

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 twenty-two years.

The Lining Up Edition



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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.

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About the editor

Alistair Urquhart, BA LLB

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

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

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

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

About the publisher

Affairs of State

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

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The Editor has a Toorak Road Coffee with Brent Groves. Brent worked in navy shipyards in Boston in the 1950's after finishing at MIT. Perhaps he knows more about the future of the Internet than most other people. Not just the detail but the wisdom. He has lived in Australia and Victoria for 40 or so years.

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EDITORIAL

State income tax as a reality takes us back to the Second World War, when the federal government took over this particular, and particularly important, tax from the states so that the nation would have a stronger war budget.

Behind the lines, with most public service/delivery sectors, one can clearly see the effect of the relevant unions: health, education, transport, and just generally, without forgetting construction and retail. Such influence is at the very top of the Structure of Government as well as further down the line or hierarchy. This is at the state level, though presently the media is focusing more on construction across Australia and perhaps the finance industry in a different sort of focus.

On other lines

Your Editor did an opinion survey on the Metropolitan transport System, as he was breathing into the face of a fellow stander upper at the Richmond Station. 'I'll give it 8 out of ten. I live out a bit, but I am grateful to be able to get to work pretty easily most days of the week'. He was the right age and a positive fellow. But we need a few more Birrells and Others to pick up an often chaotic/regularly smashed (!) train system. Perhaps get Kennett and Stockdale into a Cage to really push a few things. Grrr.

On the Monaro

Your Editor is going up into the Monaro for the Anzac Weekend, a time for reflection on Australian History. In doing so he has been refreshing his knowledge of the early history of the squatters and before them the Aborigines, and the development of the Wool industry and the growing of better agricultural grasses. And of course to look for Kosciusko's side, where the Hills are twice as steep and twice as rough. To meet up with some friends and have a few poetry sessions. Lunch. Not sure if there are any local wines. And to inspect the garden of an Australian garden Writer. Perhaps to play Waltzing Matilda on the 'Pipes under a Gum Tree. Let us all picture the Monaro in 1915 or so, when the first sod was dug for the temporary federal Parliament House, built on a sheep run on the Monaro, just near a lovely old Church that Canberra folk and visitors would regularly see..

Cover. The Supreme Court of Victoria was established in 1852, not long after Victoria separated from New South Wales on 1 July 1851. The Supreme Court building was building completed in 1884. Let us reflect on the Law as we have it in Victoria. Most Letter From Melbourne readers hopefully have little to do with it unless they are practicing professionals. The Supreme Court Building is presently alight at Night.

STATE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS**Josh sees Danger Signs**

#In December the government was buffeted by a report from the state's Auditor-General finding Labor's decision to abandon the **East West Link** cost taxpayers more than \$1.1billion "for little tangible benefit".

#Then there were the continuing allegations of union malfeasance that forced former factional warlord **Cesar Melhem's** resignation as Labor's Legislative Council (Upper house) whip.

#The **V/Line** debacle forced one-quarter of the state's regional trains from the tracks because

of concerns about excessive wheel-wear and failed boom gate closures.

#Meanwhile, negotiations with the opposition to sell the **Port of Melbourne** seemed at that time to have ground to a standstill, bringing into doubt billions of dollars' worth of funding for Labor's signature level.

#There was the sky rail public relations disaster, in which hundreds of angry locals were told on a Saturday night of a massive new rail viaduct just before it was made public in the media.

The government had damaging internal leaks. Most recently, *The Herald Sun* reported on a dumped cabinet proposal for a new public sector watchdog to scrutinize state MPs and their taxpayer funded staff.

There are however early warning signs of a warning to governments on the cusp of stumbling onto the wrong path. The first is the presence of low-level grumbling from the backbench (or, more seriously, the front bench) about the leader's office. Such complaints were common immediately before the **Rudd, Gillard, Baillieu, Napthine** and **Abbott** governments descended into hell, writes **Josh Gordon** for *The Age*.

\$100 billion Rail Link. A thought.

Former premier **Jeff Kennett** said a fully underground rail system would put Melbourne on a par with other world leading cities. If I was premier today I would probably go out and borrow \$100 billion and I'd build an underground rail system which would last for years and years," **Kennett** said.

'At today's interest rates you could borrow that amount of money, stack it away, earn a bit of interest and then slowly roll it out,' reported on by *The Herald Sun*.

Go Danny

Essendon MP **Danny Pearson** was waiting to enter a meeting with residents at a Flemington public housing estate when the drama unfolded. **Pearson** said he saw a man had collapse and rushed over to find somebody had called triple zero but nobody had tried to resuscitate him. **Pearson** then started doing chest compressions on the man and mouth-to-mouth in an attempt to get him breathing again, as per *The Herald Sun*.

Campaigning by paid officials set to be banned

Election campaigning by electorate officers on the public payroll is likely to be explicitly banned after Labor's vote scheme. A Victorian Parliament report on casual electorate officers said the Members' Guide for MPs clearly stated

electorate officers should not take part in political or party duties. It also said time sheets had insufficient details with respect to activities performed and many didn't provide guidelines to employment roles according to *The Age*.

FEDERAL**PM's State Income Tax gambit/idea**

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

In a day of conflicting signals over an enormous reform, **Turnbull** acknowledged that the states would be free to raise income taxes, while the Treasurer insisted there was no intention of increasing the tax burden.

The Prime Minister released a statement declaring there would be no increase in the total tax because any revenue sacrificed by Canberra would be offset by reductions in payments to the state.

State premiers wary of the proposal include **Jay Weatherill** of South Australia, **Daniel Andrews** of Victoria and **Will Hodgeman** of Tasmania. Western Australian Premier **Colin Barnett** said the idea had merit while NSW leader **Mike Baird** offered cautious support but warned against an increase in overall taxation as per *The Australian*.

States Resist Turnbull

Key states have rejected the state income tax proposal, to let them individually levy their own income tax to fund health and education, but the Prime Minister said it was the only way to end the age-old funding squabbles with the states. The proposal was put to a meeting of federal and state leaders and treasurers, and would have given the states taxing powers last used in 1942 and last proposed by Bob Hawke in 1991.

The change could have lead to as many as eight different personal income tax rates across the country, prompting concerns from business about increased complexity and reduced competitiveness due to income tax rate increases according to *The Financial Review*.

EDUCATION**Standards Too Low**

Minimum standards in **NAPLAN** tests are set too low and give a much rosier picture of the achievement level of Australian school children than the dismal reality, the **Grattan Institute**

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think tank says. A student in year 9 is considered to be meeting the minimum standard even if their reading skills are below a year 5 level, says the **Grattan** report *Widening gaps: What NAPLAN tells us about student progress*.

