

LETTER FROM MELBOURNE

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Post election and Christmas Edition

Issue 160

18 November to 15 December 2010

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*Page 11: Morgan Poll most accurate on the
Victorian State Election*



14 Collins Street
Melbourne, 3000
Victoria, Australia
P 03 9654 1300
F 03 9654 1165

info@affairs.com.au
www.letterfrommelbourne.com.au

Editor Alistair Urquhart
Associate Editor Hamish Brooks
Subscription Manager Juliette Biegler
Advertising Manager Eddie Mior
Editorial Consultant Rick Brown
Design Steph Dang

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, you only have to miss reading the The Age or The Herald Sun twice a week to need Letter From Melbourne. It's more about business opportunities (or lack of them) than politics. It's not Crikey.com. We keep the words to a minimum.

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EDITORIAL

Well! Here we are. Who was not surprised? And prepared? Anyone? It is important to reflect on the extent of this surprise at various levels of government, let alone various levels of the wider community.

First. For the new premier and his fellow ministers and their advisers. And the related party system with its own bureaucracy and large number of lay people. Much thinking/planning, and soon activity, is happening, though the new government is not quite as unprepared as when Labor won in 1999. Secondly, for the senior civil servants and also the less senior, there is probably not too much politics here, though there is quite a bit in the agencies and authorities and also in the judiciary and tribunals. These groups will move fast to get on with life, the life of running Victoria's government.

Then there are other folk. Former premier John Brumby and his former ministers. And their advisers and other members of the ministerial teams including the media folk. These folk might not really have felt yet the full effect upon them as a team, as a party and very importantly, as individuals. And the Labor Party, internally, its members and general followers.

The Labor team has had 11 years. The former premier's concession speech sounded as though he and premier Bracks before him had picked up a basket-case state from Kennett. More importantly, he was perhaps leaving the impression that these guys who had fallen over the line were not up to the job of looking after Victoria.

Continued on page 9...

Cover photo by professional photographer John Tozer, www.imaginsight.com.au, of Ted Baillieu in the lobby at Parliament House in December 2007.



ABOUT THE EDITOR ALISTAIR URQUHART

Alistair Urquhart graduated from the Australian National University in Canberra, in Law, History and Politics, was admitted as a barrister and solicitor of the Supreme Court of Victoria, and remains a (non-practicing) member of the Law Institute of Victoria. Before that, he graduated from high school in Bethesda, Maryland, and had many opportunities to become aware of the workings of Washington DC.

For 30 years, he listened every Sunday evening to the late Alistair Cooke and his Letter From America. His 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.

His public affairs firm works with many engineering and information technology firms, other professional association and industry groups, on a wide range of issues, in Victoria, Canberra and overseas. Urquhart visits Canberra regularly. He may hold the record for miles rowed on Canberra's Lake Burley Griffin.

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STATE GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

Surprises all round

On the Monday following the election, the papers had Liberal leader **Ted Baillieu**, 57, poised to claim victory and form Victoria's first Coalition government in 11 years, after vote counting gave the Liberal's a commanding lead in the deciding seat of Bentleigh (following a Victorian Electoral Commission decision to fast track the counting of the 3,130 pre-poll votes in the seat). Following the election loss, and his eventual concession of defeat, Premier **John Brumby** resigned his leadership and then from Parliament, with *The Age* reporting that the Socialist Left faction of the Labor party was preparing to push Health Minister **Daniel Andrews** (he was elected unopposed) for leader.

The Right's favoured candidate was Water Minister **Tim Holding**. Left-wing Regional and Rural Affairs Minister **Jacinta Allan** was also in the mix for promotion, with some senior party figures suggesting she should replace Attorney General **Rob Hulls** as deputy leader as the ALP goes into a rebuilding phase. Hulls will serve as Andrews' deputy leader, and former water minister **Tim Holding** will become shadow treasurer.

The Coalition expanded the size of the whole cabinet, with Baillieu initially planning to make no changes to the existing structure of his front bench, before conducting a bigger than expected reshuffle and creating a new Department of Business and Innovation. The new Cabinet will be made up of 22 ministers, including only three MPs who have had experience serving in government – Nationals leader **Peter Ryan**, and former Kennett government ministers **Louise Asher** and **Dennis Napthine**.

Ryan was appointed deputy premier and retained his portfolio of police and emergency services, and rural and regional development. The new Cabinet sat for the first time on Monday, December 6. Even though it was expanded to 22, only four members are women. The Brumby cabinet of 20 had five women. Meanwhile, Governor **David de Krester's** five year term expires on April 7 and he is not expected to seek an extension. We have had 28 governors in 171 years, but not one of them has been a woman.

The first lady of Bentleigh

Elizabeth Miller was the straw that broke Labor's back when she won the seat of Bentleigh for the Liberals. Miller, who lives in South Yarra, is soon to shift the 10 kilometres or so needed to live in the electorate she will represent. Miller had the lucky position at the top of the ballot paper, but Liberal Party strategists believe she received a significant boost when the party agreed to one of her key policy wishes – the promise to build a new railway station at nearby Southland shopping centre, *The Age* reported. An interesting map in the *Herald Sun*, which coloured Labor seats red and Coalition seats blue, showed a majority of blue in the eastern and southern suburbs of Melbourne, and a majority of red in the regional and rural areas.

The law of voting becoming vague

Interesting to note the different ways that people lodge their vote nowadays. Pre-poll voting is people voting before the election within their electorate at a polling booth or at designated Victorian Electoral Commission locations. Absentee voting is when one votes outside of one's electorate on election day, while postal voting is people voting from outside their electorate before election day.

Liberal liberals

The Age reported that former Prime Minister **Malcolm Fraser** said **Ted Baillieu's** victory was a very encouraging day for 'liberal Liberals'. Baillieu has a socially progressive record on issues like abortion, stem cell research and physician assisted dying. Meanwhile, an *Age* editorial said that the new government must manage a high level of dissatisfaction with government services.

Look out Canberra

The Australian reported that **Ted Baillieu** will challenge key planks of Prime Minister **Julia Gillard's** reform agenda, including the broadband network, health reform, the mining tax and water. He will also launch an audit of Victorian hospital waiting lists to determine whether the national health reform deal signed by outgoing Premier **John Brumby** provides enough for Victoria. Baillieu will also make his support of Canberra's planned rollout of the National Broadband

Network conditional on improved mobile phone reception in regional and metropolitan areas.

A fair comment

The Age reported that Team Baillieu will consist of seven key players – two political mentors, three Parliamentary colleagues, a chief of staff and a party state director. Former Premier **Jeff Kennett** and former federal MP **Petro Georgiou** have been two of Baillieu's mentors since the 1990s, and will continue to give advice behind the scenes. Around the cabinet table, Baillieu's closest confidantes will be **David Davis**, **Peter Ryan** and **Louise Asher**.

Davis is one of Baillieu's closest parliamentary colleagues, a keen strategist, and the unofficial leader of the small 'l' liberals; Ryan will be Baillieu's deputy and country springboard; while Asher is a long-time loyalist who supported Baillieu to become Liberal leader after **Robert Doyle's** resignation in 2006. Finally, there's **Tony Nutt**, the Liberal state director, who drove the election winning campaign.

Meanwhile

The hiring of staff will be co-ordinated by the Premier's office and others nearby. Some ministerial advisers might be obvious, but there are many advisers and support staff required. Baillieu has made it clear he will not cut public service positions.

A busy Christmas and New Year

The *Financial Review* carried a good summary of the Baillieu agenda: cut spending by \$1.6b over five years; introduce a major health plan within 150 days of taking office; cut stamp duty by \$790m for new home buyers; examine the process of Victoria's 12 year wagering licence; establish an anticorruption commission; review Labor's \$2b food bowl plan for central Victoria; take a tougher line on windfarms; develop Avalon airport between Melbourne and Geelong as the state's second international airport; release a large amount of land in Melbourne's outer fringe; investigate rail links to Melbourne's east and southeast, and back fast rail links to Sydney and other capitals; rewrite the WorkCover laws; look into a possible independent public inquiry into the state's investments; and force banks to mediate before they foreclose on farms.

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Into it

The Age reported that **Ted Baillieu** recalled Parliament before Christmas to start work on the Coalition's agenda. He wants to quickly introduce legislation to abolish suspended sentences for serious crimes, and create a new agency to overhaul Melbourne's public transport system. Parliament will sit on Tuesday 22 December for one day.

Ted should be out of the Epworth Hospital by then, having had emergency surgery on 15 December to remove a kidney stone. Ted evidently does not drink alcohol, tea or coffee.

Baillieu also plans to move quickly to deploy armed police protective services officers on railway stations at night, abolish the Office of Police Integrity and set up Victoria's first anticorruption commission. In a bid to contrast his administration with what he called Labor's secret state, the new Premier will also open the books on public hospital waiting lists and contracts for the \$5.7b desalination plant and the \$1.4b myki public transport ticketing system.

And then

The Age reported that **Ted Baillieu** has flagged dumping or deferring some of his big spending election promises if an audit of Victoria's finances reveals holes in the budget. He has vowed to ditch some of the Brumby government's most contentious projects and policies, saying the \$750m north-south water pipeline will be shut down, changes to clearway times in inner suburban shopping strips will be reversed, and planning laws allowing high-rise residential development along suburban train and tram problems will be overturned. Baillieu has also vowed to put an end to government spin by cutting the number of taxpayer funded advertisements and media advisers.

In the shadows

New Labor leader **Daniel Andrews's** shadow cabinet includes three new shadow ministries: the suburbs and the cost of living (both going to **Lily D'Ambrosio**), and sustainable growth (**Brian Tee**). The big winners in the shadow cabinet were newcomer **Fiona Richardson**, who has been given public transport, and veteran minister **Gavin Jennings**, who moves from the environment portfolio to health. After 11 years as attorney-general, **Rob Hulls** will take up the shadow education portfolio, with former transport minister **Martin Pakula** to pick up the attorney role as well as gaming and racing. **James Merlino** retains the police portfolio he was given before last month's election. **Lisa Neville** will become shadow environment and climate change minister.

Former treasurer **John Lenders** picks up water, resources, agriculture and Commonwealth-state relations, while **Justin Madden** will be shadow minister for tourism, small business and innovation and major events. Former roads minister **Tim Pallas** lost that portfolio to **Jacinta Allen**, but

kept ports, major projects and employment and industrial relations.

Of the other (shadow) Cabinet newcomers, **Luke Donellen** has child safety and sport; **Jill Hennessy** corrections, crime prevention and women's affairs; **Steve Herbert** higher education and skills; **Jenny Mikakos** seniors, ageing and youth services; **Robin Scott** finance and WorkCover; and **Adam Somyurek** technology and manufacturing. **Candy Broad** is shadow cabinet secretary. Andrews has added veterans' and multicultural affairs, and the shadow ministry for children and young adults to his duties as Opposition Leader, *The Age* reported.

An unexpected tide

The Financial Review reported that Labor rode the regions to power in 1999 and the Coalition is set to surf in on the suburbs in 2010. Of the 13 seats that delivered the Liberals government, 10 were in suburban Melbourne.

Yes...

The new Victorian Premier was on the front cover of four newspapers in his swimming gear on the day following his election victory. *The Age*, *Herald Sun*, *The Australian* and even the *Financial Review*.

Conceding defeat

In his concession speech, former Premier **John Brumby** said that there is no doubt in his mind that the Labor Party leaves Victoria a stronger, better and fairer place than it was 11 years ago. He was explicit about what he reckoned had beaten him, and it wasn't his performance, it wasn't his government, and it wasn't the coalition. It was time – the unforgiving churn of the electoral cycle and Labor's turn was up, *The Age* reported. The *Herald Sun* took a look at some of the highs and lows of **Brumby's three years** as premier. Highs included maintaining a strong economy during the global financial crisis and helping to deliver a national health agreement to provide Victorians more beds and surgery, while lows included the bungled myki ticketing system, law and order problems, transport system failures and the child protection crisis.

Nearby

On the opinion pages of *The Age*, **Kenneth Davidson** wrote that those who believe the Brumby government was a good government voted out by an electorate bored after 11 years, simply haven't been paying attention. The key to understanding why the Brumby government held on in the regional centres but lost badly in the outer suburbs of Melbourne – both to everyone's surprise – can be largely explained by the fact that they kept their promise to build the Regional Fast Rail network linking Melbourne to the regional centres but failed to do anything about the abysmal standard of public transport to the outer suburbs.

