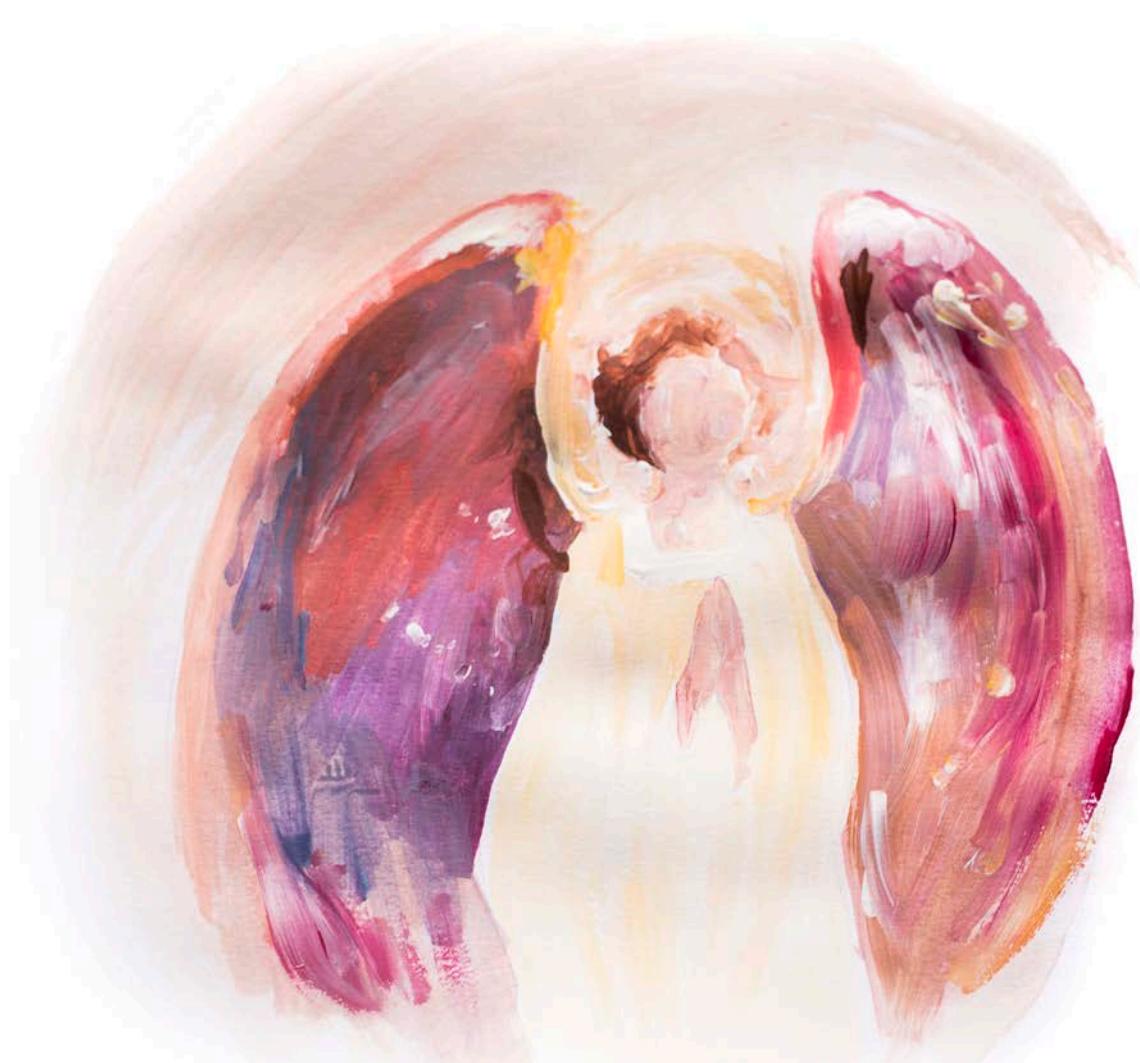


# LETTER FROM CANBERRA

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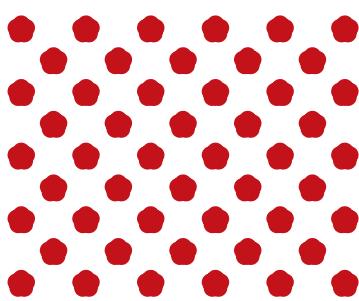
Christmas Edition/New Year Thinking/Reflection Edition

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- Super
- Housing affordability
- 18C
- Protesters on Parliament Hill
- (The) Big Industrial Relations Reform
- Rio in the news
- New Reserve Bank Chair
- Education feature by Cheryl Lacey

## SPECIAL FEATURE



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THE AMERICAN ELECTION:

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Six Weeks On

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# LETTER FROM CANBERRA

A monthly digest of news from around Australia.  
Saving you time; now in its ninth 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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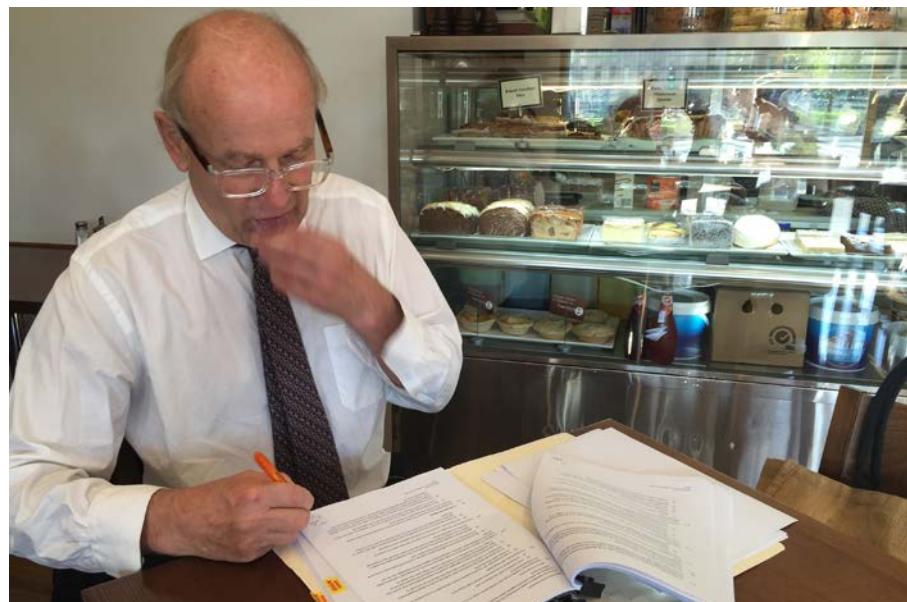
## **ABOUT THE EDITOR—ALISTAIR URQUHART, BA LLB**

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.

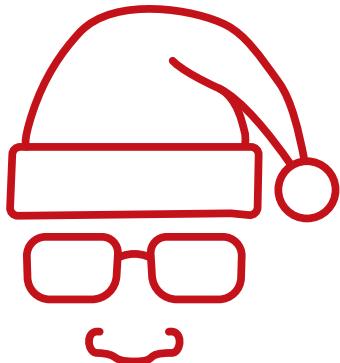
He was admitted as a barrister and solicitor to the Supreme Court of Victoria, and remains a (non-practicing) member of the Law Institute of Victoria. Previously, he graduated from high school in Bethesda, Maryland, and had many opportunities to become aware of the workings of Washington D.C.

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

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



Editor in his Spring Street coffee shop working away.



## **EDITORIAL—CHRISTMAS EDITION/NEW YEAR THINKING/REFLECTION EDITION**

The Economy is even more important than that other E word, Energy. The Federal Budget half-year update comes out as we are hitting the press. But perhaps, there is no doubt that Budget cuts are on the way. Let alone something much worse, which would be the down-grading of Australia's credit status from AAA.

This would make everything more expensive including the building of Key infrastructure, including energy infrastructure.

Energy-wise, the Prime Minister and his parliamentary team need to gauge what the various voting communities around Australia want. Not everyone lives in Northcote and Richmond in Victoria.

Australia does not need or want Schemers and Dreamers. Banjo Paterson referred to this type and your Editor no doubt will find the particular poem over the Christmas time, as Professor Google could not help.

Australia wants a proximate partisan and practical/objective approach as to its next thirty-year Energy future.

Moving back to the Economy, the industrial relations reform, which will affect the economy perhaps as much as anything in this Government's term, has been passed. With lots of nibbling at the edges by the senatorial road runners (independent-ishes).

The Protesters in Parliament House in Canberra. Let Australia refer back to the time when respect and protocols sat alongside the law, and people who did not fit into our Society were treated accordingly. If need be, just focus on the Law of the Land.

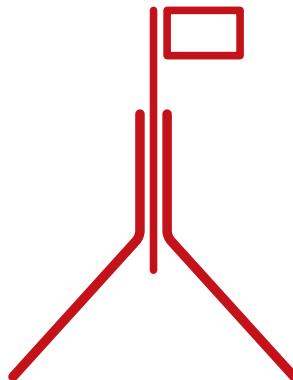
Not going to read a book this Christmas. Last Christmas night, your Editor settled in to read **Other People's Money**, 2015 a hard three hundred pages that a good accountant friend had suggested be read because the Australian Prime Minister evidently had it on his own reading list for Dec/Jan. Glad I read it but it was a most hard and thoughtful (important) book. It took three days to finish, almost no speed reading available for him.

Let us hope that our national Parliamentarians have some rest, and also put pen to paper for their focus/objectives for 2017 and the next ten or twenty years.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

## **FEATURE ITEMS**

- New Solicitor-General
- Super
- Housing affordability
- 18C
- Protesters on Parliament Hill
- (The) Big Industrial Relations Reform
- Rio in the news.
- New Reserve Bank Chair
- Education article by Cheryl Lacey



## **GOVERNANCE**

### **Deal**

The **Turnbull** government sealed the vital Senate deal that cleared the way for the government's landmark workplace relations reform, offering a pledge on the Murray-Darling to bring his agenda back from the brink of disaster, as reported in THE AUSTRALIAN.

### **The Seeds Of Discontent**

The seeds of dispute that helped deliver Donald Trump his shock victory in the US are growing in Australia, Opposition Leader **Bill Shorten** has warned. In an address to Labor Party faithful playing directly to a traditional industrial base, Shorten has claimed the Australian economy is no longer working in the interests of ordinary people, with falling living standards, rising inequality, deteriorating job security and a generation of people clamped out of the housing market, according to THE AGE.

### **ABS Jobs Cut**

The jobs of more than 150 Australian Bureau of Statistics public servants are to be axed as the cash-strapped bureau struggles to balance its shrinking budget and in the wake of the census debacle, as per THE AGE

### **Rudd v Turnbull over Asylum Policy**

The public feud between **Turnbull** and **Kevin Rudd** has escalated, with the former Labor leader accusing the Prime Minister of lying about their private discussions on asylum seeker policy. Rudd has challenged Turnbull to provide evidence to support his repeated assertions that he 'begged'

Rudd not to dismantle the Pacific Solution policy introduced by **John Howard** to stop the boats.

He has branded the Turnbull account as 'total reinvention of history' to 'try and pretend he has had a consistent position on Manus and Nauru', saying Turnbull was not even opposition leader when the policy was dismantled. Turnbull has consistently maintained he 'begged' Rudd not to dismantle the Pacific Solution, which included detaining asylum seekers in camps on Manus Island and Nauru, boat turnbacks and temporary protection visas, according to THE AGE.

### **Marriage Equality Issue Continues**

Same-sex marriage may not be dead in parliament with talks continuing among Liberals about ways to resolve the issue before the next election. Backbench MPs are discussing ways to hold a parliamentary vote on the issue next year over fears it would dominate debate at the next federal election.

Any vote would require the Liberals' party room to revisit the issue for the first time since Labor blocked the plebiscite in the Senate in October.

One idea being pushed is for the government to work with crossbench MPs to introduce a Bill to parliament giving the Coalition 'total control' over the legislation, reports the HERALD SUN.

### **QUT Case Gives Life to 18C Reform**

A judge has thrown out a controversial case of alleged racial vilification at the Queensland University of Technology, as an inquiry into Australia's race hate laws looks set to be announced. The QUT ruling, which has emboldened Coalition MPs pushing for changes to section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act, comes as **Turnbull** gave his clearest signal yet that an inquiry will be held into the provision and freedom of speech.

Federal Circuit Court judge **Michael Jarrett** dismissed a case against three QUT students embroiled in controversy over Facebook comments made after an incident in a computer lab reserved for Indigenous students, THE AGE reports.

### **18C Reform For Democracy's Sake**

Changing section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act is not a 'niche' issue, but fundamental for bolstering Australia's democracy, Liberal MP **Andrew Hastie** says. Speaking at a special forum at Parliament House, Hastie said he was concerned that recent action by the Australian Human Rights Commission in response to complaints made under section 18C represented 'a cultural trend towards increased state regulation' of democratic freedoms, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

### **CSIRO New Direction**

After months of turmoil at the CSIRO, Science Minister **Greg Hunt** has stepped in with a new statement of expectations for the organisation. Mr Hunt hopes it will set the body on the path

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to being the world's premier public research institution. The statement sets a clear focus on pure science and climate research alongside the 'innovation catalyst' role championed by chief executive **Larry Marshall**. One leading CSIRO environmental scientist THE AGE spoke to described it as a 'clear repudiation' of the direction Dr Marshall had been taking the organisation.

