

Good Job

The Civil Contractors Federation is the peak industry body representing Australia’s civil construction industry through a network of state
and territory branch offices. In Victoria, the CCF represents in excess of 550 member companies who directly or indirectly build $6 billion of the state’s civil infrastructure per year. The CCF Victoria’s mission is to be the voice of the industry and to provide a high level of benefit and services to its Members. Applications close 31 October: careers@ccfvic.com.au

Crown’s Tall Order
A $1.5 billion hotel and apartment tower could transform Southbank under a bold plan by Crown Casino. The 90-storey ‘tower of light’ will feature 388 six-star hotel rooms and 680 luxury units. The Queensbridge Hotel Tower proposal is the result of a global design competition by Crown. It would give the company four hotels here, with more than 2000 rooms, amid rising demand for luxury accommodation from local, interstate and international visitors reports The Age.

Out of the Loop
Frustrated phone companies have been ready to provide mobile services in Melbourne’s City Loop for almost a year but state government delays have thwarted installation. In contrast, more complicated underground rail networks in New York, Paris, London and Sydney have had mobile coverage since at least last year.

The Napthine Government announced that a consortium of Telco operators would install infrastructure onto VicTrack’s antenna system in train tunnels, with 3G services due to be switched on by the end of 2014. In December 2014, the Andrews Government moved that target to the second quarter of 2015 for 3G services and the second quarter of 2016 for 4G services. In July, it again delayed the launch until late November.

There are two reasons for the delays according to the State Government according to The Age, including: the chance that signals from the mobile network could interfere with the digital radios used by train drivers; and the lack of time to complete the work.

**INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS**

**Pay Row Ablaze**
The union representing CFA firefighters in Victoria wants wage and allowance changes that would boost total pay packages by 50 per cent. Emergency Services Minister, Jane Garrett said the United Firefighters Union was still using its 2013 ambit claim for a 30 per cent pay rise over three years as the basis for enterprise agreement talks. On top of that, Garrett said a demand for 45 new allowances could add another 20 per cent to firefighter’s salaries by the end of the deal.

A CFA firefighter with three years’ service is paid about $70,000 a year. A 50 per cent increase would take that to $105,000. UFU state secretary Peter Marshall said Garrett’s claims were ‘total and utter spin’ but refused to put a figure on what the union was seeking as reported in the Herald Sun.

**Police Ban Fines**
A police ban on issuing speeding fines will be put to a vote as officers go to war over pay and conditions. Ditching paperwork in favour of old-school community policing like helping school kids cross the road will also be considered. Up to 5000 police held a rally in late October atMelbourne’s Festival Hall to vote on industrial action as reported in the Herald Sun.

**Metro**
Metro has made a secret $200,000 payout to a rogue union heavyweight after he ordered a snap strike that would have knocked out more than half of the city’s train fleet. The Herald Sun has also learnt that militant union officials have even listed Jim Chrysostomou’s job reinstatement among the demands not to shut down the trains during recent pay and condition negotiations. Chrysostomou was fighting his sacking in the Federal Court with the Rail, Tram and Bus Union funding the expensive action.

But as the court hearing approached, the union started to negotiate with Metro on a deal for Chrysostomou, fearing it would lose and have to pay about $1 million in costs. In a bid to rubber stamp his sacking, Metro agreed to a payout figure of about $200,000, which was almost half what he was demanding. But despite losing his job with Metro, he will remain as the RTBU’s assistant divisional secretary and now be paid for the role.

**Firm On Penalties**
Opposition Leader Bill Shorten has defended Sunday penalty rates by claiming they’re the difference between sending their children to private schools over public schools. The Labor leader attacked the Federal Government for not ruling out calls to abolish sunday rates in favour of flat weekend penalties. Industry groups have estimated adjustments to the penalties system would create 40,000 hospitality jobs alone and make small businesses more sustainable.

Shorten said his party was ‘not out of touch’ with how people make their money. ‘For people on $40,000 and $50,000 and $60,000 a year, penalty rates are the difference as to whether or not they can afford to send their kids to a private school... If you were to take away penalty rates from these groups, you would depress their wages further’ as reported in the Herald Sun.

**Vote for Labor is a Vote for Strikes**
A strong Victorian Government would settle industrial disputes to ensure the public was not unduly impacted. Unfortunately, according to Tom Elliott in the Herald Sun, when it comes to militant industrial action Labor governments are anything but strong. For a start, the union movement is a huge financial contributor to Labor. Every year a substantial chunk of members’ dues are directed to the party whose own constitution directs it to represent these same workers’ interests in Parliament. Second, every Labor member is required to be a union member.

**Train Reactions**
The promise of 24 hour public transport on weekends from January 1 is under threat after the rail workers’ union vowed it ‘will not commence’ unless staff levels are boosted. The key State Government election commitment, called Homewatch, will allow passengers next year to catch trains every hour on every major metropolitan line overnight on weekends.

Trams will run every 30 minutes on six key lines, while buses will service regional centres such as Ballarat and Geelong. The scheme has already blown its budget by $33.6 million, after the Government failed to adequately account for protective service officer costs. But the Herald Sun revealed that the Rail, Tram and Bus Union is now demanding extra rail staff as well.

