

LETTER FROM MELBOURNE

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

Now into our twenty-fourth year.

An Autumn Edition



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- CFA Divide. Madhouse.

LETTER FROM MELBOURNE

ABOUT US

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

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

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

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

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Since 1994. A monthly public affairs newsletter distilling public policy and government decisions which effect business opportunities in Victoria, Australia and beyond. 2,500,000 words available to search digitally.

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ABOUT THE EDITOR—ALISTAIR URQUHART, BA LLB

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

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

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

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



THE EDITOR WITH VARIOUS SPECIALISTS IN SPRING STREET: HOTEL, TAXI AND CAFÉ.



EDITORIAL—THE PRESSURE IS ON

As the three million new Melbournians rush into Town over the next thirty years,

let's get the place safe first. That should not take two years. Let alone get worse.

Over a serious Coffee, the Editor joined others who came up with a few ideas. What is the cause of Police inability to Make Marvellous Melbourne safe?

Is it Bureaucracy, Politics. Politicians, Political ideology, Some culture and customs, Personalities, The Unions, so much behind the scenes, Social disengagement more generally in a changing era, Lack of Education which includes the old basics/personal skills, Lack of a clear view by all of us to share which is hidden by an opaqueness ... of government. Perhaps some of us both know and are very concerned..

Let's send half of the police force off somewhere, perhaps on a boat; and then make up the numbers by having musicians take their place. That should cheer up the streets. It might even drive the druggies off Victoria Street.

A Coffee Shop colleague suggested that we should turn Parliament House in Spring Street into an art gallery, but another at the table said it already had a lot of conartists there. Another suggestion was to use perhaps half the building as a home for young criminals rather than build the new youth facility out at Werribee. Is there anything to suggest that moving this facility/jail a few miles from town might make those in charge better maintain the inmates in good sensible order? Parliament has so many guards and uniforms to protect those on the inside, why not use the same uniforms to protect the people on the outside.

Shocking. A shock even to the Editor who thought he knew how things happened around Spring Street. The extent of the legislation recently created behind the scenes, perhaps finessed by public servant lawyers in their fenced off facilities, and brought before Parliament.

Example, Probate Law, promoted by the relevant professional association without the wider legal community being aware of the amendments to the Act and its pedantic details which can have such ramifications in places beyond the mind of the non-professionals. Safety of boats/vessels in Port Phillip Bay, with the same laws for play boats up to five feet as for the large ocean going container ships, and other large vessels that enter Port Philip Bay, with attendant responsibilities.

The Cover. The Eight Hour Day monument, diagonally opposite the Trades Hall Headquarters. Corner of Lygon and Victoria Streets. One reads the monument at ground level: 'The Eight Hour Day Movement initiated in Victoria in 1853, and the monument was erected in 1903'. It has been an ambitious monument.

Then you ask a seagull to fly you to the top of the monument where you can see: 888 Labour Rest Recreation. This sentiment is echoed in a similar monument on Sturt St in Ballarat.

Balance. The Editor's Father taught him to respect unions, in a general sense, even as they fought to stop his business loading wool at Victorian ports for export. The fatherly advice has provided balance and perspective, which hopefully is mostly displayed in an objective way in *Letter From Melbourne* and *Letter From Canberra*. The boundary can be pushed, as recently suggested by the new Australian Council of Trade Unions, ACTU. Sally McManus who says she does not see a problem with workers breaking the laws when they (think they) are unjust. More in *Letter From Canberra*.

With a focus on objectivity, we plan to bring the detail of the history and present day of many Business and Society organisations and players during this year. Any suggestions?

INSIDE

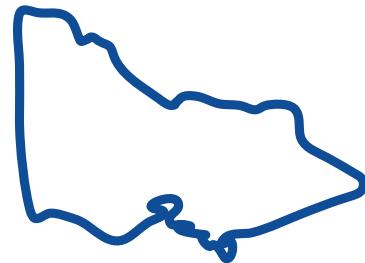
- Victorian non-parliamentary Liberal President
- Housing
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- Hunting deer, etc
- CFA Divide. Madhouse.

Hot Off The Press

- Reith withdraws due to ill health
- Maybe Next Year. A nite time Grand Final
- The Hon Steve Herbert will retire from Parliament about now. As he is in the Upper House!, he will be replaced without an election. The likely replacement is Mr Mark Gepp, a veteran union Official.
- Essendon Wins.

Next Edition

The Future of Energy in Victoria.



GOVERNANCE

Speaker and Deputy Resign Amid Audit

The Speaker of the Legislative Assembly (the Lower House) in the Victorian Parliament and also the Deputy Speaker have quit their respective roles in the Parliament, but remain as parliamentarians at this stage, on the eve of a forensic audit into whether they abused their taxpayer-funded parliamentary entitlements, THE AGE

MP Entitlement Reform

A sweeping overhaul of all MPs entitlements has been rushed through state cabinet following the resignation of the city-based speaker and deputy speaker after they claimed cash for living on the Bellarine Peninsula. The opposition is considering all options including referring the scandal to police or the Ombudsman, THE AGE.

Former Deputy Speaker Shunned

Disgraced Labor MP Don Nardella was booted out of the parliamentary Labor Party because he refused to pay back money he claimed as a controversial 'second residence' allowance since moving to Ocean Grove in 2014. The former deputy speaker's fall from grace continued when Labor colleagues turned on him and said he should leave parliament if he didn't pay back more than \$100,000. The HERALD SUN revealed a Reach-TEL poll conducted on March 2, showing Labor would lose up to 18 seats if an election were held.

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A More Informed Electorate

The home suburb of all political candidates would be printed on ballot papers under a plan being pushed to better let voters know whether their local MP lives in their electorate. Opposition Leader **Matthew Guy's** shadow cabinet has discussed a plan to print on ballot papers the suburb of residence of all candidates in 88 lower house seats. The policy would extend the practice from the upper house, THE AGE.

Non-parliamentary politics.

Two leading figures in Victoria's political and business establishment, **Hugh Morgan** and **Michael Kroger**, are locked in a dispute in which \$500,000 in donations have been withheld from the Liberals' state branch and claims of serious governance failings made, THE AGE.

Liberal President Elections STOP PRESS

Liberal stalwarts **Michael Kroger** and **Peter Reith** will go to contest state party president. Reith, a minister under **John Howard**, is challenging the incumbent, seizing on frustration among the membership and state MPs over Kroger's behaviour during recent pre-selections, and his stand-off with major benefactor the Cormack Foundation. Reith is also likely to face pressure about his role as a lobbyist.

Kroger continues to defy the demands of the Cormack Foundation, which includes business heavy hitters **Hugh Morgan**, **Rupert Murdoch's** brother-in-law **John Calvert-Jones** and former ANZ chairman **Charles Goode**. The foundation wants the roles of president of the party and chair of the finance committee to be separated – both positions are held by Kruger. Former premier **Jeff Kennett** is back Reith, saying it is time for a change, THE AGE.

Parliamentary chat at the end of last week had Kennett perhaps positioning himself for the President position. The position was reopened when Reith withdrew. The Vote will be on 1 April at the State Conference at Jeff's Shed.

Taxpayers Fork Up for 16,000km Trip

Treasury Corporation Victoria deputy chair **Cassandra Kelly** was appointed in August 2015, and moved to the United States the following month. She has since flown on the public dollar from her New York home for meetings at TCV's Victorian headquarters, HERALD SUN.

FOI and Privacy Watchdog Merger

Two months after Victorian privacy and data protection watchdog **David Watts** questioned a decision by Premier **Andrews** to audit his ministers' phones, the government has confirmed it will embark on plans to merge Mr Watts' office with the Freedom of Information Commissioner.

The merger will establish the state's first Office of the Victorian Information Commissioner, OVIC, headed by a single regulator who will oversee FOI, manage the state's privacy and data protection issues, and provide independent advice to the government about how the public sector collects, uses and shares information.

But the shift has already been described as an 'attack' on Mr Watts, with some raising concerns it could also create a conflict of interest between FOI, which is based on the principle of releasing information, and privacy and protection laws, which are based on the principle of keeping information secure.

Mr Watts declined to comment about the government's plans, but has previously made no secret of his disdain for the change, which will result in his role, and that of the FOI commissioner, only existing until the legislation takes effect. Last year, the privacy chief raised concerns on his website about a potential conflict and accused the government of failing to consult him properly.

Liberal spokesman **Gordan Rich-Phillips** said the legislation allowed the government to effectively sack two independent office holders without recourse, in favour of a 'dud' model that had not worked in other jurisdictions. 'It is absolutely an attack on the Privacy Commissioner's office,' he said. However, the government stands by the restructure, saying it will streamline Victoria's integrity system, improve access to information, and make it easier to manage the rapid of information and data across the public services, THE AGE

Challenging Brochure

Matthew Guy has released a glossy brochure with the title 'real people, real stories'. To summarise: crime, the CFA saga, East West Link and roads, sky rail, power prices, ideology and general cost of living. Hazelwood and Peter Mac pointed out in Guy's brochure could be good conversation starters if there were more than an opening line available.