### Election Campaigning Reform Wanted

The federal director of the Liberal Party **Tony Nutt** has said the party will push for new laws to make it illegal to impersonate government organisations such as Medicare after it blamed texts sent by the Queensland Labor Party for a poor showing at the federal election.

Nutt also suggested the Liberal Party wanted election advertising authorisation laws – which force parties to say upfront that they produced certain television and radio ads – to also apply to Facebook and other social media ads, according to THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### Shorten Ethnic Push

Labor is attempting to mobilise ethnic communities against the Liberal Party's latest push to water down legal protections against hate speech enshrined in section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act. An opinion piece by Opposition Leader **Bill Shorten** has appeared in Chinese and Arabic-language newspapers and Jewish publications, claiming changes to section 18C are 'a vendetta driven by ideology, a nonsense fixation of the extreme right wing of the Liberal Party', THE AGE reports.

### Cuts to Save AAA

The government has hailed the passage of its \$6 billion in cuts to superannuation concessions as an important step in preserving the nation's AAA credit rating but warned the rating remained at risk unless Parliament passed another \$20 billion in spending cuts and revenue increases, according to THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### Super Changes

With the superannuation reforms announced recently by **Scott Morrison** (subject to legislation) and expected to take effect in July 2017, retirees may need to consider other retirement strategies beyond superannuation to boost income returns. One of the changes is a cap on how much can be transferred into tax free pension phase at retirement with \$1.6 million for an individual and \$3.2m for a couple, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Happy Snaps Now Allowed in the Senate

Politicians who fall asleep or play games on their phones during parliamentary business will no longer be shielded from scrutiny after the Senate voted to scrap strict restrictions on photography. Crossbench senator **Derryn Hinch** moved a motion to abolish the rule and it was passed by the Senate.

The vote followed a long lobbying campaign by photographers and media organisations that argued important moments in Australian democracy were being censored under the restrictions. The move ends the anomaly in which photographers were free to take pictures at all times in the House of Representatives but not in the Senate, according to THE AGE.

### Politician Slam Triggers an Apology

A regretful **Gillian Triggs** says she was 'very frustrated' when she slammed Australian politicians as ignorant and uneducated in an infamous newspaper interview. The Australian

Human Rights Commission boss was hauled back before Senate estimates to explain misleading evidence she gave at a similar hearing in October, according to THE AGE.

### Gannon Pulls no Punches over Backpacker Tax

Reprehensible. That is the only word to describe the backpacker tax farce. And there are a few more words I could use to describe the participants in this shameful exercise. The Liberals are dumb and the Nationals are weak. Labor members are nothing more than cynical opportunists, while One Nation is a rabble.

Senator **Nick Xenophon** is a political blackmailer. **Jacqui Lambie** is confused and **Derryn Hinch** is a dithering dill. The absurd backpacker tax saga has exposed how reckless our political system has become. Everyone involved in this ill-conceived mess of how to tax backpackers looks like a buffoon, writes the Editor of the **Weekly Times** **Ed Gannon** for the HERALD SUN.

### Carbon Pricing Could Be Costly for Turnbull

Turnbull cannot afford a carbon pricing argument. The Coalition must focus on energy security and affordability. Depending on the actions of our trading partners, if Australia imposes extra costs on energy, we risk further diminishing our natural advantage in secure and affordable power for little, if any, global environment gain, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.



### PARTY HAPPENINGS

#### Out in the Bush

New NSW National leader **John Barilaro** has moved to ease divisions in the party following the Orange By-election disaster, declaring a 'clean slate for all members' and offering **Troy Grant**, the man he replaced, a continued role in the Baird government ministry.

#### And Another change

Now NSW Deputy Premier, Mr Barilaro was elected party leader unopposed following Mr Grant's resignation. Education Minister **Adrian Piccoli** also stood aside as Nationals

deputy leader, succeeded by Primary Industries Minister **Niall Blair**. Mr Grant resigned after backing a disastrous greyhound racing ban, since overturned, according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Hewson Hits Out at Coalition

Former Liberal federal leader **Jon Hewson** has accused the Coalition of 'cheap political arse-covering' over attempts to link **Malcolm Fraser's** 1970s immigration policies to criminal gang activity and Islamic radicalisation in Australia today. Succumbing to the lure of a 'friendly' conservative barracker, Immigration Minister **Peter Dutton**, whose job it is to promote multiculturalism, has told **Andrew Bolt** that Malcolm Fraser erred in the 1970s by allowing so many people into the country from certain places, THE AGE reports.

### Nationals Tobacco Conflict

A member of **Barnaby Joyce's** frontbench team has publicly voiced concerns about the Nationals continued acceptance of tobacco company donations as senior party figures also agitate for a ban. **David Gillespie** joined the frontbench after the July 2 election as Assistant Minister for Rural Health, a portfolio that gives him responsibility for the **Turnbull** government's policies on tobacco. The former physician admits he is 'conflicted' about his party's stance, according to THE AGE.

### Keating Legacy Mistake

Twenty-five years after **Paul Keating** became prime minister, there is recognition at Labor's highest levels that it was a blunder for the party led by **Kim Beazley** to distance itself from his legacy after the 1996 election. **Kevin Rudd** and **Julia Gillard** the two Labor prime ministers to follow Mr Keating, have criticised Mr Beazley for this error and concede it probably cost Labor an earlier return to government, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Viva La Revolucion

Former prime minister **Tony Abbott** has joined some of his Liberal colleagues calling for Labor and Greens MPs to explain their displays of support for 'murderous' former Cuban leader **Fidel Castro**, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

### Cabinet Reshuffle

Defence Minister **Marise Payne's** illness and surgery have increased speculation in Coalition ranks that there will be a ministerial reshuffle just before Christmas or in the first quarter of next year. Nothings definite and cabinet ministers are remaining disciplined but the end-of-year shuffle hounds have been let loose. Treasurer **Scott Morrison** was admitted to hospital and had his gall bladder removed, but returned quickly to work and prompted no speculation about his future, according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

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## Schools Out

Stalin, Churchill, Cicero, Harry Potter, Tintin and Awesome Man are on the reading lists of our federal politicians this summer – if they can find time between binging on **The Crown**, **House of Cards** and **Shameless**. **Turnbull** is planning to get through a dozen books, beginning with **A.S Patric's Miles Franklin** winner **Black Rock White City** and **Tim Winton's Island Home**, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

## Parko Departs Turnbull Team

**Turnbull's** senior political adviser **Tony 'Parko' Parkinson** had been running government relations at supermarket Coles under **Kevin Rudd's** former chief of staff turned **Richard Goyder** protégé **Alister Jordan**. Before that he worked for Turnbull in opposition, and before that was a senior adviser to **Alexander Downer** when Downer was foreign minister, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

## Green Army Has MPs Seeing Red

Discontent is stirring within the Coalition backbench over the decision to dump the Green Army in the midyear budget update, with MPs vowing to agitate for retention when Parliament resumes next year. Coalition MPs with high levels of youth unemployment in their electorates have complained directly to **Malcolm Turnbull**, Treasurer **Scott Morrison** and Environment Minister **Josh Frydenberg** after THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW revealed the program would be dumped to save \$360 million.

## Cross Cross.

**Turnbull** is disloyal to ministers, few of whom will now go out on a limb for him, knowing he's likely to saw it off. The truth about Turnbull can no longer be dodged; in this form, he cannot lead the liberals to victory. Firstly, the Prime Minister allowed one of his best ministers, **Josh Frydenberg**, to publicly float the idea of a new kind of carbon tax – an 'emissions intensity scheme' in which coal-fired generators are forced to subsidise wind and solar farms.

'We'll look at it,' Frydenberg said. This was idiotic, especially when Australians had just seen what this green war costs: more blackouts in wind-powered South Australia, and a 10 per cent jump in electricity prices in Victoria after the announced closure of one of the state's biggest coal-fire generators. Outraged Liberal backbenchers revolted, and Turnbull in a panic humiliated Frydenberg, now deeply wounded.

Turnbull didn't only scrap the suggested scheme, insisting he was against any such kind of emissions trading or carbon tax. He also acted dishonourably. He briefed journalists that the normally cautious Frydenberg had somehow gone off on some mad frolic of his own. Cabinet Ministers know this false. They were in the Cabinet meeting when Frydenberg presented the terms of reference of his proposed inquiry into global-warming policies in front of Turnbull, writes **Andrew Bolt** for THE HERALD SUN.

## One More for Hanson?

Former mechanic and soldier **Steven Burgess** could become a surprise fifth senator for **Pauline Hanson's** One Nation under a raft of possibilities if the High Court orders a recount of the South Australian Senate voting. Experts were unable to predict who would win if **Bob Day's** election as a Family First senator on July 2 was ruled invalid, according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

## One Less for Hanson?

One Nation's **Rod Culleton** insists he was eligible to have been elected as a senator as he fights for his job before the nation's highest court. The

court deliberated over a larceny conviction against him at the time of the July 2 election, later annulled, for taking a tow truck key. He later pleaded guilty to the charge but no conviction was recorded. He was supported in court by Lower House MP **Bob Katter**. The High Court has reserved its decision, reports the HERALD SUN.

## Green Army Dumped

Former prime minister **Tony Abbott** has accused the **Turnbull** government of prioritising the Greens over the Coalition with its decision to scrap the Green Army. Following revelations by THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW that Abbott's signature environmental initiative will be abolished, the former prime minister took to Facebook to make his inflammatory claims.

The Green Army, which cost the budget about \$90 million a year, was established after Abbott won office in 2013. Using funds stripped from Landcare, it aimed to create an 'army' of 15,000 unemployed people aged between 17 and 24 to work on local conservation projects such as landscape restoration and species protection. The decision to scrap the Green Army was taken by the expenditure review committee.

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND EMPLOYMENT

### Migrant Worker Taskforce

Domestic slavery, sex slaves and scandal ridden convenience store chain 7-Eleven are top of the agenda for a new powerful government-run migrant taskforce headed by Professor **Allan Fels**, reports THE AGE.

### New Union

The formation of the Retail and Fast Food Workers Union (RAFFWU) is a response to a nationwide wages scandal centred on workplace agreements by the conservative Shop, Distributive & Allied Employees Association with major employers including Coles, Woolworths and McDonald's.

A 15-month Fairfax Media investigation revealed how the deals left more than 250,000 workers paid less than the award – the basic wages safety net – and saved big business more than an estimated \$300 million a year, according to THE AGE.

### Unions Costing Australians

More than \$100 billion worth of projects have been disrupted by construction union 'lawlessness', according to new analysis release by the **Turnbull** government to try and persuade the Senate to pass the Australian Building and Construction Commission bill. Employment minister **Michaelia Cash** told THE AUSTRALIAN the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union has been found guilty of workplace law breaches on projects worth \$78bn and was facing the courts for alleged breaches on projects worth \$25bn.

'The list of projects affected by CFMEU lawlessness is simply staggering – everything from major gas export projects, to major road and rail projects, to children's hospitals, schools, social housing and community facilities' Cash said. 'Lawlessness and dysfunction means all these facilities cost more, get delayed, or both.'

## FWC 'Interfered' With CFA Dispute

Pressure is mounting on federal Employment Minister **Michaelia Cash** to investigate the president of the Fair Work Commission after she received a complaint he improperly interfered in Victoria's Country Fire Authority Dispute. And the FWC commissioner behind the controversial agreement to end the dispute between the CFA and the United Firefighters Union could also be probed over his behaviour during the case, according to the HERALD SUN.

## Landlease Pay Rise

One of the nation's biggest contractors, Landlease, has agreed to new age deals with the militant construction union that deliver more than 20 per cent in pay rises over four years, more than double the average annual increase being paid in the private sector, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

## 457 the Key to Tech Success

Restricting foreign workers will limit the tech sector. When Atlassian co-founder **Mike Cannon-Brookes** talks, it's time to listen.

Cannon-Brookes has not only founded one of the most successful Australian companies in recent years (with his friend **Scott Farquhar**), which now has a market capitalisation of more than \$6 billion, he is responsible for creating thousands of new jobs here and overseas. Not yet 40, he is a self-made billionaire with a global business in a highly competitive market.

The total number of people coming in on 457 visas has already gone down from 70,000 a year a few years ago to 45,000 today. The tech industry is one of the biggest users of the visas, working within a ceiling of 5000 a year. Cannon-Brookes can see that the political rush to exploit anti-immigration sentiment is inevitably hit companies such as his.

Founded in 2002, Atlassian has 2000 employees around the world including 1000 in Australia. 25 per cent of its Australian workforce are on 457 visas. Most are software engineers. As he points out, Australia produces only 2000 computer science graduates a year – far less than the 5000 foreign workers that come into the country on 457 visas. The real demand, he says, is more than 7000 workers, writes **Glenda Korporaal** for THE AUSTRALIAN.

## ABCC to be a Code Changer

Civil penalties would be tripled and sweetheart deals limiting court action banned under a new Australian Building and Construction Commission that would have the power to target unions in the offshore oil and gas sector. But the proposed ABCC will not, in the short term, deliver the changes to work practices in the construction sector promised by the Coalition.

