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

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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.
EDITORIAL

The Voluntary Assisted Dying (Bill) has been the main attraction in the Parliament this past month. There are so many facts and so many other considerations. In particular, the personal or Family experiences of people in the last days of their lives. This brings both objective and subjective considerations. Many tears in the Parliament as the stories were told. Many of Melbourne’s, and Australia’s best medical people, are and have been involved. It literally would take a person without too much experience in this area, such as a normal parliamentarian, many weeks to read up and hear up about, and consider and muse upon the right way to go. Most MP’s have been flooded by all means of communication. Many people have changed their mind, Parliamentarians or others, and as they might hear the next chapter, or another perspective.

Doctors have a range of views. Some groups of doctors have come together: general practitioners, geriatricians, and other specialties. As have some other non-medical people. All influencing done professionally and not in a noisy way.

Any reader who wants to read fifteen full pages of detail on VAD, please ask Editor.

Editor heard in a coffee shop about a tender that he had evidently missed seeing, seeking diesel back-up generation for Victorian hospitals in the near future. Back to the fifties... Let us have a few more hot days to clarify the thinking. And perhaps some of the dreamers will realize that as with VAD, there are many facts which make up a reliable 12 month energy scheme.

Just a few words. Your Editor declared at the time that Melbourne traffic hit ‘very slow’ 17 hours a day as at 15 February 2015. Time moves on and it is incredibly worse. Public transport is about 15 per cent worse. This is a personal reality check

Crime is up by 10 per cent across the range of serious and...serious crimes. Housing ownership is as we know, not for more than half of the next generation, though Geelong etc are good places, as long as local jobs are available.

Cover
Growing Melbourne

FEATURE

Upper House Challenge

Victoria’s voluntary euthanasia laws appear unlikely to pass without major changes as three MPs insist on amendments. The life expectancy of those allowed to seek voluntary euthanasia is a key issue, with the current 12 months likely to be reduced to six months. At least two upper house MPs maintained they would not support the bill in its present form.

Liberal Simon Ramsey has joined independent James Purcell in saying he wanted amendments to the legislation. Mr Ramsey said he supported an assisted dying regime but held strong concerns that he wanted to address. Mr Ramsey confirmed he was finalising his set of amendments to the bill.

Professor Brian Owler, who chaired the ministerial advisory panel on voluntary assisted dying, says extensive consultation had gone into the current bill. ‘It’s difficult to ignore the sum of all those hundreds of people, who have been consulted through this process’, he said. Upper house president Bruce Atkinson said he would not have a final position until he had seen the amendments. National MP Melina Bath said after months of deliberation she had decided against supporting the bill, The Age.

It remains unclear whether the proposed euthanasia bill has enough support to pass both houses. This comes as new polling of 9,000 people commissioned by lobby group Go Gentle showed overwhelming support for the legislation. Liberal Robert Clark, the former state Attorney-General, has written to all MPs outlining a range of concerns about loopholes in the legislation.

He argued the laws would allow as few as two GPs to operate clinics dedicated to ‘death with dignity’. Two senior doctors are required to sign off on a patient’s wish to access assisted dying. This claim has been rejected by Professor Brian Owler, the chair of the ministerial advisory panel, who says one of the doctors must be an expert in the patient’s condition, The Age.

Euthanasia Bill Passes Lower House

After four days, 330 proposed amendments and a 26-hour marathon sitting, historic voluntary euthanasia laws have passed Victorian Parliament’s lower house. The assisted dying bill will become legal in Victoria if the upper house passes the laws in a final vote expected in November. In the end, weary MPs voted 47 to 37 in favour of the Andrews government’s bill.

But there were times during this long week on Spring Street where it felt much closer than that. The Andrews government started quietly confident it could get its Euthanasia bill through. The government was even hopeful it could be done in two days, perhaps not paying enough attention to conservative Liberal Robert Clark’s notice of amendments and his determination to resist what he believed was a deeply flawed bill.

But the first sign of real trouble came from a different but not wholly unexpected source: Deputy Premier James Merlino, a devout Catholic and longstanding, vocal

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opponent of the voluntary assisted dying legislation. Merlino’s ‘reasoned amendment’, essentially a series of conditions that would put the whole legislative process on indefinite hold, sent the government into a spin when he unveiled it before a vote.

With the draft Bill got to the ‘committee stage’ but when more than 330 amendments to the legislation appeared on the notice paper, the full extent of what the opponents of the bill had planned began to crystallise. Some of the amendments, such as tighter controls on doctors’ advertising euthanasia services or more comprehensive collection of data on assisted dying, were acknowledged to be worthy of debate.

But others, such as referring to the lethal medication to be used to end the life of terminally ill patients as ‘poison’, looked simply provocative and invited accusations that a group of MPs around Mr Clark were simply filibustering.

Paul Keating provided his genius for political theatre was still intact with a last-minute plea for MPs to go through with a yes vote.

But Keating’s gesture, while dramatic, was never likely to sway the votes of a group of politicians who had been studying this matter in depth for more than two years, The Age.

The Age Backs Bill
Assisted dying law should pass. On balance The Age cautiously supports the assisted dying legislation. It should be available in a regulated and legal form for those who need it, but also, with ongoing improvements to palliative care, it should be a rare last resort, The Age Editorial.

Legislative Council (Upper House) Simon Ransay detailed the action. The Voluntary Assisted Dying vote in the Upper House championed arguments on both sides of the debate - revealing personal stories that have been compelling and extraordinary. My vote in favour of the Bill is qualified on a number of amendments being made that will provide greater safeguards and protections. Again, I thank the people who have contacted me with their views. I have literally read thousands of emails, listened to hundreds of phone calls and spoken to many people and groups who have wanted to share their concerns. I have taken each seriously and will continue to do so as we aim to shape the legislation this week and beyond.

*AMA President Stands By Comments*
Australian Medical Association president Michael Gannon is refusing to delete a statement made declaring the intellectual case for euthanasia was ‘bankrupt’. He also criticised the emphasis placed on personal stories in the debate by high-profile Victorians. Dr Gannon said he stood by his tweet and that it was unfortunate some people had taken offence.

The Victorian branch of the AMA, which has limited its comments in the lead up to the vote on assisted dying, released a statement distancing itself from the views of Dr Gannon, a Perth-based obstetrician and gynaecologist, The Age.

