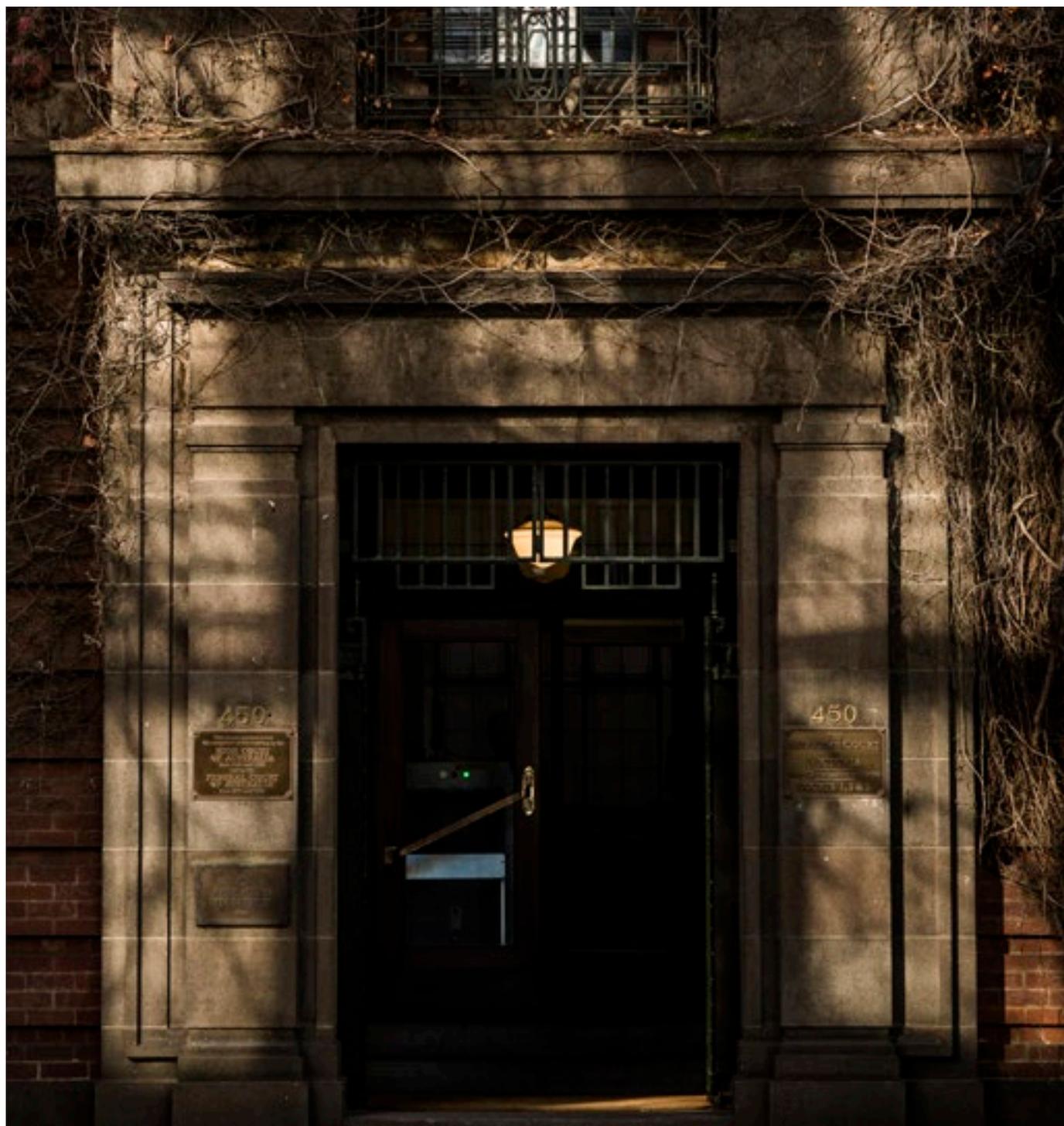


LETTER FROM
CANBERRA

Saving you time for nine years.

A QUIET POST-ELECTION NON-PARLIAMENTARY SITTING PERIOD EDITION



IN THIS ISSUE:

**Budget Bureacracy Shemozzle • Liberal Party Peace Plan • Plebiscite Indecision
China Shut Out of Electricity Grids • Illegal Detention Ignored • The Norfolk Solution**

LETTER FROM CANBERRA

A monthly digest of news from around Australia.
Saving you time; now in its eighth year.

ABOUT US

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Letter From Canberra 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 Canberra is independent. It's not party political or any other political. It does not have the imprimatur of government at any level.

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

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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-practising) 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.

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

The firm provides the following to clients:

- Two monthly publications
- Events at our offices and elsewhere
- Charts and specialist directories
- Facilitation with business and legal skills
- Training courses
- Mentoring of senior executives



The editor and wife having coffee in Manuka with a wonderful couple, the Martins, from ANU university Days.

EDITORIAL

It has been a very quiet public/media month on the federal front, as the new Government negotiates with both the Opposition and the minor Parties on some big economic and also some social issues. Passing the Budget is focusing on company tax, personal superannuation and a balanced budget, not just for this year. The Big end of town is starting to join in the Debate on the economic issues and some of the less economic and more cultural issues as well. Let them make their arguments clear, balanced and understandable by the wider population.

The Smaller end of Town, the myriad of businesses in every town, village and suburb in Australia, are particularly awaiting the new industrial relations freedoms that have been promised to them for a long while.

The Energy debate is winding up, not just wind but the full bracket of energy sources, especially as South Australia have been in dream world for the last couple of years about a truly reliable long term energy supply.

Chinese investment in Australia bounced off the Port of Darwin possible purchase but has been more clearly under consideration with the seeking by the Chinese to purchase a significant New South Wales electricity transmission grid, without success. About this time, cyber security hit the ceiling or at least the minds of many more Australians.

The Big Social issue. Do we have a plebiscite/a vote for every Australian at a normal federal election mode, BEFORE the Government brings a vote to the Parliament where just the Representatives and the Senators have their vote on the issue of gay marriage and related factors. Manus Island to faze out as an asylum seeker abode brings another huge social issue to the fore.

Your editor wonders how we might ever resolve the bigger social issue of free speech.

Cover. The Law is one aspect of the whole concept (!) of free speech and on a later page we have a picture of the present High Court of Australia, on the banks of Lake Burley Griffin. Down Melbourne way, in a side Lane, Little Burke Street and abutting the wonderful Victorian Supreme Court Building. Our Cover shows the original High Court of Australia Building. A drop of heritage involved but its position is not really recognized, for all of the years up until 1980 when the law of the Land/Our Land was focused here, perhaps radiated from here. Our Law is being perhaps edged out a bit (much) by other ways of changing our Australian life.



PLAQUE COMMEMORATING LITTLE BOURKE'S LITTLE-KNOWN HISTORY.

ISSUE ITEMS

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GOVERNANCE

Slow In Syrian Intake – Immigration

Nearly a year after former Prime Minister **Tony Abbott** announced that Australia would resettle an extra 12,000 people displaced by the Syrian conflict, fewer than 2000 refugees have arrived under the emergency program.

New figures obtained by *The Weekend Australian* show that work is accelerating to fill the quota, which was established to augment Australia's regular humanitarian intake. Last financial year, a mere 758 refugees were settled under the program. As of August 5, the figure had more than doubled, to 1868.

Revolution On The Back Foot

Australian company **Revolution IT**, which was paid \$470,000 to ensure the IBM-built \$9.6 million census servers posted at Baulkham Hills in Sydney would cope with the load of centres by traffic, has defended its work. The system was deliberately taken offline by the ABS to deal with a DDoS attempt, and Revolution IT director said protecting against this was a security, not performance, issue, according to the *Herald Sun*.

Tasmanian Instability

The Tasmanian Premier **Will Hodgeman**, followed his larger-than-life father Michael, the Rumpolean QC and Fraser government minister, into law, the Liberal Party, parliament and finally into government. Having rid Tasmania of a deeply unpopular Labor-Greens government in March 2014, ending the Liberals 16 years in the political wilderness, **Hodgeman** has striven to deliver the nirvana he promised would flourish under 'stable, majority Liberal government'.

After such a cathartic victory, a decline was bound to follow. Few, however, foresaw quite how quickly the Liberal Party would slide in Tasmania – and how low. The former cleanskin is ducking dirt flying from all directions, not least fallout from an energy crisis, bitter bloodletting over a disastrous federal election result, and a wounded hard-Right powerbroker **Eric Abetz** cutting loose on everything **Malcolm Turnbull's** mistakes to Muslim immigration, writes **Matthew Denholm** in *The Australian*.

Rudd-Turnbull Letter Leak

Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull** has launched a singing attack on **Kevin Rudd**, accusing the former PM of verballing him and plotting in advance

to lick private correspondence to the media. Mr **Turnbull** denied he supported Mr **Rudd's** till to lead the United Nations during a key December meeting, But refuse to be drawn on Mr **Rudd's** central claim that he had previously expressed his support for the bid, as reported in *The Age*.

Dodgy Steel Imported

Australian lives at risk because of shoddy fabricated steel imported from China, according to the peak welding body, which is demanding that Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull** introduce a certification regime to ensure compliance with Australian standards. Welding Technology Institute of Australia chief Executive **Gough Crittenden** told *The Australian* that about 85 per cent of imported fabricated steel coming into the country failed to meet Australian standards.

Rise of Fresh-Faced Conservatives

Matt Canavan's elevation to Resources Minister was the biggest boost for the rising generation of young conservatives in the Coalition. **Zed Seselja**, The Liberal Senator from Canberra, was the other big winner-rising from the backbench to become the assistant minister for social services a multicultural affairs. His promotion is seen as a nod from **Malcolm Turnbull** that he is listening to the concerns of his party's right wing.

The son of Croatian immigrants fleeing the restrictions of communism, Mr **Seselja** is an opponent of saying-sex marriage, supports scrapping restrictions on racially offensive speech and reduced weekend penalty rates the hospitality workers. The 39-Year old knows how to operate in hostile environments, having spent six years as Liberal leader in the ACT Parliament, as reported in *The Age*.

Land Clearing Legislation Out

Cape York Aboriginal leaders have attacked plans by Queensland Premier **Annastacia Palaszczuk** to crack down on land clearing, warning that it will stop job-creation projects and enshrined further 'social and economic disadvantage' in the indigenous communities. The proposed legislation, which includes a move to abolish the previous Liberal National Party government permits for 'high-value agriculture', is seen as a pitch for critical Greens preferences in inner-Brisbane seats next year's state election, as reported in *The Australian*.

Abbott regrets RDA reform attempt

Tony Abbott says his government should have pursued less ambitious reform of section 18C of the **Racial Discrimination Act**, in comments that will re-open debate in the conservative wing of the Liberal Party about changing the Act and potentially create a new headache for **Malcolm Turnbull**. In a speech to the Samuel Griffith Society in Adelaide, **Abbott** also lamented Australia's 'hyper-partisan' politics and surprisingly suggested that, while opposition leader in 2011, he should

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have allowed **Julia Gillard's** government to implement its so-called Malaysian solution and send up to 800 asylum seekers to that country.

The former prime minister is also strongly critical Liberal state premiers, including NSW leader **Mike Baird** and former Victorian Liberal leader **Dennis Napthine**, who opposed the harsh cuts to schools and hospitals in the 2014 federal budget. Crossbencher senators **David Leyonhjelm** and **Bob Day** have both flagged they will introduce legislation to, respectively, abolish section 18C of the RDA, which makes it illegal to 'offend, insult, humiliate or intimidate' a person, or in Senator Day's case to remove the words 'offend' and 'insult' from the clause.

Attorney-General **George Brandis** has said the issue remains off the table for the government. Amid deep disquiet, including a cabinet revolt, the plan was eventually dropped in 2014 - much to the annoyance of free-speech advocates within the Liberal party. Mr **Abbott** said in his speech Section 18C of the RDA was a 'troubling law. At its worst, it limits free speech merely to prevent her feelings', as reported in *The Age*.

Online Census Epic Fail

Foreign cyber attackers triggered the meltdown of Australia's first online Census, turning the five-yearly population snapshot into a \$340 million debacle. In one of Australia's greatest bureaucratic bundles, millions of people found themselves trapped in front of their computers for hours on end, unable to lodge their forms. The ABS pulled its website down after its defences failed under the weight of the cyber attacks and millions of people logging in to the complete their forms on Tuesday night.

Federal cyber-spy agency the Australian Signals Directorate is investigating whether another nation was behind what the ABS says was four 'denial of service' attacks, which did not penetrate the website but did tried to block it by flooding it with fake accounts. But sceptical computer experts said it was more likely that the website has simply been swamped by the numbers of people logging in.