Would a Coalition government change the way police operate, or build a new coal-fired power station, or introduce more private wings in public hospitals? Writes the HERALD SUN's state political editor **Matt Johnston**.

Long Road Toll

The **Victorian** government is lining up to give CityLink owner Transurban an extra \$8 billion straight out of the pockets of Victorian motorists and businesses. This \$8 billion is a windfall that would stay with motorists and trucking companies if the government enforced the little-known clause in the contract that allows it to end tolling in 2025, rather than in 2035.

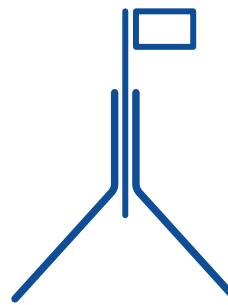
The clause, buried in the fine print of the original 1995 deal, gives the government authority to reclaim the roads network – the Burnley and

Domain tunnels, Bolte Bridge and Tullamarine link – if the company's profits reach a threshold. Transurban has denied that it will reach that profit benchmark before 2025. But any hopes motorists have for an end to tolling will be destroyed if the government proceeds with CityLink's proposal for the Western Distributor project and extends the CityLink tolling franchise to 2045, the HERALD SUN.

Out of Town

The Secretary of the Department of Premier & Cabinet has told a parliamentary inquiry he was unaware of concerns about United Fire fighters Union boss **Peter Marshall's** behaviour at the height of the EBA stoush. Secretary **Chris Eccles** said he had 'no cause' to take action to protect staff, despite a key adviser to Premier Andrews writing a memo to the Premier and ministerial staff about Mr Marshall's behaviour.

Opposition Leader **Matthew Guy** questioned why Mr Eccles never initiated action on the highly publicised issue, HERALD SUN.



FEDERAL

Regional Productivity Focus

Regional areas struggling to move on from ageing industries will be the focus of a federal government bid to identify regions at risk. Just weeks after the announced closure of the Hazelwood coal station, the **Turnbull** Government has asked the Productivity Commission to look at why some regions, particularly once-profitable mining towns, embrace economic changes, while others struggle to adjust.



THE VICTORIAN TRADES HALL ON VICTORIA & LYGON

Treasurer **Scott Morrison** has also asked the commission to look at the impacts of globalisation and environmental change across different communities and consider the impact of a transient workforce such as fly-in, fly-out workers and temporary migrant labour, the HERALD SUN.

Vics Short Changed

Victoria is Australia's forgotten state when it comes to federal infrastructure funding. If Prime Minister **Turnbull** wants to understand why he is loosing traction in Australia's second-most populous state, he could do worse than take a look at the carve up of major projects funding.

An analysis of data from the federal budget update shows Victoria has been severely short-changed, having been allocated an annual average of \$507 million for major projects over five years. That's equivalent to \$82 per person, less than one-third the national per capita average of \$257. In contrast, Queensland will get an average of \$366 per person, South Australia \$307, Western Australia \$307, NSW \$253 and Tasmania \$229, THE AGE.



ENVIRONMENT, ENERGY & CONSERVATION

Counter intuitive Policy

Restricting the amount of greenery growing besides the state's waterways will have detrimental effect on the environment while failing to meet its goal of reducing bushfire threats, top waterway ecosystem scientists have warned. Announced in January, the government policy limits vegetation along rivers and streams to a 10-metre wide area each side of the waterway.

While initially targeting a lowland area between the Dandenongs and the Yarra Ranges, the water scientists fear the policy will set a dangerous precedent for the management of the state's waterways and potentially the city's water quality. 'The policy was heralded to better manage bushfire risk while effectively managing environmental values. It does neither' Melbourne University wetlands ecologist **Joe Greet** said. 'it's very poor policy from a conservation perspective', THE AGE.

Many years ago

The burial of radioactive cows in Werribee was confirmed by the Department of Primary Industries, which has not revealed why the cows were treated with radioactive tritium dyes, THE AGE. An environmental issue!

Activists Charges Dropped

Two environmentalists who entered an East Gippsland logging coupe to document the destruction of rainforests have had charges against them dismissed. The court decision is the final chapter on what has been a two-year saga for **Ed Hill** and **Joe Henderson**, whose actions led to the state government conceding it needed to bolster timber harvesting rules – but who were then charged on summons with illegally entering the logging zone, THE AGE.

A claimed rare Aboriginal birthing tree is at the heart of a last-ditch heritage application to save it from being destroyed this year to widen a rural highway. The tree is on rural property in the Mount Langi Ghiran foothills near Buangor, on land that has recently been acquired by VicRoads. It was scheduled to be removed because it stands in the work zone for stage 2B of the joint state and federally funded Western Highway duplication project.

The tree has a girth of more than seven metres, is more than 30 metres tall and has been estimated to be up to 700 years old. But it is what is inside that might spare it from the bulldozer. A hollow, big enough for an adult to stand inside, with evidence of scarring and burning by human hands, is what has triggered the claims that it is an Aboriginal birthing tree, a place women once visited to give birth, and which men are banned from seeing, THE AGE.

Loy Yang Expansion

A major generator of Victoria's coal-fired electricity is set to be expanded sparking protests from environment groups over the effect on carbon emissions. The planned upgrade of the Loy Yang B power station in the Latrobe Valley comes as its majority owner, Engie, prepares to shut the Hazelwood plant and coal mine in March.

The Environment Protection Authority (EPA) has granted 'works approval' to upgrade turbines at the plant, which will result in the burning of an extra 400,000 tonnes of coal each year. Loy Yang B provides about 17 per cent of Victoria's energy needs, THE AGE.

Gas Shortfalls

Victorians could face gas and electricity shortages over the next five years, a new report from the nation's energy market regulator has warned. Victoria's gas production is set to drop 38 per cent

between this year and 2021, which could lead to 'domestic gas shortfalls', the Australian Energy Market Operator has warned, the HERALD SUN.

Trees Standing in the Way of Progress

Up to 22 mature trees in Parkville are facing the chop as part of the \$10.9 billion Melbourne Metro tunnel project. The trees in Grattan St, located between Leicester St and Royal Parade, have been earmarked for removal to enable safe construction of the underground rail tunnel and proposed Parkville station. The Melbourne Metro Tunnel project originally earmarked more than 900 trees for removal but the Environmental Effects Statement process later spared 117, bringing the final number of trees to be removed to about 800.

About 220 trees are set to be axed along St Kilda Rd plus another 19 from City Square. The EES warned the lost trees along St Kilda Rd and Grattan St would take many years to be replaced, the HERALD SUN.

Hunting Rules to be Relaxed

Hunting of pest animals, including deer, will be expanded under a new plan to promote sustainable hunting in Victoria. Under the Victorian Government plan a deer management strategy will be developed in conjunction with Australian Deer Association control programs, while accredited volunteer shooters will be able to contribute to pest and deer control.

Pest hunting will be expanded by looking at further hunting opportunities for gam licence holders in state game reserves. Restrictions on hunting other deer species in areas where Sambar deer hunting is already allowed will be removed, THE WEEKLY TIMES.

Smelter Future In Doubt

The future of the Alcoa aluminium smelter in western Victoria has been thrown into jeopardy after a major power fault cut more than half of the plant's capacity. The smelter, which directly employs about 500 people and indirectly supports about 2000, is assessing the damage caused to a potline when power was cut, and cannot say when problems will be fixed.

At the time, a separate SP Ausnet transmission line supplying Alcoa's smelter was down for maintenance. Speculation has been rife that Alcoa may be forced to leave Australian shores due to cost pressures, partly exacerbated by rising power prices, HERALD SUN.

Smelter to Stay Until 2021

Alcoa will keep its Portland smelter operating until 2021 after it accepted a government rescue package of more than \$200 million to secure more than 2000 jobs in Victoria's southwest, THE AUSTRALIAN.



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Energy Price Hike

Victorian households face a combined electricity and gas bill blowout of up to \$310 this year as retailers raise prices, HERALD SUN.

Land Conservation

I am pleased to announce that in 2015-16, an additional 1,706 hectares of Victoria was protected through 28 new conservation covenants, bringing the respective totals to 61,315 hectares over 1,351 covenants. I am always struck by the generosity of these landowners, who have decided to protect part of their property in perpetuity as a personal, voluntary contribution to help protect Victoria's natural areas and wildlife, writes chief executive of Trust For Nature **Victoria Marles** for the monthly hard copy magazine CONSERVATION BULLETIN.

Wind Farm in Wimmera

One of Victoria's most expensive wind farms will be built in the Wimmera, after the State Government approved its planning application. The \$650 million, 116-turbine farm at Murra Warra, north of Horsham, was approved by Planning Minister **Richard Wynne** after no objections were received, THE WEEKLY TIMES.

