

LETTER FROM MELBOURNE

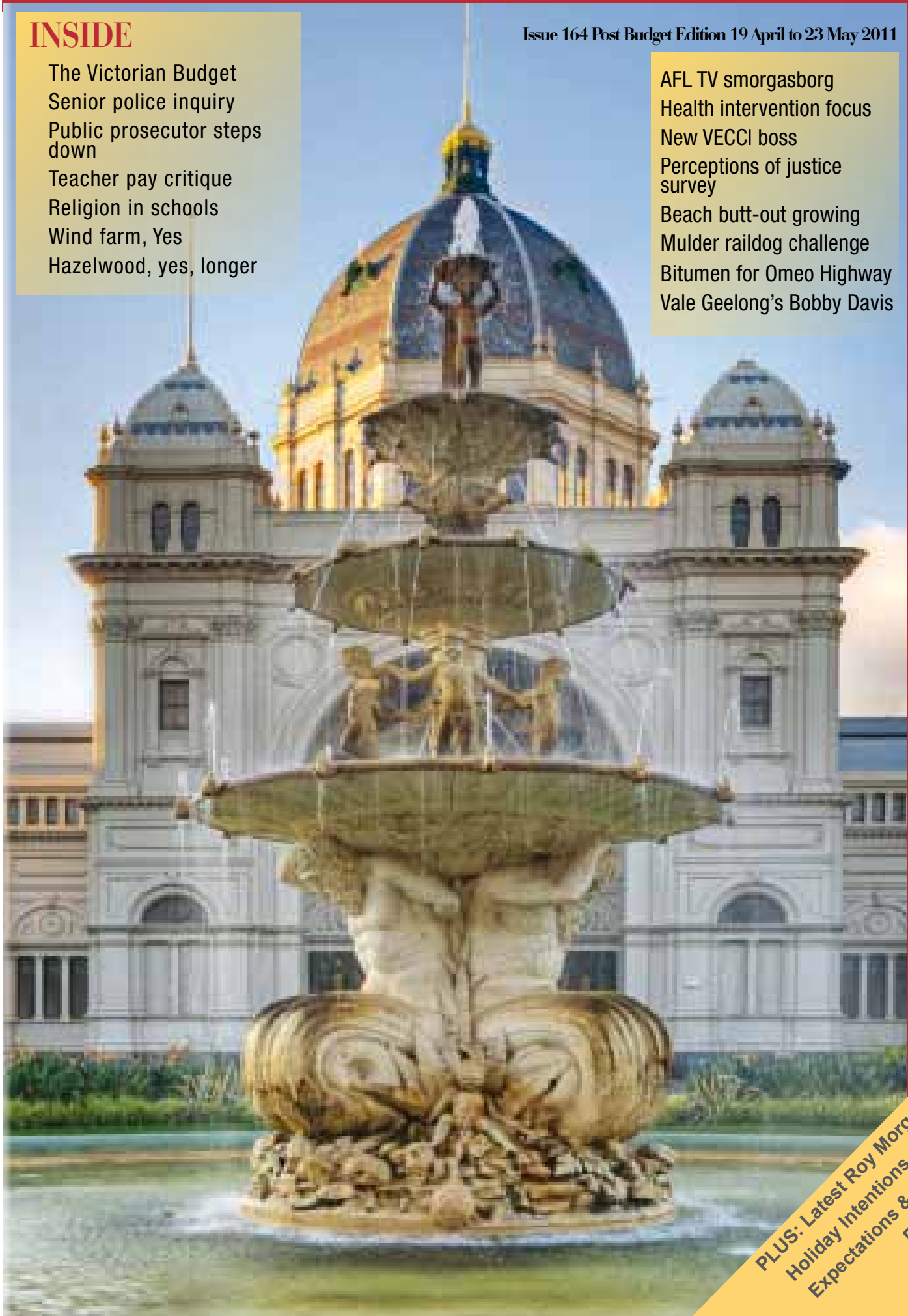
Saving you time. A monthly newsletter distilling public policy and government decisions which affect business opportunities in Australia and beyond.

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

Written for the regular traveller, or people with meeting-filled days, you only have to miss reading *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 words to a minimum.

Letter from Melbourne is independent. It's not party political or any other political. It does not have the imprimatur of government at any level.

For context. It includes events and people and society, and the weather if that is important.

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EDITORIAL

Our Justice: in for a service

The position of the Chief Commissioner of Police and that of the Director of the Office of Public Prosecutions have been in the headlines, and an inquiry into the former position and associated matters is under way. The government, being so new, has no established obligation to the formal structures of these positions. For the present Police Minister **Peter Ryan** has affirmed that the top police officer in Victoria has the full support for the Government.

Jack Rush QC is conducting the inquiry into the senior police role. The Attorney-General had already declared a significant overhaul of the bureaucracy of justice, with the concept of fewer senior people reporting directly to the Attorney-General, allowing for greater independence. The government will now consider any restructuring of the OPP, which would include consideration of retired justice **Frank Vincent's** report of his inquiry into the former DPP.

Specific election promises/commitments, of increased police numbers, rail/train guards, safer/less boozed streets and tougher sentencing are moving along. Looking easy compared to the above.

The Independent Broad-based Anti-Corruption Commission for Victoria details are still not in front of us, as similar state and perhaps other institutions are researched and considered. Perhaps up and going by the new-year.

Could only muse at a current Victoria Police advertisement seeking a Director, Corporate Strategy and Governance.

