

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 Late Autumn 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 been tutoring in Sustainable Infrastructure at the University of Melbourne Engineering School this past few months. A wonderful experience.

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EDITORIAL

A Parliament of the People

Even your Editor is still digging for a precise answer(s) as to why Legislative Council (Upper House) member and Special Minister of State and Leader of the Government in the Legislative Council Gavin Jennings has been voted out of the Council Chamber by his colleagues, for six months, because he did not release to the public some documents relating to certain infrastructure and other projects, some of which related to the activities of the former Coalition government. He will be 'paired off' by the Other Side of the chamber. (that is, one of the opposing party will not vote whilst he is out!) This removal is a most rare occurrence/procedure. It did happen several years ago to a Labor member in the same or a similar way, for a week.

Ethics and a sense of stable and 'appropriate government' are on the Editor's mind and despite various answers in the Coffee shops, and no clear 'media or columnist answers or perspectives, he will dig into a constitutional lawyer or two and some political wisdom, for his next Editorial. Who/which persons made the decision that Jennings could not release the documents? Who else was involved in this Decision.

Nearby, the Victorian Ombudsman, Deborah Glass, OBE, has been focusing through the parliament for help to gather information about the Labor funding issues at the last state election, without success as yet. One might have expected support from the non-Labor side of the Parliament.
More next Edition.

Another HUGE issue is the Victorian Government, in particular the lead of the Premier to give power to the United Fire Fighters Union over the CFA. This issue is a back breaker on several fronts. Most people and most voters are no longer 'country' people but will understand the balance between being over cautious and having two or so or more trucks lined up and ready, versus a sudden outburst of fire and the livestock or grain to be immediately saved, or a couple of horses in a yard or the dogs in their kennels and the family home even the garage and a few lovely trees. Marysville activists might bring this rural knowledge to the clearer understanding of the whole Victorian voting system as it revs up its own particular protest based on that sad history of only several years ago.

Cover. Walking along a Melbourne Street and the photo caught the eye.

Changing House. All readers have phone and email addresses for us. And our address at 14 Collins Street will be forwarded to a Melbourne post office Box, as we settle into a new desk nearby. The building where we have been for twenty years is being revamped, perhaps, by the new owner.
Our Coffee shops will stay the same.

Happy Reading.

FEATURE ITEM

Strong Union Grip Tightens

The **United Fire Fighters Union** wants to take control of the **Country Fire Authority**, a volunteer organization, as it, the **UFU**, presently runs both the **Metropolitan Fire Brigade** and the firefighters within the Department of Environment.

This would give the union power to veto decisions made by **CFA** management and force the **CFA** to have seven paid firefighters at every fire, no matter how small. For any farmer or bush person this is ludicrous and also explains why we often have two trucks in the CBD attend a (possible) fire. The estimated cost Victorian taxpayers at least \$1 billion.

STATE GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS

Premier's Ghost Returns

The Premier's decision to waste \$1.1 billion killing off the **East West Link** has returned to haunt him, with his hand-picked infrastructure advisers listing it as a key project. **Infrastructure Victoria** lists the East West stages one and two as important to 'meet Victoria's infrastructure needs.'

The Premier controversially dumped East West, despite contracts having been signed with the previous Coalition Government. Stage one of the \$17 billion project would have provided a new tunnel connecting the **Eastern Freeway** to **CityLink**, with stage 2 connecting **CityLink** and the **Western Ring Road**. The new report backing East West will be highly embarrassing for the Premier, who set up **Infrastructure Victoria** last year to provide independent advice on the state's infrastructure needs as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Bill a true believer in Dan (Also Letter From Canberra)

The federal Opposition Leader has had a political makeover courtesy of the advertising agency that helped refine **Daniel Andrews'** messages and persona. And Labor's army of volunteers, combined with union true believers, will be used in a similar way to the previous state campaign.

The shift towards direct contact with voters has also been adopted by the Liberals, who changed tactics after the party's 2014 state election loss review identified the need to boost the time spent calling voters and door knocking, as apposed to mail outs.

Liberals have door knocked about 5,000...!.. homes since Easter, and have set up a floor of a CBD office as a call centre and data harvesting hub. Labor will again use its **Campaign Action Network**, and field organisers, headed by ALP assistant state secretary **Stephen Donnelly**, to recruit and train volunteers to spruik the party's message.

The **CAN** operation prior to the Victorian election faces an Ombudsman's probe because of the way it was funded, when state electorate officers paid for by taxpayers were used as field organisers against state parliaments' rules.

Federal electorate officers are not bound by the same rules around the jobs they can perform, however, reports the *Herald Sun*.

Merlino's IT Tiger

Education Minister **James Merlino** has hit out at the mismanagement of another departmental information technology project. The *Herald Sun* revealed that leaked documents showed a 'catastrophic' budget blowout on the **eduPass** program for online staff passwords and accounts.

It was originally estimated to cost \$1.6 million, the budget was then set at \$2.6 million and is now tipped to cost \$4 million.

Merlino said he had asked the secretary of the Education Department to oversee the project and report back to him. The project was supposed to be completed last year but has fallen behind schedule. A leaked internal report said there had been 'failure on all key performance metrics and the project was 'significantly complete.'"

New Chief

The man in charge of a global food company's Asian operations has been chosen to head up Victoria's new tourism and major events body. The *Herald Sun* revealed **Peter Bingeman** has been appointed by the State Government as the inaugural chief executive of **Visit Victoria**.

It comes after the government merged **Tourism Victoria** and the Victorian Major Events Company and set up a new board to run the organisation. **Visit Victoria** chairman **Sir Rod Eddington** welcomed the appointment.

Moving along

Kristen Hilton was appointed as Victoria's new Human Rights Commissioner. Hilton will leave her job as executive director of legal practice at **Victoria Legal Aid**, where she has overseen its \$80 million public interest practice, to take up the new role.

Former commissioner Kate Jenkins, who most recently oversaw the commission's investigation into the entrenched culture of sexism at **Victoria Police**, is now Australia's newly appointed Sex Discrimination Commissioner.

Labor's Not Breathing Easy

The authors of the report into Labor's creative use of electorate offices in the lead-up to the 2014 state election seem to believe that as far as the law is concerned, Victoria's MPs can order their staff to do anything they like.

The report, written by accounting firm **PwC** was commissioned by parliament's audit committee

Now Out

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in the wake of the *Herald Sun's* revelation last September that the Labor Party recruited dozens of young men and women to work on its 2014 campaign but instead of paying them itself, ordered its MPs to put them on their staff as casual electorate officers.

Despite acknowledging that its report had been commissioned in the wake of the reports, **PWC** did not examine whether the claims were true. It makes you wonder why parliament bothered to get them at all. Even so, the report makes interesting reading. It reiterates that parliament's Members Guide made it clear that electorate officers are banned from carrying out party political work reports the *Herald Sun*. Not sure where or why PWC fits into all of this.

Victoria Stands Up for Safe Schools

Hostilities over the **Safe Schools** program have reignited before the election, with Victoria walking away from federal funds to openly defy **Turnbull's** attempts to amend the controversial curriculum, as per the *Sunday Age*.

After declaring Victoria would go it alone to make the program mandatory in every secondary school, State Government has launched a new web page providing access to the original material used to teach students about sexual diversity, rather than watered-down versions produced by the Commonwealth.

Links the Federal Coalition deemed inappropriate for students have been taken down from the site, and placed on a federal government-controlled online portal. But the latest developments have enraged Victoria, with state Education Minister **James Merlino** claiming he wasn't properly consulted before the material was removed, and accusing the Prime Minister of standing 'with the bigots and bullies instead of standing up for vulnerable students'.

FEDERAL

States' plea

Turnbull is spurning state pleas for a \$3.6 billion increase in school funding as he demands premiers accept a divisive tax reform that would give them more power to pay for services, opening a new front in the clash over his radical plan for the Australian federation.

The Prime Minister has antagonised the premiers and chief ministers by offering the less than they sought on hospital funding while rejecting their demands for bigger education payments. In a dramatic move to prepare for the federal election, **Turnbull** is seeking to blunt future attacks from state and territory leaders over a shortage of federal aid, insisting they should embrace a new carve-up of income tax.