New National Park Hopes Dashed

Hopes of a new national park in Victoria's central highlands could be 'dead in the water', with the state opposition teaming up with the Shooters and Fishers Party in an attempt to ban its creation. Conservationists have long argued that a new Great Forest National Park is needed to save the state's faunal emblem, the Leadbeater's possum, THE AGE.

Energy Network in Need of Upgrade

A mid-February heatwave in NSW nearly left Victorian cities in the dark. 'We were disappointed in AEMO's ability to forecast and manage the heatwave,' Victorian Energy Minister **Lily D'Ambrosio** said. 'What occurred in fossil-fuel dependant NSW clearly shows that our network needs to be modernised'. Power to Victoria's regional towns was vulnerable on that day because a 'system overload control scheme' SOCS was activated on the main transmission line at about 4pm AEDT, and lasted for several hours.

Tomago Aluminium, which accounts for 12 per cent of NSW energy demand, was ordered by AEMO to shed 290 megawatts of load. As AEMO's report revealed, NSW narrowly avoided blackouts during the event, with about 2000 megawatts of gas and coal-fired power stations unavailable at the height of demand, THE AGE



FOREST WORKERS PROTEST OUT SIDE THE VICTORIAN PARLIAMENT. READ OPPOSITE

Battery Upgrade for Desal Plant

The operator of Victoria's troubled desalination plant has shipped in dozen of diesel generators in a desperate bid to deliver the State Government's first water order, HERALD SUN. *The Government has said that some desal water will be used on a monthly basis, come high or dry.*

Goodbye Jobs

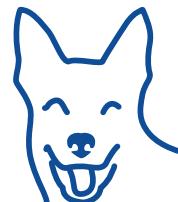
The Australian Sustainable Hardwoods mill in Heywood, in Gippsland Victoria will close in September, as the company cannot get a new contract with Victorian-government agency VicForests. Much nonsense and lack of detail and knowledge in the parliamentary debates. 250 workers. Many will probably go to Tasmanian jobs. Unlike some passionate debate details, the trees so involved are not long term trees, a mere 80 years unlike what others have claimed.

Mill Closure to Cost Jobs

Thousands of Victorian jobs could be hit by the closure of Australia's largest hardwood timber mill, in Gippsland. Timber manufacturers and hardwood suppliers in Melbourne fear costs will skyrocket and the industry will be felled if the Australian Sustainable Hardwood mill closes in September. The Gippsland company has told the mill's 260 workers it will be forced to close if VicForests does not continue to supply timber.

Michael Craven, owner of Melbourne-based Jackaroo Timber, said his business had more than 300 customers who used timber supplied by ASH. If the mill were shut, he would have to import costly timber. 'The overseas option is a possibility. But imported product would add 30 to 40 per cent more and we will be supporting labour and jobs in other countries. If they close any of the sawmills here, they never will reopen.'

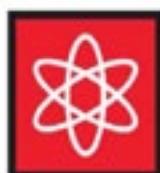
Tim Bull, MP for Gippsland East, said closing the mill would send shockwaves around the industry. Agriculture Minister **Jaala Pulford** will hold crisis meetings with the company and the CFMEU in a bid to negotiate a new supply deal, which will allow the mill to continue operating. 'VicForests continues to engage with ASH around a future sales agreement beyond June 2017' said government spokesman **Chris Piper**, HERALD SUN.

**DOG'S CORNER****Tributes For Oddball**

The dog that gained international fame for guarding a penguin colony on an island off the south-west coast has died, and there are plans afoot to erect a statue in her honour. Oddball the fluffy, snow-white maremma died at 15 – or 105 in dog years. 'Old Oddball has gone to the big chook run in the sky and will rest in peace,' the Middle Inland Maremma Project posted on Facebook.

Oddball's pioneering role as a guardian of the little penguins on Warrnambool's Middle Island was portrayed in the movie *Oddball*. About 150 metres offshore from Warrnambool and connected at low tide, Middle Island is home to a band of little penguins. Unfortunately, marauding foxes has cut the island's population to fewer than 10 birds in 2005.

But Oddball's pioneering role in protecting the penguin colony was a 'cameo' role. She stayed on the island for only three weeks before she got too lonely and swam back to shore. However, her short stint was enough to prove to the doubters that **Alan**

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OUR GARDEN SHOW IN EARLY AUTUMN, 29 MAR – 2 APRIL

'Swampy' Marsh's unorthodox idea that marmillas would protect penguins was worth pursuing.

Pairs of dogs were later placed on the island to give them a more enjoyable time and discourage them from fleeing to the mainland in search of company. Warrnambool mayor Kylie Gaston believes a statue of Oddball opposite Middle Island would be a fitting tribute, THE AGE.

Woof Woof

The Borough of Queenscliffe has introduced new time restrictions for dogs which lasted from December 15 until the end of February, extending the hours owners are allowed to walk their dogs on all beaches – on lead – to between 9am to 8pm. This gives an extra hour's beach access in the mornings for pet owners and their dogs.

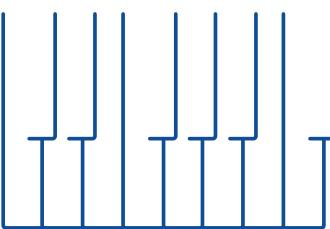
Chief executive officer Lenny Jenner said about 40 bright orange new time restriction signs had been installed on pathways and at entrances to all main daily over summer depending on weather conditions' said Mr Jenner, *Bellarine Times*. beach access points in Queenscliff and Point Lonsdale. 'Dogs are required to be leashed at all times within the municipality unless they are being exercised at the Narrows.'

Mr Jenner said time restrictions applied to all other local beaches over summer to ensure fair shared use and reduce any potential conflict between users, given the high numbers of visitors during the peak summer holiday period. 'This is a small municipality and local law officers attend most local beaches three to four times per day.'

Emu Dies in Police Custody

An emu died in police custody in south-eastern Victoria after being crash-tackled and having its legs handcuffed. Police responded to reports of an emu running along the Princess Freeway in Newborough, in the Latrobe Valley. 'A vet was also on scene to assist but sadly the emu died due to what is believed to be stress from the incident,' a police spokesman said in a statement.

The police officer who tackled the emu suffered cuts and bruises. Australian animals which adorn its coat of arms have been running wild lately, with a kangaroo attacking a jogger in Melbourne, THE AUSTRALIAN.



ARTS

Music Hall of Fame to Open in Melbourne

An Australian Music Hall of Fame will finally become a reality, with the Victorian Arts Centre chosen as the venue. The HERALD SUN can reveal industry legends Kylie Minogue, Molly Meldrum and Michael Gudinski will be patrons of the long-awaited attraction, free entry.

Victoria Gallery to Open

An \$8 million 'real act of kindness' has paved the way for a new gallery and the reopening of the Russell St entrance at the State Library of Victoria. To be known as the Victorian Gallery, it will showcase the 'best of the best' of the library's five million items. It will include Captain James Cook's waistcoat and miniature celestial globe, as well as Ned Kelly's armour.

The new gallery is being billed as tourism 'drawcard'. Philanthropists John and Myriam Wylie, through their foundation, have donated \$8 million to the project, with the State Government tipping in a further \$5 million. Mr Wylie is also the Library Board of Victoria president, HERALD SUN.



EVENTS

The Melbourne Food and Wine Festival

Celebrating 25 years 31 March to 9 April, mfwf.com.au. Get into it.

Elephant Turns Seven

Birthday girl Mali celebrated by indulging in her favourite treat – 200 kg of celery. Melbourne Zoo keepers treated the seven-year-old Asian elephant to a special cake layered with lemongrass and seven big white radishes as candles. Mali was the first female elephant born in Australia in 2010 and was the first calf to be born as a result of artificial insemination, HERALD SUN.

Melbourne Knowledge Week

1 to 7 May, melbourne.vic.gov.au/knowledgeweek

Next!

Police maintained a strong presence in the city for White Night Festival after two incidents of mobs storming public events and stealing mobile phones in the month leading up to the festival, THE AGE



EDUCATION

Opt-in for Results

The principle of the trailblazing state school explained that finishing school without an ATAR would become the default option for students. In a radical move, students have to 'opt in' if they want an ATAR. Other students will undertake the unscored VCE or the hands-on Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning and finish without a ranking. A THE AGE investigation reveals that some schools are pushing low-performing students into the unscored VCE to boost their results. Templestowe College has a different approach to the increasingly popular VCE option, which lets students receive the certificate without sitting exams, THE AGE.

Return of Richmond High

Richmond High School will accommodate 650 students, with a sports campus on Gleadell Street opening at the start of 2018 and a four storey academic campus on Griffiths Street opening at the start of the following year. State governments are increasingly looking to build vertical schools in the inner-city areas where land is expensive and the population is booming.

Education Minister James Merlino said Victoria needed to accommodate 90,000 extra students over the next five years. Richmond High was closed by the Kennett government in 1992, and two years later the site was transformed into the popular Melbourne Girls' College. Boys in the area who want to attend a state school currently have to travel to Auburn High in Hawthorn, Kew High or Collingwood College, THE AGE.