The federal Opposition's assistant treasury spokesman, **Andrew Leigh**, said that the delays experienced in lodging forms had compromised the quality of the census. 'Make no mistake: from here, the data from 2016 census will never be as good as the data from previous censuses,' Mr **Leigh** said, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Census Blame Game

Four days after millions of Australians heading to bed frustrated and angry, having unsuccessfully tried to complete the census online, we still don't know exactly what went wrong, or who to blame. Politicians have chosen to blame the only non-government entity involved - US-based tech giant IBM, which one \$9.6 million contracts in 2014 to design, develop and implement the online census, writes **Patrick Hatch** and **Lucy Battersby** in *The Age*.

Senators Term Times Announced

Derryn Hinch and **Lee Rhiannon** have missed out on a six-year Senate term after a controversial countback method was rejected by the Coalition and Labor to decide term limits. Under a deal between Finance Minister **Mathias Cormann** and Labor's Senate leader **Penny Wong**, just four of the 11 crossbenchers will get a six-year term and only three of the nine Greens. It means seven crossbenchers and six Greens will face re-election within three years at a half Senate

poll, where they will be required to effectively double their vote to retain their seats.

But **Pauline Hansen**, **Jacqui Lambie**, **Nick Xenophon** and his first running mate **Stirling Griff** will take six-year terms because of the high vote they received at last month's election. The Constitution requires the Senate to award six of the 12 members elected from each state a six-year term, which will expire on June 30, 2022. The other six received a three-year term, to expire on June 30, 2019. There are no rules about how this should be done after a double dissolution. The deal means six-year terms will be given to 16 of the Coalition's 30 senators and 13 of Labor is 26, as reported in *The Weekend Australian*.

Brandis Attempts Gag Act

Attorney-General **George Brandis** wants cabinets to have greater opportunity to thwart the Freedom of Information Act, his lawyers arguing almost every meeting with minister should be regarded as potentially secret or sensitive. Senator **Brandis** - also the minister responsible for FOI - is trying to overturn an Administrative Appeals Tribunal ruling his office was wrong to refuse to process and FOI application from Labor relating to his official diary.

Under the Act, an application can be rejected without decision if the work required to process it would substantially and unreasonably interfere with the performance of minister's office or responsible agency, according to *The Australian*.

Union Reform Likely After Liberals Win Majority

A surprise Senate victory has given **Malcolm Turnbull** a clear chance to legislate the union crackdown he put at the height of the federal election campaign, is the government opens talks with **Pauline Hanson** other key cross-benchers to overcome fierce objections to the reform. The government was buoyed by South Australia with Family First senator **Bob Day** won the state's final place at Labor's expense.

Adding its 76 lower house seats to a potential Senate tally of 30, the government is calculating that it could get enough support from the crossbench to secure the majority of 114 votes it would need when the House of Representatives sits with the Senate - an event unseen since 1974, as reported in *The Australian*.

Hinch to Listen and Learn

Senator **Derryn Hinch** says he will wait to hear the arguments of other politicians, to see 'the whites of their eyes' and to listen before he makes policy judgements in Canberra. That is already made up his mind about free speech, as per *The Age*.

Out of Favour Abetz

Eric Abetz is one of Australia's best-known senators - a conservative warrior who's ruled the **Tasmanian Liberal Party** with the proverbial iron fist since the early 1990's. Ferociously opposed to progressive causes such as same-sex marriage (which he labels the 'latest fad' and the first step on the road to poly-amory), he's the bloke the Lefties most love to hate. But after being dumped by **Malcolm Turnbull** and losing his role as Leader of the Senate and employment minister, Abetz has become an outspoken critic, according to **Ellen Whinnett** in the *Herald Sun*.

Turnbull Donates to Libs

Malcolm Turnbull donated \$1 million of his own money to bail out the Liberal Party during the federal election campaign, so desperate was the party for finances. The donation was a tightly

kept secret, known only to the party's federal director **Tony Nutt**, federal treasurer **Andrew Burnes** and a small number of Mr **Turnbull's** closest confidants. Sources close to the federal campaign told *The Australian* the money provided by Mr **Turnbull** was a donation not a loan. It is understood not to be tax-deductible.

Former party treasurer **Michael Yabsley** said the federal Liberal Party was an organisation that had been struggling financially for 20 years. 'I said at the end of 2010 that the Liberal Party was on the brink of insolvency: that was the case then and I believe it's the case now,' Mr **Yabsley** said. 'The fact that the Prime Minister has to put his hand in his pocket is pretty strong evidence of that.' Mr **Yabsley** said the Liberal Party had a small membership base and little engagement with the corporate world, while Labor was able to rely on the union movement and the support of other organisations such as *GetUp!* *The Australian*.

Call for Strong Leadership

It is 10 months since **Malcolm Turnbull** took over the leadership from **Tony Abbott**. But, having scraped back into government, there seems still to be no national agenda, no pathway, no narrative to convince us the government knows what it is doing. Everything is directed to the short term. Former Victorian Premier **Jeff Kennett** writes in the *Herald Sun*.

The latest example is the establishment of the royal commission into juvenile detention in the Northern Territory. And ABC program, with graphic pictures, goes the air and the next day the Prime Minister and out of the royal commission. No time was taken to consider the facts or how best to address the issue raised in the report. The government claimed it had acted decisively but the decision was made, without proper thought or process, for short-term political advantage. Then followed the embarrassment.

No Census Rerun

The Australian census has not been compromised and will not need to be rerun, the **Turnbull** government says, despite a crippling series of cyber attacks leading to the decision to shutdown the census website. But the Prime Minister defended the **Australian Bureau of Statistics** decision to err on the side of caution in order to protect the people data. Treasurer **Scott Morrison** dismissed suggestions the census might need to be abandoned and repeated after millions of Australians were unable to fill their forms.

'There is no compromise of integrity of the information,' he said. 'There is no need, for any statistical reason, for return of the census.' Chief statistician **David Kalisch** and technicians at IBM opted to shutdown the website at 7:45 PM after system failures resulting from cyber interferences by as-yet-identify perpetrators. Among the errors contributing to the fiasco were the failure of geo-location mechanism to block international traffic and a router overload that triggered a 'false alarm' on the system monitors.

Mr **Turnbull** assured Australians that 'their data is safe' and said the decision to shut down the website had been taken 'out of an abundance of caution' by the ABS, as reported in *The Age*.

Sad Day for Labor

Surprise result at the end of counting in South Australia's Senate race, the anti-union Family First Senator **Bob Day** Has emerged as the 12th senator from the central state, displacing

Labor's forth spot and thus ending the career of **Anne McEwen**. The final result in south Australia is: Liberal 4, Labour 3, NXT 3, Greens 1 (**Sarah Hanson-Young**), Family First 1.

Former housing industry entrepreneur, the conservative Senator **Day** secured his term with just 0.37 of a quota of first preferences. His return on favourable preference flows, adds to the numbers in favour of the government's Australian Building and Construction Commission and it's Registered Organisation bills, according to *The Age*.

Bureaucracy Shemozzle

The superannuation package **Scott Morrison** announced in this year's budget is turning into the complete shemozzle. The real reason **Malcolm Turnbull** knockback **Kevin Rudd** had nothing to do with **Rudd's** poor interpersonal skills but rather **Turnbull's** realisation that his party base would go into complete meltdown had he supported the former Prime Minister's candidacy for the position of UN secretary-general.

Turnbull and **Morrison** probably now realise they have been played for mugs but the bureaucrats in Treasury and Prime Minister and Cabinet Love Long how the ambition to unwind what they see as the unjustifiable superannuation tax concessions. You have only to check out the highly erroneous but enormous values put on these concessions, as presented in the annual tax expenditure statement released by the Treasury, to pick up the agenda that the activist bureaucrats have been running, according to **Judith Sloan** in *The Australian*.

No Plebiscite for Minority Issues

Australians should reject the proposal to holed plebiscite as a precondition to the enactment of same-sex marriage legislation by the federal parliament. The elected politicians should get to work on what we the people elected them to do – to decide on the law, one way or another, in parliament. Not at the hustings. A plebiscite campaign unfortunately would be likely to bring out hatreds and animosities in our country that are bad for minorities generally and for the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transsexual minority in particular.

It is exceptional and wrong in principle to commit decisions on the basic human rights of minorities to majority popular vote, especially in a country such as Australia which, exceptionally, has no entrenched constitutional guarantees for equality or fundamental human rights to protect minorities, according to **Michael Kirby** in *The Australian*.

Coalition Clash

The West Australian government was in chaos after former Nationals leader **Brendan Grylls** called for a policy overhaul and declare Premier **Colin Barnett** was headed for defeat next March.

Nameless Census

Senators Nick Xenophon, Sarah Hanson-Young and Scott Ludlum are vowing not to put their names on their census forms amid claims the national survey has turned into a 'mobile CCTV that follows every Australian', as reported in *The Australian*.

IBM's Big Deal

The technology provider at the centre of the census debacle, **IBM**, has won 136 federal government department contracts worth almost \$700 million dollars in the past year. The contract between IBM and departments and agencies including Defence, Immigration and Border Protection, Social Services, Health, IP Australia and the Australian Bureau of Statistics

total \$ 699, 023, 526. Among them is a single deal with Human Services worth \$484, 168, 980.

The flexible, five-year contract, which began on January 1, will see agencies hey under the DHS umbrella such as Medicare and Centrelink use IBM services and consultants to transform outdated computer systems, but will not pay for a replacement payment system, as reported in *The Australian*.

Federal election 2016: Conviction 'may make Senate win invalid'

Some constitutional lawyers say the election of One Nation candidate **Rod Culleton** to the Senate appears to be invalid, meaning the Australian Electoral Commission may need a recount to determine who is elected in his place. Mr **Culleton** was convicted of larceny in NSW in March but is yet to be sentenced. The offence carries a maximum sentence of between two and five years in prison.

The charge related to the theft of a tow truck key during an attempt to repossess a vehicle that Mr **Culleton** was leasing. *The Australian*

Liberal Party Peace Plan

Malcolm Turnbull is offering a peace plan to furious backbenchers on the warpath over tax hikes on superannuation, tackling concerns over the \$6 billion budget plan by setting up a new forum to clear the way for a deal that will legislate the changes. When it became clear **Michelle Landry** had held on to her central Queensland seat of Capricornia, snaring the government its crucial 76th seat, **Malcolm Turnbull** told the LNP backbencher: 'Michelle, you have saved the nation.' According to the National Party, of which she is a member, her victory in what has previously been regarded as a safe Labor seat was no thanks to Turnbull and his 'innovation agenda', as reported in *The Australian*

Canberra Press Gallery Falls for Bill Shorten's Medicare Con

Labor has pulled an enormous media con job on much of the Canberra press gallery. Journalists have been prepared to praise Bill Shorten and his Treasury spokesman **Chris Bowen** for 'doing the hard yards on policy.' Much of the progressive media and many vocal conservatives have spent the campaign pointing out the Prime Minister has softened his progressive positions on social issues to accommodate the

right of his party, which supported **Abbott** in the leadership spill in September last year.

Imagine that: a politician being political. Too few have been willing to call out Shorten for the fraud he and his campaign are. Let's look at it:

His 100 positive policies have morphed into a single negative Medicare scare based on a lie. It is likely to persuade voters this man is just not Prime Minister material.

Shorten pledged after the budget to make the election a referendum on the government's decision to cut the \$4.5bn Schoolkids Bonus, only later to accept the revenue savings in his own mid-campaign costing's release on May 26.

After a year of criticising the 2015 Coalition changes to the pension assets test, Shorten accepted the change and banked the associated revenue mid-campaign.

Reports Chris Mitchell, Campaign Media Watch columnist from Sydney

PM Key Issues

Malcolm Turnbull will need to manage two key issues during this term of government: the threat of internal divisions within the Liberal Party and the policy challenges the nation faces... Peaceful coexistence between the PM and younger conservatives is crucial. The key is that these groupings are listened to, not bought off reports *The Australian*

PM Backs NT Government

The **Turnbull** government is standing by the increasingly embattled Giles government in the Northern Territory and will resist calls to exclude it from joint stewardship of its royal commission inquiry into human rights abuses within the territory's youth justice system. The Prime Minister's insistence on shared administration comes despite growing calls for the government in Darwin to be sacked, or at least stripped of its responsibilities for juvenile detention. Details of the rapid-action royal commission are to be settled at a cabinet meeting in Canberra, as reported in *The Age*

Plebiscite on the Agenda

No Coalition or Labor MP who opposes same sex marriage will be forced to vote in support of the change should it receive majority backing at the plebiscite. Instead there are various mechanisms



to ensure the Parliament votes to reflect the plebiscite result without anyone having to lose face or vote against their strong personal view. **Malcolm Turnbull** has promised to hold a plebiscite after the election if he wins. Labor, if it wins, will put the issue straight to a vote of the Parliament.