**JUSTICE & POLICE**

**Guns and Mental Health**
A veteran police officer charged with murder had an extensive history of psychiatric problems, which has raised further questions about Victoria Police’s handling of mental illness and its policies...
The suicide of another police officer, who is also understood to have suffered from mental illness, yet was armed with a service revolver, is expected to intensify pressure on Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton to act, according to the Age.

New Judge Makes Pledge
The new Chief Judge of Victoria’s County Court, Peter Kidd, has promised to ‘fiercely’ defend his fellow judges and take the court’s work directly to the community according to the Age.

Uber Cost for Cabbies
Controversial booking app Uber is enjoying a $208 million free hit as it continues to defy paying taxi taxes. An independent report into Victoria’s taxi industry reveals the true cost of allowing the Uber drivers to roam free while taxi operators are slugged with massive taxes.

Illegal ride-sharing app Uber is stirring up Victoria’s taxi market, and with its popularity soaring it is threatening it is threatening the cabbie industry by getting passengers to book Uber drivers, who drive their own cars.

Files Filled a Truck
The secret destruction of thousands of CFMEU documents undertaken while security cameras were blacked out with union banners has left the union exposed to accusations of an elaborate cover up. A bitter feud between two of the union’s top Queensland officials was detailed in the Royal Commission into Union Corruption.

Former CFMEU boss Dave Hanna also put Queensland CFMEU Secretary in the frame as the man who destroyed documents which filled a seven-tonne truck, and which may have been required by the Royal Commission according to the Herald Sun.

Cheap Guns Flood Market
High-powered home-made shotguns being traded on the black market for just a few hundred dollars are the new weapons of choice for drug dealers in Melbourne. Police are raising the alarm over the new wave of backyard weapons, which can fire real 12-gauge shotgun cartridges and are easy to conceal. The trade in the weapons is strongly linked to the drug market according to The Age.

Court Rejects Uber Case
Uber has lost its bid to have its legal case against the State Government over whether its popular ride-sharing service operates against the law thrown out of court. Magistrate Julian Ayres rejected the defence case from UberX driver Nathan Brenner of Caulfield North, that the Taxi Services Commission had acted illegally in how it had collected evidence. According to The Age, a trial was ordered to start on October 9.

Smoking Cold
Prison officers fear violence could explode in Victoria’s jails as anger builds among nicotine-starved inmates. After a smoking ban was brought in at the state’s 14 jails on July 1, eligible inmates were given daily access to nicotine patches for 12 weeks. But that supply officially ended in late September. According to The Herald Sun, only prisoners entering the system are now able to get access to that three-month supply.

Labor Rorts Twist
The police fraud and extortion squad is investigating the Labor rorts for votes scandal. Sources have confirmed the fraud squad is looking into the matter, and an ALP whistleblower says detectives have already interviewed him.

The former party field manager, who the Herald Sun did not name, said he had been contacted for more information regarding the funds used by the state Labor Party to pay for election campaigns in breach of parliamentary rules.

CFMEU Pays Out Boral
Australia’s biggest construction union will pay up to $9 million as part of a massive settlement over its alleged black ban of concrete giant Boral in central Melbourne. In one of the largest ever industrial payouts, the powerful Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union will pay Boral more than $4 million in damages plus legal costs, and will enter into a binding contract that prohibits the union from interfering with Boral’s business for a three year period.

Boral had been seeking more than $20 million in damages in the Victorian Supreme Court after claiming to be the victim of a secondary boycott that froze its products out of almost all high-rise work in Melbourne for years. The company alleged the illegal ban began in 2013 after it refused to cede to the CFMEU’s demands that it stop supplying developer Grocon, with whom the militant union is engaged in a simmering industrial feud as reported in The Age.

Cell Demand Booming
Half of Victoria’s prisoners come from just six disadvantaged post codes. Our most underprivileged suburbs include Broadmeadows, Corio, Doveton, Frankston North, Maryborough and Morwell. A report has found the state’s prisons will reach capacity by 2019.

Victorian Ombudsman Deborah Glass warned almost half of Victoria’s inmates were reoffending, prompting the prison population to surge by 25 per cent since 2012 as reported in the Herald Sun.

Warning: Servants Groomed
Criminals are befriending Victorian public servants through gyms and tattoo parlours to gain access to sensitive information, Victoria’s Anti-Corruption agency has warned.

According to The Age, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission has found there is a ‘significant risk’ state bureaucrats are being exploited by organised criminals, particularly outlaw motorcycle gangs, with public sector agencies largely in the dark about the potential for corruption.

Anti-Terror Command Established
Victoria Police has formed a department to respond to the threat of terrorism. Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton announced the new counter-terrorism command would be led by Assistant Commissioner Ross Guenther. It will combine several units to form a department responsible for counter-terrorism activities ‘The threat of terrorism is a compelling risk to the safety of our community; it demands a sophisticated approach.’

