

LETTER FROM MELBOURNE

A monthly public affairs bulletin, a simple précis, distilling and interpreting public policy and government decisions, which effect business opportunities in Victoria and Australia.
Every month for more than twenty years.

Reflection on the Past Year Manure Edition

Swimming pool at Portarlington



IN THIS ISSUE

Political donations ♦ Branch stacking ♦ NewMarket Reunion
 IBAC widens ♦ Parliament expansion, a bit ♦ Our Yarra. Our Clock.
 Uber Future ♦ Swanston Street toe main undisturbed
 Christmas Carol Sadness ♦ Union negotiations ♦ Union stands
 Unions planning ♦ Ice? Where? ♦ Ship at Portland
 Melbourne Port Sale ♦ Very hot rail lines. Black spots.

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

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

Letter from Melbourne is independent. It's not party political or any other political. It does not have the imprimatur of government at any level. Letter from Melbourne developed a federal and national coverage. This spawned Letter from Canberra (www.letterfromcanberra.com.au) four years ago.

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

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

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

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The Editor and some friends in the Surf

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EDITORIAL

Your editor had to buy some horse manure for the Garden over Christmas, which was not a long drive in whichever direction from the seaside cottage, one or two dollars a bag. A pretty good deal. He was soon musing about the state of Melbourne's roads back in the 1890's when, evidently, there was a big debate/discussion as to what would happen as Melbourne's City area/CBD horse use continued to grow. Perhaps with manure to reach the height of a two storey building in the main streets.

Over Christmas coffee, someone mentioned that Holden's horse and saddlery business in Adelaide was well into its stride by then. Then we got the car, all hurried up in its delivery as a result of the First World War. Rushing along the road, we come to the Victorian Hire-Purchase Act 1958, which released a tsunami of cars onto the roads and highways as so many more people could now afford a car, and at the same time denying Flinders Street Station the role of being the busiest pedestrian train station in the World.

Melbourne's competition with Sydney for the population growth and the citification/urbanisation (from The Bush) of the Australian and Victorian population all gave Melbourne a huge boost, and the citification of jobs.

Your Editor reckons that 15 April 2014 was the day that Melbourne and a large number of its suburbs hit quasi-gridlock for eighteen hours of each day. It won't get better for some many years. Public transport is at overload. The Geelong trains over this past Christmas period would get about a 4. Bad on time. Bad on arrival. Bad on seat availability. As said in the editorial of the last Edition, most parliamentarians would not know enough serious points for a serious discussion as to public transport and road transport's future.

Transport is one of Melbourne and Victoria's main issues into the Future. Let the Parliament and all inside it respect the money that the taxpayer is pouring into it, and perhaps we can go back in time, not to the manure days, on the roads, but to a time when visitors to Parliament might hold the debating Chambers in more respect, as some of the big issues were/are discussed.

Cover. The Portarlington community have had a community swimming pool, evenly privately-owned for quite a while now. Sadly, the City of Greater Geelong, local Victorian parliamentarians and even federal money (surely tax benefits for some private support) seem to have no interest in 'local community' (perhaps too Old School!) for if the pool closes because some bureaucrats say it needs repairs for which money is wanting, the kids will have to bus it 50 km into Geelong. An hour in a Bus to go for a swim?? Community pools are needed. The people in the Cover photo are all fighting to keep the pool open, for the kids splashing in the background.

STATE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

We're Hiring. And Hiring. And Hiring ...

The *Herald Sun* states that the Victorian Ministerial Offices have now become not merely Victoria's, but the entire country's, biggest single

employer of ministerial staff. Since it took office a year ago, it has added 30 new positions.

At present there are 258 advisers, assistants, spin-doctors, and drivers working for the Premier and for his cabinet colleagues. It costs an estimated \$25 million to keep all them on the payroll. The revelation comes as the administration faces questions over its finances. One in five of the 236 ministerial staff works directly for **the Premier**.

The Premier claims a retinue of 30 advisers, not counting a director of policy, a director of parliament and strategic relations, a legal counsel, a chief of staff, a deputy chief of staff, a media director, a media adviser, a separate suburban media adviser, and two assistants, as well as administrative support personnel.

Keeping It Real? No, Keeping It Vague

A *Herald Sun* article on November 26 discussed an impressive show of unanimity by the major parties in Victoria's Parliament. They have balked at a recent call by the State Ombudsman to clean up the procedures for political donations, and to weaken through new statutory procedures the grounds for assuming that politicians are simply being bought.

Planning Minister **Richard Wynne** refused to reveal whether he supported or opposed the plea, which Ombudsman **Deborah Glass** made, to ban developer donations and introduce new transparency laws. He said that this was the responsibility, not of himself, but of his cabinet colleague, Special Minister of State **Gavin Jennings**. Meanwhile, the Coalition is equally unenthusiastic about urgings to reform donation rules.

Political Donations

Donations from property developers to political candidates create a perception that politicians can be bought, according to **Victoria's Ombudsman Deborah Glass**. The findings, will add pressure to the state government to begin reform of political donation laws in Victoria.

Greens MP for Melbourne, Ellen Sandell, said she would try to introduce laws banning council candidates from taking donations from property developers.

The **Ombudsman's** investigation into political donations was launched after a complaint, that was ultimately found to be unsubstantiated, that **Casey councillor Geoff Ablett** had been involved in offering favourable planning application decisions in return for donations to his state Liberal Party election campaign, as reported in *The Age*.

ALP And Branch-Stacking

The Age announced on December 12 that the Victorian ALP had failed in a dramatic legal bid to close down the anti-branch-stacking campaign of its leading reform champion. The State Supreme Court outcome allows a veteran party activist, **Eric Dearricott**, continued access to the party's membership records, so that he can continue to pursue his anti-branch-stacking crusade.

Those who enthusiastically greeted the win for **Dearricott** as a victory for party democracy and transparency included none other than **John Cain**, who in 1982 became Victoria's first ALP Premier in 27 years (the last such Premier, a victim of the party's 1954-55 split, had been his own father). 'Whistleblowers need protection,' **Cain** observed. 'The party shouldn't be trying to shut him up.' **Cain** retired from the Premiership in 1990.

ALP Action

The **Victorian ALP** is moving swiftly to recover credit card and personal data it says was unlawfully obtained from its database by a party dissident and self-styled whistleblower, amid threats of criminal charges and court action, as per *The Australian*.

More than 200 ALP members in Victoria will lose their party membership immediately and a further 270 face similar consequences over branch-stacking breaches in the biggest membership purge in Labor history.

An investigation into fraudulent membership also lead to two "low level" Labor operatives likely facing branch-stacking charges.

The purge comes after insiders accused groups associated with **federal leader Bill Shorten** of using prepaid gifts cards to pay for memberships. But the investigation found the so-called gift cards scandal was a myth and the **Shorten** loyalists mentioned in media reports had no case to answer, according to *The Australian*.

Premier stance

The militant **Construction Forestry Mining Electrical Union** has put \$2.4 million in donations into the Victorian **Labor Party**, as Premier **Andrews** refuses to distance himself from the union's controversial leaders, **John Setka** and **Shaun Reardon**.

Federal opposition Leader **Bill Shorten** has formally launched Labor's new union governance policy, stating the party has "zero tolerance" for criminality and corruption, according to the *Herald Sun*.

Now Out

The Affairs of State parliamentary charts for the 2015 Federal and Victorian governments are now available for sale.

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Our coffee chart – your guide to the best coffee shops on and around Spring St, Melbourne – will also soon be available.

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Less detail required

At present, the **Independent Broad-based corruption Commission** requires evidence of serious corrupt conduct before it can begin an investigation. It also needs to be reasonably satisfied that an allegation involves corrupt conduct before it can investigate. To prevent fishing expeditions, the previous government wisely withheld giving **IBAC** then power to investigate the catch-all offence of misconduct in public office. All that is about to change.

The new bill will expand **IBAC's** powers so it can investigate all corrupt conduct. It will now be able to investigate cases where it reasonably suspects corruption as well as being able to probe cases of misconduct in public office.

This offence is a 'catch-all' offence that can be used to start an investigation where the conduct does not otherwise constitute an offence currently within **IBAC's** corrupt conduct jurisdiction." Public Transport Minister **Jacinta Allan** told Parliament as she introduced the Bill, according to **James Campbell** is state politics editor, writes **James Campbell, State Politics Editor** for the *Herald Sun*.

Property Windfall

Stamp duty costs have spiralled out of control in Victoria, the state's **Property Council** says, as new figures show home buyers have handed over more than \$41 billion in the tax over the past 15 years. Revenue from stamp duty on property has more than doubled since 2000-01 in Victoria from \$1.7 billion to \$4.2 billion dollars in 2013-14, **Property Council of Australian** research has revealed. The figure is forecast to hit \$5 billion for the first time this year according to *The Herald Sun*.

Whose country?

An *Age* article of December 17 stated that the Victorian National Party had failed in its bid to change its name to include the word 'country.' It had applied to the **Victorian Electoral Commission**, seeking to alter its own title to the National Country Party of Australia, or the National Country Party for short.

The **VEC** said NO to the group's application, on

the grounds that the proposed nomenclature too closely resembled that of an already existing political group, the Australian Country Party. 'Having two registered Country parties with very similar names,' the **VEC** found, 'would be likely to cause confusion among voters.'

The Victorian Nationals still have 28 days left to apply to the **Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal** for a review of the application. **Peter Walsh**, the party's leader, said that the party had a long and proud history of representing country Victorians and 'that will never change.'

Your Editor would send the VEC back to primary school and then on to Ethics College. What does the VEC know about anything. Gosh. That's almost a good aspect for a full editorial.

New And Improved Chook Shed

The *Herald Sun* notes that a \$40 million redevelopment of State Parliament would bulldoze asbestos-infested external buildings and a grass tennis court, the better to build plush new offices for 110 parliamentarians. Under the plan, which has bipartisan support, the old building referred to as 'the chook shed' would go. In its place there would be a three-storey building with a rooftop garden.

Bruce Atkinson, President of the Legislative Council, said that the building had been designed to fit in with the pristine parliamentary gardens and to minimise pain for the taxpayer. 'It's certainly not a palace,' he noted.

Union Against Andrews

The **Health and Community Services Union** certainly no longer regards **Daniel Andrews** as its friend. It upbraided the Premier over his moves, mentioned in *The Age* on December 3, to outsource government disability services work.