Workplace legal experts and senior industry figures said it was a proposed new restrictive industry code, to be put separately to parliament after the ABCC Bill, that would drive the changes, desired by the Coalition. But if the government makes no concessions about the proposed code, hundreds of companies will soon be immediately disqualified from bidding for federal building work because they have agreements that do not comply with it.

The government said any enterprise agreements struck since April 2014 will have to comply with the new code for companies to get government work. Most of the 1500 agreements struck by the CFMEU would be in breach because they contain clauses not allowed by the code, as reported in THE AUSTRALIAN.

### The Land of Bureaucracy

The Palaszczuk government now employs more than a quarter of a million people, with Queensland's bureaucracy ballooning by more than 2500 full-time-equivalent workers in three months. Ms Palaszczuk defended the hiring splurge as indicative of the government's determination to restore and improve the state's services, insisting most of the extra 2544 full-time-equivalent (FTE) staff had been employed in health and education, reports THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Drop Tools

Unions have launched a fierce campaign at more than a dozen building sites in a last-minute bid to crush the Turnbull government's workplace reforms, as Senate crossbenchers prepare for a deal that could legislate the changes within days. The peak construction union will use the rolling stoppages to escalate demands for wage deals that defy the government's new law, reports THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Strike Leads to Job Losses

Anglo American has started sacking workers at the German Creek coal mine in Queensland after a 100-day strike by CFMEU members led the Fair Work Commission to give the go ahead to a redundancy campaign. In effect, union action at German Creek has revealed operational efficiencies that save Anglo \$40 million over three years and provided management with both financial incentive and legal justification for the 82 redundancies it is seeking to make. The bitterest irony is that a CFMEU strike aimed at increasing job security has led to members being made redundant, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

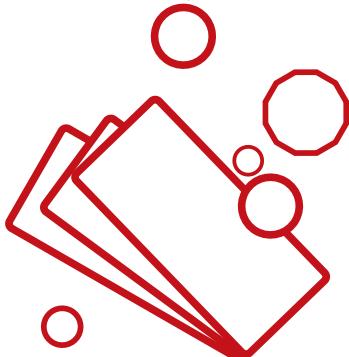
### Gas Shortages Affects Manufacturing

Australia is facing a manufacturing crisis that will cost jobs because of a looming shortage of natural gas, which the federal government believes is worsened by state bans on exploration. Industry Minister Greg Hunt and industry leaders have warned that natural gas shortages for domestic and industrial use on the east coast could lead to Australia – the world's largest liquefied national gas exporter – importing cheaper natural gas to meet shortfalls, as reported in THE AUSTRALIAN.

### ABCC Reinstated

As the reinstated Australian Building and Construction Commission came into operation yesterday, the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union announced rolling 12-hour strikes over five days at Kane Constructions sites, accusing the company of fighting the Coalition's 'ideological war against workers'.

Despite political brawling over the cost of the Coalition's deal with the Greens to legislate a new tax rate on backpackers, Turnbull said the agreement was proof he would be able to work with a divided Senate to push through his economic policies next year. National employers slammed the proposed CFMEU strikes at 13 projects across Victoria. While the action is legally protected, any unlawful action by subcontractor employees in support of the union could expose them to heavier financial penalties that apply under the restored ABCC, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.



### BUSINESS, ECONOMY, MANUFACTURING, FINANCE

#### Reckless Spending Costs AAA

Shadow treasurer Chris Bowen has outlined the bleak scenario facing the nation's banks and heavily indebted households if the AAA credit rating is lost, and blame the Turnbull government for exploding federal debt by \$4500 a person in Australia, according to THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

#### Bribe Allegations

The corporate watchdog has launched a major investigation into allegations certain executives and directors at Leighton Holdings and its successor, CIMIC, to investors the existence of a multimillion-dollar bribery scandal, according to THE AGE.

#### Over Spending is Costly

Political recklessness has resulted in \$28 billion in transport infrastructure cost overruns since 2001, making many projects not worth building in the first place, writes Marion Terrill in THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

#### Record Low Interest Rates Invites Reckless Spending

With record low interest rates, calls for new infrastructure spending seem to pop up every other day. Money is so cheap, the argument goes, that we should be borrowing now to

finance long-term projects, particularly transport, that we've always wanted to build.

Unfortunately, these calls to funnel cash out the door and into the earthmovers tend to ignore one simple point: projects that were of marginal or no economic benefit do not suddenly become viable just because finance is cheap. They are still a waste of money, it's just that the amount wasted becomes a little bit less, according to THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### Qantas-AA Partnership Up in the Air

Qantas has a fight on its hands to save its planned alliance with American Airlines after the US Department of Transportation tentatively denied plans to expand the partnership on grounds it was anti-competitive. The decision not only leaves what was supposed to be a lucrative alliance on the brink of collapse, but it means Qantas and American are now scrambling to convince the department to overturn the preliminary decision, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

### Credit Rating Cut Looms

An Economic hit to wages and profits will deepen the federal deficit by \$24 billion by 2020, according to a new warning that heightens pressure on all sides of politics to compromise on savings to prevent a cut to Australia's AAA credit rating, according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Sydney to Become Three Cities

Sydney will be three distinct cities and will need 725,000 more houses as it grows to cope with a population of 8 million by 2056, under the first long-term plan for the city since 1950s. The plan by the independent Greater Sydney Commission, led by Lucy Turnbull, moves away from the CBD-centred Sydney idea to one in balanced across three distinct economies – an Eastern City, stretching from the Northern Beaches to Kogarah; a Central City centred around Parramatta; and a Western City, including Liverpool and Greater Penrith, reports THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### Myer Makeover

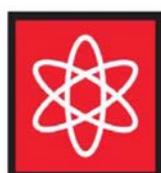
More Myer stores may close as Australia's biggest department store scared off persistent short-sellers by posting its fifth consecutive quarter of same-store sales growth. Myer has been opening, shutting and refurbishing its stores as part of its 'New Myer' strategy. The five-year, \$600-million strategy aims to tailor each store to its customers, better target the 5 million members of its Myer One loyalty card, and improve customer service, as per THE AGE.

### IMF Backs Greater Property Market Regulation

Bank regulators should redouble efforts to curb risky property market lending and the federal government should look at winding back tax breaks such as negative gearing that are distorting the housing market, the International Monetary Fund said, THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW reports.

### Regional Development Needed

Australia could unlock up to \$2 trillion tied up in capital city house prices by pursuing a regional development strategy to increase the number of centre with populations above 100,000 and tap undeveloped areas of the nation. Minister for Resources and Northern Australia Matthew Canavan has argued that the concentration of Australia's population in its biggest capitals is 'unusual' compared with the rest of the world. 'What is the policy rationale that sees wealth created... in the Hunter Valley help pay



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the transport costs of a professional in Sydney' Canavan said, according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Cut Cut Cut

ANZ has cut 3600 jobs in the past year with more to come as chief executive **Shayne Elliott** severs underperforming businesses and parts ways with unprofitable customers. And the bank has revealed it is considering a sale of its Australian life insurance and superannuation businesses as its transformation under Mr Elliott continues, per the HERALD SUN.

### ANZ Backing Out of Asia

ANZ will take a fresh hit, this time clocking in at \$265 million, after striking a deal to sell businesses in five countries to Singapore's DBS bank. Chief executive **Shayne Elliott**, who is undoing much of ANZ's expansion into Asia under his predecessor, **Mike Smith**, said the DBS deal covered the bulk of the bank's regional retail and wealth management businesses, as per the HERALD SUN.

### Beijing Connection

Former trade minister **Andrew Robb** has defended his appointment as a senior economic adviser to contentious Chinese company Landbridge Group as a 'commercial arrangement', despite the company's role in advancing Chinese President **Xi Jinping's** strategic imperatives, as per THE AGE.

### Keating Led Charge on Dollar Float

New documents should put to rest the dispute over who was responsible. In the post-war era, no economic reform is more important than the float of the dollar on December 9, 1983. The float strongly linked Australia to the global economy. It boosted the competitiveness of industry. And it continues to act as a shock absorber when the economy is buffeted by headwinds from abroad.

Newly discovered documents in Treasury and Reserve Bank archives coupled with new interviews reveal that **Keating** actually, although cautiously, supported the float through 1983. Keating has argued that he told **Hawke** in May 1983 that a float was 'inevitable' and 'desirable'. Reserve Bank governor **Bob Johnson**, who advocated a float, revealed in an interview that Keating supported a float but was mindful of Treasury's opposition, the timing of the decision and the economic ramifications, writes **Troy Bramston** for THE AUSTRALIAN.

### AGL to Import as Prices Soar

AGL Energy is considering spending as much as \$300 million building a terminal to import cheaper natural gas into the south-eastern states from as far away as Europe or the Middle East because of limited domestic gas availability and high local prices in the wake of \$70 billion if LNG export plants being built in Gladstone, as per THE AUSTRALIAN

### Sell Sell Sell!

Self-managed super funds are rushing to sell property before tax changes that cleared Parliament start on July 1. Commercial agent CBBE said more than one-quarter of the properties listed in November and December in Melbourne were owned by super funds, reports THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### Super Audit Finds Oversight

The prudential regulator's supervision of the \$1.2 trillion superannuation sector has been found to be wanting in a concerning number of cases following a review by the Australian National Audit Office. The Australian Prudential Regulation Authority has pledged to overhaul its supervision practices in four areas after

the audit found problems with record keeping, inconsistent supervisory practices and tardy review completions, as reported in THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Big Business Pushes TPP Alternatives

Business leaders have urged the federal government to press ahead with trade liberalisation including deals with India, Indonesia and an alternative multilateral agreement driven by China after the push for global trade pacts suffered a major setback after US president-elect **Donald Trump** reaffirmed plans to abandon the Trans-Pacific Partnership, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

### US Double Down

The chief executive of building materials giant Boral, **Mike Kane**, says he is betting on a long-term US economic recovery and not just a 'Trump bump' in making the biggest US acquisition by an Australian company in five years. Boral will pay \$3.5 billion for New York-listed building producer group Headwaters, which makes a range of construction materials for housing and infrastructure, as per THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### AAA Credit Crunch

S&P Global Ratings warns it will have to see budget improvements as soon as next two to nine months if Australia wants to prevent a downgrade of its credit rating. The warning follows Deloitte Access Economist forecaster **Chris Richardson's** prediction that slow wages growth will force a \$24 billion write-down in tax revenue in the mid-year budget update on December 19, THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW reports.

### Housing Affordability Key Focus - Feature

Treasurer **Scott Morrison** says property investors are not to blame for Australia's housing affordability crisis, arguing that the government needs to work with the states to remove impediments to supply which are blocking people from being able to enter the market.

Morrison has stated that the housing affordability issue across the country shows a range of factors at work, including a shift away from the mining states, continuing strong population growth, and falling numbers of occupants per residence, as well as changing financing arrangements. Morrison acknowledges that achieving the aspiration of home ownership is proving more and more difficult, which is 'why housing affordability will be an important policy focus of the **Turnbull** government in this parliamentary term', as per THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### GDP Figures Trigger Calls for Reform

Business leaders say the unexpectedly weak GDP figures should provide a wake-up call for governments and corporations on the dangers that lie ahead if they fail to convince the community of the need for urgent reforms to stimulate investment, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

### Call for Big Business Tax Cuts

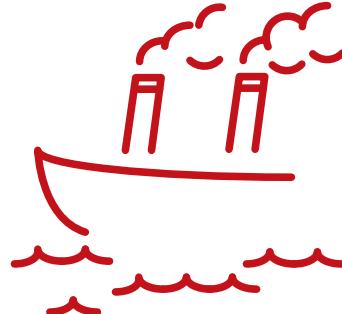
**Don Argus**, one of the nation's most respected business leaders says the spending of the **Rudd** and **Gillard** governments is now 'dead weight' on the country's finances and he has applauded the long-awaited 'exposure' of their 'cavalier approach' to managing an economy.

Mr Argus, a former chairman for BHP Billiton, Brambles and long-serving chief executive of National Australia Bank, also backed renewed calls for urgent corporate tax cuts following alarming GDP data, noting Australia

was losing its competitive position on an issue 'so essential' to attracting investment capital, reports THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Oil Price Spike

OPEC's first production cut in almost a decade and the prospect that non-OPEC producer Russia will join in with cuts of its own have served up a \$9 billion oil-fuelled rally for Australia's listed producers. Share prices in the leading oil players had their strongest day in eight years as world oil prices jumped as much as 10 per cent, as per THE AUSTRALIAN

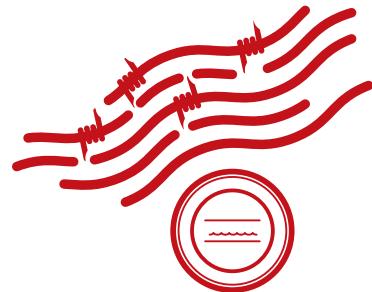


### TRADE

#### Australia- China Dairy Row

Australia and China are once again at loggerheads over dairy exports, after Beijing banned a Victorian infant formula maker from selling its products on the mainland. The latest clash involves Viplus Diary, established in 2013 to target Chinese consumers, which had its import license suspended by Beijing on November 4.