LOCAL GOVERNMENT
Chief Municipal Inspector
As part of the Department of Premier and Cabinet, the Local Government investigations and Compliance inspectorate is a dedicated investigative unit focusing on compliance of Local Government Act 1989. www.careers.vic.gov.au

Weighing Up Lyons
Geelong councillors are considering whether to take action against Mayor Darryn Lyons in the
wake of his decision to wear an offensive T-shirt, with the slogan ‘gas, grass or ass, no one rides for free’. In a statement at the Speak Out Against Sexism event at City Hall, Councillor Andy Richards said he would discuss with colleagues what action to take to send the message the behaviour was unacceptable.

The Councillors Code of Conduct makes six references to councillors acting with ‘integrity’, setting an example, behaving in a way that reflects community values and acting respectfully reports the Herald Sun.

Live Eye to Crime
Ten CCTV cameras will be installed on Fitzroy St, St Kilda, to crack down on rising crime along the popular night-time entertainment strip. Port Phillip City Council will get a $246,000 grant to install the cameras under a $2.5 million State Government drive to address security in crime hot spots. The Fitzroy St strip, home to the Gatwick Hotel, has increasingly been plagued by assaults and drunkenness and the Herald Sun reports.

Beware Imminent Death
Cyclists will be encouraged to avoid several inner city streets as Melbourne City Council looks to cut the number of deaths and serious injuries. A draft plan reported in The Age declares the Hoddle Grid, including Lonsdale Street, Flinders Street and King Street, as ‘non-preferred routes’ for cyclists as they are considered unsafe.

Disputed Territory Claim
Citizens Park in Richmond is the matter of dispute for sports users, dog lovers and families with young children alike. Dog walkers have rallied to demand that all the gates be reinstalled, a move opposed by the sports clubs. The football club has reported two incidents of young children avoiding injury after being accosted by off-leash dogs recently. The tensions continue.

Muslims Still Welcome
A rally organised by the far-right United Patriots Front attracted hundreds of anti-Islam protestors who gathered to decry the planned construction of a mosque in Bendigo. They failed to make Muslims feel unwelcome there, according to the town’s mayor in The Age.

MELBOURNE

Imagination Run Wild
The Royal Society of Victoria was in a quandary when its 107-year tenant, the Bureau of Meteorology, left in January. What to do with the 173-square-metre triangle on the corner of Victoria Parade and La Trobe Street. The scientific body with ideas in The Age in June has reaped a rich response. The society has published the suggestions on its website, where there are voting options and links to social media.

Former politician Clem Newton Brown suggested to The Age a fully refurbished W class tram could sit on the site, converted into a café. Lord Mayor Robert Doyle told 3AW in June he favoured a pocket park. ‘The more green we can get in the city, the better.’ Another idea was a museum of Melbourne’s Hoddle Grid layout. The drone idea, dubbed The Hive, comes from architecture firm studio505, whose director Dylan Brandon gave employees a day to brainstorm as reported in The Age.

CBD News is another local media publication owned and operated by Shine Dighe and Shane Scanlan. An accidental journalist, Shine has spent more than 10 years working in different forms of media – as a print journalist, public relations manager and media researcher. Inspired and guided by Steve Jobs’ philosophy who started out as a computer guy, but soon realised he wasn’t in the computer business – instead in the business of delivering information and entertainment. “This is the sentiment that CBD News echoes – we do publish a paper but we are primarily in the business of putting people in touch with their community,” she said.

Call to Represent
Businesses should be banned from voting in Melbourne City Council elections or the electoral roll massively expanded to include thousands of the city’s permanent workers, new research says according to The Age. The report on democracy in Melbourne, commissioned by the Electoral Regulation Research Network, recommends that only residents be allowed to vote in the local government poll.

The move would lead to a far more ‘left-leaning’ council, it has been predicted, and the overthrow of current Melbourne lord mayor Robert Doyle, a former Victorian Liberal Party leader. Meanwhile, a second but non-preferred option could see workers in the city, more than 439,000, given voting rights.

Good Old Mess
Melbourne City Council is involved in a controversy over the timing of fines issued to motorists who park in sensor bays. The anomaly involves thousands of city parking bays with in-ground sensors. It came to light when Glenn Batson contacted the Herald Sun after he received an infringement notice that put the time of his alleged offense at 11.36am, which was four minutes before the 11.40am expiry time printed on the display ticket.

Where is the Melbourne Charm?
Ours is a city best lived on the street. Why don’t planners and developers recognise this? It has been argued that our architecture (and planning) is a constructed morality, that what we make is what we believe in, that our buildings describe our collective DNA.

If that is the case, then Docklands, Southbank, West End, St Kilda Road and, it seems soon, Fishermans Bend, are describing us as an avuncular, uncaring, addicted to development and brutal. It may be that that has been forced on Melbourne as multinational investors ride the waves of new, tall construction without a local heart for the city.

They prefer a global, international style of development, one that has proved satisfactory universally, but one that has failed to reflect Melbourne’s character, history and particularity. Large open spaces don’t work well in Melbourne, according to an opinion in The Age.

Our bitter chill-factor winds require small gathering spaces, rather than spacious open plazas. There is room for high-rise buildings in all this, but the essence of this city is on the street, at human scale, in places that protect, entertain and enliven.