One in Four Kids Lacks Reading Skills

One million Australian students struggle to read because of poor teaching techniques in primary school and failure to read books at home, a new study warns. The Centre for Independent Studies says one in four children starts school without the phonetic skills or vocabulary needed to learn to read.

CIS education research fellow Jennifer Buckingham will launch the Five from Five literacy project next week to promote phonetics-based teaching of reading. Dr **Buckingham** said children who failed to read fluently by the end of year 3 would struggle to catch up and to read to learn as reported in *The Australian*.

Field of Nightmares

One of the states most prestigious schools will rename its sports complex over allegations one of its revered figures interfered with children. **Xavier College** announced it would remove the name of the late Fr **Patrick "Paddy" Stephenson** from its sports complex after allegations of child sexual abuse were levelled at him. **Stephenson** worked at the school for more than 60 years and died in 1990. "To those schooled at **Xavier**, Fr **Stephenson** was an educator credited with forging the school's reputation as one of the best in the state.... The **Jesuits** do not believe that the complaints against Fr **Stephenson** have been substantiated, but nor have we dismissed the allegations as wrong. The **Jesuits** believe that, on the available evidence, there is room for genuine misunderstanding as to his intentions." The school also announced it would erect a number of memorials to recognise his historical sexual abuse according to *The Herald Sun*.

Private education difficulties

The financially stricken **Australian Careers Network** has warned it could target thousands of students to repay \$300 million in course fee loans if it is forced into administration. **CAN**, the owner of controversial training outfit **Phoenix**

Institute, is teetering on the brink of insolvency after it was unsuccessful in its attempt to claw back about \$40m from the federal government under the contentious **VET FEE-HELP** loan scheme as reported in *The Australian*.

ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION

Duck a bullet

Animals Australia and the Victorian government have agreed to halt hunting at Lake Elizabeth in Kerang, which is home to the protected species of duck. Both sides appeared in the Victorian Supreme Court but activists didn't have to apply for an injunction because the government agreed to restrict access to the site. The state's agriculture minister will later make a decision about whether the wetland should remain closed for the rest of the season, as reported in *The Age*.

GAMING

Big Tatts Win

A \$540.5 million legal victory against **Tatts Group** over pokies has helped boost Victoria's mid-year budget. The High Court ordered **Tatts** to hand back the \$540 million in lost pokies compensation to the state government, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

HEALTH

Youth without Jobs

Some of Melbourne's richest and poorest suburbs have close to the lowest vaccination rates in Australia, putting residents at risk of potentially fatal disease outbreaks. The latest immunisation data shows 10 to 20 per cent of one-year-old babies in Melbourne's CBD, Albert Park, Middle Park and Brighton are not vaccinated. There are similarly low rates in the lower socio-economic suburbs of Sunshine, Glenroy, Broadmeadows, Fawkner and Dandenong according to the *Herald Sun*.

Canberra perspective

New laws allowing the federal government to withhold payments from parents who fail to vaccinate their children have led to increased vaccination rates. But in some areas of Victoria, vaccination rates remain below 90 per cent, the minimum level required to provide 'herd immunity' from serious diseases such as the measles, as found in *The Herald Sun*.

Ho humm

In 2017 the Victorian Parliament's law reform, road and community safety committee will deliver a report on the effectiveness of treatment programs and will explore harm minimisation as an alternative to treating drug users as criminals. The inquiry is an opportunity to consider a wide range of expert views, including those of the Police. It provides a chance for legislators to examine what has worked elsewhere as published in *The Age*.

Call the Midwife

Women are giving birth in unsafe rooms and at least one infant has been resuscitated in a corridor at the **Mercy Hospital** in Werribee due to a lack of resources to meet demand, nurses say. *The Age* also understands a shortage of staff also recently caused two seriously ill women to wait hours for urgent care, putting them at serious risk. Another woman gave birth in an ambulance outside the hospital on a busy night.

Health Quack Down

A new **Health Complaints Commission**, which will replace the Health Services Commissioner job held by Dr **Grant Davies**. Dr **Davies** is set to head up the new watchdog. Minister for Health **Jill Hennessy** said new legislation closed existing loopholes to provide a more comprehensive health complaints system to better protect the public according to *The Herald Sun*.

And then we will have...

Coles, **IGA** and **Foodworks** stores are selling cut-price premium brand cigarettes imported from Ukraine for as low as \$20 a packet, in a move described by anti-smoking advocates as "reprehensible" according to *The Age*. **Quit Victoria** director **Dr Sarah White** said the price drop was concerning. "Any measure that is trying to make cigarettes cheaper for people to keep them hooked on an addictive product that kills two out of three long term smokers is reprehensible."

Eye, Ear Hospital gets \$30m lifeline

The stalled redevelopment of the **Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital** has been thrown a lifeline and will be completed before

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the next state election, despite costs blowing out to \$200 million after buildings were found to be riddled with Asbestos as reported in *The Age*.

Firey's Bullying Claim

One third of firefighters making mental health insurance claims say they are the victims of bullying according to *The Herald Sun*. Figures obtained under freedom of information laws show 41 per cent of **CFA** and 38 per cent of **MFB** applications for mental injury cover in the past five years relate to harassment.

BUSINESS & INVESTMENT

Easter Rates Spark Exodus

Small business say they have been forced to close or reduce hours over Easter due to penalty rates. The declaration of two more public holidays, on Easter Sunday and the Friday before the AFL Grand Final means employers have to pay staff penalty rates.

State opposition spokesman on small and medium enterprise **Neale Burgess** said the public holiday on the Sunday was a double whammy for small businesses.

'Most of us appreciate our public holidays and those that work on those days deserve to be appropriately rewarded. The public holidays would effect people who could least afford it, being small business and young casual workers, according to *The Herald Sun*.

Uglier scenes as boss pulls pin

The resignation of Victorian businessman **John Knorr** came after **Fairfax Media** revealed how he repeatedly misled investors, including thousands of Victorians, to generate at least \$25 million for his struggling online search firm. It is understood **ASIC** recently demanded **Uglier** hand over documents as it expands its investigation into the firm, although **ASIC** declined to comment on the case.

Among **Uglier's** shareholders are thousands of unsophisticated investors from the Latrobe Valley and Melbourne, where **Uglier** has offices. They include pensioners and many small business owners who invested in **Uglier** after hearing **Knorr's** claims that it would generate hundreds of millions of dollars in revenue and transform world's leading economies, reports *The Herald Sun*.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Power Strikes

Rolling strikes at one of Australia's biggest power plants could put Victoria's energy supply at risk. Workers represented by the militant **Construction Forestry Mining and Energy Union** are demanding \$180,00 a year for a four-day week, pay to walk from a car park, and a \$15-a-week mobile phone allowance. But **AGL Energy** warns that the demands from workers at its Loy Yang power plant and coal mine, in the Latrobe Valley, could lead to higher electricity prices.