A few days later in the same paper, **Tom Ormonde** wrote that so far Brumby has barely indicated that

he might have been to blame to his government's election defeat. For all the positive things he did in office, his farewell speech only served to reinforce the major negative perceptions of the Premier and some of his ministers: arrogant, dismissive of critics and reluctant to admit error. Let's hope that, in time, the former premier can openly acknowledge his mistakes, the worst of which included the sham consultations on private projects like the Windsor Hotel.

Recriminations (1)

The Age reported that **George Droutsas**, who was senior campaign officer in Victorian Labor's head office from 2006 until last year, says voters regarded **John Brumby** as arrogant, dismissive and a poor listener who refused to hear genuine community concerns, such as dilapidated public transport, alcohol-fuelled street violence and rising electricity and water bills. He believes the decision to build Labor's election campaign around Brumby was a mistake. Droutsas is a controversial figure in the ALP. In October, the former Whitehorse mayor was acquitted of false document charges after being accused of trying to stack a council election with dummy candidates. Meanwhile, senior Labor MP for the Melbourne seat of Wills, **Kelvin Thomson**, said **John Brumby's** government lost the election because it became too cosy with the big end of town and lost touch with the real concerns of ordinary people.

How green?

The Australian reported that federal Labor minister and key Victorian powerbroker **Bill Shorten** blamed the state election result on the party ignoring the suburbs and being distracted by the Greens from fighting its main enemy, the Liberals. Meanwhile, **Peter Van Onselen** wrote that the Labor Party will face more internal debate on whether pandering to the Greens is in the party's best interests. *The Age* reported that Labor relied on Greens preferences to win 20 of its 43 seats in the new Legislative Assembly – raising real doubts about whether it could afford to follow the Coalition in putting the Greens last. Final election results suggest rather that Labor and the Greens may be doomed to live in a love-hate relationship – competing fiercely for a widening circle of suburban seats, yet teaming with the Coalition elsewhere. Meanwhile, one in three Liberal voters in the four inner-city seats that could have fallen to the Greens if the Liberals had preferred them defied their how-to-vote cards, and directed their preferences to the Greens ahead of Labor. Meanwhile, the Greens also made big gains from Labor in the next ring of seats further out, suggesting the next Labor versus Greens battle will be over a much wider field.

Recriminations (2)

The Age reported that Victorian Labor will consider putting the Greens last on its how-to vote cards at future elections, as payback for the minor parties role in the Brumby government's defeat

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at the election. Senior ALP figures, angry at the Greens’ attempts for seats in the city heartland, want Labor’s election review panel to look at ways to destroy the minor party’s prospects of winning seats in the lower house.

Onward Christian soldiers

The Age reported that veteran Liberal MP **Ken Smith** will become lower house speaker, with colleague **Christine Fyffe** as deputy speaker. Liberal **Bruce Atkinson** will be president of the upper house. Of the 22 ministers, all but one swore oaths on the Bible. Only Attorney-General **Robert Clark** made an affirmation.

Watch COAG

After being sworn in as Premier, **Ted Baillieu** said that he would pursue an approach of competitive federalism, the *Financial Review* reported. Baillieu was very critical of the Council of Australian Governments agenda in recent years. He has already flagged concerns with federal health and water reforms and criticised some COAG agreements for producing a race to the average. Baillieu flagged a determination to take on the powerful construction union stranglehold on commercial scale residential construction.

Packages tied up with string

Two suspicious packages found in government buildings, hours before **John Brumby** conceded defeat, were more than a hoax, police said. Detectives will investigate whether the packages delivered to 1 Treasury Place, which houses the office of the Premier and the Exhibition Street offices of the Departments of Transport and Justice, had any political links, *The Age* reported. The *Herald Sun* reported that the packages were later declared safe.

First brushes of new broom

The *Herald Sun* reported that at least 160 staff members, including public relations employees and advisers left government offices in a matter of days once the result was called. Any who have spent a bare minimum of 12 months in government will walk away with 12 weeks redundancy pay plus a three-week notification payment on top

of any holiday pay and other benefits they are eligible for.

That last week

The final Morgan Poll on the Victorian election, released lunch-time the day before the election was the first to show the Coalition surging to the front and in an election-winning position - L-NP (51%) cf. ALP (49%). Subsequent polls released on election day also supported the late swing. The Morgan Poll also showed a late fall in Brumby’s approval, down 4 per cent to 34 per cent while Baillieu held firm at 40 per cent. **Tim Colebatch** wrote that the late polls implied a swing to the Coalition of about 6.5 per cent. Although the swing to the Coalition was closer to 6 per cent, it was enough for the Coalition to take government, 45 seats to 43. On the same day, the *Herald Sun* had Newspoll showing the Coalition with 51.1 per cent of the two-party preferred vote ahead of Labor with 48.9 per cent. It was the first time that the Coalition had been ahead in the campaign. *The Age/Nielsen Poll* had the Coalition ahead by 52 per cent to 48 per cent.

Other polls

Five days out from the election, the *Herald Sun* reported that a Galaxy Poll showed Premier **John Brumby** would cling to power, but only with the help of Greens preferences. On a two-party preferred basis, Labor was ahead of the Coalition 51-49 per cent, but the polling showed that up to 18 government seats were in play ahead of the election. History shows that they lost 13 of them.

Good summary

Following the election, **Shaun Carney** wrote in *The Age* that Labor’s support during this election campaign followed a similar downward course to the ALP governments in Western Australia in 2008 and South Australia in March this year. At the beginning of the Victorian campaign, only a few short weeks before the election, Labor appeared to be ahead with a small margin of comfort and Brumby looked in command, just as his interstate counterparts had.

Gradually, the campaign turned sour for Labor and Brumby, especially in the final week. It was perhaps an example of the media clocked

in action, where opposition parties outside an election cycle receive only a few minutes in every hour of coverage, but have their voices heard with far more regularity in the lead up to an election. The Liberal Party’s decision to direct preferences to Labor ahead of the Greens changed the campaign and boosted the Coalition’s prospects. It consolidated the Liberal’s focus, sharpened up the party’s attempts to appear resolute, and made the contest a much starker choice between Labor and the Coalition.

The bush fights back

As part of *The Age’s* post-election analysis, it was noted that Baillieu ran a traditional campaign, pushing the message that it was time for a change after more than a decade of Labor. Meanwhile, Nationals leader **Peter Ryan** and his party defeated the Independent, **Craig Ingram**, to reclaim East Gippsland. This boosted the Nationals’ numbers in the 88-member lower house from 9 to 10 and cements Ryan’s position as a leader of substance in the rural and regional party.

More green detail

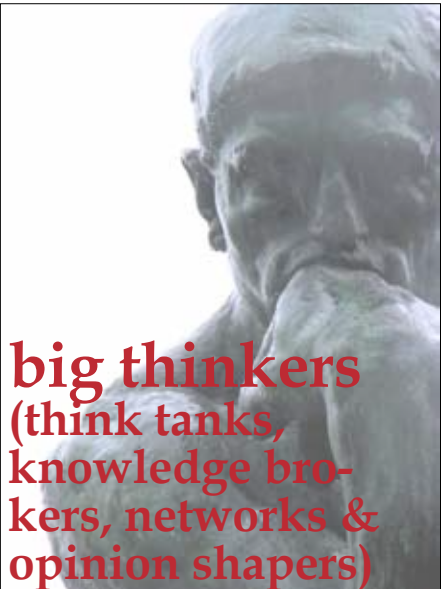
The worse than expected result for the Greens will be taken by Baillieu as vindication for his mid-campaign decision to preference the minor party last in all seats, even if it meant a couple of Labor members, namely **Bronwyn Pike** and **Richard Wynne**, retained their inner-city seats because of it. Meanwhile, a swag of new Liberal Party members claimed the heartland eastern suburbs of Melbourne from Labor for the first time since 1999. **Paul Austin** noted that something dramatic happened in the last days of the election campaign. Undecided voters, especially in the mortgage belts across Melbourne’s eastern and southern suburbs, decided they had had enough of Labor and were prepared to give the Coalition another go, 11 years after they had evicted **Jeff Kennett** from the Premier’s office.

A long speech

On election night, former Premier **John Brumby** was convinced that the election result would be a hung Parliament, and said in his non-concession speech that Labor had provided stable minority government before, the *Herald Sun* reported.

Democratic deficit

The close election result showed both major parties were lacking in authority, had too many apparatchiks, and were suffering from a ‘democratic deficit’, former Premier **John Cain** said. Cain, Labor Premier from 1982 to 1990, said both major parties face similar issues but the Labor Party needed to fix the problem to ensure policy and ideas are being generated by the broader parties as well as its MPs. Cain said the policy vacuum is being filled by professional political advisers, the bureaucracy and interest groups who back it with political donations. Cain praised the campaign of **John Brumby** and said the major parties are no longer the crucible for ideas and policies, *The Age* reported.



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Watch these spaces

The *Herald Sun* reported that transport, crime and health chiefs have a nervous wait as the Coalition's election victory could mean big departmental changes. Meanwhile, Chief Commissioner **Simon Overland** may become a victim of the change of government, although he has been publicly supported by both major political parties. *The Australian* reported that the new Baillieu government wants Overland to play less politics and to refocus on the basics of running the police force. The paper expected Overland to survive in his job despite a perception in Coalition ranks that he became too close to the Brumby government, which appointed him.

In the upper house

The *Herald Sun* reported that preliminary counts suggested the Liberal and National parties were on track to gain four seats in the Legislative Council (upper house). With about 30 per cent of the vote counted, the Coalition was on target to win 21 seats. *The Age* reported that the final result was known on 13 December, 16 days after the election, when the Victorian Electoral Commission fed all 3.2 million votes into its computer to allocate preferences. The Liberals squeezed home in all three of the close races in the new Legislative Council, giving them a majority of 21 seats in the 40 member chamber – a gain from the 17 it held in the old Council. Labor ended up with just 16 seats, down from 19 in the old chamber. The Greens retained their three seats in the Council but lost the balance of power. The Democratic Labor Party lost its one seat, that of its leader, **Peter Kavanagh**. The Liberals **Craig Ondarchie** ended up with the final seat, held by retired Labor minister **Theo Theophanous**. Sex Party leader **Fiona Patten** fell short of sneaking an upset win in the same race. A late surge to the Greens saw their Member of the Legislative Council, **Colleen Hartland**, win her battle with the President of the Council, Labor's **Bob Smith**, for the final seat in Western Metro. The closest race of all was in a vast electorate of Northern Victoria, where Liberal MLC **Donna Petrovich** narrowly rolled back a strong challenge by **Steve Threlfall** of the Country Alliance. And in Southern Metro, the Liberals **George Crozier** unseated Labor MLC **Jennifer Huppert**.

What it all means

The Age reported the **Premier Baillieu** will be able to push his legislative agenda through Parliament unopposed as a result of the Coalition securing a majority in the upper house. It all but assured the passage of controversial proposals such as minimum jail sentencing guidelines, abolition of suspended sentences and new restrictions on windfarm developments. The result will leave the Opposition and the Greens powerless in the upper house, which has traditionally been a site for amendments and robust legislative debate. **Paul Austin** wrote that the Coalition's seizing of the upper house is especially surprising. The *Herald Sun* reported that the long serving Labor government only had a majority in the upper

house between 2002-06, forcing them to enter deals with either the Greens or the Coalition to get legislation passed.

Campaign privacy coverage: Yes/No

The Age reported that the ALP secretly recorded the personal details of tens of thousands of Victorians – including sensitive health and financial information – on a database being accessed by campaign workers ahead of the state election. A follow-up report in the same paper had Premier **John Brumby** and Opposition Leader **Ted Baillieu** taking up contrasting positions on constituent privacy, with the Labor leader effectively confirming he would deny access to files kept on voters and the Liberal chief vowing to release files wherever possible. The Liberals have software capable of similar profiling. Brumby dismissed the suggestion that MPs held 'secret' files. When asked if he would therefore release such files requested by constituents, he avoided the question, thus confirming he would not. But Baillieu said he had no problem releasing information to constituents where requests were made.

What shade of green?

Opposition leader **Ted Baillieu** defended the move not to preference the Greens at the state election, saying it was a party decision he supported. But he denied the Coalition was giving the Brumby government four inner-city seats by preferencing Labor ahead of the Greens and potentially allowing two Labor ministers to keep their jobs, *The Australian* reported. 'We are going to make them (Labor) sweat... we're actually going to do them ourselves,' Baillieu said. On the opinion pages of the same paper, **Peter van Onselen** wrote that unless you're a member of the Liberal Party living in Melbourne, it is hard for most people elsewhere to understand the sense of frustration many Liberals feel about the party's preferences helping the Greens their first House of Representatives MP in the federal election. Understanding that angst goes some way towards understanding the party hierarchy's decision to preference Labor ahead of the Greens at the state election. The conservatives federally got nothing for helping the Greens to their best federal election result. The *Financial Review* reported that federal Greens leader **Bob Brown** said that Liberals' preferencing to Labor means instead of three Greens in the new state Parliament (lower house, Legislative Assembly), there won't be any. The poor election result for the Greens raised doubts about the momentum of the party as the third force in the Australian electoral landscape. Their best result was in Brunswick where candidates **Cyndi Dawes** received 43.6 per cent of the two-party preferred vote, losing to Labor's **Jane Garrett**.