Western Australia would have been 33 per cent better off after allowing for inflation, while NSW would have gained nothing and Victoria, Tasmania and South Australia would all have fallen behind by between 3 per cent and 7 per cent. A state tax would raise 80 per cent more per capita in Western Australia than in Tasmania as reported in *The Australian*.

Will the Vow Be Broken?

Shorten's vow to maintain a hard line on border protection is unraveling as three more Victorian candidates are revealed to have threatened mutiny over Labor's asylum seeker policies.

Stephanie Perri is among seven Labor candidates for Victorian seats who, it has now emerged, have pledged to fight their party's current platform, which includes boat turn backs and offshore processing as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

It comes as **Shorten's** campaign for election was again distracted, with Labor recently fumbling over its defence of weekend penalty rates. Labor's campaign has been plagued by internal divisions over asylum seekers.

Lib Turmoil Down South

A 'branch-stacking' row centred on the office of former Defence Minister **Kevin Andrews** has broken out in the Victorian Liberal Party on the eve of the federal election. Andrew's electorate officer had assisted in probing dozens of membership applications in **Andrew's** seat of Menzies.

The claims centre on allegations that **Amania Ananievski** signed up dozens of Macedonians, many of them elderly. It is alleged that in some cases, the potential members did not know or did not understand that they were members of

the Liberal Party. The *Herald Sun* spoke to a relative of a victim who said his mother had been signed up at a meeting of a senior citizens club in Doncaster by **Ananievski** in March.

Private v Public

Government funding to private schools has increased at twice the rate of funding to public schools, a new union analysis of **MySchool** data revealed in *The Age*. **Australian Education Union** federal president **Correna Haythorpe** slammed the Federal Government's plan to scrap the needs-based **Gonski** funding model after 2017.

We Will Pay For It

The Federal Government has opened the door to pumping more money into the **Melbourne Metro Rail Project**, with its own transport minister conceding Victoria deserves a fairer share in the carve-up of infrastructure cash.

Nationals MP **Darren Chester** has also declined to endorse the view of some Coalition colleagues that South Yarra station should be included in the project, pointing out that 'we need to assess the business case' before passing judgment. In comments likely to be welcomed by the State Government, **Chester** declared he would like to see more infrastructure funding flowing to Victoria, which Labor claims is getting only getting about 9 per cent of the federal carve-up, despite having the fastest-growing population, the *Sunday Age* reported.

State taxes. Just an interesting discussion.

A state income tax would (have) produce (d) extremely uneven returns to each state and would fail to deliver the growth in revenue to fund hospital costs that the premiers have been seeking **Malcolm Turnbull**.

Turnbull said the first two percentage points of every tax bracket could go to/would have gone to the states and would raise \$14 billion. Western Australia and the ACT would be the big winners and South Australia and Tasmania the big losers, according to modeling conducted exclusively for *The Australian* by the **Australian National University's Centre for Social**

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Research and Methods.

Using data from the **Australian Taxation Office**, the centre examined what a tax following the design suggested by the Prime Minister would have raised in 2013-2014.

It found that while the tax would generate income of \$593 per person in the ACT and \$582 in Western Australia, it would have raised only \$333 per person in Tasmania and \$354 in South Australia, reflecting lower incomes and workforce participation.

Turnbull indicated there would need to be special arrangements for Tasmania and South Australia; however, the modeling shows there is also significant variation among the other states. The tax would raise \$465 per person in NSW, which is 8.4 per cent more than the \$429 it would raise in Victoria. Queensland would get 1.4 per cent more per person than Victoria but 25.3 per cent less than Western Australia.

The states have been complaining that the GST is no longer providing the revenue growth to match their spending because a rising share of household budgets is devoted to exempt health and education services, as well as online purchases from overseas. South Australia's Premier Jay Weatherill, the first premier to call for a share of federal income tax, argued that it would deliver better growth than the GST, partly because of bracket creep.

To test this claim, the **ANU's Ben Phillips** modeled how revenue would have grown if a state tax following the design outlined by Mr. Turnbull had been in place for the past 10 years. He found that the total revenue it raised across all states would have increased by 60 per cent over that period, slightly less than the 63 per cent growth achieved by the GST and barely half the 115 per cent growth in state hospital costs in that period.

This low growth partly reflects tax cuts and increases in tax thresholds under the **Howard** and **Rudd** governments, highlighting the exposure of state income tax revenues to federal tax decisions. More significant is the huge variation in growth between the states. Over the past decade, the resources boom brought big increases in average pay and workforce participation in Western Australia and Queensland.

As a result, Western Australia's revenue per person would have lifted by 72 per cent over the decade and Queensland's take would half lifted by 44 per cent. However, Tasmania's gain would have been only 22 per cent. The big states lagged too. Victoria's revenue per person would have risen by only 27 per cent, just ahead of South Australia's 24 per cent.

Even NSW's growth of 32 per cent would be below the national average of 36 per cent. 'It is unlikely that Western Australia would get that growth again, but it shows the tax is not as stable as people might like to think'.

'You don't know which states will fare well or poorly in the future' **Phillips** said. After allowing for inflation, NSW would have gained nothing, and Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania would have been 3-7 per cent worse off over the decade according to *The Age*.

AGRICULTURE

Give Us the Cream

Eating more dairy products, not drinking more milk, will help lift the bottom line for Victoria's embattled farmers. **Dairy Australia** is urging

people to eat more locally produced cheese, yoghurt and ice cream. The call came as consumers appeared to be heeding a farmer-led boycott of \$1a litre supermarket milk by opting for branded varieties instead, in the *Herald Sun*.

Funds Help Farmers

Victorian dairy farmers are being offered extra assistance to help them deal with the milk price crisis engulfing the sector. Farmers across the state are reeling from a dramatic price drop from major milk processor (with most of the shares still held by dairy farmers) **Murray Goulburn**, which will leave many out of pocket up to \$100,000, according to the *Herald Sun*. Including asking for repayment of money already paid by milk producers/dairy farmers

Deputy Prime Minister **Barnaby Joyce** said the Federal Government had put short-term arrangements in place to 'keep the wolves at the door' of struggling dairy farmers. 'I've been in contact with both the retailers and, dairy producers, and also with the **National Farmers Federation** on this issue. We've made sure the **Farm Household Allowance**, which for mums and dads on the farm will get them about \$1,000 a fortnight, that that's in place.'

Investors Sue

Australia's biggest milk producer **Murray Goulburn** and its board is being sued by investors for allegedly misleading them before its float last year as per *The Age*. Watch this space.

Can't Afford to Cry Over Spilt Milk

A controversial suggestion that a 50c levy be applied to every litre of fresh milk sold has divided the dairy industry, with some describing it as a knee-jerk response to an industry in crisis, according to *The Age*.

But farmers have again called for an increase in the price consumers pay for supermarket milk and blasted the major supermarkets for selling fresh milk as cheap as \$1 a litre, saying the price did not properly reflect the value of the product.

Victorian dairy farmer **Chris Gleeson**, president of the group **Farmer Power**, warned some farmers could lose up to \$250,000 between April and June after Australia's dairy processors slash the price they pay them for milk. A 50c per litre levy on fresh milk sales would put an extra

12c a litre in farmers' pockets, but would not apply to other dairy products, nor exported dairy products.

Price Pain

Murray Goulburn directors will waive their fees for the next two months in response to questions about board remuneration, chairman **Phillip Tracy** has told suppliers in the embattled dairy company's latest newsletter as Deputy Prime Minister **Barnaby Joyce** said the government would consider concessional loans as well as payments for the struggling dairy industry reports *The Australian Financial Review*.

ARTS

Whiteley fraud pair convicted

An art dealer and a respected conservator convicted of faking **Brett Whiteley** paintings in the country's biggest art fraud will seek to appeal a verdict that could send them to jail for a decade.

In a landmark case for the arts community, a jury found **Peter Stanley Grant** and **Mohamed Aman Siddique** guilty of obtaining financial advantage by deception through the sale of works attributed to **Whiteley**, who died in 1992, but actually created by **Siddique** in his Collingwood studio in Melbourne.