Workers have rejected an offer of a 21.5 per cent pay rise over the next four years and are threatening to take industrial action as per *The Herald Sun*.

JUSTICE & POLICE

More Uniforms

The Victorian Government has announced an increase of 500 new front line police within two years. There has been an 8 per cent increase in crime in Victoria in recent years. The Police Union wants a larger increase, but will not get it at this stage. Your Editor wonders why the police do not seem to be focusing in certain

necessary places, in particular drugs (including ice).

Who profit from wins?

More small businesses could be able to pursue litigation against companies, banks and suppliers if lawyers were able to share the risk and winnings on lawsuits, according to the **Law Institute of Victoria**.

But the proposal has been slammed by the Victorian legal services commissioner **Michael McGarvie** who said it could annihilate the principle, enforced by uniform profession legislation, that legal costs should be reasonable and proportionate to a client's needs.

'We should not adopt a flawed and cynical device for overcharging as an excuse for giving people access to the courts'.

Introducing success fees for lawyers is one of the 104 recommendations in a **LIV** submission to the Victorian government's access to justice inquiry. It was also recommended in a position paper released by **LIV**, which represents 19,000 members of the profession. **Marianna Papadakis** wrote for *The Age*.

Cops in Danger

Simon Brown-Greaves, a former **Victoria Police** psychologist, said the treats of ice, terrorism and other perils meant members were more likely than ever to face a critical incident in their career. **Brown-Greaves** who now holds senior positions in private industry, spoke at a Melbourne forum to support police and their family members who had gone through critical incidents. He said it was vital new recruits were prepared early in their careers for what might lie ahead.

The police culture needed to ensure officers were willing to ask for help and educate them about the extreme pressure and stress they might feel and how those factors could affect them, he said in *The Herald Sun*.

Bravo! 100-year-old wins

Norm Bravo, age 101, appeared before the **Broadmeadows Magistrates' Court**, prepared to represent himself and argue the \$960 in traffic infringements **Moonee Valley Council** wanted to pay him were not his responsibility, given the fines were clocked up by another driver

Bravo decided at age 97 to stop driving and in 2014 sold his prized Hyundai to a man who racked up a series of traffic infringements across Melbourne. Because the registration papers were not transferred until months after the sale, the infringement notices went to the **Bravos**, and eventually **Moonee Valley** had **Bravo** attend court.

Bravo hopes that **Melbourne, Manningham, and Port Phillip** councils will now settle things before he is due in court in Melbourne the same month he will turn 101, as reported in *The Age*.

Row Over Female Firefighters

The **Metropolitan Fire Brigade** and the **United Firefighters** faced off in the Federal Court over the union's bid to block contentious changes to selection criteria encouraging more female recruits. The hard line from the state and national secretary **Peter Marshal** has been criticised by a large firefighter's union in NSW that split from **Marshal's** main union. Just over 3 per cent of firefighters in Australia are women. In NSW it is about 5 per cent but the union wants it higher. Central to the dispute in Victoria are

changes meaning candidates who pass all written, physical and mental exams will no longer be judged on score alone, but will also have their gender considered, as reported in *The Age*.

A Hoon Jump Start

Hoons with sob stories are persuading merciful magistrates to return cars from impound yards and waive costs, despite frightening driving. Since anti-hoon laws came into effect in 2006, at least 828 hoons have come up with "hardship" stories to convince courts to release their cars. **Victoria Police** also have the power to hand the keys back, but have only done so in 10 cases according to *The Herald Sun*.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

McMansions Blight

The proliferation of "McMansions" replacing traditional homes in Melbourne's eastern suburbs has led to a council calling for new rules to protect the local amenity. The **City of Boroondara** has been swamped with complaints from residents about street-scapes being changed by French-provincial style and Georgian-style mansions that dominate blocks.

These houses, in suburbs such as Balwyn, Kew, Camberwell and Canterbury, are favoured by people of Chinese origin and investors who don't want gardens but consider ostentatious architecture as a sign of wealth. Boroondara mayor **Jim Parke** has written to residents acknowledging their concern over the trend of established homes being demolished and replaced by big, modern houses "often referred to as McMansions".

But **Parke** said the council was powerless to act on most, because the vast majority of residential sites were subjected to the state building regulations that did not require approval of councils. **Boroondara Residents Action Group** president **Jack Roach**, who lives in Canterbury, said some streets had been completely transformed by mock Georgian and French provincial housing as reported in *The Herald Sun*.

Clean Up Your Mess

Lord mayor **Robert Doyle** has called on courts to force all vandals found guilty of graffiti to clean tags from Melbourne's streets. **Cr Doyle** said Melbourne needed to follow New York City's tough stance to crack down on spray-paint stupidity. There should be a tightening of laws whereby people could be charged for carrying spray cans if an intent to make graffiti can be established, as reported in *The Herald Sun*.

Council Censors Nude Art

Graffiti of nude women in Melbourne's internationally renowned **Hosier Lane** has been censored. **Melbourne City Council** contractors covered up the women's breasts and genital areas – just after they were painted by graffiti artist **Lucksux** according to *The Herald Sun*. Perhaps he copied the nice young lady in Young & Jacksons.

MELBOURNE

At Last.

The \$100 million redevelopment of **Flinders Street Station** will start within weeks when the leaking roof and crumbling façade is repaired, as per *The Herald Sun*. Premier **Andrews** revealed Australian company **Built** had won the contract for the package of works, scheduled to be finished in 2018.

Eat, Drink Up. Late

Lord Mayor Robert Doyle is supporting a push for extended drinking hours, as some bars call for 24 hour liquor licenses. Cr Doyle supports a partial extension of opening hours into the early morning at smaller venues and those serving food.

All night public transport was changing the way the city worked at the weekend, and Cr Doyle said the city needed to prepare for extended hours "and move towards a real 24 hour city". In the city, 275 venues serve alcohol, of which about 120 are licensed to trade past 1am. Melbourne's push to open up the city is in stark contrast with the approach being taken in Sydney, where lockout laws prevent venues admitting patrons after 1.30am or serving alcohol after 3am as published in *The Herald Sun*.

Sydney's War: another perspective

Which is worse: Sydney's overbearing regulations, or the human waste littering the sidewalks of San Francisco? It's no laughing matter.

Especially in the technology sector, where there is a fierce battle for talent under way globally. By now you have probably read the blistering essay by one of Australia's most successful internet entrepreneurs, **Freelancer** chief executive officer **Matt Barrie**, about Sydney's lockout laws, and the damaging impact they have had on the city's nightlife as reported in *The Australian*.

Where?

The Lord Mayor also suggests that the Paris End of Collins Street is no longer the Paris End of Collins Street. The Editor hopes he is not supporting any competition further down the street. It's interesting to reflect on who might own the name of Paris End apart from one of the good coffee shops.