Same team, etc.

Before the election, the Greens were saying they would consider teaming with Labor if they held the balance of power in the lower house. Greens candidates said they were a good chance

to win key inner-city seats with federal MP for Melbourne **Adam Bandt** trumpeting a shift toward the Greens across the board, the *Herald Sun* reported. The editorial in that paper urged readers not to throw their vote away by voting for the Greens.

Changing tack

In the last days of the election campaign, **John Brumby** told a Melbourne Press Club lunch that a Liberal-National government, with its uncensored policies, it's invisible shadow treasurer (**Kim Wells**) and a terrible history that it cannot escape, is a bigger risk to our prosperity and jobs than the fragile global economy. Following this, Labor stepped up the assault on the Opposition, with a new prime time TV advertisement reprising the attack on **Ted Baillieu** from the last election for allegedly profiting from the Kennett government's asset sales, because a real estate firm of which he had been a director had the contract to sell school and hospital sites. The Opposition said the attack showed the government was becoming increasingly shrill. Baillieu threatened to sue the ALP if the ad was not withdrawn, and after Labor called his bluff, the opposition leader made good on his threat to sue ALP campaign director **Nick Reece** for defamation, issuing a writ in the Supreme Court. Neither party shone in its advertising strategy, **Jason Murphy** wrote in the *Financial Review*. After promising a positive campaign, the Labor Party launched an armada of attack ads.

Looking back

In the week leading up to the election, **Paul Austin** noted in *The Age* that the position of Brumby's Labor government bears an uncanny resemblance to that of the Coalition that lost by a whisker in the 1999 poll. Then the Labor opposition had an extra 13 seats to rob the Kennett government of its majority and it's the same numerical situation that the Liberals find themselves in now.

Displaced to be

The *Herald Sun* reported that the Baillieu government is searching for a new catchy slogan for the state after dropping 'Victoria: The Place

To Be' less than a week after taking power. An official email from the Department of Premier and Cabinet was sent to all department bosses asking bureaucrats to delete the slogan from websites because of its links with the former Labor government. The Australian Monarchists League welcomed the change as a good opportunity to restore the emblem of the Crown to Victorian licence plates.

Baillieu and Doyle teaming up

Billions of dollars for community infrastructure projects for schools, libraries and new rail lines could be delivered under a municipal bond scheme proposed by Melbourne Lord Mayor **Robert Doyle**. Doyle said the infrastructure bond scheme is the 'number one thing on my agenda to discuss with the new Premier'. He said he would ask the Premier to join him in a coordinated approach to the Federal Government to support the scheme. The exact bond funding model would be developed by the Federal Government's office of financial management and projects would be first approved by the federal body, Infrastructure Australia, headed by **Sir Rod Eddington**. Doyle said the scheme was about unlocking private money for infrastructure investment, *The Age* reported. Nearby, industry groups have called for action from the Baillieu government on infrastructure, stamp duty and planning, with Sir Rod Eddington saying that while Melbourne faced challenges with existing infrastructure, newer areas do not have enough.

Safe as houses

The *Herald Sun* reported that almost one in 10 Victorians works with the state because of unprecedented growth in the public sector under the Brumby government. The rise in staff numbers means 40c in every dollar spent by the government goes on paying staff. The public sector workforce has risen by almost 40,000 in the past five years but neither side of politics plans to cut jobs. Almost 250,000 people are employed in the Victorian public sector, according to the State Services Authority. This is much higher than when **Jeff Kennett** lost office in 1999. The

250,000 figure includes full-time, part-time and contract employees.

Boot camp

According to the *Herald Sun* the former State Government wrote to the Defence Department with a proposal to send troubled year 9 boys and girls to army, navy and air force bases for two-week camps where they will be drilled by defence personnel. Watch this space.

Consultants for the consultants

The *Herald Sun* reported that Labor has spent more than \$1.6b – or \$445,000 a day – on an army of consultants since coming to power.

Redistribution on the way

Tim Colebatch wrote in *The Age* that of the 88 seats in the Legislative Assembly, 28 are either more than 10 per cent above the enrolment quota or more than 10 per cent below it.

Serving a cold dish warm

Craig Langdon, the former Labor member for Ivanhoe, who quit Parliament in disgust at his own party, letter-boxed residents in the seat, criticising the ALP candidate who ousted him, former senior government adviser **Anthony Carbines**, saying he was not up to it and telling residents a freeway through the area proposed by the government should not be built, *The Age* reported.

Democracy lovers say aye

The **Victorian Electoral Commission** invited members of the public to attend the State Election tally room at the Victory Room, Etihad Stadium from 6pm on Saturday 27 November.

Up there

New South Wales Premier **Christine Keneally** won her battle with outgoing state Labor president **Bernie Riordan** but strained relations with the unions at a crucial time for her government. Riordan, state president since 2006, bowed to pressure and announced he would resign his post. The dispute with unions comes at a difficult time for the Keneally government, which is facing

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almost certain defeat at the election in four months time. It appears to erode some of the goodwill built up during Keneally's stand against federal workplace relations reforms and the introduction of a new Easter Sunday public holiday. It comes as the New South Wales government struggles to complete the troubled sale of its electricity assets. In a further blow to the government, ratings agencies Standard & Poor's has warned any abandonment of its electricity privatisation could affect its much prized AAA credit rating. There is speculation the government may opt to go ahead with the sale of its energy retailers but drop the sale of its generation assets if potential buyers don't increase their initial bids, the *Financial Review* reported.

Nearby

The Australian reported that Sartor became the 18th party member from the New South Wales government to signal their retirement ahead of state election. Sartor is one of the government's highest profile ministers, but his resignation came as no surprise. He entered Parliament in 2003 after an 11-year stint as lord mayor of Sydney and used his valedictory speech to trumpet his achievements and to settle a few old scores. Meanwhile, the *Financial Review* reported that New South Wales premier **Kristina Keneally** has sacked **Angela D'Amore** from her job as parliamentary secretary for police after she was found to have acted corruptly by the state's Independent Commission Against Corruption. Keneally has had to sack three ministers and two parliamentary secretaries over personal scandal or corruption allegations since becoming premier a year ago. After ICAC's announcement, D'Amore, member for Drummoyne, became the 19th Labor MP to say she won't be contesting the March election.

Kennett!

Speaking on 3AW, former Premier **Jeff Kennett** said Kool Mints were ideal for disguising booze because 'they absorbed the alcohol'. This is obviously not true. The *Herald Sun* reported that police criticised Kennett after his comments. Inspector **Martin Boorman**, of the road police and drug and alcohol section, dismissed the claims as an urban myth.



HAMISH BROOKS

Hamish has been the sub-editor for three years, thirty editions of *Letter from Melbourne* and thirty editions of *Letter From Canberra*, 15,000 words each edition, in total 900,000 words. Hamish has used voice recognition equipment, inspired by dictation specialist Howard Hutchins of Melbourne. So do not doubt how well this technology can work!

Hamish has also contributed to a number of other publications including an Australian Institute of Company Directors quarterly bulletin, acted as agenda secretary for a monthly infrastructure think tank, which includes some very senior industry leaders, and finished writing his first novel. Few people would have this particular expertise and experience. An excellent reference is available. Hamish studied Arts at the University of Melbourne, and Professional Writing and Editing at RMIT.

Editorial continued...

It would be wrong to say 'relax' in regard to this later impression. However, a summary of the individual education, professional relationships, range of business experience, worldly experience and energy plus a quick guess at IQ levels will

show that these new guys are up to the task. Also, the Liberals... and the Nationals... are the party of business.

In this longer than usual editorial, one must note that both metropolitan and regional water in the state have been combined under one minister, as have both public transport (including rail and trams and buses) and roads. Interesting challenges.

This publication is not a history of an era written five years after the event. Each day, we scan and read *The Age*, the *Herald Sun*, the *Financial Review* and *The Australian*, as well as press and industry releases, hence we have taken items as we headed into the election and came out of it. The momentum of change is documented.

What a surprising year. And then the upper house (the Legislative Council) went to the government as well.

Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year.

NEXT EDITIONS/THE NEW YEAR

We will bring you detailed updates across the spectrum of the new Victorian government, just as we did with the new Kennett government and then with the Bracks and Brumby governments.

THE BUSHFIRES

Moving along

New premier **Ted Baillieu** has vowed to implement all recommendations of the Black Saturday Bushfires Royal Commission, including a government buyout of homeowners who want to abandon high-risk bushfire zones, *The Age* reported. Departing Emergency Services Commissioner **Bruce Esplin** (see below) warned any buyback of properties would need to be compulsory and include all those in the designated area. He said a buyback policy would work overtime, but must not end up with a situation where some people sell up and others stay.

Tough job

Bruce Esplin, who has been Emergency Services Commissioner for a decade, will quit at the end

of the year. As head of the office of emergency services, Esplin led emergency planning, response and recovery as a senior adviser to government. He emerged largely unscathed from the Bushfires Royal Commission, but its report on the death of 173 people did question the inadequate process of declaring a state disaster and Esplin's view that such a call was not necessary, *The Age* reported.

Systems more perfect

The Country Fire Authority has been heavily advertising New Total Fire Ban districts, that align with the nine Victorian Bureau of Meteorology weather districts. More importantly, with local government boundaries. This has, and will cause cause, some grief for local folk/farmers who have been fighting fires together for 100 years, and are now having to do things differently come fire time.

ARTS

Happy Birthday

Meanjin, Australia's second oldest literary magazine, is marking its 70th birthday in December with a special celebratory edition and a new editor. **Sally Heath**, associate publisher at Melbourne University Publishing and a former senior journalist at *The Age*, was named as the magazine's ninth editor. She succeeds **Sophie Cunningham**, who in November said that by mutual agreement she would not be renewing her contract. At the time there was concern that the magazine was heading for a solely online presence. Heath said she wanted to take the magazine to more readers. She said *Meanjin* was committed to a print edition for the foreseeable future. Heath will be advised by a new editorial board that will include **David Malouf, Lindsay Tanner, Alison Croggon** and **Brian Johns**, *The Age* reported.

Serious music

The **Australian Chamber Choir Melbourne Series 2011**, has released its brochure. All concerts are in Our Lady of Mount Carmel, 216 Richardson Street, Middle Park. It is not all about religion. As one friend said to the editor, 'I love the music but I am a card-carrying atheist', www.auschoir.org.

EDUCATION

How good?

Victorian teachers will demand a 30 per cent pay rise over three years, in the first test of the Baillieu government's election promise to make the state's teachers the best paid in the nation. The education union will push for the top classroom teachers to be paid \$110,000 a year – up from \$81,806 – in a bid to attract and retain the most talented, *The Age* reported.

School Hall

A new tertiary education and training ombudsman and the reintroduction of concession fees for vocational study are key changes to be implemented by the incoming Coalition government. The new government will also scrap the Brumby government's plan to put money into building more student accommodation at rural university and TAFE campuses. Instead, it will create a smaller \$20m fund to support the delivery of higher education through rural TAFEs which it believes will make it easier for rural students to stay at home and study. New Tertiary Education and Training Minister **Peter Hall** said his first priority will be to implement the reintroduction of vocational education and training concession fees, *The Australian* reported.

More than money

A surge in private school enrolments has been linked to parents wanting more disciplined and better social values instilled in their children. Independent school enrolments have risen by more than 6 per cent and Catholic student numbers by almost 4 per cent in the past three years, Education Department figures reveal. Independent Schools Victoria chief executive **Michelle Green** said more parents are choosing to make a personal financial investment in an independent school because it meets the family's social, cultural and religious values, the *Herald Sun* reported.

Federal website challenge

Victorian private schools are seeking legal advice to prevent the publication of what they worry is flawed data about their funding. Independent schools fear a parent revolt if the data on their finances – to be published on a new version of the My School website – appears to contradict information they provide the parents. The website will publish every school's income from government, as well as fees, donations and other private sources, *The Age* reported.

Urgent action needed

Victoria will suffer a \$2.6b hit to its economy by 2012 with international student numbers dropping as a result of tighter skilled migration rules impinging the states once booming, residency driven market. The numbers come as the International Education Association of Australia issued an open letter warning that thousands of jobs are at risk, *The Australian* reported.

What?