Siddique was previously well regarded in the arts community, acting as a conservator and adviser for high-profile figure, such as the National Gallery of Australia chairman **Allan Myers QC** reports *The Australian*.

EDUCATION

Dress Code Row

An exasperated mother, **Mrs Cariss**, asked the school to let her daughter wear pants like her male friends. 'I basically got a 'No'. **Cariss** then launched an online petition calling for gender equality in school uniforms. **Catholic Education Melbourne** executive director **Stephen Elder** said decisions around uniform were dealt with at an individual school level. **Cariss** said she did not want to name the school because she felt the problem was part of a broader issue. However, her daughter can now wear pants, as in *The Age*.

Pupils' Laziness

Primary school pupils are being packed off to school in **Uber** cars in what the service drivers are calling the rise of 'Generation Lazy'. Parents



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outsourcing responsibility are also giving teens accounts with the unregulated ride-sharing service for trips to the shops, to friends' houses and to sporting events.

One driver told the *Herald Sun* he had taken a mother and her two primary-age children to school. 'It's part of the lazy generation. Why take a school bus or walk, or drive your child to school, if you can get an **Uber**?'

Chinese Zip

Almost 50,000 Chinese students started courses in Australian universities, colleges and schools this year, up 23 per cent on last year, making students from China more important than ever to the booming education export industry.

Federal government data shows a 13 per cent increase in the number of international students from all countries, but by far the biggest cumber were from China with a record 46,400 in total reports *The Australian Financial Review*.

White flight, Not Racism

The idea that smart kids should sacrifice their own education to drug up their peers from non-English speaking families is simply obnoxious. The new principal of **Mount Alexander College** is looking at ways to modernize the curriculum, so that it caters for students excelling in certain areas and supports those whose learning has been interrupted by migration.

Lazy catch phrases such as white flight may capture attention and tap into class anxieties, but they don't help (any) children get a better education, according to the *Herald Sun*.

Elitism. Reality.

They are supposed to welcome all students, but a popular high school in Melbourne has been accused of turning away poor children who live in public housing, according to *The Age*. In an unusual intervention, Education Minister **James Merlin** has forced **Melbourne Girls' College** to enrol 12 students it had initially rejected, including residents of the nearby North Richmond public housing estate.

The case highlights issues around the gentrification of public schools with booming enrolments and the impact on poorer student's access to a good education. Richmond MP and Planning Minister **Richard Wynne** said he had fought with the school and Education Department for a decade to ensure students in nearby housing were able to attend the popular school.

But last year, for the first time, he asked the Education minister to intervene. 'They are purposefully excluding students who ought to have the opportunity to get a first class public education.' 'A publicly funded high school must be accessible, but particularly for young women out of our public housing towers. It's an opportunity for them to get a first class education, to go to university and get a high quality career.'

An informal arrangement meant the school must provide girls who live South of Victoria Street with automatic entry. But Principal **Karen Money** denied the school excluded students in public housing, and said there was no informal arrangement. She criticized politicians for interfering in the school's enrolment processes. 'We have a substantial number of students from the Richard and Prahran public housing flats.'

Students who lived outside the school's zone were selected based on their response to four questions designed to measure their leadership skills, and their postcodes and backgrounds were not taken into account.

'The school was grappling with its popularity, and in coming years might need to stop accepting students from outside the zone due to strong local demand. The towering North Richmond public housing estate is one of the largest in Australia and is about two kilometers from the Richmond school, but it is technically outside its zone, as the towers are about 500 meters closer to Collingwood College on Hoddle Street'.

The estate is home to many Vietnamese, East Timorese and Chinese migrants. The school reeks of elitism', according to Yarra councillor **Stephen Jolly**, whose daughter recently graduated from the school. He said diversity and inclusiveness were the key to a successful public school. 'We are not going to allow those poor kids, black and Asian kids, to be cut out'.

Victoria University adjunct professor **Richard Teese** said schools in gentrification areas were under pressure to differentiate and select in order to survive. 'Schools experience a lot of tension in their role, because on the one hand they are expected to recruit blind to background but on the other hand if they don't make a special effort for the middle class parents, then those parents may take their custom elsewhere.'

ENERGY

Victorian gas reserve driver

Cheap, clean, reliable natural gas has been the backbone of Victoria's economy for decades. (Perhaps coal fits into this subjective argument). Gas has powered much of our industry and led to the greatest penetration in household and business usage of any state. This is now in danger of being progressively reversed by groups like **Lock the Gate**, in an unholy alliance with the Greens and the Nationals.

Our gas reserves in Bass Strait are gradually drying up or becoming ever more expensive to access. Yet, rather than welcoming gas exploration onshore the Coalition government in 2012 imposed a statewide ban following pressure from the Nationals and fringe groups. The main opposition to Victorian gas exploration comes from the Greens and people who mostly don't live in affected regions.

Major energy retailers are placing customers on automatic monthly bills. The retailers suggest it will help people manage household budgets better. The move comes after **Origin Energy** introduced a \$1.75 fee for posted paper bills, according to former Victorian energy minister **Theo Theophanous** in the *Herald Sun*.

The Victorian Government has proposed changes to the way payments are made to Victorians with solar panels and other forms of distributed generation. The proposals form part of the Commission's inquiry into the **True Value of Distributed Generation**. It also examines the methodology for determining the payments that Victorians with solar panels receive for exporting their excess energy back into the grid.

This includes looking at Victoria's Feed-in Tariff arrangements. The Victorian government is currently calling for submissions from interested parties and will also be holding a series of public forums across the state.

ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION

Trash Turns Into Treasure

More than \$400 million raised from Victorians to improve the environment and reduce waste is now propping up government coffers. An environment group says the money, collected by the **Environmental Protection Authority** from the landfill levy, should be spent on projects including solar hot water systems and insulation for rental properties, more recycling projects and solar panels for community buildings.

And the association representing local councils wants some of the money to go toward cleaning up waterways, including the Yarra River and stopping decommissioned rubbish tips from polluting the environment.

Money flows into the **Sustainability Fund** from landfill levies that Victorians pay when they use rubbish tips. The fund provides for projects that promote sustainability, improve waste management and reduce emissions. Its balance has risen substantially in recent years and now sits at more than \$440 million.

Environment Minister **Lisa Neville** told parliament's public accounts and estimates committee the State Government had been spending money from the fund on environmental initiatives. But Environment Victoria chief executive **Mark Wakeham** said the fund was being used to prop up the state budget. Municipal Association of Victoria president **Bill McArthur** said councils wanted the money to help them manage disused rubbish tips according to *The Age*.

Pet Food

Government figures show the commercial pet food program has processed 27,760 kangaroos, almost 50 per cent of the total culled since the trial began in 2014.

The initial success of the program has led to state Agricultural Minister **Jaala Pulford** extending it until 2018. However, the Victorian Greens raised concerns that shooters were flouting trial rules by exceeding permitted numbers and not euthanising joeys left without mothers, in the *Herald Sun*.

GAMING

Tatts to hand back \$540m windfall

Tatts Group will be forced to hand back \$540 million in lost pokies compensation to the **Victorian Government** after the High Court dismissed its rights to keep the windfall, in a move likely to derail its plans to issue a special dividend to investors.

The win will help boost Victorian coffers by more than half a billion dollars at a time when the State Government looks at ways to pay for expensive infrastructure projects, reports *The Age*.

HEALTH

Ice User Figures Triple

The number of Australians using ice at least monthly has tripled to 270,000 in five years, according to the *Herald Sun*. The first research tracking the growth in addition to the drug found nearly 60,000 of regular users were aged 15-24. And in 2012-13, 1131 15 – 25-year-olds were admitted to hospital for amphetamine use, and 22,000 used drug treatment programs. Ice causes hallucinations, aggression, paranoia, delusions and impaired memory.

Here is a plan. TargetIce2020, which could have twenty per cent of all people on Ice, twenty



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"The significant problems we face today cannot be solved by the level of thinking we were at when we created them."