Shorten Supports Radical Reform

Bill Shorten has imperilled the indigenous referendum by breaking bipartisanship on the issue to support a radical form of reconciliation aimed at pushing a treaty-like process designed to resolve grievances dating back to European settlement. The Opposition Leader backed plans unveiled by Cape York leader **Noel Pearson** for constitutional reform to insert a 'hook' into the nation's birth certificate, off which could then be hung a settlement process likely to see individual First Nations bodies strike a network of deals covering large parts of the continent.

Mr **Shorten** sided with Mr **Pearson** and Arnhem Land leader **Galarwuy Yunupingu** in calling for the radical approach just as the Referendum Council, established in December to chart the next steps, and has heard warnings from indigenous people that recognition without some form of treaty would be unacceptable.

'Let's be straight: constitutional recognition is important, and it shouldn't be beyond the wit and wisdom of the nation to be able to recognise our First Australians in the nation's sort of official birth certificate; but that is not in and of itself going to resolve every issue for the last 200 years,' Mr **Shorten** said, as reported *The Australian*

NT Government Betrayal

Former chief minister **Ian Tuxworth** says the **Giles** government has betrayed the Northern Territory he loves and fought for. Mr **Tuxworth**, who also served as a Country Liberal Party minister for prisons and juvenile justice, delivered his verdict on abuses in youth detention and the state of the CLP administration in the Top End. 'I'm appalled and I'm ashamed,' Mr **Tuxworth** said. 'I can't believe such an abomination happened.' After watching footage on the ABC's **Four Corners** of children shackled and hooded, beaten and sprayed with tear gas, he said he sat stunned in front of the TV, as reported in *The Australian*

Life Insurance Crackdown

The federal government will push ahead with a crackdown on life insurance commissions in an attempt to mend the scandal-ridden sector.

In her first speech as Revenue and Financial Services minister, **Kelly O'Dwyer** said the government was working to push legislation through parliament to address upfront commissions that plagued the sector, as per *The Age*

Banks Royal Inquiry Rethink

Opposition Leader **Bill Shorten** has leapt on the Prime Minister's reference to the banks operating under a 'social license' to ask **Malcolm Turnbull** to reconsider supporting a banking royal commission, as the opposition considers pushing the Parliament for an inquiry. But the government has hit back, saying Mr **Shorten's** call is 'completely confused' and accusing the opposition leader of having only a 'crass political' interest in pursuing the issue, as reported in *The Australian Financial Review*.

Next Election Could Be Two Years Away

The new federal parliament will not sit until August 30. And, thanks to constraints caused by the recent election being a double

disillusioned, Australia could be back at the polls in just two years. The July 2 election was a full-Senate election, half the 76 Senators who were elected will serve three-year terms while the other half or serve the full six-new terms.

Three-year terms are effective from July 1 this year and will expire on June 30, 2019. That means there will have to be another half-Senate election and, by extension, a federal election, by mid-May 2019, so the Senate votes can be counted and the newly elected senators be ready to take their seats on July 1, 2019. However, because of conflicts with state elections in NSW and Victoria, Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull** may be tempted to go even earlier, as reported in *The Australian Financial Review*.

PM NT Kerfuffle

Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull's** troubled start to his new term in office continued when he had to replace the royal commission probing the Northern Territory's Juvenile Justice System. Four days after his appointment, **Brian Martin** quit over concerns of perceived conflicts of interest relating to his former term as NT chief justice.

Discrimination Commissioner Blunder

The Race Discrimination commissioner has just made it extremely dangerous for his organisation to discharge all of its statutory duties. **Tim Southphonmmasane** has encouraged people to lodge complaints with the commission about **Bill Leak's** cartoon last week depicting an Aboriginal policeman returning a delinquent Aboriginal youth to his equally delinquent Aboriginal father. The problem is that the commissioners prejudge those complaints: **Leak**, according to **Southphonmmasane's** public statements, is guilty and people should feel free to complain.

Those complaints will all go to **Southphonmmasane's** organisation, where every official knows that one of those at the top has already made up his mind. That means any attempt by the commission to deal with the complaints about **Leak's** cartoon is now vulnerable to challenge for a perception of bias. **Leak**, like everyone else in this country, has a right to procedural fairness. Decision-makers who knowingly infringe that right might also be vulnerable to accusations of malice.

In free societies, the right to a fair hearing before an arm of the state is fundamental - a fact that has long been recognised in Australian administrative law. **Southphonmmasane's** prejudgement of **Leak's** cartoons was not a mere slip-up. It was blatant, which can be seen from the report on that affair that was published last week by Fairfax media. He was quoted as saying 'our society shouldn't endorse racial stereotyping Aboriginal Australians or any other racial or ethnic group.'

Here's what needs to happen. Thanks to **Southphonmmasane**, there will be complaints to the commission about the cartoon. Somebody will need to deal with them. In another case where the commission has been accused of breaching human rights, it brought in an independent silk to avoid the obvious conflict of interest. Thanks to the Race Discrimination Commissioner, it needs to do the same thing now.

That will be a ridiculously expensive waste of taxpayers' money but the alternative is for the commission to blunder on hoping that **Leak** will allow his rights, as well as his reputation, to be traduced. If the Human Rights Commission has a future it needs to

start conducting itself with the self-discipline and professionalism expected of the secretary officers, writes **Chris Merritt** in *The Australian*.

Not a Gooda Appointment

The decision of Attorney-General George Brandis to make **Mick Gooda** a royal commissioner is a farce and a scandal. How can Gooda, a professional Aboriginal activist, possibly be an impartial judge, jointly presiding over the royal commission into juvenile justice in the Northern Territory? How can he be considered impartial when he's already declared the key defendant guilty - attacking the Northern Territory Government as incompetent, vicious, dead to reform and needing to be sacked? If **Gooda** does not resign, then **Brandis** must, writes **Andrew Bolt** in the *Herald Sun*.

PARTY HAPPENINGS

Portfolios Combined

Malcolm Turnbull's moves to combine the energy and environment portfolios has won a mixed response, as Victorian Liberal **Josh Frydenberg's** record in competing areas comes under a new scrutiny. Greenpeace slammed Mr **Frydenberg's** appointment to replace **Greg Hunt** in the expanded portfolio as a blow to the Great Barrier Reef, while Climate Council boss **John Connor** said the upcoming review of the government's climate and energy policy framework could deliver progress. The move follows Labor's lead in combining energy and environment under **Mark Butler**, as reported in *The Age*.

Greens Gone Red

Greens co-founder **Bob Brown** has urged a 'clean-out' of the party's NSW division, which is dominated by extreme hardliners left over from the Cold War. Although many Greens spring from the environmental movement, the party's NSW leadership includes senator **Lee Rhiannon**, formally of the Soviet-sponsored Socialist Party, and convener **Hall Greenland**, a one-time Trotskyist expelled from labour in 1984.

The Greens party was dumped at the federal election, suffering a negative swing in the Senate and advancing little in targeted lower-house seats such as Grayndler and Sydney. Dr **Brown**, who retired from Parliament and 2012 after leading the Greens to their best results in 2010, has taken the division to task in an interview published in *The Monthly*, as reported in *The Australian*.

Questions Over Activist Group Partisanship

GetUp! chairwoman **Sarah Maddison** campaign for the Greens during the federal election, calling into question the activist group's claim not to support publicly any political party, and provoking outcry from conservative politicians. On its website, GetUp! states that its work 'is driven by our values, and not our party politics'. 'GetUp! is, and always has been, an independent organisation,' it states, as reported in *The Australian*.

Cabinet Shake-Up

Malcolm Turnbull has undertaken a larger than expected shake-up of his frontbench by elevating two more Nationals, looking after his own supporters and controversially doing little to build bridges to disgruntled Conservatives, as reported in *The Australian Financial Review*.

Liberal Blame Game

It is noteworthy that the most powerful figure in Tasmanian Liberal politics, Senator **Eric Abetz**, has in one of the most vocal critics of the national election campaign 'a lot of our colleagues see

the election results is that barest victories—if we can call it victory,’ Senator **Abetz** told ABC radio. Yet Liberal sources are questioning why things went so badly in Tasmania and who might be responsible. Yes, it is conceded that in the often economically stretched state, the issues of health and education hit the Coalition hard.

The 2014 budget measures continue to either way at the government’s standing with voters. **Malcolm Turnbull’s** company tax cut did not resonate with the people worried about their blue-collar jobs. Yes, there was consternation that there was not a clear ‘Tasmanian package’ until measures announced just days out from polling day.

But the arguments in the state Liberal Party is that there were a lot of other factors at play, most noticeably revolving around the decision to dump Tourism Minister **Richard Colebeck** to an unwinnable position down the Liberal party Senate ticket. **Laura Tingle** writes in *The Australian Financial Review*.

Liberal Donors Pass

An analysis of the Liberal Party’s biggest donors ahead of the 2013 election shows two of the top three have since died, and several others have been involved in political scandals, offering some hints as to why the party may have struggled for cash during its more recent campaign. Healthcare and media entrepreneur **Paul Ramsay** — who gave the party’s top single donation, \$550,000, in 2013 — died in May 2014, leaving almost all of his \$3 billion fortune to charity.

The third-largest donor, businessman, yachtsman, winemaker and philanthropist **Bob Oatley**, who contributed \$400,000 in 2013, died in January. Millionaire businessman **Paul Marks**, friend of then leader **Tony Abbott**, contributed \$500,000 through his business Nimrod Resources and \$431,361 through P. Marks Investment Pty Ltd in 2013. *The Australian*

Fundraising an Uphill Battle

The Liberal Party’s fundraising efforts in the key state of NSW were struggling months before the federal election, forcing the state division to take a loan with Westpac, due to be repaid by September. The NSW Electoral Commission is continuing to withhold about \$4.3 million in public funding, questioning the Liberals’ disclosures about donations funnelled through the party’s controversial Canberra-based trust, the Free Enterprise Foundation. *The Australian*

Beazley Questions Rudd

Former ALP leader and ambassador to the US **Kim Beazley** has questioned **Kevin Rudd’s** viability as a candidate for UN secretary-general. Mr **Beazley**, replaced by Mr **Rudd** as Labor leader in 2006, said endorsing a male from the Asia-Pacific region would require an enormous effort to influence the vote at a difficult time. *The Australian*.

Rudd Left Waiting at the Altar After Turnbull Rejection

After cabinet finished meeting on a Thursday afternoon in late July, **Malcolm Turnbull** and Barnaby Joyce adjourned to the Prime Minister’s office to discuss the unsettled matter of **Kevin Rudd**. There was a firm resolve between the two leaders of the Coalition not to endorse the former prime minister for the role of UN secretary-general.

‘It’s like a wedding,’ **Joyce** said. ‘You don’t say, ‘You should marry this guy even though he’s not the right choice and it’s going to end badly.’ You don’t marry someone just because you’re scared of hurting their feelings.’ Cabinet split was ultimately a case of personality versus protocol, as reported in *The Australian*

Modern Politics Has Reached a Sorry State

The rejection of **Kevin Rudd** lays bare our fractured political culture of payback. If Labor has an ethical standard that guides its conduct it is no better than this: hurt your enemies help your friends. Now, with the government’s refusal to nominate **Kevin Rudd** as a candidate for secretary-general of the UN, the Coalition risks sinking to its opponent’s level.

It Pays to be Independent

Pauline Hanson’s success at the ballot box will mean her party will receive \$1.6 million from taxpayers. Labor and the Liberal Party take two-thirds of the total spending, with the Liberals receiving \$23.4m, roughly the same as in the 2013 election, while Labor’s \$22.3m is about \$1.6m more than it earned from the last poll.

The Greens will get \$6.3m, up from \$5.5m in 2013, and the Nationals receive the fourth-largest cash injection of \$3.1m, the same as the last election. The Australian Electoral Commission authorised the first payment of public election funding from the July 2 election. *The Australian*

Rudd Primed for the Job

Kevin Rudd is right about one thing at least. It is a great pity that **Malcolm Turnbull’s** Coalition government has opted not to give its backing to

the most recent Labor prime minister to become the next secretary-general of the United Nations. Australia does not produce many political figures of such international standing to be considered a serious prospect for one of the pinnacle jobs of global governance suggests the *Australian Financial Review*. Mr **Rudd** has clear expertise and experience within the UN system, including through Australia’s successful campaign to secure a revolving seat on the UN Security Council.

Small Business Portfolio Dropped

Mr **Turnbull** named his ministry after a drawn-out election count, dropping Small Business from **Kelly O’Dwyer’s** portfolio. Ms **O’Dwyer** remains in the Cabinet as Minister for Revenue and Financial Services but no longer titled Assistant Treasurer, which **Turnbull** says modernise the role. Controversially, the small business portfolio will be consigned to the outer ministry, after being handed to Nationals MP **Michael McCormack**.