The Victorian College for the Deaf is fighting to save its primary school. A section of the school site behind the frontage at 597 St Kilda Road has been listed in an expressions of interest campaign for sale or lease. Agent Klinger Wood's is marketing it as a multilevel development opportunity, which it is believed could fetch up to \$20m, *The Age* reported.

Best schools in town and country

As we rush to press, the top ten schools, VCE result-wise, in various parts of Victoria, and in the public and private system, are been declared, including MacRobertson Girls High School and Melbourne High School.

Good jobs

Swinburne University of Technology seeks a Vice-Chancellor and President, vcswinburne@bspes.com.

ENVIRONMENT

CONSERVATION

Green government focus

In the last week of the election campaign, the Coalition pledged to plant 2 million trees across Melbourne and regional Victoria at a cost of \$4m. Opposition leader **Ted Baillieu** said 1.5m trees would be planted in Melbourne and 500,000 would be planted outside the city to regenerate waterways, the *Herald Sun* reported. Nearby, after the election, *The Age* reported that the Baillieu government will face calls to explain how it will meet the state's legislated target of a 20 per cent cut in greenhouse gas emissions this decade following confusion over its position during the election campaign.

Moo!

The Age reported that early fault lines emerged within the new Coalition government, with Liberal and National party MPs publicly at odds over environmental policy. The government is divided over aspects of the plan to return cattle grazing to Victorian National Parks. The Coalition has promised to overturn Labor's ban on cattle grazing in alpine national parks in the belief that strategic grazing can reduced bushfire risk by reducing fuel loads. But the Liberals and Nationals are at odds over whether cattle should be allowed back into the prized red gum forests on the banks of the Murray River at Barmah and Gunbower. Premier **Ted Baillieu** and deputy **Peter Ryan** declared that there were no plans to return cattle to those forests after Environment Minister **Ryan Smith** and Nationals MP **Paul Weller** contradicted each other on environmental policy in regards to the matter. Weller wants cattle grazing to return to the forests, which are within his electorate of Rodney.

Humphries, B

Victoria's most senior timber industry figure has declared that an end to native forest logging in Victoria is inevitable regardless of who won the election. **Bob Humphries**, president of the Victorian Association of Forest Industries and owner of a sawmill in Cann River in East Gippsland, said it was fairland to be thinking that companies, unions and environmentalists could reach an agreement under Tasmanian style peace talks proposed by Labor. But he said years of cuts to the amount of native forest



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Finding No. 4619
Available on Website: www.roymorgan.com
On December 17, 2010

L-NP (51.5%, up 4%) surges ahead of ALP (48.5%, down 4%)

L-NP in front on Face-to-Face Morgan Poll for First time since Federal Election

The latest Face-to-Face Morgan Poll conducted last weekend, December 11/12, 2010, shows the L-NP (51.5%, up 4% from the Face-to-Face Morgan Poll of December 4/5, 2010) now ahead of the ALP (48.5%, down 4%) on a Two-Party preferred basis. A recent [telephone Morgan Poll conducted from December 8-12, 2010*](#) showed the L-NP (54.5%) well ahead of the ALP (45.5%) on a Two-Party preferred basis.

The ALP primary vote is 38% (down 2.5% from December 4/5, 2010), behind the L-NP 43% (up 2.5%). Support for the minor parties shows the Greens 13.5% (unchanged) and Others/ Independents 9.5% (unchanged).

If a Federal election were held now the L-NP would win Government. At the recent Federal election, held on August 21, 2010, the ALP (50.1%) was just ahead of the L-NP (49.9%).

A falling number of Australians (49%, down 3%) are confident that Australia is 'heading in the right direction,' compared to 30.5% (unchanged) that say Australia is 'heading in the wrong direction. Therefore the Roy Morgan Government Confidence Rating is down 3 points to 118.5.

The latest [weekly Roy Morgan Consumer Confidence Rating](#) for the weekend of December 11/12, 2010, was 119.3 (down 1.6 pts in a week) – worryingly, driven by a fall in those saying now is a 'good time to buy' major household items (52%, down 6%).

Gary Morgan says:

"The latest Face-to-Face Morgan Poll shows the L-NP (51.5%, up 4% since December 4/5, 2010) now ahead of the ALP (48.5%) on a Two-Party preferred basis. This is the first time since the 2010 Federal election that the L-NP has been ahead. A [telephone Morgan Poll taken over the five days of December 8-12, 2010](#) also showed the L-NP (54.5%) clearly ahead of the ALP (45.5%)."

"Both polls indicate a recent shift to the L-NP which comes after the Wikileaks issue involving Australian citizen Julian Assange, and also continuing discussion about banking competition in Australia."

"The shift is explained by examining electors second preferences – fewer Greens supporters, and supporters of Independent/ Others, are now directing their second preferences to the ALP, leading to an increasing share of second preferences flowing to the L-NP. In fact, if the Morgan Poll allocates preferences based on voter's actual voting behaviour at the recent 2010 Federal election, the ALP is level on a Two-Party preferred basis – a very similar result to the recent Federal election."

Electors were asked: "If a Federal Election for the House of Representatives were being held today — which party would receive your first preference?"

This Face-to-Face Morgan Poll on Federal voting intention was conducted over the last two weekends, December 4/5 & 11/12, 2010, with an Australia-wide cross-section of 1,757 electors.

*Telephone Morgan Polls are conducted using the same methodologies used by other major telephone polls – Nielsen, Newspoll, Galaxy. In analysing telephone Morgan Poll results, it is worth noting that telephone polls are good at capturing the response to current events and have **typically been biased towards the L-NP and more 'responsive' to current events.**

For further information:

Gary Morgan: Office +61 3 9224 5213 Mobile +61 411 129 094
Michele Levine: Office +61 3 9224 5215 Mobile +61 411 129 093

401 Collins Street, Melbourne, Victoria 3000, G.P.O. Box 2282U, Melbourne, Victoria 3001, Australia
Tel: (03) 9629 6888 Fax: (03) 9629 1250 (03) 9622 8387 Email: melbourne@roymorgan.com.au Website: www.roymorgan.com
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On December 20, 2010

Final Morgan Poll first to show swing & win to Baillieu-led L-NP Opposition **'Reactor' showed why voters swung away from Brumby**

by Gary Morgan, Michele Levine and Julian McCrann

The Morgan Poll was the first to predict the late swing to the Victorian L-NP Opposition – and a Liberal-National Coalition win – just enough to dislodge the Brumby Government and allow Liberal Party Leader Ted Baillieu to become the new Premier of Victoria.

The final Morgan Poll on Victorian voting intention (released Friday November 26, 2010) showed the L-NP (51%, up 5.4% since the 2006 Victorian election) holding a narrow, but winning, lead over the ALP (49%, down 5.4%) – virtually the same result as the Victorian election – L-NP (51.3%) cf. ALP (48.7%).

The Morgan Poll predicted a narrow L-NP victory on a Two-Party preferred basis and was also the closest pollster to the primary vote results for the major parties – ALP, L-NP & Greens. Newspoll, which predicted a similar Two-Party preferred result of L-NP (51.1%) cf. ALP (48.9%), however wrongly called a 'Hung Parliament,' and wasn't as accurate for the parties primary results – including significantly underestimating the ALP vote (by 3.2%). On the Two-Party preferred results The Age/Nielsen poll was out by 0.7% and Herald-Sun Galaxy poll by 1.3%. The Sky News Exit Poll was not as accurate, out by 2.7%.

VICTORIAN VOTING INTENTION – Primary Vote Predictions

	Victorian Election Nov 27, 2010	Nov 22-25 Telephone <u>Morgan Poll</u>		Nov 23-24 Telephone Galaxy <u>Herald-Sun</u>		Nov 24-25 Telephone The Age <u>Nielsen</u>		Nov 23-25 Telephone <u>Newspoll</u>		Nov 27 Exit Poll <u>Sky News</u>	
	<u>Actual Result*</u>	%	error	%	error	%	error	%	error	%	error
<i>Sample Size</i>	(3,164,731)	(990)		(800)		(1,533)		(1,451)		(3,000+)	
L-NP	44.8	44.5	-0.3	44	-0.8	45	+0.2	45	+0.2	48	+3.2
ALP	36.2	35.5	-0.7	36	-0.2	34	-2.2	33	-3.2	35	-1.2
Greens	11.2	13	+1.8	14	+2.8	14	+2.8	15	+3.8	12	+0.8
Ind/Other	7.8	7	-0.8	6	-1.8	6	-1.8	7	-0.8	5	-2.8
Av. error on all parties PREDICTED OUTCOME		0.9		1.4		1.75		2.0		2.0	
		Close L-NP win		Close ALP win		Clear L-NP win		Hung Parliament		Big L-NP win	

VICTORIAN VOTING INTENTION – Two Party Preferred Predictions*

L-NP	51.3	51	-0.3	50	-1.3	52	+0.7	51.1	-0.2	54	+2.7
ALP	48.7	49	+0.3	50	+1.3	48	-0.7	48.9	+0.2	46	-2.7
L-NP Lead	2.6	2		-		4		2.2		8	
Ave error		0.3		1.3		0.7		0.2		2.7	

Victorian Electoral Commission (<http://www.tallyroom.vic.gov.au/>). VEC Election results at 4pm, Monday December 13, 2010.

*The Two-Party preferred vote is yet to be released and the figure quoted here is based on past voting trends at the 2006 Victorian election.

The Morgan Poll is clearly the most accurate on primary voting intention and the Green vote. The average error was 0.9% for the L-NP, ALP, Greens & Independent/Others. Galaxy (1.4% average error) was the next best followed by The Age/Nielsen (1.75% average error – although it must be noted that the figures for this poll were rounded and together add to only 99%), Sky News Exit Poll (2.0% average error) and Newspoll (2.0% average error).

The final result for the pollsters for the 2010 Victorian State election once again showed the Morgan Poll providing the most accurate result of all major pollsters – the prediction of a narrow L-NP win (L-NP 51% cf. ALP 49%). This follows the successful Morgan Poll prediction of the Federal election – [A Hung Parliament](#) (<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2010/4572>) – once again the first pollster to call this result.

'Reactor' showed why voters swung away from Brumby

On Friday November 26, when all other polls were predicting a win for Brumby's ALP, [the Morgan Poll showed a swing to the L-NP](#), (<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/polls/2010/4607>) for the first time putting them in a winning position (+3.5% to 51% L-NP cf. 49% ALP).

Even at that time, the eve of the Victorian State election, it's worth pointing out that 61% of electors **expected** the Brumby ALP Government to be returned.

Many will rewrite the history of the dramatic change in elector sentiment that saw the ALP lose what was thought to be an unloseable election (or alternatively Ted Baillieu win an unwinnable election).

However, the **evidence** from the [Roy Morgan Poll](#) is clear.

In the last week of the campaign, the Roy Morgan Qualitative Research and quantitative issues data, along with the [Roy Morgan 'Reactor' on a series of campaign TV ads](#), (<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/press-releases/2010/1218>) **all** pointed in the same direction – the ALP was in trouble.

The early phase of the Victorian State election was dominated by the 'rise of the Greens.' Even after the Liberals decided to preference the Greens last (November 15), the [Morgan Poll \(conducted November 16/17, 2010\)](#) showed the Greens had enough elector support to win 3 or even 4 inner Melbourne seats.

However, it was short-lived and by November 24 the [Morgan Poll \(conducted November 22/23\)](#) reported the Green vote had dissipated and Labor looked set to retain the four inner Melbourne seats.

While the focus was on the battle between the ALP and the Greens, there was little 'air-time' for Ted Baillieu who ran a straight campaign on crime, transport and cutting State Government costs and charges.

Then, the [Baillieu Knight Frank ALP ads](#) – (<http://www.onlinereactor.com.au/Player.aspx?jid=23%C2%B6m=party>)

- Gave Ted Baillieu the 'air time' he desperately needed; and
- Increased his awareness, and electors' knowledge of him;
- In a strange twist, by trying to 'paint' Ted Baillieu as dishonest, the ALP's advertising was seen as just more spin and 'dirty tricks' and gave Ted Baillieu the moral high-ground.

As Gary Morgan said on November 26:

"In the Roy Morgan Qualitative Research designed to elicit concerns the electorate might have about a Ted Baillieu led Government – there was no mention of corruption. The negative advertising clearly did not 'stick'!"