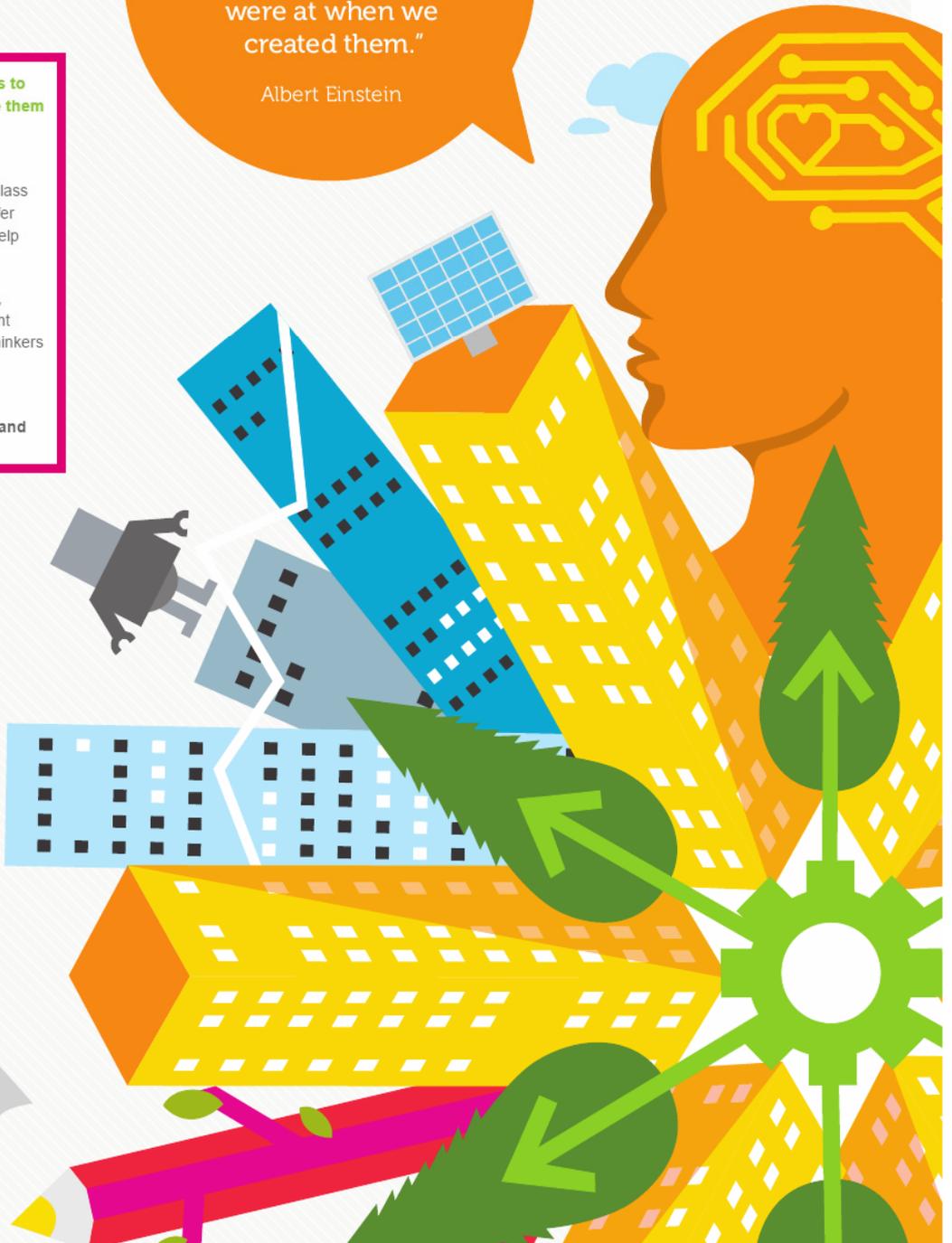
Albert Einstein

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percent not on Ice and what about the rest. Lets' have a firm plan. Just a thought..

Obesity Rates Rise for Expecting Mothers

The number of overweight, expectant mothers has risen dramatically, with more women and babies at risk of serious health issues, a major insurer has warned. Nearly 60 per cent of pregnant Australians are obese or overweight, according to the **Medibank Better Health Index**, which compares with 49 per cent in 2008, as per *The Age*.

Ambulance follow up

Ambulance Victoria is looking to claw back millions of dollars in annual revenue charged to patients. The emergency service has released a tender to review its billing and debt retrieval processes and find ways to 'maximise efficiency'. Huge fees are charged to patients transported in ambulances who are not covered by state government concessions or Ambulance Victoria's membership scheme. The tender documents say the service responds to 850,000 incidents a year for which paramedics complete a patient care records.

It said 80 per cent of these records were considered 'non-chargeable' because the patients were covered by concessions or ambulance membership. However, the remaining 20 per cent generates about \$160 million a year in transport fees, according to *The Age*.

My Mum always said to never do it

The Federal Budget's tax hike on cigarettes has led to a 21 per cent rise in calls to **Quitline**, but new research reveals people still aren't aware how damaging the habit is. A pack of cigarettes will cost \$40 by 2020 after four annual increases on the tobacco excise. The news prompted 265 calls to **Quitline** in the week following the Federal Budget reports the *Herald Sun*.

Hospital funds Pay Reforms

The Federal Government is considering spending \$280 million of state hospital funding on its chronic healthcare pilot and reforms that **could limit federal funding for preventable injuries to patients in hospitals according to the Herald Sun**.

BUSINESS & INVESTMENT

Uber Angry

Angry Melbourne taxi drivers have demanded that Premier **Andrews** does not legalise **Uber**, as the ride-sharing service continues to nab passengers.

Dozens of cabbies brought Bourke Street to a standstill in May for about an hour in the second major protest against **Uber**. But the turnout was well below the 500 cabs and 1,500 drivers expected, according to the *Herald Sun*.

Fellsy. There has been a surge in the popularity of the ride-sharing **Uber** service available to all members of the public. This has slightly minimized the amount of vehicles travelling throughout the CBD. Professor **Allen Fells**, who chaired the **Taxi Industry Inquiry**, has been appointed to the ride – sharing company's global advisory board. The point the board is trying to state is to make an impact and debate across all the concerned parties about transport issues and the legalities behind the service.

AAA Push

The **Australian Automobile Association** will launch a national advertising campaign encouraging its eight million members to push

for stronger investment in infrastructure, according to *The Australian*. 'The AAA wants every candidate to understand why their community can't be part of the economy of the future while it relies on the transport infrastructure of the past,' **AAA** chief executive **Michael Bradley** said.

Small business bug

Victoria is at the centre of a nationwide small business boom, with more than 8,600 new ventures opening across the state in the past year. New figures reveal more than 21,000 nationwide began operating during the 2014-15 financial year, with Victoria providing the healthiest market for setting up new enterprise reports the *Herald Sun*.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Trade Union Compromise

Unions in Victoria have backed penalty rates being legislated if they are cut by the **Fair Work Commission**, breaking ranks with the **Australian Council of Trade Unions** and the Labor Party.

Victorian Trades Hall Council secretary **Luke Hilakari** also disputed claims by Labor leader **Bill Shorten** and ACTU Secretary **Dave Oliver** that legislating penalty rates would open the way for a future Coalition Government to use its parliamentary numbers to reduce them, as per the *Financial Review*.

Nurses 'Historic' Wage Deal

Tens of thousands of Victorian public sector nurses have locked in large pay rises, with some staff set to receive increases of more than 30 per cent over the next seven years. The Nurses' Union announced the new wage deal with the State Government. Calling it a 'historic outcome' for 40,000 nurses and midwives. Under the agreement, employees will receive pay rises between 3.6 per cent and 4.8 per cent this year, followed by 3 per cent in 2017 and 3.25 per cent the following year.

Master Builders slams pay deal

Master Builders Association has criticised contractors over an imminent pay deal with the construction union in Victoria that will deliver above inflation annual 5 per cent pay rises.

The contractors' stand has upset the Coalition and the **MBA**, which has constantly portrayed the union as engaging in reckless unlawful conduct in pursuit of unsustainable demands for higher pay and conditions reports the *Financial Review*.