‘This is about stability and continuity and significant economically and fiscally challenging time’ Mr **Turnbull** said. Council of Small Business of Australia chief **Peter Strong** accused big business of ‘classic behind-the-scenes manipulation’ and dismissed the PM’s defence that every minister was representing small business, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND EMPLOYMENT

CFMEU tensions rise

The Age reported that Australia’s largest construction union faced a scathing rebuke for its long record of lawlessness, which a federal judge has labelled an ‘embarrassment to the trade union movement’. The CFMEU was penalised nearly \$180,000 in July for illegally blockading a Melbourne work site in an attempt to force building giant Grocon to cede to union demands. Justice **Christopher Jessup** slammed the CFMEU’s extensive history of violating workplace law. ‘The CFMEU’s record of non-compliance with legislation of this kind has now become notorious,’ he said.

‘That record ought to be an embarrassment to the trade union movement.’ The Federal Court handed down the heavy fines over the union’s unlawful industrial action at the Yarra Edge Tower 8 apartment complex project in Melbourne’s Docklands in February 2011. Six CFMEU Victorian officials, including **Elias Spernovasilis**, **Bill Oliver** and **Shaun Reardon**,





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were also personally fined for the three-day picket that blocked access to the site and prevented the delivery and installation of a tower crane.

Election 2016: Labor and Liberal unite against worker exploitation

There can be no middle ground on scrubbing out worker exploitation says **Adele Ferguson**, columnist for *The Age*

Greyhound Ban Produce Industry Fears

Animal-related industries are on high alert after the Baird government's decision to outlaw greyhound racing in NSW, and peak bodies say the same scrutiny applied to dog racing is rippling across other sectors. Agriculture and food production faces the challenge of dealing with community expectations regarding animal welfare that have increased significantly in the past decade, National Farmers Federation chief executive **Tony Mahar** said.

Livestock industries including meat production coming under pressure to stamp out practices such as mulesing, some old methods of shearing and a live export have resulted in reforms throughout the industry, as reported in *The Australian*.

A Matter of Fair Work

The Australian says the independent Fair Work Commission is reviewing penalty rates in seven awards in the hospitality and retail sectors as part of the four-yearly review of modern awards under the Fair Work Act introduced by Labor in 2009. The FWC decision is binding by law.

The Productivity Commission recommended cutting Sunday penalty rates to match Saturday rates.

Employers in some sectors want Sunday penalty rates to be cut from 200% to 150% and public holiday penalties from 250% to 200%.

Unions want to maintain the status quo.

Haunted by the damage it sustained after its Work Choices policy the Coalition declined to make a submission to the FWC.

Labor's submission argued against cutting penalty rates. Labor will be under pressure to fight any cuts to penalty rates, even if that is the outcome of the 'independent' process it established. The LNP state executive has voted on a motion to formally assess a proposed split amid anger it's MPs and senators are proportionally under-represented on the **Turnbull** government frontbench.

'It is life or death for **Barnaby**,' one said. Under the plan, the LNP would establish a separate party room in Canberra and strike a second Coalition agreement with the Liberal Party with demands for more frontbenchers from their ranks. The LNP is also divided on government plans on superannuation and the backpacker tax, which could also form part of negotiations, as per *The Australian*

Unions Win Breakthrough

Unions have won an important breakthrough in the farm sector, with Australia's biggest horticulture producer forced to the bargaining table. The agriculture and horticulture industry is rife with worker exploitation, illegal underpayment and poor working conditions. Unions attract few members and have barely had a presence since the 1970s. Costa Group, a big supplier to Coles and Woolworths, has consistently resisted a National Union of Workers push for a union agreement at its tomato business in Guyra, in northern NSW, as reported in *The Age*

BUSINESS, ECONOMY, MANUFACTURING, FINANCE

Aldi Urged to be Transparent

Coles has urged its German rival Aldi to sign up to a new tax transparency code that will lead to more big businesses, particularly multinationals, releasing detailed information about the tax they pay. Aldi has yet to sign up to the Voluntary Tax Transparency Code, which targets more than 1500 businesses with turnover of \$100 million and follows public anger of a large multinational is engaging in aggressive tax avoidance, as reported in *The Age*.

Emergency Policy Only for Extreme Market Shocks

Emergency policy measures studied by the Reserve Bank of Australia would only be needed if China's financial system collapsed or similarly dramatic event seized up global markets, says a leading expert. Perpetual Investment's head of investment strategy **Matt Sherwood** said simmering geopolitical tensions, even if they hit growth in Australia, wouldn't be enough to force the RBA's hand. Quantitative easing (QE) – central bank bond-buying to stabilise long-term rates and push money into other assets – would only help if the world had another huge financial crisis, according to *The Australian Financial Review*.

Big Four Prevent Stimulus

The big banks have defied the reserve bank, passing on barely half of the cut in the official benchmark cash rate to their home mortgage and business borrowers, reducing the stimulus that the central bank was trying to inject into the economy in favor of supporting their own profits, as reported in *The Australian*.

ACCC Gives All Clear For Port Lease

Australia's competition watchdog has given the green light to two major bids to lease the Port of Melbourne 50 years. Two consortia for the lease were probed by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission because of their interests in other Australian ports. 'The ACCC has formed the view that neither acquisition would result in substantial lessening of competition,' ACCC chairman **Ron Sims** said.

The IFM consortium is led by Australian fund manager IFM Investors, along with a Dutch pension fund manager and a division of Macquarie Group Limited. The QIC consortium includes a 40 per cent interest from a fund manager owned by the Queensland Government. **Sims** said no single consortium member would control the port, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Tough Choices To Reduce Deficit

Reserve Bank governor **Glenn Stevens** says Australians are 'kidding ourselves' if they think the federal budget can be returned to surplus without having to make tough choices. While Australia agreed on the need to close the deficit, concrete ideas got bogged down in debates based on 'narrow notions of fairness' run by interest groups looking to protect their patch.

'If we think this rather other-worldly discussion will not have to give way to more hard-nosed conversation, we are kidding ourselves,' Mr **Stevens** said. 'That will care should there be a moment of crisis, but it would be better if it occurred before then.' Mr **Stevens** leaves the RBA in September, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Super Regulations To Be Increased

APRA is starting to tighten the screws on superannuation funds that book continual poor performance and face unsustainable outflows of money, suggesting it will push for more merges between funds in the \$2 trillion nest egg sector.

Speaking at the Financial Services Council yesterday, Australian Prudential Regulation Authority deputy chairman **Helen Rowell** also hit out at the lack of transparency over fees and costs in many parts of the super industry and said the regulator was attempting to get access to even more fund information, as reported in the *Financial Review*.

Australians' Trust Issues With Banks

Greg Medcraft, the nation's top corporate cop, has put banks' senior executives on notice to ensure efforts to improve culture and conduct do not become 'white noise' for staff below them, saying the regulator will continue to uncover wrongdoings and is not intimidated by the financial might.

At the release of the damning study revealing Australians' poor view on banks' ethics, **Australia Securities & Investments Commission** chairman Mr **Medcraft** said recent scandals have clearly combined to 'fundamentally undermined investor trust and confidence' in the banks.

Reform Requires Rethink

Small businesses fear they could be the next target of bad financial advice and predatory lending under the proposed low-regulation scheme for start-ups. The scheme, being considered by the corporate watchdog, would allow financial services start-ups to operate unlicensed for 6 months in the name of supporting innovation.

Peter Strong, chief executive of the Council of Small-Business Australia, said he was concerned small businesses could fall victim to the same financial scandals as consumers had fallen prey to in recent years, as reported in *The Age*.

Water Price Rise

The price of water for 4 million Sydneysiders could be about to rise because of a last-minute rule change by the Liberal government that helped it raise more from that \$2.3 billion privatisation of the Sydney Desalination Plant (SDP) in 2012. The arrangement comes to light as **Rod Sims**, chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, has called for a halt to privatisations on the grounds that governments are increasingly running them to maximise proceeds to the state budget even if it increases prices for consumers.

The SDP at Kurnell on Botany Bay has never actually pumped any drinking water but Sydneysiders pay about \$200 million a year to SDP to keep the plant on stand-by in case of drought. A consortium led by the Ontario Teachers Pension Board bought the plant in May 2012 for \$2.3 billion, as reported in *The Australian Financial Review*.

Properties Could Flood the Market

The Reserve Bank has issued a fresh warning that developers may be sitting on a flood of apartments that fail to settle flagging that the property supply glut will worsen, given that developments already under way are still running near record highs despite efforts to cool the market. The comments came as the central bank gave its strongest indication yet that the cash rate would move closer to 1 per cent signalling that another cut could be on the cards this year, as reported in *The Weekend Australian*.

Big Business Bullies

More than 5560 small businesses have complained to the competition watchdog in the first half of year, many directory gripes towards top end of town. The proportion of complaints has risen in the previous six months, up from 4931, the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission figures revealed. The six-monthly Small Business and Focus report, released yesterday, showed the biggest numbers of complaints, at 1435, related to misleading conduct and false representations from big businesses.

ACCC deputy chairman **Michael Schaper** said the increase in complaints was 'incremental but substantial'. Complaints also related to product safety, consumer guarantees and unconscionable conduct. Misuse of power was cited in 197 grievances. However, the ACCC said not all instances lead to breaches or investigations. 'We're continuing to see in increasing number of contacts from the Australian small and medium enterprise sector' Dr **Schaper** said, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Qantas' New Coat of Paint

Qantas' freshly painted freight network has taken to the skies to deliver domestic mail, parcels and Express Post for **Australia Post** and its subsidiary **StarTrack**. The dedicated sub-fleet of six freighter aircraft — which now feature StarTrack-branded livery — began flying to nine destinations exclusively for the Australia Post Group. *The Australian*

Innovation in Fintech is Key

Fintech leaders have urged the new-look federal ministry to continue with the government's pre-election push on policies to create a thriving fintech ecosystem that will help grow financial services exports to Asia and create more competition for incumbent banks. **Ben Heap**, the founding partner of fintech incubator and investor H2 Ventures, said the narrow margin in the election highlighted challenges selling the innovation message to voters fretting about the impact of technology on their jobs

But he said encouraging innovation remains crucial to refrain the Australian economy 'and for us to take a step backward due to machinations of our political system would be disaster', as reported in *The Australian Financial Review*

Wrong Investment

There is more than enough money in Australia's multi-trillion-dollar superannuation funds to invest in start-ups and entrepreneurship, but it is being deployed wrong, says Australian National University Vice Chancellor **Brian Schmidt**, as reported in *The Australian*.

Foreign Bid For Ausgrid Denied

Federal Treasurer **Scott Morrison** has blocked the NSW governments planned sale of electricity distributor Ausgrid to foreign companies, citing national security issues, in a preliminary decision that could have broader implications for foreign investment in Australia, as reported in *The Age*.

Asbestos Slipping Through The Cracks

Companies importing goods riddled with deadly asbestos are not being fully investigated by Austrian Border Force due to 'time and resources' constraints and the uncertainty of prosecution, a review Of Australia's asbestos border controls has found. Amid revelations that authorities have prosecuted only two companies for importing asbestos since 2008, the report calls on the Federal government to more forcefully pursue the offence

into work with China to educate suppliers about Australian laws, as reported in *The Australian*.

FIRB Ministerial Shakeup

Malcolm Turnbull's government has come up with new ministerial arrangements are handling FIRB decisions. Treasurer **Scott Morrison** Will continue to take carriage of all the big and potentially politically hot transactions - NSW poles and wires top the lists, and with the likes of the Port of Melbourne coming down the line the Kidman pastoral sale bubbling along.

ScoMo's Fellow Cabinet member, Revenue and Financial Services Minister **Kelly O'Dwyer**, Will have it pared-back suite of FIRB duties, looking after agriculture, well the Nationals' **Michael McCormack**, who is Small Business Minister (and fully occupied with the Census debacle), Will handle everything else.

China Shut Out of Electricity Grids

Scott Morrison's decision to block two Chinese bids for NSW's electricity assets on national security grounds has cast a shadow over Australia's relationship with its biggest trading partner and the prospects for foreign investment in critical infrastructure.

Treasurer said the foreign investment rejection was a preliminary decision and he gave the two bidders - the publicly listed Hong Kong business Cheong Kong Infrastructure, CKI, and China's government-owned State Grid — seven days to amend their offers for Ausgrid, which owns the electricity grid from Sydney to Newcastle and the Hunter Valley.

