

# 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.**

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## The Budgety Edition

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### In This Issue:

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- Heywood Timber
  - Infrastructure Pipeline
  - Energetic Victoria, or not..
  - Gas, and Fracking (What's that exactly?)
  - Al Gore
  - Hazelwood
  - Desalish
  - The CFA Fight
  - Our Police philosophy
  - Bin Tax
-

# 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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**Contents**

<i>Editorial</i> .....	3	<i>Justice</i> .....	8
<i>Governance</i> .....	3	<i>Local Government</i> .....	9
<i>What is fracking? (bbc.com)</i> .....	4	<i>Education</i> .....	9
<i>Federal</i> .....	4	<i>Melbourne</i> .....	10
<i>Agriculture</i> .....	4	<i>Planning</i> .....	11
<i>Energy, Environment &amp; Conservation</i> ..	5	<i>Transport – Rail</i> .....	12
<i>Arts</i> .....	6	<i>Transport – Road</i> .....	13
<i>Events</i> .....	6	<i>Society</i> .....	14
<i>Health</i> .....	7	<i>Vale</i> .....	14
<i>Industrial Relations</i> .....	7		

**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.



COFFEE, ALMOST, WITH MY MARY AND SIR LENOX HEWITT, ON HIS ONE HUNDREDTH BIRTHDAY. BUSY READING THE BUSINESS PAGES. ONE OF HIS DAUGHTERS AND I SHARED SOME CLASSES TOGETHER AT UNIVERSITY A FEW YEARS AGO.



## EDITORIAL

Your editor perhaps was distracted by the Budget's entrails, though there was not much to see under the skin of the Government that we are all getting to know quite well. Clear details next Edition in a fortnight.

Talking about activity in the CBD and around town, our COVER, has a picture of road construction in the inner burbs. Much more than usual perhaps. Could be the best weather for such work. Your Editor does not yet know from which/why Budgets the money is coming for all of these maintenance and repair of roads, pathways and associated suburban infrastructure,

Let's muse on the economic fabric of the future. Victoria has mostly had all the energy that it has ever needed, which has in the manufacturing era always been a great attraction to overseas investment. Cars, and the related parts manufacturers. And aluminium and other items. These opportunities are now moving into the past.

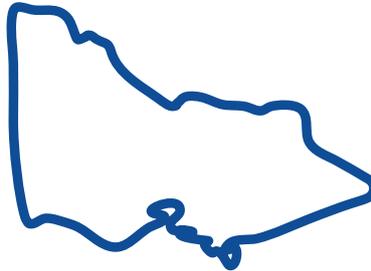
Each state contributes to our manufacturing economy, and Australia will be ill-prepared if sizable nasty international events comes along which might involved us. As a teenager living in the suburbs of Washington DC with various relevant senior players, I came to realize the manufacturing needs for America, and also for my home country. There needs to be some independence of others.

The present CFA decisions and discussions are a great way to see the activism and business methodology of unions. It is much clearer to see the politics behind this union fight with others. Easier than some of the methodologies used in health and education and the public service where so often we are unaware of what and who effects what decisions. Just reflect on the present range of Education issues in this state alone. Your Editor cannot see the fighting of bushfires being fought by these divided groups and the associated bureaucracy, Which is bad enough as it is.

Reflectable Reading

## Items

- Heywood Timber
- Infrastructure Pipeline
- Energetic Victoria, or not..
- Gas, and Fracking (What's that exactly?)
- Al Gore
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## GOVERNANCE

### Possum Habitat Hold Up

A deep split has formed in the Victorian cabinet over Premier **Andrews's** stance on the **Heyfield Timber Mill**, which has started slowing production ahead of its closure, in which 250 jobs will/would be shed. Cabinet is at loggerheads over the upcoming closure with members pushing for the release of a review into lead beater's possum numbers, to determine whether possum habitat currently excluded from logging could be made available.

Mill owner **Australian Sustainable Hardwood** said last month it had no alternative but to close the mill in the next 18 months, after being handed a deal by VicForest which reduced its timber supply to 200,000 cubic metres of timber over the next three years. The offer from the government-owned logger reflected the increasing challenge it faces securing timber, following bushfires and efforts within Victoria's Central Highlands Regional Forest Agreement to protect the endangered possum, locking up more than 10,000ha of forest, **THE AUSTRALIAN**.

### Mill on the Move?

Hundreds of Victorian timber jobs are likely to be handed to Tasmania after Premier **Andrews** last-ditch bid to buy the Heyfield mill backfired. Australian Sustainable Hardwoods says it does not want to sell the mill to the state government

and will instead 'recommence' talks with the Tasmanian Government to move its milling operations to that state, **THE HERALD SUN**.

### B Replaces A

One of **Jane Garrett's** former senior advisers is a contender replace **Steve Herbert** in the Victorian Parliament, after he sensationally quit politics. No by-election will be required, with Labor able to replace Herbert in the upper house through a casual vacancy. **Mark Gepp**, a veteran union official and Garrett's senior adviser was quickly out forward as contender for the spot. He is understood to have the backing of the left win unions, **THE AGE**.

### A Fairy Tale

Former deputy speaker **Don Nardella** lived with family in Ocean Grove in an 'opportunistic' arrangement so he could keep claiming residency allowance designed for country MPs. And former speaker **Telmo Languiller** did not stay in Queenscliff long enough for it to be considered a principal place of residence, an audit of his \$37,800 entitlement claim for living on the Bellarine Peninsula has found. The audit also revealed that Nardella has been claiming the allowance since 2010 when he lived in a Ballarat suburb, away from his Melton seat, **THE AGE**.

### Brand New

The Victorian Government has set out a new strategy to create maximum value for Victorians from its multibillion-dollar pipeline of major projects. Minister for Major Projects **Jacinta Allan** released Labor's **Value Creation and Capture Framework** – an Australian first that centres on realising and creating value, rather than taxing beneficiaries.

The framework sets out how the Labor Government will harness its record investment in infrastructure to generate benefit for taxpayers and broader social benefits – like jobs and skills, the better use of surplus land as well as better housing, community facilities and open spaces, **LABOR MEDIA RELEASE**

### Is Dan the Man for the ERA?

Two former Labor premiers are deeply concerned about Premier **Andrews** handling of the CFA crisis and believe it has been a 'disaster' for his government. Current and former Labor MPs and ministers have said that **Steve Bracks**, Premier from 1999-2007, and **John Brumby**, Premier from 2007-2010, share serious reservations about the Premier's judgement and actions throughout the damaging industrial saga.

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The elder statesmen, according to Labor figures, believe their successor made a significant error by personally taking over negotiations with the United Fire Fighters Union chief **Peter Marshall** in what has proven to be a failed attempt to settle the long running ERA dispute. 'Brumby feels it's been a disaster for the government' the figure said.

'He believes that Marshall has to be kept at arm's length, and reckons the leaders can't afford to get caught in a room with Peter Marshall because he'll gobble you up. Marshall needs to be forced to deal with bureaucrats not ministers or premiers' the source said, the HERALD SUN

*As we go to Press, The CFA is going to be split into paid and volunteer groupings!!! This cannot work in reality.*

**Us vs Them**

The Victorian government is demanding the operator of Australia's main electricity grid explain how the state nearly lost electricity during the heatwave throughout February to ensure New South Wales avoided power outages, adding to calls for a wider inquiry. Victoria was told to prepare for outages in the west of the state, including large regional centres, on February 10, even as the state was busy exporting surplus power to NSW and enduring heatwave conditions north of the Great Divide.