Watchdog says he can't foil dodgy conduct

The **Fair Work Building and Construction** director **Nigel Hadgkiss** said that the agency's success in pursuing court action against the **Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union**, was not acting as a deterrent.

'Clearly the agency is efficient in getting matters to court and winning its court battles but when you consider the comments from the judiciary and the clear trend of increasing numbers of court matters, you have to come to the only conclusion that we have not been effective in changing the culture of the building and construction industry,' he told an **Australian Industry Group** conference in Canberra.

He said the union's dismissive attitude towards the law and 'lack of respect for our industrial relations system is something that the **FWBC** grapples with on a daily basis' reports *The*

Australian Financial Review. This item also appears in Letter From Canberra: where industrial relations is a more natural fit considering Australia as a whole.

JUSTICE & POLICE

United Front's Fight

Victoria Police and the *Herald Sun* are joining forces to tackle the youth crime crisis. Chief Commissioner **Graham Aston** has called a landmark summit of up to 200 community leaders and experts to push for reform. The force warns that urgent action is needed to stop young offenders turning into serial adult crooks.

It follows the Moomba riot, in which dozens of youths ran rampant through the city, and a wave of car-jackings and home invasions linked to youths including members of the notorious Apex gang. Initial invitations to the Chief Commissioner's **Youth Summit**, to be held on July 21, were sent in mid-May, with more to follow.

The summit program will include criminal trends, identifying the drivers of crime, and evidence-based solutions. *Herald Sun* editor **Damon Johnston** said the newspaper was delighted to join forces with **Victoria Police**. Sometimes the role of police, and particularly the chief commissioner of the day is a leadership role, to pull people together from different sectors, as we have the capacity, and to ask ourselves some difficult questions and to try to find the answers.

Help Yourself

Ice and heroin dealing in Richmond' drug-ravaged Victoria Street has become so flagrant that local traders are now supporting a proposal for a needle van. In return for their support, the traders are demanding the CCTV cameras offered by the State Government, and long rejected by the local council.

'North Richmond remains a focal point for the trade and misuse of illicit opiates' according to the local council's planning director, 'Living in that particular part of Yarra brings with it issues that most members of the community do not have to deal with on a daily basis'

Mental Health Minister **Martin Foley** ruled out supporting a drug injecting facility anywhere in Victoria. And local Labor MP **Richard Wynne** said that, while there were 'clearly serious social issues' on Victoria Street, he did not back any injecting facility as per *The Age*.

Apex Gang at Moomba Gang Violence Stirs at Moomba

Hundreds of youths gathered at **Federation Square** after the Moomba fireworks. It became increasingly apparent trouble was brewing between rival gangs, who taunted one another with racially based slurs, then a punch was thrown. It was on, according to the *Herald Sun*.

Apex, which rampaged through city streets, denting public confidence in Melbourne's safety, has been under police scrutiny for four months. But the outbreak of thuggery sparked calls for tougher action against the Apex gang. A police taskforce had arrested 33 gang members in recent months for crimes including aggravated burglary, robbery, assault and car theft.

But the crackdown failed to deter about 150 others from converging on Federation Square to wreak havoc and terrify Moomba crowds, according to the *Herald Sun*. Chief commissioner **Graham Ashton** said more

resources would be devoted to Taskforce Tense, set up in November to crack down on the gang from the southeastern suburbs.

And he defended Victoria Police's response to the night's anarchy, in which diners in cafes ran for their lives as gang members, some as young as 14, ran riot. 'I thought ... our police exhibited excellent restraint when they were being absolutely taunted and provoked by these individuals.'

The Apex gang has grown into a large group of up to 200 members from a mixture of backgrounds including Sudanese, Pacific Islander and Middle Eastern, and are being blamed for increased violence, reports the *Herald Sun*.

Police Crack Down on Beggars

Police have cracked down on aggressive begging in the city centre, as splits emerged at the Town Hall over the council's approach to homelessness. Amid concerns authorities were losing control over the number of aggressive beggars on CBD streets, police were out in force to reassure the public, according to the *Herald Sun*.

Puzzling

The future of the **Victorian Volunteer Coast Guard** is in doubt after the organisation was unable to come up with \$148,000 for insurance. The **Volunteer Coast Guard** responds to almost 60 per cent of water incidents, with remaining call-outs taken by Victoria Water's Police Squad. The **Coast Guard** will cease its rescue service for recreational boats and monitoring radio service, as per the *Herald Sun*.

Police mental state

Bullying and harassment were the biggest cause of mental injury claims made by Victoria's police officers last year, taking a bigger toll than stress or trauma. But despite **Victoria Police** having been rocked by a wave of suicides, more than half of officers' mental health claims are being rejected, a *Herald Sun* investigation has found.

Melbourne focus

The Catholic Education Office in Victoria and the former archbishop of Melbourne **Frank Little** covered up serious sex claims against a priest, Cardinal **George Pell** has told a royal commission.

In his third day of evidence, in May, he accused the school administration and the archbishop of deceiving him about alleged paedophilic priest **Peter Searson**. Cardinal **Pell** told the

commission that the education office and the archbishop kept him in the dark about **Searson**, who died in 2009, reports *The Age*.

As the years go on

Former Police Association secretary **Paul Mullett** will face court more than eight years after he was charged with perjury. Former Police Commissioner **Christine Nixon** and other high ranking officers are said to have bullied and persecuted the victim. **Nixon** is being sued with her former deputy commissioner **Kieran Walshe** and detective superintendent **Wayne Taylor**, they have denied acting unlawfully or with malice'.

Mullett was charged along with former assistant commissioner **Noel Ashby**, over allegedly providing false evidence under oath to the **Office of Police Integrity** in 2007 and perverting the course of justice by tipping off a suspect in a high-profile murder investigation. **Mullett** is said to have rejected a \$2 million offer from the **Victorian Government's Solicitors Office** to settle the case prior to trial.

Additional

500 new police officers in response to a surge in crime rates, calls for more police on the beat and the far reaching reforms recommended by the **Royal Commission into Family Violence**, to *The Age*.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The End Drawath Nigh

Council officers have taken the first step in removing the protest camp from City Square. The camp was set up recently in response to crackdowns on rough sleepers. Lord Mayor **Robert Doyle** said he had hoped for a peaceful solution to the stalemate. Doyle said he believed the protest had been hi-jacked by others. It is thought other activists with different agendas had infiltrated the genuinely homeless community.

MELBOURNE

Tram Coffee

Melbourne's mothballed fleet of heritage-listed W-class trams would be turned into cafes under a plan to save them from the graveyard. Under the plan, about \$400,000 would be spent restoring the green and gold trams and transforming them into cafes and mini museums.

But for now they are mostly rotting at a Newport depot, with rust, graffiti and vandalism taking their toll. Under the plan, a flagship cafe tram would sit on the lawn outside the **State Library** on Swanston Street. A permit application has

been made. Other cafe tram sites would include the **Queen Victoria Market** and Southbank.

Melbourne advertising executive **Michael Abdel** has come up with the concept for the **Melbourne Coffee Co**, which wants to transform at least 20 of the old trams. 'Melbourne is known for its coffee and its W-class trams, so what better way to have a Melbourne experience?'

The *Herald Sun* revealed last year that **PTV** conducted a load survey about the W-class tram, with questions including how passengers would feel if they were taken off the tracks and replaced with modern trams. But **PTV** and the State Government denied they were destined for the scrap heap.

Another glass

Melbourne as a cruise port will be enhanced with news that the 293m-long **Carnival Legend** will be based here for a good time in early 2018. In the *Herald-Sun*

Getting real

Special three day **Myki** passes should be available for people visiting Melbourne, a tourism lobby group says. Melbourne is the only major Australian city that does not have a single-use public transport ticket for tourists.

Fake Queen Victoria

Opponents of the **Queen Victoria Market** redevelopment say the City council's plans risks turning it into a series of franchised food outlets. A friend of the market for 44 years, **Mary-Lou Howie** told a planning hearing that Council's plans would destroy the market's authenticity, according to the *Herald Sun*.