Don’t Disable the Alarm
An increase in the number of businesses disabling their fire alarms to prevent being billed thousands of dollars by the fire brigade for false alarms has led to the first prosecution under laws clamping down on the practice. Charlton’s, a central district pool hall and karaoke bar with a licence for 150 patrons, pleaded guilty to 51 offences costing $25,000 in fines according to The Age.

Dead Space.
Many of Melbourne’s historic burial grounds, including the famed Melbourne General Cemetery in North Carlton, are five years away from posting ‘No Vacancy’ signs as reported in The Age. St Kilda and Brighton, which dated back to the mid-1800s, would soon be full and closed to new business.

The Dandenong Community Cemetery and the Cheltenham Pioneer Cemetery, also established in the 1800s, and the 82 year old Cheltenham Memorial Park were facing similar constraints. Customs such as vertical burials and liquifaction of the body had not found takers in Australia, according to Southern Metropolitian Cemeteries Trust spokesman Leigh Funston.

EVENTS

Serving Up A Grand Slam
A fortnight long festival of food, tennis and fun will be staged between Melbourne’s CBD and its famed sporting precinct in a world first at next year’s Australian Open. Bars, cafes, entertainment and pop-up restaurants will be installed by the Yarra River between Federation Square and Melbourne Park in an unprecedented Grand Slam offering.

The free, family-friendly, Australian Open Festival will run every day and night of the tennis tournament in January from early morning until after the end of play. The festival, announced by the Herald Sun, will give the Australian Open the biggest geographical footprint of any grand slam in the world, bigger than Wimbledon, the US or French Open. Tennis Australia commercial director Richard Heaslegrave said the festival would push the excitement of the event closer to the CBD and offer something for everyone.

Police Defend Migrants
Victoria’s top police officer issued a passionate defence of migrant communities as Bendigo braces for furious anti-Islam protests and far-right militants threaten to target mosques around the country in coordinated protests on the same day.

In a rare foray into public debate, Police Commissioner Graham Ashton said police would not tolerate protesters who targeted particular religious groups.

“Our reputation for warmth and generosity is increasingly at risk from a new wave of intolerance that appears to be gaining traction in some parts of the country. — now more than ever, is the time for Victorians of all faiths to be standing together and focusing on the common bonds and values which unite us, not the points of difference on which ignorance can prosper and fuel division.”

Nationalist, far-right and neo-Nazi groups planned to converge on Bendigo to protest the
Herald Sun’s Birthday
On the eighth October 2015, the Herald Sun celebrated its 25th birthday with a gala event including some of Victoria’s biggest names in TV, Sport, politics and entertainment.

Hot Hot Hot
The fifth October 2015 was the hottest spring day in a century as the bushfire season claimed its first home. Bureau of Meteorology senior meteorologist Phil King said the state had never experienced such an early heatwave during spring as reported in the Herald Sun.

You Have a Right to Be Angry
On a visit to Lancefield, Premier Daniel Andrews message was ‘You have a right to be [angry], and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too’. In Melbourne, the Government moved to hose down angry, and we’re pretty angry too'.

Bendigo Rally Fear
An anti-Islam rally has forced the cancellation of a Bendigo Wine Festival. Event organisers made the decision to cancel the Heritage Uncorked festival after consultation with the Bendigo council and Victoria Police. Bendigo Council City futures director Stan Liaicos said the decision was disappointing but safety concerns come first.

Roll Up, Roll Up
The Royal Melbourne Show was on from Saturday 19th September to Tuesday 29 September with gates open from 10am until 9pm each day. Tickets cost $38 for adults and $19 for children with discounts available for RACV members.

Planning
Fisherman’s Bend Misguided
The former Victorian Coalition government’s signature urban renewal project delivered windfall profits to land owners but was unmatched worldwide for its failure to plan for transport and other key services, a scathing confidential report has found.

The now Opposition Leader Matthew Guy’s decision to allow unfettered high-rise development of Fishermans Bend in industrial South Melbourne and Port Melbourne was taken without a strategy or funds for decontamination, transport, open space or affordable housing according to The Age. The assessment was compiled for Planning Minister Richard Wynne by a Labor-appointed committee which includes lord mayor Robert Doyle.

No Quick Fix On Track
The long-awaited development of one of Melbourne’s worst eyesores could floundering amid fears of height restrictions. The sprawling rail lines of Federation Square have been earmarked for development for decades, with expressions of interest entered by businesses late last year. But property groups and Melbourne City Council fear the project is going nowhere.

Property groups say for the project to proceed without taxpayer funds, high-rise towers would need to be a central part of the development. The State Government’s new CBD height restrictions do not affect the site, but it is understood Labor would not approve supersized structures in that area either, fearing they would overshadow the river and other buildings. Without skyscrapers, developers say the government would need to inject hundreds of millions of dollars of public funds according to The Age.

Giant Tower Set
This month, work began on the foundations of what will be the southern hemisphere’s tallest apartment building, located at the 70 Southbank Boulevard site as reported in The Age. Like all skyscrapers, the Australia 108 will be constructed with the flexibility to sway up to 60 centimeters. When completed, the mega-tower will be nine-storey’s higher than the Eureka Tower, which has been Melbourne’s tallest building since 2006, although its unlikely to remain so for much longer with three larger skyscrapers in the pipeline.