**Lily D'Ambrosio**, Victoria Energy Minister, said the Australian Energy Market Operator had told her that 'they were going to risk interrupting electricity supply in western Victoria to make sure NSW could keep the lights on'. 'I made it very clear that our government would not tolerate AEMO prioritising NSW over Victoria', THE AGE

**Changing Land Tax**

The Victorian Government has offered relief to farmers facing huge tax bills within Melbourne's urban growth boundary. Treasurer **Tim Pallas** has stepped in to ensure some farmers who operated through superannuation trusts will be eligible for the land tax exemption that all Victorian farmers enjoy. 'We've listened to farmers and made a change to the existing exemption to ensure it is now applied as intended'.

The Victorian Farmers Federation raised the issue with Pallas early in 2016 in response to members who had received land tax bills for hundreds of thousands of dollars on properties within the UGB. Farmers operating through family superannuation trusts had been at risk of being slugged with land tax, under a regime where stricter tests were applied to UGB properties, the HERALD SUN

**Gas Backflip**

Victoria's Coalition has back flipped on the gas policy it used to help it win two regional by-elections. The Coalition wants fracking permanently banned, but in a move to woo industry, will no longer support legislating a ban on onshore conventional gas until 2020. The move is at odds with the Coalition policy to ban all onshore gas in Victoria until 2020, a policy first adopted from the Victorian Farmers Federation during the 2015 Polwarth and South West Coast by-elections.

In February, the Liberals and Nationals supported the Government's legislation in the Lower House, but in an about turn, the Nationals leader **Peter Walsh** said Victoria was facing an 'energy crisis' and the legislation should be changed. He wants a ban on conventional gas to remain until the chief scientist proves it is safe, not necessarily until 2020.

Geoscience Victoria has been commissioned to study onshore gas reserves by 2020, but Walsh

**WHAT IS FRACKING? (BBC.COM)**

Fracking is the process of drilling down into the earth before a high-pressure water mixture is directed at the rock to release the gas inside.

Water, sand and chemicals are injected into the rock at high pressure which allows the gas to flow out to the head of the well.

The process can be carried out vertically or, more commonly, by drilling horizontally to the rock layer and can create new pathways to release gas or can be used to extend existing channels.

The term fracking refers to how the rock is fractured apart by the high pressure mixture.

The extensive use of fracking in the US, where it has revolutionised the energy industry, has prompted environmental concerns.

Fracking uses huge amounts of water, which must be transported to the fracking site, at significant environmental cost.

Environmentalists say potentially carcinogenic chemicals used may escape and contaminate groundwater around the fracking site. The industry suggests pollution incidents are the results of bad practice, rather than an inherently risky technique.

There are also worries that the fracking process can cause small earth tremors.

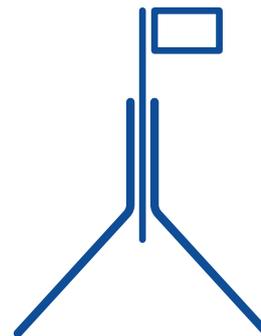
Campaigners say that fracking is simply distracting energy firms and governments from investing in renewable sources of energy, and encouraging continued reliance on fossil fuels.

said 'If Government wants to help assist industry, they need to do that work quicker'. Walsh said the Opposition hoped to amend the legislation to include a right of veto for farmers, THE WEEKLY TIMES.

**What Crisis?**

The treasurer of the Victorian Liberals insists the party does not face a financial crisis, despite internal documents revealing a string of budget blowouts and rising debt as it heads towards next year's state election. Victorian Liberal treasurer **Russell Hannan** denied the party

was in financial turmoil, saying he believed the issues would be resolved and it was 'disgraceful' the information had been leaked, THE AGE.



**FEDERAL**

**The law comes in several shapes and sizes**

The High Court has rejected a Victorian government bid to thwart (stop) an investigation into its alleged misuse of taxpayer-funded resources for political campaigning at the 2014 election. The embarrassing blow for the government means Ombudsman **Deborah Glass** is free to continue investigating allegations that Labor used electoral officers for campaigning in contravention of parliamentary rules, THE AGE.



**AGRICULTURE**

**Better Roads**

The **Victorian Farmers Federation** has called for an extra \$160 million in state government funding for maintenance of country roads and bridges that are the responsibility of rural councils. The money would help tackle problems posed by potholes and crumbling roadside



ROADWORKS BEING UNDERTAKEN TO IMPROVE SIGNAGE PERHAPS?

verges on bitumen roads, and deep corrugations and a lack of gravel roads. Large trucks carrying timber, and other heavy loads, which really do mess roads that are quite good for cars. Go for a drive around Corangamite Shire, for example.

In a pre-budget submission to Victorian Treasurer **Tim Pallas**, the VFF also called for extra funds for VicRoads for maintenance on the country roads it is responsible for, roads that typically get more traffic than council roads, *THE AGE*

### Irrigation Plan Leaves Farmers Exposed

Commonwealth buyouts and infrastructure investments have drained 41 per cent of the water from Victoria's Goulburn Murray Irrigation District, leaving irrigators more exposed to drought, climate change and high water prices. That's the message from a study into the impacts of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan on Victoria, commissioned by the state government, *THE WEEKLY TIMES*.

### Mice Plague

Farmers and residents in regional Victoria will be on high alert in coming months as large mice numbers threaten to breed to plague proportions. It comes after the CSIRO in January issued a warning that Victorians and South Australians should expect lots of mice in autumn, with plenty of food available due to a wet spring and bumper harvest, *THE WEEKLY TIMES*.



## ENERGY, ENVIRONMENT & CONSERVATION

### Vic Investment in Renewables

The Victorian government aims to add to its renewable energy investment in wind with the release tenders for large-scale solar plants. The \$150 million of new capital investment is expected to create about 300 jobs in regional Victoria. The Solar Certificate Tender will build up to 75 MW of new solar projects, which will generate enough power to supply more than 15,000 homes or a town size of Mildura.

About 35 MW of this new capacity will be linked to Melbourne's trams, generating enough energy

to power the entire tram network. The state government says it will voluntarily surrender renewable energy certificates matching the amount of electricity used by Melbourne's trams, making the scheme additional to the national Renewable Energy Target. It will also acquire renewable energy certificates from the successful tenderers, *Stock and Land*.

### Desal Usage

Victoria's desalination plant is being rebadged by the **Andrews** government as an everyday part of the state's water supply rather than a last resort for times of drought. In a new approach, Water Minister **Lisa Neville** has confirmed the \$4 billion plant will now be switched on every year and fulfil a minimum water order to top up the state's dams as Victoria's population continues to swell, *THE AGE*

### ...However...

Victoria's troubled-plagued desalination plant faces penalties of up to \$33 million, if as expected, it misses the deadline for producing Victoria's first annual water order. Global financial services giant Standard & Poor's expects operator Aquasure to fall short of a promised 50 gigalitres by 1-3GL, because of a major power fault discovered in December stopped water production until March.

The government ordered the water last year because of an expected dry summer and falling storages long-term. Storages are 64.6 per cent full, holding about 62 GL more than at this time last year, *THE HERALD SUN*.