Back Track on Appointments

The Andrews Government has backed down on controversial university appointments after a revolt by the state's chancellors. New Skills and Training Minister Gayle Tierney has extended all expiring appointments for three months. Victoria's university chancellors met Ms Tierney in an attempt to convince her to back down.

It has sparked accusations Ms Tierney was handling university council positions to Labor and union-linked mates over more suitably qualified

candidates. Federation University Australia chancellor **Paul Hemming** said he hoped the government would hold off on any final call until the minister had consulted universities, the HERALD SUN.

Vics Surge as Nation Slides

VICTORIAN students are bucking the national trend when it comes to their achievements in science, maths and reading. They are not going backwards. Australia has now fallen behind Slovenia, New Zealand and Vietnam in scientific literacy, while it lags behind the Netherlands, Estonia and Poland in reading literacy.

Students in Singapore – OECD's top performer in all areas – are 2½ years ahead of Australian students in maths. The OECD's latest Program for International Students Association (PISA) – a major global test of student achievement held every three years – revealed that Australian 15-year-old students were up to two years behind the world's strongest performers.

The average Australian student is now seven months behind where they were in science in 2006, a year behind where they were in maths in 2003, and a year behind in reading compared to 2000. Nationally, Victoria jumped from fifth place in maths and science to third, after the ACT and Western Australia. Every other state experienced a decline in their performance.

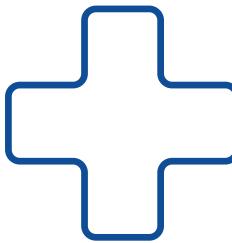
'Victoria has held its position in maths, science and in reading' Australian Council of Education Research Director of Educational Monitoring and Research Dr **Sue Thompson** said.

Richmond Locals Locked Out

Many Richmond families are up in arms after discovering they will be zoned out of the prestigious Melbourne Girls College, which is located in their suburb. To rub salt in their wounds, families living in some parts of Kew, Hawthorn and Toorak will still be included in the state school's enrolment boundary. The changes were made in response to a new \$43 million co-ed Richmond High School, which will open its doors to year 7 students next year.

Victorian Greens leader **Greg Barber** said he had been contacted by residents who were 'shocked' by the changes. 'A public girls only high school is a pretty unique thing' he said.

'Many parents in the area had no idea that a new Richmond High meant they would lose access to Melbourne Girls College', THE AGE.



HEALTH

Lazy Inspectors

The Auditor-General has found almost 90 per cent of venue checks last year were carried out before 10pm. It meant Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulations inspectors discovered just 15 cases where bartenders were serving intoxicated patrons, which can cost licensees more than \$17,000 in fines.

Inspectors handed out only 17 breach notices for serving drinks to minors and 25 notices for selling alcohol without proper licences. The Auditor-General criticised the VCGLR for trying to meet its targets with 'a large number of short and largely superficial inspections', the HERALD SUN.

Doctor Shortages for Abortions

Women seeking abortions at Melbourne's leading women's hospital are being turned away amid concerns there is a shortage of doctors willing to carry out the procedure. Seven years after Victoria decriminalised abortion, there are fears publicly funded services have deteriorated throughout the state, causing women to travel long distances for private care that can cost hundreds of dollars, THE AGE.

Safe Injecting Room Push

Drug addicts would be given free needles and medical help to shoot up in a safe injecting room in North Richmond, under a radical plan to be considered by State Government. A coalition of community leaders and medical experts is back Sex Party leader **Fiona Patten's** push for an 18-month trial of a legal injecting room in the inner suburb.

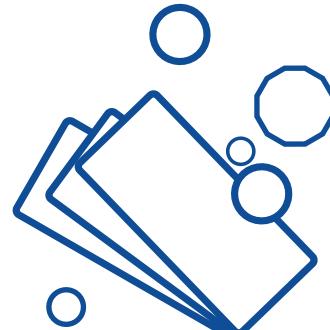
The 18-month trial would be modelled off the safe injecting room in Sydney's Kings Cross. Criminal

Lawyer **Robert Richter QC**, also state president of the Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation, said an injecting room did not send 'a message drug use is alright'. 'It is telling the community that just as we try to save the lives of those killed on the roads, we should try and save the lives of those who can't save themselves without help', HERALD SUN.

Heroin-Related Deaths Inquest

Every year, in a small rectangle of North Richmond, an average of more than 20 people die from heroin overdoses, community health providers say. Coroner **Jacqui Hawkins** called for evidence from four groups, including the Department of Health and Human Services.

Hawkins has recommended the Victorian government trial a supervised injecting room in North Richmond, amid an unprecedented spate of heroin overdoses. Hawkins held the inquest in December into the death of Ms A, a 34-year-old who overdosed from heroin on May 30, THE AGE.



BUSINESS & INVESTMENT

NZ Operation to Move to Oz

Victoria's Cadbury factories could be in for a boost as the company considers closing New Zealand plant. Owner Mondelez has announced it plans to close its Dunedin plant and move its production to Australia.

Onshore Gas Ban Will Cost Jobs and Money

The Victorian Parliament (Government) has voted to ban the exploration for gas, with a moratorium until 2020.

This includes both conventional gas as well as gas which needs to be fracked (the process of injecting liquid at high pressure into subterranean rocks, boreholes, etc, so as to force open existing fissures and extract oil or gas). Fracking has created a shale gas boom in the United States. Victorian businesses will pay more for gas and jobs will be lost as a result of the state's ban on onshore gas exploration and production. Shell Australia managing director **Andrew Smith** has warned, THE AUSTRALIAN.

Editor's Note: These words come from a Dairy Australia article. If you read Hansard, there are not folk who speak on the real and important detail rather than just their passion. Richard Riordan MP is one who does know about conventional and gas fracking.

Onshore gas deposits are often located under farms. By law, the Crown owns the gas and groundwater under privately owned land and the State Government (on behalf of the Crown) licenses companies to explore for and extract gas.

Gas companies negotiate access agreements with landholders and provide compensation for the disruption to and impact on the property. Ultimately,



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landowners have no *legal right* to refuse the gas company access to their land. However, today, substantial engagement between the lead agricultural organisations and major gas companies has increased understanding between both sectors. This has led to companies wanting to work in collaboration with landholders, in a more respectful and understanding manner than has been experienced in the past. Some large mining companies, such as Santos and AGL, have publicly committed not to enforce their right to access against a landholder's will.

Companies now generally understand that dollars alone will not earn landholder and community support. Community acceptance requires a combination of providing trusted and easily understood information, addressing perceived risks, communicating the safeguards available and being more accepting of social responsibility in rural and regional areas. On this basis, gas companies, governments and agencies have made a concerted effort in recent times to more adequately consult with, and provide information to the community with the aim of building open and transparent relationships.



INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

CFA CEO Asked to Stay

The Andrews Government has asked the CFA's chief executive to remain in her post until later this year. **Frances Diver** was hand-picked by the government last year to lead the CFA amid a bitter industrial dispute with the United Firefighter Union. Ms Diver, an experienced bureaucrat, replace former chief executive **Lucinda Nolan**, who was forced to quit because she refused to support the union's government-backed demands for a new workplace agreement.

The decision to keep Ms Diver in place comes as the government investigates a radical plan to split the fire services into separate career and volunteer organisations, HERALD SUN.

Career CFA Pay Increase

Career firefighters at the CFA will be paid thousands of dollars in new and increased allowances under an extraordinary deal to bypass

the stalemate over a new industrial agreement. The new benefits, worth tens of millions of dollars, have been stitched into the 2010 workplace agreement because a new deal endorsed by Premier **Andrews** cannot be signed under new federal legislation to protect CFA volunteers.

The payments were approved by the Fair Work Commission. Instead of rolling over the existing workplace agreement with pay increases, the CFA agreed to the UFU's demands during conciliation at the Fair Work Commission. It means the UFU can continue its campaign for greater control over the CFA, HERALD SUN.

Post-work Savings

The first Retire Ready Index, compiled by the Commonwealth Bank and actuarial firm Rice Warner has indicated Victorian workers are heading for a post-work savings crisis: about 1.3 million are unlikely to have enough for a comfortable retirement. Nationally 5.1 million are likely to fall short, HERALD SUN.



JUSTICE

New Police Union leader

Wayne Gatt has spent half his 42 years as a Victoria Police officer, is a trained police negotiator, and has studied at Harvard University. Now he is the new head of the Police Association, replacing secretary **Ron Iddles**. He will become the 19th secretary in the union's 100-year history. He is regarded as having a firm grasp on the machinations of union-command relations, THE AGE.

50th Anniversary

Ronald Ryan was the 186th person to be hanged in Victoria, after which there were no more hangings in Australia. Victoria abolished the death penalty in 1975. In 1984 Western Australia became the last Australian state to ban it. **Mike Richard's** book *The Hanged Man: The Life & Death of Ronald Ryan*, published in 2002, is being reprinted to coincide with the 50th anniversary of the execution of the last man hanged in Australia, the HERALD SUN.