The Certification and Accreditation Administration of China (CNCA) gave no reason for the ban, but in June the regulator said it had blocked 3.8 tonnes of Viplus formula from entering the country citing incorrect labelling. It follows the entire Australian dairy industry being put on notice by Chinese authorities in late August over disputed claims about the quality of fresh milk exports to the mainland, as reported in THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.



### REFUGEES AND IMMIGRATION

#### Hard Line Against Refugees Preferred

Australians expect politicians to take a firm line against asylum seekers, according to findings that escalate the fight over **Turnbull's** bid to toughen border protection laws. A clear majority disapprove of boat arrivals and only 2 per cent say the poor treatment of asylum-seekers is the most important problem facing the country.

The survey shows overwhelming support for a multicultural society and opposition to screening migrants by their religion or ethnic origins, reports THE AUSTRALIAN.

#### Borders Bolstered After US Refugee Deal

Australia will mount its largest peacetime border security mission in response to fears that a break through deal signed with the US to resettle

up to 1600 refugees could reignite the people smuggling trade. American Homeland Security officials have travelled to Australia to begin the assessment process, which will determine whether the 1600 refugees held on Manus Island and Nauru – about 1250 of whom are in offshore detention centres – meet US requirements for resettlement, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

### One and Done

Women and children held on Manus Island and Nauru will be prioritised to find new homes in the United States as part of a deal to clear Australia's offshore processing centres. But Turnbull has sent a stern warning to people smugglers that the 'one-off' deal – available to some of the 1600 asylum seekers – would not apply to future boat arrivals, according to the HERALD SUN.

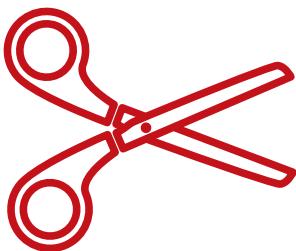
### 457 Reform on Everyone's Lips

The federal government was contemplating its own changes to the 457 visa scheme before calls by Labor leader Bill Shorten to crack down on the use of foreign workers as part of his 'Australia first' policy push. As Mr Shorten used a trip to regional Queensland to unveil proposals for the temporary importation of foreign skilled workers, senior source said the Turnbull government had been mulling changes of its own in response to the growing anxiety among sections of the public and its own backbench.

### 457 Visa Change Up

457 visa workers generally create more jobs than they take but both sides of politics are taking aim at the 457 visa. Opposition Leader Bill Shorten vowed Labor would crack down on the temporary skilled migration scheme to ensure unemployed Australians can find work. Immigration Minister Peter Dutton responded that he was already onto the problem.

In a media release the minister 'announced' changes he had quietly made three weeks earlier that make it harder for 457 visa holders to stay in Australia if they lose or leave a job. Previously migrant workers had 90 days to find an alternative employer to sponsor them for a new visa; now they have just 60 days, THE AGE reports.



### TAX

#### Review of LNG Tax Needed

There have been calls for a parliamentary inquiry into why the boom in liquefied natural gas exports is failing to deliver any meaningful contribution to the public purse. Craig Emerson – who designed the petroleum resources rent tax with economist Ross Garnaut in the Hawke government – believes particular scrutiny should be given to extra concessions won by the oil and gas sector since the tax was first imposed on offshore projects in the mid-1980s, as per THE AGE.

#### Changes to Super Tax

Major changes to superannuation have been introduced in federal parliament, giving more than three million low-paid workers certainty over their financial future. However, there will be losers in the changes to superannuation tax, they include 560,000 who make concessional contribution of more than \$25,000 a year, 110,000 people will lose tax free status for all income received by transition to retirement scheme funds. Fewer than 160,000 Australians who have more than \$1.6million in their super accounts, 160,000 who earn – including super contributions more than \$250,000 will be affected by new income threshold of 30 per cent, 160,000 Australians who plan to make more than \$300,000 of non-concessional contributions over three years, the HERALD SUN reports.

#### Super Needs to Invest in Infrastructure

The head of the Financial System Inquiry has blamed the narrow performance standards in the \$2 trillion superannuation industry on its lack of investment in infrastructure compared with other countries. At a Melbourne lunch hosted by the Australian Centre for Financial Studies, David Murray said local super funds were heavily invested in easily tradable equities that made them less enthusiastic about long-term infrastructure, as reported in THE AUSTRALIAN.

#### Conglomerate Watch

Australia's top 100 listed companies now account for 47 per cent of the economy, up from 15 per cent two-decades ago. Australian Competition and Consumer Commission chairman Rod Sims has used that fact from new research to put the case for a 'rebuttable presumption' that large mergers not proceed unless there is evidence to the contrary, as reported in THE AGE.

#### ANZ to Review Services

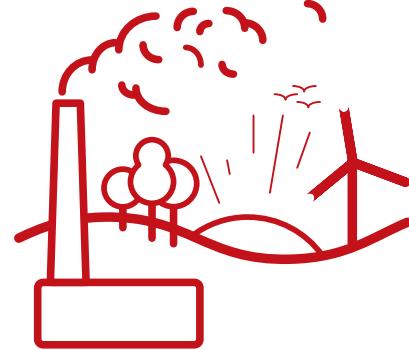
ANZ has hired outgoing Commonwealth Ombudsman Colin Neave to spearhead a company-funded review of whether the bank and financial services products are fair. Mr Neave will start the role in mid-January and will report directly to ANZ chief executive Shayne Elliott, who recently

told a parliament inquiry that the banking sector has lost touch with its customers, as per THE AGE.

### New Boss

Melbourne business leader Carol Schwartz has been appointed to the board of the Reserve Bank. A leading figure in the Victorian not-for-profit and corporate sectors, she served as President of the Property Council of Australia, and will replace Heather Ridout on the Reserve Bank board from February.

The Turnbull government has announced more than a dozen appointments, which will boost female representation on a number of tribunals and financial boards, the HERALD SUN reports.



### CLIMATE CHANGE, ENVIRONMENT AND ENERGY

#### Swift Bird in for the Long-Haul

It is the speed freak of the avian world, flying faster and higher than almost any other type of bird. Now the swift has broken the record for long-haul flight. Swedish researchers have shown that common swifts can fly for 10 months without landing, after fitting 13 birds with micro-data logs and tracking them for up to two years. The study, reported in the journal Current Biology, confirms a 45-year-old theory that the little birds land only to breed, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

#### Labor States Go It Alone on Renewables

Some of Australia's biggest power producers and users are calling for Labor states to abandon renewable targets in favour of a national plan in the wake of the South Australia blackout and Queensland's plan for 50 per cent renewable power, declaring that the states' plans to go it alone will affect reliability and cost, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

#### Ross Sea Marine Park

The Antarctic Ross Sea is the healthiest marine ecosystem on the planet – home to toothfish, seals, a range of penguins and a unique population of Orcas. Lying south of New Zealand, it is vast, cold and largely untainted by human contact. After a landmark deal reached in Hobart, it will stay this

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way for at least the next 35 years. More than 50 countries including Australia, the US, China, Russia and Japan agreed to make the Ross Sea the world's first large-scale marine park in international waters.

It means 1.55 million square kilometres of ocean – an area nearly twice the size of NSW – will be protected. More than two thirds of the park, including coastal areas, will be off limits for fishing. Some areas will be set aside for research, particularly into krill, THE AGE reports.

### Bowen Basin Solution

Former Santos chief executive **John Ellice-Flint** has declared that much of the east coast's gas supply problem could be solved in one fell swoop with the construction of a 200-kilometre pipeline to tap into Queensland's gas-rich Bowen Basin, according to THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### Local Government Takes Stand Against Climate Change

The mayors of Atlanta, Cape Town, Paris and Vancouver have pledged to lead a 7000-city push to combat the threat of climate change, even as **Donald Trump's** election as US president dims hopes for co-ordinated national action. The cities, along with Seoul, Quito and others, will join the board of the Global Convent of Mayors, chaired by **Michael Bloomberg**, former mayor of New York, and **Maros Sefcovic**, vice-president of the European Commission. The group's more than 7000 members have all signed up to work on measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to make cities more resilient to the potential impacts of climate change, THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW reports.

### Energy Concerns

In a submission to a landmark review into electricity security, the Queensland government owned Stanwell Corporation said renewable energy policies had 'emphasised energy, while neglecting to value other electricity market services which are required to maintain a secure and reliable electricity supply'. This has led to the weak system and instability problems in South Australia, Stanwell said while also ringing the alarm about energy affordability.

'It is disappointing that Australia has moved from one of the lowest-cost electricity nations to one of the highest cost, to the detriment of Australian industry and economic growth'. The comments, which are focused on the national energy market and do not single out Queensland, have reignited debate over renewable targets and are significant as the Queensland Premier pursues a 50 per cent renewables target by 2030.

Former Queensland Labor treasurer **Keith DeLacy** warned that high renewable energy could send energy-incentive industries offshore, which would mostly have an impact on those on lower incomes, per THE AUSTRALIAN.

### MPs Band Together for the Dugongs

Three federal ministers are spearheading a government crackdown on illegal and 'cruel' indigenous hunting of dugongs and sea turtles, flagging moves to introduce more 'no-take' zones in a bid to stop the selling of the animals' meat.

Environment Minister **Josh Frydenberg**, Indigenous Affairs Minister **Nigel Scullion** and Attorney-General **George Brandis** have met with Liberal MP **Warren Entsch**, and have committed to talk with indigenous rangers and the Queensland government to prevent

the vulnerable species being hunted for commercial purposes, as per THE AUSTRALIAN

### New Plan Needed for Murray-Darling

The decade-old plan to send more water down the Murray-Darling river system to save the environment has been exposed. A taste of the damage that could be caused by man-made floods to mimic environmental flows under the Murray-Darling Basin Plan can be seen along the Murray River and its tributaries, angering communities and causing many to question the plan.

And coupled with yet another study that revealed the likely economic damage from taking water from irrigators to send down the Murray and Darling rivers out to sea, it paints a picture of an ill-conceived plan, writes **Ed Gannon** for the HERALD SUN.

### Government Ignores Money-Saving Advice

The **Turnbull** government has been sitting on advice that an emissions intensity scheme – the carbon policy it put on the table only to rule out just 36 hours later – would save households and businesses up to \$15 billion in electricity bills over a decade.

While the government has rejected this sort of scheme by claiming it would push up prices, analysis in an Australian Electricity Market Commission report handed to the government months ago, finds it would actually cost consumers far less than other approaches, including doing nothing, as per THE AGE.



### AGRICULTURE, CATTLE AND WATER

#### Voting With Their Feet

More consumers are choosing to support dairy farmers by ignoring \$1-a-litre supermarket own-brand milk, according to the retail giants

at an inquiry into farm gate milk prices, THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW reports.

### Cheese & Butter Eh?

Canadian dairy giant Saputo may finally be able to buy 100 per cent of Warrnambool Cheese & Butter after Lion decided to sell its pivotal 10.2 per cent stake in the company. Lion sold its Australian wine operations to Accolade for a speculated sum just under \$100 million, ahead of that company's proposed float next year, as reported in THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Got Milk?

Murray Goulburn is confident its decision to increase the milk price it pays to its 2200 remaining farmers will act as a circuit-breaker from the embattled co-operative as Chairman **Phillip Tracy** flagged plans to step down, according to THE AUSTRALIAN.



THE SUN RISING OVER THE FIELDS OF NEWLYN IN RURAL VICTORIA

### Crop Record Haul

Australian growers have smashed the record for the biggest grain crop, according to the Australian Bureau of Agriculture and Resource Economics and Sciences forecast. ABARES forecast a mammoth winter crop of 52.4 million tonnes – a 15 per cent jump on the previous record of 45.7 million tonnes, set in 2011-12, reports THE AUSTRALIAN.

### New Boss at Murray Goulburn

After a turbulent 2016, Australia's biggest dairy processor Murray Goulburn has appointed **Ari Mervis**, a former top brewery executive, as its new CEO on an annual package of \$1.5 million. His switch to the dairy industry comes after a 27-year career with SABMiller, where he



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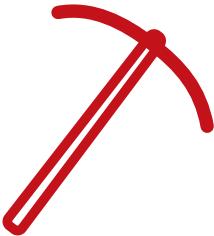
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gained vast experience in the beer, soft drinks and fruit juice categories, THE AGE reports.)



## MINING

### Rio Sacks Execs

Rio Tinto has sacked two senior executives over a payment scandal related to a controversial iron ore project in Africa, sparking threats of legal action. Energy and minerals chief executive **Alan Davies** said he would take the mining giant to court over his dismissal as there were 'no grounds' for his termination and he had been denied the opportunity to answer any allegations his former employer may have.

Rio announced it had sacked Davies and legal and regulatory affairs group executive **Debra Valentine**. The dismissal follows emails surfacing that show Rio discussing a \$14 million payment to a consultant, made to ensure the Simandou iron ore project in Guinea went 'smoothly' with the local government. The emails, briefly published on a public website, show former Rio chief **Sam Walsh** and his predecessor **Tom Albanese** were aware of the payment made in 2011, according to the HERALD SUN.

### Rio Exec Fallout

Senior Rio Tinto executive **Alan Davies** has declared war on the company over his sacking from his \$3.5 million a-year job, in the latest instalment of the mining giant's festering Simandou iron ore corruption scandal in Guinea. The dumped London-based chief executive of its energy and minerals unit, a Rio man for close to 20 years and a former Brisbane accountant and lawyer, is seething that the company has made 'no effort to abide by due process' in sacking him after suspending him from duties.