Hold on, not just Oldies

Melbourne's \$300 million fleet of so-called "supertrams" must be overhauled to fix safety flaws that topple passengers during acceleration and braking, a secret report reveals. A review of the hi-tech Dandenong-built trams has identified a host of problems which are contributing to passengers slipping, tripping and falling at alarming rates.

The *Herald Sun* used Freedom of Information laws to obtain a copy of a report on **E Class Trams** commissioned by **Public Transport Victoria**. Independent reviewer **Interfleet Pty Ltd** found the state-of-the-art tram was the worst performing model among Melbourne's tram fleet for passenger falls.

Shower Bus Refreshes The Soul

The corner of Collins and Swanston streets, near high-end fashion boutiques and hotels but also the sandy expanse of City Square, a place where homelessness services meet with rough sleepers is where the mobile shower bus has been operating since December.

A bus donated by the **Ventura Bus Company** has been entirely re-furbished to accommodate two shower cubicles, water tanks big enough for 40 hot showers a day and a changing area. At the moment, about 15 people use it each session. *The Age*.

Open Plains Zoo

For lions, the best parties are marked by feasting on beef thigh-bones and rolling around in giraffe poo. Well, at least that's what lioness

Nilo and veteran pride member **Tombo** enjoyed while celebrating their birthdays at the **Werribee Open Plains Zoo**. The pair, surrounded by **Nilo's** three cubs and other family members, spent a lazy afternoon pawing at festive boxes filled with treats, covering themselves in giraffe poo and soaking up sunshine on the sandy plains of their enclosure.

The event was organized by keepers for first-time mum **Nilo's** fourth birthday and **Tombo's** 20th. It's a huge milestone. In the wild they typically live for eight to 10 years, so he is a very elderly gentleman" **Hobbs** said. He was born in **Philadelphia Zoo** and spent some time in **Auckland**, as well as **Melbourne Zoo** before coming to Werribee... He leads a very full and healthy life," as told by *The Herald Sun*.

We are One.

As more appalling violence in the CBD showed again, the influx from Sudan and Somalia in recent years is presenting fresh challenges daily. We're seeing some frightening consequences.

While many young African-born people have settled into our way of life, making a go of it at school, university and work, a growing minority of angry young men are turning to binge drinking and crime gangs, and causing the sort of mayhem we saw when the predominantly Sudanese **Apex** gang fought the **Islander 23** gang, according to the *Herald Sun*.

EVENTS

Run For The Kids

More than 27,000 Melbournians dug deep, out on the running track and into their hip pockets, to raise \$1.7million to help the state's sick children. Former marathon champion **Steve Moneghetti**, race director for the 11th **Herald Sun CityLink Run For The Kids** said he was blown away by the enthusiasm as covered by *The Herald Sun*.

Be Qik

John Cleese is opening his stage version of *Fawlty Towers* in Australia, saying he believed audiences here would be more welcoming than those in Britain. The British media "dislike me very much". In Melbourne, **Cleese** said local actor **Stephen Hall** would fill his shoes as **Basil Fawlty**. Sydney actor **Blazey Best** will play **Sybil**. *Fawlty Towers* will be at the **Comedy Theatre** from October 26 to November 13.

Win Twice as Much for Nico

Nico Rosberg has conquered the **Australian Grand Prix** for a second time before a jubilant crowd of more than 90,000. In a drama filled day at Albert Park, **Mercedes** finished first and second as Formula One thrills and spills saw the 21st Grand Prix in Melbourne celebrated in style. A spectacular smash and lucky escape for Spanish ace **Fernando Alonso** left the crowd gasping as per *The Herald Sun*.

Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show

Ian Barker's won the floral project *Reflection*, at annual **The Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show**, at the Exhibition Building.

Our Attracting City

Melbourne's love affair with major events has lined the pockets of Victorian businesses by generating almost \$1.3 billion in a single month. March is the city's busiest time, hosting several major events and festivals. **Moomba** and the **Melbourne Food and Wine, Fashion** and

Comedy Festivals were expected to draw at least 2.5 million people and boost the city's economy by at least \$60 million.

The **Formula One Grand Prix** also brought an estimated \$1.2 billion into the state. March 20 was the busiest day on the network, with people shuttled to and from the **Grand Prix, Melbourne Flower and Garden Show** and the *Herald Sun* **Citylink Run For The Kids**.

There was also a soccer match at **AAMI Park**, the **Arnold Classic**, Victoria's **Multicultural Festival** and a popular dinosaur exhibition at Melbourne Museum, according to *The Herald Sun*.

Stop Start

Plans to launch Australia's biggest start-up conference in Melbourne have stalled, embarrassing the State government. Innovation Minister **Philip Dalidakis** announced the popular **StartCon** had been snatched from Sydney in October, lured with \$1 million in funds. He admitted it had failed to get off the ground in Victoria and would go ahead at Sydney's **Randwick** racecourse as reported in the *Herald Sun*. **Dalidakis** said the event would be held in Melbourne next year and no taxpayer funds had yet been spent on it.

MEDIA, MULTIMEDIA & IT

Reality TV

Two men killed in an ultra-light plane crash in Victoria's north were filming for the Vietnamese TV version of **The Amazing Race**. Melbourne passenger pilot **Ian Cook** and passenger **Quoc Huong Vu**, a Sydney-based camera man. Nose first into a field as it was coming in to land at Yarrowonga.

PLANNING

Boom's Busted!?

The **Australian Population Research Institute** said that years of misguided planning policies coupled with a huge immigration intake, had resulted in a social catastrophe for ordinary people as per *The Herald Sun*. 'It has disenfranchised the younger generation from home ownership and consigned the less affluent to remote outer suburbia and to a lifetime of rental bondage'.

Mayor Slams 'Dog Boxes In The Sky'

Melbourne Lord Mayor **Robert Doyle** has lashed property developers for pursuing high-rise projects that overwhelm the central business district with cramped apartments. In a strong speech to the **Urban Development Institute of Australia** conference in Adelaide, **Doyle** likened some high-rise residential towers to 'dog boxes in the sky. You know I am pro-development, but some of the developments that have been put before us are shameful' as per *The Age*.

Cloud-like

A ninety-three metre tower to be built behind the **Hotel Windsor** will have a calming effect on the heritage icon, says one of the designers. **John Denton** from architects **Denton Corker Marshall** has defended the 27 level glass tower against claims it will ruin the precinct's amenity. 'We were just trying to create a tower that was very calm and a bit curtain like, that cut the heritage building off a bit from all the mess of towers that are behind it. It doesn't read like it's part of the heritage building', according to *The Herald Sun*.