Controversy over Ausgrid

The preliminary decision, which won broad domestic political support the cast a cloud over the NSW governments budget plans, left the Hong Kong bidder fuming and sparked fierce criticism over what was underpinning foreign investment policy. Mr **Morrison** announced a preliminary decision to veto bids by both companies for a 50.4 per cent stake in Ausgrid worth more than \$10 billion saying they were 'contrary to the national interest', as reported in *The Australian Financial Review*.

Revamp for PM's Former Investment

Malcolm Turnbull's most contentious investment, a failed sports media company that lost almost \$100 million conflict-of-interest row over online gambling, has come back to life. **PlayUP**, the sports start-up Mr **Turnbull** helped bankroll in 2012, went into liquidation in February. It is to be relaunched this year. The key feature will be sports gambling licensed by the embattled Norfolk Island Gaming Authority. While the Prime Minister will not have a stake in the new-look **PlayUP**, it is likely to be an unwelcome reminder of one of his more troublesome business forays, as reported in *The Age*.

High Speed Rail at Last?

A high speed rail plan would see a Melbourne Sydney journey time of less than two hours via eight new inland cities. The new cities including two in Victoria would be high-tech centres, creating jobs and easing pressure on overcrowded suburbs in the nation's two biggest centres, says the consortium behind the plan. The *Herald Sun* reports the first new Victorian city, planned for the Greater Shepparton region would be less than 30 minutes from Melbourne on the high speed line.

The second city would be in the shire of Strathbogie. Over the next 35 years, the eight cities of up to 200,000 homes would accommodate a quarter of Australia's population growth, under the \$200

billion 'nation-changing project' unveiled by the high-powered Melbourne-based Consolidated Land and Rail Australia. The plan is backed by former Victorian premier **Steve Bracks**, outgoing federal trade and investment minister **Andrew Robb** and former NSW premier **Barry O'Farrell**.

Not Enough Investment

Australia is already forgoing billions of dollars in potential productivity gains after investing too little in key projects, the Committee for Economic Development of Australia says. And the damage bill will blow out to more than \$50 billion a year in 15 years if crucial infrastructure projects in major cities do not go ahead, the committee says, as reported in the *Herald Sun*

Qube Getting Asciano

Asciano's decision to hand its share of the portside logistics business ACFS back to its business partner has cleared one of the last remaining hurdles to the \$12 billion takeover of the ports and rail group with the competition watchdog dismissing concerns about the deal. Qube Holdings and an international group of investors are on track to complete the acquisition next month following a recommendation from the Foreign Investment Review Board due next week and a court hearing.

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission ruling comes more than a year after Brookfield Infrastructure Partners kicked off a race to buy one of Australia's biggest infrastructure operators — and a series of ACCC inquiries — before partnering with its rivals and close the deal, as reported in *The Australian*

NAB Cuts Commission Rates

National Australia Bank's \$45 billion financial advice arm to the wealthy, JBWere, has cut commission rates for its 120 advisers, becoming the latest major player to overhaul remuneration as the industry strives for sustainable profitability. Less than a month after Morgan Stanley's pay changes, JBWere will slice advisers' 'grid' rate cut by up to 1.5 per cent and also retain a 'small' portion of revenue from clients referred by NAB. *The Australian*

Smart Cars on Smart Roads

All vehicles on Australian roads will be driverless by 2030 and road builders must begin work to create smart roads that interact with them, says Telstra chief scientist **Hugh Bradlow**. Dr **Bradlow** said his conservative and realistic forecast was based on the rate of autonomous car development, where 14 trials were under way in California, and falling costs of retrofitting driverless systems to existing cars, which would soon be in the \$US1000 (\$1310) range.

'My expectation is that governments will very quickly realise that they need to make them mandatory to help overcome the statistic that 90 per cent of road accidents are caused by human error,' he said, as reported *The Australian*

RBA Cuts Rates

The Reserve Bank of Australia lowered the cash rate by 25 basis points to a fresh record low of 1.50 per cent during the meeting held on 2nd August. It was the second rate cut so far this year prompted by weak inflation numbers, as reported in *The Age*

Smart Road Technology is the future of collision avoidance

Future 'smart road' technology will virtually be able to predict the likelihood of an accident 30 minutes before it happens, CityLink owner Transurban has said.

And in the case of driverless cars, predicted to be in widespread use by 2040, that data could link directly to the car's control system to better adapt to dangerous conditions reports the *Herald Sun*.

The toll road group's head of technology, Lisa Tobin, said its crash prevention pilot program collated masses of data on roads, weather and traffic conditions to improve emergency response times and traffic flow. The Bureau of Statistics has been quietly hanging on to the names it collects with the census to conduct studies, despite a public commitment to destroy them.

Australian statistician **David Kalisch** told Fairfax Media the Bureau had been keeping the names it collected for up to 18 months. 'They've done it under the guise of: 'this is while we are processing the data', he said.

'They've done linkages, they've done other things. What's happening now is we are being more transparent about it.' As reported in *The Age*

Job Transition

The paper, *Economy in Transition – Start-ups, innovation and a workforce for the future*, was released last month by StartupAUS, the national start-up advocacy group. The paper highlights the impact technological change is having on the workforce, but also the need for innovation and start-up policies to capitalise on new opportunities. StartupAUS CEO **Alex McCauley** said.

'There's a transition coming,' he said. 'We have the opportunity to be on the leading edge of that, and for those 4.6 million jobs that are made obsolete to turn into a bigger number of new, forward-looking jobs. There is a whole lot on offer with this next wave of technology if we take the right steps and get behind the right sorts of policies.' As reported in *The Age*

Australia Post Job Flurry

Communications Minister **Mitch Fifield** has given former Senate colleague **Michael Ronaldson** a job on the board of Australia Post, while another former Liberal senator, **Judith Troeth**, has been appointed to the Administrative Appeals Tribunal. The jobs were among a pre-election flurry of more than 100 announced from a new Australian Transport Safety Bureau chairman, to the ambassador to Iran, to board members of national galleries and museums.

Senator **Fifield** appointed former Liberal National Party president **Bruce McLver** as a non-executive board member of Australia Post in December. Company director and former academic Helen Nugent has been reappointed chairwoman of the National Portrait Gallery with board members **Sidney Myer**, **Yasmin Allen** and **Jillian Broadbent** also being reappointed. *The Australian*

MINING

Crustaceans Halt Uranium Mine

Tiny blind crustaceans living deep beneath the West Australian desert have derailed one of Australia's biggest potential uranium mines after a long-running campaign environmentalists to save the little-known creatures from extinction. The prawn-like stygofuana, which lack eyes and pigmentation, measure between 0.3 and 10 millimetres in length.

The state's Environmental Protection Authority blocked Canadian company Cameco's proposed Yeelirrie uranium mine, 650 km northeast of Perth, because of the direct threat it posed to 11 species

of the stygofuana. The EPA's review of the project attracted hundreds of submissions, including from the Greens senator and anti-nuclear campaigner Scott Ludlum, who argued that the critters should be placed on the threatened species list.

'Today's decision by the EPA should be the final nail in a proposal that should never have seen the light of day' **Scott Ludlum** said. Cameco paid BHB Billiton \$US430 million for Yeelirrie in 2012 and had planned to develop it into a 22-year mine producing up to 3850 tons of yellowcake a year and employing hundreds of local workers, according to *The Australian*.

Iron ore rebalance will take longer

The global iron ore market will take longer to balance out than other commodities as excess supply takes time to be absorbed after a boom, according to BHP Billiton chief executive Andrew Mackenzie, who drew a contrast with the outlook for oil and copper.

'There are some commodities, like oil and copper, where there is a natural decline because pressure drops off, grade drops off,' Mr Mackenzie said in New York after making an address.

'One of the markets that will take longest to come back into balance is the iron ore market.' Iron ore dropped for three years to 2015 as low-cost miners including BHP and rivals Rio Tinto and Fortescue Metals Group ramped up output just as growth cooled in China, spurring a glut, as reported in *The Age*

BHP Brazilian Hold-up

BHP Billiton has suffered a fresh setback in Brazil, after a court overturned a crucial settlement the miner had struck with the Brazilian government to limit its liability in the wake of the Samarco dam disaster, as reported in *The Age*

ACF Threat to Miners

Miners are incensed by the Australian Conservation Foundation's scorecard rating the Coalition 11 out of 100, declaring the ACF's policies threaten the steel industry and undermine Asia's power supply. The Minerals Council of Australia hit back at the scorecard, which measured parties' policies against goals such as increasing clean energy. The ACF rated the government's ecological credentials as 'woeful' and lagging significantly behind those of Labor and the Greens. **Bill Shorten** will promise a network of community power hubs to facilitate small-scale renewables projects, according to *The Australian*

TRADE

Indonesia FTA High Priority

Trade Minister **Steve Ciobo** will travel to Jakarta in his first trade-related overseas trip since the election, underscoring the emphasis Australia is placing in finalising the free-trade agreement with Indonesia, as reported in *The Age*.

Virgin Shift to Asia

Virgin Australia is advancing plans to begin flying to China and Hong Kong later next year with the airline increasingly setting its sights on Asia and its burgeoning middle classes, as per *The Australian*.

REFUGEES AND IMMIGRATION

Lowy Weighs-In on Immigration Debate

One of Australia's most successful immigrants, businessman **Frank Lowy**, has warned that immigration must be controlled by the government rather than being a reaction to global upheavals.

Mr **Lowy**, a Holocaust survivor who founded that \$22 billion Westfield shopping empire after emigrating to Australia as a 21-year-old, made the remark about immigration amid a growing political debate triggered by Islamic extremism and international terrorist attacks, as reported in *The Australian*.

Illegal Detention Ignored

One of the policy fiascos **Malcolm Turnbull's** government diligently ignored for the duration of the election campaign – the illegal detention of asylum seekers in the Australian built facility on Manus Island – is in the final stages of slow motion collapse. Test cases could unravel our asylum seeker policy suggests **Sarah Gill** in *The Age*.

Immigration Debate Stifled By "ideologues"

Andrew Bolt has questioned the ABC after the news outlet critiqued **Sonia Kruger's** position on Muslim immigration. Why are taxpayers paying a government official to whip up hatred of **Kruger**? Why is the **Turnbull** government tolerating this state-funded attack? Why is it allowing our institutions to be hijacked by ideologues trying to stifle debate that anxious Australians clearly want? According to the *Herald Sun*.

The Norfolk Solution

Remote Norfolk Island will be offered as an alternative offshore holding centre for asylum-seekers under a plan that will heighten tensions on the lush Pacific Ocean outcrop. The scheme will be put to Canberra's man on Norfolk, former Howard government minister **Gary Hardgrave**, in a last-ditch effort by residents to save a way of life that began with the mutiny on the Bounty.

The Australian revealed that Mr **Hardgrave's** term as island administrator will be extended until next March, after the Australian government rejected demands by residents that he be recalled. A former speaker of the disbanded island legislative assembly, **John Brown**, released a joint submission detailing how the housing of asylum-seekers in empty tourist accommodation would revive the island's fortunes on the eve of the boom being lowered on self-rule.

The plan was a 'win-win' for the island and the Australian government as it comes under international pressure over conditions in the controversial detention centres on Manus Island in Papua New Guinea and Nauru.

TAX

Demand for Greater Small business Tax Concessions

The small business community has urged crossbench MPs to constructively negotiate on policy, warning that an obstructionist parliament would result in a 'really difficult time' for the nation's productivity. Small Business Ombudsman **Kate Carnell** has contacted independent MPs ahead of parliament returning next month in a bid to highlight the merits of policies such as the company tax cut for enterprises with turnovers of less than \$10 million a year, as reported in *The Australian*

Generous MP Pensions

Taxpayers will foot the bill for generous lifetime pension payments of up to \$4500 a week for federal MPs and senators who stood down at the election. 27 federal parliamentarians chose not to recontest their seats at the July 2 poll, with more than 20 MPs and senators eligible for large annual pensions under the controversial Parliamentary Contributory Superannuation Scheme. In 2004

the scheme was axed by then-prime minister John Howard, but politicians elected before that date — including Victorians **Bruce Billson**, **Alan Griffin**, **Sharman Stone** and **Kelvin Thomson** — are still entitled to the annual six-figure payments.

Most will receive an annual minimum pension of \$118,000 — or 75 per cent of a current MP's notional salary of \$157,500. But former ministers and office holders are entitled to extra amounts based on their past ministerial salaries and the length of time in parliament, which can add tens of thousands of dollars to their taxpayer-funded pensions. The *Herald Sun*.

ATO and ASIC Corruption Raids

Up to 120 **Australian Tax Office** and **Australian Securities and Investments Commission** investigators raided 13 Melbourne and Brisbane offices and homes the part of a major investigation into corrupt bankruptcy businesses. The investigation centres on so-called phoenix schemes, in which businesses go bankrupt to avoid paying debts, including tax and work entitlements, as reported in *The Age*.