Rio said its executives had 'failed to maintain the standards expected of them under our global code of conduct', as reported in THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Rio in Crisis

Apparently absent Rio Tinto chairman **Jan du Plessis** is prepared to take charge of the crisis that has already spawned potentially years of regulatory risk in the US, UK and Australia; left two Rio worthies without careers, past share entitlements or future prospects; and tainted the legacy of past management, including two former CEO's and a former chief financial officer, reports THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.



## MEDIA

### Uhlmann Cleared over Renewable Claim

The ABC has reportedly dismissed two complaints against senior political editor **Chris Uhlmann** over his coverage of the South Australian blackout. The complaints were made after Uhlmann linked the state-wide blackout, after powerful winds and storms on September 28, with South Australia's reliance on renewable energy.

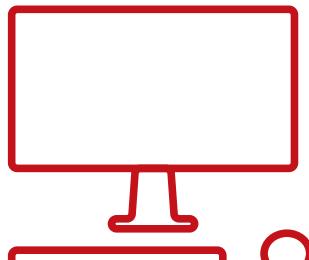
The ABC's Audience and Consumer Affairs body dismissed at least two of about 180 complaints and comments against Uhlmann, the website Crikey reported. It is not known how many comments were complaints, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

### ABC Letting Indigenous Community Down

**Paul Keating** has launched a new line of attack against the ABC, building on criticism by **Noel Pearson** over what the academic and indigenous leader called its 'racist' and misery laden coverage of indigenous affairs. ABC was 'letting Australia down' in terms of news presentation and failing as a hard-news-gathering organisation that captured attention, the former prime minister said, as reported in THE AUSTRALIAN.

### AT&T Media Conglomerate

AT&T yesterday struck a deal to buy Time Warner for \$112.2 billion in a move that would transform the US phone company into a media giant, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.



## IT

### Further NBN Investment

The **Turnbull** government will borrow almost another \$20 billion to shore-up the rollout of the National Broadband Network despite repeated assurances it would not exceed the Coalition's \$29.5 billion investment cap. Labor accused the government of a broken promise and warned the surprise provision of a \$9.5bn loan to NBN Co would substantially increase financial exposure to the project because of the failure to source private debt funding, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

### Telcos Data under the Microscope

The Australian Information and Privacy Commissioner is investigating allegations personal information held by telcos can be bought on the black market from overseas call centres, as per THE AGE.

### Census Workers Unpaid

Thousands of field workers who recused the 2016 Census after the online meltdown debacle are still owed up to \$30 million in wages and out-of-pocket expenses. The Australian Bureau of Statistics has told workers, many of whom are unemployed or are pensioners, that they will just have to wait for their money. The bureau has been in damage control since its website crashed on Census night in August, destroying its plans for a move to a predominantly digital rather than paper-based census that had been intended to save \$100 million, according to THE AGE.

## Digital Payments IT System Replacement

On 19 October, 2016 the Hon. **Sussan Ley** MP, Minister for Health and Aged Care, and the Hon. **Alan Tudge** MP, Minister for Human Services, announced the Australian Government is replacing the IT system that delivers health, aged care and related veterans' payments. The Australian Government expects to issue a Request for Proposal (RFP) in early 2017 seeking proposals to support an innovative, cost effective, end to end digital health and aged care payments solution, based on existing commercial technology.

The new system will support the Australian Government continuing to own, operate and deliver Medicare, Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS), Aged Care and related Veterans' payments into the future. Market Briefing 1: Melbourne, Wednesday, 11 January, 2017, 9am – 10:30am. Market Briefing 2: Sydney, Thursday, 12 January, 2017, 4pm – 5:30pm. For more details visit [www.digitalhealthpayments.com.au](http://www.digitalhealthpayments.com.au).



## JUSTICE

### QUT Students Kept in the Dark

Students in a racial hatred case say documents released under Freedom of Information laws show they were kept in the dark by their university because it was worried about its brand. Queensland University of Technology vice-chancellor **Peter Coaldrake** has written to students to explain why QUT delayed telling them about the race complaint, but the students' lawyer says 'QUT wanted to... control the information'.

### Conservative Loss for the High Court

Conservatives will take one look at **Susan Kiefel**'s record and see her appointment as a lost opportunity. The great benefit in choosing her to lead the High Court is that those on the Left will feel the same way. The High Court's incoming chief justice falls well short of the mark set by great conservative judges of the recent past – **Dyson Heydon** and **Ian Callinan** – but her track record so far suggests she is unlikely to become a judicial adventurer in the manner of **Michael Kirby** or, a generation earlier, **Lionel Murphy**.

Instead of choosing radical conservative or even a mild conservative, the **Turnbull** government has made a safe, orthodox appointment that seems designed to keep the High Court on the course set by outgoing Chief Justice **Robert French**, writes **Chris Merritt** for THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Remember the Bell Group

High Court Justice **Virginia Bell** was presiding over a hearing for the Western Australian government's legislated attempt to grab the Bell Group's assets over the claims of other creditors, which included federal taxpayers through the Australian Taxation Office. She was trying to establish whether anyone was appearing before her on the Commonwealth's behalf. The case over the WA Bell legislation has been at the heart of

the ongoing controversy over Attorney-General **George Brandis** and former solicitor-general **Justin Gleeson**, according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Solicitor-General Appointed

The **Turnbull** government has appointed Melbourne silk **Stephen Donaghue QC** as the new federal Solicitor-General. Law Council of Australia president **Stuart Clark** said the Law Council had 'every confidence in Dr Donaghue's ability to provide frank and fearless advice to the government in a way that is traditionally expected of a solicitor-general'.

'He is a first-class constitutional lawyer with a significant track record of academic and practical contribution to the field,' Mr Clark said. A fellow Melbourne silk said Dr Donaghue was 'personally conservative', was a 'straight up-and-down lawyer' and was likely to be one of the few silks capable of taking on the role of solicitor-general in difficult circumstances, according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Fraudsters Take the Gamble

Dodgy online betting agencies will have a harder time gaining a foothold in Australia after the **Turnbull** government launched an unprecedented intervention to dismantle Norfolk Island's wagering authority amid corruption concerns, as reported in THE AGE.



## WELFARE

### Triggs Called to Resign

Australian Human Rights Commission president **Gillian Triggs** is under renewed pressure to resign after devastating criticism from a former human rights commissioner and formal notification she has been recalled to a parliamentary committee to explain 'apparently deliberately misleading' evidence in October.

These developments come as insiders told THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN the AHRC was dispirited and divided because of the controversy surrounding Professor Triggs, while Liberal senator **Linda Reynolds** said she was 'deeply concerned' about the president's handling of the Queensland University of Technology section 18C case, which Senator Reynolds will pursue in the committee.

Former human rights commissioner **Sev Ozdowski**, who served from 2000 to 2005, said the AHRC faced a major challenge to rebuild public trust and that Professor Triggs could accelerate the process by resigning. 'The complaints process cannot be used as a de facto extortion racket by warriors of political correctness or as an opportunistic weapon of choice by the Far Left to impose their point of view on what Mrs Clinton called "deplorables".'

'The recent complaints under section 18C of the Racial Discrimination Act – against the QUT students and cartoonist **Bill Leak** – should have been terminated at an early stage because there was no substance to them'. Immigration Minister **Peter Dutton** has called for Professor Triggs to resign. She should 'do the right thing', he said,

citing her handling of the QUT and Leak cases. 'Australians don't want to have Gillian Triggs and other officials out of Canberra jamming some sort of language code down their throat' Mr Dutton said.



## EDUCATION

### East Coast Favouritism

The patchwork of different federal funding levels to government-run schools in each state has been exposed, with new figures revealing wild inconsistencies across the nation under the Gonski model. An analysis of last year's federal funding data for the nation's 6602 primary and secondary public schools by THE AUSTRALIAN shows Western Australia is being short-changed compared with NSW, Victoria and Queensland public schools. South Australia also lags.

### Education Complacency

A sense of 'mediocrity' in Australian education and a 'she'll be right' attitude has led to our students losing the hunger for academic success shown by their Asian competitors, a leading education expert says. The comments by **Kevin Donnelly**, a senior research fellow at the Australian Catholic University, come after a renewed debate on government-run selective schools.

Academic **Christina Ho**, a senior lecturer in social and political sciences at the University of Technology Sydney, told THE WEEKEND AUSTRALIAN that selective schools had become 'ethically unbalanced' and politicians had their 'heads in the sand' over the intensive commercial coaching often favoured by Asian-Australian families seeking to get their children into selective schools.

'And you need only look at the percentage of Asian and Indian kids getting into selective schools, compared to Anglo-Australian, to see there's a real imbalance there.' Dr Donnelly, who is also executive director of the Education Standards Institute, said the stereotype of 'tiger mums' pushing their children to achieve academically had an element of truth because Asian cultures respected education, and believed in hard work and classroom discipline.

### Funding Reallocation to Help Needy Schools

Hundreds of needy schools could be properly funded with money left over for improving teaching skills without any significant increase in federal government spending, according to a new report from the Grattan Institute. It says \$3.5 billion can be reallocated to needy schools by cutting back the too-generous 3.5 per cent indexation of existing funding. Only a small number of overfunded schools (about 3 per cent) would be worse off, as per THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### 20 Years of Education Stagnation Continues

Australian Year 4 and Year 8 students are slipping backwards in maths and science, leapfrogged b students in Kazakhstan, Slovenia and Hungary, as the nation continues a 20-year tumble down international academic rankings. The

alarming results from the four-yearly Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study sparked calls for Australia to 'wake up', reject short term fixes, raise the effectiveness of teaching and improve retention and training of qualified maths and science teachers.

Writing in **The Australia**, Australian Council for Educational Research chief executive **Geoff Masters** says 'the 20-year slide in maths and science learning is a national challenge that requires a national response. We cannot afford another 20 years of stagnation. The answer is not to do more of the same'.

### 1 in 5 Take Vocational Courses for Self-Development

One in five students enrolled in vocational courses say they are not studying to improve their job prospects, despite billing taxpayers more than \$500 million a year in fees. The report shows 30,000 TAFE and private vocational college students with government loans are studying course for 'personal interest' or 'self-development' reasons.

The data comes weeks after the Federal Government announced an overhaul of the taxpayer-funded loan scheme, which blew out from \$325 million in 2012 to \$2.9 billion in 2015 after private providers got access to the scheme, the HERALD SUN reports.

### Vocational Rort

New data on the federal government's failed VET FEE-HELP student loan scheme reveals the scale of rorts by private colleges, with multiple enrolments making up nearly one sixth of the 320,000 courses funded by the program in 2015. Education Minister **Simon Birmingham** said the large number of multiple enrolments spoke to wide abuse of the scheme, which he plans to shut down at the end of the year, reports THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### Cuts to Art Degrees

From January 1, 2017, under new funding arrangements, students undertaking courses in creative fields including theatre studies, professional writing, jewellery design, circus arts and hundreds of others will no longer be eligible to access existing student loans. According to Education Minister **Simon Birmingham**: 'Currently there are far too many courses that are being subsidised that are used simply to boost enrolments or provide "lifestyle" choices but don't lead to work.'

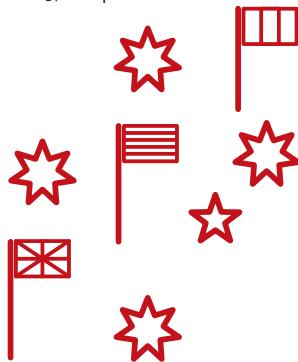
The minister's assertion that such professions will not benefit Australia economically are wrong. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics the arts contributed \$86 billion to the Australian economy in 2014 – more than transport or welfare sectors. Added to that nearly 20 million Australians attend arts events annually. Isn't art the very thing that helps us celebrate the national imagination, provides a site for creative protest and exchange of ideas, and in many ways, reflects our nation's soul back at us? Writes **Jason Norman** for THE AGE.

### Education Slump

The deterioration in the performance of school students has slashed billions from Australia's economic wellbeing. The release of data showing Australian teenagers are falling behind many of their international peers has slashed the value of the Fairfax-Lateral Economics wellbeing index, which puts a dollar figure on our collective welfare.

The index uses reading scores from the international Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) to measure Australia's human

capital, or collective knowhow. The latest PISA results, released on Tuesday, showed Australia's reading score dropped from 512 to 503 between 2012 and 2015, as reported in THE AGE.



## FOREIGN AFFAIRS

### Remain Still a Vague Possibility

Britain's prime minister cannot trigger Brexit single-handedly, the country's High Court has ruled, in a decision that embarrassed the government and gave new hope to the 'Remainers'. The court ruled unanimously that the 'royal prerogative' did not give the government power to start the legal process of taking Britain out of the European Union.

Prime Minister **Theresa May** has planned to trigger the 'Article 50' treaty exit clause by the end of March, but must now first seek the approval of parliament. This will now open the door to Remainers who wish to dilute or even block Brexit.

### DC Embassy Facelift

Australia is building on its long-standing relationship with the US, unveiling plans for a new embassy on the site of the existing building in Washington, DC. Bates Smart has designed the new \$237 million building at 1601 Massachusetts Avenue NW, which will replace the 50-plus-year-old building.