Birdman Michael soars again

A Carrum Downs resident proved to be a cut above the competition as he took out the annual Moomba Birdman rally title ... again. For the tenth time in 13 years, **Michael Paul**, clinging to a pair of no-frills aluminium wings, took top honours in the Yarra River challenge, reports the *Herald Sun*.

Oops

Melbourne University is installing dozens of 'all-gender' toilets in order to comply with federal gender equality rules. A **Melbourne University** spokesman said the institution was updating current practice across the board as part of its requirements under the **Australian Government Guidelines on the Recognition of Sex and Gender**.

The guidelines of not specifically mention all-gender toilets, but say individuals may identify

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and be recognised as a gender other than the sex they were assigned at birth or as a gender that is not exclusively male or female as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

On Your Bike!

Getting more people out of cars and onto bikes is a key goal of Melbourne's first major resilience strategy to cope with rapid population growth and looming social unrest. The plan, backed by all Melbourne Councils, says that riding a bike would be considered a good option as 40 per cent of all car trips to the city are less than 2km.

The draft **Resilient Melbourne** strategy calls for a metropolitan network to make cycling safer and provide travel options for areas like the city's car-dependent west, which has very high obesity levels as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

MEDIA, MULTIMEDIA & IT

Let broadband users quit

Optus chairman **Paul O'Sullivan** has called for new law allowing millions of Internet users to quit their contracts once they are connected to the national broadband network and for **Telstra** to split its phone line network from the main company.

Speaking at a **Trans-Tasman Business Circle** event in Sydney, **O'Sullivan** said there was a lack of sufficient competition in the broadband market thanks to **Telstra's** success and the **NBN** would not fix the problem.

If regulators were to adopt **Optus'** suggestion, it would let every broadband user change to a rival service without any penalties and help **Telstra's** rivals gain market share reports *The Australian Financial Review*.

PLANNING

30 Year Plan for Our Future

Motorists would be paying higher tolls during peak times, householders would be drinking recycled water, and small rural schools shut in a 30 year plan to address Victoria's pressing Infrastructure needs. The report also calls for a drastic end to Victoria's coal-fired power stations in the Latrobe Valley, a new airport link and a third international airport.

The **Infrastructure Victoria** foundation paper, **All Things Considered**, recommends better bus services in growth areas with waiting times no longer than 20 minutes, seven days a week, from at least 6am to 9pm. The report flags dedicated bike lanes for cyclists across Melbourne's central business district and suggests following a number of European

countries where vehicles are assumed to be at fault in all accidents with bicycles unless it can be proven otherwise.

It calls for more consideration to be given to railway stations in growing areas such as Truganina, Black Forest, Sayers, Davis and Doherty's roads and calls for upgrades to existing overcapacity stations. A third international airport in Melbourne's South East is to be put on the agenda, as well as a new port to meet demand to import goods in Victoria.

Changing consumer habits is also a key focus, with the paper recommending overall pricing reviews to manage demand for travel at peak times across the entire transport network as per the *Herald Sun*.

Very Sad

One of Port Melbourne's most popular waterfront pubs, the 100 year old **London Hotel** opposite Station Pier, could be bulldozed to make way for apartments. **Port Phillip Council** is not opposing the demolition according to *The Age*. The building, which was built in 1861, has been repeatedly altered and its art deco facade was added in 1941, the historical society believes. The building does not have any heritage protection.

Nouvel Melbourne

Jean Nouvel, the French architect behind Sydney's world beating **One Central Park** development, is making his mark on Melbourne with a \$700 million, 70-level mixed use tower in the CBD's northern edge. According to the *Financial Review*, developer **Sterling Global** lodged plans for the tower with 488 apartments and a 196 room luxury hotel on the 338 Latrobe Street site it purchased from **Investa Office Fund** last year for \$70.7 million.

To Soar Above Others

Crown Casino's new hotel in Melbourne would be taller than originally planned, as per the *Herald Sun*. The \$1.7 billion hotel would soar 323m into the sky, taller than **Eureka Tower** and 4m higher than the planned Australia 108 project in Southbank. If approved, the 90-level **Queensbridge Hotel Tower** would have 708 units, 28 more than flagged when the project was launched in October. Crown seeks an exemption from tough CBD height controls on the basis that it would be a project of state significance.

It would give Crown four hotels in Melbourne with more than 2000 rooms amid rising demand for luxury accommodation from local, interstate and international visitors. It must be assessed

by state planning officers, the **City of Melbourne** and the state architect before going to Planning Minister **Richard Wynne**.

Builders Sought for \$5b Project

Construction of the \$5.5 billion Western Distributor toll road is to begin late next year after the State Government released a tender for the project. Several international firms have been approached to express interest in building the new road and tunnel, including **John Holland**, **Lend Lease** and **Bechtel Infrastructure**.

The decision to go to market to find builders for the road, which would provide a major alternative to the West Gate Bridge, comes before a final design of tunnel entrances and alignments is finalised, as per the *Herald Sun*.

Oh Dear.

Residents and traders near train stations are fuming over rail commuters who drive in from other suburbs and then park in local streets. Some residents are trying to deter parking 'interlopers' by putting witches hats on the streets outside their homes. With station car parks either full or non-existent, commuters are increasingly clogging up nearby roads as councils respond by introducing restricted parking times, as reported by the *Herald Sun*.

Funds sound infrastructure alarm

The heavyweights of the nation's biggest industry superannuation funds have warned the will change their investment strategies to divert funds away from local infrastructure if the federal government proceeds with a proposal to scrap default funds in enterprise bargaining arrangements.

Cbus chairman and founder and former Victorian premier **Steve Bracks** said the \$32 billion industry fund received guaranteed inflows of \$100 million a month from default funds, which allowed it to invest up to 14 per cent of its portfolio in long-term infrastructure investments.

Retail funds have argued the default fund system favours industry funds, which can advocate for their funds at the **FWC**, and the federal government claims there is a need for choice in super fund selection and that people should not be locked into funds negotiated by their unions, reports *The Australian*.

City Conflict

Victoria's Planning Minister will have the final say on bold new plans for a striking \$300 million Collins St skyscraper because of city councilors'

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conflict of interest. Lord Mayor **Robert Doyle** and four other councilors with links to a donor in the development absented themselves from the meeting.

800 Flats Upright

A massive twin-tower complex could dominate a CBD heritage after a Malaysian developer paid \$101 million for a key site. Developer **SP Setia** wants to construct apartments, offices and shops in a \$640 million dollar project on the corner of Exhibition and Latrobe streets. The site, bought from **Telstra**, is opposite the historic **Royal Society of Victoria** building where the bodies of explorers Burke and Wills lay in state in the 1860's according to the *Herald Sun*.

SPORT

On your Bike

A new 40 kilometer cycling and walking trail proposed for the Yarra Valley would establish a continuous off road loop throughout one of the state's most popular tourist playgrounds.

The new trail would run from Lilydale to Yarra Glen, Yarra Glen to Healesville, and from Healesville across to an existing rail trail near Woori Yallock. It would run close to Yarra Valley tourist drawcards such as the Healesville Sanctuary, Yering Station winery and other popular wineries, **Yarra Glen Railway Station** and **TarraWarra Museum of Art**.

The Victorian Government has carried out a feasibility study on the trail and it has estimated it would generate 210,000 visitors per year, more than \$30 million of annual economic benefit and more than 220 jobs, the report prepared for **Yarra Ranges** Councilors said the project cost was \$10.6 million.

Cycling as we know doesn't occur only on trails, commuters are using bicycles in central Melbourne and the **Melbourne City Council** has been working together with architects and business owners to provide a number of parking space for bicycles and motorcycles. With the increased amount of traffic throughout the CBD so has the incidents of injuries to motorcycles and bicycles commuters.

'Bicycle groups are calling for new laws forcing drivers to allow minimum distances when overtaking cyclists' The group is calling for drivers to allow at least a meter in 60 km/h zones and 1.5 meters in higher speed areas between cars and riders.

Common sense for all road users must be thought about when sharing the roads with other road users. Victoria's road toll in 2016 is 20 per cent above the same time last year, mostly due to a big increase in motorcycle fatalities'.