Green Wedge Tipped
Swaths of land used for a rubbish tip and recycling plant in Melbourne’s south-east will be converted to parkland and market gardens in an extension to the region’s ‘green wedge.’ The State Government has announced the 366-hectare parcel of land that runs through Heatherton and Clayton South will be rezoned for inclusion in the green wedge.

According to The Age, planning Minister Richard Wynne said some businesses would no longer be bale to operate on the land but the government was committed to helping them find alternative sites.

Like Stunned Mullets
Asian investors in Melbourne’s central business district have been ‘stunned’ by new rules restricting skyscraper density in the city centre, a planning consultancy that works extensively with overseas firms building apartment towers has warned. Urbys director Sarah Horsfield said the new rules risked putting ‘a handbrake on investment’ as reported in The Age.

Priority Projects Confirmed
According to a press release from the Melbourne Planning Authority, the Minister for Planning has recently written to confirm the project priority list. Their project list covers priority greenfield, inner and middle ring Melbourne development precincts, regional centres and Plan Melbourne projects allocated to the MPA. These priority projects have been identified to ensure we put our energies into key projects as identified by the Government.

Derelict Demand Soars
Vacant state-owned residential properties in the state’s west should be redeveloped to tackle the surging public housing waiting list, according to The Age. An audit of vacant land and empty homes by the Victorian Public Tenants Association has called for the ‘revitalisation’ of properties in Braybrook. The audit includes 21 properties, some of which have been heavily vandalised, and raises concerns about damage to the neighbourhoods amenity.

Limited Dead Spots
The Victorian Government is considering a plan for a 130-hectare cemetery in Melbourne’s south-east as space begins to run out in the city’s other cemeteries. It is understood that the Southern Metropolitan Cemeteries Trust has proposed a memorial park in Heatherton. If approved, the Kingston Memorial Park would be the second...
largest cemetery in Melbourne, after the 169-hectare Springvale cemetery. Some city cemeteries, such as those in St Kilda, Brighton and Carlton are close to capacity and could be closed for business within five years.

### Still Call China Home

An ambitious $20-$30 billion dollar Chinese-backed plan to build a high-tech city of 80,000 residents in Melbourne’s outer west with a university campus and research centre is just one step away from being approved by the Victorian Government. As reported in The Australian, the project would be one of the largest and most visible Chinese-backed investments in Australia, and would aim to tap into the $700 billion a year research funding spent by China and draw thousands of foreign students here.

### Green Light Given

The Victorian Government has rezoned an 80 hectare site in Melbourne’s inner north, opening the way for more than $1 billion of apartments, shops and offices as reported in The Australian.

Victorian Planning Minister Richard Wynne has given the green light for development at Coburg, 8km north of the Melbourne central business district. Within the larger precinct is the 16ha Penitentiary Prison site, where a number of projects have been planned. The entire area is expected to attract $460 million of private development and about $500m of community facilities and infrastructure projects.

### Fund Under Fire

A $1 billion fund set up by the former Coalition Government to boost regional Victoria’s economy has been slammed by the Auditor-General. The Regional Growth Fund, a project of former Deputy Premier Peter Ryan, was reported to have generated $3 for every $1 contributed by the Government according to The Weekend Times.

A Victorian Auditor-General’s report said a lack of transparency and proper evaluation made it difficult to determine if taxpayers had gained any value for money from the fund. It said any figures suggesting investment or jobs created by the fund were potentially misleading ‘as they inflate the actual achievements of the BGF.’

There were also some weaknesses in governance, with independent assessment committees seemingly ‘rubber stamping’ projects for approval, Auditor-General John Doyle said. The RGF provided $570 million to more than 180 projects from July 2011 until it was abandoned by the current government in June. It also allocated a $1.5 million grant to Covino Farms at Longford, which was controversially linked to labour-hire companies in the horticulture industry.

### Plan for Needy

Flinders Street station’s ‘heritage ballroom could become a craft market for Melbourne’s homeless and crisis accommodation under a radical plan. The Salvation Army will ask the State Government for access to the unused space in a move they say will help people get off the streets and provide vital business skills needed to turn lives around. Major Brendan Nottle said it was a disgrace the space, in Melbourne’s oldest major transport hub, had been left to deteriorate for years according to The Age.

### Sports

#### Sports Cardiac Support

Life-saving machines that can be used on people suffering a heart attack will be made available to sports clubs. The Victorian Government has announced that clubs can apply for a grant to buy 1000 defibrillators under a $2.7 million plan outlined in the budget. The automatic external defibrillator meets Ambulance Victoria’s requirements and funding is provided for training and three years’ maintenance support.

More than a dozen people in the state suffer a heart attack every day. In an important step, the defibrillators will be linked to the ambulance database, which will allow triple-zero operators to have a guide to the nearest equipment when someone suffers a cardiac arrest as reported in The Age.

### Transport - Ports

#### Ports Plan Redrawn

The Victorian Government will change the way the Port of Melbourne is sold in a last minute bid to keep the future pricing of port services out of the regulator’s hands. The successful bidder will be required to offer a market standard rent review mechanism, with dispute resolution by an independent property market expert, to any new tenants or renewing tenants according to The Age.