Staff in Washington will be relocated to temporary leased accommodation from the first quarter of 2019 until the new embassy is ready for occupancy in the first half of 2022. Bates Smart will work with local firm Karn Charuhas Chapman & Twohey, which will document and help deliver the project, reports THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### International ETS on the Cards

The European Commission's top climate officials says a nationwide emissions trading scheme to be rolled out in China next year could pave the way for a link-up to the EU system, taking a step toward an international emissions trading market, as per THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### Canada Accepting Gender-Neutral

Visitors to Canada can now identify themselves as male, female or 'other' in a border document being introduced. It will join a handful of nations offering gender-neutral options when the new electronic travel authorisations are brought in, the HERALD SUN reports.

### Nothing Suss

Aussie teen **Jamie Murphy** Bali nightmare has ended, after authorities revealed the white powder he allegedly carried into a nightclub was crushed-up painkillers, according to the HERALD SUN.

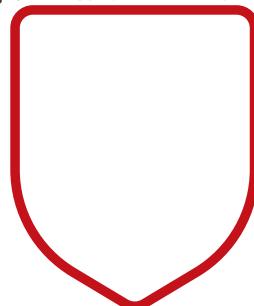
### New NZ Prime Minister

The ruling National Party of New Zealand appointed the experienced **Bill English** after **John Key's** shock resignation, the HERALD SUN.

### Italy Votes Down Ref, PM Dives on Sword

Italian Prime Minister **Matteo Renzi** will resign after losing a critical referendum on constitutional reform by a wide margin in a move that is expected to lead to renewed political and financial turmoil in Europe. The Italian poll confirms the rise in anti-establishment populism that led to Donald Trump's stunning US election victory last month and Britain's shock vote to leave the European Union in June, and continues to redraw the political map in western democracies.

The defeat will prompt fresh market ructions, especially in the banking sector, which has lost almost half of its value this year on the Milan bourse, hit by fears over its huge exposure to bad loans accumulated during years of economic downturn. The referendum, designed to hasten the legislative process by reducing the powers of the upper house Senate and regional authorities, was to have been his crowning achievement, according to THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.



## DEFENCE

### No Royal Commission into Defence Abuse

'Doing nothing is not an option.' This was the view of former sec discrimination commissioner

**Elizabeth Broderick** in her advice to the then-**Abbott** government. In announcing the government will not go ahead with a royal commission or Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission-Australian Federal Police probe, Defence Minister **Marise Payne** relies on the fact that many victims told Ms Broderick they did not favour a royal commission and the principle of 'doing no further harm' to victims was paramount. That ignores Ms Broderick's advice that victims 'want action to be taken' and 'if a royal commission is not established, a strong alternative response is required', THE AGE reports.

### Toxic Defence Bases

Toxins have been detected at more than 300 times the recommended safe levels in ground and surface water at numerous Defence sites across Australia, prompting warnings of a 'national crisis' requiring intervention from the **Turnbull** government.

Potentially hazardous levels of per- and poly-fluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) were detected at Townsville RAAF base, HMAS Stirling at Perth's Garden Island and in other isolated cases, preliminary testing by the Department of Defence revealed, according to THE AGE.

### US Ties Essential

Former Chief of the Defence Force **Angus Houston** has attacked critics of the US alliance such as former Prime Minister **Paul Keating**. Houston warned cutting links with the United States would force Australia to hike defence spending by as much as 4 per cent of GDP and that membership of ASEAN cannot guarantee Australia's security, according to THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

### Subs Back to the Drawing Board

Coinciding with two big steps in progressing the development of Australia's Future Submarine, the heads of the \$50 billion program have underlined the scheduling and complexities involved in creating a new design for the Collins-class replacement. This runs counter to a widespread assumption that the Barracuda Shortfin 1A successfully bid by French submarine constructor DCNS will be a conventionally powered version of its under-construction Barracuda nuclear attack submarine.

'You can't take a nuclear submarine design and put a diesel engine in it. Anyone who says that doesn't know what they're talking about' says Rear Admiral **Stephen Johnson** (US Navy retired), general manager submarines in the Australian Defence Department's Capability and Sustainment Group, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

## Empowering job seekers and employers to reach their employment goals



WISE Employment is a not-for-profit organisation. We empower job seekers from diverse backgrounds to find meaningful work and become self-sufficient. We help employers to find the right staff.

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## Naval Expansion

Worth an estimated \$35 billion, the huge Future Frigates contract has come down to a three-horse race with the bidders in the process of finalising their designs – but with a build strategy seemingly being dictated by the Department of Defence. There are two main parts to Australia's planned substantial naval build-up – nine Future Frigates and 12 submarines. The frigates, being acquired under the SEA 5000 program, will enter service far sooner and will have a more immediate impact on the shipbuilding sector, with construction due to begin in 2020, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

## Cyber Attacks Could Lead to War

Large-scale cyber-attacks on critical infrastructure could escalate into warfare between nations, **Malcolm Turnbull** has warned. The Prime Minister told the Centre for Strategic and International Studies in Washington that Australia's offensive cyber capability allowed it to respond to nations and non-government groups which might attack. Australia's offensive cyber response was an option which took its place alongside diplomacy and law-enforcement action, Turnbull said, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

## Cold War Espionage

It was the secret war being waged in Canberra's bars, parks and streets that makes today's spy thrillers 'pale by comparison'. The third and final volume of the explosive history on ASIO, **The Secret Cold War**, has revealed the extent of the espionage in the nation's capital in the late 1970s to mid-'80s.

Australian National University academic **John Blaxland** co-wrote the official history of the spy agency from 1975 to 1989 with Australian War Memorial historian **Rhys Crawley**. 'People don't quite appreciate how much was going on in Canberra; in the restaurants...in the bars, in Manuka, in Kingston, in Deakin, in Yarralumla and Red Hill, in parks around near the Soviet Embassy, around the Chinese Embassy' Dr Blaxland said.

'Russian spies waiting for a meet, a pre-arranged contact to turn up to drop something off or have a brush past – this was the kind of thing that was happening in the Manuka shops, around the embassies and it was happening in front of our very eyes without us realising what was going on', THE ACE reports.

## Pyne Bungles Submarine Data

Defence Industry Minister **Christopher Pyne** has fumbled the government's handling of the massive leak of secret data from Australia's new French submarine designer, said independent South Australian senator **Nick Xenophon**.



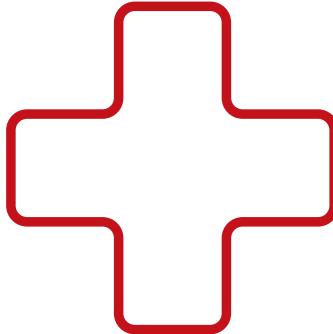
ONE OF THE CUTER PUPS GOING AROUND.

Twenty-five Australian companies have passed the first audit to be able to work on the \$50 billion building of Australia's 12 Shortfin Barracuda submarines when construction begins in 2021.

**Herve Guilou**, the chairman of DCNS, which won the submarine tender, said hundreds of workers from France would move to Adelaide to help with construction, reports THE AUSTRALIAN.

## Legislation Reform Provides RAAF Boost

Australian warplanes in Iraq and Syria are increasingly hitting Islamic State's logistics and finance networks as changes to the rules of engagement and Australia's war crimes legislation allows the RAAF to expand the list of targets, per THE AUSTRALIAN.



## HEALTH

### I Can't Get No Satisfaction

Satisfaction with private health insurers has declined to 2013 levels, as survey results show more than 10 per cent of Australians plan to leave their fund in the next 12 months and are shopping around. The results, from Roy Morgan's Single Source survey of more than 50,000 Australians, found nearly all major health insurance providers have shown declining customer satisfaction in the past year, THE ACE reports.

### Lack of Tests for Doctor Performance

Doctors are the most trusted professionals in Australia but many of their patients want them to face more tests and audits of their work, a survey has found. International research suggests about 6 per cent of doctors (about 6600 in Australia) are underperforming at any given time, and in Australia there are no mandatory checks of their performance over time.

In the past year, more than 5000 complaints were made against doctors according to the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency's latest annual report, THE ACE reports.

### E-Cig Ban

The move by Phillip Morris International to introduce its new product of a smokeless cigarette has so far been thwarted by the Federal Government, which refuses to follow the US, UK, Japan and parts of Europe in allowing the legal sale of e-cigarettes.

Australian **Paul Riley**, president of PMI in Japan, believes smokeless cigarettes such as the company's iQOS product will one day sound the death knell for traditional cigarettes. The device uses real tobacco, but instead of burning it to produce hazardous smoke and tar, it heats it to produce tobacco flavoured vapour.

### Stronger Bones and Thinner Belly's

Children who drink full-fat milk are slimmer than those brought up on semi-skimmed, a study has found. Researchers believe this is because the blue-top variety leaves youngsters feeling fuller, so they are less likely to snack. The study also found that

the full-fat drinkers had higher levels of vitamin D – the 'sunshine vitamin', which is soluble in fat.

The Canadian study, published in the **American Journal of Clinical Nutrition**, involved 2745 children aged two to six. It found that youngsters who drank whole milk with a fat content of 3.25 per cent has a body mass index lower than those who drank 1 to 2 per cent fat milk, the HERALD SUN reports.

## The Great Outdoors

A non-profit organisation is getting children off laptops and into the great outdoors, to the benefit of their health. Not far from where **Hyahno Moser** lives, a societal transformation is taking place. In the leafy community of Tamborine, south of Brisbane.

'A computer game can hold a child's attention, but what's happening outside is engaging all their senses,' says **Moser**, a father of four who chose Tamborine because there were other kids in the neighbourhood. 'We had a big mountain of mud that kids just loved to climb and then slide down...you can put a mud pit in your own backyard, and they will find ways to engage', according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

## Left in the Dark

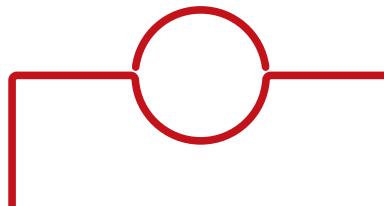
Blind Australians have been unable to sign up for the National Disability Insurance Scheme because the application form and pamphlets are not available in braille or large print, as per the HERALD SUN.

## NSW Healthcare Privatisation

A NSW government move to hand over all of its disability support to the private sector could attract large healthcare providers like Australian Unity, but some of the sweeteners to bring them in might undermine key features of the National Disability Insurance Scheme. Not all service providers are happy about the way the transfer has been structured and, in the short term, there are questions about whether it facilitates the customer-driven market at the heart of the NDIS, according to THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

## Australia in Dire Need of Sensible Drug Policy - Editorial

Australia's drug policy a wasteful, cruel failure. THE ACE has for years been arguing the policy should be dumped in favour of a harm minimisation strategy based on decriminalisation, regulation and education. We continue to advocate, and believe the resources being wasted on this misguided, indefensible 'war' should be diverted from the criminal justice system to the health system, where there is a need for more treatment facilities and support to help those with drug issues recover and stay well.



## INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS

### Human Rights Paramount

Shocking rates of domestic violence among indigenous Australians are being excused as 'a matter of culture' and left unpunished to recue the number of assailants being sent to jail, three senior Aboriginal women told a national forum.

**Marcia Langton, Jacinta Price and Josephine Cashman** said indigenous communities and their supporters alike were guilty of reverse racism, an indefensible adherence to traditional law was denying women and children their human rights, and the Turnbull government was too slow to address the problems, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

#### ABC Labelled Racist

Aboriginal leader **Noel Pearson** has described the ABC as a fundamentally racist organisation, content to see Aboriginal people languish in poverty in order to wallow in hand-wringing reports of misery, incarceration and tragedy. Pearson's searing assessment came at the launch of **Troy Bramston's** biography of **Paul Keating**, who made true reconciliation with the Aboriginal people, via **Mabo** and native title legislation a cornerstone of his prime ministership.

Pearson said many of Keating's most promising reforms in the arena of indigenous affairs had been 'wrecked by ignorant ministers and malign bureaucrats, aided and abetted by the media, not least the country's miserable, racist, national broadcaster'. The ABC was, he said, 'a spittoon's worth of perverse people willing the wretched to fail', as reported in THE AUSTRALIAN.

#### No Constitutional Recognition

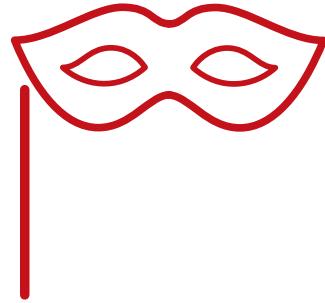
##### Says Keating

**Paul Keating** does not support recognising indigenous Australians in the Constitution but instead backs a formal document of reconciliation or a treaty he believes would be more meaningful, according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

#### Another Leak Complaint Dropped

Two Aboriginal men from the remote Kimberley town of Fitzroy Crossing say they plan to withdraw from a racial hatred complaint lodged with the Australian Human Rights Commission over a provocative **Bill Leak** cartoon. Retired country music singer **Kevin Gunn** and his cousin **Bruce Till** told THE AUSTRALIAN they stood by their strong criticisms of the cartoon but did not want to be part of legal action being run for them by the Aboriginal Legal Service of Western Australia.