*Gov’t Inquires About Euthanasia Cocktail*
A proposal to create a new euthanasia pill using a cocktail of legal medication has been slammed by assisted dying advocates on the eve of one of state parliament’s most contentious debates. With Victoria set to decide if terminally ill patients should have the right to an assisted death, the Andrews government has approached Monash University’s pharmacy department to research the kind of pill that could be developed if legislation passes, The Age.

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*I do not shy away from my comments; I have no intention of deleting the tweet, but it’s always upsetting when you upset someone,’ he said. ‘And I have zero doubt at all that those people who are favouring a euthanasia law are doing it out of compassion and goodwill.’ ‘It’s hard to capture the full depth of emotional and kindness in 140 characters, I don’t believe the case for euthanasia has been made intellectually in a public policy way’.

GOVERNANCE

18 November By-election
Victorian Labor will splash out half a million dollars on its Northcote by-election campaign, almost triple its typical spend, as it steps up the fight to retain the seat of the late MP Fiona Richardson. Under siege from the Greens in Melbourne’s inner north, Labor has blanketed the area with advertisements promoting its candidate Claire Burns, who is challenged by The Greens’ Lidia Thorpe, The Australian. It might be of interest for some readers to go on-line to see the large amount of on-line training and encouragement and passion under which keen helpers and supporters might under go.

Chipp to Contest Northcote
Her father was a force in Australian politics, founding the Australian Democrats and famously promising to ‘keep the bastards honest’. Now Don Chipp’s daughter, Laura is hoping to launch her own political career as a Reason party-endorsed candidate in the Northcote state by-election next month.

‘We’re not a protest vote as an activist party. We’re a vote to work with the government of the day to make sure there is compassion and reason in politics.’ In 2007 at 21, Ms Chipp ran as a Democrats candidate in the federal electorate of Isaacs, which was won by Labor MP, Mark Dryfus. Ms Chipp
said she resigned from the Democrats about a year later disillusioned with party’s direction and feeling it no longer offered the breadth of issues that voters deserved.

Earlier this year she joined the Sex Party, which has since been rebranded as the Reason Party, led by upper house MP Fiona Patten, The Age.

**Scared of Losing**

Victoria's Coalition was ‘scared to lose seats’ when it called for a 2020 ban on onshore conventional gas, the Nationals former Upper House leader has said. Now a Federal Nationals MP, Damian Drum said it was wrong, and has called on the Victorian Government to permit the extraction of conventional gas before the state's moratorium – proposed by the Coalition – expires mid-2020, The Weekly Times.

**Keating on Euthanasia**

Paul Keating has made a dramatic last-minute intervention into Victoria's voluntary euthanasia debate, which he characterised as a 'threshold moment' for the entire country, as the Parliament prepared for its third late night debate on the issue, The Age.

**Gas Crisis**

There's a gas crisis – and everyone is pointing fingers of blame. The former Baillieu Coalition government imposed the moratorium in 2012, in response to regional fracking fears, but the opposition said it would rescind it within 100 days of being re-elected. Those untapped onshore reserves are critical to making sure Australia has enough gas in the next few years and does not pay extortionate prices for it, it argued.

Bruce Robertson is an analyst with the Institute for Energy, Economics and Financial Analysis. He argues the ‘globally uncompetitive prices’ Victorian households and businesses are paying for gas are the fault of the profit-driven behaviour of the major gas exporters. The Andrews government argues the flow overseas is so excessive it cannot be on a tenancy blacklist unless they owe more than the equivalent of one month’s rent and even then they have the right to challenge the listing at VCAT, Mr King said.

A blacklist is open to being abused, given disgruntled tenants will be able to unfairly place agents on a blacklist. The tenants union, Tenants Victoria, said it would support the key reforms. Labor also plans to crackdown on misleading and deceptive conduct by private landlords and their agents and force the disclosure of any serious defects or plans to sell the property, The Age.

**Ageless Cover**

Former Premier Jeff Kennett said his office rental payments to his wife's superannuation fund had been verbally approved by an official during the mid-2000s under the Bracks Labor government. In power from 1992 to 1999, Kennett was an outspoken advocate for open markets and small government; he is renowned for slashing public service jobs, closing schools, and privatising transport, energy and roads.

But as a former premier Kennett is entitled to a publicly funded office space and secretarial support, travel and other expenses on top of his parliamentary pensions. The other surviving former premiers – Denis Napthine, Ted Baillieu, John Brumby, Steve Bracks and John Cain – have office space in government-owned buildings at Treasury Place.

Kennett said that in the mid-2000s the Bracks government asked him if he might leave Treasury Place and find alternative accommodation to make way for a former governor. He said he could have rented space from anybody. The expenses data also details extensive use of government cars by Mr Kennett, totalling nearly $150,000 from mid-2008 to mid-2017. And it reveals that Kennett claimed expenses for as little as 55c for a ‘giant’ paper clip, along with dozens of airport parking tickets, some as little as $5.45 each. Electrical Trades Union state secretary Troy Gray accused Kennett of ‘forting his entitlements’.

The ETU has been locked in a dispute with one of Kennett’s companies after Crown casino sacked 16 casino technicians and outsourced the work to a business run by

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Kennett. He accused Fairfax Media of working on behalf of the ETU. Monash University governance expert and former Labor MP Ken Coghill said that while the Kennett arrangements may not be illegal – due to loose guidelines – it did raise ethical concerns.

The Kennett deal appears to be within the loose, unpublished guidelines for former Premiers’ entitlements that are decided by the Premier of the day, The Age. Sorry to waste Readers time with such detail of public life...

**Young Liberal Stoush**
Victorian shadow Treasurer Michael O’Brien came under fire over a Facebook message of support for Australian Liberal Students Federation president Xavier Boffa, who is being investigated by police and Melbourne University authorities over his alleged behaviour.

Boffa, who works for shadow attorney-general John Pesutto, is accused of assaulting a male club member and intimidating a female colleague during an ugly stoush at the university’s Parkville campus. Boffa, who says university rules prevent him from commenting, denies the allegations against him, and his supporters say the accusations are part of a factional hit-job in the club led by his ultra-conservative enemies in the party.