Vandal Spree

Fifteen vehicles have been damaged in the second vandalism spree in Melbourne's east

in days, including a car belonging to a Liberal MP. At least nine of the vehicles had their driver side window smashed in Malvern and Malvern East overnight on Boxing Day, THE AGE.

Who is to Blame

Courts and inquiries will eventually allocate responsibility for the horrific events in Melbourne's Bourke Street that resulted in the death of five people and injuries to 32. The entire nation is grappling for explanations that could help it come to terms with how this could happen. Innocents were mown down by a man driving a stolen car who used it as a weapon, THE AUSTRALIAN.

More than a dozen sites for a new high-security youth justice centre were considered before the government settled on land in Werribee South. The Herald Sun understands land in Craigieburn and Dandenong was assessed for the new detention centre, to hold up to 224 of Victoria's worst teen criminals, the HERALD SUN.

Werribee Selected For New Youth Detention Centre

A new high-security youth justice centre will be built in Werribee South following a string of violent uprisings, escapes and several damning reviews of existing facilities at Malmsbury and Parkville, THE AGE.

Rural Upgrade

New police stations will be built at Warracknabeal, Rutherglen, Wedderburn, Alexandra, Wycheepoof and Tangambalanga as part of a \$2 billion investment in Victoria's police force. Police Minister **Lisa Neville** announced the six regional stations will be rebuilt as more than 3100 new police officers are recruited over four years, THE WEEKLY TIMES

No Help for Stolen Livestock

Victorian farmers have reported losses of almost \$2.2 million from stolen livestock in the past two years – but the state remains without an official stock squad of investigators within Victoria Police, THE WEEKLY TIMES

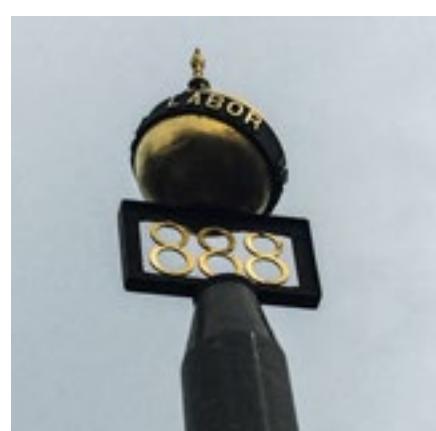
Recruitment to Help Crime Rate

Victoria's police force is expected to grow by more than 20 per cent as the **Andrews** government hires more than 2000 officers to cope with the state's soaring crime rates. The government has been caught out by a sharp increase in crime over the past two years and by the severity of offending among troubled youth in some areas, including members of the Apex gang and other groups of violent youths, THE AUSTRALIAN.

Mafia 3D Printing

Mafia ties have been made to an organised crime syndicate allegedly involved in making

THE TOP OF THE EIGHT HOUR DAY MONUMENT.



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SAD. THE SOCIETY RESTAURANT AT THE TOP OF BOURKE STREET HAS CLOSED.

THE EDITOR'S MUM WENT THERE BEFORE THE WAR, IN 1940.

3D-printed guns and distributing drugs in Melbourne's southeast, HERALD SUN.

Police Respond to Critics

Victoria's top law enforcement officials have blasted suggestions they've become soft on crime, but conceded the planned recruitment of thousands of new officers could put even greater strain on the justice system. The state has been hit with a series of major crime issues in recent months, including Apex gang attacks, the Bourke street rampage and a continuing escalation of youth crime, THE AGE.

Lacking Resources and Training

Victoria's Chief Commissioner of Police has blamed past failings on a lack of government funding, saying less than 4 months ago the force did not have the equipment or education to 'get the job done'. In the aftermath of the Malmsbury youth justice centre riot and the Bourke Street attack, Chief Commissioner **Graham Ashton** yesterday defended Victoria Police against criticism it has become 'soft on crime', but said the organisation had been under-resourced prior to December.

'We haven't had the equipment needed to get the job done, we haven't had the right education...to get the job done' Mr Ashton said, THE AUSTRALIAN.

Youth Justice In Chaos

Victoria's main youth justice centre at Parkville should be shut down after a litany of safety and security failings led to riots last year, a scathing independent review has found. The review of the riots, by former Victorian Police chief commissioner **Neil Comrie**, warned that many dangerous teen criminals entering the Melbourne Youth Justice Centre were 'well over 100kg in weight and 190cm tall' and regularly used their physical stature to intimidate staff.

There was a need to 'carefully accommodate them', both for their safety and to stop them from radicalising other teens. Victoria is facing an unprecedented youth crime wave, especially of aggravated burglaries and car-jackings, HERALD SUN.

No Room for Mentally Ill

Mentally ill patients are increasingly being held in overcrowded jails and unable to get the treatment they need because of a lack of beds, adding to the risk of self-harm, death or reoffending. The

government has been warned of yet another worsening crisis; the growing number of severely unwell prisoners locked up in mainstream jails because forensic psychiatric hospitals are full.

Public watchdogs, including the Ombudsman and the Auditor-General have urged successive governments to act for years, but some now say the problems will worsen unless a new secure psychiatric facility is built to take pressure off hospitals such as Thomas Embling in Fairfield, THE AGE.

Police Directive Months

Before Bourke St Attack

Victoria Police hierarchy ordered its officers not to rush intercepting stolen or suspect cars, in a directive just months before the Bourke St carnage. The September 13 email from force command also tells officers that shooting at a moving vehicle would not stop it, and ran the risk of sending the vehicle out of control if the driver was hit.

Deputy Commissioner **Andrew Crisp**'s directive was issued after a series of incidents in which criminals rammed police vehicles. Mr Crisp states in the memo that training and worldwide experience had shown shooting at moving vehicles did not work and created danger, HERALD SUN.

Union Defends Chief Commissioner

The head of the police union has defended Victoria's Chief Commissioner following criticism he is being 'soft on crime'. Police Association Victoria secretary **Ron Iddles** has backed **Graham Ashton**'s leadership, also taking aim at former chief commissioner **Kel Clare** and other former police who have criticised his crime strategies, HERALD SUN.

Regulator Laundering Lapse

Money Laundering by high rollers at Crown has not been properly scrutinised by the state's gambling regulator, damning report from Victoria's financial watchdog has found. Inspectors from the Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation were simply 'not paying sufficient attention to key areas of risk in the casino's operations', the auditor-general found, such as shutting out people the police wanted excluded from the casino or watching for signs of money laundering, THE AGE.



LOCAL GOVERNMENT

CCTVs to be Un-installed

The council that installed CCTV cameras in Brunswick amid public anguish over the rape and murder of **Jill Meagher** may abandon the project because it has not reduced crime. The cameras have been expensive, regularly malfunction and have not achieved their intention to force down the crime rate, an independent review has found. The system cost \$375,000 for nine closed-circuit television cameras, THE AGE.

An inner-city council may consider dumping Australia Day celebrations because they could offend Aboriginal people. City of Yarra Mayor

Amanda Stone says January 26 marks the arrival of white settlers and the start of the dispossession of indigenous people from their land. 'The long-term negative consequences of that event have been well documented and have caused intergenerational harm to many Aboriginal people' the Greens councillor said in a motion, HERALD SUN.

Big Spend for Greens

The state Greens spent almost \$250,000 at the latest local government elections as the party increased its influence in inner-city councils. But despite the amount spent, the Left-wing political party failed to win seats in Melbourne's leafy eastern suburbs, HERALD SUN



MELBOURNE

Faceless Men Run Town Hall

There is a great misconception out there that councillors hold the power at City of Melbourne. Alas, truth be told, it is the officers who are really in control. Under the Local Government Act, the only employee who councillors can hire is the CEO. But once hired, the CEO is very much in charge of the organisation, controlling the meeting agendas, flow of information, deployment of staff and allocation of resources.

Councillors may get to vote on dozens of tiddler contracts worth a few hundred thousand dollars – which, like the hundreds of grants dished out, are rarely changed from the officer recommendation – but we have no involvement in the enterprise agreement. It has been a succession of CEOs not the councillors, who have made City of Melbourne employees the best paid local government workers in Australia.

The 2015-16 annual report reveals City of Melbourne has a staggering 169 staff earning

more than \$139,000. All this largesse on the staff has squeezed council's capacity to deliver more capital works projects, such as fixing up the Harbour Esplanade, writes former councillor **Stephen Mayne** for the CBD News.

Unliveable

No government ever asked the people of Melbourne if they wanted their city to become a high-rise metropolis. No plan set such as goal. Governments decided for us. Halfway thought its term, Victorian Labor has joined the big-city development camp, THE AGE.

Batman Legacy Under the Microscope

Founder of Victoria's capital, **John Batman**, could have his name stripped from a federal electorate due to concerns about his legacy. Batman already has naming rights to more than two dozen locations around Melbourne, including multiple Batman parks, streets, avenues, a hill and a railway station. But a modern audience has begun to look less than kindly on his role as colonist, including his involvement in the murder of Aboriginal people in Tasmania in the early 1800s.