### Gore Trip to Vic

**Al Gore**, US vice-president from 1993-2001, became an international climate celebrity with his 2006 documentary *An Inconvenient Truth*, and now he has launched a sequel. He will speak at the Ecocity World Summit 2017 in July. He called for 'moral courage' on climate change and said he was 'stoked' parts of Australia were moving on the issue, *THE HERALD SUN*.

### Last Gasp for Hazelwood

A leading national business group has called on Canberra and Victoria to consider an unprecedented 'emergency intervention' to keep the Hazelwood coal power plant running because of concerns about electricity supply and prices, *THE AGE*.

### Potential Energy Shortages

Victorian's energy security has been thrown into question, with the state facing an unprecedented 72 days of possible power supply shortfalls over the next two years, after the shutdown of Hazelwood. Australia's electricity grid operator has warned the looming shutdown of the ageing plant, which supplies up to one-quarter of the state's

power, could lead to breaches of the minimum energy reliability benchmark next summer.

Its data shows 72 days of potential 'reserve shortfall' over the next two years. While the prediction does not mean Victoria is facing imminent blackouts, it does highlight the risks to the state's power supply as the **Andrews** government prepares for next year's election, with toxic state-federal relations and energy policy uncertainty blamed for inhibiting new investment, *THE AGE*.

### Next?

The workers at the Hazelwood power station were not going quietly. On the last day of business for the nation's dirtiest coal power station, past and present workers gathered to commemorate their service, *THE AGE*. Your Editor suggests this sentence could not be written more emotively.

### Hazelwood Political Split

Energy Minister **Lily D'Ambrosio** said the state's energy supply was not threatened by the Hazelwood plant's closure. 'In fact, Victoria will remain a net exporter of electricity beyond the closure of Hazelwood'. Your Editor suggests that she is dreaming. Opposition Leader **Matthew Guy** said the Hazelwood power station and mine shouldn't be closing. 'Victoria is going to suffer blackouts and brownouts in future summers, without a shadow of a doubt', *THE HERALD SUN*.

### Future for The Valley?

How will the power station and mine closure affect the Latrobe Valley? In ten years time, the valley is likely to look quite different. For a start, the huge Hazelwood coal mine could be a lake. Some with long-term experience in the power industry expect another brown coal power station to close within a decade.

With renewables providing 40 per cent of Victoria's electricity, the brown coal and gas sector would be left to provide the remaining 60 per cent, but would have the capability to produce much more than that, meaning that something in the brown coal sector would be likely to give, said Latrobe City Councillor and former long-term power industry worker **Graeme Middlemiss** warns.

Even before Hazelwood closed, the valley had and has a significant unemployment problem, poorer health outcomes and other socio-economic disadvantage, writes **Darren Gray** for *THE AGE*

### Hong Kong Connection

Three out of the five of Victoria's electricity distributors would be controlled by a single Hong Kong-based infrastructure business being considered by the **Turnbull** government. The proposed takeover, being scrutinised by the

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federal government's new Critical Infrastructure Centre, has raised concerns in business, strategic and political circles about the ownership of infrastructure regarded as critical, *THE AGE*.

**PIPERS AND REEDS IN CAMPERDOWN AT THE ROBERT BURNS FESTIVAL**

which today has 45 members, has been playing continuously since 1885, and is believed to be the only company band still operating in Australia.

To celebrate this history, the band played two events throughout the Castlemaine State Festival month. In 2005 industrial manufacturer Flowserve took over the foundry, now sharing the building with Vossloh Cogifer, which makes railway crossings. These days the 45 band members come from across the central Victorian town, with the oldest in their 80s and the youngest aged nine, thanks to the band's junior program, which is held on Tuesdays at 4pm and is open to anyone wanting to learn a brass instrument, *THE WEEKLY TIMES*.



**ARTS**

**Company Band Still on Song**

The Thompson's Foundry in Castlemaine was one of the largest engineering works in Australia, making everything from dredging equipment to steam locomotives and, in World War II guns and engines. The Thompson's Foundry brass band,

**EVENTS**

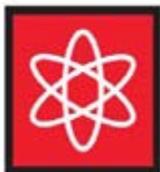
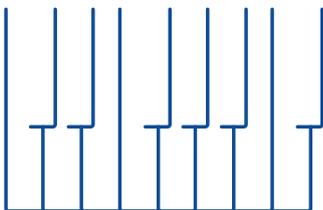
**The People's Games**

Eleven Victorian regional cities and towns are launching a revolutionary bid to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games. In what is a world first, the bid – dubbed the People's Games – isn't spearheaded by a single host city. Instead it promise that events, and thousands of athletes, would be split across the regional centres.

The bid, which has been kept under wraps by its organising committee for months, has been unveiled at Victoria Park Lake in central Shepparton. The plan would turbocharge a regional job and economic boom but would bypass Melbourne. No events will be slated for the state's capital, the *HERALD SUN*.

**People's Games Feasibility**

A plan for regional Victoria to host the 2030 Commonwealth Games has gained widespread momentum. A 13-member taskforce announced they would volunteer their efforts for the People's Games vision to be staged in 11 regional cities. 'Our main focus is on getting the government and corporate support for the feasibility study' said taskforce chairman **Adem Karafili**.



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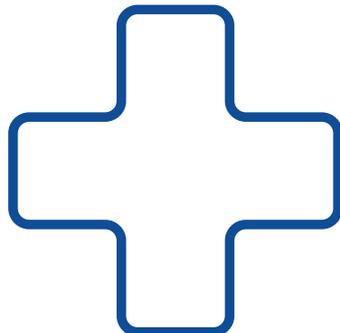
Premier **Andrews** said the government would consider the proposal but warned there would be a considerable cost. 'The costs of putting on an event like that, well, that money has got to come from somewhere and therefore wouldn't be available for other things,' he said. Deputy Prime Minister **Barnaby Joyce** was also positive about the idea, the HERALD SUN.

### Games to Boost Regional Economy

Hosting the 2030 Commonwealth Games would come as close as you can get to a silver, or even golden bullet for economic employment and social challenges facing regional Victoria. A federation of 11 regional Victorian towns and cities led by Shepparton is launching an audacious bid to host the games, the HERALD SUN.

### Avalon Airshow

The F-35 Joint Strike Fighter and gigantic C-17A Globemaster soaring through the sky and restored World War II aircraft, including a Hudson bomber and the Australian Boomerang fighter, all featured at the Australian International Airshow at Avalon Airport, the HERALD SUN. *March 2017*



## HEALTH

### Good Friday Appeal

The simple premise of giving every child the best chance at life underpins both the Royal Children's Hospital and the Good Friday Appeal. Each year, more than 45,000 children are admitted to the RCH, up to 100,000 more are treated in its emergency department and 255,000 are managed at the hospital's specialist clinics. Countless young lives are saved or changed for the better with world-class treatment and dedicated professionals utilising the latest research and equipment, the HERALD SUN.

### New Health Role

The head of the Royal Children's Hospital, Professor **Christine Kilpatrick**, is leaving her job to become chief executive of Melbourne Health. It comes after nine years as the CEO of the paediatric health service. RCH chair **Rob Knowles** expressed his gratitude to her for an outstanding contribution. Melbourne Health chairman **Robert Doyle** said he was pleased to welcome her into her new role, the HERALD SUN.



## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

### Industrial Agreement Saga Continues

Labor MPs are bracing for the damaging CFA dispute to erupt again as **Andrews** Government considers a radical fix. Emergency Services Minister **James Merlino** declared the government was looking at a 'range of options' to end the dispute over a new CFA enterprise agreement for career firefighters. Under one scenario, several hundred paid unionised CFA firefighters would be transferred to the Metropolitan Fire Brigade and the country service would be restricted to a volunteer-only service.

Agreements between agencies – known as memorandums of understanding – would be needed, but legislation would also have to pass the state parliament. 'This could lead to an Upper House stoush that some MPs say would be a 'nightmare' in marginal seats. The United Firefighters Union has stepped up a campaign to drive the change, while Volunteer Fire Brigades Victoria has urged the government not to mess with the current structure for fear it would affect surge capacities, the HERALD SUN.

### Political Battle Over CFA

The recently installed CFA board has been warned it will be sacked if it disrespects volunteers' rights under a Victorian Coalition government. Opposition Leader **Matthew Guy** issued the blunt warning at the Liberal Party's state conference where he said a 2018 state election win was within the Coalition's reach. The current CFA board has been in place for less than a year after its predecessor was

terminated for refusing to support a controversial pay deal for professional CFA firefighters.

The **Andrews** government has been rocked by the tumultuous dispute, which has claimed the scalps of former minister **Jane Garrett**, CFA chief **Lucinda Nolan** and chief officer **Joe Buffone**. CFA volunteers had claimed the pay deal would undermine their standing within the organisation, THE AGE.

Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry boss **James Pearson** said: 'However you look at it, employees will still receive a decent rate of pay when they work on a Sunday and will still be paid more for working on Sundays than any other day of the week'. But Mr Pearson said the change would give small and family-run businesses more capacity and incentives to hire and give existing staff more hours, THE HERALD SUN.



## JUSTICE

### Youth Justice Politicised

**Brendon Murray**, who was the executive principal of Parkville College – a network of schools inside Victoria's youth jails – is speaking out about what he witnessed at Barwon after he resigned as Victoria's most senior juvenile justice educator. His decision to go public means he may never work in the state education system again, but Murray feels a moral obligation to expose what he sees as the mismanagement and politicisation of youth justice system by a government desperate to be seen as tough on crime, THE AGE.

In a report tabled to State Parliament, the Independent Broad-based Anti-corruption Commission said it had uncovered corruption of procurement processes that took place at the Dame Phyllis Frost Centre over a five-year period.

The corruption watchdog found that a former manager of the prison facilities department, **Jeff Finlow**, subverted the procurement process and failed to declare a conflict of interest, THE AGE.

### Judge to Step Down

Victorian Judge **Marilyn Warren** will step down in September after serving almost 14 years as the first female Chief Justice of a Supreme Court in Australia. Justice Warren was promoted to Chief Justice by former Attorney-General **Rob Hulls** in 2003. Last year she banned the wearing of wigs by barristers in the Supreme Court, although they remain part of the costume in the County Court, THE HERALD SUN.

### Reward for Cold Case Info

A \$1 million reward and the grinding analysis of more than 100 DNA profiles may yet lead to a breakthrough in the investigation of Melbourne's inner-city Easey Street murders that was marked in its early stages by police mistakes. The bodies of **Suzanne Armstrong**, 28, and housemate **Susan Barlett**, 27, were found in their home in Collingwood on January 13, 1977, after a neighbour heard the cries of Armstrong's 16-month son, Gregory, THE AUSTRALIAN

### Justice System Doesn't Pass the Pub Test

Pub-goers have spoken. They believe the justice system needs to toughen up on crime, families are less safe than they were, and teen crims should not be able to keep their identities secret. THE HERALD SUN headed to a popular Cranbourne watering hole to put hot topics to the 'pub test'.

The unabashedly unscientific punters poll at Kelly's Motor Club Hotel provided insight into the views of everyday people in a marginal electoral seat on topics ranging from MPs travel perks to homelessness. But it was law and order that touched the biggest nerve, with almost three in four agreeing that their family was less safe than it was two years ago, THE HERALD SUN.

### Shame

The violence, unrest, staff assaults and mass breakouts at youth justice centre may lead to a government department being prosecuted and fined millions. Workplace regulators are investigating if the Department of Health and Human Services has breached its responsibilities

in its management of youth justice centres and could face fines of more than \$1 million.

Absenteeism has been high at youth prisons because staff, fed up with dealing with violent disturbances, are taking stress leave. Since 2010 more than \$10 million has been paid out to former and current staff who were injured whilst guarding the state's worst youth offenders. Opposition youth affairs spokeswoman **Georgie Crozier** said lives were being put at risk inside youth prison, THE HERALD SUN.

### System Under Pressure

Up to 500 remand inmates could be held at a new medium-security men's prison in Melbourne's west as the number of offenders being held before trial continues to explode. Victorian Corrections Minister **Gayle Tierney** admitted the system was under strain and told parliament she had entered discussions with GEO Consortium to ensure remandees could be held at the Ravenhall jail when it opens, THE HERALD SUN

### Free Cops From the Desk

Chief Commissioner **Graham Aston** is certainly keen on freeing up police from non-core duties. His 10-year road map for the future of his force, contained three recommendations to help achieve this. The first he can implement himself, but needs the support of the Police Association and the **Andrews** Government for the other two.

Mr Ashton is freeing up fully sworn police so they can concentrate on core activities by allowing public servants and partially sworn staff, such as Protective Services Officers, to take over some of their duties. He wants to make changes to present working conditions, through negotiation, to introduce much more flexible rostering so it is easier to move police quickly from one location to another, or change their hours of work as the need arises.

It is to be hoped the Police Association is receptive to that. Mr Ashton wants to buy modern equipment and technology to create an integrated information system to support mobile policing, enabling him to get more members out from behind their desks and into the community, THE HERALD SUN.

### Priest Stabbed

A priest has been stabbed in the neck at a church in Fawkner as he was about to begin the 11am Italian mass at St Matthew's Catholic Church on William Street. A few attendees at the northern suburb church recognised the attacker. "He's been seen once or twice in the last couple of weeks" a long-time volunteer said, THE AGE.

### Prison Riot Toll

About 400 inmates at the Metropolitan Remand Centre caused up to \$12 million damage during a June 2015 uprising in response to the introduction of a smoking ban. Dozens of staff suffered physical and psychological injuries as a result of the 15-hour rampage, THE AGE

### Vic Police a Sinking Ship

The officer brought in to clean up Queensland Police says Victoria's Chief Commissioner, **Graham Aston**, is in charge of a 'sinking ship', with strategies failing to stop violent crimes by young recidivist offenders. Police Minister **Lisa Neville** is under sustained criticism from former crime fighters, including retired Victorian commissioner **Kelvin Clare**, former Queensland commissioner **Noel Newnham** and senior inspectors and detectives.

Ashton has said Victoria Police is confronting an unprecedented challenge, with young,

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first-time offenders carrying out aggravated robberies, carjackings and other offences usually associated with hardened criminals. Mr Newnham, a Victorian hired to run Queensland Police nearly 30 years ago on the recommendation of corruption buster **Tony Fitzgerald**, said the failings that plagued Victorian Police predated Mr Ashton's appointment in 2015, *THE AUSTRALIAN*.