Martin Foley, the Minister for Disability, had announced that the cabinet would soon start to identify which organisations were best placed to provide those services which the State Government oversees. Nevertheless, representatives of the union are adamant that **Andrews** had promised, when he was still

Opposition Leader, to keep the relevant jobs in government hands.

MPs own deep perspective

A government minister has lashed Liberal MP Graham Watt for refusing to join a standing ovation after Australian of the Year Rosie Batty addressed a historic joint sitting of state Parliament. Innovation Minister Philip Dalidakis said Watts behaviour was an "utter disgrace" according to *The Age*.

'For very personal and private reasons I chose not to stand. Family violence is an issue of incredible sensitivity to me and my family and at some point I will be making a public contribution about the indiscriminate nature of family violence. I am very passionate about dealing with the scourge of family violence and supporting all those who are victims of it, male and female.'

Your Editor has observed Watt in the Parliament and feels he has deep and reflective views on various issues in Society.

Racism Suit: It's Lib Versus Lib

Inga Peulich is the Shadow Minister for Multiculturalism. She has taken legal action against **Prasad Philip**, a fellow Liberal, as reported by *The Age* on December 3. Philip has alleged that **Peulich** racially vilified him at a Liberal Party meeting last December.

The writ which **Peulich** served on **Philip** rejects the latter's claims that she had launched a 'racist and abusive tirade' at him, that she 'carries the poison of racism in her,' and that she owed an apology not just to him but also to the wider Indian community.

She told *The Age*: 'This is very hurtful to me and my family, including my 83-year-old mother who was in a children's concentration camp on the grounds of race. There is no truth in the allegation that I am racist and that I have racism running through me.' **Philip** is a businessman and Liberal activist of Indian background. He insists that **Peulich** abused him with racially motivated intent during a debate over the party's troubled campaign for south-eastern Melbourne seats at the 2014 election.



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FEDERAL

For new readers, we also publish Letter From Canberra, which has the same parameters and objectives and has a national focus.

AGRICULTURE**Newmarket Reunion**

Saturday 19 February, from perhaps midday. Your editor might know more detail soon, 9654 1300

Another afternoon for the livestock agents, auctioneers and stockmen, farmers and truckies, who for a century and a half, until 1987, were a part of the largest livestock trading yards, facility, in the World. The Editor will attend the re-union to swap a few stories that have been passed down by his family, and to have a beer or a coffee or two.

We Lead Food Boom

Victoria has become central to the nation's emerging dining boom, with research showing the food and grocery sector is growing amid an otherwise declining manufacturing industry. More than 92,000 Victorians are now working in the \$119 billion food and grocery processing sector, representing 32 per cent of manufacturing jobs in the state.

More than 60,000 jobs are in Melbourne, including more than 120 at **Carman's** at Cheltenham, which export muesli, muesli bars and oats to more than 32 countries as reported in *The Herald Sun*.

A Beef With GST Exemption

Experts such as PwC partner **Paul Abbey** and CPA Australia head of policy **Paul Drum**, are strongly in favour of removing the current GST exemption on fresh food according to *The Herald Sun*.

Apricot Seed Ban

The sale of raw apricots kernels, which can cause cyanide poisoning, is now banned in Australia and New Zealand. Some kernels are promoted as an alternative therapy for cancer treatment, but the **Cancer Council of Australia** warns they are not only ineffective at treating disease but can be very dangerous according to the *Herald Sun*.

ARTS**TripAdvisor For The Arts**

Nicholas Gruen, economist and chairman of the **Australian Centre for Social Innovation**, wondered in *The Age* on November 27 why we could not have for the arts sector what we long ago became accustomed to using for the travel, hotel, and dining sectors. In other words, we need the equivalent of websites such as

TripAdvisor, **Yelp** and **Urban Spoon**, 'to provide useful information for consumers,' and more specifically to help us avoid costly disappointments.

Dr Gruen cited the report lately released by Creative Industries Minister **Martin Foley**, which proposed a platform to 'capture data from arts providers, promoters, funders and patrons.' In response to **Foley's** initiative, he writes: 'Though that platform might be specific to the arts, it's part of a larger innovation agenda ... Amid all the pep-talks intoning the need for tough choices, how fitting for the arts to show us a way to work smarter, not harder.'

Funds to Creativity

A new fund to deliver "landmark Victorian creative works" is being considered by the State Government after months of consultation with the state's artistic community. It is one of 42 initiatives recommended in a government-commissioned report handed to **Creative Industries Minister Martin Foley**. **Publisher Louise Adler** led the task force, according to *The Age*.

Peace And Lerve With Oprah

After five years away from Australia, she was back. Yes, **Oprah Winfrey**, 'dressed in a peach mermaid sequinned gown' according to the *Herald Sun* on December 3, spent two hours alone on stage at the **Rod Laver** arena and made her one-woman show a message of empowerment.

'From the start,' we are told, 'the 61-year-old confidently let loose, telling the 15,000 audience members that they should find their "calling" in life. That we should all [be] rid of the "disease to please". That we should keep our "vibrational energies high." The largely female audience cheered throughout, as the billionaire delivered an often emotional mix of spiritual messages.'

Literary Awards

The shortlist for the Victorian Premier's 2016 Literary Awards has been revealed. For fiction, the authors represented include **Miles Alinson** and **Steven Carroll**; for non-fiction, they include **Karen Lamb** and **George Megalogenis**; for drama, **Patricia Cornelius** and **Mary Anne Butler**; for young adult writing, **Sally Morgan** and **Meg McKinlay**; and for poetry, Alan Loney and Peter Rose. If you want to vote for the **People's Choice Award**, you should go to the www.wheelercentre.com website. All categories' winners will be announced on January 28.

Circus Breaker

Roll up, roll up for **White Night Melbourne's**

open-air circus! This year's dusk-to-dawn arts party, to be held on February 20, will include acrobats, jugglers and aerial artists during 12 hours of Big Top action outside **Melbourne Museum**, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

EDUCATION**Joy For VCE Stars**

An impressively diverse range of backgrounds marked the top scoring students in this year's VCE. So noted the *Herald Sun* on December 15, which reported that **Melbourne Girls' Grammar School** and **Melbourne Grammar School** led the way, with three students from each of those establishments recording the highest tertiary entrance rank of 99.95.

Frankston High School has had its most impressive results ever. Four of its students managed to achieve scores of 99 or above, and 41 of them achieved 90 or above. Meanwhile, at **Glen Waverley Secondary College**, 20 students had ATARs of 99 or more, and 130 of them had ATARs of 90 or more. At **Suzanne Cory High School** in Werribee, six per cent of VCE students attained scores of 99 or higher.

No Bible, Koran For State Schools

On November 24, *The Age* reported that students at government schools in Victoria are permitted to sing Christmas carols in class time, but that they will not be allowed to sing hymns. Moreover, whilst honey-dipped apples are considered permissible in order to mark the Jewish New Year, programs that use the Bible or the Koran are forbidden from class time.

In response, **Rob Ward**, a spokesman for Victoria's largest Special Religious Instruction provider, **Access Ministries**, accused the policy of being 'ambiguous and confusing. When we sing a Christmas carol, that is based on a biblical story. Do you need permission to sing a Christmas carol?'

More Trouble For Vocational Colleges

It was only a few years ago that Australia's vocational colleges seemed unstoppable. Now, up to 12,000 of their students, some of them in Victoria and the rest being elsewhere around the country, are in a frustrating limbo, according to an *Age* report of November 26. The collapse of **Vocation Limited** is a particular embarrassment for the State Department of Education and Training, because the now defunct college operator owes that department \$8 million.

How uneducated

The **Vocational Education** company **Acquire Learning** has been accused of unconscionable

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conduct and false or misleading behaviour after it sold tens of thousands of government-funded courses to vulnerable job-seekers. The **Australian Competition and Consumer Commission** has alleged before the **Federal Court** that the company bought the details of successful applicants on job websites, then cold-called them to sell expensive diploma courses, as reported by *The Age*. This a federal issue with wide state ramifications, so we have also covered the topic in this Victorian-focused publication.

Inaction On Phoenix Could Have Cost \$106m
 Authorities failed to act on a serious complaint against the parent of embattled **Phoenix Institute**, action that may have prevented the potential loss of more than \$100 million dollars in government funding. Concerns about fraud at businesses owned by the **Australian Careers Network**, which has created an uncertain future for more than 12,000 students, were foreshadowed in a complaint lodged in Victoria in February according to *The Australian*.

No Horse Needed
 Students who have never ridden a horse have been fast tracked to work as jockeys, stable hands and jackaroos through online training courses. Year long training courses for the equine sector have been delivered online in less than a week, the industry watchdog has warned, in another damning assessment of Australia's troubled training sector.

Three out of four equine training providers flunked audits by the **Australian Skills Quality Authority**, which identified 'critical safety and quality issues', as identified in *The Australian*.

Crackdown
 Victoria training colleges will be barred from enrolling more than 200 students, and prevented from offering "high risk" courses such as heavy vehicle training, childcare and crane operations, under a sector wide crackdown on dodgy training providers, writes **Timma Jacks** in *The Age*.

Education Ordered To Repay \$37m To Teachers
 The State's Education Department was ordered to repay \$37 million to employees it unlawfully charged for school laptops. The Federal Court ruled that the department unlawfully deducted money from teachers' salaries to pay for laptops according to *The Age*.

What is a PhD?
 Earning a PhD is not about job placement, according to **Michael Biercuk**. And PhD-level

research is not about helping businesses make profit. There, I said it. New policies designed to improve job readiness in higher-degree graduates risk transferring weaknesses of Australian industry back to academic research.

The PhD is not, and should never be, a vocational training certificate. Rather than a narrow quest for job placements, pursuing a PhD is about making a deep contribution to knowledge. So it's confounding why so many discussions on improving Australian innovation are focused primarily on how to change academia, and specifically PhD programs, to meet industry demands on job candidates, as reported in *The Australian Financial Review*.

Michael Biercuk is an associate professor at the **University of Sydney**, chief investigator in the **ARC Center of Excellence for Engineered Quantum Systems**, and the winner of the **2015 Australian Museum Eureka Prize for Outstanding Early Career Researcher**.

ENERGY

Next door
 The national energy market regulator has warned that South Australia is likely to face continued price volatility and 'significantly lower' electricity availability with the retirement of two gas and coal power stations and an increased reliance on wind.

A report by the Australian energy regulator warned that despite the upgrade of the inter connector with Victoria, 'current forecasts indicate total capacity (including imports) available to the South Australian region will be significantly lower than in 2018 done in 2015' as reported in *The Australian*.