For further information:

Gary Morgan: Office +61 3 9224 5213 Mobile +61 411 129 094

Michele Levine: Office +61 3 9224 5215 Mobile +61 411 129 093

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[Roy Morgan Hotels and Resorts Satisfaction Report](#)

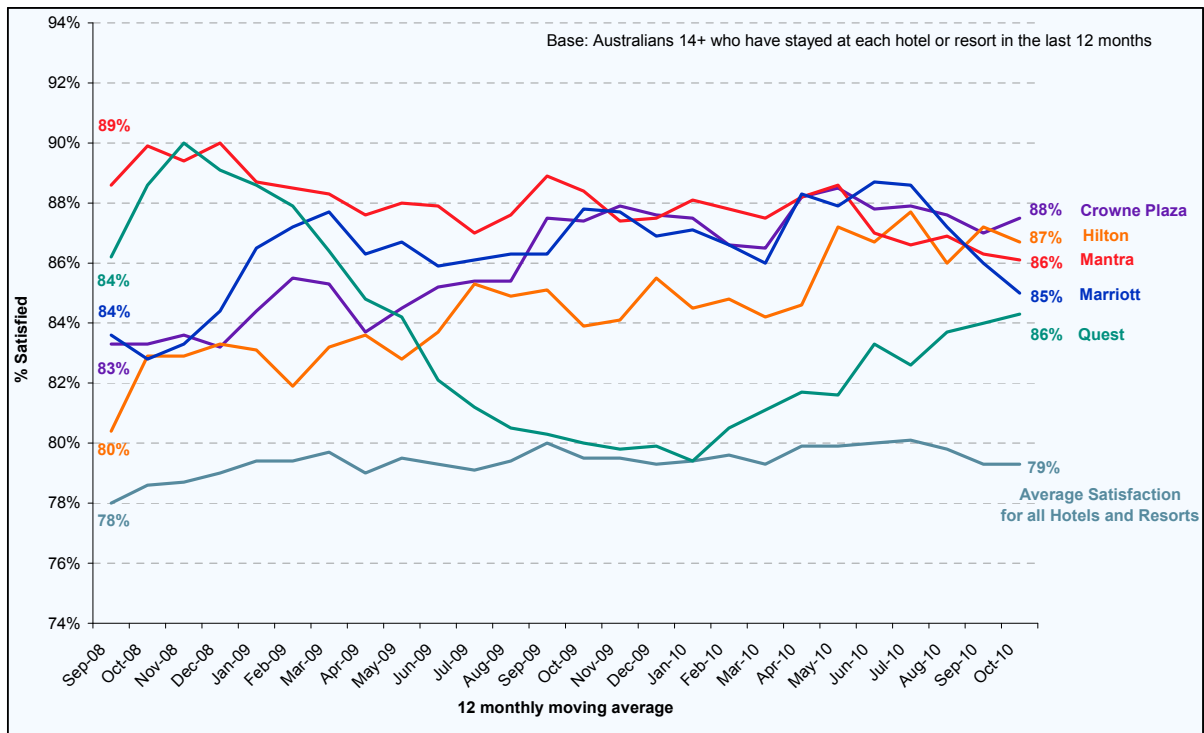
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Hotel Satisfaction Highest Amongst Crowne Plaza Patrons

Crowne Plaza has edged ahead of the competitors in terms of customer satisfaction – 88% of customers now satisfied or very satisfied, according to the latest Roy Morgan Research Hotel Satisfaction report. Hilton (87%), Mantra (86%), Marriot (85%) and Quest (84%) are all close behind.

During most of the last 2 years the Intercontinental had the highest satisfaction rating but since February 2010 has declined by 10% points to 81% and is now outside the top 5 performers.

Hotels/Resorts Customer Satisfaction – Top 5 Performers



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (October 2007 - October 2010). Total stayed at a hotel or resort in the last 12 months n=24,557, for the latest 12 months (November 2009 – October 2010) n =7,674. “% satisfied” is the proportion of all customers who are “Very” or “Fairly” satisfied with that hotel or resort (on a five point scale).

Jane Ianniello, International Director of Tourism, Travel & Leisure, Roy Morgan Research, says:

“With Crowne Plaza, Hilton and Marriott improving their customer satisfaction ratings over the past two years, there is now less than a four percentage point gap between the top five hotels indicating that all of them are competing for the same ‘top-end’ customers.”

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timber allocated to the industry meant it could not continue on its current path and have a viable future, *The Age* reported.

Nearby

Timber company Gunns has announced it is closing the last of the central Victorian community of Alexandra's three sawmills, putting 44 people out of work. Wilderness Society campaigner **Luke Chamberlain** said it showed native forest logging was not commercially viable, and a plan was needed to move to plantations aimed at the high-quality timber market. But Gunns said the Alexandra mill closure was not linked to its position on native forest logging. Gunns' head of timber products, **Chris Peterson**, said it was forced by dual pressures – the ballooning cost of native sawlogs under the Victorian government's blind auction system, and the soaring Australian dollar making it harder to compete with cheap timber imported illegally from the developing world, *The Age* reported.

Buzz about

The Age reported that mosquito numbers were booming in Melbourne and other parts of southern Victoria in early December following the perfect breeding conditions of a wet spring and a balmy start to summer. University research **Andrew Weeks** said the mosquito population could still grow dramatically in the favourable conditions.

Good job

The **Environment Protection Authority** seeks a chief information officer, details from **Daryl Carlton** on 9695 2908.

ENERGY

Reverse power play

The Energy Minister in the new government, **Michael O'Brien**, said he would ensure Victoria defended the Australian Energy Regulator's

decision to limit distribution companies price increases to about \$12 a year. Distribution companies want more money from consumers and are contesting the decision. The Government is taking legal advice on how to hit back at distribution companies, and argue for the costs to actually come down, in a reverse power play, the *Herald Sun* reported.

Electric shock

On the opinion pages of *The Age*, **Tim Colebatch** wrote that electricity costs have shot up. What price will Baillieu pay to bring households some relief? In the three years to September, the price of electricity for the typical Melbourne home rose 54 per cent. The price of water rose 62 per cent, the price of gas rose 28 per cent. It was one of the key reasons the Brumby government lost office. A decade ago, Australia had a glut of power, so the prices were cheap. Not now. Our generation prices have risen a lot: in part, because demand has caught up with supply, and in part because our new plants run on gas or wind, and that costs more than coal. Nearby, the energy industry has warned Baillieu that he has little control over rising power bills and is wrong to imply to Victorians that he does have control. Meanwhile, concerns have been raised over two of the new government's policies – a commitment to reducing bushfire risk from electricity wires, and a better tariff for rooftop solar panel owners, which may push up prices further. Only days after the change of government, two of the state's biggest power companies, AGL and Origin Energy, foreshadowed further bill rises of up to \$150 for gas and electricity next year, prompting the new Premier to demand an explanation from the industry.

It's already blown over

The Baillieu government has conceded its wind farm policy is powerless to control the biggest expansion of wind energy in Victoria's history, with 1,322 new turbines planned across 28

approved developments. If all farms approved by **Justin Madden** before the Brumby government left office go-ahead, Victoria will have eight times its current generation capacity, from 427 MW to 3619 MW, equivalent to two Latrobe Valley brown coal power stations. In a concession likely to disappoint local anti-windfarm groups, new Planning Minister **Matthew Guy** said that although several of the approved farms were contentious, the Coalition would not retrospectively apply its policies to the 28 wind farms already holding planning approvals. Such a move, he said, would create serious risks to business in Victoria. Coastal Guardians Spokesman **Tim Le Roy**, who welcomed the election of Baillieu, acknowledged the government had a problem implementing its policy retrospectively and urged the industry to embrace the new government guidelines on a voluntary basis. There are no new projects waiting for Guy's signature.

Cerebral stuff

EnergySafe Victoria supports energy distribution company Jemena Electricity Networks' two advertisements on community safety. Jemena is one of the five electricity distribution companies in Victoria, which owns the poles and wires delivering electricity to homes and businesses. It is responsible for the safe and reliable distribution to approximately 309,000 customers in Melbourne's north-west suburbs. One of its advertisements says that, once again this summer, we face the possibility of extreme weather.

In such conditions, your electricity supply cannot be guaranteed all the time. This means you need to take care of yourself and family in the event of a loss of power for a short or an extended period. Jemena tells us that things you can do now to prepare include ensuring torches are readily accessible with batteries and some things to do in the event of a power outage include checking your neighbour's house to see if they have also lost power.

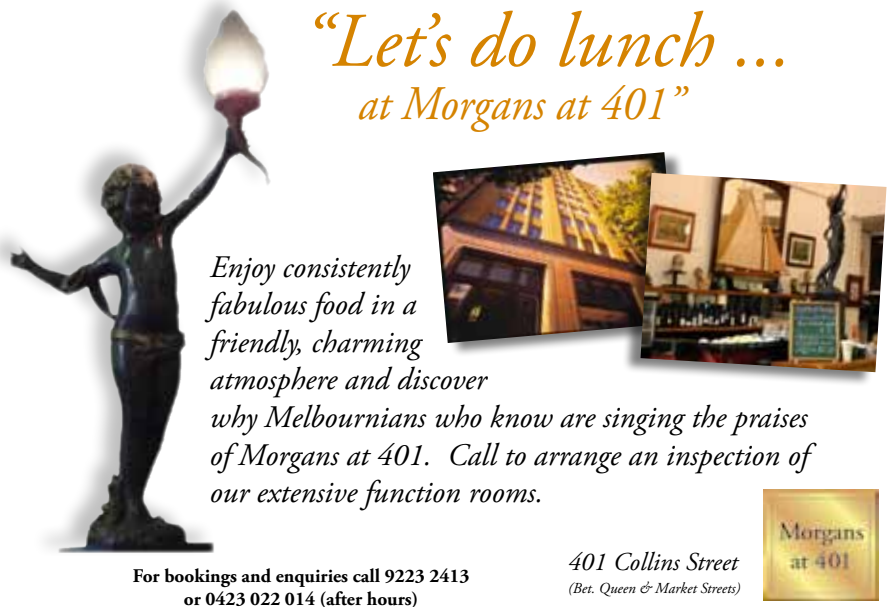
Up there

Origin Energy and True Energy have purchased key retail assets in the New South Wales electricity privatisation. Hong Kong owned TRUenergy has bought the biggest retailer, EnergyAustralia, while Origin Energy has purchased both Integral Energy and Country Energy, the *Financial Review* reported.

WATER

One bucket

The Age reported that National's deputy leader **Peter Walsh** was sworn in as a water minister. Before the election Ted Baillieu repeatedly indicated **Louise Asher** and Walsh would share the portfolio, as they did in opposition. However Walsh, the member for Swan Hill and a former head of the Victorian Farmers Federation, will have the responsibility for shutting down Labor's



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\$750m north-south pipeline and exposing previously confidential contract details of the \$5.7b desalination plant. The appointment of a rural-based National’s MP as water minister could complicate negotiations with the Gillard government and the Queensland, New South Wales and South Australian governments on the future of the Murray-Darling Basin.

When it rains

In a report on the rains of early December, the *Herald Sun* showed that Cheshunt recorded the most rainfall, 128 mm; Horsham had the most SES calls for help with 96; Melbourne’s water storages were 52.5 per cent full; 5,500 SES volunteers were on standby for the wild weather; 10 mm of rain fell in central Melbourne in just 10 minutes on December 8; Australia is experiencing the strongest La Nina weather system since the 1970s, and Victoria had the most rain in 48 hours that it has had in two decades.

Spies. Union fights. New government

Thiess confirmed that the project director at Wonthaggi desalination plant, **Greg Miller**, and human resources manager **Marcus Carrol** would be stood down while company and external lawyers investigated claims the firm was hired to spy on workers and unions. Work stopped on the project after the report that Thiess had engaged Australian Security Investigations, headed by prominent union buster **Bruce Townsend**, from March to June this year, *The Age* reported. A later report in the same paper had hundreds of workers at the plant demanding a range of concessions from Thiess beyond the claims about spying. *The Australian* reported that the deal with Townsend was called the Pluto Project and its aim was simple. Infiltrate the unionised workforce at the plant with Townsend’s spies, gather information about the activities of employees and union tactics, and report back to the management of Thiess.

Members of the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union and the Australian Manufacturing Workers Union rejected a peace deal negotiated between Thiess and the unions, in which the unions recommended that members return to work. At a heated meeting, workers aired a range of grievances and demanded action on issues such as safety, how shop stewards were treated, the failure of Thiess to pay some allowances and the failure of Thiess to abide by dispute panel rulings. Towards the end of November, *The Age* reported that the project appeared to be back on track, with work resuming after Thiess agreed to demands by disaffected workers.