O’Brien posted a photo on his Facebook page of himself, Mr Boffa and other young Liberals on the campaign trail. The post drew immediate fire from young Liberal figure Stephanie Bastiaan, who publicly accused the shadow treasurer of supporting ‘bad behaviour’ of Mr Boffa, The Age.

**Short Memory**
Labor is in no position in attack moves for a royal commission into Victoria’s fire services. Victorian Opposition Leader Matthew Guy has pledged to set up a royal commission into the continuing debacle surrounding attempts to restructure the Country Fire Authority and the Metropolitan Fire Brigade.

Labor instituted a royal commission into Victoria’s ambulance service and the Intergraph emergency communications system on the back of a 1999 election campaign pledge by then Opposition Leader Steve Bracks. In Opposition, Labor had repeatedly raised concerns about the Intergraph contracts and the process to overhaul the ambulance service.

As Simon Ramsay says, Given the members’ anxiety within the CFA and MF8, the claims of sexual harassment and bullying and the ongoing cover-up and protection of the UFU - the Commission is a must in the effort to seek truths and achieve real justice.

That Royal Commission, headed by Lex Lasry, QC, now a Supreme Court judge, lasted 17 months and resulted in 50 key recommendations to better protect the Victorian public, the Herald Sun Editorial.

**Upper House Challenge**
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Professor Brian Owler, who chaired the ministerial advisory panel on voluntary assisted dying, says extensive consultation had gone into the current bill. ‘It’s difficult to ignore the sum of all those hundreds of people, who have been consulted through this process’, he said. Upper house president Bruce Atkinson said he would not have a final position until he had seen the amendments. National MP Melina Bath said after months of deliberation she had decided against supporting the bill, The Age.

**Lib Funding Fight**
The Victorian Liberals could be waiting up to six months to resolve their dispute with the men who control the party’s main source of funding, Liberal Party officials are furious, saying the $70 million Cormack Foundation is trying to prolong the dispute in an attempt to starve the party of funds and force it to settle its case.

The party wants arbitration between itself and the foundation wrapped up by mid-December but Cormack, which has funded the Liberals in the state for 30 years, says that timetable is unrealistic. State Liberal leader Matthew Guy said on Thursday he was confident the dispute would be settled, The Age.

**Emotional Vote**
Jaala Pulford’s speech for voluntary assisted dying took a little more than 12 minutes, roughly one minute for each week between the day her 13-year-old daughter was diagnosed with an aggressive cancer and the day she died. It was long enough to turn the upper house into an emotional wreck, with MPs on both sides in tears.

Ms Pulford voted against assisted dying when it was debated in Victoria’s parliament in 2008, a time when she ‘knew very little about death’. She found that vote difficult. But she said she would have no difficulty voting yes to this bill, ‘having learned more about death and dying than I ever cared to’. The bill passed the lower house by 47 votes to 37, without amendments, but is much more even in the upper house, where 40 MPs will vote, The Age.

**Minister Apologies After Irish Jibe**
A state government minister has apologised after making an ill-advised jibe about Irish people that drew a strong response from Australian diplomats in Dublin. While warning residents of the state to be wary of dodgy workmen fronting up on their doorsteps, Marlene Kairouz said the words that would come back to haunt her.

‘If anybody knocks on your door that has an Irish accent, automatically ask them to leave’. After the comment made news in Ireland, and provoked a local social media backlash, the Australian embassy in Dublin issued a statement reassuring the people of Ireland that they still had a friend in Australia, The Age.

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Andrews Slates Gov’t Plan
The Turnbull government faces an uphill battle getting the states to sign up to its new energy plan, with Premier Andrews savaging it as an ‘unspeakable’ trashing of climate science and a capitulation to Tony Abbott’s agenda. The government will need all the national electricity market states – NSW, Victoria, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT – to agree to its national energy guarantee in order to implement it.

The plan to force energy companies to meet mandated standards will require changes to state-based legislation. Energy Minister Josh Frydenberg briefed his state counterparts before the COAG meeting planned for late November. But both Mr Andrews and his South Australian counterpart Jay Weatherill have already condemned the ‘National Energy Guarantee’, The Age.

Relationship Troubles
Relations between the state and federal governments are marred by a ‘chaotic and punitive approach’ on the part of the Commonwealth that has undermined funding certainty, according to the Victorian Treasurer Tim Pallas. In a speech, Mr Pallas argues for a new way forward, including the possibility of legislation to ensure the Commonwealth honours commitments made to the states, The Age.

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States Combine
The Victorian and NSW treasurers have formed a breakaway group, sideling Treasurer Scott Morrison in a new national board that will exclude the federal treasurer. The move, led by NSW Treasurer Dominic Perrottet, has been born out of state treasurers’ growing frustration at the ‘punitive approach’ of the federal government and a sense that they were ‘being treated like serfs, not partners,’ according to Victorian Treasurers Tim Pallas.

Mr Pallas said the states were taking responsibility for the things that they should be able to do collectively, The Age.

Butter Shortage Fears
You can’t have a croissant without butter. But Melbourne bakers are now contemplating a world sans the pastry’s principal ingredient, as fears of a global butter-shortage continue to churn. In France – home of the flaky breakfast staple – they’re describing it as the worst butter shortage since World War II. Butter has disappeared from supermarket shelves and prices continue to skyrocket, jumping from 2500 Euros a tonne to 6500 Euros in 18 months.

Lune Croissanterie Founder Kate Reid said the shortage was a hot topic among Melbourne’s butter-fingered pastry community. So what’s the reasons for the butter shortage? A change in consumer habits has been identified as one reason, with less concern around the health risks of dairy fats. The preference for skim milk has fallen which has reduced the supply of fat available for butter.

Tony Smith, executive officer of the Baking Association of Australia, said he was baffled by the dearth. Dairy Australia senior analyst John Droppert said there had been a 60 per cent rise in commodity prices for butter globally within the past year, writes Tom Cowie for The Age.

Agriculture

Mooooo
Former presidents of Victoria’s main farm lobby group are calling for the United Dairy Farmers Victoria to remain within the Victorian Farmers Federation. It comes after it was revealed the UDVF is contemplating shifting its staff and funding to a new alliance with national advocacy group Australian Dairy Farmers, The Weekly Times.