Gas Price
 Victorians are facing a New Year gas price sting as retailers prepare to lift charges. **Energy Australia**, which has 460,000 gas customers, says average households and small businesses combined will pay an extra \$61 to \$60 annually, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Ocean Energy: Watch This Space
The Age on December 17 announced that Victoria is set to harness the energy of the ocean. An enormous underwater machine will capture the power of the waves and is expected to supply enough clean energy for approximately 250 houses.

Beneath the surface of the water, the steel structure will sway, with a generator producing electricity. It has been installed west of Port

Fairy, about 800 metres off-shore. Energy technology company **BioPower Systems** will shortly start running tests on the equipment.

ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION

Tales Of Dear Bureaucracy
 A *Herald Sun* article on December 15 discussed the battle being waged by a teenager to stop state authorities from killing a rescued baby deer. **Andrew Foots**, 19, took in the fawn, dubbed **Rudolph**, after he twice spotted it alone and 'skinny' in bushland at Goughs Bay, which is near Mansfield, north-east of Melbourne.

Officials from the Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources had other ideas. They seized **Rudolph**, and carted him away in a police-patrol wagon, about a week later, on November 19. On December 10 they won a court order to kill **Rudolph**, who, they believed, posed a threat to public safety.

Unconvinced, **Foots** appealed against the verdict. Since then, the **Jirrahlinga Koala and Wildlife Sanctuary**, near Barwon Heads, has volunteered to take and look after Rudolph.

Daniel Beecher, **Foots'** lawyer, accused the Department of wanting its 'pound of flesh.' 'The reasons for killing a deer, or any animal, under these circumstances are difficult to understand when there is a non-lethal alternative that would provide so much good to so many,' is how **Beecher** put it.

Foots, a farm-hand who over the years has reared about 1,000 goats, could face criminal charges for adopting the deer. But he insisted that both he and his mother had visited a local veterinarian for advice on how to care for the sambar fawn, and the veterinarian told them that they needed no wildlife permit.

Barrie Tapp, chief investigator for **Animal Cruelty Hotline Australia**, said that people should be encouraged to help look after wild animals, not to leave them struggling. In the meantime, a spokesman for the Department's Game Management Authority subdivision refused to comment on the case for as long as the courts had not yet finalised it. The appeal will be held in February.

New Board Members
 The Port Phillip and Westernport Catchment Management Authority, has four new board members, appointed by **Lisa Neville**, the State Minister for the Environment, Climate Change and Water; **Virginia Wallace**, **Susan Anderson**, **Moragh Mackay** and **Allan Bawden PSM**.

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Water Bombers Land

The *Herald Sun* announced on December 3 that two of the world's biggest bushfire-fighting aircraft have now landed on Victorian soil, in readiness for what has already become a scorching summer. These aircraft include the **C-130 Hercules** among 47 water bombers that have been brought in from overseas for the bushfire season.

But the 47 water bombers are by no means the only components of Victoria's current bushfire-fighting fleet. There are also 25 helicopters, 22 fixed-wing planes, two large air tankers, two air-cranes (water-bombing helicopters), and two Sikorski helicopters.

Net Void Leaves CFA High And Dry

Weather information and access to detailed maps are critical tools for fire fighters, but for many small **Country Fire Authority** brigades, Internet access and top notch mobile phone coverage can be difficult to get. Even in places not far from Melbourne, coverage can be poor and Internet access limited.

The Macclesfield **CFA** brigade, just East of the Dandenong Ranges, is one such group struggling with intermittent mobile coverage and no Internet. A **CFA** spokeswoman said it supported the work of **Emergency Management Victoria**, governments and telecommunications companies to tackle mobile phone black spots as reported in *The Age*.

Fiskville documents

The **CFA** has been slammed by a Parliamentary committee investigating the **Fiskville** training college, with the chairperson of the committee accusing it of refusing "to provide vital information" needed by the inquiry.

Labor MP and committee chairperson **Brownyn Halfpenny** blasted the **CFA**, saying there had been extensive withholding of information" that was crucial to the committee's investigation of what happened at **Fiskville**, according to *The Age*.

Under Fire

Ten houses near Ballarat were destroyed by fire in mid December, 10,000 hectares burnt and 60 people near Wodonga fled their homes as an uncontrolled grass fire advanced rapidly on Sunday evening, according to *The Age*.

EVENTS

Shot Ban For NYE?

A *Herald Sun* reported the possibility that shots of booze would be banned at pubs and clubs on this coming New Year's Eve. This possibility comprises part of a scheme proposed by the state's liquor regulator, the **Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation**.

If the call were to be put into practice, venue staffers would also be empowered to limit the number of drinks of any sort that revellers could legally consume, and liquor inspectors would be out in force to crack down on rogue operators who serve minors and drunks. The Commission has recommended that shots and double shots be forbidden, as an element in a concerted plan to tackle alcohol-related harm on the year's biggest party night.

Festival Cancelled

Australia's biggest rock festival, **Soundwave**, has been cancelled, leaving suppliers and ticket holders in limbo. The move, which came after

headline act **L7** pulled out, was announced by promoter **A. J. Maddah** on **Twitter** with "poor ticket sales" cited as the reason. It has since emerged that venues had not been booked for the touring show's three scheduled events, in Brisbane, Sydney and Melbourne, in January 2016, per *The Age*.

Perhaps more importantly, the big Lorne Music Festival was moved to Mt Duneed near Geelong, and away from fire danger, as the Coast had many fires and near miss areas.

Security Fence For MCG Test

The **Melbourne Cricket Ground** is set to have increased security measures as authorities warn that a terrorist attack in Australia remains likely. It is understood a fence will be constructed around the perimeter of Australia's biggest sporting stadium as it prepares to host the biggest test match of the cricketing calendar as reported in *The Australian*.

2016 Business Summit

Join Australia's business influencers at the **SUMMIT** from the 15 to 16 March in Melbourne. This event will focus on Australia's economic position in the global landscape, with discussions covering construction, technology, leadership, Asia and other new opportunities. afsummit.com

Global Food Forum

Keynote speakers and analysts will provide extra insight into the state of our export markets, the impact of technology on productivity, and how Australia can maximise its potential as a leading global food supplier. Event at **Palladium Crown Melbourne** on Wednesday, 20 April, theaustralian.com.au/gff

Australian Domestic Gas Outlook

According to the official journal of the **Australian Institute of Energy**, *Energy News*, Australia's Premier event for all domestic gas market stakeholders from 7 to 10 March at the **Four Seasons Hotel** in Sydney, www.aie.org.au

HEALTH

Our Eyes and Ears

The \$169 million redevelopment of the **Royal Victoria Eye and Ear Hospital** may have to be scaled back after its buildings were found to be riddled with asbestos. The government has launched an urgent review into the project amid "substantial costs and time blow outs" less than halfway through its construction.

A confidential document obtained by the *Herald Sun* revealed that delays could jeopardise \$50 million in federal funding. Redevelopment of the hospital was announced by the **State Government** in 2012, with completion set for 2017. But work has been frequently held up by the unexpected discovery of hazardous materials throughout the state's third-oldest hospital, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

BUSINESS & INVESTMENT

Here Comes LaunchVic

Philip Dalidakis, the State Minister for Small Business, Innovation and Trade, formally opened on November 27 the new body that will accelerate start-up enterprises, drive new ideas, and create jobs in Victoria as a whole, **LaunchVic**.

LaunchVic will provide the right environment for entrepreneurs to develop, incubate, and grow early-stage innovative businesses, backed by the State Government's \$60 million start-up

fund. Working with Victoria's start-up community, as well as with the successfully locally-grown firm **99Designs**, on the branding, identity, and form of **LaunchVic**, to ensure that it can be support fledgling businesses to grow.

The Chief Executive Officer will be **Dr Pradeep Philip**, who used to be the Secretary of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services. An advisory board of industry experts, who will work to strengthen and build the current operating environment of Victoria's start-up ecosystem, will support **Philip**.

Support Centre, Cyber Jobs To Victoria

The Victorian Government says that its plans concerning the National Broadband Network involve creating 700 new high-school jobs in Melbourne during the next five years. This scheme would entail 400 jobs over the first two years, and with 300 more to be generated later on by the project less directly, in terms of construction, maintenance, and technical support.

One especially notable aspect of the project is the establishment in Melbourne of the **NBN's Cyber Security Operations Centre**. The idea is that this centre will be the first line of governmental defence against cyber-threats to the NBN's operation. It will provide a collection of services to deliver detection, identification, triage, and management of cyber-events and incident response.

Tourists in Parks

The 28 kilometres of the **Shipwreck Coast** from **Princetown** to the **Bay of Islands**, west of **Peterborough**, attracts few overnight visitors, which contributes to very low levels of spending from tourists in the area, a new report commissioned by **Parks Victoria** says.

The new 100-page master plan for the **Shipwreck Coast** is aimed at turning that around, with 72 upgrade projects over the next 20 years that could boost visitor numbers by half a million a year. The report said the target market for nature-based tourism such as the **Great Ocean Roads** is "experience seekers", adventurous and self-motivated people who are ecologically minded and love the outdoors, as reported in *The Age*.

Shop Around The Clock

The *Herald Sun* noted that almost 1,000 stores across three city blocks were then preparing for an onslaught, as they started trading later into the night in the lead-up to Christmas. Retailers concerned included **Melbourne Central**, **Emporium, QV, The Strand, GPO, Myer**, and **David Jones**, all of whom were planning to open at least until seven o'clock each evening, starting on December 1. Note this for next year!

The Power Of Tim Tams

The **Tim Tam** biscuit dispute was triggered when **Arnott's** demanded price rises of up to 10 per cent for some of its biscuits, including **Scotch Finger, Teddy Bear, Monte Carlo** and **TeeVee Snacks**, and a similar hike on some popular **Campbell's** cooking stock products.

It has now blown into a full scale blockade, with **Arnott's** refusing to supply **Coles** with up to six **Tim Tam** varieties and a range of other biscuits, after Australia's second biggest supermarket chain refused to accept the price rises, arguing they were unjustified.

The 'biscuit war' has developed into a major battle of wills between a supermarket giant and

supplier, with other food manufacturers in the nations \$19 billion grocery market paying close attention as neither side looks to budge on the vexed issue of pricing, according to *The Australian*.