The small matter of water

Water Matters, the Victorian Water Industry Association News, Volume 13 Issue Four, reported that construction has begun on the Melbourne to Geelong pipeline, which will boost Geelong’s water supplies by 50 per cent by the end of 2012 and ensure local towns are spared from harsh water restrictions in the future. The 59 kilometre pipeline will link Barwon Water’s Lovely Banks Basins in Geelong with the Melbourne system at Cowies Hill, near Werribee, so the region can share in the 150 billion litres of water the desalination plant can produce each year. The Government has committed \$20m towards the project, with Barwon Water funding the balance of the \$137.9m project.

GAMING

You can bet on it

During the election campaign, the Coalition pledged to immediately re-examine the financial agreements affecting the state’s racing industries and to reassess online gambling. Victoria’s \$4b wagering and sports betting industry faces a major rethink given the coalition victory, the *Financial Review* reported. In a detailed article in *The Age*, **Malcolm Maiden** wrote that before the election

Baillieu announced a Coalition government would not allow a second casino in Victoria, and would accelerate the introduction of pre-commitment devices to gaming machines, saying the Labor government had massively expanded gambling in the state without community consultation.

On the eve of the vote itself, Baillieu announced that a Coalition government would commit \$150m to establish an independent body to reduce Victoria’s problem gambling. The fact is that a Victorian government of any persuasion is on the gambling drip feed. Baillieu is politically boxed in after the Coalition’s campaigning. He has even announced that his government will ban lobbyists in the gaming industry: could be a tough meeting.

Nearby

The Baillieu government is set to take on Canberra by rejecting Prime Minister **Julia Gillard’s** planned compulsory limits for poker machine players, *The Age* reported. Victorian Gaming Minister **Michael O’Brien** said that gamblers should be able to choose whether or not they pre-commit the amount of money they could lose on a poker machine. A mandatory scheme would cost Victoria hundreds of millions of dollars in lost tax revenue, the industry claims.

Star City

An \$850m facelift of Sydney’s Star City Casino could result in more major concerts and musicals being held there, with big event organisers showing interest in the Palladium style venue, which is due to be completed next year. (Former) Major Events Minister **Tim Holding** encouraged the revamp saying it’s about time Sydney caught up with Melbourne after failing miserably in the past. A grand hall in the Star City redevelopment will hold up to 4,000 people – dwarfing Crown’s Palladium, which has a capacity of 1,700 for award nights such as the Brownlow, the *Herald Sun* reported.

Brother where art though?

Victoria’s top gambling probity official, **Peter Cohen**, who has headed Victoria’s gambling regulator for eight years, has resigned, denying his decision to leave was linked to the election result.

HEALTH

Ted to test

Following his election victory, **Ted Baillieu** indicated that he might go back on former Premier **John Brumby’s** deal on hospital reform with the federal government, if he felt there was not enough in it for Victoria. The deal – agreed to by all states except Western Australia at the Council of Australian Governments meeting in April – aims to give additional responsibility of health and hospital funding to the federal government. It is due to begin on July 1 next year. But he nominated the hospital funding

reforms as a top priority in considering his new government's relationship with Canberra. **David Davis**, who was sworn in as Victorian Health Minister, insisted that the new administration would seek a collaborative approach with the federal government. Nevertheless, significant work remained to properly understand the deal, he said.

Steering the ambulance

A new website that will track daily activity at Victoria's hospital emergency departments will help cut waiting times and free up ambulances, the new health minister **David Davis** says. He said the website, due to go live by June, would encourage hospitals to improve their performance while also allowing Victorians to make more informed decisions about which hospital they attend, *The Age* reported.

Finesse the detail

The Age reported that if **Ted Baillieu** were to win the election (and he did), he would cut government spending by more than \$1.4b – and build the new Monash children's and Geelong hospitals more slowly than Labor.

To get better (1)

The director of the Royal Melbourne Hospital's 'Hospital in the Home' program, **Michael Montalto**, said a review of the system-wide scheme published by the Department of Health this year indicated hospitals were abusing the program to generate money. He said the review did not 'point the finger' at guilty parties – but insiders knew hospitals were admitting patients to the program when they were in fact going home without needing any further care. This meant the hospital would continue to be funded for the patients, *The Age* reported.

To get better (2)

The *Herald Sun* reported that more than 5,000 Victorian women may have been caught in a botched breast screening program. They now face a wait until Christmas to receive new results. **BreastScreen** Victoria is concerned mammograms may not have been reviewed by two separate radiologists, as is standard procedure. Chief executive **Vicki Pridmore** said the 5,339 women affected had had mammograms examined between September 16 and October 6.

Our perfect beaches

By December, smoking and glass will be banned on the sand at Port Phillip Council's 11 kilometres of beaches, including St Kilda, Elwood and Port Melbourne. Those caught breaking the rules face \$110 fine. The new moves are the latest outdoor smoking bans being rolled out across Victoria. Similar bans have already been introduced at Lorne and Torquay, and an outdoor smoking ban on Frankston's main shopping strip has been implemented. Port Phillip Mayor **Frank O'Connor** said the council initially focussed on educating

and warning people rather than handing out fines.

The sun can get hot

Paramedics treated eight children taken from cars in the first burst of November heat. They were rescued in Melbourne and Geelong when the temperatures rose to almost 30, *The Age* reported.

To good health

Derryn Hinch has gone through 24 hours of gruelling medical tests but the results have been worth it. The 66-year-old broadcaster has been told by doctors that he has made the list for a liver transplant, the *Herald Sun* reported.

INVESTMENT

BUSINESS

Clear action

In a bid to trump the Brumby government's economic credentials before the election, the Coalition released a plan where stamp duty on home purchases would be cut and thousands of small businesses could become exempt from payroll tax, *The Age* reported. The \$750m pledge to cut stamp duty for first home buyers in half over four years has won the backing of the real estate and building industries. The Real Estate Institute of Victoria said that while both parties had recognised homebuyers were paying too much stamp duty, the coalition's policy, which applies to homes costing up to \$600,000, was more generous.

Nearby

A report by home lender Bankwest shows that stamp duty for a median priced house in Melbourne was \$30,620 in the September quarter – a 31 per cent increase on 12 months ago. The impost represents 36.8 per cent of average annual household income, *The Age* reported.

Our Melbourne

The United Nations has chosen Melbourne to be the worldwide headquarters of its corporate social

responsibility program. The initiative will establish a cooperative network of 7,700 corporates from around the world to share expertise on community investment in philanthropy. Chairman of the interim Principles for Social Investment secretariat **Andrew McLeod** said the initiative had the potential to attach a cultural identity to Melbourne in the same way the Red Cross had shaped Geneva's public image.

The new secretariat's interim board includes St James Ethics Centre executive director **Simon Longstaff** and representatives from Ernst & Young, Clayton Utz, ANZ and National Australia Bank, and is advised by **Sid Myer, Gareth Evans**, BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto, the *Herald Sun* reported.

It's a whopper

The biggest superannuation merger in Australian history has begun with Victoria's Health Super to pair up with the giant New South Wales public sector fund First State Super. The combined fund, which will boast \$28b in assets, is the first of many expected mergers as the sector undergoes a major restructure, the *Herald Sun* reported.

VECCI support

The **Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry** is running a pilot program, called Carbon Down, to show businesses they can chop an average of \$850 a year off their electricity bill by shifting to a cheaper power plan with a 25 per cent GreenPower component. GreenPower is a government accreditation program for renewable energy sources such as sun, wind, water and waste, *The Age* reported.

New folk in the tent

Former Geelong mayor, lawyer and federal Labor figure **Peter McMullin** is the new president of the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, *The Age* reported.

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ITC

Keeping an eye on things

CenITex will lose chief executive **Peter Blades**. Around 620 staff were told of his planned retirement in March next year, just a day before the state went to the polls. Victoria's technology industry is carefully watching the incoming Baillieu government's plan for the shared services company after its role was expanded under the Brumby government. During his time as opposition technology spokesman, Victorian Liberal **Gordon Rich-Phillips** took issue with the remuneration of key CenITex staff. The creation of CenITex in 2008 was met with strong opposition from private outsourcing providers and hardware suppliers because it allowed the government to cut costs by centralising volume purchasing. Parts of industry have lobbied strongly for the government enterprise to be disbanded, but CenITex secured the support of outgoing Finance Minister **Tim Holding** amid embarrassing cost blowouts for self managed agencies, the *Financial Review* reported.

Assessing his options

New premier **Ted Baillieu** threw an obstacle in the path of the Federal Government's National Broadband Network plans, declaring that the connection of all homes to the carbon fibre network should be optional. Baillieu stated that he does not want all homes to be automatically connected to the NBN, and preferred an opt-in model, *The Australian* reported.

AGRICULTURE

The end times before Christmas

At the beginning of December, *The Age* reported that millions of locusts forming part of the biggest swarm to threaten Victoria in decades was about to enter the state, placing farmers and motorists at risk. The swarm, 25 kilometre wide and at least one kilometre deep, was in the Hay and Conargo region in New South Wales at the time of the report and travelling southwest. State Controller for Locusts **Russell McMurray** said vegetables and pasture were most at risk. The *Herald Sun* reported that a locust triangle – a vast farming area between Swan Hill, St Arnaud and Echuca – has been hit hardest by the bugs with residents reporting enormous bands on the move. *The Age* reported that doubts remain about the value of chemical spraying as wave after wave of locusts threaten Victoria's agriculture. A locust is a type of grasshopper in plague proportions.

Can't take a trick

The flooding and extreme wet weather that has hit key wheat growing regions in New South Wales will take the shine off expected earnings of eastern Australia's largest grain storage and handler GrainCorp. Small businesses in flood affected areas of New South Wales have also been hit hard by the extensive flooding and it

will take several months for them to recover, the *Financial Review* reported. The *Herald Sun* reported that Australian Crop Forecasters chief executive **Ron Storey** estimated the loss to the wheat harvest because of the rain at \$1b and expected up to 30 per cent of new season wheat and barley would be rain-damaged and waterlogged. *The Age* reported stone fruit prices, especially the price of cherries, are tipped to rise because of the constant downpours.

JUSTICE

A starting point

The Age reported that **Ted Baillieu's** election pitch for the law and order vote of 'zero tolerance, tough on crime' may not be as draconian as people are making out. His statutory minimum sentences, for example, are not mandatory sentences at all. Rather, they are a starting point from which judges can alter the minimum non-parole period up or down from the baseline. In other words, judges can still exercise discretion.

A correlation

The Age reported that Victoria is leading the nation in yet another area: it provided virtually the entire growth in Australia's prison population in the year to September. As law and order became a key theme of the election campaign, the number of Victorians behind bars grew by 169 or 3.8 per cent in the year – while in the rest of Australia, the number of prisoners grew by just four, or .02 per cent.

Nearby, the *Herald Sun* reported that a third of prisoners in Victoria were back behind bars within two years of being released. Victoria had a re-offending rate of 33.9 per cent in 2008-2009. But that was actually a reduction on the state's recidivism four years earlier when it was 38.4 per cent.

Peter still active

In November, Melbourne University's monthly **Voice** lift out in *The Age* carried an extract from the 2010 John Barry Memorial lecture and was presented by Vice-Chancellor's fellow **Peter Norden** AO on November 11. The Barry lecture series has been presented by the Barry Family and Criminology discipline in the School of Social Sciences since 1972. Here is a portion of the extract published in Voice: 'Ten years ago I attended a conference conducted by Catholic Charities USA in Chicago. At that conference a paper was presented outlining strategy being used in the State of Louisiana that used the demographic reading scores of 10-12-year-olds in different parts of the State to predict how many prison cells needed to be constructed in the coming decade. We're doing precisely the same thing here in Australia. We know the strong positive correlations that exist between such variables as early school leaving and further education and skills training and eventual unemployment with the frequency of criminal convictions and eventual imprisonment later in life. But throughout Australia we persist with the misguided view that we can manage such problems by extending the interventions of the criminal justice system rather than addressing the problem at its source. The result is that the most disadvantaged communities around Australia, both in metropolitan, regional and rural areas are being more and more deeply mined by the instrumentalities of the criminal justice system... California, once the wealthiest state in the United States, is threatened by bankruptcy, and is today spending more on the construction and operation of its prison system than it does on higher education.'

Shock tactic

Before the election, *The Age* reported that the Opposition will push to arm all front-line Victorian police with tasers if it wins the election, while



Ted and Oprah discussing Melbourne's attributes

indicating that the current trial of the weapons will not change its stance. Meanwhile, legal and community groups said a Coalition plan to introduce minimum sentence standards for serious crimes in an effort to increase average jail terms is a backward step which will not reduce the crime rate. The new Coalition government said before the election it would introduce benchmark sentences in the Sentencing Act for serious crimes such as murder and drug trafficking.