Housing Drought Could Be Eased

More than 82,700 residential properties, 4.8 per cent of Melbourne's housing stock, are empty, while many people struggle to afford to buy or even rent accommodation. The study, **Speculative Vacancies**, by tax reform advocate **Prosper Australia**, estimates that 82,724 Melbourne properties are unoccupied according to *The Herald Sun*.

Tower Values Topple

Planning controls have halved the value of proposed CBD towers. New height and ratio rules were set last September after concerns were raised that new buildings were too high and overwhelming streetscapes. **Nathan Theor**, new business director for construction heavyweight **Probuild**, said the controls had slammed a brake on development of inner-city apartments according to *The Herald Sun*.

Palace needs second life

Melbourne's **Palace Theatre** should be saved from demolition because of its cultural significance as a popular entertainment venue, a high profile historian has told the planning tribunal set to decide the building's fate. Professor **Graeme Davison** also questioned a 2014 **Heritage Council** decision not to include the theatre on Victoria's heritage register. He said the former **Metro Nighclub** had been incorrectly identified as an original cinema, when it was most likely the last surviving "expressly built" vaudeville theatre in Melbourne according to *The Age*.

Governments target energy efficiency

The federal and state governments plan to beef up the resources being provided to a landmark national project working to improve energy efficiency in new buildings and renovations following fresh revelations of widespread non-compliance with current standards across the industry.

Last year the **Council of Australian Governments Energy Council** agreed to a **National Energy Productivity Plan** to develop policy to reduce energy per unit of gross domestic product in Australia by 40 percent by 2030. As a result it is supporting the **National Energy Efficient Building Project**, which is working to improve energy efficiency in new buildings, renovations and additions under the **National Construction Code**.

The South Australian government is managing the project on behalf of the federal government and all states and territories. Last year, a damning review by infrastructure consultancy **Pitt & Sherry and Swinburne University**, which was the centre piece of phase on of the **NEEBP** project, found there was a "pervasive culture of mediocre energy performance across the Australian building industry"

Now phase two of the project focused on quantifying the extent to which the problems are occurring, has found that in many areas, compliance could not be measured due to lack of information provided in the development approval documentation for properties as reported in *The Australian*.

Market overshadowing

A city council move to allow more high-rise buildings near **Queen Victoria Market** has raised concerns about open spaces being overshadowed and the loss of the market's character. More than 150 submissions regarding proposed planning changes have been received, including a claim that the council has

engaged in a "land grab" to help fund the \$250 million redevelopment of the city.

The **City of Melbourne** wants to rezone part of the precinct so that apartment and office towers can be built closer to the market. Under the plan, the main car park on **Queen Street** would become a green plaza and streets would be redesigned to give cyclists and pedestrians better access as per *The Herald Sun*.

Eddie's Etihad Plan

I hate to rain on **Eddie McGuire's** parade, but do we really need a new 60,000 seat footy ground in Melbourne? **Eddie** wants to knock down the 16-years-young **Etihad stadium**, sell the land to a developer, and build another venue opposite the **MCG** where the **Hisense Arena** now sits. The proposed location leaves a lot to be desired. Right now two tram lines – Wellington Parade and Swan St, two small train stations, Jolimont and Richmond, and Australia's most crowded arterial, Punt Rd, service the **MCG**, **AAMI Park**, **Rod Laver Arena**, **Olympic Park** and **Hisense**.

On evenings when footy, rugby and a concert occur simultaneously, the traffic is already bedlam. Adding yet another high-capacity stadium to the mix will make access a complete disaster. In contrast, **Etihad** is already built and has the advantage of being serviced by our biggest train station, **Southern Cross**, as well as four separate sets of tram tracks according to *The Herald Sun*.

Toll Bonanza

As part of an unsolicited proposal to build the \$5.5 billion second crossing from Melbourne's west, **Transurban** has negotiated a deal including an extension on its existing **Citylink** tolling concession for 10 to 12 years. The concession was due to expire in 2035. Under the **Transurban** bid the cost of the project is to be split three ways between tolls on the new road, federal and state government contributions, and the extension of the existing **CityLink** concession as reported in *The Age*

Row brews as hotel saved

Melbourne's legendary **Hotel Windsor** has been saved after the owner won a bid to extend the permit for a controversial \$330 million redevelopment. But the debate is raging over the plan to build a shiny 27 level tower behind the 19th century 'Duchess of Spring St' which itself will be largely restored.

Halim said the key heritage aspects of **The Windsor**, including the staircase, ballroom, foyer and historic suites would be retained and restored. Hotel rooms would be improved and new restaurants and bars would open there, according to *The Herald Sun*.

Connecting Clever Folk

The **University of Melbourne** has moved ahead with a key component of its innovation strategy, shortlisting two heavy-weight developers and a consortium as potential partners for a major overhaul of the old **Melbourne Women's Hospital** site in Carlton. The **Grollo** family, **Grocon**, has been short-listed alongside development giant **Lend Lease** to build, operate and ultimately transfer the 8500sq site back to the university.

Julie Wells, **Melbourne University's** vice-principal (policy and projects) said the precinct would be focused on technology, innovation and support research collaboration with the university.

But the Innovation precinct, which is formally known as **Carlton Connect**, may still be built by the university if **Grocon**, **Lend Lease** and the **CCJ** consortium do not submit acceptable bids. **Dr Wells** said the university anticipated a total lettable floor space of around 50,000 square meters, and while she declined to name a development value for the project said it would be in the "hundreds of millions of dollars".

This precinct is central to our strategy which is built around increasing the amount of collaboration with industry and end users of our research, creating an employment opportunities for students and recognizing an increasing number of students are going to be self-starters. We need this kind of collaborative space to develop these skills and meet the need of that cohort.

Meanwhile, Melbourne University is part of a consortium alongside several other universities and the **CSIRO** vying for the right to redevelop the White Bay Power station in Sydney with an innovation and technology hub, as reported in *The Australian*.

SPORT

Lights Out on Move to Shift Race

Victorians have slammed the brakes on the idea of an **Australian Grand Prix** night race with widespread opposition to **Formula One** being staged under lights in Melbourne. A national survey of sentiment towards the **Grand Prix** has found almost a quarter of Australians are against a Melbourne night race and just one in five supporting the move, according to *The Herald Sun*.

Sitting on the fence

The **Melbourne Cricket Club** was soon to decide if cyclone fencing would surround the **MCG** for the football season, as per *The Herald Sun*. No cyclone but as many security airports as at an airport. Yuk.

Our Summer Lives

Life Saving Victoria is hoping to offer a financial lifeline to surf clubs needing extensive infrastructure upgrades. Surf lifesaving club presidents from Torquay, Jan Juc and Anglesea have directly indicated their desire to have ageing clubhouses expanded or refurbished, as reported in *The Herald Sun*.