Farmers Seeing Red Over Sale
Victorian farmers have blasted Murray Goulburn over the dairy processor’s decision to sell the business to Canadian giant Saputo for $1.31 billion at an annual general meeting in Melbourne, The Age.

It would have strong links to the planned Australian Education City in nearby East Werribee – a $30 billion super precinct that local and foreign backers hope might eventually house 80,000 residents and 50,000 students. The state government is due to make a decision on the Education City site soon, the Herald Sun.

Vic’s Top of the Food Chain
Victoria’s dining reputation has held firm at the inaugural National Good Food Guide Awards, held in Sydney, with Melbourne’s Attica taking home the top gong. Attica was crowned the Vittoria Restaurant of the Year, beating out fellow Victorian restaurant Brae, Adelaide’s Orana, and Sydney’s Ortensia at the Spit and Sixpenny, The Age.

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**Turbine Encirclement**

Just 300km west of Melbourne, the township of Hawkesdale, with a population of 400, is grappling with the prospect that five wind farms – with almost 500 turbines generating 1500 megawatts – could soon go up and effectively encircle their town.

- Three approved projects at Hawkesdale, Woolsthorpe and Ryan Corner, will border the town to the east and south, and two proposed large-scale farms at Penshurst and Willatook will sit to the north and west. Locals who are nervous that the noise could drive residents and farmers away say they’ve been overlooked by a state government chasing an aggressive renewables target, The Australian.

**Wind Farm in Western Victoria**

German-backed West Wind Energy has submitted plans for a $1.7 billion wind farm in south-west Victoria, making it the largest such facility potentially in the southern hemisphere. If approved, the massive Golden Plains wind farm of 231 turbines will generate 3000GWh of power annually, enough to power 500,000 homes.

Some 39 landholders around Rokewood, south of Ballarat, can expect to earn at least $3.5 million in annual income for hosting the turbines. The Golden Plains project is among the next generation of wind farms in the pipeline as the state government legislates its own state-based renewable energy target, The Australian Financial Review.

**EDUCATION**

**Kids to Have a Say**

Victorian students will soon have a say in hiring principals and approving school budgets as part of a shake-up that will see them appointed to every state high school council. Students will work alongside other council members to approve multi-million dollar budgets, sign off on payments, and review and update policies.

They will also help establish a school’s ‘broad direction and view’, monitor spending and enter into contracts. Education Minister James Merlino said students had repeatedly raised concerns about being locked out of important decisions. ‘Young people should have a say in the future direction of their school’ he said.

‘We want our kids to be future leaders in our communities and developing these skills is a crucial step in making that happen. These student members will have full voting rights on the council and it is our expectation will play a key role in deciding the future direction of the school’. The Andrews government is considering whether exemptions are needed for decisions involving staff or specific students, The Age.

**Funding Recipients Not Sitting NAPLAN**

Two-thirds of Victorian students who received disability funding are not sitting NAPLAN, research shows. And there are concerns that schools are discouraging these students from sitting the test because of fears they might bring down a school’s academic results. The University of Melbourne research, commissioned by the Victorian Education Department, was supposed to examine whether targeted disability funding improved students’ academic results.

But co-author Cain Polidano, of the Melbourne Institute of Applied Economic and Social Research, said low participation rates made this impossible, The Age.

**HEALTH**

**Swooping Season**

Angry magpies are getting their claws – and beaks – into unsuspecting Melburnians this swooping season. So much so, the city’s Royal Victorian Eye and Ear Hospital has seen a notable jump in the number of patients injured by black and white dive-bombers. Lonsdale Street seems to be a magnet with many reports of swooping by one magpie-lark nesting near the corner of Russell Street, The Age.

**Divest From Fossil Fuels**

Hundreds of Victorian doctors and medical staff are pressuring their super funds to quit investing in coal and oil for the sake of health, as they did with tobacco five years ago. The group, which includes some of Australia’s leading health experts, says there is overwhelming evidence that climate change is already making people sick and causing thousands of deaths.

They want the two largest health super funds, HESTA and First State, to divest from fossil fuel-based companies, arguing the nest eggs of the medical profession should not be built on industries that make people sick. Co-founder of the pro-divestment group, Kate Lardner, a Melbourne-based surgical resident, said health workers in the group did not want their retirement savings to support carbon intensive industries.

‘As health professionals, we don’t want to see our money invested in fossil fuels that cause air pollution in places like the Latrobe Valley and contribute to climate change that we’re already seeing locally’ Ms Lardner said, The Age.

**Shame**

Doctors wear stab-proof vests, nurses carry duress alarms and security guards have body cameras. This is the new reality as Victorian hospitals try to tackle rising reports of violence against their staff. Despite efforts to stem the scourge, rates of reported occupational violence rose almost 33 per cent last financial year.

There were more than 11,600 incidents in wards around the state, almost 1700 of which resulted in an injury, illness or other condition. There were also 567 attacks on paramedic staff. This means that every 40 minutes or so, a healthcare worker is abused, threatened or assaulted while trying to do their job, The Age.

**Safe Injecting Proposal**

The Andrews government has approved a trial run of a safe injecting room for heroin addicts. Key upper house MP James Purcell confirmed that his vital vote would go with legislation to enable a state-sanctioned injecting room in the inner-city neighbourhood of Richmond, where dozens of lives have been lost to heroin overdoses in recent years.
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If established, the injecting room would be the first in Victoria, and only the second in Australia, after NSW established one in Kings Cross. It’s believed the trail would run for at least two years, followed by a review. This significant reversal of Premier Andrews’ long-held opposition to legalising medical supervision of addicts injecting illegal substances, The Age.

Drug Deaths Spike
Deaths from drug overdoses in the Yarra Council area have surged 40 per cent, with at least 34 people dying in the inner-city region so far in 2017. The ‘shocking’ figures emerged as the state government prepares to pump another $53 million into drug and alcohol rehabilitation, increasing the number of publicly-funded beds for addicts to 420, The Age.

BUSINESS & INVESTMENT

Canals Closes
The Carlton North institution Canals Seafoods is closing its doors. As one of Melbourne’s oldest seafood shops, Canals has witnessed great change over 100 years of business. Couta and flake were the fish of the day until deep-sea fishing in the 1970s introduced countless other varieties, The Age.