Research on way

The Age reported that fresh doubts about the future of **Jeremy Rapke**, QC – Victoria's Director of Public Prosecutions recently embroiled in a damaging internal brawl – have resurfaced with the change of government. It is believed new Attorney-General **Robert Clark** plans to receive briefings on the matter from the Department of Justice. Clark was Parliamentary Secretary to Treasurer **Alan Stockdale** during the government of **Jeff Kennett** and served on the party's attorney-general's committee, among others. In opposition, he served as the shadow treasurer, opposition spokesman for gaming, information and communication technology, energy and resources, industrial relations and WorkCover. He was elected to Parliament in 1988 at the age of 31, following a short legal career. Rapke has been labelled draconian and punitive by Melbourne lawyers as part of a co-ordinated opposition to his campaign for harsher sentences.

Nearby

The *Herald Sun* reported that senior Office of Public Prosecutions staffers urged new Attorney-General **Robert Clark** to establish a judicial investigation into the conduct of the Director of Public Prosecutions, **Jeremy Rapke**, with at least 10 current and former OPP lawyers prepared to testify about their boss.

Next

Before the election, *The Age* reported that the Office of Police Integrity will be abolished and a new anticorruption tsar appointed if the Coalition won. It will be interesting to look back and see which of these promises are kept.

Who's getting serious?

In late November, 650 police raided 65 properties as part of Operation Entity, resulting in the arrest of 43 suspects and the seizing of almost a dozen cannabis plants with a potential wholesale value of more than \$30m. The raid was linked to five interrelated Vietnamese drug syndicates. In each of the houses, syndicate electricians bypass power meters to provide free electricity to the crops. Detectives will lay theft of power as well as drug cultivation charges, *The Age* reported.

Police leaders

The *Herald Sun* reported that Chief Commissioner **Simon Overland** and Deputy Commissioner **Sir Ken Jones** were said to be barely speaking following a clash of personalities. In an official



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statement, a Victoria Police spokeswoman described their relationship as robust.

Under cover (1)

A senior homicide squad detective assured **Tyler Cassidy's** family that they would come to trust the police investigation of the teenager's death – while secretly taping conversations at their home two days after he was shot, the Coroner's Court was told, *The Age* reported.

Under cover (2)

The Age reported a policewoman, Senior Constable **Lauren Conte**, is facing charges over allegations she improperly searched the force's LEAP database after forming a friendship with the sergeant-at-arms of the Hells Angels' Nomads bikie club, **Paul Peterson**.

MELBOURNE

Planning ahead

In *The Age*, **Tim Colebatch** wrote that no city in Australia has seen growth on the scale Melbourne has experienced in the past five years. In that time, the city's population has risen by 400,000 or more. And Victoria's population has grown by more than 500,000, or 10 per cent, twice as much as it did a decade earlier. The state's population has expanded by close to 20 per cent, from 4.7 million to 5.6 million since Labor was elected in 1999. The epicentre of Victoria's population growth is in Melbourne's outer western suburbs. KPMG demographer **Bernard Salt** has declared it

the fastest growing region in Australia, outpacing even the Gold Coast. In 2008-09, for probably the first time since the 1800s, most of Melbourne's population growth occurred north and west of the Yarra. Salt says the Gold Coast population

boom was based on lifestyle, but for Melbourne's west it is fundamentally about affordability. An editorial in the same paper said that according to an *Age*/Nielsen poll taken in early November, only 1 per cent of Victorians think Melbourne is growing too slowly. About 50 per cent think it is growing too fast, and 43 per cent think the present rate of growth is about right. The paper asserted that the constant growth is making the city less liveable.

Probably as a result of the above...

The Age reported that Melbourne has closed the gap on Sydney in housing affordability, taking the mantle of Australia's least affordable city in which to buy a home.

Tweet Tweet

Melbourne City Council is recruiting a full-time tweeter on a salary of up to \$78,000, plus super, to keep its constituents up-to-date with every machination of lord mayor **Robert Doyle** and his office, *The Age* reported. The tweeter, to be known as the social media co-ordinator, will be expected to keep abreast of computing trends and experiment with social media to give exposure to the council's programs and websites.

Melbourne times

The City of Melbourne's magazine, *Melbourne News*, carried a number of interesting items in its December 2010-January 2011 edition. These included news on a business mission to Melbourne's sister city in China, Tianjin (the pair have shared a bond as sister cities for 30 years); an announcement that the City of Melbourne will present an international nuclear disarmament exhibition, *From a Culture of Violence to a Culture of Peace: Transforming the Human Spirit*, from mid-January to early February; a plan for all abilities, the *Our Melbourne – Disability Action*



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VicUrban ►►



Plan 2010-2013, which will help guide the City of Melbourne to develop a barrier free city. The magazine also had an item where, following two years in office, the Melbourne City Council reported on the highlights of its second year in office.

Not much compromise here

The Age reported that VicRoads' figures show that Melbourne's shared bicycle scheme is seeing 183 trips a day being made on the 450 blue bikes, which are costing taxpayers \$5.5m over four years. The bike scheme has struggled because of Melbourne's compulsory helmet laws. In a bid to encourage use of the bikes, the Government has started subsidising the sale of \$5 helmets from convenience stores and two vending machines. Since the helmets went on sale, bike use has increased from an average 136 trips a day to 183. The Melbourne scheme lags far behind those in overseas cities. About 140 cities have introduced shared bikes; only Melbourne and Brisbane have compulsory helmet laws.

Golly gosh

American social commentator and TV star **Oprah** (below) visited Melbourne for the day in mid December, and met the new Victorian premier and the Australian prime minister at Federation Square.

A Melbourne doll shop has withdrawn a Golliwog from its display to avoid offending the Oprah Winfrey roadshow. But the Dafel Dolls and their shop in Block Arcade – where 110 of Oprah's guests will attend the cocktail party – will continue to display other golliwogs. Golliwogs are deeply offensive to some Americans because of their perceived links to slavery and racism, the *Herald Sun* reported.

Nearing 2011

The *Herald Sun* reported that on New Year's Eve 15 rooftop locations will create a rainbow of colour across the city skyline as part of a \$2.38m fireworks display, a spend which is \$500,000 more than last year celebrations.

Continuing work required

Melbourne has won the **Most Admired Knowledge City** award over other finalists such as Barcelona and Singapore. The win was announced at the Knowledge Cities World Summit in Melbourne in November. The 'Melbourne Charter' to emerge from the summit is expected to include recommendations for a unique identity and brand for Melbourne as a knowledge city, free public transport and heavy investment in education. University of Melbourne vice-chancellor **Glynn Davis** said the city had several world-class educational institutions and education was Victoria's largest export industry. Australia Post managing director **Ahmed Fahour** said Melbourne was an example of the benefits of ethnic diversity. Orica chief executive **Graeme Liebelt** said Melbourne had the most diverse commercial base in Australia, including scientific research, and led the Asia-Pacific region in business education. Cities vying for the award were judged on seven criteria by an international panel. Six cities made the short list and Singapore was runner-up, *The Age* reported.

Hello possums

In a trial to begin early next year, nesting boxes designed to attract powerful owls will be placed in Royal Park in Parkville, and Fitzroy and Flagstaff gardens in the city. Banned by law from culling possums, Lord Mayor **Robert Doyle** said he wanted to use nature to help banish his pet hate. The latest figures from the City of Melbourne's annual possum survey show the Carlton Gardens has the highest estimated population (194), followed by Fitzroy Gardens (185) and Yarra Park (111), with the common brush tail possums most prevalent. **Rheya Linden** from Animal Active branded the mayor ignorant, the *Herald Sun* reported.

Reappearing act

After 73 years selling magic from a store in Elizabeth Street, **Bernard's Magic Shop** is

moving. An increase in rent has forced the Melbourne institution to walk away from its site at 211 Elizabeth Street, where it has retailed since two local businessmen launched Bernard's in 1937. It has changed hands several times, and is moving to the same side and same block as its regional location, to Level 1, 187 Elizabeth Street, the *Herald Sun* reported.

What a racket

Denis Walter, the deep voiced veteran of 27 *Carols by Candlelight*, introduced a new Christmas 'tradition', *Carols by Sunlight*, at Federation Square on December 1, with the Deaf Children Australia choir, *The Age* reported.

PLANNING & BUILDING

Former architect

Former architect and now Victorian Premier **Ted Baillieu** has promised a big shakeup in the state planning and property sectors. There is good news for greenfield residential developers in the coalition's promise to release more land immediately on Melbourne's fringe to take in so-called logical inclusions. Longer term, the Coalition plans to review the mandated limit to Melbourne's sprawl every two years, potentially delivering more fresh land for greenfield developers. At the same time, Baillieu will overturn the Labor policy aimed at fostering high-density development along the city's transport corridors. The Coalition will instead target 1,000 defined activity centres to increase development. The rollback of the corridor-based approach – it is seen as a watering down of government efforts to promote infill development – has been criticised by the property industry. Property Council of Australia state president **Jennifer Cunich** agreed it was good, however, to have a mechanism to review regularly the urban growth boundary, the *Financial Review* reported. Meanwhile, property industry players have been quick to endorse the Coalition's \$750m stamp duty relief plan for first home buyers. The Coalition policy is to phase in the stamp duty cut of 50 per cent over the next four years to homes valued up to \$600,000. The cut will be applied to both new and established housing, beginning with a 20 per cent cut from July 1 next year. Labor, by contrast, had a \$115m plan for first-time buyers, abolishing stamp duty on newly built houses in regional Victoria.

Windsor Plus, no longer

Planning Minister **Justin Madden** and his department have been accused of running a sham planning process that was abandoned when it appeared the government would not get its way on a contentious development. A joint Planning Department-City of Melbourne committee, established to give CBD planning advice to the minister, was shut down when it appeared the advice may not have been what the government was after, it has been alleged. The process has been likened to the Windsor Hotel planning scandal in which a leaked e-mail

revealed plans for a sham consultation process, *The Age* reported.

Watch this space

Melbourne has sprawled 50 per cent further than its official urban growth boundary and is over running small country towns, residents groups and planning experts say. Developers are building large suburban style estates as close as three kilometres to the boundary, marketing to metropolitan commuters while avoiding the infrastructure levy, *The Age* reported.

Not from Northcote

The Country Alliance, a five-year-old political party hoping to become a force in country politics, is raising a few eyebrows in the bush. But with 29 candidates who ran for the lower and upper house in the election, it also raised a considerable block of votes. In 18 lower house seats they preferred Coalition candidates, but in 11 others they preferred Labor. The party chairman, **Russell Bate**, is a former board member of the ABC and is currently the chairman of an organisation that promotes chamber music. Yet some of the party's strongest supporters include shooters and fishermen. Bate says the party represented people who live, work, or take their recreation in the country. **Steve Threlfall**, the Country Alliance candidate for Northern Victoria, says politicians are too influenced by the green movement. **Rod Drew**, CEO of Field and Game Australia, said he had been a member of the party since it formed five years ago, *The Age* reported.

History 101

Before the election, **Tim Colebatch** predicted in *The Age* that whatever the fate of the Greens in the four inner-Melbourne seats in the lower house at the election, one thing looks almost certain: the Greens will hold the balance of power in the new upper house, whoever wins government. (He was wrong).

Oh

A five-star resort project in the Yarra Valley collapsed on the eve of the election, causing embarrassment for the Brumby government. Melbourne businessman **Bernard Roux** (brother of **Michael Roux**), the driving force behind the proposed Hilton in the Vines luxury resort, near Yarra Glen, has filed a bankruptcy application, with the 30-hectare property now in the hands of receivers. Last year, Premier **John Brumby** wrote to Papua New Guinea Prime Minister **Michael Somare** encouraging him to invest in the project, *The Age* reported.

What size suits all?

Stonnington Council has joined South Yarra residents fighting a development they say will disrupt a peaceful heritage neighbourhood. The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal heard that the proposal for 114 apartments, shops and restaurants at 300 Toorak Road was an overdevelopment that would set a bad precedent.

The application by Raywood Nominees, a company owned by the local Rothfield family, went before VCAT after the council failed to make a decision within the time allowed, the *Herald Sun* reported.

Nice holiday home

Portsea cliff-top mansion **Ilyuka**, a 1920s Spanish-mission style residence, has been bought by a Victorian businessman for about \$27m, the *Herald Sun* reported. The buyer will also have to pay stamp duty to the Government of \$1.48 million.

Good job

The **Department Innovation, Industry and Regional Development's Major Projects Victoria** seeks a Commercial Manager, www.careers.vic.gov.au.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Breeding ground for MPs

The Municipal Association of Victoria newsletter, the *MAV Bulletin*, reported that six new members of Parliament hail from local government. As a consequence by-elections will be held in the municipalities of Casey, Banyule, Kingston and Yarra to replace councillors moving from local to state representation. Congratulations to **Jane Garrett** (new MP for Brunswick), **Anthony Carbines** (new MP for Ivanhoe), **Donna Bauer** (new MP for Carrum), **Lorraine Wreford** (new MP for Mordialloc), **Clem Newton-Brown** (new MP for Prahran – former Melbourne city councillor), and **Andrew Katos** (new MP for South Barwon – former Geelong councillor).