Provisions also include the Essential Services Commission being charged with reviewing whether there has been misuse of any market power by the leaseholder in the setting of rents at the port. If they are found to have been in breach, the Victorian government has the power to terminate the lease. Port capacity levels and trigger points will be made public, but this will be after the lease transaction has been completed. The changes come after the issues were raised as concerns by the ACCC.

ACCC Fires Broadside

Rod Sims’s crusade to ensure that a renewed state government enthusiasm for privatisation does not translate into a ‘tax on future generations of Australia’ has been ratcheted up with the Australian competition regulator’s forceful submission to a Victorian parliamentary review of the sale of Melbourne’s container port according to Matthew Sims in The Australian.

The chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has been increasingly vocal in his criticism of the misplaced government ambitions that continue to shape the sale process of state-owned infrastructure assets. Sims’s view is that too many asset sales are being carried out in order to maximise the prices earned by sale processes at the expense of the longer-term economic benefits that should result from the release of government-owned assets to more commercially focused private ownership.

That the Victorian port privatisation was a target of Sims’s concern was made apparent with publication of the ACCC’s submission to the legislative council’s review of the proposed sale of a 70-year lease over the port. What had been implicit has now become achingly explicit. Victoria’s plan is that pricing a range of port services will be established by the Essential Services Commission to allow a rate of return on a deemed asset base. The ESC will then oversee annual price increases for 15 years to be capped at CPI.

The ACCC worries first that this cap expires too early and then that defining cost of port-side rent sits very specifically outside of the regulator’s bailiwick. The regulator expressed concern too, that formal reviews of the framework of oversight by the state regulator will be too infrequently pursued (occurring every five years) and any results be too slowly enforced. As a consequence, the state runs the risk that the ‘harm resulting from the exercise of substantial market power will already have occurred and may not be possible to be undone.’

### Transport - Rail

#### Spending Spree on Track

The state government is already buying inner city properties as it seeks to acquire more than 40 buildings to make way for the $11 billion Melbourne Metro Rail project according to The Age.

Final Fix for Myki

A public transport ticketing overhaul could allow passengers to use their credit cards, smartphones and even smart watches instead of the strife-plagued myki card, ending years of commuter frustration. And commuters could use Apple Pay and Google Wallet, which store debit and credit cards, gift and loyalty cards, to make payments by swiping their mobile phones.

Two international companies on the short list of tenderers to run the troubled system, which has cost taxpayers $1.5 billion in the city’s west side, are technologies elsewhere. The State Government would consider changing the system’s software to allow Myki-card-free payments, should this prove efficient and cost effective as reported in the Herald Sun.

Trains Not Stopping

The safety performance of Victoria’s regional rail operator has slipped, with an increase in trains passing through stop signals. The latest annual report from V/Line, tabled in the Victorian Parliament showed a rise in ‘signals passed at danger’.

This occurs when a train passes a stop signal without permission. The report showed that there were 2.14 signals passed at danger per million kilometres in 2014/15, up from 1.97 in the year before as reported in The Age.

### Bulldozer Making Way

Up to 200 family homes and businesses are to be bulldozed to make way for the $11 billion Melbourne Metro Rail Project. Owners of properties along the 9km route of the underground tunnel face an uncertain wait to see whether their properties will be among the compulsory acquisitions, as planners work out how many properties will need to be razed according to the Herald Sun.

### Tunnel Revamps System

The $11 billion Melbourne Metro Rail project will overhaul not only the train network, but also the tram network. The creation of several new tram routes on the city’s west side is a fundamental element of the scheme, according to the Herald Sun. New tracks will run through
South Melbourne, heading up Kings Way and William Street to Docklands and to West Melbourne and the inner north.

Coming Soon on a Train Near You
Within three to four years, Melbourne’s busiest railway lines will be unable to cope with commuters predicted to be unable to board peak-hour trains, according to The Age. The city’s rail capacity crisis is expected to hit hardest on lines in the western and northern suburbs which are predicted to hit bursting point at least seven years before the planned solution, the $11 billion Melbourne Metro rail tunnel, is completed.

The latest projections from Public Transport Victoria, James Henry in peak hour passenger of about 90 per cent to the Werribee/ Williamstown lines between this year and 2025, 80 per cent on the Sunbury and Upfield lines, more than 70 per cent on the South Morang line and 60 per cent on the Craigieburn line. The capacity crisis is expected to affect the north and west lines worst because of the inability to run trains through the City Loop more frequently.

Three fast-growing lines, Craigieburn, Sunbury and Upfield, all converge into one tunnel in the City Loop. The tunnel’s signalling technology cannot handle more than 22 trains an hour.

China Stake in Rail
Chinese companies have expressed significant interest in helping fund the Melbourne Metro Rail project, setting the scene for a potential expansion of foreign investment in Victorian infrastructure as reported in The Age.

Cut it in Two
One of Victoria’s oldest farms will be cut in two under a State Government plan to build a train stabling yard. Stan Larcombe claims his farm, at Mt Duneed, will be ruined by the compulsorily acquired 35ha, which will separate his home and sheds from his sheep flock according to The Weekly Times.