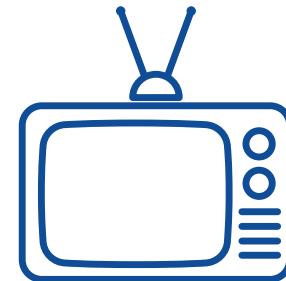
The City of Darebin council voted to make an application to the Australian Electoral Commission to rename the Federal Electorate Division of Batman, a Labor-held seat that takes in the suburbs of Northcote, Bundoora, Macleod and Preston. Batman MP **David Feeney** said 'There can be debate about what the contribution of John Batman was'.

'But clearly modern scholarship has revealed that his participation in conflict in Tasmania and the notion that he was essentially bounty hunting first Australians in Tasmania mean that the Wurundjeri's angst and other's angst is perfectly reasonable'. The electorate of Batman, is likely to undergo a redistribution from December, presenting an opportunity for a new name to be introduced, THE AGE.

Homeless Crackdown Won't Help Them

Melbourne City Council's crackdown on CBD homeless camps won't fix the problem, and could even worsen the 'already perilous' state of highly vulnerable people, according to the **Andrews** government's new adviser on rough sleeping.

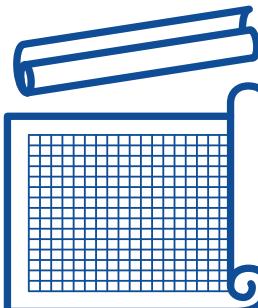
Brotherhood of St Lawrence executive director **Tony Nicholson** has also warned against setting national targets to reduce homelessness—describing them as superficial 'distractions' and has urged homeless services to scale back support such as mobile showers and all-night cafes, because they entrench homelessness, THE AGE.



MEDIA

Gender Equality on Our Screens

The Victorian Government will call for a mandated minimum amount of women's sport coverage on the public broadcaster amid reforms for gender equality. Sport is one target in the government's first Gender Equality Strategy. The push for the Commonwealth to set minimum female sport airtime on the ABC comes after an All-Star women's AFL exhibition match delivered bumper TV ratings in September, HERALD SUN



PLANNING

Labor's Rule and Promise Breaking Approval

Melbourne's tallest skyscraper, a 90-storey giant given the nod by Premier **Andrews** for Crown Casino, will overshadow the Shrine of Remembrance on winter afternoons. Labor's approval for Crown's \$1.75 billion tower comes despite the party pledging it would never allow the Shrine to have new shadows cast over it, because it was 'sacred'.

Labor attacked the now Opposition Leader **Matthew Guy** in 2014 for approving a lower tower that also casts a shadow on the shrine during winter afternoons. The deal also breaks new density rules set by Labor for city Skyscrapers, THE AGE.

Silos to be Saved

The concrete silos beneath the Nylon sign could be saved as the site's developer revises plans to placate the state's heritage authority. Heritage Victoria is considering removing an exemption

for the site that would have allowed the 1962 silos to be knocked over. But developer Caydon, sensing the possible complete protection of all the towers, has revised its plans for The Malt District. Instead of knocking down the silos completely it will incorporate some of the structures in to its plan for 1000 apartments on the sprawling Richmond site, THE AGE.

Wynne Backtrack

Planning Minister **Richard Wynne** has ignored expert advice that density limits he introduced will be 'unworkable' if he allows skyscraper developers extra floors in return for 'public benefits', THE AGE.

Construction Boom Provides Headaches for Commuters

An estimated 128 cranes dot Melbourne's skyline, but down below their impact is being felt all too keenly. While the situation has already led to gridlock on the streets, it is set to get far worse this year, as construction of the \$11 billion Melbourne Metro begins and lanes on major thoroughfares such as St Kilda Road, Franklin Street and Flinders Street partially or completely close.

New figures released by Melbourne City Council show the construction boom's impact on the streets: in 2012, there were 1400 applications to close streets or parking lanes for construction. Last year, there was 3500, THE AGE.

Spencer Street Revamp

Grey, industrial and chocked with cars and trucks, Spencer Street in West Melbourne would be few people's idea of a pleasant place to stroll or spend time. The City of Melbourne wants to change that, and has proposed to transform the grimy thoroughfare into West Melbourne's 'high street', a retail strip with shops, bars, cafes, bike lanes, wider footpaths and even a tram service up the median in the long term, THE AGE.

Neighbour Influx

As swaths of once-genteel Melbourne suburbia are knocked down to make way for multi-storey developments, many residents have grown uneasy about just how many people may be moving into their street. HIA economist **Geordan Murray** says developers had started to include more larger apartments over the past year in response to community demand.

The City of Melbourne periodically publishes data on bedroom mix. The latest report from May 2016 shows that of the residential dwellings under construction or approved, 52 per cent are two-bedrooms; 42 per cent are one-bedroom; more than 5 per cent have three bedrooms or more; and less than half a per cent are studios, THE AGE.

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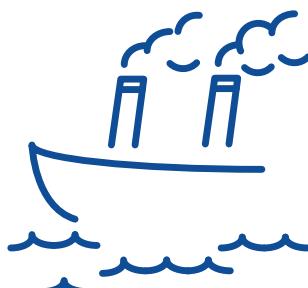


EDITOR ON THE MARCH WITH BROTHER IAN, SHARING SOME TIME WITH SHEEDS, THOUSANDS OF FELLOW MARCHERS AND CHLOE.

Defence Building for Sale

By any Melbourne standard, 310 St Kilda Road is prime real estate; opposite the Botanical Gardens, metres from the Shrine and National Gallery of Victoria, and a short stroll from the city centre. The Defence Department formally listed the building for sale. The Land, deemed 'surplus to operational and strategic requirements' by Defence, is worth in the ballpark of \$8 million to \$10 million once rezoned.

As it is, it's not clear what the beautiful but rundown historic Art Deco building—once criticised by **Sir Arthur Streeton** because its bricks were not bluestone—could be repurposed as. But the proposed sale has been greeted with fury by a small band of veterans who, for three years, have quietly lobbied the department to turn it into an art gallery for returned servicemen and women, **THE AGE**.



TRANSPORT - PORTS

Portland – a Historic Port Town

Victoria's first European settlement and the only deep-water harbour between Adelaide and Melbourne, exists largely because it lies within the western crook of Portland Bay, offering shelter from often cruel seas at the far reaches of what is known as the Shipwreck Coast. The port is the world's largest hardwood woodchip exporter. The

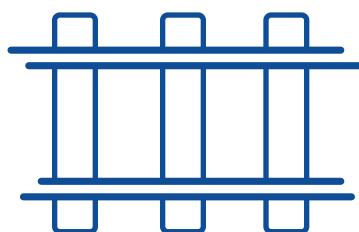
world's thirst for mineral sands, grain, softwood logs, aluminium and live animals also keeps the harbour in restless movement, and several large cruise ships arrive each year, **THE AGE**.

Semi-happy tourists

A cruise ship stuck in Melbourne at Station Pier, in early February, for a few days, has had two system failures in less than a month, it's operator confirms, **THE AGE**

Sad

Transport giant Toll has been convicted and fined a record \$1 million for safety failures after a father-of-three was crushed and killed on Melbourne's wharves back in May 2014, **THE AGE**.



TRANSPORT - RAIL

Marginal Seats Impact Skyrail

Victorians could end up paying more to remove level crossings on the Frankston train line, after the government decided not to build 'skyrail' in some of its most marginal suburbs in the hope of avoiding an electoral backlash. *The Sunday Age* revealed that bayside communities in Edithvale and Bonbeach will get their wish to not have elevated rail near their homes, with the government set to announce that those key sections of the track will be lowered under the road.

However, a 'hybrid' version of skyrail will be built in Seaford where the government insists it is not feasible to lower the line due to the

impact a trench would have on the Kananook creek and nearby wetlands, **THE AGE**.

Calls for V/Line Staff Protection

V/Line staff assaulted on the job say violence on trains is the worst it's been, and are calling for handcuffs, batons and capsicum spray for protection. The latest V/Line data reveals 21 staff were assaulted and 178 were verbally abused in the year to June 2016, **HERALD SUN**.

10 Minute Wait for Trains

The State Government is under pressure to run suburban train services every 10 minutes to improve Melbourne's liveability. A coalition of transport and planning groups claims the 'turn-up-and-go' measure will boost service levels by 21 per cent and lead to less crowding while boosting economic growth. But a sticking point could be the need for extra train drivers and improved driver productivity—a key union says it won't change its current industrial deal, **HERALD SUN**.

Solar Tram Network

Victoria's taxpayers will partially fund the building of a \$150 million solar plant to be used to power Melbourne's tram network. Victorian Energy Minister **Lily D'Ambrosio** doubled down on the government's controversial renewable energy target as she announced that a 75 megawatt solar plant would be built in regional Victoria.