ATO Clamps Down On Multinationals

The Australian Taxation Office has more than double the number of multinational companies being targeted for tax avoidance, vowing to hit offending corporations with big tax bills and hefty fines. The Tax Office told Fairfax Media that they had identified 175 companies that potentially fall within the scope of the federal government's Multinational Anti-Avoidance Law — which aims to address the problem of multinational companies using loopholes to minimise tax paid in Australia, as reported in *The Age*.

CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

State Takeover of Wind Power Approval

Councils in Queensland will no longer approve new wind farms after the **Palaszczuk** government takes the power from them. Deputy Premier **Jackie Trad** announced a new wind farm planning code for the state aimed at combating community worries about the noise and aesthetics of the renewable energy technology.

The code, obtained by *The Australian*, requires wind farms to be decommissioned at the end of their operational life and the land to be returned to its former state 'to a reasonable extent'. Noise must be kept to an 'acceptable' level, the safety of low-flying planes cannot be compromised, and new or expanding wind farms will be prevented from causing 'unreasonable impact' on the landscape.

Renewable Energy Buzz

Malcolm Turnbull's new Environment and Energy Minister, **Josh Frydenberg**, has welcomed a declining role for coal in Australia's future energy mix, talked up reliable green energy, and locked in the current 23.5 per cent renewable energy target by 2020, in a marked change from the avowedly pro-coal rhetoric of the Abbott government.

And he has stated that recent price spikes in South Australia — where energies such as wind and solar power make up 40 per cent plus of supply, and Tasmania where the figure is above 90 per cent — were not solely the fault of high renewable energy dependencies but to a 'complex of factors' including the failure of other energy distribution infrastructure such as Basslink, as well as the effects of

drought, a cold snap, and high gas prices arising from inadequate supplies and suppliers. *The Age*

Big Coal Blowing Hard Against the Wind

Peter Martin, economics commentator for *The Age* suggest there are very good reasons why traditional power generators should be worried. The oil and gas industry has the potential to drive climate change action but only if it makes a clear break with its coal cousins and cleans up its own production, according to a leading safety researcher in the sector.

Oil and Gas need to break from coal

Andrew Hopkins, an emeritus professor at the Australian National University, said it was in the interests of the petroleum industry to argue for a price on carbon given its lower emissions compared with coal. In a research paper, From climate pariah to climate saviour? For *The Australia Institute*, Professor **Hopkins** said Australian gas producers had been much less outspoken than global peers such as Shell, Total and BP in backing carbon pricing, as per *The Age*

Toxic Firefighters

Thousands of people in 18 communities near military airfields across Australia are discovering that toxic firefighting chemicals have poisoned their land and water — and that these chemicals appear more dangerous than authorities have conceded, according to *The Australian*

Wind Farm Guidelines

The NSW government is introducing new guidelines for wind farms under which they could be banned for up to 3km from sensitive areas. But the renewable energy sector has welcomed the guidelines as bringing some certainty to an industry stalled by political and regulatory uncertainty. NSW has had draft guidelines since 2011, and the final guidelines are still open to consultation until next month.

The NSW guidelines are not exclusion zones, with each development assessed on its merits. They include a sliding scale, depending on the height of the turbines and whether they are near sensitive areas. The guidelines suggest that, in the most extreme example, a 160m tall turbine would face difficulties being approved within 3km of a high significance 'visual influence zone'.

Victoria, by contrast, has a 1km buffer zone around turbines irrespective of their size, within which homeowners have to grant their permission. Queensland has taken over council approval with a requirement they be at least 1500m from 'sensitive land uses', as per *The Australian*

John Olsen Dropped SA's Power Lifeline in 1998

South Australia's Olsen government dropped a high voltage link to NSW that could have averted a recent power crisis back in 1998 — because banking advisers said it would slash the sale proceeds for the state's power stations. The River link high voltage interconnector would have cost about \$100 million and given the power-starved state an alternative 280 megawatt lifeline to the 500 megawatt Heywood interconnector to Victoria — on which it still heavily relies.

Last month power prices in South Australia soared to \$14,000 a megawatt hour — 100 times normal levels — as high gas prices and low wind power output coincided with Heywood being out of service for an upgrade to 600 megawatts as per *The Australian Financial Review*

Frydenberg Overhaul of Energy Market

Energy and Environment Minister **Josh Frydenberg** has been urged to 'flesh out' his plans to overhaul the National Energy Market ahead of next month's urgent energy meeting. Reported in the *Australian Financial Review*

NEM Needs Integration on Policy

The National Electricity Market could 'drown' under the weight of competing state and federal carbon and renewable policies, according to a peak energy body. As clean energy advocates defended the reliability of solar and wind despite a new report showing there could be blackouts if cold-fired generation was removed from the NEM, there is growing pressure on state and federal ministers to take a national approach to the transition to a lower-emissions economy.

Energy Networks Association chief executive **John Bradley** said the report did not change the need to move to a lower-carbon energy mix. But it did highlight the need for an integrated carbon and energy policy, as reported in the *Australian Financial Review*.

Beef Price Spike Due To Drought

According to Meat and Livestock Australia, the national cattle herd is now at its smallest in 20 years — the aftershock of severe drought, according to the *Herald Sun*. **Ralph Deleo**, part-owner of the 40-year-old Jonathan's butcher in Collingwood said he had extremely loyal patrons, but people were choosing soup bones and offcuts owing to the exorbitant steak prices.

Renewables Root Of Price Surge

Energy crises in South Australia and Tasmania have shown that unilateral state-based renewable energy measures were distorting the national market and could trigger damaging price surges in Eastern states, one of Australia's leading energy specialists has warned.

The head of energy policy at the Grattan Institute public policy think tank, **Tony Wood**, said governments might have to keep back-up power sources such as gas-fired electricity available, even if they were only used occasionally. **Mr Wood** also said moves from Victoria and Queensland to shift to 40 and 50 per cent renewable generation would increase power prices and volatility in the network on the Eastern seaboard.

It comes as energy industry insiders agree a South Australian-style scenario, where prices have surged regularly from under \$100 per MWh two over \$1000, was possible in eastern states without reforms to the national market, as reported in *The Australian*.

AGRICULTURE, CATTLE AND WATER

Farmers Crippled By Regulation

The farm sector is hobbled by regulations serving political purposes at devoid of economic or scientific logic, ranging from bans on genetically modified crops to the Coalition's new restriction on foreign investment and biodiversity regulations, a hard-hitting **Productivity Commission** report concludes.

The commission is critical of the National's preoccupations, such as curbing the power of supermarkets and regulating the sugar industry, while also taking aim at Greens and Labor concerns with animal welfare and coastal shipping.

The commission says that the combination of federal, state and local government regulation and consume up to 15 per cent

LETTER FROM CANBERRA

of farm revenues and affects the whole supply chain, as reported in *The Australian*.

Farmers across Australia struggling under the weight of over-regulation and heavy restrictions on how they can use their land have welcomed Productivity Commission recommendations that many laws and rules should be simplified, abolished or relaxed.

The commission's finding that land-clearing limits proposed in Queensland and NSW fail to balance potential economic gains in food production against the environment has delighted angry farmers, such as Atherton Tablelands cattleman Peter Spies. *The Australian*.

MEDIA

Kennett Slams ABC

Former Victorian Premier **Jeff Kennett** has used the Northern Territory Country Liberal Party's campaign launch to slam the ABC for supposedly using 'our money to set us all up' in relation to the controversial youth detention and live cattle export *Four Corners* programs. Mr **Kennett** said he liked good news and balanced commentary but claimed that last months program exposing shocking footage of abuses at the **Don Dale Juvenile Detention Centre** had been unbalanced and 'timed to deliver as much damage (as possible)' to the **Giles** government.

'At times I get the feeling that the ABC uses our money to set us all up, put together stories they've worked on for years, where they've interviewed people hours and they only deliver part of the story for their own reasons,' Mr **Kennett** said. Mr **Kennett** made the remarks at a low-key event in Darwin conspicuously unattended by federal ministers, as reported in *The Australian*.

The End is Nigh for Print

Billionaire investor **Alex Waislitz** has called for Fairfax Media chief executive **Greg Hywood** to fast track plans to shut weekday print editions of the publisher's venerable mastheads, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and *The Age* in Melbourne. 'The strategic steps just announced hopefully pave the way for the move two full digital publication on weekdays – something which is in the best interests of the group and its shareholders in this digital age and is therefore something which should happen sooner rather than later and with as short a transition period as possible' Mr **Waislitz** told *The Australian*.

Mr **Hywood** in May said the closure of that *SMH* and *The Age* on weekdays, and *The AFR Weekend*, was inevitable as the digital alternatives ripped away audiences and revenues from traditional newspapers.

JUSTICE

WikiLeaks Founder's Saviour is Dick Smith?

Wealthy Australian businessman Dick Smith is preparing to stir a diplomatic hornet's nest in the hope of securing the freedom of WikiLeaks founder **Julian Assange**. *The Australian*

Chris Merritt, Legal Affairs Editor for *The Australian* suggests A civil trial that starts next month is set to provide some answers to one of the great mysteries associated with the NSW anti-corruption agency.

When it was trying to ping former politician Eddie Obeid and his sons, why did it rely upon the evidence of a colourful banker by the name of Gardner Brook?

More importantly, how much did the NSW Independent Commission against Corruption know about this man when it used his evidence to bolster its conclusions in one of its most important inquiries?

Secret Crime Maps

Secret police crime maps reveal Melbourne neighbourhoods near rail corridors and major roads are being terrorised with home invasions and car thefts committed by youth gangs, including Apex. The explosive documents released under Freedom of Information come as Chief Commissioner **Graham Ashton** urges Victorians against forming neighbourhood vigilante groups to combat rising crime.

The operational police maps show parts of Melbourne's southeast were repeatedly hit last year, including parts of Murrumbena, Carnegie, Mordialloc, Mentone and Sandringham. Elsternwick, Chelsea, Highett and Clarinda were also hit hard, as reported in the *Herald Sun*

ACIC To Testing Sewage

Australia's top crime-fighting agency is about to spend millions of dollars testing the nation sewage to get the most accurate picture yet about rising illicit drug use. Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission boss **Chris Dawson** said the wastewater Analysis would be a much more accurate measure of national drug use the merely serving users, according to the *Herald Sun*.

Calls for ICAC Inquiry

Former NSW emergency services commissioner **Murray Kear** has called for a judicial inquiry into the state's Independent Commission Against Corruption after a court found the agency had engaged in improper conduct. Sydney magistrate Greg Grogin has ruled ICAC's investigation of Mr **Kear** was conducted in 'an unreasonable and improper manner'. Evidence was not revealed to Mr **Kear's** lawyers and potential witnesses were ignored because the prosecution considered them in Mr **Kear's** 'camp', the magistrate found, as reported in *The Australian*

IT

Big deals for NBN rollout

The company rolling out the national broadband network has struck deals with six construction groups to help build it. NBN Co announced it had signed deals with Lend Lease, Broadpectrum and Fulton Hogan to help meet a target of connecting eight million homes and businesses by 2020. The technology group has also signed up services group Downer. Melbourne-based contract workforce specialist ISGM and communications technology group BSA.

It is understood that the total value of the six deals is about \$300 million for the first year, with further work to be determined based on the progress of construction. NBN Co. led by chief executive Bill Morrow said the deals would ensure the 'most appropriate delivery partners' were carrying out construction work, as reported in *The Age*

Outage Entitlement

Telstra called major enterprise and business customers to apologise for a disastrously-timed seven-hour network outage last month to discuss what compensation they might be entitled to. Internet data services for banks, retailers, airlines, politicians, schools and hospitals were down across Victoria. A company spokesman said the fault was caused by 'a device in the network behaving in a way that wasn't expected'. This took out part of Telstra's data network in Victoria which affected about 20 per cent of business customers. *The Age*

WELFARE

Fall from Grace

Harriet Wran has laid bare her fall from high society to the depths of an addiction that led her to be caught up in a murder in a drug den, according to the *Herald Sun*

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Subsidies for Nannies

The Turnbull government's \$185 million nanny scheme paid out less than \$9000 in subsidies in its first four months writes *The Age*. Documents released under freedom of information laws show families were paid just \$8820 under the troubled Nanny Pilot Program between its launch on January 1 and the week ending May 8.

That means that more than four months into the 30-month trial - first announced too much fanfare in the Coalition's 2015 budget - just 0.0049 per cent of its budget has actually gone to parents. Under the scheme, families earning up to \$60,000 per year are eligible for the maximum subsidy of \$8.50 per child per hour. The means-tested subsidy decreases to a minimum of \$5 per child per hour for those families earning between \$165,000 and \$250,000. Families earning \$250,000 per year or above are not eligible.