**Ice Education Program Attracts Interest**

A landmark 'spot an ice user' program to help families caught up in the scourge has attracted huge interest. Since October last year, more than 2000 Victorians have taken part in the education program. It is part of a \$45.5 million state government plan to tackle ice, the *HERALD SUN*.

**Batty Effect**

They call it the 'Batty effect': in the wake of young Luke's murder by his father in February 2014, the number of children seeking shelter from family violence has surged. Demand from children accessing homelessness help dropped in the year prior to Luke's death, but increased in that financial year and soared in the one after that, *THE AGE*.

**Target Small-Time Dealers**

Police should arrest low-level drug dealers rather than focus on the criminal masterminds behind the illicit trade, an alliance of retired police chiefs say. The Community Advocacy Alliance (CAA), led by former Victorian Police chief commissioner **Kelvin Clare** unveiled a 70-point plan to combat lawlessness. One thing they say police could do right away is to target the kind of drug dealers routinely seen in places such as Victoria St Richmond, the *HERALD SUN*.



**LOCAL GOVERNMENT**

**Yarra Bin Tax**

Families face being slugged with a \$247 tax to have rubbish collected in a controversial council cash grab. The Greens-dominated

Yarra city council has included the annual bin levy in its budget plans. Householders and businesses in Yarra, which includes Richmond, Collingwood and Fitzroy, face paying \$247.50 for collection of a standard 120-litre bin. \$800 for a 240-litre bin, and \$164 for an 80-litre bin.

The council is expected to push through the bin levy in June, even though it stands to rake in an extra \$11 million in rates next year owing to a boom in development. Levy opponent and Yarra councillor **Stephen Jolly** said council was using rates and other charges to for a 'bloated bureaucracy', saying: 'When the highest rates in Victoria aren't enough for them, they introduce a bin tax and slash services', the *HERALD SUN*.

**Bin Tax Nothing But Garbage**

What an outrageous load of rubbish. As if councils weren't already on the nose the City of Yarra is making a stink with a ridiculous and extortionate bin tax aimed at raising an extra \$8 million a year. The Greens-dominated council – which blew \$500,000 on lawyers and a campaign fighting the East West Link – thinks it deserves additional revenue for carrying out what is one of the most basic, cornerstones responsibilities councils have – to collect the neighbourhood bins.

Instead of a focus on the fundamental three Rs – keeping rates affordable, fixing roads and collecting rubbish – the third tier of government sees its modern function as a champion of social change, promoter of weird art and climate change warrior. The rubbish tax comes as Yarra council forecasts an extra \$11 million in rate revenue next year courtesy of a boom in inner-city development.

All Melburnians will be furious at the bin tax because, as the Ratepayers Association said, other councils will look at Yarra and think 'great, we'll have a go at bins too'. People are sick of local, state and federal governments digging further into hip pockets because they fail to constrain bureaucratic spending and waste, the *HERALD SUN*



**EDUCATION**

**Zoned Out**

At a recent meeting for the 2018 opening of the \$20 million Beaumaris Secondary College a map of the initial zone boundary was revealed and showed that many local children may miss out on a place. Many upset residents in nearby Black Rock and Cheltenham, whose homes just miss out on the boundary map, say the zone is smaller than expected and may prompt them to buy or rent within the zone. They are also confused why the zone covers several golf course, *THE AGE*.

**MGC Zone to Stay Put**

Controversial changes to a coveted inner-city school zone have been abandoned by the state government. Melbourne Girls College's enrolment zone would have dramatically shrunk from 2020, excluding almost half of Richmond and parts of Prahran and South Yarra. Richmond MP and Planning Minister **Richard Wynne** said he would reinstate the school's existing enrolment zone. 'Richmond parents have spoken and we've listened' he said, *THE AGE*.

**Teacher's Pay Rise**

The lengthy industrial disputes between teachers and the **Andrews** government is over. The government and the Australian Education Union announced they have reached a deal, after 11 months of 'long and difficult' negotiations and threats of statewide. The four-year deal is valued at \$2.2 billion and will involve 3.25 per cent annual pay rises for teachers and support staff, the creation of 3000 new learning specialists and will move 2500 teachers and 5000 support staff off shaky contracts and into permanent roles, *THE AGE*

**Gender Agenda**

Senior high school students are being allowed to identify as having an 'undefined gender' in official documents. Personal details forms

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DRUMMERS OF ALL AGES AT FULL PELT.

this year allow VCE and VCAL pupils to choose whether they are male, female or 'gender X'. The Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority altered the form after requests from students who are transgender or 'a gender that is not exclusively male or female.'

Its spokesman said: 'Schools also expressed similar concerns on behalf of students.' But the Australian Christian Lobby's Victorian director, **Dan Flynn**, said it was a 'threat to change rooms and bathroom usage' and could create problems in selecting sex-specific sports teams. Opposition Education spokesman **Nick Wakeling** said Premier **'Andrews** needs to...stop pushing his radical gender and sexuality theories onto other people's children'.

But Education Minister **James Merlino** said schools must cater to all pupils. 'We do have young people in our education system who are gender diverse so it is about reflecting and respecting every student', the **HERALD SUN**.

### Hair Tangled

Amid a storm of controversy **Helene Hiotis**, the principal of Bentleigh Secondary College, said that she would work with students' family so the girls could wear their 'braided hairstyle' to school. It came as the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission warned that some school uniform policies failed to respect students' diversity, **THE AGE**.

### No Salvation for Safe Schools

The Salvation Army has backed away from the controversial Safe Schools Coalition after its surprise support for the program sparked backlash from members. Just a fortnight after the Salvation Army's Victorian branch strongly supported the program, the organisation has quietly released a revised national statement.

'Whilst acknowledging such positive outcomes (to address bullying), the Salvation Army cannot unconditionally support the Safe Schools program in Australia in their current form. 'We believe there needs to be consideration and refinement to the scope and form of implementation', **THE AUSTRALIAN**.

### Secondary Shortage

Melbourne's outer suburbs are facing a high school crush with an 'alarming' shortage of secondary schools. Analysis by the Good Education Group, an independent career and school consultancy, shows that more than 73,000 students are enrolled in almost 200 primary schools north of Thornbury.

But they'll have to squeeze into just 61 secondary schools that currently serve 45,000 students – representing a 'whopping 60 per cent increase'. The burden on high schools in the southeast, from St Kilda to Western Port, will increase 35 per cent, the group said. It is predicted a 40 per cent surge in secondary students in Melbourne's west, the **HERALD SUN**.



## MELBOURNE

### First Laneway Bar to Close

Meyers Place, the tiny bar that 23 years ago gave birth to a revolution, is closing. Melbourne's first laneway bar set the benchmark when it opened in 1994, with its fit out of recycled timber and shagpile carpet on the wall, its cast-on-site concrete bar, its cramped quarters and its embrace of the narrow city street from which it took its name, **THE AGE**.

### Smoker Rebuffed

Outdoor smoking areas will be scrapped at cafés and restaurants across Melbourne because owners don't have the room to implement new buffer zones. From August 1, eateries will be required to adopt a 4m buffer or install plastic walls to shield diners from smokers. However, business owners warn they do not have the space to comply.

Restaurant & Catering Industry Association boss **John Hart** said scores of eateries has already advised the union they would do away with designated smoking areas, the **HERALD SUN**.