She would not say how much the government would contribute to the project, which will be partially funded by the private sector. She boasted a 'world-first' policy which would see Melbourne's entire network run by solar trams, although she acknowledged this was 'notional' and that the energy would also flow into the broader system but the government would buy enough renewable certificates to cover the tram system's needs, **THE AUSTRALIAN**.



Metro Staff Abuse Allegations

Leaked emails have exposed claims of a toxic culture of bullying, gender discrimination and even looking up passengers' skirts at Metro Trains. The emails reveal Metro hired a former police detective to investigate an avalanche of staff allegations of harassment and gender discrimination in the workplace, only to suppress the report's findings, THE AGE.

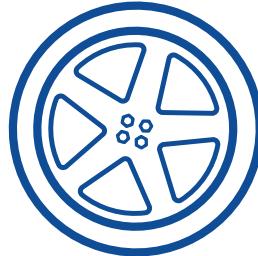
Regional Rail Link Shambles

The Geelong railway line will need an overhaul within five years, or it will decline into a slow, over-crowded service with more and more passengers standing in the aisles over long journeys, an expert analysis warns. Geelong train lines have run on the Regional Rail Link, Melbourne's newest rail line, since it opened 18 months ago. The link also services the expanding suburbs of Wyndham.

But the link's dual purpose is already creating tension between regional and suburban passenger needs. Less than two years old, the Regional Rail Link 'has already become a victim of its own success' and will soon be overwhelmed, the Rail Futures Institute predicts. There are already 17 trains an hour in the peak, and the link was built to handle just 18 trains an hour. The link has also done nothing to reduce train travel times between Geelong and the city. Editor says lets focus on Geelong and not the expanding Melbourne suburbs, THE AGE.

Platform Extensions

Size will matter on Melbourne's busiest train line with platforms to be extended at 13 stations as part of a \$660 million upgrade. The longer platforms will cater for the new high-capacity metro trains that will first travel on the Cranbourne-Pakenham line. Work will begin to extend the platforms later this year, THE AGE.



TRANSPORT - ROAD

Life in the Fast Lane

Uber drivers riding in taxi-only lanes is an idea on the cards as part of wide-sweeping industry reforms. Passengers who pay for a premium service, such as a hire car, Uber Black or limousine may also be given the right to use the lanes to reward them with quicker travel as they pay a premium rate, HERALD SUN.

Consumers to Pay for Heavy Vehicle Toll

Victoria's major container transport companies have resolved to pass on a hefty hike in CityLink truck tolls to their customers, in a move they warn will ultimately raise the cost of household goods. Tolls for heavy vehicles using CityLink and the Monash Freeway will rise as much as 125 per cent on April 1, when a deal struck between Transurban and the state government to help pay for the \$1.28 billion widening of the Tullamarine Freeway and CityLink takes effect, THE AGE.

Driverless Trials

Autonomous cars will begin cruising on CityLink and the Monash and Tullamarine freeways early next year in the first 'real world' trial of driverless vehicle technology on Australia's roads. The cars will not be truly driverless – there will be drivers inside them, capable of grabbing the steering wheel if needed – but will function in semi-autonomous mode to test how driverless technology fits in with general traffic with all of its unpredictability and risk.

The two-year trial will be managed by tolling company Transurban, CityLink's owner, which expects to see autonomous vehicles on the roads within five to 10 years, THE AGE.

Licence Comp Upgrade

Taxi licence owners will be able to access up to \$100,000 more in compensation after the Andrews government succumbed to political and industrial pressure and reformed its buyback agreement. Metropolitan licence holders will be offered \$100,000 for their first taxi licence, raised through a \$2 levy on all taxi, hire car or ride-share services trips. The government will then offer a further \$50,000 for a second, third or fourth licence, extending the cap from two to four, HERALD SUN.

Uber Hit With GST

Uber had fought an 18-month battle to avoid GST, but will now need to work out how to apply the ruling to its 50,000-plus partner-drivers, THE AGE.

Uber Drivers Manipulating System

An underground network of Uber drivers is using messenger app WhatsApp to trigger 'surge pricing', inflicting higher fares on passengers. Surge pricing occurs when the price of rides goes up in areas where the demand for cars exceeds the available drivers. Uber spokesman Mike Scott said surge pricing kept rides reliable and waiting times low, but he said those drivers who were manipulating the system faced being booted from Uber, HERALD SUN.

Fox is No Fool

Trucks could divert to suburban streets when CityLink tolls rise in April, after transport magnate Lindsay Fox revealed his company was assessing new routes to avoid the sting. The HERALD SUN can reveal Mr Fox delivered a personal spray to Transurban chief executive Scott Charlton about a toll increase on heavy vehicles that would lift some daily CityLink fees from about \$12 to more than \$26 on 1 April.

Calls for CityLink Review

The former chairman of the government body that oversaw the development of CityLink has added his voice to calls for an independent audit of the tollway before owner Transurban wins a lucrative contract extension. John Laurie, the first Melbourne City Link Authority chairman, has backed calls by former premier Jeff Kennett for a public audit of CityLink given the tollway could return to public ownership a decade early if certain profitability markers are hit, HERALD SUN.



HOUSING

Cut to Stamp Duty

Thousands of new home buyers will no longer have to stamp duty on properties up to \$600,000. This will give new homeowners savings up to \$15,000 by exempting them from stamp duty on new and existing properties, in a bid to help more Victorians to break into the expensive housing market.

A \$50 million pilot program will also give about 400 people the chance to co-purchase a dwelling with the government, which will offer to take an equity share of up to 25 per cent for each property – in turn reducing the deposit a first home buyer would otherwise pay.

The so-called 'HomesVic' program will begin in January next year, targeting couples earning up to \$95,000 and singles earning up to \$75,000. Buyers will need a 5 per cent deposit to be eligible, THE AGE.

Homeless Problem

A homelessness crisis is building around the country, particularly in Victoria, as domestic violence awareness campaigns lead to more action to remove women and children from dangerous homes without a matching increase in available support. Homeless charities and domestic violence advocates say increased investment to rehouse victims of family violence has fallen short in the past two years, as campaigns encourage women and children to leave hostile homes and ask for help, THE AUSTRALIAN.

Lease Extension

Decade-long leases will soon be possible under rent reform laws, but landlords are unlikely to embrace them in a market with soaring demand. Current laws restrict any rental agreements to a maximum of five years but under the new rules there would be no 'artificial cap', Premier Andrews said. 'The lease can be as long as the tenant and landlord agree to with all the terms and conditions'. The change is expected to be in place by 2018. It remains to be seen if the laws will provide real rental reforms at a time when more

than one third of households are renters, according to 2015 housing occupancy figures, *THE AGE*.

Aboriginal Housing Victoria

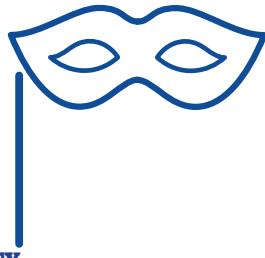
Over three years, the government will hand over 1,448 properties worth more than \$500 million to Aboriginal Housing Victoria. It is the largest tranche of housing to be transferred to an Aboriginal organisation nationwide, and means that the 4000 Victorians on its books will now live in properties that are owned and managed by an aboriginal organisation. It will also cater for the 1200 families on the social housing waiting list, *THE AGE*.

Women-Only Shelters

Social welfare charity Anglicare has called for female-only shelters for women made homeless by family violence or sexual abuse, as services struggle to cope, the *HERALD SUN*.

Lease Extension

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SOCIETY

New Age Editor

Alex Lavelle has been confirmed in his position as the editor of *The Age*, responsible for all content under *The Age* masthead across print and online. Mr Lavelle was formerly the deputy news director and sports editor of *THE AGE* and *The Sunday Age*.

Discussions Not Lectures

One of the nation's most senior religious leaders has hit out at elites who label anti-gay marriage supporters as 'redneck ratbags'. Archbishop of Melbourne Dr **Phillip Freier** said he was worried activists were trying to shut down debate over the

issue, and he restated the church's stance that marriage was uniquely between a man and a woman.

'For the church, it's important that we are able to hold our doctrinal position that we have, I think, that's part of a tolerant society even if it turns out to be a minority view' he said. Dr Freier had supported the doomed gay marriage plebiscite, saying traditional marriage advocates wanted to have respectful discussions about the issue. Dr Freier, who is also Australia's Anglican Primate, said that Brexit and the election of **Donald Trump** showed ordinary people felt distaste at being lectured by elites, the *HERALD SUN*.

Burqa Ban

A Liberal Party plan to table a law to give courts the power to jail women for refusing to remove burqas (in the courtroom) has been dismissed by the **Andrews** government as 'racing into alliance with One Nation'. Opposition leader **Matthew Guy** said he favoured jailing women who refused to remove burqas or niqabs in Victorian courtrooms for up to two weeks, or fine them \$1500. Religious headwear that did not obscure the face, such as turbans or skullcaps, would not be subject to legislation, he said. Guy said the proposed law was not aimed at any specific group or religion, *THE AGE*.