The possible collapse of the case comes as the original complainant, 25-year-old politics and international relations student **Melissa Dinnison**, also withdrew her AHRC complaint that she had experienced racial hatred as a result of the August 4 cartoon published in THE AUSTRALIAN.



#### SOCIETY

##### Selfish Nation

Australia is selfish, inward looking and less prepared to help neighbours and the needy around the world. Only 48 per cent of Australian women feel safe walking alone at night, we volunteer less and give less to charity despite being one of the richest countries in the world, and eight people die as result of suicide each day.

These are the damning findings of a landmark report from the Community Council for Australia. The 60-page document contains sobering reading about the nation we live in, reports the HERALD SUN.

##### Another Royal Milestone

The Queen and Prince Phillip have celebrated their 69th wedding anniversary. This year has seen Elizabeth – Britain's longest reigning sovereign – celebrate her 90th birthday and the Duke, the nation's longest serving royal consort, turn 95. They are just one year from their platinum wedding anniversary, the HERALD SUN reports.

##### Lefties 'Hijacking' Award

Our Australian of the Year awards have been hijacked by activist sponsors. The fix is now in and it shows. Take the Victorian Australian of the Year award. One finalist was **Waleed Aly**, the Muslim apologist and hero of the Left, and the winner was refugee advocate **Paris Aristotle**.

Young Australian of the Year went to the former (failed) Greens candidate **Jason Ball**, now campaigning for same-sex marriage, and Senior Australian of the Year was **Lois Peeler**, principle at Australia's only Aboriginal girls' boarding school. Every fashionable cause of the Left this year was covered, now that global warming is so 'yesterday', writes **Andrew Bolt** for the HERALD SUN.

##### Uni Lessons on Sexuality

The University of Sydney's elective unit, called Young People, Sex and Sexual Health, is offered to teaching students and promises to foster a 'new view of the ways in which the sexual identities of young people are often constructed from outside influences'. 'still not quite sure what all the letters

in LGBTPPQQIA stand for or why it's really important to know them?' says a brochure promoting the unit. 'Wonder no more – in this unit you will learn why issues of sex, sexuality and sexual health for young people are considered 'difficult and contested knowledge' and how institutions go about dealing with this', as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

#### Social Cohesion Issue

Renowned historian **Geoffrey Blainey** has warned that public unease about home-grown terrorism and Muslim immigration presents a far greater threat to social cohesion than the Asian immigration issue he flagged more than 30 years ago. The problems he warned about three decades ago – an influx of poorly educated migrants with low employment prospects – are now exacerbated by the community's legitimate fears about random violence by Islamic extremists, he said in THE AUSTRALIAN.

#### Revamped Republican Movement

**Malcolm Turnbull** is going back to where his political career began with a much-anticipated address to mark the 25th anniversary of the Australian Republican Movement. The Prime Minister spoke at an event which the movement hopes has pressed the reset button on the republican debate. The gala event was held in the Gala Hall of Sydney University with the top-tier tables costing \$3000.

'It is an occasion to honour those who've got us to this point, and the PM is, of course, at the forefront of our founding fathers and mothers. The dinner is also a moment for the ARM to outline its vision for the future. A vision in which Australia takes the lead and completes the journey to full and final independence' ARM national chairman, **Peter Fitzsimons** said, as reported in THE AGE.

#### Self-Righteous Lefty Protestors

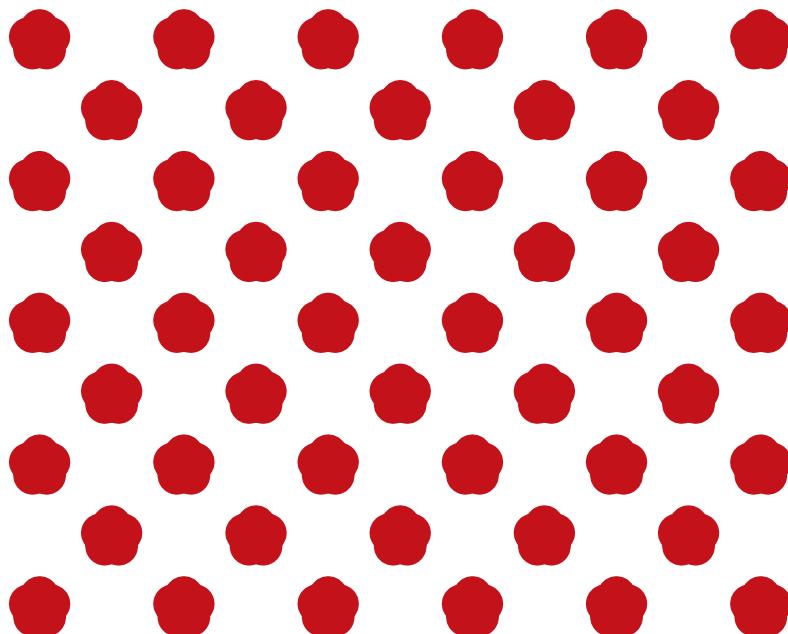
The right to protest, while crucial to a healthy society, is not license to break the law. The protest in Parliament House in the last sitting week of federal Parliament for the year was another opportunity to reflect on the narcissism so prevalent among, but not restricted to, the left. Bathing themselves in self-righteousness they justify their behaviour by kidding themselves that they have the right to rearrange their rights and obligations according to their own assessment of what is fair and appropriate, writes **Amanda Vanstone** for THE AGE.

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## THE AMERICAN ELECTION:

### *Six Weeks On*

#### Our Editorial

Paradoxically, it was **Bill Clinton's** 'war room' advice in the 1992 presidential campaign that proved decisive in **Donald Trump's** defeat of Hillary Clinton 24 years on. 'It's the economy, stupid,' was the mantra Mr Clinton's advisers drilled into him, driving him to the White House. We saw how Mr Trump was able to capitalise on economic insecurities in states left behind by globalisation to defeat Mrs Clinton, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

#### TPP Dead in the Water

President-elect **Donald Trump** has reassured **Prime Minister Turnbull** that the United States' military commitments to the region will continue but has confirmed that America will not be ratifying the Trans-Pacific Partnership, which effectively kills the 12-nation regional free trade deal, according to THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

#### Impact On Australian Businesses

The impact of **Trump's** victory on Australian companies will be huge. Almost a quarter of top-200 listed companies have significant exposure to the US economy and face a 'mixed outlook' according to analysts at Credit Suisse, even before you consider the \$64 billion in imports and exports

to the US, which might be affected by a trade war, as per THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.

#### Will Trump Stick to His Deportation Guns?

**Trump** pledges to America will be snagged on the plodding machinery of government that slows down every politician. Can we overlook the grotesquery of a nation voting to deport a whole class of immigrants while retaining as its icon a 46-metre-tall copper lady enjoining all and sundry to give me your huddled masses? Writes **Annabel Crabb** for THE AGE.

#### University Students Protest

Fliers depicting men in camouflage, wielding guns and an American flag, appeared in men's toilets throughout Texas State University. "Now that our man Trump is elected," they said. "Time to organise tar and feather vigilante squads and go arrest and torture those deviant university leaders spouting off that diversity garbage".

A year after students at campuses nationwide pushed for greater sensitivity towards cultural differences, the distribution of the Texas State fliers just one of several episodes this week suggesting that the election of **Donald**

**Trump** is provoking a round of backlash on campuses, as reported in **The Sunday Age**.

#### Australia Affected By Climate Denial

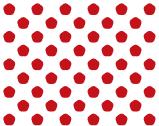
**Trump's** pledge to end US participation in the Paris climate agreement and expectations he will appoint climate change denier **Myron Ebell** to a key environment role have scientists bracing for fallout. Australia's climate research relies on many US programs, some of which have been targeted by the Republican-controlled Congress, reports **The Sunday Age**.

#### Trump to Return to Reaganomics

**Trump's** plan to emulate US president **Ronald Reagan** by slashing taxes, cutting regulation and running up debt to unleash infrastructure spending helped turn global financial markets, as investors welcomed the prospect of more inflationary pressures, THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW reports.

#### UK-US Relations

British Prime Minister **Theresa May** promised to work with **Donald Trump** to bolster the 'special relationship' between Britain and the US, despite the disdain with which the Republican President-elect is viewed in Westminster, as reported in THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW.



### Rise of the Alt-Right

Patriotism and popular democracy are reborn with the rise of Trump and Britain's Brexit vote. The differences between Trump, Britain's **Boris Johnson** and Hungarian Prime Minister **Viktor Orbán**, let alone the National Front's **Marine Le Pen**, are vast and many and put them on opposite sides to each other on vital questions.

For instance, **Orbán**'s government took full-page ads in British newspapers appealing to voters to reject Brexit. That said, there is certainly one thing they all have in common: they have all provoked extraordinary self-righteous demonstrations against the outcomes of democratic elections. No sin is too trivial to escape the preaching and punishment of the progressive state.

If you're delivering the monologue, or if you agree with the sentiments expressed, you doubtless feel that all is well. But if you have a view different to that of the monologists, or if you merely don't like being lectured, you will feel more and more irritated. Maybe you will think that it's not the job of government to keep telling you how you should behave morally.

It's commonly said that America is now divided into two nations, progressives and conservatives, each with its own media and conversations, neither listening to the other. Progressive politicians such as **Hillary Clinton** are surprised every four years when the voters prove to be angrily resistant on issues that they thought had been safely settled.

Those who support Trump are not themselves vulgarians or sexists and they dislike those qualities of Trump. But they like his candour, his contempt for political correctness – his political profanity. Above all, however, they disliked Clinton and the progressive bureaucrats who had in their view misgoverned America for the previous 30 years.

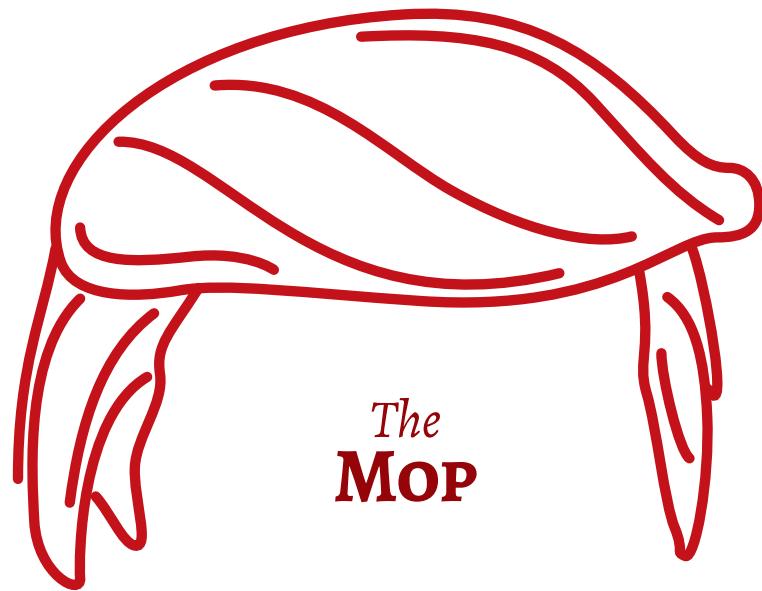
America is now a society divided almost evenly on major ideological development at home and abroad. Identity politics has now crossed the floor. The Trump campaign, Brexit in Britain and the refugee row in Europe have signalled the rebirth of patriotism and popular democracy against progressive global governance and its forced transformation of societies along secularists and multicultural lines, writes **John O'Sullivan** in THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Populism Won't Slow Globalisation

Former National Australia Bank chief executive and ex-BHP Billiton chairman **Don Argus** believes that globalisation will continue, despite the trend running into some 'choppy waters'. As **Donald Trump** was swept into the White House this week on an anti-globalisation movement and a rising tide of populism, Mr Argus said politicians needed to develop 'a new way of communicating and leading', according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Trump Trade War

While the real impact of the Trump agenda is a case of 'the devil's in the detail' according to former deputy prime minister **Tim Fischer**, this view is backed by leading analysts in the US and Australia who fear that a global recession will



result from **Trump** hitting Chinese imports with a 45 per cent tariff, and by ending free-trade agreements. US bank Citigroup says in a research note that while Trump's policies might be good for US growth in the short term, the global impact of a tit-for-tat trade war would be catastrophic.

### US Key Dates

**December 19:** Electoral College to vote for president

**January 6:** Joint sitting of Congress counts Electoral College votes and declares a winner

**January 20:** Inauguration at noon.

### Australian's Take on Trump

'A picture showed a young woman with a placard that says, 'Hatred is unwelcome. F\*\*k Donald Trump'. The hypocrisy is this message sums up the Left that was rejected by US voters.' MIKE YOUNG, SWANBOURNE, WA.

'Donald Trump may not be a career politician but his instinct told him that the people looked around and saw an America in decline. They resented being patronised by smug commentators with trendy slogans who were out of touch with the real world. And then the people spoke' ALAN FREEDMAN, ST KILDA EAST, VIC.