Nearby, evidently the Portarlington Pool, which featured on our cover an issue or two ago, has found the cash flow to continue to provide life saving education and training to the local youngsters, and oldsters

TRANSPORT - PORTS

Port Kitty Poser

Major projects funded from the \$6 billion forecast to be raised by leasing Melbourne's port must form the bedrock for long-lasting economic growth, industry leaders say. Industry chiefs hailed the bipartisan accord on the **Port of Melbourne's** lease legislation, following nearly two years of debate.

The government has committed the bulk of the proceeds to removing 50 level crossings and starting work on the **Melbourne Metro Rail** network. **Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (formerly VECCI)** chief **Mark Stone** agreed those projects would prove "vital" to the state's competitiveness, helping to cut congestion, as per *The Herald Sun*.

Going one, going twice

The long-term lease of the **Port of Melbourne** might happen this financial year as parliament

has now signed off on the asset sale, Treasurer **Tim Pallas** has conceded, as a stalemate with the opposition was negotiated to success. The government and opposition had been locked in talks to sell the port, with the Coalition refusing to move on its compromise position of no more than a 15-year compensation clause.

The government said a 15 year compensation period would devalue the asset and strip value out of Victoria, especially given a new port is only going to be needed, at earliest, in 30 years. Shadow Treasurer **Michael O'Brien** said the Coalition had moved to a 15 year compensation clause, from blanket opposition to compensation. **Pallas** attacked the politicization of **Infrastructure Australia**, saying it changed its view depending on which party was in government.

"Everybody has an opinion about infrastructure, everybody fights over infrastructure. It appears the business case (for **East-West Link**) has not been read by Infrastructure Australia because they seem to think that it will increase and improve flows into the city," **Pallas** said, reported on by *The Age*.

Shuffling the Docks

Australia's only combined ports and rail operator, **Asciano**, will be broken up as part of a protracted \$9 billion takeover battle spearheaded by logistics group **Qube**, chaired by water-front warrior **Chris Corrigan**, has also tapped investors for \$800 million in new capital to help fund its part of the deal. **Asciano's** board formally accepted a \$9.05 billion buyout from **Qube**, Canada's **Brookfield Infrastructure Group** and a string of international private and state-backed investment funds, according to *The Herald Sun*.

TRANSPORT - AIR

Virgin Exit...

Virgin Australia could emerge as a takeover target from shareholders **Etihaad Airways** or **Singapore Airlines** after **Air New Zealand** flagged its intention to exit the carrier through the sale of its \$311 million holding as per *The Australian Business Review*.

TRANSPORT - RAIL

Myki Penalties Soar

Public Transport ticket penalties increased by almost 100,000 in a single year with beefed-up enforcement, and some commuters are now arguing the system is not fair. There were 158,607 public transport ticket infringement notices issued in 2013-14; this jumped to 257,873 tickets and penalty fares in the last year.

The state is now reviewing the ticketing enforcement regime, including the penalty fares after concerns were raised by the **Public Transport Ombudsman**, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Skyrail Lacked Consultation

The plan to elevate rail lines in Melbourne's south-east as a way of removing nine level crossings between Caulfield and Dandenong lacked a proper process to involve the community, planners have told the State Government.

It comes as the head of Infrastructure Victoria, the government body created to devise a 30 year plan for the state's infrastructure needs, said his organisation had not been asked about the plan.

The Victorian branch of the **Planning Institute**, which represents the state's urban planners, has said there was a failure to successfully engage with the residents who will be worst effected. **Level Crossing Removal Authority** chief executive **Kevin Devlin** said community consultation had begun in April, through public information sessions and information stands at shopping strips, train stations and community events.

Devlin said more than 300,000 newsletters were distributed that indicated the rail-over-road options were being considered. These had "included images of elevated design options", according to *The Age*.

Bill to buy rail homes

Anger over Premier **Andrew's** sky rail plan has forced his government to offer to purchase upset residents' homes in a \$100 million buyback plan. Public transport minister, **Jacinta Allan**, is to reveal the expensive plan. **Allan** said residents directly along the railway line had until June 30 to decide whether they would stay or take up the offer to go.

She said the final cost of voluntary acquisitions would be absorbed by the sky rail project's \$1.66 billion budget. About 135 home and unit owners are likely to be eligible. The sale of all properties at current market rates would cost about \$100 million, according to *The Herald Sun*.

Headaches spread to country school students

The effects of **V/Line's** problems have spread well beyond passengers travelling to and from Melbourne. **Trafalgar High School**, West Gippsland, draws more than 300 students from

as far afield as **Drouin, Warragul, Traralgon, Morwell and Moe**.

An efficient train service has operated for more than 15 years, carrying students back and forth. For some reason, **Vlline** has now replaced the train with buses, but not nearly enough of them. Surely it is possible to run a **Vlocity** train in peak times between **Pakenham and Traralgon**, unless there is an undisclosed problem with boom gates south-east of **Pakenham**. *Letter to The Age*.

Parking, toilets among main worries

It comes as the worst train stations in the state have been voted as **Aircraft, Hallam and Lalor**. **Werribee** was voted the worst train line as part of the RACV and Leader Newspapers' On Track survey. Almost 18,000 Victorians rated stations and services.

The lack of car parking remains one of the biggest bug-bars for travellers, along with personal safety and lack of toilets. The average train station rating was 6.95 out of a possible 10 as per *The Herald Sun*.

Station Time Wait

A suburban train station that had a multi-million-dollar upgrade four years ago is still not operating as a working station, locals claim as reported in *The Age*. The 157 year old **Diggers Rest** station received a long overdue facelift, with a new PSO building, extended platforms and new toilets, in 2012.

PSOs have yet to start work, while anyone needing a comfort break is forced to cross the road to a nearby café as the toilets are permanently closed. The station can resemble a ghost town, with the ticket office closed since October 2012.

A sign on the window informs commuters that no Metcards will be sold after Monday, October 8 (2012). In a November letter to Melton council chief executive **Kel Tori** seen by the *Herald Sun*, public transport minister **Jacinta Allan** said the facilities would remain closed until passenger numbers increased.

Lack of federal funds stalls trains

Victoria is not ruling out building the \$10.9 billion **Melbourne Metro Rail** project without federal funding, after walking away empty-handed from a meeting with the federal government. Victorian Transport Minister **Jacinta Allan** flew to Canberra to negotiate for \$4billion to help build the rail project, which is seen as vital to coping with the increasing capacity of the network.

Elderly At Risk of Tram Trips

Transport researchers fear an ageing population

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could become particularly vulnerable to injury on trams that are larger, more crowded, and in mixed traffic conditions in which they are prone to sudden braking. **Yarra Trams** and **Monash University** have begun to investigate how to reduce the risk of injury among the elderly, including modifying current tram design.