LGBTI Evacuation Procedures

Gender-neutral bathrooms in crisis evacuation centres and tailored support services to address perceived discrimination of gay and transgender communities are being canvassed under a push to develop 'LGBTI-inclusive' emergency management policies. Victorian Government funded researches will investigate the specific experiences and needs of LGBTI communities in the event of emergency, such as a bushfire or flood, amid broad questioning about the **Andrews** government's increasingly radical social agenda, *THE AUSTRALIAN*.

We think of you

Members at the almost century old Williamstown RSL were told that the \$3 million debt they have racked up means it's over: Williamstown's Returned Service League club was shut on January 3, after decades at the corner of Melbourne Road and Ferguson Street. The site was valued last year at \$4.5 million. The land is to be redeveloped as apartments, as part of a deal between builder Grocon and the RSL state office, *THE AGE*.

Could be Arty

By any Melbourne standard, 310 St Kilda Road is prime real estate; opposite the Botanical Gardens, metres from the Shrine and National Gallery of Victoria, and a short stroll from the city centre. The Defence Department formally listed the building for sale. The Land, deemed

'surplus to operational and strategic requirements' by Defence, is worth in the ballpark of \$8 million to \$10 million once rezoned.

As it is, it's not clear what the beautiful but run-down historic Art Deco building—once criticised by **Sir Arthur Streeton** because its bricks were not bluestone—could be repurposed as. But the proposed sale has been greeted with fury by a small band of veterans who, for three years, have quietly lobbied the department to turn it into an art gallery for returned servicemen and women, *THE AGE*. Your Editor has also heard that the focus might be on returned services folk who need some space and relaxation.

Pokie Machines 'Successful Way for Racing Clubs to Make Money'

Poker machine numbers should be boosted at Victorian racecourses and racing club be transformed into gambling hubs, the racing industry says. Racing Victoria chief executive **Bernard Saundry** has called for poker machine limits to be increased from 105 to 250 machines after 2022. He argued clubs statewide were battling declining revenue and pokies were a 'legitimate and successful' way for racing clubs to make money.

But gambling opponents said the racing industry was putting profits before people. In a submission to the Victorian Government's review of gaming arrangements, Mr Saundry said all profits would be injected back into racing. And Melbourne Racing Club CEO **Broadie Arnhold** said blubs should become gambling destinations, under contract conditions like those afforded to Crown Casino, *HERALD SUN*

Kelly Legacy Stoush

A long-overlooked photograph believed to be of **Ned Kelly** has intensified infighting among the bushranger's descendants over his legacy and the right to speak for the family. Since *The Weekend Australian* published the photo in January – verified by an expert as being 'very likely' of Ned and possibly also his villainous younger brother Dan – the letters page of *The Ovens and Murray Advertiser* has run hot with claims and counter-claims about who should call the shots for the latter-day Kelly Gang.

Ned Kelly's great-grand-niece **Jeanne Griffiths** is trying to set up a historical centre at Glenrowan, scene of the bloody 1880 shootout that ended the outlaws' rampage across northeast Victoria, in competition with a private site at nearby Beechworth backed by rival descendants, *THE AUSTRALIAN*.

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**VALE**

The man who died in a paragliding accident at Fairhaven has been identified as **Ben Cowen**, co-founder of camping megastore chain Anaconda. The son of former Governor-General Sir **Zelman Cowen**, Cowen was paragliding when he was caught in strong winds, **THE WEEKLY TIMES**

Peter Lynch, a senior executive of Fortescue Metals Group has died when the antique plane he was flying crashed into Perth's Swan river in late January.

Lord Snowdon, the former husband of the late princess **Margaret**, died aged 86.

DIVALL, Richard, a theatrical music maker. Richard left Manly Boys High School at 15 and joined the ABC as a mail boy. His mother Dorothy had paid for piano lessons. He then went to the library and took out books to teach himself. He knew his life was in music. At the ABC he rose to become the music producer responsible for the fascinating Musica Australis programs about early and unknown Australian music, **THE AGE**

HEFFERNAN, Pat, Past president and life member of the Australian Submarine Association

HOLDING, Margaret, wife of the late Clive Holding, Victorian Opposition Leader

KAYE, Gordon, Actor best known for his role in the long-running British comedy *'Allo 'Allo* has died aged 75. The show was a fictional exploit of Resistance fighters in Nazi occupied France. He appeared in all 84 episodes of the sitcom, as well as a stage version, **HERALD SUN**.

ANNAND, Ann Selwyn; **ARCHER**, Stanton Charles; **ASHBY**, Jean; **ATTARD**, Joseph 'Joe'; **BATCHELER**, Robert; **BARILLARO**, Lon; **BELL**, Julianne; **BENTLEY**

(**nee Lieder**), Helen; **BENNETT**, Lois Bartlett; **BERKELEY**, Hartog Carel QC; **BLASTOCK**, Peter; **BRIGGS**, Geoffrey Winston, MBBS FRACGP formerly 2 Squadron RAAF WWII; **BROWN (nee Wootton)**, Edna Vessy Harriet; **BROWN**, Roger Wilke; **BURNS**, Victor Edward, member of the Rotary Club of Hawthorn; **BUNTING**, Peter Alan; **BRACHER**, Valarie Mildred; **BYRNE**, Allan George, Retired Police Inspector; **CALLISTER**, Russel Stuart;

CAREY, Brian Timothy; **CERBASI**, Adrian Anthony; **CHIVERS**, Alexandra; **COLBOURNE (nee Blyther)**, Evelyn May; **COLVILLE (nee Mogensen)**, Berres Hoddle; **CONNOLLY**, Kevin; **CORDNER**, John Pruen 'Jock'; **COSTA**, Teresa; **CRAPPER**, Esther Mali; **CULLEN (nee Lansdown)**, Florence Evelyn 'Swannee'; **CUMING**, David, school friend of the Editor; **CUSS**, Thomas Henry; **DAVIS**, Rita Sophia Annie; **DIOGUARDI**, Colin; **DONOHUE**, Troy; **DRAY**, Lynne Barbara; **DRINKWATER (nee Rowe)**, Shirley Isobel 'Poppy'; **EDMONDS (nee Macintyre)**, Brenda; **ELGIN-STUCZYNSKI**, Roman; **ELLIS**, Judith Ann; **EMANUELLE**, Fonce Victor;

EVANS, Julianne; **EWEN**, Doris Alberta Frankland; **FERRS**, Alan; **FREILICH**, Jason Aaron; **GIBSON**, William Alexander; **FREEMAN (nee Milliken)**, Thelma Ruth; **CALBRAITH**, Patricia Mary; **HADWEN**, Phillip Anthony; **HEINRICH**, Ivan; **HOBBS**, Norma; **HODGE**, Geoffrey Payne OAM; **HUNTSMAN**, Nancye;

JACQUES (nee Graham), Mary Tallent; **JOHNSTON**, Ian Wylie; **KEENE**, Robert Wilbur; **KENDALL (nee Stubbs)**, Dawn Elizabeth; **LAKE**, Emily Mary; **LATCHFORD**, William Norman Anscombe; **LITTLE**, Ian OAM FCPA FGIA; **MACKENZIE**, William John MacLennan;

MANSFIELD, Yvonne Evelyn; **MC CALL**, Rev Richmond James; **Mc CALLUM**, Rosemary Jane; **Mc CLURE**, Malcolm John; **Mc DONALD (nee Miles)**, Jennifer; **Mc DONELL**, Beatrice; **MEDLICOTT**, William John; **MILLER**, Reginald Keith; **MINTO**, Shirley Kathleen; **MOTTERSHEAD**, Gordon Leonard; **MUIR-SMITH**, Sidney Frank;

NICHOLAS, Hilton John AM OBE; **PALMER**, John 'Jack'; **PARRISH (nee Kerr)**, Elaine Mary; **PETRIE**, Gerard Francis OAM; **PRESTON**, Gordon; **PUZEY (nee GARVEN)**, Dr Alison Kinnear; **QUIRK**, Roselyn Marjorie; **RAEBURN**, Eric Boyd; **RICHARDS**, Dr Walter Thomas; **RIORDAN**, John Arthur; **ROBERTSON**, Dr Ian Keith OAM; **ROSSI**, Pasquale; **SARANOVAC (nee Bethall)**, Marjorie Arbuthnot; **SAWBRIDGEWORTH**, Robert;

SETCHES, Denis Norman; **SOUTHWICK**, Stuart David OAM, aged 84; **STEWART**, John Dudley; **THOMPSON (nee Mc Alister)**, Lily May; **THOMSON**, Dr Roderick; **TRAGARDH**, Joyce Alison; **TUCKER**, Peter Frederick; **TURK**, Maurice Alan Eric; **VAN ROMPAEY**, Tom; **VINES**, Marie Theresa **WHITELOCK**, Georgina Iris 'Iris'; **WILLIAMS**, Lois Bervi;

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