Small Business Recognised
Melbourne family enterprise Creative Wigs has come out on top of the Lord Mayor’s Commendations for small business. Joel Grosman runs the Swanston St business with mum Diane and his 88-year-old grandfather known to everyone as ‘Mr Lourie’. Mr Lourie funded the company in 1957 when, as a chemist, a salesmen offered human-hair ponytails, the Herald Sun.

LaunchVic’s New Boss
Victoria’s $60 million start-up body LaunchVic has a new chair, with the state government appointing businesswoman, adviser and philanthropist Laura Anderson as chairwoman, the role vacated by former Australia Post boss Ahmed Fahour. Ms Anderson is chairwoman of SVI Global, the Melbourne Fashion Festival, LKG Advisory Boards, The Good Foundation and the Foundation for the Advancement of Science and Technology in Schools.

She is also on the board of the Australian Grand Prix Corporation, Epworth Health Care, Fed Square, the Australian Defence College Advisory Board and Defence Council Victoria. Ms Anderson takes the top job as the government start-up body still reels from the 500 Startups debacle.

LaunchVic severed ties with the accelerator amid allegations of sexual harassment and said it was reviewing its processes. ‘LaunchVic has already overseen several excellent initiatives in the start-up sector, and we look forward to many more exciting announcements under Ms Anderson’s leadership’ Minister for Small Business Luke Donnellan said in a statement, The Australian. LaunchVic CEO is Dr Kate Cornick.

Regional Jeweller Shuts
Thomas Jewellers will close all its stores, including its flagship Geelong business as well as its only Melbourne outlet in Bourke Street Mall. Its seven regional stores – Albury, Ballarat, Bendigo, Geelong, Shepparton, Wagga Wagga and Warrnambool – would soon follow suit. The company said it was the start of a new era as The Thomas Group ‘consolidates and expands its commercial and residential portfolio’, the Herald Sun.
Industrial Relations

No Resolution in Sight

For more than a decade, industrial disputes have revealed a culture of combat and distrust between management and staff, and between professional and volunteer fire fighters. Several internal reviews in recent years have described dangerous dysfunction. Yet the problems get worse. Executive after executive has been unable to create unity, and has left, often in disgrace or distress.

The board has been replaced. The United Fire Fighter Union, considered by many to be a cause of the problem, is seeking to suppress in the Supreme Court a Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission report. The union has challenged the report’s data gathering methods, claiming they are open to manipulation.

The former minister responsible for the fire services, Jane Garrett, considered a talented and promising politician, quit the role after Premier Andrews inexplicably intervened last year. The enterprise agreement remains unsigned and legislation to reform the fire services has not progressed, prompting Opposition Leader Matthew Guy to call for a judicial inquiry, The Age Editorial.

Cops in

Victoria’s Country Fire Authority has called in police and anti-corruption authorities to investigate its own workforce, the CFA’s boss confirmed. The revelation by the authority’s chief executive, Frances Diver, came days after it was revealed women working for the CFA have been sexually assaulted and harassed amid a culture of fear, bullying and impunity.

The allegations were contained in a previously secret report, the contents of which have been made public. With political pressure building on the Andrews government over the dysfunction gripping the state’s fire services, Ms Diver told 3AW radio’s Neil Mitchell that cases have been sent to police and to the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission, The Age.

Claims of Union Abuse

The Victorian government faces a potential multi-million dollar lawsuit over allegations of union intimidation against a number of senior fire fighters, who were forced to quit after a 15-year campaign of harassment including threats of violence that the Metropolitan Fire Brigade management is accused of having failed to take seriously.

The alleged harassment began in 2002 when all 10 fire fighters were asked by MFB to apply for promotion to commander or inspector level. At the same time, they claim they were assured by the MFB hierarchy that they would be protected from intimidation by the union, which is alleged to have demanded none of its members apply for jobs as part of an industrial dispute.

All claim they were then stripped of union membership and targeted in a ‘relentless’ campaign of intimidation over a 15-year period. All also claim to have eventually been forced into early retirement, and now claim significant financial loss as a result of the MFB’s failure to provide a safe work environment, The Australian.

More detail

The leaked internal CFA report, which in part fed into the Human Rights Commission’s report, has exposed the CFA’s hidden problems, suggesting it is an unsafe workplace. The report says some staff believe the union, which maintains a relatively small but powerful presence in the CFA, contributes to a culture in which management and in particular operational staff bully and harass with impunity as a consequence…of an organisational culture that has no transparency or accountability, The Age.

Hitting Targets

Response times for Victoria’s fire services have been released for the first time, showing the MFB and CFA hit their targets for more than 85 per cent of incidents. The data shows the Country Fire Authority responded to 87 per cent of all incidents within its targets between April 1 and June 30, the Herald Sun.

Justice

Crown Investigation

Whistleblowers have accused Crown of tampering with pokie machines to increase gambling losses, and ignoring drug use and domestic violence. Crown has rejected the claims. The Victorian Commission for Gambling and Liquor Regulation is investigating the claims, which it is taking ‘extremely seriously’.

But Victoria’s Auditor-General in February said the commission had not paid sufficient attention to key areas of risk in the casino’s operations, including responsible gambling and money laundering, The Age.

Crown’s Case to Answer

Gambling authorities in Victoria say they will thoroughly investigate explosive allegations aired in Federal Parliament that Crown Casino tampered with poker machines, undermined government efforts to track money laundering and ignored domestic violence, The Age.

Shoplifters Caught Out

Fifty sticky-fingered shoppers have been nabbed during a two-week blitz at a shopping centre in Melbourne’s north, with the high number of arrests even surprising police. Police were out in force at Epping Plaza during October, after a security manager and several shopkeepers raised concerns about the levels
of theft. The aim was to scare off would-be shoplifters in the lead-up to Christmas, The Age.

**Breath Test Bungle**
Victoria’s police chief has conceded the officers who did not breath test the Premier’s wife after a serious crash had ‘mucked up’, but says they would have been dealing with a complicated situation. The admission came as Premier Andrews revealed one of the officers involved later apologised to his wife over the breath test bungle.