\$2b For new trams

The Victorian Government was ordering 28 new seven-car trains, on top of a previous order for 37 trains. A competitive tender process including a 50 per cent local build requirement is under way to build the trains, with three consortia in the running for the public-private partnership as per *The Herald Sun*.

Signal Chaos

Melbourne's train network was thrown into turmoil during peak hour with major delays across every line. Thousands of commuters were left stranded on over-crowded platforms after a signal fault shut down the city loop to all services for three hours in mid-March..

Delays hit the Alamein, Belgrave, Craigieburn, Cranbourne, Frankston, Glen Waverley, Gurstbridge, Lilydale, Pakenham, Sandringham, South Morang, Upfield, Werribee and Williamstown lines as reported in *The Herald Sun*.

More Train Chaos

The **Rail Tram and Bus Union** is pushing for for **Metro Trains** infrastructure workers to get the same 17 per cent pay increase over four years it won for train drivers and ticket inspectors last year as reported in the *Herald Sun*. That deal was a cash bonanza for some train drivers, who by the end of the agreement will reap more than \$140,000. But **Metro Trains** is so far offering its infrastructure workforce a 2 per cent pay rise over four years.

Heaping further pressure on embattled public transport minister **Jacinta Allan**, yet more rail pain could be in store for regional commuters: the union's negotiations with **V/Line** over an enterprise bargaining agreement have also hit a stalemate. The hit list of action it intends to roll out includes an unlimited number of one-, four-, 24-, and 48-hour work stoppages, bans on roster changes, bans on deliveries of materials for works, and overtime bans.

TRANSPORT - ROAD

Plan to replace fuel taxes with user pays

The **Australian Infrastructure Plan** calls for the creation of a national transport market,

completion of national energy, water and telecoms markets, more user charges and a radical upheaval in the way governments plan and fund infrastructure.

Privatisation of the **National Broadband Network** and State Energy companies in Queensland, Western Australia and NSW and a national freight plan are also needed for the nation to cope with rapid growth in population and Asian trade, the plan says.

Infrastructure Australia chairman **Mark Birrell** said the reforms could boost economic activity by \$39 billion, nearly \$3000 per household, by 2040 and keep cities liveable and productive for their inhabitants. Australia needed an "ambitious plan" with a population policy to deal with the way the four biggest capitals – Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth are growing helter-skelter while Adelaide and Hobart languish.

The plan names two national high priority projects, the widening of the Tullamarine Freeway road link to Melbourne Airport and the Perth Freight Link project – a long list of high priority 'initiatives'. **Birrell** said the preservation of a corridor had greatly reduced the cost of Melbourne's **Eastlink** toll road and lamented the lack of long term infrastructure planning and presentation of business cases for major projects by state governments in recent years.

"The big picture is we need both road and rail but the three largest investments in Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane will be in new metropolitan rail transport systems."

The plan calls for a national system of heavy vehicle charging for trucks to start within five years in place of the inefficient and inequitable array of existing vehicle and fuel taxes to make more efficient use of roads. Passenger car users should also have to pay according to road usage but a longer lead time of ten years with trials and a public inquiry are needed to gauge the social implications and transitional challenges of moving to user charging for all vehicles. **Birrell** said an independent driving regulator and more competition and privatization of urban water suppliers was also needed to complete the national water market according to *The Australian*.

Pit Stops

Flashy toilet and free barista-made coffee were the latest weapons in the war on the Easter road toll. They featured six pit stops being set up by the **Transport Accident Commission** in its latest initiative: Rochester, Maryborough,

Marong, Euroa, Bacchus Marsh, and Drouin, according to *The Herald Sun*.

Safety Plan cyclical

Motorcyclists riding in shorts and thongs should be fined, a bike riders group says. A helmet is the only protective gear motorcyclists are legally required to wear. But the **Independent Riders Group's Damien Codognotto** said police should have the power to pull over bikers in inappropriate gear according to *The Herald Sun*.

Finally, a road to the future

Briefly, the two things wrong with **Citylink** was the way it locked out competition, even from the existing road network with those so-called "traffic-calming" obstructions to dissuade drivers from using other roads; and the way it built in a monopoly not just on the original mandate but all expansions and extensions to it, says *The Herald Sun*.

Red Lights Cut Traffic Time

Traffic is flowing more smoothly on major Melbourne roads after **VicRoads** tweaked the traffic light sequences at hundreds of intersections. The cuts to travel times were achieved in part through the use of blue tooth technology to track vehicle movements across the city and identify time-wasting bottlenecks at some of the most congested arterial roads.

Major traffic routes where peak-hour travel times/have been cut in recent months including Dandenong Road, the Ringwood Bypass, Nepean Highway, Blackburn Road, Burke Road, Toorak Road and Springvale Road, as per the *Herald Sun*.

Get Trucks off Street

Hundreds of truck drivers are flouting road bans in inner city suburbs as frustrated residents want fines increased. **VicRoads** slapped \$152 fines on a record 436 truck drivers last year for breaking curfews on almost 50 Melbourne roads.

The number of drivers fined has nearly doubled in four years, and in the first two months of this year another 98 truckies have been busted. Last week, several semi-trailers were caught flouting the morning curfew on Somerville Rd as per *The Herald Sun*.

Link Cash Unlockable?

Money set aside for the **East West Link** toll road could be unlocked for a major upgrade of the Monash Freeway, ending the deadlock between the state and federal governments. A group of federal Liberal MPs is lobbying the Federal Government to release the \$1.5 billion,

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which was frozen after the state government dumped plans for the toll road, and redirect "a significant portion" to fix congestion on one of Melbourne's busiest roads as per *The Herald Sun*.

Freeway Gridlock

Melbourne went into traffic meltdown recently after two separate crashes involving motorcyclists forced the closure of multiple lanes on the **West Gate Bridge** and **West Gate Freeway**. Hundreds of frustrated motorists were forced to sit in their car for several hours as they waited for four outbound lanes of the bridge and three inbound lanes on the freeway to reopen according to *The Herald Sun*.

Transurban favours 'more meaningful' road reforms

Toll road operator **Transurban** has cautioned against radical proposals being considered by the Federal Government to tap future surges in land values from infrastructure projects. The ASX-listed company says the proposals could distract from "more meaningful" reforms to impose direct charges on motorists to raise billions of dollars needed for roads to bust the congestion that is expected to cost Australia's largest cities \$53 billion a year by 2031.

In a submission to a parliamentary inquiry ordered by Major Projects Minister **Paul Fletcher**, **Transurban** chief executive **Scott Charlton** is pushing for a shift to a user-pays model for the roads, despite an increasing focus on "value capture" mechanisms to fund projects, as reported in *The Australian*.

Trapped in a Carmageddon

Roads minister **Luke Donnellan** should open his heart to motorists and stop charging them to sit in one of the worst traffic jams since the **West Gate Bridge** and **Citylink** opened. Motorists surely have a right to expect a service they are paying for to be delivered. If the tolls are not lifted, the minister may find himself inundated with demands for compensation.