### Giuliani's Gigantic Comments

The frontrunner to become **Donald Trump's** secretary of state has revealed the US president-elect is committed to building 'gigantic' military force to thwart China's ambitions in the pacific. **Rudy Giuliani**, the New York mayor during the terror attacks of September 11, 2001, and who is assisting Mr Trump's transition to the White House, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

### Counselling Needed – AU comment 'Bullshit'

Corporate giant PricewaterhouseCoopers has offered to counsel its staff in Australia who are

worried by **Donald Trump's** US election win. In an extraordinary move, ridiculed by many on social media, PwC implied that Mr Trump held values contrary to the company's and that all staff should take solace in PwC's culture of 'care' in the wake of the election result, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

### Elites Got it Wrong

**Donald Trump's** triumph has shown once again how desperately out of touch much of the commentary is with the mainstream. The Left-wing echo chamber inhabited by much of the media and political class was in the midst of a full-blown meltdown as the results rolled in showing that Trump was likely to become the next president of the United States.

The Trump phenomenon shows just how deep the gulf is between the political and media elite and the people they are meant to represent, writes **Rita Panahi** for the HERALD SUN.

### VP Power

**Donald Trump's** decision to empower his running mate **Mike Pence** to steer the presidential transition gives him a significant hand in shaping the incoming government, indicating he will wield more power than a traditional US vice-president, according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

### Sino-US Relations

Chinese President **Xi Jinping** and US president-elect **Donald Trump** have agreed to meet 'at an early date' to discuss the relationship between the two powers, Chinese state broadcaster CCTV said, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

### Trump Appoints Staff

**Donald Trump** has named Republican National Committee chairman **Reince Priebus** as his chief of staff, a selection that suggests he is interested in a more conventional approach to governing after his insurgent campaign. The US president-elect

**Six Weeks On**

also named **Stephan Bannon** as his chief strategist and senior counsel, according to THE AUSTRALIAN.

**Trump Promise May Be Impossible**

**Donald Trump** campaigned on a promise to resurrect the ailing US coal industry and put miners back to work. Delivering on that vow could prove nearly impossible. Electric utilities that buy more than 95 per cent of the coal mined in America have already retired hundreds of their coal-burning power plants from Colorado to Connecticut —amounting to about a third of the total capacity—and have plans to mothball even more.

While in Appalachia (mostly Pennsylvania southwards the Virginias, the Carolinas to Alabama) earlier this year, Trump pledged to 'bring the coal industry back, 100 per cent' by rolling back environmental regulations. But coal's biggest problem is that it is no longer the cheapest fossil fuel around. It is being displaced by natural gas.

**Left Without a Leg to Stand On**

The Left's latest decent into cluelessness, sanctimony and hypocrisy unfolded like a tedious but impeccably timed bit of synchronised swimming. After **Trump's** win, some on the Left remonstrated about a 'post-truth' era where impudent readers and voters ignore the mainstream media. Then when Cuban leader **Fidel Castro** died, many on the left soliloquised about a romantic era of revolutionary leadership, neatly proving that post-truth labels better suit their own factually compromised postures, writes **Janet Albrechtzen** for THE AUSTRALIAN.

Your Editor sat beside a Cuban refugee at high school for a year of World History in 1964, and heard a few stories first-hand.

**Perfect Storm**

The Left doesn't get **Donald Trump's** victory over political correctness. Fortune handed Trump the perfect opponent. There is no leading political figure in the US who more closely symbolises both neoliberalism and political correctness than **Hillary Clinton**, writes **Robert Manne** for THE AUSTRALIAN.

**Caught Out**

ABC Breakfast presenter **Virginia Trioli** has been caught live on air saying **Donald Trump** supporters/voters should be 'subjected to an IQ test', as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

**Tales of Bureaucracy**

**Trump** emphatically means what he says when he pledges to 'drain the Washington swamp'. He believes that the institutionalised political and bureaucratic structures that dominate America are in his terms 'corrupt' and must be dismantled, THE AUSTRALIAN reports.

Washington, District of Columbia (DC) is at the mouth of the Potomac River. Your Editor had his American high school scholarship year in the village of Potomac, very near to DC itself.

**Winds of Change**

It is the great American political shock of the past century. This has been a revolt against the US Establishment, against conventional politics,

against the global status quo. It is a cry from the disaffected white working-class heart of traditional America. **Trump**, never having held public office, is a political novice who broke every rule in the book and defied the polls.

The immediate issue is his ability to calm global nerves, contain his narcissism and project an unrevealed sense of judgement and pragmatism. This is a smashing victory for economic populism and trade protectionism. It has the potential to change the world. It will cripple global climate change action, inject fear into US allies and risk a trade battle with China, writes **Paul Kelly** for THE AUSTRALIAN.

**Meet The Wives**

NO 1: **Trump** married Czech fashion model **Ivana Zelnickova** in 1977 and they had three children: Donald Jr., Ivanka and Eric. The couple divorced in 1992.

NO 2: **Marla Maples**, with whom he has a daughter **Tiffany**, who is named for the 5th Avenue jewellery shop. They later divorced.

NO 3: **Melania Knauss**, who came to the US to work...as a model, as per THE AUSTRALIAN. She and Don had the ten-year-old son, that we all quietly saw on Election Night.

**Democracy Under Attack**

Suspicious that Russia tried to influence the outcome of the US presidential election in favour of **Donald Trump**, via internet/cyber activity should alarm citizens of democracies anywhere, THE ACE reports.

**Australia's Top Merchandise Exports to the US**

Beef \$3076 million, Aircraft, spacecraft & parts \$991 million, Meat (excluding beef) \$879 million, Alcoholic beverage \$491 million, Medical instruments \$444 million, Gold coin & legal tender coin \$334 million, as per THE AUSTRALIAN.

**Trump Cabinet Taking Shape**

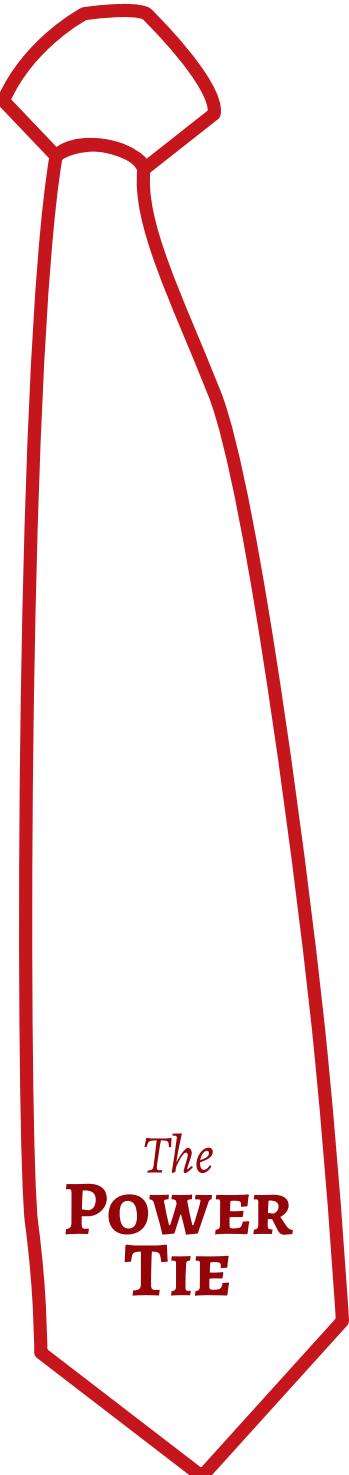
President-elect **Trump** has chosen 15 Cabinet members for his administration but key positions still outstanding, reports THE AUSTRALIAN.

**Australian-Trump Connection**

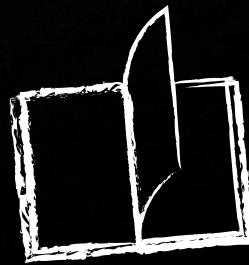
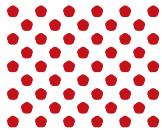
President-elect **Donald Trump** has named **Andrew Liveris**, chairman and chief executive of Dow Chemical Co, to head the Manufacturing Council, a private sector group that advises the US secretary of commerce. Liveris has nominated tax cuts, cheap energy, elimination of red tape, worker reskilling and integrated supply chains as the keys to reviving US manufacturing and jobs, according to reports from THE ACE and THE AUSTRALIAN.

**US-AUS Relations**

Former Australian ambassador to the United States **Kim Beazley** warns that former prime minister **Paul Keating** is 'completely wrong' in calling to 'cut the tag' with the US and has urged the **Turnbull** government to 'lobby' the Trump administration as it fills 'real gaps' to protect our interests in Asia, THE AUSTRALIAN FINANCIAL REVIEW reports.



## The POWER TIE



# TRUMPING AUSTRALIAN EDUCATION

BY CHERYL LACEY

Australian education is in dire need of overhaul. If you need evidence, look at the 2015 exam results recently released by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA).

The PISA exam, which is administered every three years, measures 15-year-old students' abilities, in 73 countries. It is the world's leading external exam, and provides a snapshot of a nation's education. In 2015, Australia was ranked 10th in science – down from 8th position in 2012; 12th in reading – down from 10th; and in mathematics ... yes, down again – from 17th to 20th place.

Despite the billions of dollars spent, year after year, we have been in consistent decline since 2000. These latest results raise essential questions about our educational system and our global ranking, and suggest the need for dramatic change, if we are to achieve improved educational outcomes for our students and, indeed, for our nation.

Dramatic change calls for dramatic action. We mustn't be afraid to go deep – to the root cause of the stagnation and decline. Neither should we resist the repurposing of some of the greatest initiatives previously presented by both major parties.

In 1788, the First Fleet sailed into Botany Bay. Among the first arrivals were 36 children: 19 were the offspring of the marines and 17 were from convict parents. Children of the privileged and the poor lived together in the penal colony, under one rule of law. We had our first charter of justice, and it articulated law and order, but failed in its provisions for education.

As our colonies grew, so too did the need to address the significant failure to provide education. There were attempts to provide schools for the children and stem the vagrancy

that came with rapid population growth. Trial systems were implemented, and there were the inevitable struggles for control, and loss of trust. The result was a major fallout between government, parents, and faith groups.

The political battle that ensued pitched man against man, colony against colony, culture against culture, and faith against faith. Land, power, legislation and opportunity were all part of the balance – or imbalance – and a centralised public system was born. Schools and schooling became big business.

In matters of education, the USA is similar to Australia in many ways. It shares its powers between Federal and State Government, and it has seen a decline in PISA performance. There have also been some outstanding reforms, designed to counter lack of choice, and offer opportunity and progress to every child; none of these reforms has survived the poison of political ego.

Australia and the USA have both public and private schools. Each has denominational institutions, home schooling, international schools, and virtual schools. Australia has selective entry public schools, and the USA has 'magnet' schools. Although they are public, these schools are highly competitive and highly selective. They're renowned for their special programs and high academic standards.

The USA also has a growing charter school movement. Charter schools are public but, as the term implies, they have the freedom to chart a more autonomous course, reducing the top-down influence of Federal and State governments. Charter schools are independently



**'AS PRESIDENT, I WILL ESTABLISH THE NATIONAL GOAL OF PROVIDING CHOICE TO EVERY AMERICAN CHILD...'**

operated by community organisations or for-profit companies, who receive tax dollars and private sponsorship.

The challenge for both the USA and Australia is to create a decentralised, flexible school system, where Federal and State governments put a bipartisan approach to greater choice and greater autonomy ahead of political power.

In Australia, the current funding model is shaped by the Gonski reforms. It links funding to children's needs, but funds still go directly to the schools. In some US states, however, school funding is based on a 'voucher system', where funding follows the child. This system fosters greater choice, and access to more autonomous, specialised schools, including magnet and charter schools. This approach has attracted Donald Trump's attention.

Some of the things Trump has to say about school reform in the USA raise questions for Australia, too:

#### **1. Let Them Choose**

**'As President, I will establish the national goal of providing choice to every American child...' Mr Trump said.** Should Australia consider a voucher system, or similar, so as to provide greater opportunity for all children, particularly the disadvantaged, to attend the school of their choice?

#### **2. Let Schools Compete**

'Who's better off, the kids who use vouchers to go to the school of their choice, or the ones who choose to stay in public school? All of them. That's the way it works in a competitive system', Mr. Trump said. Should Australia introduce charter schools, giving local schools the opportunity to choose their area of expertise, thereby attracting expert teachers and talented students?

#### **3. Portability and Local School Boards**

'I'm not cutting services, but I am cutting spending. We're going to be cutting tremendous amounts of money and waste and fraud and abuse', says Mr. Trump. Should Australia consider an 'Educare' system – similar to Medicare? The same accountabilities would apply, and funding would be available for all children to receive effective literacy, numeracy, and values education. If schools offered specialist education, it would fall under a 'user pays' or voucher model?

The essence of education can be described as the imparting of knowledge, positive judgement, culture, and well-developed wisdom from generation to generation. Australia was founded as a Judeo-Christian nation and, it has to be said, also founded on an omission, which has seen education used as a political football rather than a time-honoured gift.

The USA also has a scattered system, with pockets of success and deep wells of failure. Perhaps we have something to learn from Trump's enthusiasm. Perhaps it's time for Australia and the USA to work in unison, to provide education systems that value, and offer, diversity, choice and opportunity. Perhaps it's time to be human first, politically correct second, and to develop first rate education systems that cultivate the 'Australian Fair Go' and the 'Great American Dream'.

Australian education has gone backwards. This trend is reversible. All that is required is the will of our people, our politicians and a genuine belief in what's possible. The only question that remains is this. How hungry are we?

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