### Subway Shame

Walk down the stairs to the De Graves Street subway from Flinders Street and the stench would have hit you in the face. A noxious raw sewage smell has wrecked havoc in the historic subway, home to the Campbell Arcade, which runs through to Flinders Street Station. Retail assistant **Megg Minos** is disappointed more wasn't being done to improve the arcade, given how central it is.

'It's shocking to the shop owners here. They pay rates and rent, it's a heritage-listed area, there's a minimum of five tourist groups in here a day. You would think there would be more attention' she said. Ms Minos believes it was a women's toilet that recently flooded, causing the smell. 'I know this arcade sits on an ancient creek bed'.

'Then there's a current outflow that goes into the Yarra and all the plumbing on top of that, I think it joins together in some kind of morass of sewage disaster' she said. The stench has come during school holidays, and young commuters and shoppers have not hidden their displeasure, **THE AGE**.

### Possum Season

It's estimated more than 45,000 possums call the City of Melbourne home, with about 12 possums per hectare across the municipality. Right now, possums are trying to find a mate ahead of peak mating season in May. And once their young are born, they will seek a place to keep their babies warm over winter. Local expert **Paul 'the Possum Whisperer'** said ringtail possums were 'invading houses more and more'. And would take advantage of any roof opening, the **HERALD SUN**.

### Greater CBD Security Measures

A new public siren system is set to be installed across the CBD to keep Melbournians safe. The alert system would see speakers installed to enable

police to send out mass warnings of impending terror attacks or any other threat to public safety. The security upgrade is part of up to \$10 million in state Budget measures to increase city safety.

Pop-up bollards are another major security upgrade likely in the wake of the Bourke St tragedy and overseas terror attacks. There will also be CCTV upgrades to create a greater 'eye on Melbourne', with the government meeting police requests for better protection, the HERALD SUN.

### Blossoming City

The emergence of this thriving city of tiny public spaces didn't happen completely by chance. Changes to our licensing laws – making it permissible to have a drink without ordering a meal – the boom in CBD residents, from a few hundred in 1990 to 37,000 in 2016, two-thirds of them under the age of 35 – and a deliberate strategy to focus on education, culture and design have all shaped Melbourne's modern identity, writes **Karl Quinn** for THE AGE.

### Fastest Growing City

Melbourne is booming faster than ever before, with new population figures showing the city has four of the five fastest growing regions in the nation. More people are moving to South Morang than any other suburb in the nation. Cranbourne East, Craigieburn and Point Cook are also in Australia's five fastest growing areas. South Morang and Cranbourne East each increased by 500 people last year, THE AGE.

In the past 12 months, 82,800 Australians have moved to Victoria from interstate, around 500 carloads a week. At the same time, 65,600 Victorians have left. Bureau of Statistics projections released with population figures show Melbourne overtaking Sydney as Australia's biggest city in 2056, THE AGE.

### Growing Pains

Urban expansion is still the main way in which Melbourne's population growth is managed, generally in a case of put the housing first, work out how to add and pay for the supporting infrastructure later. The house and land packages are comparatively cheap in growth belt suburbs such as South Morang, Craigieburn, Point Cook and Tarnet, but their heavy reliance on cars adds billions of dollars in social costs such as lost personal time, lost productivity through congestion and poor health due to air pollution, as a report by Melbourne's interface councils, *One Melbourne or Two?*, documents, THE AGE.

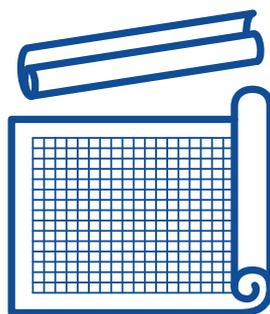
### Need to Diversify Investment

Melbourne is becoming the metropolitan equivalent of a black hole, a place with a centre so dense

and with such gravitational pull that it is sucking the substance out of its surrounds. This is alarming given that the population of Victoria and its capital is forecast to experience continuing massive growth. Without investment in infrastructure throughout Melbourne and Victoria, our new residents will not enjoy the amenities and culture that have made Melbourne the serial annual recipient of *The Economist's* most liveable city award, THE AGE.

### Push for Queen Vic Refurb

Melbourne's Lord Mayor has issued an ultimatum over the \$650 million Queen Victoria Market revamp: approve the plans or risk the project being scrapped. Melbourne City Council is worried that concerns over the height of a proposed 196m apartment and hotel tower will jeopardise the market's much needed refurbishment. But the council fears that Planning Minister **Richard Wynne**, a critic of the tower's proposed height, is delaying a decision on a planning amendment, the HERALD SUN.



### PLANNING

Long-time Chief Executive of the Victorian Planning Authority Peter Seamer is to retire from that role. But he will still be around town. His replacement is Steve Dunn is (acting) CEO. The VPA focus is on suburban planning in the years ahead.

### Skyscrapers Coming to a Suburb Near You

A controversial 30-storey apartment tower on the site of the old Moonee Ponds market has been given the go-ahead by Planning Minister **Richard Wynne**. The site between Homer and Halls streets will be home to the Caydon project for more than 700 apartments. Work on the first stage has already begun, while the 93m second stage will make it the tallest building in the suburb. But Mr Wynne said the decision was further proof that discretionary height controls were not working, the HERALD SUN.

A major new development located on the Winter & Taylor site in Cavendish Street, Geelong. With impressive views over Corio Bay, the new high-profile \$35 million 21-storey residential project will compromise more

than 100 luxury townhouses and apartments. Miramar will be Geelong's tallest tower.

Architect **Colin Watson** said that careful consideration had been given to maximising the spectacular views from all apartments, with full-height windows and large balconies creating a seamless transition from the interiors to the expansive outdoor living areas. One-bedroom apartments will start from \$420,900, BELLARINE TIMES.

### City Square to be 'Revitalised'

Melbourne's civic spine will be revitalised once a key part of the \$10.9 billion Metro Tunnel is completed. But people will first have to put up with considerable disruption and inconvenience, starting with the closure of City Square for up to five years. The current square, which opened in 1980, will be fenced off as preliminary works start on CBD South station – one of five new inner-city metro stations planned for the 9km rail project, the HERALD SUN.

### Final Call

Almost 30 of Melbourne's most historic corner pubs have closed in the past five years, as the city's property boom sweeps all before it. Developers are increasingly targeting corner pub sites for apartment projects, particularly in the inner city, a special report by THE AGE has found.

### Nylex to Stay

The Nylex sign will flicker to life once again. Heritage Victoria approved permits for the controversial development of the former Richmond Maltings site. It gives a green light for two towers of 13 storey and 14 storeys, and also saves some of the sprawling industrial site's landmark concrete silos. Developer Caydon had originally earmarked the silos for demolition to make way for its precinct of apartments, offices and restaurants, but more than half of the 1962 silos will now be retained.

The neon Nylex sign and clock which also once showed the temperature will be restored to working order, and again light up from its vantage point looking over Hoddle Bridge towards the city. However the landmark will disappear from Melbourne's skyline for a number of years, as it's put into storage during construction, THE AGE.

### No Religion No Land

A peace-loving Melbourne spiritual group wants to build a large 'place of worship' on green wedge land south-east of the city – but has to convince the Supreme Court it is a legitimate religion first. The group is called Radha Soami Satsang Beas. It was established in Indian in 1891 and is followed in more than 100 countries, THE AGE.

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IN PIPING KIT WITH A KELPIE, A PICK, TWO HATS AND FRIENDS. CAMPERDOWN IS HOME TO THE KELPIE.