Waiving the tolls is a decision that **Donnellan** may have to take in consultation with **Citylink** operator **Transurban**, which is the owner of **CityLink**. **TransUrban** has the right to toll the road system until 2034 after winning the \$1.8 billion contract from the Victorian government. **Citylink** then reverts to government ownership according to *The Herald Sun*.

Road Rage

Despairing motorists face worsening gridlocks as works ramp up on the widening of the **Tullamarine Freeway-Citylink** corridor. Drivers yesterday faced 77 minute crawls to travel just 14km on the West Gate Freeway between the Western Ring Road and the Kings Way exit – usually just a 20-minute trip according to *The Herald Sun*.

WELFARE

State Land for Low Cost Homes Urged

A list on the Department of Treasury and Finance website shows dozens for properties are being readied for sale. Housing groups say the state government should consider offering some of the properties to social housing providers to tackle homelessness and help low-income earners struggling to break into the private rental market.

The sites include former schools, police stations, departmental buildings, healthcare sites and research facilities. They include more than a dozen sites in Footscray. The list

features Crown and freehold land in Melbourne and regional Victoria as reported in *The Age*.

SOCIETY

Portrait Of An Abuser

Family violence has a face and we now know what it looks like: an unemployed, 34-year-old Australian born man. The **Royal Commission into Family Violence**, a vast compendium of more than 2000 pages and eight volumes, draws on a wealth of data about the perpetrators, and victims, of family violence, collected over more than a decade according to *The Age*.

WOOF!

Controversial dangerous dog laws forcing councils to confiscate and kill pit bulls should be overhauled in Victoria, according to a long-awaited parliamentary report. The inquiry into the legislative and regulatory framework relating to restricted breed dogs made 31 recommendations including calling for the government to scrap legislation that resulted in scores of dogs being put on death row.

The recommendations include: Allowing pit bulls to be registered but place other restrictions on the owners of restricted breeds; greater penalties for owners of restricted-breed dogs who do not register their dogs and ending the requirement for non-racing greyhounds to be muzzled in public according to *The Herald Sun*.

Blueprint to Defeat a Scourge

The state government unveiled the sweeping plan for an overhaul of laws, bureaucracy, policing and social services, all to save the lives of women and children. Responding to the nations' first **Royal Commission into Family Violence**, the government promised to implement all 227 recommendations, likely to cost billions of dollars.

A special tax or levy is being considered to help fund the changes, which police said would immediately require an extra 500 officers in Victoria.

The *Herald Sun* can also reveal that extra measures to clamp down on perpetrators, such as a dangerous offenders register and a specific family violence offence – neither part of the royal commission report – are still being actively pursued by the government as per *The Herald Sun*

Highlights from the 25 recommendations include:-

1. Establish a central information point fed by Victoria Police.
2. Provide funding for specialist family violence support services to deal with current crisis in demand within 12 months.
3. More money for after hours response services with capacity for face-to-face help within 12 months.
4. Offer rent and mortgage subsidies and safety devices for victims wanting to stay in or return to their homes within two years.
5. Phase out communal refuges in favour of private, safe and accessible accommodation. Include a capital fund to assist service providers by 31 December 2020.
6. Deploy mobile technology like iPads to frontline police to collect statement and evidence within three years.
7. Investigate family violence reforms, possibly including a levy or tax. *The Herald Sun*

Move Family Thugs Out Of The Home

A radical ideal to put family violence perpetrators in public housing so women and children can stay at home, backed by security, will be examined. A senior government source said moving one person would cost less than moving the rest of a family. But giving taxpayer-funded housing to thugs is likely to be controversial. It does recommend developing alternative accommodation for violent adolescents in the home, along with therapy.

Commissioner **Marcia Neave** recommended as a priority a 'housing blitz' to unclog family violence refuges and crisis housing as reported in *The Herald Sun*

Domestic Violence Register

Proposals for a specific crime of domestic violence and a register of dangerous domestic violence offenders were not adopted by the royal commission. Nevertheless, both items remain on the table, government sources said in *The Herald Sun*.

Desal Taps Set To Open

Victoria's desalination plant will be turned on for the first time with the water expected to start flowing next summer. The State government announced yesterday it would place an order for 50 gigalitres of water.

Turning the tap on the Wonthaggi site will cost the state an extra \$27million, on top of the \$607 million paid each year to keep the plant ready for use.

Household water bills are predicted to rise by \$12 as per *The Herald Sun*.

North-South Pipeline

More next month

VALE

Battye, Don, aged 77, writer and producer. **Byrne**, June, aged 80. **Chambers**, David. **Collins**, Barbara, aged 95. **Dolan**, John Patrick. **Douglas**, Lionel, Serviceman. **Dowling**, Lindsay, CSIRO Researcher. **Drohan**, Neville Thomas, aged 86, educator. **Ferguson**, Brian James. **Geddes**, Roger Brian.

Hirst, Dr John Bradley, Historian. **Hunstman**, Robin Jean, aged 90. **Ingles**, Olivia, aged 17, jockey. **Sinatra**, Frank Jr, aged 72, musician. **Shandling**, Garry, Aged 66, comedian. **Van der Molen**, Jan, aged 89, Engineer. **West**, Roderick, age 86, educator.

Ballet Pioneer

A pioneer of the Australian classical dance scene in the 1940s, Colac born **Graham Smith** left home to forge a career as an international ballet star in Europe and America. With his brothers **Alistair** and **Robert**, he designed and shaped Australia's first bohemian cafes, the **Arab at Lorne** (where the Editor learned to drink Coffee) and **The Abominable** in Mt Buller, leaving an indelible legacy in Australia's café culture as per *The Age*.

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- ◆ Allow the experience of fresh air and the wind in your face to be pure ecstasy
- ◆ When its in your best interest – practice obedience
- ◆ Let others know when they have invaded your territory
- ◆ Take naps and stretch before rising
- ◆ Run, romp and lay daily
- ◆ Thrive on attention and let people tough you
- ◆ Avoid biting, when a simple growl will do
- ◆ On warm days, stop and lie on your back in the grass
- ◆ On hot days, drink lots of water and lay under a shady tree
- ◆ When you are happy, dance and wag your entire body
- ◆ No matter how often you are scolded, don't buy into the guilt thing and pout... run right back out and make friends
- ◆ Delight in the simple joy of a long walk
- ◆ Eat with gusto and enthusiasm but stop when you have had enough
- ◆ Be loyal
- ◆ Never pretend you are something you are not
- ◆ If what you want lies buried, dig until you find it
- ◆ When someone is having a bad day... be silent, sit close by and nuzzle them gently

*Applying the above lessons to
your life should make it less rough!*



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