Behind The Great Tim Tam Crisis

Coles has blinked in a tense stand off with **Campbell Arnott's**, accepting price rises on dozens of products after the biscuit and soup maker held its **Tim Tams** hostage. **Campbell Arnott's** told **Coles** in July it planned to lift prices in October by up to 10 per cent on a range of items, including **Tim Tams**, **Scotch Fingers**, and **Monte Carlo** biscuits, and some vegetable and meat stocks.

Coles said the price increases were unjustified and refused to pay, prompting **Arnott's** to stop shipping **Tim Tams** and other products to Australia's second largest supermarket chain's warehouses from early October. The stand off lasted 2 weeks before **Coles** caved in and agreed to pay an increased price on 44 'must have' **Arnott's** biscuit products and 7 lines of **Campbell's** stock. **Campbell Arnott's** would not comment on its negotiations with **Coles** other than it reviewed wholesale prices as necessary according to *The Age*.

Really Takes The Cake

There was a time when international food companies, whose brands were among the best known in the world and constant features of any supermarket trolley or basket, would jokingly refer to Australia as 'treasure island.' It referred to the fact that some food producers, mostly based in North America or Europe, could charge a much higher wholesale price for their packaged goods in Australia than any other market in the world.

When **Wesfarmers** bought the then struggling **Coles** supermarket chain in 2007, its new boss, the canny **Scot Ian McLeod**, set about putting an end to these shenanigans, pushing back international suppliers to force the price down. It's in this context that the corporate brawl between **Coles** and Australia's biggest biscuit maker, **Arnott's**, revealed by *The Australian* over the price of the **Tim Tams** and its portfolio of chocolate biscuits and soup stocks can also be viewed, as reported by **Eli Greenblat**.

Self-Interest Driving

The leader of the federal government's sweeping review of competition policy has accused car dealers and manufacturers of acting out of naked self interest, instead of their claimed regard for road safety, by fighting against foreign used cars. 'If you have a rule which says you can only have one vehicle at a time brought in here, what's that got to do with preventing clunkers on the road?' said **Ian Harper**, who told the government to deregulate used car imports last month.

A lobbyist for car dealers and makers, **Victorian Automobile Chamber of Commerce** executive director **Geoff Gwilym**, said there was no need to discuss the policy which is backed by Liberal Minister **Paul Fletcher**. 'We are in the industry and we know what we're doing', **Gwilym** said. 'The government has made the decision on this issue so why are we still having this debate?' as reported in the *Australian Financial Review*.

Melbourne Metro Rail

Melbourne CBD will keep moving while the city's newest rail tunnels are constructed, with trams, pedestrians and cyclists to remain on Swanston Street while the new **Melbourne Metro** tunnels

and stations are built underneath. **Evan Tattersall** as Chief Executive Officer is overseeing the project. Tunnel boring machines (TBMs) are likely to be used to build most of **Melbourne Metro's** rail tunnels, including under the Yarra River.

Information sessions have been held with over 1000 people attending, 3000 people undertaking social research and more than 5000 people visiting the feedback portal on the **Melbourne Metro** website. mmrailproject.vic.gov.au

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Culture Of Conflict

There is a sustained and systemic 'culture of conflict' which afflicts the **Metropolitan Fire Brigade**, according to an outgoing board member who has resigned. The board member concerned, **Lieutenant-General Des Mueller**, sent a letter that *The Age* discussed on December 15.

Lieutenant-General **Mueller** described the **MFB**, which now employs 2,200 persons, as having been gripped by bitter internal conflicts that appeared unlikely to ease. At the same time, his letter includes the following conciliatory reflection: 'In spite of the difficulties which the **MFB** experiences, and they are the worst I have ever seen in any organisation, I have nothing but admiration for the work that fire-fighters do ... I like them very much.'

He made the comments after a run of major clashes between the **MFB** and the powerful **United Firefighters Union**. Several of these clashes have been so severe as to warrant referral to the **Fair Work Commission**, for settlement. In 2014, tensions flared particularly over the **MFB's** bid to reduce union influence in the workplace by applying to terminate an enterprise bargaining agreement.

Expansion of Pharmacist's Roles

Pharmacists will take on same doctors' tasks under a controversial plan to let Victorian patients see pharmacists for vaccines and chronic diseases such as diabetes and asthma. Under a trial that has angered doctors, **Victorian Health Minister Jill Hennessy** said three pharmacies would test a partnership with GPs next year to "help patients manage their chronic illnesses and medications".

People with high blood pressure, diabetes, asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and those on anti-coagulation therapies can be part of the trial which will involve two rural pharmacies and one in Melbourne.

The idea is that patients will be able to visit the

local pharmacist to monitor their conditions and manage medications under the direction of a GP care plan.

It comes as the state government pushes ahead with its plan to create five 24/7 "super pharmacies" next year. It also wants more pharmacists to give flu vaccines from next year and whooping cough vaccines from 2017 under its state-based immunization scheme. The expansion of pharmacist's roles has infuriated president of the Victorian branch of the **Australian Medical Association**, **Tony Bartone**, who said the plan was risky and aimed to substitute the skills of doctors, as reported in *The Age*.

New Allowances to Firefighters

The militant **United Firefighters Union** bagged the Government's latest offer of a 14.7 per cent pay rise over three years, saying it was a bid to buy off workers.

The pay offer will come on top of the Government conceding a number of extra allowances, which will also cost millions. Union members labeled the offer as "dirty tricks" and a "divide-and-conquer tactic by the Government to try and break the solidarity of the **UFU**" in a bulletin emailed to members.

The offer, made in the **Fair Work Commission**, would see a qualified firefighter earning \$69,703 to \$79,973 by August, 2018, before any allowances are added.

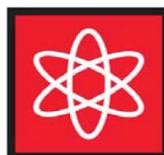
The wages bill is expected to cost the state and added \$47 million in pay over the duration of the deal.

The Government has also agreed to include a number of new allowances expected to cost \$1.6 million. The new allowances include ambulance subscription, fitness benefits, sporting vouchers, driver education, added bonuses for member posted in hard-to-fill positions and extra time off if they are involved in an accident, according to the *Herald Sun*.

Disabled Jobs Threat

Up to 20,000 disabled workers earning an average of \$4.97 and hour could lose their jobs if a proposal forcing bosses to pay them more goes ahead. A **KPMG** report, released last month, says hundreds of businesses that employ the disabled could be bankrupted if the **Fair Work Commission** changes the rules.

Ken Baker, CEO of industry lobby group **National Disability Services**, said 85 per cent of disability enterprises could shut down if wages increased by 40 per cent. "The



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(proposed) changes could destroy thousands of jobs for people who can't find another job and would then be dependent on government for support'.

After the **Federal Court** in 2012 ruled current disability wages were invalid, the **United Voice Union** and **Health Services Union** applied to the **Fair Work Commission** to change the award, as per *The Australian*.

Victorian Public Servants

Victoria's 30,000 public servants will receive a 13 per cent pay rise over the next four years under an in-principle agreement struck with the state government. **Industrial Relations Minister Natalie Hutchins** announced a 2.5 per cent yearly wage rises would be an "investment in the state's public service" and would help attract and retain talented staff.

The deal reached after negotiations with the state's **Community and Public Sector Union**, also includes additional pay rises linked to productivity improvements and 20 days' paid domestic violence leave. It comes after police this month agreed to a deal including yearly salary rises of 2.5 per cent and new penalty rates for overnight, weekend and public holiday shifts, according to *The Age*.

Metro Stands Down

Debora Gough writes to *The Age* that Metro has shoot down a worker for allegedly leaking sensitive documents to the public transport union, worsening tensions between the train operator and the union following **Metro's** decision to sack five union members for breaching safety protocols.

The **Rail Tram and Bus Union** met to discuss tactics, including possible strike action, in response to the termination of the five staff for walking on tracks without protection.

Firefighters in Impasse Over Terms

A feud over firefighters' pay and conditions is deepening at the **Country Fire Authority**, as the government back-pedals on agreed terms despite saying nothing has been taken off the table.

The **Victorian Government** and the firefighters' union remain locked in bitter dispute over the details of a new **CFA** workplace deal. **CFA chief executive Lucinda Nolan** fears the stalemate is causing "too much uncertainty" while the fire season takes hold, as per *The Age* by **Nick Toscano**.

Union Law-Breaking Cost Jobs

According to **Dan Tehan**, a Modest member in *The Australian Financial Review*, by repeatedly defying the law, the **Maritime Union of Australia** is playing havoc with the burgeoning cruise industry in Victoria.

He says that the **Maritime Union of Australia** is holding the town of Portland in Victoria to ransom by breaking the law. Through its illegal actions, more than 6000 visitors could be prevented from disembarking from three cruise ships over the coming weeks, costing the local economy millions. It is time we had an industrial relations system where breaking the law had real and immediate consequences.

The **MUA** has highlighted in December that Australia's industrial relations system is flawed. Its illegal action has shown that in the current industrial relations system, law breakers can prosper at the expense of the law.

By refusing to accept a **Fair Work Commission** decision, a **Federal Court** injunction, and numerous attempts by the port authority and Portland's largest employer, **Portland Aluminium**, to move the **MV Portland**, the union has shown that it can break the law with impunity.

Each time a cruise ship docks, the local economy receives a \$ 1million boot, an incredible kick for Portland, a town of 10,000 people.

For a Saturday

The **Productivity Commission** report found that, while penalty rates should be kept to compensate employees for working long hours or at unsociable times, higher Sunday rates in hospitality and retail were "anachronistic" and out of touch with consumer preferences.

But the report stressed emergency services personnel, including police, nurses, paramedics and firefighters, should be exempt from any changes. **Restaurant and Catering Australian chief executive Jon Hart** said restaurants and cafes faced difficulties controlling labour costs on Sunday.

Scrapping "excessive" Sunday penalty rates could lead to cheaper meals, improved service and more places open to eat and drink, a major report into workplace relations has found, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Productivity Key to Pay Deal

Builders will draw a "line in the stand" during negotiations for the next union pay deal as the fight to get better value from the construction industry heats up, per the *Herald Sun*.

State Sets Watchdog on Furies

Bullying and gender inequality in the state's firefighting services is being scrutinized by the equal opportunity and human rights watchdog, after a secret report found a "culture of bullying".

Fairfax Media understands that the reports, which followed a major review of the state's fire services, commissioned in July and now begin considered by the State Government, found a culture of bullying and a lack of gender diversity in the **MFB** and **CFA**.