Two officers who attended the scene had been focused on organising for the crash victim to be flown to hospital, so had not carried out any tests on Ms Andrews. The state’s anti-corruption watchdog, the Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission, said it had launched a probe into police handling of the crash.

It issued a statement clarifying its position, stating that it was ‘not investigating the incident or the conduct of the Premier, Ms Andrews, or any member of his family’, The Age.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**Back again**
Down Geelong way, most of the councillors that were sacked a couple of years ago, replaced by commissioners, have been re-elected, even with the same mayor. Ho Humm.

**Inner Metro Assembly Commences**
Locals were introduced to a new concept in government with the first Inner Metro Assembly at Albert Park. The Inner Metro Assembly intends to meet annually for the next three years. When introducing the evening, chairman Tony Keenan said: ‘it is not a replacement of other processes and it is certainly not a replacement of local government.’

The priorities of the assembly are: innovation; airport rail link; housing; rough sleeping; indigenous cultural centre; indigenous children; disabled access; greenling; sustainability; microgrids and co-ordinated walking and cycling routes, CBD News.

**City of Secrecy**
City of Melbourne councillors are making only about a third of the number of public decisions they were making 10 years ago. As of last month, some 760 applications for planning permits had been lodged with the City of Melbourne. Only a selected handful came to an open meeting for determination. The opportunity for corruption has never been better.

A culture exists at the City of Melbourne where elected representatives are increasingly sidelined. Anything remotely contentious is held in confidential sessions. And councillors face criminal charges if they reveal what’s said behind closed doors. The council also routinely stymies freedom of information requests and spends about $1 million per year on spin doctors, CBD News.

**Injecting Centre Coupled With Crackdown**
Tougher laws allowing police to tackle large-scale heroin trafficking will be introduced at the same time as Victoria’s first medically supervised drug injecting centre is set up. The radical plan for an injecting centre, where addicts will be allowed to take heroin while a doctor and counselling services are on hand, has been approved by Cabinet.

It is due to be open in North Richmond next year. The government will also move to crack down on drug peddlers by reducing the quantity of heroin that must be trafficked to attract heavy penalties. For large-scale commercial trafficking, which can be punished with a life sentence, the threshold will be lowered from 750g to 500g, the Herald Sun. ...

**Melbourne**

**Homeless Ban HR Issues**
A plan to ban the homeless from camping in Melbourne’s CBD has been abandoned over fears the move could leave the council open to lengthy legal challenges. Melbourne lord mayor Robert Doyle revealed he had received advice repeating what legal and homelessness experts had been telling the council for months: that the ban could infringe on people’s human rights, The Age.

**Bussing Rethink**
The City of Melbourne is reassessing its position on proposed changes to the bussing guideline that include a public audition and the expiry of some bussing permits. A recommendation to its September 19 Future Melbourne Committee meeting proposed the introduction of a new bussing handbook including a public-audition-rewarded new premium bussing permit for popular locations such as Bourke St Mall, Swanston St and Elizabeth St, CBD News.

**Doyle’s Boyle**
There are still similar numbers of homeless on our streets. Why? I think it’s because people come in to the CBD from the suburbs, from country Victoria, even from interstate, because they know that Melbourne is well equipped with services. We also have a million people using the city on a busy day, so that’s a lot of foot traffic for beggars.

The Prime Minister gets it, his wife, Lucy, was the Lord Mayor of Sydney so he understands the concerns and supports the idea of crafting a national approach. The homeless issue is a complex one: housing affordability, cost of living pressures, domestic violence, mental illness and drug and alcohol addiction all play a part.

Those are not issues that a single city council can solve alone. Yet it is on city streets that these issues manifest themselves. I am happy with the progress that the City of Melbourne, the Victorian government and Victoria Police have made and am committed to applying the protocol, writes Robert Doyle for the Herald Sun.

**Melbourne Population Stats**
Melbourne gained an extra 485,220 residents in the five years to the 2016 census, the overwhelming bulk of them imports form the rest of the country or overseas. While most came from overseas (365,240), Sydney accounted for 27,670,
more than any other Australian city, setting up a flow that was only partly offset by the 19,100 Melburnians who headed north to Sydney.

Brisbane sent 17,000 of its residents to Melbourne, a flow only partly offset by the 13,700 Melburnians who moved in the other direction, The Age.

New Tourism Ad
If you took the Victorian government’s new tourism ad literally, you would think Melbourne’s citizens stroll around in 1950s garb. There is a scene in the ad in which a group of geeks wear 1960s gear at a modernist art exhibition. And another in which a couple in 1940s noir outfits, for no obvious reason, kiss (in black and white) next to trams in Spring Street.

In another scene, there is a Mary Poppins-style picnic in one of Melbourne’s gardens. It all seems suspiciously meant to be turned into internet memes. The aim in the next 12 months is to increase visitation to 5.7 million, spending $5.6 billion. In a highly competitive market, Victoria was the best of the states at major events, The Age.

Fishermans Bend Transformation
A new bridge for trams to cross the Yarra River, options for the location of new underground railway stations, more parks and a limit on density are among plans in a draft strategy for the urban renewal of Fishermans Bend. But height limits would be removed from some areas of Fishermans Bend, in a new strategy released by the Andrews government.

Fishermans Bend is a new suburb covering 435 hectares of land. Australia’s largest urban renewal project, the new suburb covers most of the industrial parts of Port Melbourne and South Melbourne on either side of the West Gate Bridge. The land was rezoned overnight in 2012 by the then planning minister Matthew Guy.

None of Mr Guy’s rezoned land had mandatory height limits, but the new draft controls would see limits placed on much of the suburb – with notable exceptions. And the new height limits allow up to 24 storeys across swathes of the suburb, along with a smattering of sites where developers would be able to build to 30 levels.

The proposed building rules will go before Planning Panels Victoria, meaning the public will be able to make submissions and presentations before an expert panel advising Planning Minister Richard Wynne, The Age.

Water Main Bursts
A burst water main in Swanston Street has forced the closure of a prominent 14-storey office block for nearly six weeks, with uncertainty about when the building will reopen, The Age.

The proposed building rules will go before Planning Panels Victoria, meaning the public will be able to make submissions and presentations before an expert panel advising Planning Minister Richard Wynne, The Age.