Walker also backs it.

As the **Formula One Grand Prix** notches up its twentieth anniversary at Albert Park, developer and major events mastermind **Ron Walker** has thrown his support behind a plan to redevelop Melbourne's sports precinct and a key railroad artery. The controversial proposal includes relocating **Melbourne Park's** second tennis arena above the rails yards and the construction of a 60,000 seat stadium in its place.

Other options include a massive rethink if the Docklands, a redevelopment of the Punt Road Oval, a media hub for TV and radio networks, a luxury hotel/apartment complex and putting large parts of Punt Road underground. Inflation-linked infrastructure bonds aimed at local

superannuation funds have been considered as part of the funding mix to complete the development, which is expected to run into the billions of dollars.

Eddie McGuire, the sports and business identity who floated the plan, said he was convinced that workers would rather their superannuation funds were invested in local infrastructure than 'in a Tobacco field somewhere in Pennsylvania' reports *The Financial Review*.

TRANSPORT - PORTS

Patrick resolute over port dispute

The settlement of the \$9 billion takeover and break-up of **Asciano** was moving slower than desired even before the **Foreign Investment Review Board** told the rail and port operator the deal could not earn a sign-off until the federal election was decided.

Confirmation that a federal government cannot deliver foreign investment clearance leaves the deal in regulatory hiatus until July 22 and means **Asciano** will remain independent at least until late August reports *The Australian Financial Review*.

New name

The Victorian Government's decision to lease the **Port of Melbourne's** commercial operations to the private sector, together with the transfer of relevant staff, the **Port of Melbourne Corporation** will be renamed **Victorian Ports Corporation (Melbourne)**.

This sold enterprise will be primarily responsible for the safe navigation of commercial vessels throughout the port waters and the manager of Station Pier as Victoria's premier cruise shipping facility.

In doing so the **Victorian Ports Corporation** looks to appoint a Chief Executive Officer to oversee the commercial operations and the development of Australia's largest container and automotive port.

TRANSPORT - RAIL

Metro and V/Line trains, as at mid-May could simultaneously grind to a halt as a pay-and-conditions dispute escalates. Strike points include trauma leave, the dispute resolution process to make it tougher to be sacked and rostered days off, RDOs for signal staff.

Metro Set to Work on Sky Rail

Melbourne's rail operator, Metro, has been put in charge of almost half-a-billion dollars worth of work on the contentious sky rail project without going to tender, as per *The Age*.

The government has handed **Metro** control of almost one-third of the cost of the project to remove all nine level crossings between Caulfield and Dandenong, including critical upgrades to signalling and power.

Ramp trials

Melbourne City Council planners will investigate closing parts of Spencer Street at the 'dangerous' Southern Cross Station intersection' according to the *Herald Sun*. The Spencer and Collins intersection has been identified as one of the most severely overcrowded locations in central Melbourne.

Canberra dollars

The lack of rail infrastructure has been a problem facing Victorian's for many years but the Federal Government announced they will be pouring \$857 million into the Melbourne metro rail project. Treasurer **Scott Morrison** has told the *Herald Sun* the money will be allocated in the Federal budget. A further \$20 million will be given to finalise funding on the **Murray Basin rail project**, in a big boost for regional Victoria.

The improved infrastructure should filter out towards the fast growing outer suburbs where the help is most needed. The increased demand for homes in Melbourne's outer north and west is expected to increase and so is the heavy reliance on the rail network. The areas of concern such as Doreen and South Morang highlight the fact of fast growth and a network not equipped to deal with the increased daily commuters that this decision was necessary.

Sky track soars higher

The \$1.6 billion sky rail planned for the south eastern suburbs will soar as high as four stories in one section. Designs for elevated tracks in Carnegie, seen by the *Herald Sun*, show that at one point, above Girdwood Ave, between Carnegie and Caulfield stations, tracks would be 12.5m high, nearly 40 per cent higher than the rest of the 8km sky rail. Tracks are being raised along the Cranbourne-Pakenham line, Melbourne's busiest, to remove nine level crossings reports the *Herald Sun*.

TRANSPORT - ROAD

Ramp Upp

A multi-lane carriageway will soar almost four stories above the western end of the West Gate Bridge, creating a Los Angeles-style skyline, under one plan for the \$5.5 billion Western Distributor. Project designs released by **Transurban** include options for short or a long tunnel connecting the **West Gate Freeway** and **CityLink**.



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New on-ramps and off-ramps at the western end of the new route will also link the freeway to Hyde Street in Yarraville, giving trucks direct access to **Mobil's** fuel terminals. No one has acknowledged that if the cheaper short tunnel option is built, it will see several lanes of trucks and cars forced to cross above the West Gate Freeway, 11m above the current road.

Under that proposal, a massive 10 lane wide deck will be built to support the new road. **Transurban** says all design options are still in the 'concept' stage, but admits the options the option would have a big visual impact according to the *Herald Sun*.

Other detail

Transurban has a monopoly on road tolling, said a recent news article, including Melbourne Sydney and Brisbane

Sheep will move faster

Speeds on 'narrow, lower-quality, high-speed' country roads would be reduced from 100km/h under a new safety strategy. It comes following the escalation of deaths on Victorian roads, with 252 dying last year.

It is nine more than died during 2013, when 243 perished, which was the lowest recorded annual death numbers on Victorian roads. The government's **Towards Zero** road-safety strategy aims to reduce deaths on Victorian roads to below 200 within four years as reported in *The Age*.

SOCIETY

Nearly Dead, but Then.

Thirty years ago, the **Victorian Football League** came perilously close to being shut down. Never before seen documents reveal how close the end nearly came. It's hard to believe but professional football in Victoria nearly collapsed in 1986. With seven clubs on their financial knees, including Fitzroy, Geelong, Footscray, Collingwood, Melbourne, North Melbourne and Richmond, the League was in trouble.

Gordon Lewis had been Commissioner for corporate affairs for only a couple of months when he penned an ultimatum to the VFL commissioners. 'Of the 11 Victorian Club companies it appears that seven of them are technically insolvent,' he wrote on August 8, 1986. 'Please advise me within seven days what steps the Victorian Football League or its Club Company Members propose to take to remedy the situation.' **Ross Oakley** was brought in as chief executive of the VFL to fix up the mess.

There were other changes that boosted the **VFL** coffers, including offering television rights on the free market to boost competition. A public lottery to support the VFL was considered and there was even a view that if the **VFL** could just get Richmond to win more games, then the crowds would return. **John Cain** had only been Premier for six weeks when the **VFL** came looking for money. They wanted to make Waverley Victoria's major football stadium, move the **Grand Final** there and for the government to build a new railway line to the stadium according to *The Age*.

VALE

Allerton, Beth, 15.10.1919-29.03.2016, Much loved wife of Cliff (Dec). **Allen**, Brian Gerald. **Cosh**, Patricia Australian Physiotherapy Association. **Hedigan, John Joseph**, 2.9.1931 ,27.3.2016, **Hilton-Wood** John Bruce. **Haigh, Angus Alexander**, aged 37 years

Judy Joy Davies, 90 years, swimmer and journalist Empire Games gold medallist and bronze at the 1948 London Olympics

Rothols, William Robert, Tuesday March 29th. Bob, aged 89 years, quietly exited the studio following a life well lived. He will be deeply missed by his family and friends.

Murray, John, Engineer, 8-12-1944 to 10-3-2016, Fighter for workplace safety was a friend and comrade to many. Australia and Scotland have lost one of their compassionate sons. John Murray, a former metal worker at The Age, social activist. Trade unionist, amateur comedian and singer, died in Hervey Bay, Queensland.

Mounsey, George, College Woodman, 12-5-1928 to 2-4-2016, Generations of Ormond College students would remember George, limping along with his two dogs as he pushed his wheelbarrow of wood to tend the college fires. **McCloskey**, Mary Agnes Professor

Doolan (nee Fawcett) Lila Joan, Of Albury, formerly of Burrumbuttock passed away peacefully on 2016 at Jindera Aged Care, aged 86.