JUSTICE & POLICE

Cyber-Security Hub

The Age on December 15 announced that **Oxford University's** leading **Global Cyber Security Capacity Centre** will set up its first international office in Melbourne. This is part of a global push to prevent terrorists, organised criminals, spies and hackers from infiltrating the computer systems of businesses and governments.

Under an agreement signed in Britain by the Victorian Government's Innovation Minister, **Philip Dalidakis**, the centre will team up with a new **Oceania Cyber Security Centre**. Such a centre is going to involve eight Victorian universities, the Melbourne-based **Defence Science Institute** and various private sector entities.

Police Predators Slammed

The Age devoted most of its December 3 front page to a report about police officers who had histories of sexually exploiting vulnerable victims of crime. In many instances, despite this misbehaviour, the culprits were given responsibilities for investigations into family violence and sexual offences.

Such was a finding of the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission into the **Victoria Police**. It announced that certain officers grossly misused the trust and power placed in them.

Terrorism And Counter-Terrorism

John Silvester, crime-writer and regular *Age* columnist, devoted his November 28 article partly to **Ross Guenther**, who has been appointed **Victoria Police's** first Assistant Commissioner (Counter-Terrorism). Shortly before **Silvester's** article appeared, **Daniel Andrews** 'pledged nearly \$50 million to boost the police's counter-terrorism resources.'

Fees and Consumers

Fee hikes have priced consumers out of fighting over dodgy goods and services in Victoria's small claims tribunal, a key advocate has warned.

Small claims cases, involving sums up to \$10,000, have plunged by a quarter following a fourfold increase in the **Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal** lodgement fee from \$39 in 2013 to \$174.10 now, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Online Platform for Education

The **Independent Broad-based Anti Corruption Commission** announced it would turn its attention to the education department's **Ultranet** project, with hearings starting on February 15. The new enquiry could be politically damaging for Labor, which has been questioned over its handling of the project, announced as a key election promise in 2006.

It was meant to deliver an online platform that connected teachers, parents and students, but was plagued with technical difficulties and rarely used. The former **Naphine** government dumped the project in 2013, after costs blew out from \$60 million to \$180 million, as per *The Age*.

Methamphetamine Versus Cannabis

Methamphetamine or "ice" had become an "almost indispensable feature" of ultra-violent crime in Victoria, according to a senior judge, who questions whether government are doing enough to stop the carnage.

The message from outspoken **Supreme Court Judge Lex Lasry** came on the same day Victorian crime figures revealed the number of people caught using or possessing ice was, for the first time, rivalling those caught with cannabis, according to *The Age*.

IBAC Investigation

Months after Victoria's school sector was rocked by revelations of corruption, five **Education Department** staff remain suspended on full pay while their alleged roles are investigated. No charges have yet been laid in the banker school scandal, which **IBAC** laid bare. A total of 12 staff had been affected by the **IBAC** investigation, but the department could not comment on confidential employment matters, as per the *Herald Sun*.

Speeding Fines

Drivers would pay less for speeding fines and be stripped of more demerit points under a radical plan by Victoria's peak motoring body to save lives as our road toll look set to top last year's figure.

The devastating number of road deaths has put fresh doubt on the effectiveness of the state's speed and red light cash cows blitzing record

numbers of lead foots. In 2015, 234 people have died on our roads compared to 235 at the same time in 2014, according to the *Herald Sun*.

Booze buses to change

As reported by **Wes Hosking** in the *Herald Sun*, smaller booze and drug buses will be unleashed to catch out rouge drivers as part of a new, more "agile" police testing fleet. **Victoria Police** will have for large buses and six smaller units to give the force greater flexibility.

New cop shop for riverside

A new \$2.8 million police station will open in Melbourne's expanding **Southbank** precinct early next year, at 60 Moray St, to replace the existing station at the St Kilda Rd complex. This move will allow easy access to the Southbank precinct for foot patrols and will also service several new developments and apartment complexes into the future".

Southbank Residents Association president **Tony Penna** said there was an increasing need for a police station in the fast-growing area, with about 18,000 people now calling it home, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Red Light Challenged

The validity of Melbourne's most prolific red light camera has been questioned by the **RACV**, which fears some motorists are being improperly penalized.

The camera monitors and intersection where the traffic signals disappear from the line of sight of approaching motorists as they close in on the intersection, potentially increasing the risk that drivers will run the red.

The camera, at the corner of Cemetery Road West and Royal Parade in Parkville, has caught more motorists since it was turned on in October 2011 than any other red light camera in Melbourne.

In the four years to October, 28,436 motorists ran the red light while turning right into Royal Parade, being penalized a total \$10.04 million in fines, figures from the **Department of Justice** show, according to *The Age*.

MP Pushes To Keep Terrorists Locked Up

Convicted terrorists would be treated like paedophiles and kept behind bars even after their sentences have expired under a bold plan to be put before federal and state governments.

The proposal, which is set for discussion at Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull's** first COAG meeting of state and territory leaders, is being

pushed by federal liberal MP **Dan Tehan**, who heads the Parliamentary joint committee on intelligence and security matters according to *The Age*.

Injection for Vic Police

The continuing terror threat level in Victoria has stretched the state's police, Victoria's Chief Commissioner **Graham Ashton** has revealed. **Ashton** welcomed a \$49.4 million boost to police counter terrorism from the state government saying it came at a very important time according to *The Age*.

Second-Class Cops

Protective Service Officers are being removed from fighting crime at railway stations and forced to undertake menial jobs at **Victoria Police** headquarters. The *Herald Sun* revealed dozens of PSOs have been removed from the front line to perform administrative duties. **IBAC** is probing complaints by the **PSOs**.

External Force Required

In order to fix police culture an external power is required, according to **Greg Denham** in *The Age*. **Greg Denham** is a former senior sergeant with **Victoria Police** and is now executive officer of the **Yarra Drug and Health Forum**.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Geelong Council Inquiry

The State Government will launch an investigation into the Geelong Council amid claims of bullying and dysfunction involving councillors and staff. Local Government Minister Natalie Hutchins announced an inquiry and the appointment of three commissioners, including former senior Victorian and federal civil servant Terry Moran with a brief to report back in March. The last CEO resigned over only three months in the job and went back to a senior Victorian civil service job. Kelvin Spiller is the present CEO.

"This includes the clarity of roles across the council, the efficacy of the 126 different services we deliver to our 225,000 residents, and the Halliday workplace culture review" according to Councillor Lyons in the *Herald Sun*.

Uber Legalisation

Lord Mayor Robert Doyle has urged the **State Government** to move swiftly in legalising controversial ride-sharing service **Uber**, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Man in Red

Pedestrians have been urged not to cross the 'red man' this Christmas, it is a \$70 fine. With

pedestrian activity up more than 40 per cent in lead-up to Christmas, avoid jaywalking.

Over the past five years there have been 846 collisions involving pedestrians in the **City of Melbourne**. He said most pedestrian fatalities in the city occurred between midnight and 6am on Sundays, and between 9am and noon on Mondays, according to the *Herald Sun*.

Doyle Wants Etihad Bulldozed

Melbourne's Lord Mayor, **Robert Doyle**, told the *Herald Sun* on November 11 that the **Etihad Stadium** should be bulldozed, in order to make a better connection between Docklands and the CBD. He also called for a new linear suburb to be built above the real line to **Flemington Racecourse**.

A day after an exclusive report in the same newspaper revealed Councillor **Doyle's** intention to seek another term in office, he has been mayor since 2008, insisted it was inevitable that eventually the **Etihad Stadium** would be destroyed, to open up Docklands. Recently the first cinema in the Docklands precinct was announced, with **Hoyts** planning an eight-screen complex at a revamped Harbour Town.

Councillor **Doyle** welcomed the move. He asserts that Docklands had turned the corner in the last few years, and that over the next decade it would hit its stride.

MELBOURNE

Parking Money Grab

Parking inspectors at an inner-city council have been increased and asked failing to raise enough money in fines. **Tenix Solutions**, which manages parking for **Stonnington Council**, says it has not met its target of parking infringement notices for the first three months of the financial year.

With the council estimated to be about \$100,000 down on projected parking revenue for the first quarter, **Tenix** says it will install new officers and work overtime to rectify the shortfall, according to the *Herald Sun*.

City's Spray Street

ONE of the city's famous street art precincts has lost its way and top graffiti artists are moving to other locations. **Lord Mayor Robert Doyle** said globally recognized Hosier Lane was suffering from poor-quality art.

"The artwork is substandard, they've painted over some of the most iconic artwork and what they've put in its place is nowhere near as good





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as what was there," he said, as per the *Herald Sun*.

Firm Beats Lockout

Research house **Roy Morgan** has won a court fight to access its Collins St offices after being dramatically locked out over the weekend.

The polling company has refused to pay rent since September, a total now standing at \$ 730,083.07, in an ongoing dispute about the cost and placement of new lifts. **Roy Morgan** wants the new lifts to cover the basements and roof. The case between Impact and **Roy Morgan** will be heard in February, as per the *Herald Sun*.

PLANNING

Our Windsor

The historic **Hotel Windsor** may be closed for good during the next state election campaign. Hotel owner **Adi Halim** made the threat after talks to extend a redevelopment permit broke down.

The long running saga returned to the **Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal**, but a planned mediation conference did not go ahead and the State Government has resolved not to extend the permit. **Halim** insists that work could not begin when the permit was issued in 2010 due to heritage requirements. The **Halim** Group plans a \$300 million-plus redevelopment of the 19th century hotel, including a modern 27 story tower at the back.

Planning Minister **Richard Wing** has said that the owner has (had) plenty of time as the permit was until January 2017 according to the *Herald Sun*.

Melbourne's Mayor, who since 2008 has been **Robert Doyle**, has renewed his call for the Windsor to be saved.

The issue is now set for a full **VCAT** hearing on February 15. It is understood that **Halim** is going to decide over the next few weeks whether he should pursue the legal action. He could, as an alternative, consider an option to shut the hotel down if the permit is not extended.

Big National Trust Tiff

An *Age* article on November 25 says that the **National Trust of Victoria** was reeling, after six of its 12 board members had resigned, or were voted out, in a showdown over the Trust's direction. Lobbyists who declared themselves alarmed at the Trust's increasing business focus campaigned to vote out three finance-oriented board members, in favour of those whom they considered more inclined towards conservation and advocacy.

After that, three board members resigned: the chairman, former pharmaceutical executive **Graeme Blackman**; the Trust's finance committee chairman and Deloitte consultant **Michael Batchelor**; and former education sector executive **Des Thornton**. Evidently, there had been an 'orchestrated campaign' from influential factions, and that altogether only five per cent of **Trust** members voted. *The insider* called the outcome 'more than an unhappy time. It's catastrophic.'