Nearby

The *MAV Bulletin* also reported that many policy commitments made by the new Baillieu Government during the state election campaign responded to and supported matters raised by the MAV and local government, including: legislation to bring forward municipal elections by six weeks to the second Saturday in October; a new Victorian Population Strategy; \$20m to help councils replace local street lights with energy-efficient technology; \$160m for Country Roads and Bridges Fund; a \$100m Local Government Infrastructure Account; and \$6m to provide operational grants of up to \$20,000 for small rural kindergartens, among a number of other promises.

Super hole

The *Financial Review* reported that poor performing investments have put a \$71m hole in the local government superannuation scheme. The Municipal Association of Victoria has written to the state's 79 councils saying there was a need to top up the local authorities super fund, **Vision Super**, because of the damages wrought to investments during the economic crisis. It had hoped a five-year plan begun after a review in

2008 would return the scheme to fully funded status.

Larger postcard required

The Age reported that in an attempt to boost its coffers and raise permanent revenue, Bayside City Council is selling the first of six bathing boxes it is controversially developing on Brighton's Dendy Beach, the first such boxes to be built in about a century. It fetched a record \$215,000 price, beating the previous record of \$205,000. Only local residents are eligible to purchase the leasing rights to Dendy's 83 existing boxes, which remain the property of the local council.

After hours

A senior Yarra Council officer under investigation for bribery has quit his post after being arrested as part of a blitz on illegal brothels, the *Herald Sun* reported.

SPORT

Best before dates

The *Financial Review* reported that re-elected Racing Victoria chairman **Michael Duffy** said he is cautiously optimistic about working with new Racing Minister **Dennis Napthine**. This was despite a comment by Napthine before the coalition won the election that Duffy had reached his use by date.

TRANSPORT

RAIL

Good research

The Age reported that two decades of successful reform of the Victorian economy could be undone unless Melbourne's already stressed roads and public transport system allow improved travel between the CBD and the city's urban growth centres, a new research paper warns. In *Melbourne's Transformation: rust belt to renaissance*, economists and planners SGS have analysed how Victoria's economy has changed from 1991, the year the Kennett government came to power, to today. Researchers **Terry Rawnsley** and **Marcus Spiller** found the recession of the early 1990s provided a catalyst for reform that had seen Melbourne move from a manufacturing hub to a post-industrial knowledge intensive economy.

Which airport?

Avalon Airport will get a passenger rail link under a plan promised by the Coalition before the election. Now Premier **Ted Baillieu** pledged to spend \$50m in his first term to invest in design and planning, land acquisition and preliminary construction works for a rail link to Victoria's second major airport, *The Age* reported.

Hotter than Mulhouse

A month after Premier **John Brumby** announced Victoria would buy the five distinctive bumblebee trams from France, it has emerged hundreds of thousands of dollars must be spent fixing air-conditioning on the vehicles, so they can cope with Australian summers. The government will not reveal how much the public has paid to keep the five bright yellow trams, which the Department of Transport rented from the French town of Mulhouse in 2008.

High and myki

As part of the myki smartcard rollout, Met card will be turned off next year, *The Age* reported. Myki is a reusable smartcard for public transport, but the new system includes short-term disposable tickets. They will be available in Melbourne when the Metcard ends. Former Premier **John Brumby** did not say when Metcard would go, but indicated that it was likely to be next year. Each short-term myki ticket has a computer chip and costs the government about 35c. Metcard, with its cheaper magnetic strip, costs 3c. When the former governments signed the \$1.35b myki contract, it expected 10 per cent to 20 per cent of trips would use disposable tickets. But in the six regional towns with myki, 60 per cent of passengers used short-term tickets.

En garde

The Age reported that in a resolution passed by ticket inspectors, and followed by a vote of metropolitan railway station staff, members of the Rail, Tram and Bus Union opposed the new Government's armed guards promise for trains and stations.

Yes

The Age reported that a straw poll it conducted found large support for the idea of quiet carriages. Monash University's Chair of Public Transport, Professor **Graham Currie**, and **Dr Simon Smith**, a historian, author and lawyer, both want Melbourne to begin a quiet carriage trial.

A tram summit?

The campaign to rescue Melbourne's classic W-class trams scored a victory with the government agreeing to a tram summit to consider options on the future of the vehicles, *The Age* reported.

Who's in?

The Regional Rail Link project is a new \$4.3b rail line that will provide capacity for enough extra train services for up to 9,000 passengers across the network in peak hour by separating out the regional from the metropolitan services. It is jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian governments, with the Commonwealth contributing \$3.2b. The Regional Rail Link Authority is now releasing the Request for Proposals for the Alliance Works Packages C and G for the Regional Rail Link project, www.tenders.vic.gov.au.

ROAD

Into reverse

Premier **Ted Baillieu** was expected to begin winding back clearway times introduced across inner Melbourne in the past two years by the former Brumby government, *The Age* reported in early December. Road user group the RACV has warned the government against making a knee-jerk reaction by winding back the extended clearway times, saying they are crucial to keeping traffic flowing. **Baillieu** altered a clearway sign at midday, December 9, on High Street, Prahran, to mark the first step in reversing the laws. *The Herald Sun* reported replacing clearway signs will cost taxpayers \$2m. It is believed most of the old clearway signs were turned to scrap metal.

A challenge for Ted

Just over a week before the election, Premier **John Brumby** flagged the possibility of tolls on the Western Freeway – a \$5b, six-lane road to go under Footscray and through Sunshine West, *The Age* reported. Nearby, residents of Melbourne's inner west say they are having to cope with

almost 1,000 trucks going down their streets every hour. The Maribyrnong Truck Action Group and Footscray's Less Trucks for Moore protested on the steps of the parliament with toy trucks to demand assistance from whoever won the election

Fine tuning

Myki is overcharging passengers on a handful of Melbourne bus routes because of faults with the GPS system that the \$1.35b smartcard system uses to locate bus stops. The Transport Ticketing Authority, the government department in charge of the ticket system, identified the problem in July but still has several locations around Melbourne where bus passengers can be wrongly charged using myki, *The Age* reported.

Good focus

The **Municipal Association of Victoria** is convening a working group to meet with the utility sector in an endeavour to improve the operation of the Road Management Act, which has ongoing issues relating to communications and process, where utilities interface with roads in particular. The MAV's weekly 'Local Government' bulletin on line provides a good focus on this sector.

Dear nanny...

County Court Judge **James Montgomery**, (aged ?), said that there is a lot to be said for compulsory licence retesting for people 65 years of age or over, *The Age* reported.

AIR

World wide

Qantas passengers suffered another mid air scare on 15 November – taking the number of Qantas mid-air incidents to five in ten days – when a Boeing 747 flying to Argentina was forced to return to Sydney amid reports of smoke in the cockpit.

Flying kangaroos go with Virgin

The AFL has ended a nine-year partnership with Qantas as its official carrier, a move the airline claims is because it would not agree to an exclusive contract with the league. The deal is now worth \$6m annually for Virgin Blue, *The Age* reported.

PORTS

The Port of Portland

The High Court has found that the Port of Portland is entitled to a substantial tax rebate, saying the Government was obliged to stick to tax concessions granted when the port was privatised. The High Court ruled that when the assets and business of the Port of Portland authority was sold in 1996 by the Kennett government, there was a clause on the liability of the buyers to pay land tax on the site.



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THE WORKPLACE

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Pay claims

The police union will push for a 36-hour week and substantial increases in wages and penalty rates as the new Baillieu government confronts pay claims from key public sector unions, *The Australian* reported.

A few salvos at the Salvos

The Age reported that the Salvation Army faced the unusual prospect of industrial action with more than 100 workers at its Westcare arm in Sunshine voting on a range of work bans, strikes and even a ban on submitting reports. Australian Services Union organiser **Leon Wiegard** had said it would be the first time the union had taken industrial action against the Salvation Army in Victoria. The union is pushing for the first collective agreement at Westcare. Wiegard accused the Salvation Army of failing to bargain in good faith by cancelling meetings or sending people to negotiations who did not have authority to make decisions.

Merry Christmas

The Age reported that workers at Gippsland's large Maryvale Mills could be fined up to \$6,600 each if they do not volunteer to work on Christmas and Boxing Day after a Fair Work Australia order that failure to do so would be an illegal strike. That was despite the workers and their employer, Australian Paper, having a collective agreement that stated work on those days shall be on a voluntary basis only. Commissioner **Wayne Blair** ordered that employees at the Latrobe Valley site must proceed to work as normal, which included volunteering to work on those days if it was the custom and practice to do so. Failure to do so would be unprotected industrial action, which carries fines of up to \$6,600 for workers. Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union pulp and paper secretary **Alex Miller** said the order came after an Australian Paper application, which he said claimed a lack of volunteers is a form of industrial action. The union was considering an appeal.

The English language: wonderful words used by negotiators can come back to bite!

COMMUNITY

Quietly

Freemasons Victoria expects to recruit 450 members this year, boosting numbers to 13,000, with the average joining age now 36, the *Herald Sun* reported. Freemasons Victoria has been receiving membership applications from men as young as 18, keen to follow in their grandfather's footsteps.

Our friends (1)

Shanghai officials hope to curb the growing popularity of man's best friend in the city with a one dog policy. A new law would limit each household to one canine, citing Shanghai's population of 20 million people and their limits on living space, *China Daily* reported. The RSPCA recommends a two-dog household as does the editor of this publication. (Anyone with a spare Vizsla?)

Our friends (2)

The **Department of Primary Industries** is now enforcing a rule that each carer or dog rescue group be registered as a domestic animal business, despite volunteers operating out of private homes. The blacklisting means councils not using dog shelters, which have 28 days to find dogs a home, will have to kill healthy dogs after eight days under the rules of pounds. Pregnant dogs, puppies, and sick animals in smaller pounds face immediate death because legally they cannot be sold. Many animal shelters have their own foster carers to return the dogs to health before selling them, but smaller pounds had relied on volunteer dog rescuers. The volunteers fear new legislation being drawn up will shut them down, said **Tricia Taylor**, of the Dog Rescue Association Victoria, the *Herald Sun* reported.

Vale

Eric Fullilove, television director, aged 85. **Roberta Sykes**, indigenous rights campaigner and writer, aged 67. **Frank John 'Bunny' Fenner**,

AC, CMG, MBE, microbiologist regarded as one of Australia's greatest scientists, played a key role in combating malaria and other tropical diseases but best known for his work in ridding the world of the variola virus that causes smallpox, as well as the myoma virus that helped control Australia's rabbit populations in the early 1950s, aged 95. **Keith Vincent Garzoli**, engineer, respected pioneer in greenhouse design, renewable energy, and water conservation technology with the CSIRO, aged 75. **Elizabeth Agnes Marshall**, humanitarian who rose to become national vice-chairman of the Red Cross Society from 1981 to 1988, played a leading role in producing *Grassroots*, a book still used by emergency organisations to train volunteers, see *The Age* obituaries (18 November), aged 96. **John Thomas Hounslow**, television journalist who delivered daily news from home to Australian troops in Vietnam in 1968-69, aged almost 64. **Retired Judge Stanley George Hogg QC. Jack Vines OAM. Dr Brian Hoare. Kenneth Alexander Middleton**, aged 91. **Rosalie Nancy Walton (nee McGarvie)**, aged 79. **Dr John Henry Stevenson**, aged 89. **Alwyn L. Shilton, MC. William Arthur Akers**, actor, production director with the Australian Ballet for over 30 years, aged 81. **Norman Fredrik Hetherington, OAM**, cartoonist, puppeteer, creator of the Mr Squiggle television cartoon character that first appeared on screens in 1959, aged 89. **Denise Ruth (nee Jones) Jenkins, OAM**, aged 91. **Dr John Sullivan**, oncologist. **Augustino Eugenio 'Gus' Mercurio**, actor, boxer, chiropractor, aged 82. **Timothy James Maxwell Cockburn Mercer**, grazier, livestock agent, aged 51. **Lady Edna Jungwirth**.

Norris Church Mailer, artist, writer, aged 61. **Leslie William Nielsen**, actor famous for his roles in *Flying High* and *The Naked Gun* comedies, aged 84. **Samuel Cohen**, the inventor of the neutron bomb which emits tiny particles that pass through physical objects but destroy living cells, killing combatants but leaving buildings intact, aged 89.

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