Nikakis, Constantine George (Victoria Bar). Rangelov, Dr James Theodore (Victoria Bar)

Alan Threader Forestry leader, 84 years. He brought commercial forestry alongside the consideration of the environment. Last chairman of the Forests Commission Victoria

Tippett, Peter Gerard, 22.11.1960, 2.5.2016. **Trebilcock, Richard Phillip**, aged 94 years old.

Brodersen, Ben. Cassar, Anthony John. Bolton, Oliver Milne, 18 years. **Perry Linda**, Deloitte **Shepherdson, John Banks**, 77 years **Boyd, Avis Betty (Betty)**. 91 years **Cohn, Desmond Richard** 92 years. **Liffman (nee Kewish) Patricia Margaret**, 93 years

Pfanner, Nicholas David Walter, Stoney, Ian, The Rotary Club of Hawthorn

Trevilcock, Richard, The Commodore, Committee & members of the Royal Victoria Motor Yacht Club are deeply saddened by the passing of our Past Commodore.

King, Inge, The Association of Sculptors of Victoria. McCall, Graeme, Beloved member of Mercantile. An Australian Olympian, member of the Victoria Kings Cup. Mercantile Senior VIII.

McCall, Graeme Frank Rouch, Psychologist, educator, 4.1.1923, 12.4.2016. Small in stature but a giant in terms of intelligence and generosity former Spitfire pilot Frank championed ethical professional behavior and good humor.

Ashby, Dacia Elizabeth Josephone, 94 years. **Aston, Michael Hilton RAN (ret)**, 90 years **Bolton, Oliver Milne**, 18 years

Burley, Genat, Lorna. Cross, John Ernest, 85 years. **Helme nee Bedford. Kathleen Joan** 93 Years. **Kaye, Dr. John MLC**

W. Ross Ray QC, Victorian Bar and much else, 64 years.

Muhammad Ali, 74 years. **Ultralight Plane Crash Causes Casualties** Two men have died after an ultra-light plane crash less than a kilometre away from a regional airport in Victoria's North, near Yarrowonga airfield.

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The value of small business lobby in Canberra

The first Morrison Budget handed down on 3 May 2016 acknowledged the small business sector of the economy and cut taxes applied to small businesses.

Small business lobbyists are pleased with this result. It has been a long time coming, but without consistent small business representation in Canberra it would never have occurred. Left to their own devices Governments do not change tax rates or thresholds unless pressure is applied.

Treasurer Morrison announced cuts to the company tax rate for small businesses and a reassessment of the definition of small business for company tax purposes moving up from a turnover of \$2 million per annum to \$10 million. It is a good move; the \$2 million small business threshold had been static for too long. Small business owners will feel relief and will be encouraged to invest, grow and employ.

Unincorporated small business owners are also provided with tax cuts and small business capital gains tax concessions have been retained.

Small business reactions were good:

James Pearson CEO at ACCI supported the change and said; “The government as committed to reducing the company tax rate over the next decade, providing benefits for small and medium enterprises, and at the same time providing practical measures to help people become job-ready and give them a path to meaningful work. With an election looming, this Budget demonstrates that good policy can also be good politics.”

Peter Strong at COSBOA said;” Well done to the Treasurer Scott Morrison and The Small Business Minister and Assistant Treasurer Kelly O’Dwyer, the economy is in now a better position to deal with and take advantage of change. The big ticket item is that the threshold for determining what is a small business has been raised to \$10m. This creates a change immediately for government support actions around tax breaks, instant tax write offs and other initiatives. This gives more businesses access to the \$20,000 instant tax write off announced in last year’s budget”.

The Master Builders CEO Wilhelm Harnisch was also positive; “Measures to cut company tax rates for SMEs and the expanded tax write-off will be an immediate shot in the arm for builders, particular in the equipment intensive building industry,” he said.

How are small business owners best represented in Canberra?

The best form of representation comes from within Government, that is, parliamentarians who know of and care about the importance of small business and acknowledge the many positives that small business owners bring to the economy. So, it is important to have a Small Business Minister in Cabinet and strong and vocal support from Parliamentarians. It is the task of small business representatives to communicate well with Parliamentarians and deliver to them credible and factual information that may be relied upon.

Employer associations have gravitated towards Canberra so they can be close to decision makers and generally they take up the running on behalf of small business.

Brand name associations like ACCI, AI Group and the NFF, (now renamed Australian Farmers) are strong advocates of positive small business policies and comment regularly.

Most employer associations have a strong core of members that identify themselves as small businesses. Many small businesses are family owned companies carrying on business in the tradition of their parents and grandparents. They are important to the structure of our communities.

There are also significant numbers of small businesses which remain unincorporated and operate as sole traders or partnerships. For example; the local garage owner, plumber, bookseller, newsagent, etcetera. Associations formed of these groups along the line of a trade guild, continue to operate at the political level and can be very effective, The Pharmacy **Guild** of Australia is a good example.

Small businesses are represented by associations, by ad hoc groups or professional registered lobbyists. Some small business owners have their own say by direct contact with Members of Parliament and scheduled visits to meet with their MPs... good on 'em.

Some associations do stand out as genuine small business representatives:

- **Motor Trades Association of Australia (MTAA)** operates as a secretariat, advocate and lobbyist in Canberra on behalf of the retail motor industry associations. Established in 1988, with offices close to Parliament, MTAA is led by CEO **Richard Dudley**. Over the past 12 months MTAA has been particularly active with submissions to a Senate Committee inquiry into the future of Australia’s Automotive Industry. MTAA also represents a

significant sector of franchisees. Franchising relationships and contracts are a continuing issue for small business owners.

- **Master Builders Association of Australia (MBA)** led by CEO **Wilhelm Harnisch**, the MBA is heavily involved in the debate about housing stock, negative gearing and investment in the future of housing. They do not shy away from an argument.
- **Master Grocers Association of Australia (MGA)**, punching above their weight on behalf of independent grocers and liquor stores, the CEO is **Jos De Bruin**, based in Melbourne and very active in the Harper Review submissions over competition policy.
- **Pharmacy Guild**, often quoted as an influential and well organised, a national association with branches in all States and Territories and well engaged small business membership.

Another format of the lobby group is the umbrella group Council of Small Business Associations of Australia; **COSBOA**; formed in 1979, COSBOA consists of association members. It is not a direct member association or a Registered Employer organisation under the Fair Work Act. COSBOA is incorporated as a Public Company Limited by Guarantee.

The COSBOA Office bearers are:

- Paul Nielson – Director and Chair
- David Gandolfo – Director and Deputy Chair
- Peter Strong- CEO (also a former chairman)
- Phil Johns – Director and Treasurer
- Jos De Bruin – Director and Company Secretary
- Mark McKenzie – Director
- Dominic Schipano- Director
- Sandy Chong – Director
- Teresa Mitchell- Director
- Elizabeth Skirving – Director
-

For more information, google COSBOA or go to www.cosboa.com.au

The 31 Association members of COSBOA include a diverse range with convenience stores, Pharmacy, taxi, Family Business Australia and Australian Booksellers Association included.

In a Pre – Budget submissions Budget COSBOA asked for the following:

- Options for minimising tax compliance costs for small business
- Choice of a lower tax rate in lieu of claiming deductions
- Agreed lump sum tax payment for a 3-year period for small businesses
- Sanctions for non-complying businesses
- Removal of businesses from collection of Superannuation
- Changes to GST to remove complexity and create fairness
- Removing FBT on generic benefits such as childcare and health assistance for employees
- Increase the threshold for definition of a small business from \$2m to \$10m
- Training and skills development, employment programs and support Modern Cadetships

Some of these requests were well targeted and accepted by Government. Others may have to wait for another day or an election commitment, ideally before July, 2016.



David Russell
David V Russell & Associates
Public Policy Consultants

Canine Life Rules

If dogs could teach us we would learn such things as:

- ◆ When loved ones come home, always run to greet them
- ◆ Never pass up the opportunity to go on a joyride
- ◆ 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
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Federal Government Wall Chart

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- OR
- \$130 For 5 Charts for the Team _____



Victorian MP Footy Chart

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