The board members who were voted out had been all members of the Trust finance committee. **Martin Purslow**, chief executive of the **Trust**, announced that delivering the board's strategy had led to its most successful two years, with profits accruing from record attendances at **Trust** properties. Such

properties included Rippon Lea House, Como House, and Barwon Park.

East Werribee And Scientology Link

Victoria's Finance Minister **Robin Scott** gave 'preferred bidder' status, *The Age* announced, to a little-known consortium with **Scientology** links, when it came to a huge tract of East Werribee public land. Since the time when the consortium concerned, **Australian Education City**, was chosen, three Chinese investment firms have bought into the planned project, lifting the consortium's value from almost nothing to more than a quarter of a billion dollars.

During November, **Australian Education City** beat off three of Australia's largest property development companies, to begin negotiations with the State Government over 400 hectares of public land in East Werribee. The consortium has promised a 1.5-million-square-metre city on the site, with soaring residential towers, as well as with connections to Australian and overseas universities. These campuses, it predicts, will eventually provide 58,000 jobs.

Leader of the company is **Bill Zheng**, a Chinese-born businessman with strong links to the **Church of Scientology**. **Zheng** once worked for **Price Waterhouse Coopers**, and has made a fortune in property investments via his firm, **Investors Direct Financial Group**.

Our Clock

A \$1 billion redevelopment of the **Nylex** clock site on the **Yarra** would see it transformed into a mini-suburb with its own brewery and arts and leisure precinct. 500 jobs will be created during construction of the newly named **Malt District** at **Cremorne**, including 1,000 apartments, bars, restaurants, cafes and commercial offices. Developer **Caydon** is also working with **Parks Victoria** for a ferry stop at the waterfront development. The Nylex clock will be restored and repositioned at the same orientation on a new building, as per the *Herald Sun*.

Combustible high rise

Melbourne's **Metropolitan Fire Brigade** has called for a national audit of modern high-rise buildings, warnings that the use of cheap, flammable and non-compliant cladding over the past decade has created cities filled with "ticking time-bombs".

MFB fire safety director **Adam Darlymple** told a (federal) Senate inquiry into non-conforming building products that the service was frustrated with the lack of national action over the widespread use of cheap, highly combustible aluminium cladding imported from Asia, according to *The Australian*.

Our Yarra

The Victorian Government will introduce planning controls to limit overdevelopment on the river, including enforced setbacks and heights for buildings. Water management expert **Chris Chesterfield** will chair a committee to overhaul the governance of the iconic river along its 240km length.

Chesterfield, a former **Melbourne Water senior executive and Office of Living Victoria CEO**, said there were big gaps in how the river was run and "we need to recognise the community's aspirations for the river into the future". **Planning Minister Wynne** said the Yarra flowed through eleven council areas and consistency was needed to protect it, as per the *Herald Sun*.

Five-Minute Walk City

The **City of Melbourne's** third *People for Places* report divides Melbourne into 15 mini-cities within one metropolis, with each area developed as a resident-and-visitor friendly neighbourhood in which the pedestrian is king. The micro-analysis of the CBD, which was first conducted in 1993 provides a snapshot of a city shooting upwards and sprawling outwards.

It is turning from what **Lord Mayor Robert Doyle** calls "a 10-hour-a-day city into an 18-hour-a-day city".

The 2015 *Places for People* report brakes the city down into 15 "catchment" areas, starting with the traditional central city around Flinders Street but now spreading out to encompass areas to the north, south, east and west. The council's director of urban design, **Professor Rob Adams**, said the report highlighted flaws in the development of newer areas such as Southbank and Docklands, which it finds notably lacking in the pedestrian-friendly aspects at the core of the city's strategy, as per *The Age*.

Already a number of suburban councils have adopted interim controls, or are preparing to do so, as developers edge closer to Melbourne's main watercourse. "It is iconic and it is one of the most important assets that our city has got," said **Victorian Planning Minister Richard Wynne**.

State planning rules will be changed to allow for consistent decision-making along the river, with control over building heights, setbacks, overshadowing, vegetation and public access, as per the *Australian Financial Review*.

Waterways May Be Dammed

The Maribyrnong River and Moonee Ponds Creek could be partially dammed while two bridges are built across them as part of a new toll road through Melbourne's west, planning documents show.

High-voltage transmission towers beside the West Gate Freeway will also be move or rebuilt so the freeway can be widened to 12 lanes between the Western Ring Road and Williamstown Road as part of the \$5.5 billion **Western Distributor** project.

The high-voltage power lines could either be shifted closer to homes in Brooklyn and Yarraville or buried.

SPORT

Best Cycling State

Victoria has been named, in a *Herald Sun* article of December 15, Australia's best state for cycling holidays. Nevertheless, it needs to do more in order to promote itself as the nation's premier cycling destination.

A national online survey, in which more than 3,000 people took part, revealed that Melbourne was the single most popular destination for cycling experiences. Deemed the best of the state's cycling destinations was the Great Ocean Road.

Top Cop Becomes Top Bomber

Erstwhile **Victoria Police** chief **Ken Lay** has joined the **Essendon Football Club's** board, according to a *Herald Sun* report, and is its **Number One** ticket-holder. Chairman of this board, incidentally, is the former ALP federal cabinet minister **Lindsay Tanner**.

Match-Fixing Dangers

The Age announced on December 15 that local sports leagues' integrity is being increasingly compromised by the rise of match-fixing and corruption. It attributed this trend to the increasing popularity of unregulated overseas online bookmakers, a popularity noted and regretted by the Victorian Government.

As part of their submission to a federal review of these off-shore bookmakers' impact, the state authorities say that 'there is a lack of awareness of integrity risks amongst sub-elite and community-based sport in Victoria.' The submission also maintained that such ignorance was a 'particular concern,' given the sheer number of betting markets which foreign bookies offer on Victorian sporting events.

Parking around MCG

According to **Peter Rolfe** in the *Herald Sun*, sports fans leaving the **MCG** on foot will be given right of way over cars under a new trial. In a blow to drivers hoping for a quick escape after their team has lost, cars will be delayed from leaving the **MCG** about 20 minutes longer until pedestrian traffic is cleared under the new system.

Pedestrians will be given priority over vehicles leaving **Yarra Park** from about 15-20 minutes before the end of play. And cars will be kept behind bollards until the main pedestrian thoroughfares outside the home of Australian sport are clear.

Good morning

Vic Health's walk to school month has been running since 2006, but this year left previous years in the dust as more children from more schools walked further than ever before.

The 110,000 kids from 620 schools who took part clocked up and estimated 1,279,745km.

Although thrilled by the result, **VicHealth CEO Jerril Rechter**, said only one in five Australian children got the recommended one hour of daily physical activity and only one in four walked or rode to school, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Mates Bat For Warnie's Charity

The **Shane Warne Foundation** has announced a new fundraising direction to cut costs and boost donations. **Collingwood** president **Eddie McGuire** said the board unequivocally backed **Warne** and the foundation had never been guilty of any wrongdoing, as reported in *The Herald Sun*.

TRANSPORT - PORTS

Alcoa And Local Shipping

According to the State Government, and in particular according to Industrial Relations Minister **Natalie Hutchins**, the aluminium business **Alcoa** should stop using a foreign-flagged ship to carry material from Western Australia to Victoria. **Hutchins** was quoted to this effect in the *Herald Sun* on December 10.

Her direct intervention threatens to raise tensions between the government and **Alcoa**. While she said that meeting union demands for the ship were 'in the best interests of all concerned,' **Alcoa** responded by saying that it had already introduced cost-saving measures worth \$6 million to ensure the future of its Portland smelter, which currently employs 700 people.

Alcoa wants to no longer use Australian-owned ships, with the related union costs and powers

Melbourne's Port Sale

The Victorian government has failed to put up legislation to privatise the **Port of Melbourne**, delaying the \$6 billion sale.

After threatening to proceed with the sale using special administrative powers if legislation was not passed, on the last parliamentary sifting day for the year, **Treasurer Tim Pallas** refused to comment on what his next move would be. However, he has previously claimed he has been "let with no choice" but to sell the asset regardless of support from the **Parliament**.

It is understood the government has only begun constructive negotiations with the opposition, which it relies on for support to get the legislation through the **Upper House** where the government holds a minority. Opposition Leader **Matthew Guy** said the best interest for the state was to have a legislated outcome rather than trying to dispose of the asset through the State-Owned Enterprise Act.

The Coalition has been, since August, willing to negotiate with the government, **Guy** said. "We have given our suggestions to the government and we wait for point for the negotiations comes from the compensation clause, the time frame in which the government is liable to pay compensation should it proceed with building a second container port in the state.

Potential bidders for the asset include infrastructure giants **Hastings Funds Management**, **IFM Investors QIC Ltd** and partners. **QIC** is expected to bid with **Borealis Infrastructure** and the **Future Fund**. **Hastings** has teamed up with **Wren House Infrastructure Management** and **Global Infrastructure Partners**. **IFM Investors** is working with **Barclays**, as reported in the *Australian Financial Review*.

Flogging the Port of Melbourne

Kenneth Davidson, a senior columnist at *The Age*, writes that this city's future as an international hub in jeopardy. There are so many questions about this whole thing, and capacity sits right at the core of it.

Are we going to have a port that has rail to the dock? Are we going to be able to take the trucks out of Maribyrnong? Are we going to be able to have the trains that leave Horsham and go all the way into the dock? We do not know what the capacity is going to be. When will the second port happen? 'All of these variables are just sort of sitting out there, and we are going to let the bidders tell us the future and how they see it all happening. **Treasurer Tim Pallas** is showing contempt for Parliament and proper process'.

Deals are being done that will damage the bay and neighbouring communities, stealing from future generations according to **Kenneth Davidson** in *The Age*. The deal involves giving the private buyer and implied right to triple the size of the port.

TRANSPORT - AIR

Celluloid Airport

Matthew Guy, when recently planning minister in the State Government, once described **Melbourne Airport's** car park, which churns through approximately \$125 million each year, as being so big that it really deserved its own suburb name and postcode. Now it is the subject of a short film, *Vacant*, which *The Age* discussed on November 30.