Welfare Reform for Budget

The **Turnbull** government has prepared a welfare reform battle plan to achieve budget savings of more than \$5 billion from as soon as September, seeking to dodge potential roadblocks in the Senate by introducing the first changes without legislation. Ministers will authorise the changes to halt fraud and reverse welfare payments to those who do not qualify, but they are insisting the \$2bn saving over four years will not involve cuts to payments for those who are entitled.

But Human Services Minister **Alan Tudge** said the government was serious about making sure welfare was targeted at people who were genuinely entitled to it. 'A small number deliberately cheat the system and take more than they are entitled to,' he said. 'These measures will not adversely affect any welfare recipients who are honestly complying with their ... requirements.' As reported in *The Australian*

Salvo's Reform

The Salvation Army in Australia operates out of two distinct territories. In March this year it was announced that the two major territories in Australia will merge into one territory under the leadership of the National Commander, **Floyd Tidd**. This will deliver a unified organisation with an aligned vision, united voice, stronger partnerships, better stewardship, and ability to make an even greater impact on the many people who depend upon their services.

The head of Australia's Family Court has warned against 'simplistic' reforms to the troubled system, saying the vast majority of cases are complex and involve family violence, mental health and substance abuse issues. **Pauline Hanson's** One Nation party is calling for the Family Court to be abolished and replaced with a family tribunal made up of people from 'mainstream Australia'. *The Age*

Denton Campaigns For Euthanasia Reform

Television personality **Andrew Denton** has criticised MPs **Kevin Andrews** and **Tony Burke** for their role in scuttling voluntary euthanasia laws, decrying 'subterranean forces' preventing reforms to help the sick and dying. **Denton** told the National Press Club in Canberra that he was seeking 'to light a fire' on the issue because Catholic MPs responsible for overturning controversial 1990s Northern Territory assisted dying laws continued to block any national change in Parliament, as reported in *The Age*.

Calls For Review Of Veteran Welfare

Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull** has ordered a review into veterans' suicide prevention services after admitting 'we need to do a better job, right across the board'. Experts along with current and former Defence members will join The National Mental Health Commission in reviewing self-harm and suicide prevention services, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

EDUCATION

University Fees Need Reform

University leaders are calling for a radical rethink of how student fees and funding rates are set to different courses, with the current system widely seen as outdated, overly-complicated and riddled with anomalies. Under the current system, law and accounting students can be charged up to \$10,440 a year while humanities students are charged \$6256 a year.

The federal government allocates all undergraduate subjects to one of eight different funding bands, based on a formula including how much graduates are expected to and how much courses cost to teach. Other countries, such as Britain, use a flat system where all students can be charged up to £9000 a year for any course, as reported in *The Age*.

Education Reform Debate Gets Childish

Education Minister **Simon Birmingham** says he wants to overhaul higher education funding to ensure universities and not making money by churning out graduates in fields where they will struggle to get a job. Senator **Birmingham**, who is consulting on higher education reform, said a 'key part' of his thinking was how to remove incentives for universities to enrol an excessive number of students in profitable courses such as law.

He also compared universities calling for more government funding to 'petulant toddlers' demanding more chocolate from their parents, writes **Matthew Knott** in *The Age*.

School Yard Bullying Needs to be Stamped Out

The *Herald Sun* reports parents whose children are bullied often believe the school is letting them down — and it's making some 'steaming mad'. Research reveals nearly 60 per cent of parents were not satisfied with how the incident was handled, and one in five thought there was not enough supervision of the schoolyard, a bullying hotspot. The Bullying in Australian Schools study also found students were more likely to confide in their parents about being victimised than teachers or school counsellors. The *Herald Sun*

Sexuality Quiz for Scholarship

A leading education scholarship provider backed by some of Australia's biggest businesses has begun quizzing high school students on their sexuality as part of its application process, sparking fresh concerns about the creeping influence of LGBTI rights activism on schools. The Australian Business and Community Network Scholarship Foundation is inviting applications for its 2016 grants program and, for the first time, is offering a grant targeted at Year 10 students who 'identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and/or intersex'. As reported in *The Australian*

Allowing universities to enrol as many students as they want has harmed the economy, diminished the value of higher education, and created the false view that anyone without a degree is a 'failure', according to the nation's most prestigious universities.

In a provocative speech to business and university leaders, **Vicki Thomson**, executive director of the Group of Eight (Go8) universities, will argue the surge of enrolments over recent years has left too many graduates with 'broken dreams and a large student debt'. She also blasts employers for demanding university qualifications for jobs that don't need them and expecting universities to operate as if they were factories churning out widgets. *The Age*

Schools not Meeting Parents Expectations

Parents believe schools are failing their children who are being bullied by taking no action or blaming the victims rather than punishing the bullies. A national taxpayer funded study of bullying in schools by the University of South Australia has exposed the large gulf between what parents expect schools to do about bullying, and what schools actually do, as per *The Age*

China Study Hotspot

More Australians studying in China than ever before, as the tide of the one-way student exchange turns back towards the booming Asian business market. A decade ago China was not even in the top 10 destinations for Australians studying abroad; Now student numbers have surged 37 per cent in the past year, or 83 per cent since 2011, with up to 5000 Australians studying in Chinese universities, according to China's Ministry of Education, as reported in *The Age*

Little known trumps the big boys

The *Australian Financial Review* reported that new data released last week on the Quality Indicators for Teaching and Learning (QILT) website (qilt.edu.au) shows that students rated Geelong agriculture and equine business institution Marcus Oldham College as the best in Australia for its overall education experience.

Schools need to embrace the digital age

The former managing director of the ABC, **Mark Scott**, was appointed as the new secretary of the NSW Department of Education in June. *The Age* reports Mr **Scott**, a former teacher, political advisor and editor before guiding the ABC into the digital era will absorb a pay cut of up to \$300,000 to take on the role. NSW Premier **Mike Baird** called Mr **Scott** 'one of the great leaders in this country.' 'He brings a proven track record, a deep understanding and passion for education,' said Mr **Baird**.

TRANSPORT

Watchdog Wants More Powers

Competition regulator **Rod Sims** has called for more powers to scrutinise collusive conduct by governments after being hamstrung in his dealings with NSW's Baird government on port privatisations. **Sims**, chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, said he can't take the **Baird** government to court over a cap on container traffic at the Port of Newcastle because governments enjoy wide immunity from competition law as per the *Australian Financial Review*.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Putin in the Pacific

The alarm should have sounded a couple of months ago when Chinese commentators began quoting **Vladimir Putin**, that 'if a fight is inevitable, go and fight first' as per *The Age*.

Tensions Between China-Australia Relations Rise

Tensions between Australia and China in the complex management of relations as investment partners and security rivals is inevitable, guaranteed to increase and constitutes an unprecedented challenge for our political and policy judgement.

Security sources confirm that Treasurer **Scott Morrison's** finding against the two bidders for the NSW electricity network lease- worth between \$10 billion and \$13 billion- reflects firm security assessments. The idea that **Morrison** Took this decision to appease a bunch of anti-China is xenophobes is nonsense, as reported by **Paul Kelly** in *The Weekend Australian*.

Might isn't Right

It's not often that a complex legal judgement has such an obvious and devastatingly clear outcome But that is what the Permanent Court of Arbitration achieved at The Hague in the Netherlands this week, when it ruled on a dispute between the Philippines and China over who owns a number of rocks and reefs in the South China Sea. China's claim that it has sovereign ownership of 80 per cent of the South China Sea – an area almost as big as the Mediterranean Ocean – was blown out of the water.

Chinese maps since 1947 have drawn a 'nine dash line' around most of the South China Sea, extending Beijing's 'ownership' as far south as Indonesia. This historical claim was trashed by the international Court, which was bluntly critical of China for encroaching on the Philippine's Exclusive Economic Zone. Beijing was criticised for destroying reefs and the region's marine environment as it built artificial islands, now housing missiles, radars and runways for combat aircraft.

At base, this is a dispute between two different ways of thinking about the world.

For the Philippines and most Southeast Asian countries as well as Australia, Japan and the United States, this is a matter of upholding the international rule of law based on agreements like the Law of the Sea Convention. Disputes are supposed to be settled peacefully through Courts reports **Peter Jennings** in a *Herald Sun* editorial.

Peter Jennings is the executive director of the Australian Strategic Policy Institute

UK Cabinet Picked

Apologies to the US 'will be at the front of the queue' quipped British Foreign **Secretary Boris Johnson**, just hours after learning of his new job from freshly appointed Prime Minister Theresa May. There was no place for the treacherous **Michael Gove**, who politically knifed **Johnson's** leadership ambitions, nor the Chancellor and **David Cameron's** right hand man, **George Osborne**, who was sacked to the back benches in May's new cabinet. *The Australian*

Top cabinet picks:

- **Chancellor: Philip Hammond**
- **Foreign Secretary: Boris Johnson**
- **Home Secretary: Amber Rudd**
- **Brexit Negotiator: David Davis**
- **International Trade: Liam Fox**
- **Defence Secretary: Michael Fallon**

East Timor eyes gap in Timor Sea row with Australia

The East Timor government has accused Australia of hypocrisy for appealing to China to use international law to resolve its disputes with Asian neighbours over the South China

Sea while refusing to do so itself in its ongoing tussle over the Timor Sea. *The Australian*

Dibb's Double Agent bombshell

Koshlyakov and his KGB predecessors who served in Canberra have good reason to remember **Dibb**, then a fast-rising military intelligence official and expert on the Soviet Union. *The Australian* reported for almost two decades of the Cold War, from 1965 until 1984, **Dibb** led a secret life that required dangerous liaisons with suspected KGB agents including — in **Dibb's** words — 'that tough, hard bastard' **Koshlyakov**.

To the rest of the world, **Dibb** was a successful public servant and academic, rising to prominence as the author of the seminal 1986 Dibb report — a document that still guides Australian defence policy.

PNG Dispute Over LNG

Oil Search and ExxonMobil have held urgent talks with Papua New Guinea Prime Minister **Peter O'Neill** in a bid to prevent the escalation of landowner grievances that could disrupt production at their PNG LNG venture. Landowner protests over unpaid royalties and benefits from \$US19 billion PNG LNG venture have so far not affected production, according to joint-adventure sources, as reported in *The Australian Financial Review*.

Trip Down Under for Uncle Joe

United States Vice-President Joe Biden was treated to whirlwind tour of Melbourne's finest, with friendship, first-class medicine, food and footy taking centre stage. The VCCC will receive \$1 billion to host up to 1200 cancer researchers, and each year several of them will get the chance to travel to the US. Mr Biden also met with World War II veterans to present them with an American flag, as per the *Herald Sun*.

Fire Drill Powers for Liquidity

The prudential regulator has stepped up its scrutiny of bank liquidity since last month's disruptive Brexit vote, using a new 'fire drill' power that gives lenders only 24 hours to prepare and hand over up-to-date liquidity data. The data, along with discussions between the Australian Prudential Regulation Authority and the banks on funding, market risk exposures and developments in offshore funding markets, has enabled regulators to conclude that bank liquidity has not been significantly affected by Brexit, as reported in *The Australian*.

US-NZ Renew Ties

For the first time in 30 years, a US warship will visit New Zealand waters — an outcome that ends a standoff dating from the depths of the Cold War. US Vice-President **Joe Biden** made the announcement in a whistle-stop tour of New Zealand, where the news was swiftly condemned by activist groups who planned to protest against the arrival of the warship with a 'peace flotilla'.

The visit will be made in response to an official invitation for a US ship to attend the Royal New Zealand Navy's 75th anniversary celebration in November. The move represents a breakthrough in a three-decade disagreement over New Zealand's decision to embrace a 'nuclear-free' policy enforced after the election of David Lange's Labour Party government in 1984, as reported in *The Australian*

PNG PM Protests

Up to 18 people, most of them students, were shot and wounded last month when Papua New Guinea police fired on hundreds of protesters demanding the resignation of Prime Minister **Peter O'Neill**, as per the *Herald Sun*

IS Atrocity

Knife-wielding attackers interrupted a French church service, forced the priest to his knees and slit his throat, a murder made even more shocking as one of the assailants was a known would-be jihadist under supposedly tight surveillance. As the attackers came out of the church shouting 'Allahu akbar' ('God is Greatest') they were shot and killed by police. The men arrived during morning mass in Saint-Etienne-du-Rouvray, a working-class town near Rouen, northwest of Paris, where the 85-year-old parish priest, Father **Jacques Hamel**, was leading prayers. *The Australian Financial Review*

DEFENCE

Joint Exercise Provides Gold Mine of Intel

Australia is likely to have military assets in the South China Sea to gather vital intelligence on a joint drill between Chinese and Russian forces next month. The exercise between Chinese and Russian ships and planes is intended to send a signal of defiance to the West, but Defence sources and experts say it will also provide a gold mine of intelligence on how major powers' militaries work together, as reported in *The Age*.