Transport
Congestion Headache
An inner-city congestion charge and increased CBD parking taxes are part of a proposed shake-up to ease Melbourne’s congested traffic network. The Grattan Institute report also called for a revamp of the public transport system to encourage more passengers onto its trains, a move that would reduce fares. The state is also scrutinising Google Maps data of 350 routes, with readings taken 25 times a day for six months.

The analysis by the Melbourne think tank also showed: The worst inner-city routes were Hoddie St, Punt Rd and Victoria Pde: Workers driving in from the northeast faced the longest peak-hour delays; Melburnians love of their cars remains undiminished, shunning public transport and lured by parking that is more plentiful and cheaper than in Sydney; and as Melbourne became more developed, space for building more roads was limited, the Herald Sun.

V/Line Keeping Mum
V/Line is refusing to reveal what temperature will trigger heat restrictions for freight trains this summer. In April, V/Line chief executive James Pinder said he would commission a review of last summer’s restrictions, which stop trains when temperatures reach 33C. Industry and local government criticised the restrictions for bringing freight to a halt during a record gain harvest, The Weekly Times.

Boring job
The Minister for Public Transport is seeking expression of interest for the role of Commissioner to the Taxi Services Commission. The TSC regulates the commercial passenger vehicle industry in accordance with various acts, regulations and other legislative instruments.

Radical Transport Plan
Many CBD roads should be ripped up and converted to ‘linear parks’, bike paths and tram lines if Melbourne wants to keep its title as the world’s most liveable city, says the council’s transport chairman. And a rail link to the airport also needs to be made a priority, says Nicholas Frances Gilley, who has been the council’s transport chair since March.

In his Transport Vision for Melbourne, the councillor argues that more space is needed for people and ‘less for cars’, if Melbourne is to keep its most-liveable city title. Cr Frances Gilley called for a rail link to the airport, as ‘we are the only major city without one’, The Age.

Taxi Reforms
Taxi drivers will war on customers and platter low fares on their doors if a proposed shake-up of Victoria’s taxi industry becomes a reality, a spokesman for drivers has warned. President of the Tax Drivers Association, Michael Jools, said a wave of ‘taxi driver rage’ could flood Melbourne’s streets, as drivers compete to offer the lowest prices under the state government’s proposed legislation enabling taxi companies to set their own fares. The changes, to take effect next year if passed, follow legislation in August which imposed a $1 levy on all taxi and Uber rides to compensate taxi license holders, whose assets plummeted.

The second tranche of reforms aimed to deregulate the taxi industry will put taxis on a ‘level playing field; with ride share companies, said Public Transport Minister Jacinta Allan.

‘Allowing taxi service providers to set their own fees would boost much-needed competition in the sector, lowering prices for consumers,’ Ms Allan said. The proposed bill will see Taxi service providers set their own fares, allowing customers to shop around either on an app, or on the street, where they can ask drivers for a fare estimate.

Tough penalties for failing to give an accurate fixed cost or estimate before the trip starts. This proposal has been a long time coming for Professor Allan Fels, who has been calling for taxi deregulation since the 1980s. Graeme Samuel, another former taxi
service commissioner, said the proposed bill marked a ‘quantum leap forward’, The Age.

**Cars Rule Melbourne**
Melburnians are still addicted to their cars, with new census data revealing about three-quarters of employees are driving to work. The number of commuters across all forms of transport in Melbourne’s greater city has increased by 182,000 people or 111 per cent since 2011.

Melbourne’s public transport network is heaving, with a rise of 51,000 people using trains to get to work since 2011, an increase of 27 per cent. This is equivalent to 57 trains full of people, The Age.

**Transport Message**
A small army of media, communications and ‘stakeholder relations’ officers have been hired to keep Melbourne’s transport message moving. A year out from a state election, expected to focus on Andrews success or failure at reducing road and rail congestion, the government’s four special transport project authorities have hired more than 100 communications officers.

This small battalion of officers are employed mainly in communications and to work with ‘stakeholders’ – groups and individuals who have a stake in a project. But they are also employed in roles including branding graphic design and advertising, and are in additions to the 27-strong team of media advisers reporting directly to the Premier, and additional communications staff in the transport department and its agencies.

Organisational charts for the four transport authorities established to remove level crossings, build the Metro Tunnel rail project, and plan two major freeways show at least 115 staff in communications and stakeholder relations. Victorian government’s method when choosing big projects was deciding on them confidentially and then telling the community.

‘Communities are presented with Maggie Thatcher’s old line – “there is not alternative”’ – and often there is. But under the current system, the community can only be heard if they can create enough political will to be heard’, writes Clay Lucas for The Age.

**Airport Breached Law**
Melbourne Airport has been in breach of legislation that gives it authority to issue car-parking fines for at least two years, putting in doubt thousands of fines, a court has heard. The breach was uncovered after hire car driver Tony Sheridan refused to pay four fines for illegally parking in a permit zone. Mr Sheridan took the airport corporation to court, where Melbourne Airport was forced to admit it had not complied with federal legislation.

Melbourne Airport’s owner is required by law to submit to the Commonwealth and to the federal police each year a ‘paring signage plan’ – a document that informs airport visitors where they can legally park. It must also publish the plan online. Documents subpoenaed by lawyers reveal it did not do this for at least two years between mid-2014 and mid-2016, putting it in breach of the Airports Regulations.

Airport parking officers issued 848 parking fines between April and June 2015, during which time the airport was in breach, the subpoenaed documents show, equating to more than nine fines a day. Car parking is one of the airport’s largest sources of revenue, The Australian. ‘Now Stopping at… Dusty Martin Station?’

Victorians may end up with Dusty Martin station or Jumpin’ Jack Riewoldt stop after Tigers fans made last-minute submissions on the names for Melbourne’s newest railway stations. The government has received more than 36,000 entries for the public vote to name the $11 billion Metro Tunnel’s five new stops, The Age.

**Metro Backs Away From Hi-Tech Plan**
A hi-tech Metro initiative allowing commuters to use their smartphones to scan a train to check its destination and available seating has been scrapped at a transport conference. But the rail operator is now retreating from the futuristic plan, which was showcased in a slick video. A former senior Metro executive said it has been a key factor in negotiations to win the operator its $5.5 billion contract to operate Melbourne’s trains for the next seven years, the Herald Sun.