**Height Limits Introduced**

Strict new height limits will be introduced across Melbourne's suburbs to ward off 'inappropriate development', as the city prepares to swell to eight million people within a generation. In a refreshed 33-year plan for the city, the **Andrews** government has promised to assess every metropolitan region for its capacity to accommodate new housing.

But there will be no change to the urban growth boundary, with the government instead to ensure a break between the urban sprawl of Melbourne and the outskirts of Geelong. Developers will be able to build to only two storeys, or nine metres in the neighbourhood residential zones. In the general residential zones, the height limit will be raised from nine to 11 metres, but the rule will be mandatory, *THE AGE*

**Revitalise Not Redevelop**

Traders at Queen Victoria Market have savaged plans to redevelop the historic precinct, with fears the proposed revamp will doom one of the city's most popular attractions. While most shoppers

backed an overhaul, the market's Stallholders and Traders Action Group urged the State Government to dump the concept, even calling for the market's board of management to be sacked.

It comes as the City of Melbourne unveiled a grand plan for a sustainable mixed-use development, including a 196m tower. But operators, many of whom have run stores for more than 40 years, fear the proposal could rip the heart and soul out of the area.

Long-time operator **Jenny Pyke** said business owners sought a revitalisation, not a redevelopment. 'It just has to be sensitive to the site and based on the needs of the market and its traders' she said, *the HERALD SUN*

**Plan Ahead**

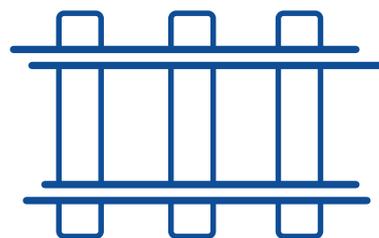
Plan Melbourne 2017-2050 sets out the strategy for dealing with a city that will grow from 4.5 million today to about 8 million by 2051. An extra 1.6 million dwellings and another 1.5 million jobs will be needed over that time. This assault on the urban sprawl will mean more development in

what have been highly protected neighbourhood residential zones – the limit of two dwellings per block will be scrapped, *the HERALD SUN*.

**Clear Winner**

The Kew Cottages redevelopment was supposed to be a three-way winner. Ten years later, as the deal comes to an end, there appears to be one clear winner - **Lang Walker**, the multi-billionaire property developer from Sydney's north shore. Those with disabilities who live on the site are understood to be happy enough with the outcome.

The state's poor financial outcome from Kew raises questions about the contracting and management of public-private ventures – especially when big political donations are in play. And it raises the question: how could a government do so badly on its on premium real estate in a well-serviced location overlooking the Yarra River and central city amid tree-lined streets and private schools?, writes **Royce Miller** for *THE AGE*.



**TRANSPORT – RAIL**

**Tram Use Up as Services Cut**

Tram services will be slashed on some of Melbourne's busiest routes in Ma, leading to longer wait times and increased crowding. Tram frequency will be reduced on six routes after the timetable changed on May 1. Public transport advocates and the Opposition have slammed the move by the Labor government. Routes that have been cut include 96, 86, 19, 59, 11 and 67, some of which are among the most heavily used tram lines in Melbourne.

The cuts have been made in a time of runaway tram usage growth. Passenger numbers soared 12 per cent last year to 203 million journeys. Public Transport Users Association spokesman **Daniel Bowen** said the cuts were mystifying. 'The government and Yarra Trams need to explain why these changes are being made' he said, *THE AGE*.

**Drink Up, or Down**

A popular student pub in Swanston Street could be one of the first business casualties of the Government's \$10.9 billion rail tunnel under the city centre. The Oxford Scholar Hotel, opposite RMIT, at the corner of Swanton and A'Beckett Streets. Publican, **Malcolm Wulf**, says he is losing \$3,000 to \$5,000 in drink sales each week as a result of bulldozers, jackhammers and construction works that started in January, *THE AGE*.

**Uncompetitive Agreement**

It was all self-congratulation in a government press release praising timetable changes that would 'increase services and reduce crowding' on Melbourne's trams. This was before the story broke that tram services will be slashed on some of Melbourne's busiest routes. Fewer services and more crowding is the reality from the operator locked in secret negotiations with the government for a new contract to run Melbourne's trams.

In a stroke of legal genius, the current contract of Yarra Trams gives it the exclusive right to negotiate with the government behind closed



#### YET MORE WORKS

doors for seven-year franchise agreement. It certainly makes the bidding process easier when you are not facing competition, writes leader of the Australian Sex Party **Fiona Patten** for THE AGE.

#### City Square Closure

From Monday 3 April, City Square will be closed for up to five years to build a new underground station directly connected to Flinders Street Station. An acoustic shed will be constructed on the site in 2018. Fencing to secure the site will be installed along Swanston Street, Collins Street and Flinders Lane.

#### Not-So Free Tram Zone

Tram passengers are swiping away money in the Free Tram Zone, with almost 800 people asking for refunds. Public Transport Users Association president **Tony Morton** said anyone who touched on in the free zone was entitled to a refund – a policy that should be advertised prominently. 'I guess the potential for confusion is always there and we don't always send out clear messages on when to touch on and off' he said, the HERALD SUN

#### No-Go on South Yarra Upgrade

A bid to force the state government to build a new South Yarra station as part of the \$11 billion Melbourne Metro tunnel has failed in the Victorian Parliament. The motion put forward by the Victorian Coalition was defeated in the Upper House, which would have allowed Stonnington council to make the government change the design of the project to include the new station, the HERALD SUN.

#### Truck Trips for Metro Tunnelling

Trucks carting millions of cubic metres of spoil out of the inner city as the Melbourne Metro rail tunnel is dug will be fitted with protective sideguards designed to reduce the risks of cyclists, motorcyclists and pedestrians being killed. The task of removing about 2 million cubic metres of spoil from the rail tunnel work sites is expected to require more than 340,000 truck trips around the inner city, many of them near popular bike routes.

The spoil will be trucked away from tunnel entrances in Kensington and South Yarra, and from the Domain underground station site on St Kilda Road. Major construction of the tunnel is due to start next year. At the

height of the \$10.9 billion project, about 1300 truck trips will be made a day, THE AGE

#### More Crossings to be Removed

Ten level crossings will be removed between Cheltenham and Frankston on the Frankston line – two more than originally promised. The bayside line, which runs through three of Victoria's most marginal state seats, will get a mix of four rail trenches, two bridges and one 'hybrid' crossing in place of 10 sets of boom gates, THE AGE.

#### Freight Regulations Questioned

Farmers and freight operators have challenged V/Line claims that its grain haulage total this summer was a record. V/Line chief executive **James Pinder** claimed speed restrictions on the rail network had actually ensured more grain was delivered to port than in recent years.

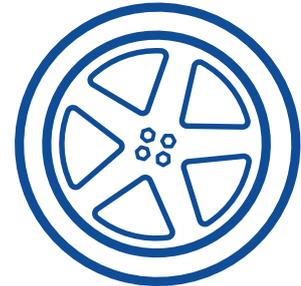
Victorian Farmers Federation president **David Jochinke** said V/Line was 'fooling itself' if it thought the rail freight this year was a good result given the current harvest was expected to be the biggest in the state's history. 'It should be at least 300 per cent more grain' he said. Victoria's rail freight has been hampered by rules that stop trains travelling on some parts of the network when temperatures hit 33C.