Approved Arsenal

The US has approved an arsenal of missiles worth more than \$400 million for the navy's new Air Warfare Destroyers, saying a strong Australian military capability is vital to security in the Asia-Pacific and to keeping open crucial sea lanes, which would include the South China Sea. The SM-2 missiles, designed to destroy incoming supersonic missiles, will be used to test the equipment aboard the navy's three new AWDs and to arm the warships once they are operational.

They will give the navy the ability to protect the fleet or troops near a shore by destroying attacking aircraft or incoming missiles travelling at several times the speed of sound, from up to 90 nautical miles away, as reported in *The Australian*

Push For Australian Defence Work

In his first big decision as he puts his stamp on his new role as Defence Industry Minister, **Christopher Pyne** announced international companies tendering to supply 225 new armoured vehicles for the Australian Defence Force must ensure as much work as possible is done in Australia. This second stage of the \$10 billion-plus, four phase Land 400 program is for the 225 combat reconnaissance vehicles for the army that will replace the ageing fleet of 250 ASLAV light armoured vehicles.

In the four-stage process, the army is replacing its 'soft-skinned' Land Rovers, troop carriers and patrol vehicles that date back to the 1960s and 80s and which could not survive on the modern battlefield where improvised bombs have become the weapon of choice of insurgent groups, as per *The Australian*

Defence Inquiry

Senator **Jackie Lambie** has called for a senate inquiry into the Department of Veterans' Affairs after revelations of a hidden toll of military suicides. A *Herald Sun* investigation found 41 defence personnel and veterans have killed themselves this year alone - the same number of lives lost in combat during 13 years of war in Afghanistan.

Donations Potentially Funding Terrorists

Justice Minister **Michael Keenan** has urged Australians to ensure that they are donating to legitimate charities after a report revealed there was a high risk of terrorism funding being channelled through non-profit organisations. The

warning comes after the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade suspended the funding of World Vision programs in Palestinian Territories after Israel claimed the head of the charity in Gaza was bankrolling Hamas, as per *The Age*.

Planes Grounded Due to Contamination

The Royal Australian Air Force's fleet of B300 King Airplanes have been grounded for more than a month after aircrew were exposed to cancer-causing chemicals in the aircraft cabins. The 16-strong fleet, operated by Victorian-based 32 squadron and Townsville based 38 squadron was suspended from flying operations on June 30 as a precautionary safety measure after strontium chromate was detected inside the plane's environmental control system, as report in the *Herald Sun*.

Australian Security Contractor Pardoned

A former Australian soldier who claims he shot an Afghan colleague in self-defence is home after serving seven years in a Kabul jail for murder. **Robert Langdon** was released last week after Afghan President **Ashraf Ghani** pardoned him. His tearful mother, father and sister greeted him at Adelaide airport on Tuesday night. Mr **Langdon** was a private security contractor when he shot an Afghan colleague while escorting a convoy to an American base in 2009. He always insisted his colleague had pulled a gun on him, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

HEALTH

NDIS Meltdown Leaves Patients Stranded

Service providers to the National Disability Insurance Scheme have been underpaid while clients have been forced to cancel their appointments as the \$22 billion program falls into disarray after a technology bundle. As revealed by *The Australian*, the system has broken down at the busiest point in the schemes history, as it starts this month assessing and approving individual plans for 430,000 people over the next three years.

South Australian Dignity for Disability MP **Kelly Vincent** called on the federal government to intervene and fix the computer problem, which she said had blocked some people's access to disability services for more than a month.

Reform to Support Local Doctors

Overseas-Trained medical practitioners would no longer be granted visas to work in Australia, under a contentious proposal from the Health Department that heralds the end of the nation's shortage of locally trained doctors. With thousands of foreign doctors currently in the system, and an increasing number of local graduates, the department has secretly argued that Australian-trained doctors will struggle to find jobs if immigration pathways not closed.

The department wants 41 health rolls-including general practitioners, resident medical offices, surgeons and anaesthetists – to be removed from the Skilled Occupations List in the hope that Australian doctors will fill areas of need, particularly in remote areas. Well its recommendations were not accepted by the **Turnbull** government in visa changes made before the election, they will be revisited within months and Health Minister **Susan Lay** has foreshadowed broader workforce reforms next year.

The Australian Medical Association and the Rural Doctors Association welcomed the move to restrict visas but it prompted calls the greater incentives and support for local doctors, inflaming

tensions over Medicare freeze and public hospital funding. After misguided attempt to cut costs by restricting doctor numbers, successive governments funded new medical schools and increase the number of graduates to the point where training places and internships and now hard to secure, as reported in *The Australian*

Disability Insurance Scheme Mess

The landmark \$22 billion National Disability Insurance Scheme is in disarray after a technology bungle led to some providers being unpaid for almost two months and only a handful of support packages finished since July 1. The system has broken down at the busiest point in the scheme's history, with the start of the month marking the period in which it must start assessing and approving individual plans for 430,000 people over the next three years.

The planning process is the core function of the NDIS agency, as it must meet and settle on a 'reasonable and necessary' support package for every person, as reported in *The Australian*

Pharmacists Reform

Pharmacists could see their PBS funding cut if they don't limit the space they devote to retail products, and restrictions put on the types of products they sell under potential reform measures canvassed by a major federal government review. A pharmacist's dual role as retailer and healthcare professional had blurred the line between treating people as customers or patients, the Pharmacy Remuneration and Regulation review panel has heard.

It meant community pharmacists face a conflict of interest by offering patients unnecessary over-the-counter and complementary medicines to boost their earnings, according to the review's discussion paper released, as reported in *The Age*

INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

Bias of ABC is now a menace

Andrew Bolt, senior editor for the *Herald Sun* suggests two explosive ABC reports published in late July proved [the] biased state broadcaster is now a public menace. First, the ABC falsely presented the restraint by detention staff of a violent youth as the torture of a near-innocent boy. Next, it presented Australia's top Catholic, Cardinal George Pell, as a sexual predator of children, based on the highly unreliable memories of people recalling ambiguous events more than 30 years old. It is believed that the reports on Territory detention were developed to bias a Labor win at the August Northern Territory election.

The consequences have been devastating. In a knee-jerk response to the first report, Prime Minister **Malcolm Turnbull** called a royal commission into the Northern Territory's juvenile justice system. Bad memory is excusable, but how the ABC abused its massive state power can never be excused.

Calls for Final Settlement

Two of the nation's most prominent indigenous leaders have jointly called for constitutional recognition to become a process of reaching 'final settlement' with indigenous people, a radical shift that would be more akin to a network of treaties. But Cape York leader **Noel Pearson** and Arnhem Land leader Galarwuy Yunupingu have likened the 'settlement' to the Yolngu idea of *makarrata*, the atonement that comes from spearing a killer in the leg.

The two men called for the Constitution to recognise individual First Nations bodies, so each could then negotiate deals with governments. The treaty-like approach marks a major shift for both: Mr Pearson has previously favoured an indigenous representative body. Last year Mr Yunupingu said constitutional recognition and a treaty were 'two different things', with the former the right one to pursue now.

Both are members of the Referendum Council charged with plotting the next steps. Their change in posture appears to partly respond to messages the Referendum Council is hearing as it moves around the country, that constitutional recognition without a treaty-like settlement would be unacceptable to indigenous people. Many pundits think this sort of push towards more radical change — distinct from the sort of symbolic recognition the word is often taken to convey — will doom the prospects of reaching consensus about a referendum proposition, which, even then, would be unlikely to pass, as reported in *The Australian*

SPORTS

McEwen Delivers At Rio

Emma McEwen delivered a stunning 200m freestyle performance with a brave swim to claim bronze at the Rio Olympic Games. She became the first Australian swimmer at this meet to win multiple medals, adding the bronze to the gold in the women's 4x100m freestyle relay on day one, as reported in *Herald Sun*.

Russia in the Firing Line

The Age editorial suggests that by failing to ban Russia from the 2016 Rio Olympics Games, the IOC has ... failed to uphold the Olympic spirit. Through a lack of courage and conviction, the IOC has missed a much-needed opportunity to restore integrity to the Olympics, which have for years been undermined by doping and drugs scandals. Instead of enforcing 'the educational value of good example', the IOC has failed to provide leadership at the very moment the Olympic movement needs it most.

Instead of respecting 'universal fundamental ethical principles', the IOC has turned a blind eye to the darkest cheating scandal the Olympics have seen in more than a century of competition. Olympic supremo **John Coates** has defended arguing against Australia's position on banning Russia from the Rio Olympics, despite being paid in consultancy fees as Australian Olympic Committee president during his career.

Coates, a senior vice-president of the International Olympic Committee executive board, has cited his loyalty to the IOC in explaining his involvement in and public support for the decision to allow Russia to compete in Rio despite evidence of state-sanctioned protection for drug cheats. 'Members of the IOC swear an oath of allegiance to the IOC,' he said. **Coates** is also president of the AOC and the International Court for Arbitration in Sport, the body that will ultimately need to resolve any disputes involving Russian athletes excluded from Rio, as reported in *The Australian*

Charmers Ends 48-Year Drought In The Pool

Kyle Chalmers is the first Australian to win the Olympic 100m freestyle gold medal in 48 years, Surging from seventh the first in the last 50m in one of the quickest finishes in Games swimming history. And stunned to have left in his wake Australia's race favourite, his close

mate and idol **Cameron McEvoy**, who struggled in the worst race of his life to finish seventh.

The realisation that he was the Olympic champion didn't sink in until he stood on the podium, felt the gold medal, heard the national anthem playing, and saw his family in the grandstand, in tears, as reported in the *Herald Sun*.

Swimmers Fall Short of High Standards

Australian Olympic greats have called for an drastic overhaul of coaching, competition and training regimes after the national swim team fell short of its projected gold-medal haul in Rio. The Australians arrived in Rio on a high following last year's haul of seven gold medals at the world titles in Kazan, but after two gold medals on the first day of competition – to the women's 4x100m relay team and **Mack Horton** in the 400m - the team dropped away, only winning one more, narrowly improving on its London haul. In comparison the US team claim 16 out of 32 gold medals, as reported in *The Australian*.

SOCIETY

PETA Gripe Over Bacon And Eggs

Animal rights group PETA wants to change the name of Tasmania's **Eggs and Bacon Bay** to a more vegan-friendly alternative. They are suggesting perhaps 'Apple and Cherry Bay' to promote not only the local fruit industry but also kindness to animals, according to *The Age*.

Man's Best Friend

Guide Dogs Australia has been named as the countries most trusted charity for the fourth successive year. Chief executive of Guide Dogs Victoria, **Karen Hayes**, said the charity was grateful for the recognition of its work after receiving the *Reader's Digest* award. It cost \$35,000 to train each guide dog to work with the visually impaired, as reported in the *Herald Sun*

Same sex marriage Surge

Support for same-sex marriage has surged to a record high. The plebiscite was engineered by **Tony Abbott** in 2015 and adopted by Mr Turnbull when he took the leadership to satisfy the progressive and conservative wings of the Coalition, as reported in *The Age*.

Sydney Tops Hot List

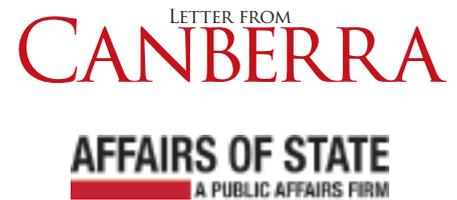
Sydney - and NSW generally - dominate *The Weekend Australian's* Hot 50 restaurant list for 2016: The Bridge Room won Hottest Restaurant, Hubert the Hottest New Restaurant, Clayton Wells from Automata took out Hottest Chef and Sepia claimed Hottest Dish. And the sheer number of imminent projects suggest little change to the city's stranglehold on dining innovation.

In *The Weekend Australian's* fifth annual roundup of our hottest restaurants, NSW backs up its dominance with a further 18 listings in this year's B List of the 50 restaurants we consider the second tier of must-do dining experiences across the nation. Unsurprisingly, Melbourne and Victoria are the next strongest performers.

Tartan Symbolism Mostly Bogus

The real history of tartan is not a clan-based system of what may be worn by whom, but a sartorial free-for-all. Some of the earliest tartan was found on a 3000-year-old mummy discovered in the Taklamakan desert in northwest China. The *Vestiarium Scoticum*, published in 1842, identified and listed the various 'official' Scottish tartans.

Encouraged by this royal obsession, sartorial snobs and canny retailers began creating tartans at an astonishing rate, investing them with tribal symbolic meaning and complicated clan lineage, most of it totally bogus. There are somewhere between 3500 and 7000 different tartans, with around 150 new ones being invented every year, according to **Ben MacIntyre** in *The Times*



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