Among airports for the world's 50 busiest cities, Melbourne's is the only one outside America that has no rail link to the main metropolis, and even within America there are only five cities on the list that are thus handicapped. Film-maker **Elle Marsh**, a masters student at the **Victorian College of the Arts**, reports that with *Vacant* she has explored the 'beauty and emptiness of Australia's largest car park' and what the car park says about Melbourne's cultural identity.

Lobbying: One could muse as to which organisations are against the building of a rail link to the Airport.

TRANSPORT - RAIL

Open For All Week

For decades **Flagstaff** has been, as it were, the Cinderella of Melbourne's CBD railway stations. But no longer will it be so. An *Age* report of December 7 stated that as of New Year's Day, trains would begin to stop at **Flagstaff** on weekends as well as on weekdays.

Ever since **Flagstaff** opened 31 years ago, numerous trains have skipped the station. Back in 1985, few people lived in the western end of the city centre, which was very much a dead zone compared with what it has become since. The 1990s' trend towards downtown apartment residence remained unimaginable.

Myki Technology...

The enforcement of Victoria's problem-plagued **Myki** technology is under an immediate government review amid concerns that the ticketing system cannot withstand legal scrutiny and thousands of commuters have been bullied into paying fines.

The state government will announce a sweeping review of the fare enforcement regime, and admits it doubts the current system is equitable, effective and fair, as per *The Age*.

Trainless station

Thousands of new residents in department towers planned on land at **Flemington Racecourse** should not get a train service, the State Government says despite having a useable railway station and line at their doorstep. **Public Transport Victoria** and the state transport department have rejected the possible use of the station for commuter services. Advocates for public transport branded the approach "defeatist and disappointing".

And local residents said the massive apartment project was being inappropriately fast, tracked by the **Victoria Racing Club** and its development partner, the Shanghai-based **Greenland Group**, one of China's largest residential builders. Four towers and a low-rise apartment precinct are proposed at **Flemington**, on racing club land that it says is ripe for development. One hectare of land is on **Epsom Road**, and another three hectares are in **Ascot Vale**, next to **Flemington Racecourse** railway station.

The railway station and spur line are used for just a handful of race days, and for special events like the **Royal Melbourne Show**, as reported in *The Age*.

Railway Safety Slammed

According to **Adam Carey** in *The Australian*, the safety of Melbourne's passenger rail system has been questioned after **Metro** sacked five staff for walking on tracks without protection and the union retaliated by releasing an internal document exposing hundreds of serious track faults around the system.

Hot Times At Metro

Melbourne's Metro train system, *The Age* revealed on December 15, has a new strategy for the extremely high temperatures expected during summer. It hopes that the strategy will guarantee fewer train delays and fewer frustrated passengers when the thermometer climbs.

During recent years, the worst of the summer heat has routinely wrought havoc upon the running of Metro transport. Railway tracks have buckled, train motors have overheated, air-conditioning systems have broken down, and several hundred services have simply needed to be cancelled.

The presence of precautionary speed restrictions exacerbates the unreliability of the Metro's system in summertime. Those restrictions have come into play across the network whenever the temperature hits the high 30s, as it has often done and will often continue to do.

Train Lines And Black Spots

We have all experienced the frustrating feeling that comes when one is conversing on a mobile phone and suddenly the connection ceases. We have all experienced the even more frustrating feeling that comes when one cannot embark upon a mobile phone call in the first place. Welcome to that most vexatious of telecommunication phenomena, the 'black spot.'

Victoria wants to use federal money intended for a mobile black spot program targeting high fire risk areas to upgrade phone coverage on trains. The government last month confirmed that it had dumped the \$40 million Naphthine government plan to put Wi-Fi on **V/Line** services, suggesting that it was not needed because most phone plans now include a data allowance.

Innovation Minister Philip Dalidakis instead promised to improve phone coverage along regional railway lines, which can be patchy, even in areas with a relatively good signal, because of interference created by the moving train, as per *The Age*.

A State Government plan, discussed by *The Age* on November 30, to fix mobile phone black spots along five of the busiest regional rail lines; Melbourne-Geelong, Melbourne-Ballarat, Melbourne-Bendigo, Melbourne-Seymour, and Melbourne-Traralgon, should make life easier for those whose livelihoods depend on being able to conduct phone conversations in transit. One such commuter is furniture production manager **Wayne Bell**, who regularly travels between Melbourne and Ballan, and who is often rendered unreachable by such black spots during his journeys.

'On the way in it doesn't mean too much because I am still waking up but on the way home we have wholesalers in Western Australia and ... often I get emails from them,' Bell complained. 'We could possibly jeopardise the [sale], especially if it is a Friday ... they have to wait for the whole weekend before they get the quote.'

TRANSPORT - TAXIS. ETC

Uber's proposal

The *Herald Sun* has obtained **Uber's** submission to the **State Government** outlining its case to operate legally in Victoria, in which it also agrees to a tightened screening process and **Taxi Service Commission** regulation.

Uber proposes drivers pay an annual licence fee of up to \$150, despite taxi licences leased from the Government costing \$22,700 a year. The company itself does not want to pay a cent. In a bid to win approval, it has promised to create 5,000 jobs in the state on top of the 6,500 drivers it already has, according to the *Herald Sun*.

It Ain't Over Till It's Uber?

A *Herald Sun* article on December 5 revealed that the preceding day, **Uber** had been effectively outlawed in Victoria, when a driver was found guilty of driving a hire car without a licence or accreditation. Meanwhile the State Cabinet is considering a plan to force **Uber** to adhere to existing hire-car regulations on the statute books.

While the relevant ministers had already been discussing **Uber** a good deal anyhow, the decision by a Melbourne magistrate is likely to spur the government's review of the whole taxi and ride-share industry. Has the 'unstoppable' **Uber** been, in fact, stopped?

Fixed Taxi Fares Proposed

On December 16, the *Herald Sun* announced that the State Government was considering a radical plan to improve the taxi sector. Were the plan to go ahead, taxi fares would rise to ensure that cabs arrived on time, and passengers would pay fixed fees to Melbourne Airport. Part of the motivation behind the plan is of course the need to keep the taxi industry competitive against **Uber**-derived threats.

Unhappy With Uber?

UberX customers who are unhappy with its service or believe they were incorrectly charged are left in legal limbo, as no government bodies will investigate customer complaints because the popular ride-sharing app is illegal.

In the midst of the party season, **Uber** customers can only make a complaint to the company itself. Because **Uber** operates illegally in Victoria, no department will respond, per *The Age*

TRANSPORT - ROAD

Fresh detail on how the Western Distributor will be built and its impact on nearby areas is revealed in documents **Victoria's Transport Department** has submitted to the **Federal Environment Department**, as reported in *The Age*.

Citywide shakeup

A major Melbourne City Council owned firm has undergone a management and operations shakeup after posting a big profit dip over the past year. Two senior executives including the former acting chief, are leaving **Citywide**. **Citywide** recorded an after tax profit of \$3.37 million in 2014-15, down from \$7.5 million the previous year and \$8.2 million in 2013, according to *The Herald Sun*.

City Car Tax

An inner-city congestion charge for cars that varies according to traffic conditions has been proposed to solve Melbourne's road problems. The **RACV** supports the idea in principle, provided that petrol prices and some other charges fall under a major review of motoring taxes. US planning expert **Professor Robert Cervero** said that political will was needed to put a price on the true costs of using cars, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Toll up

The 2014 road toll was higher than the 2013 figure, ending an eight-year downward trend. Of the lives lost in 2015, one third were a result of speed-related accidents. **RACV** road and **traffic manager Dave Jones** said speeding fines should be lowered and more demerit points stripped off licenses for those caught speeding. He said more focus should be placed on high-range speedsters, as per the *Herald Sun*.

Cyclist Death

A Coburg mother who opened a car door into the path of a cyclist, knocking him beneath the wheels of a truck that killed him, has been fined \$1,000 in court, sparking calls for stiffer penalties and safer bike lanes to prevent more cycling deaths. According to media reports, the court heard **Savic** looked for cyclists in her side mirror, but only saw Ms **Canedda**, so she waited for her to pass and then opened her car door.

Savic issued a written apology to **Paulon's** loved ones: "I cannot begin to comprehend the pain, sadness and heartache you have experienced. For that, I am truly sorry."

The \$1,000 fine imposed by magistrate **Brian Clifford** was lower than the maximum penalty of \$1476. A spokesperson for **Roads Minister Luke Donnellan** said the government had no plans to increase penalties for dooring and would focus on changing attitudes and improving roads, as per *The Age*.

Cycling Rules Clarified

An article in *The Age* on December 7 spoke of a new handbook, which sets the record straight concerning Victoria's often misunderstood cycling road rules. It aims to take the confusion, and maybe some of the heat, out of driver-cyclist interactions. Produced by the **Victoria Law Foundation**, the pocket-sized *Bike Law Handbook* has the backing of the cyclist group **Bicycle Network**, which hopes that it will reduce the number of crashes on the state's roads.

Craig Richard, **Bicycle Network's** chief executive, observed that confusion about the road rules created potential, all too often realised, for conflict and unsafe behaviour. Of every five Victorian crashes involving a bike, three happen at intersections, and a fair few crashes would never have occurred to begin with if drivers and cyclists better comprehended the laws about who should give way to whom.

Roads Projects

Melbourne faces "localized gridlock" on the **West Gate Freeway** after new roads to the **Port of Melbourne** are built, with average peak-hour-speeds forecast to slow to a glacial 11km/h on some inner-city stretches of the city's busiest road. The West Gate Freeway is, approximately, the Western half of the East-West Link.

The warning of looming gridlock near the port appears repeatedly in reports and confidential briefings about the \$1.6 billion Webb Dock project, which also reveal the project's costs are spiralling as **VicRoads** rectifies the botched road plans.

Among the serious planning mistakes was a failure by the port authority to design the roads for super-sized container trucks, which have had approval to travel on certain Victorian roads since 2013, as reported in *The Age*.

Advice Ignored

As per reported by **Lucille Keen**, in the *Australian Financial Review*, former **primer minister Tony Abbott** has been criticized by the federal government's financial watchdog for handing over \$3 billion to Victoria for its **East West Link** toll road and tunnel without proper analysis. Commonwealth **Auditor-General Grant Hehir** (formerly **New South Wales Auditor-General** and before that a well-known Victorian departmental Treasury secretary) said **Abbott** was given "clear advice" from the public sector that the toll road project had not been fully analysed.