Stan and brother Gordon’s Larcombe family have been farming the 455ha Mt Duneed property, 12km south of Geelong, for 112 years. It was founded by one of Victoria’s first settlers, in 1855. In May Premier Daniel Andrews unveiled a $115 million plan to build a stabling yard at nearby Waurn Ponds to allow trains to meet a 20-minute turnaround time for commuters between Melbourne and Geelong.

Inland Rail on Track
Malcolm Turnbull’s commitment to the ‘steel Mississippi’ as part of his deal with The Nationals as it would run through so many rural electorates. The Australian Logistics Council says the inland rail should be encouraged. However, the Inland Rail Implementation Group report made clear the government would have to pour significant funds into the project.

Free Ride Day
Melbourne’s passengers got free train travel on Grand Final day amidst seven days of consecutive strike action. Despite at least six months of negotiations Metro and the Rail Tram and Bus Union have been unable to agree on a new pay and conditions deal, with both sides remaining firm on their demands. Train passengers are feeling the most pain over the failed negotiations and have already endured three days of trains being pulled off the rails according to the Herald Sun.

Longer Boom Gate Times
Boom gates will lower as much as 15 seconds earlier as a train approaches a level crossing on the Frankston, Werribee and Williamstown lines in preparation for the arrival of eight new X’Trapolis trains later this year. The trains have faster acceleration than other trains operating in Melbourne, and Metro has made the change to mitigate the risk of a road-rail crash.

In all, 46 level crossings and 33 pedestrian crossings will have their wait times extended and this will increase traffic congestion according to The Age.

Tollway War
A revamp of a planned toll road linking the West Gate Freeway to CityLink will see tunnels replaced by ramps above homes. The change to the $5.5 billion Transurban project, creating a ‘spaghetti junction’ over the inner west, has triggered a $4 billion change to the plan. The Premier to scrap or overhaul it. The Western Distributor was unveiled in April as a low-impact answer to the crippling West Gate Bridge congestion, with a four-lane tunnel running between the West Gate Freeway, about 250m west of Williamstown Road and industrial land south of Footscray Road.

However, the Herald Sun reports that a revised plan will see two dual carriageways rise above hundreds of homes, businesses and parkland in South Kingsville, Yarraville and Spotswood before cutting across a golf course and parkland. Two lanes will rise over the western end of the West Gate Bridge and the report said the revised plan will be reduced by between 500 metres and 1 kilometre. Transurban Victorian general manager Vin Vassallo said the change was made to allow dangerous goods trucks to access the route and resulted from ‘consultation.’

UTILITIES

Smart Meters, Dumb Costs
A review of the smart metre rollout critiques the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport & Resources for failing to properly track the multi-billion dollar costs associated with the program, preferring instead to crow about its benefits out of context. It says the largest benefit of the life of the program is $1.4 billion out of a $3.2 billion cost which could have been mitigated by simple processes such as no longer maintaining old meters.

‘When the rollout was announced, the benefits were promoted widely. However, when the government reviewed the program in 2011 it was clear there would be no overall benefit to consumers, but instead a likely cost of $319 million.’ As reported in The Age, Department secretary Richard Sullivan said the report included ‘systemic pessimism that is not justified by the evidence’ and that its recommendations include ‘actions that department is already acting or has proposed to implement.’

Taxi Groups Angry
The competition watchdog was accused of protecting ride sharing service Uber after it flagged it may stop the taxi industry introducing a rival booking app. Taxi representatives are furious the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission plans to block the release of Thail, an app which said the report said as a one-stop booking service for major taxi networks as reported in the Herald Sun.

In The Fast Lane
More than $3.9 million has been spent investigating Transurban’s $5.5 billion Western Distributor tunnel proposal in the strongest sign yet the project will go ahead. International construction, environment and engineering consultants GHK have been contracted to look at the plans submitted in March.

Transurban wants to build a tunnel from the West Gate Freeway, under Yarraville, to emerge in industrial land and lead to an overpass above Footscray Road, funneling traffic on to CityLink or into the CBD. To pay for the tunnel, Transurban wants its licence to toll CityLink drivers extended for up to 15 years and the Federal Government to contribute a third of the cost as reported in the Herald Sun.

We Are Listening
The entrance to a proposed $5.5 billion tunnel that would take pressure off the West Gate Bridge has been shifted to get more trucks off the streets in Melbourne’s inner west according to The Age. The report, mounted by Mayor Anna Young, found that most locals wanted less truck traffic.

As a result, the southern tunnel entrance has been moved to an industrial land, to allow a separate off ramp to Hyde Street in Yarraville. This would allow trucks carrying dangerous loads, such as fuel, to access the West Gate Freeway directly from Hyde Street according to Transurban’s Victorian general manager, Vin Vassallo. The Western Distributor is a 5km tunnel and elevated freeway with a connection to the Port of Melbourne.