V/Line introduced the restrictions as a safety precaution in December. The Rail Freight Alliance has called for a peer review of the operating requirements. 'This is unprecedented in Australia, we've never had stoppages (because of heat) before' Alliance spokesman **Reid Mather** said. 'NSW has similar network that operates to 40C'. Mr Mather said grain exporters faced penalties for missing shipping deadlines caused by the new requirements, while some increased the amount sent by road, THE WEEKLY TIMES

#### No Sky Rail for Cheltenham

Twenty-five homes and seven businesses will be demolished but the cinder Cheltenham community will get its wish not to have the new 'sky rail' built in its midst when the Charman Road level crossing is removed. The **Andrews** government revealed its plans for the removal of three key crossings on the Frankston line, at Charman Road and Park Street in Cheltenham and Balcombe Road in Mentone.

The announcement ends months of speculation by residents that unpopular elevated rail would be build, but also means more people in the area will be forced to sell their properties. The railway line will be put in a 1260-metre trench, passing below the road, at both sites, a more costly option that will also require significantly more property acquisition, THE AGE.



#### TRANSPORT – ROAD

##### Driving Age to Stay Put

Victoria will remain the only state in Australia in which young people must wait until they turn 18 to drive unaccompanied, after the government rejected a parliamentary committee's proposal to lower the probationary driving age to 17. Roads Minister **Luke Donnellan** ruled out lowering the driving age, THE AGE.

##### Uber Unhappy

More than 1,000 Uber drivers in Melbourne refused to log on as part of strike action over poor pay and safety concerns, according to RideShare Drivers United. Drivers were urged to log off between 6:30am and 5pm. An RSDU spokesman said it was a very successful protest, with between 1000 and 1500 drivers taking part. The spokesman said drivers were working between 12 and 15 hours a day, which was a safety issue.

He said the RSDU had public support and the group was getting bigger. The RSDU says some drivers are earning take-home pay of \$11 an hour after expenses and before income tax and superannuation, THE AUSTRALIAN.

##### Risky

VicRoads Risk and Audit Governance Committee has, maybe still, vacancies for four independent members.

##### Snail's Pace on Eastern

A new study has revealed what long-suffering motorists have long suspected: traffic on the Eastern Freeway slows to an average speed of just 9km/h in the morning peak approaching Hoddle Street and Alexander Parade, making it the slowest section of Melbourne's freeway network. New data taken from Bluetooth tracking of vehicles by VicRoads in 2015 this section of road consistently moves at less than 20km/h during peak times.

Off-peak, freeway traffic there averages a speed of 25km/h, and in the evening peak 18km/h, still well below all other parts of the network that VicRoads monitors, THE AGE.

##### Heavy Vehicle Ban

Trucks will be banned from suburban streets in Melbourne's inner west when the Western Distributor Project opens. Following fears truck drivers would continue weaving through suburban streets in Yarraville and Footscray to avoid planned tolls on the Western Distributor, the **Andrews** Government has announced a 24-hour, seven-day heavy vehicle ban on key streets, the HERALD SUN.

**Country Road Funding Needed**

Almost 1500 kilometres of Victoria's regional roads are in a 'distressed' state, increasing the risk of crashes and putting lives at risk, the RACV warns. The motoring club estimates it will cost the **Andrews** government \$1.2 billion to fix the state's degraded and potholed country roads, but says a failure to invest now will mean a much larger bill in future. It had called on the government to double road maintenance funding to \$300 million a year over four years, starting with this year's state budget, *THE AGE*.

**Tulla Widening**

Traffic congestion on Bolte Bridge expected to ease after the introduction of more lanes and new signalling system to improve the flow of almost 200,000 vehicles a day. Two nine-kilometre lanes were opened between Flemington Road and the West Gate Bridge. Drivers now have access to four lanes each way. Emergency lanes have been removed to make way for the upgrades.

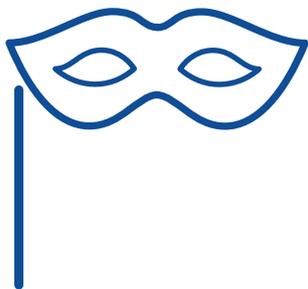
The project is the first to be completed in the CityLink Tulla Widening project. Other elements of the project include broader upgrade works between the Bolte Bridge and Power Street, including an extra lane on the Bolte Bridge to Burnley Tunnel exit ramp. Works will also include adding an extra inbound lane on the West Gate Freeway for drivers travelling towards the Burnley Tunnel, *THE AGE*.

**Teens Game Uber System**

Uber is asking young passengers for ID as some teenagers and even some parents, try to game the ride-sharing system. Uber rules say passengers under 18 must be accompanied by an adult. But some teens are using parent's phones to book rides, *THE HERALD SUN*.

**Cyclists in A Spin Over Congestion**

Cyclists are pushing for wider bike lanes to solve increasing congestion along some of the city's more popular routes. Cyclists now account for almost a fifth of all vehicles coming into the city from 7-10am, new data shows. Heavily congested routes include the Yarra Trail, Royal Parade, Rathdowne Street, Footscray Rd and St Kilda Rd, *THE HERALD SUN*.



**SOCIETY**

**Go Bombers**

The start to any AFL season will be marked by most clubs unveiling at least a couple of new faces. But never has a club had close to half a team come back to the fold after a year away from the game. That's the extraordinary position in which Essendon find themselves on the eve of the new AFL season, writes **Rohan Connolly** for *THE AGE*. Just getting warmed up, as are the supporters who will expose the AFL and many others for being so naughty.

**First LGBTI Centre**

Australia's first Pride Centre will be built in St Kilda. The centre, which will be located at 79-81 Fitzroy St, will house LGBTI community organisations as well as health and support services. Port Phillip council beat Melbourne and Yarra councils to secure the \$38 million development. The facility will be bigger than San Francisco's LGBT Community Centre, *THE HERALD SUN*.

**DOG CORNER**

A Melbourne pensioner is desperate to get his seized kelpie puppy back from an animal shelter he fears may destroy it. **Boro Wongar**, 86, was out with pup Linda when she pulled away on her leash and ran into Caulfield racecourse. She was found later rolling in horse dung on the track outskirts. Mr Wongar and local supporters say Glen Eira city council, perceiving the puppy as a possible threat to horses at the track, have held it at a Burwood pound since March 10. Naughty bureaucracy.

Director for Planning and Place **Ron Torres** said the council planned to return the puppy to Mr Wognar at the conclusion of its investigation and 'welfare assessment', *THE HERALD SUN*.

**Gatwick Hotel to Close**

The Gatwick Hotel has consistently provided a kind of safety net over the years. Now the Gatwick rooming house in St Kilda is closing. It will join the long list of old-style rooming houses to shut down—places that had provided accommodation of last resort, *THE AGE*



**VALE**

**John Clarke**—Comedian. Born Palmerston North, New Zealand, July 29, 1948. Died Grampians, Victoria, April 9, aged 68. Clarke was a fixture of Australian political satire for more than three decades. *Clarke & Dawe*, which has been broadcast almost continuously for three decades, most recently on ABC TV. Kiwis remembered fondly Fred Dagg, the laconic gumboot and singlet-wearing father of seven sons named Trev.

We Australians will truly miss him.

**Lou Richards**, of Collingwood Football Club. Forever a great Australian.66

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