He criticized **Abbott** for approving the transfer of \$1.5 billion on the final day of the 2013-14 financial year, which maximized the budget deficit in the **Rudd** government's final year. The reporter claimed **Abbott** ignored advice from the **Department of Infrastructure and Regional Development** that the money was being transferred to the state well in "advance of project needs, and proposed and alternative payment approach that aligned payments with project progress.

WELFARE

Church Confessions Sought

In a rare public statement, **Sano** taskforce detectives investigating historic allegations of abuse have made an appeal for information about sexual assaults at **St Patrick's Cathedral** between 1996 and 2001. The development came after **Cardinal Pell** cancelled his flights to Melbourne from Rome, citing ill health for being unable to give evidence in person at the **Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse**, as reported in *The Age*.

Heat on parents

The number of children having to be treated after being trapped in hot cars has soared by more than 40 per cent in the past year.

As the mercury rises again today, the *Herald Sun* can reveal paramedics were called to a record 1531 instances of children being locked in hot cars up more than 30 per cent from the 1165 in 2014, according to the *Herald Sun*.

SOCIETY

Campsites

Fees at dozens of campsites around the state have been cut by \$11 a night ahead of the Christmas holidays, with refunds to be given to families who have already booked.

The fee reductions affect 55 "mid-level" camping or boating sites, including in the **Gippsland Lakes, Kinglake, Great Otway National Park**, and **Grampians** areas. It comes after the Government scrapped a new fee system, introduced by the former government, for all basic campgrounds, as per the *Herald Sun*.

A new era

There has been much evidence before the child abuse royal commission, when 1996 marked the start of an era when the church took its responsibilities for clergy sex crimes and their cover-up much more seriously. The church has said this new era meant transparency, accountability, justice for victims and a new leadership showing integrity, courage and a commitment to change.

This new wave of church leadership prompted **Pell**, in 1996, to establish the **Melbourne Response**, an internal process which investigated complaints of clergy sexual abuse.

It was characterised as being a genuine attempt to both give justice to victims and act against clergy offenders. (This has not turned out to be the case. **Asmy** research has found, not only has the **Melbourne Response** not provided justice to some victims, it has caused a new round of trauma and harm to many), as per *The Age*.

Ice has cold results

According to *The Age*, a government panel has made more than 50 recommendations to help tackle Victoria's methamphetamine epidemic, including expansion of the drug court, and a police operation to stem supply of the drug from south-east Asia.

The law reform, drugs and crime prevention committee's 900-page report the result of the bipartisan inquiry's year-long consultation. Headed by **Western Victoria MP Simon Ramsay**, the committee's recommendations included; a "harmonization" of unexplained health laws across Australia to large organized crime groups and laws to allow for the declaration of "drug transit zones" to assist with cross-border detection and seizure of illicit drugs on interstate roads.

There are better ways

A quarter of all drownings in 2014 in Victoria involved people who were born overseas. **Life Saving Victoria's** analysis of drownings reveals 39 people died in water in Victoria in 2014, and 90 per cent of the victims were men.

Of concern, the report also found that appropriate safety checks had not been carried out at almost half of the state's swimming pools in the past five years. It comes as **Consumer Affairs** inspectors start conducting hundreds of unannounced inspections of shops and wholesalers to seize potentially dangerous inflatable pools and swimming toys, as reported in the *Herald Sun*. Too much paperwork. Bring back the **Herald Learn-to-Swim** certificate, (was that its name) from the Baby boom era generation

VALE

Bannon, John, aged 72. Labor Premier of South Australia. **Bardenhagen**, Dr Fiona Jane, aged 48. **Boffa**, Maria Aurelia OAM, aged 94.

Brzozek, Anna. **Bufradeci**, Giuseppe.

Butler, Dr Harry, aged 85. Conservationist, Australian of the Year 1979. **Cameron**, Rev Fr. Desmond Howard, aged 93. Priest. **Carson**, Barbara. Nurse and RANF secretary.

Corbett, Dr Graham, aged 87. Founder of the Vermont Medical Clinic. **Cossar**, Brian David, aged 77. **Crooke**, Ray, aged 93. Painter, artist. **Denahy**, Monique, aged 49.

De Marchis, Eva. **Dixon**, John. **Docking**, Gilbert Charles OAM, aged 96

Druva, Rasma, aged 92. Hand weaver. **England**, Dorothy Jean.

Evans, Russel. Yachtsman, farmer, winemaker, fire fighter. **Fergusson-Wall**, Rhonda.

Fox-Lane, Brian Douglas. **Gilcrist**, John. Founding Director of the Elwood Community Bank. **Gunn**, Kay Lorraine, aged 68. **Hale**, Alan **Flintham**, aged 87. **Hansen**, Joyce Alice Helen, aged 97. **Harford**, Alan Bruce, aged 88. **Harper**, Stanley, aged 90.

Harkness, John Laughlan, aged 90. **Hayes**, Edward Francis. **Hill –Ling AO**, Robert, aged 82. Businessman. **Hoare**, Harold Richard **Donald Patrick** ('Dick'), aged 88. **Holmes**, Sally (Sarah Elizabeth Rose Chapman), aged 62. **Hunter**, Stuart. Brighton Art Society.

Hurley, Thomas Victor. Victorian Bar. A Great friend of many and will be greatly missed.

James, Dr. Patrick **Keely**, The Hon John QC, aged 90. Victorian Bar. **Kendall**, Barry Anthony. **Kennelly**, Ron. Respected member of the Portside community. **Krum**, Henry, aged 67. Professor at the School of Public Health and Preventative Medicine, Researcher at The Alfred Hospital. **La Fontaine**, Don Cyrelle.

Leyden, John, aged 72. Soldier, chief instructor of a national Officer Cadet Training Unit (3OCTU), and known for his strict discipline as 'Mad Dog,' a name which amused him when, long afterwards, he learned of it. **MacDonald**, Rod, aged 92. Architect.

Marginson, Betty May AM. University College, Municipal Councillor and Mayor of Hawthorn.

Masterton, John, aged 87. Surgeon, Explorer. **Maxwell**, John. Rotary Club of Camberwell member. **McLaughlin**, Phillip, aged 87. **McMurdie**, David, aged 90. Engineer with the Board of Works. **Murphy**, Gavin. Victorian Transport Association. **Nayman**, Doreen Phyllis. **North**, Sir Thomas. Vice Chairman and Committee member of Melbourne Racing Club, racehorse owner.

Parsons, Amelia Bernadette. **Pearce**, Jack Martin, aged 91. **Perry**, Peter Carl OAM, 92. **Richardson**, Linda. **Rogers**, Graham Ernest, aged 85. **Ryan**, Peter Allen, aged 92. Soldier (WWII), writer, columnist and publisher. **Stewart**, Kitty.

Bourke, Fr Patrick John, OSA. Aged 79. Augustinian Catholic priest, latterly based in South Yarra. **Coady**, Edmond William (Bill). **Du Parquet**, Hélène. **Ebeling**, John Stewart. Aged 71.

Lieberman, Evelyn May (née Simonowitz). Aged 71. Former deputy chief of staff during **Bill Clinton's** presidency, and best known for having attempted to thwart the **Monica Lewinsky** scandal by banishing Clinton's best-known intern to a job outside the White House. **Maxwell**, Godfrey John.

Nachman, Merton Roland, aged 92. Alabama lawyer who made history when it came to American defamation laws. His client, segregationist Montgomery politician **L.B. Sullivan**, sued *The New York Times* for having published in 1960 an advertisement that Sullivan considered to be defamatory. Under Alabama law and national law, as matters stood then, it was. Sullivan won from the newspaper \$500,000 in damages, equivalent to almost \$3,914,000 in today's money.

Unfortunately for him, the Supreme Court's judges in 1964 (*New York Times v. Sullivan*) unanimously overturned the original state court's 1962 ruling, and decreed that the ruling's criteria for determining defamation had been far too strict. The long-term result was that libel laws in America, at both state and federal level, were spectacularly weakened; that 'actual malice' needed to be proven in libel cases; and that in practice the First Amendment would triumph over other considerations.



Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
“Working for business. Working for Victoria.”

Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Mark Stone

Chief Executive

20 January 2016

PC report on Australia’s workplace relations framework makes valuable recommendations, but falls short in key areas for business

As you may have seen the Productivity Commission’s (PC) report on Australia’s workplace relations framework was released prior to Christmas and contains important recommendations for Victorian business.

Our [submission](#) argued that the key outcomes of the PC review must be the creation of a simpler, fairer and more efficient framework that spurs economic growth, increased productivity and improved business competitiveness.

We welcome a number of the final [report’s](#) recommendations including:

- Providing penalty rate relief for hospitality, entertainment, retail, restaurant and café businesses by aligning Sunday rates with Saturday rates.
 The report states that Sunday penalty rates are inappropriately high given changing consumer preferences and work against the interest of people seeking employment and employers who want to trade on a Sunday.
- Reform of state and territory public holidays. The PC has recommended that new state public holidays are not subject to public holiday penalty rates or a paid day of leave.
 This recommendation is particularly relevant in Victoria as the recent introduction of two new public holidays takes Victoria to a nationwide high of 13 days, compared to states like New South Wales with 11. The Victorian Chamber calls for a nationally consistent maximum number of public holidays to reduce the cost and confusion for business.
- Addressing ‘strike first, talk later’ tactics by unions.
 These tactics significantly disrupt business and there is no requirement for bargaining to have commenced before striking occurs. The PC has made recommendations that would limit this avenue.
- Expanding the existing portable long service leave schemes would not be justified given the cost to business for no benefit.
 The Victorian Chamber’s separate submission to the State Government’s inquiry into this issue stated that an expansion would impose significant costs on business and discourage employment, particularly among older Victorians.

However, we were disappointed that the report falls short in a number of areas.

The report missed the opportunity to address the problem of costly and lengthy general protections claims, despite our strong advocacy on the significant impact they have on business. It does, however, propose reforms to limit the ability of frivolous and vexatious claims to proceed, and for greater powers to award costs against applicants, so we urge the government to act on these recommendations.

Unfair dismissal claims continue to be an issue for business. Despite the Victorian Chamber urging the PC to remove the burden of unfair dismissal for businesses with under 20 employees, this recommendation was not part of the final report. Therefore small businesses will continue to spend time and money defending claims rather than running their businesses.

We are also disappointed that the PC has recommended the removal of the small business dismissal code, rather than working with industry to improve the effectiveness of the code.

We await the Federal Government’s response to the report and urge it to consider the recommendations and take on the heavy lifting required to implement much needed reforms for business.

Mark Stone is the Chief Executive of the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

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