SECRET

Australia’s railways
Inland Rail is a plan to build a rail line from Melbourne and Adelaide to Brisbane and Sydney, connecting major urban areas with a new inland rail line. The project is expected to cost around $15 billion and is expected to be completed by 2030. The Inland Rail Implementation Group has been established to oversee the project, with members from the federal government, state governments, and the private sector. The group is expected to meet regularly to monitor progress and make decisions on the project.

SAN FRANCISCO

gifts from Australia
The Australian government has offered to provide gifts to San Francisco in order to strengthen the relationship between the two cities. The gifts are expected to include cultural and educational programs, as well as economic and trade initiatives. The government hopes to use the gifts as a way to promote Australian products and services in the United States and to attract investment from American companies.

NEW YORK

recent developments
Recent developments in New York include the construction of a new Woolworth Building, the rehabilitation of the old Waldorf Astoria Hotel, and the expansion of the Brooklyn Bridge. The Woolworth Building is expected to be completed in 2019 and will feature modern office space and luxury apartments. The Waldorf Astoria is being transformed into a new hotel and casino, and the Brooklyn Bridge is undergoing a major renovation to improve its safety and accessibility.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

recent developments
Recent developments in Washington, D.C. include the completion of the new United States Capitol, the opening of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture, and the expansion of the National Mall. The Capitol was completed in 2019 and features an updated design and expanded visitor services. The African American History and Culture Museum opened in 2016 and is dedicated to preserving the history and culture of African Americans. The National Mall is undergoing a major renovation to improve its visitor experience.

HEALING

recent developments
Recent developments in healing include the expansion of mental health services, the development of new treatment methods, and the establishment of new hospitals. Mental health services are being expanded across the country to provide more access to care for those in need. New treatment methods are being developed to address a range of conditions, and new hospitals are being built to meet the growing demand for care.

UNITED STATES

recent developments
Recent developments in the United States include the passage of the American Rescue Plan Act, the implementation of the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, and the expansion of broadband access. The American Rescue Plan Act provides $1.9 trillion in economic relief to individuals, businesses, and states. The Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act provides $1.2 trillion for infrastructure projects, including roads, bridges, and public transportation. The expansion of broadband access is improving internet connectivity across the country.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

recent developments
Recent developments in public transport include the expansion of rail networks, the introduction of new train models, and the implementation of new fare systems. Rail networks are being expanded across the country to provide more access to travel. New train models are being introduced to improve efficiency and reduce costs. New fare systems are being implemented to make it easier for passengers to pay for their travel.
representing 51.5 per cent of the CFA’s volunteers and the older group just 48.5 per cent.

State Same-Sex Recognition

Thousands of same-sex couples with children will soon have the right to be recognised as parents by Victorian law, under new adoption laws to be introduced by the State Government. The move is being made without any exceptions for faith-based adoption groups to exclude gay couples from accessing adoption services according to Minister for Equality Martin Foley.

The Australian Institute of Family Studies has estimated that 11 per cent of gay men and 33 per cent of lesbians in Australia have children. According to The Age, the bill may face difficulty in the upper house.

On Another Note

The RACV Royal Auto monthly magazine has been a notable publication for years in Victoria. In the October edition, the RACV stressed that they promote the need for a proper road solution that involves removing on-street parking, to provide better bicycle infrastructure and keep all the traffic lanes in full use, particularly during peak times.

VALE


Besanko, John Leonard, aged 85. Bingley, Margaret (Peg). Bourke, Philippa Lesley, aged 53. Brenchley, Dr Roger, aged 87. Buckley, John. Chambers, Donald Brian, aged 99. Cid-Fels, Mabel, wife of Professor Alan Fels. Clarkson, Paul, Director of the Ministry for the Arts in 1980 with special affections for the Port Fairy Spring Music Festival where he was the chair from 2004 to 2013.


Researcher and educator who held an honourary zoology position with the South Australian Museum. Hannan, Margaret Rosalie, aged 78. Harley, Richard Howard, aged 70. Hindhag, Christina, aged 76. A farmer and much more.

Healey, Denis, aged 98. A British socialist politician who was secretary of state for defence from 1964 to 1970 during which time he slashed Britain’s military budget and closed all its bases east of the Suez Canal. Heath, Charles Harry, aged 80. Henderson, Mariah, aged 78. The queen of the Australian folk revival. Holmlund, Stephen John, aged 64. Holyman, George Ivan. Jansen, Pieter Frans

Knight, Sir Harold, an economist, who worked at the Commonwealth Bank the year following the split between the Reserve Bank and the Commonwealth Bank. In 1975, he was appointed the third governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, which he held until his retirement in 1982. His first challenge came as RBA governor during the Whitlam Government’s dismissal in 1975.


Rankin, Dusty, aged 91. One of Australia’s most popular country and western singers who was inducted into the Tamworth ‘Hands of Fame’ in 1980 and elevated to the ‘Roll of Renown’ in January 1996. Scudamore, Joseph Henry, aged 89, an obstetrician and gynecologist.

Scully, Frank, aged 95. An established Labor politician who was preselected in 1949 for the seat of Richmond, which he won and held for the party until 1954. Made history as the last lower house DLP member in the state of Victoria. Southcombe, Edward Richard, aged 87. Sneddon, Jeffrey David. Sturrock, Mary Evelyn, aged 88.

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