**Too Close to Home**
Just 200 metres from neighbours homes, hundreds of workers are lowering the rail line under Grange Road, part of the government’s $7 billion level crossing removal program. The residents are in favour of losing the crossing – it’s a major congestion point in their area – but they’re not fond of the site offices that have been set up just outside their bedroom windows.

The Level Crossing Removal Authority is building a power substation between Eaglemont and Ivanhoe railway stations. The power supply on the line is being improved so more trains can run, and the government has chosen a location directly opposite some houses. Both projects have left residents appalled.

The authority has more than 80 communications and stakeholder relations officers – employed to tackle issues such as this. But residents say the officers they have dealt with were of little help. Instead, complaints and concerns were left ‘until it is too late’. The authority has employed a strategy of ‘appearing to co-operate’ but not providing adequate evidence to residents, The Age.

**North East Link**
One of the state’s top tennis centres is in line for demolition if a state government option for its $11 billion North East Link toll road goes ahead, an eastern suburbs council says. Boroondara Tennis Centre, last week crowned the state’s best tennis clubs, has 23 courts and caters to more than 45,000 people a year.

But it may lie in the path of one of four routes to be selected by the Andrews government for a new toll road linking the Metropolitan Ring Road in Greensborough to the Eastern Freeway or EastLink, The Age.

**Tulla Widening Ahead of Schedule**
The widening of Melbourne’s CityLink toll road has been completed three months earlier than expected. The $1.3 billion CityLink-Tulla widening project includes almost 30 kilometres of new lanes in both directions of the CityLink between Bulla Road and the West Gate Freeway. Transurban said the project would boost the roadway’s capacity by 30 per cent and result in travel time savings of up to 17 minutes for motorists during the busiest periods, The Age.

**SOCIETY**

**VICSES CEO Job**
Victoria State Emergency Service (VICSES) is a volunteer based emergency service and is the control agency during Victorian emergencies and disasters such as storms and floods. VICSES also plays a major role in assisting appropriate emergency service organisations during Victorian bushfires and road rescue. VICSES is currently hiring for the position of chief executive officer.

**Ankles Exposed**
The Victorian Racing Club has changed its dress code in time for this year’s Melbourne Cup Carnival, allowing men to go sockless in the members’ areas of Flemington racecourse. The trend for going without socks with more formal shoes and even suits can be traced back to New York designer Thom Browne circa 2004, The Australian.

**Tiger Has No Defence**
Nathan Broad, the 24-year-old Richmond defender, did not deny claims from a woman he photographed topless wearing his premiership medal that he had passed around the photograph to a social media group without her consent, The Age.
**DOG CORNER**

**Fine Overturned**
A dog owner has taken a council to court and won after being fined for not having his pet under what it called 'effective control'. Stuart Petchey was fined $149 after his Doberman cross, BJ, wandered behind a bathing box during a walk on an Aspendale beach. The Kingston Council was ordered to drop the fine and pay $10,000 for his legal costs after an appeal at the County Court.

The Moorabbin Magistrates Court agreed with the council. But the judge at the County Court appeal said that having a dog within sight at all times was impossible. Petchey said the judge ruled the council had failed to prove the dog was not under effective control. Petchey was able to get a second fine withdrawn after sending in photos showing four signs saying the beach is an off-leash area, The Age.

**Hiker Alive**
A 77-year-old hiker was found after spending a night lost in the Victorian high country at Carignan in the Baw Baw National Park, The Age.

**VALE**

Sir Ninian Stephen
BOSI, Commendatora Giuseppe Giulio Luigi ‘Pino’ AM – Italian-Australian journalist, broadcaster, author, poet, aged 84.

McCOLL, Douglas – Pharmacist, aged 89.

ADLER, Jacques Issac; ANDERSON, Rex; BARLOW, Colin Maxwell; BENDORICCHIO, Regina Vittoria; BEUTLER, John; BOWTELL, Dawn Elinor ‘Bunty’; BROADHEAD, Irene Elizabeth; BROWN, Albert Weston; BROWN (nee Watson), Faith Holmes; BRYANT, Audrey June Mary; BULL, Pamela Margaret; BULMER, Graeme; CHIPP, Monica Teresa; CONSIDINE, Mary Grano; COOPER, Nigel Robert Charles;

COSTELLO, Brian John; CURRY, Elisa Anne; D’ARVILLE, Greg; DAVIES, Alison Agnes; DEWEZ (nee Huddleston), Edith Margaret ‘Peg’; DIMITRIADIS, Eugenia; DUIGAN, Dr Gwynne Elizabeth; DWYER, Jacinta Mary; ELLIS Norman Thomas ‘Norm’; EVANS, Donald Henry; EWART, Honor Vickers; FAIRFIELD, John; FARFORD (nee Hyde), Deirdre Robertson ‘De’;

FOX, Eugenie; GAMBLE, Paul Daniel; GOTTO-NUTTING, Lesley; HALL, Kenneth Russell; HANSON, Ronald Keith; HARDER, Graham Arthur ‘Murph’; HEFFERNAN, Mark A.; HODGESON-RILEY, Sharon; HOGG, Thomas Franklin; HORE, Dr Terrance ‘Terry’; HOWARD, Neil; HOWELLS, Rev. Thomas Boase; HURLEY, Richard ‘Dick’ KENNEDY, Kevin Michael;

KIMBERLEY, Michael Oliver; KIRK, Durban; KWONG, Michael Wah Saik; LATIMER, Ian Graham; LANGMAN, James Alistair Cairnes; MACKEN, Nora Angela; McCALLUM, Rhoda Marie; McCLURE, Andrew; MOODGALL, Angus; MCKENNA, Bernadette Marion; McMAYON (nee Brewer), Valma Josephine; MILDERN, Rodney John; NEWELL, Anthony Alexander ‘Tony’ RIORDAN, Lorraine; S-WHITECROFT, Christina Josephine; SWORD Robert Joseph; TRELOAR, Mike; TULLY, Peter William URQUHART, Donald Kevin (no immediate relation to the Editor); VARUGHESE;

Blue Boy lives in Yeppoon, Queensland. He does not swim but helps pick pineapples and helps makes wooden boats.
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