And with less focus on justice, the Baillieu government has now declared that government ministers and civil servants may acknowledge the traditional owners of the land where a meeting might be commencing, but it is optional. **Andrew Bolt**, Herald Sun columnist and now Sunday television presenter on the Bolt Show (on 10 at 10am), after *The Insiders*, said that the welcome to country is divisive, that we have had successful and famous Australian aborigines whom all Australians have naturally respected, and let us all act naturally to aborigines rather than impose any formal procedure.

The Victorian Budget was a practical affair, a snapshot, with many details still to come or even be changed. For example, the detail of the Monash Children's Hospital project was only made public after Budget Tuesday.

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

Black hole politics

In the comment section of *The Age Business*, **Malcolm Maiden** criticised rhetoric about the discovery of 'so-called Budget black holes', labeling it a political device. 'The Baillieu government would have to overturn conventional wisdom... to portray the Brumby government as serially incompetent,' he wrote. Maiden argued that Kennett, Bracks and Brumby governments built and maintained Victoria's reputation as a conservatively managed economy, saying that this was underlined by credit rating agency reports. He recognised that the post-election window was a time for an incoming government to attack a former government's project management skills, such as on the rail project and myki in particular. However, he said that any attempt to 'ramp that up' into a claim that bad economic governance in Victoria was endemic would 'fly in the face of reality'.

Elected to do this

Victorian Liberal upper house MP **Simon Ramsay** had to explain his conduct to Legislative Council president **Bruce Atkinson** after appearing on the steps of Parliament in a television interview criticising the proposed Coles takeover of an abattoir. Ramsay, who is a former president of the Victorian Farmers' Association, confirmed to *The Age* that he owns a four per cent stake in the abattoir. But he denied he breached parliamentary laws banning MPs from using their public position for commercial reasons. Ramsay accused Coles of unfairly wielding its market clout to discourage rival bidders and drive down the potential sale price of Colac meat processing plant CRF. Coles is the plant's biggest customer and the only viable bidder. Ramsay said he had always been upfront about his stake in the company and had declared his shares to Parliament. *The Age* says Ramsay has held his shares since the company was set up in 2000.

Flood money flounders

The Baillieu government accusing Canberra of trying to welsh on its promise to pay Victoria's flood-hit communities \$500 million in federal flood levy funding. *The Age* revealed that none of the money had been delivered to the state's 94 flood-affected communities. While Queensland had received \$2 billion, the money earmarked for Victoria had become bogged by a dispute between the state and federal governments. Victoria was reportedly refusing to sign up to the National Partnership Agreement as demanded by Canberra. It accused the Commonwealth of imposing onerous and unrealistic bureaucratic requirements in an attempt to avoid debacles reminiscent of the household insulation scheme.

Lindsay labors no more

The Age wrote an insightful piece on former Melbourne Federal MP **Lindsay Tanner's** life after public life, and his new book, *Sideshow*. One observation he included in his book is that to be regarded as 'thoughtful' is dead weight in any politician's saddlebags because it is code for being boring. Better to be considered 'charismatic' or, better still, a 'maverick'. He told *The Age* that he began collecting evidence of how the serious content of politics was being swamped by entertainment. 'The centre of gravity was shifting in ways that I found pretty distressing because I saw myself as a policy person and a serious contributor... More and more, I felt like I was being asked to put on a funny hat to fulfill my role'.

Separation of powers

In light of the recent controversy over the performance of Victoria Police Chief Commissioner **Simon Overland**, Police Minister **Peter Ryan** advocated a clear delineation between political governance and police duties. He has said that the Coalition Government would set up the political agenda, while Victoria Police will enforce the state's laws. According to Ryan, he will do his utmost to ensure there is no political interference in police operational matters. In what the *Herald Sun* described as a clear swipe at the previous Brumby administration, Ryan advocated a 'different approach', which suggested that

senior police officers would no longer share the podium with the Premier or Coalition Government ministers at public events.

Victoria Exports Minister's Message

The Victorian government is working to revive Victoria's export performance, secure jobs for Victorians and help many more world-class businesses make their mark in the global economy. To do this, we are going to increase funding for more clearly targeted existing programs and deliver new strategies. This includes raising the international profile of Victoria by promoting Victoria and its export industries at Expo 2012 in Yeosu, South Korea and Expo 2015 in Milan, Italy. We will ensure Victorian exporters have better access to new and growing markets by developing a strategy to help Victorian exporters work with funds from other states and territories to take advantage of available synergies.



Richard Dalla-Riva MLC, Minister for Manufacturing, Exports and Trade.

Sorry for slur

It was reported by *The Age* that Baillieu government MP **Geoff Shaw** apologised for comments he made in an email to a gay constituent that likened homosexuality to child molestation and dangerous driving.

The power of the Cain

Former Victorian premier **John Cain** turned 80 in April. Cain held office from 1982 to 1990 and some of his achievements were listed in *The Age*. The list of reforms, often achieved against entrenched business and political interests and without control of the upper house, was 'astonishing'. It included sweeping new liquor licensing provisions, extended shop trading hours, Sunday footy, the legalisation of prostitution, the right of women to join sporting clubs on public land, notably the MCG and various racing clubs, and tighter gun controls.

Those legal bills

Evidence of an alleged Labor Party conspiracy to impersonate a Baillieu government powerbroker was reportedly forwarded to

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police. *The Australian* believes the government obtained official notes of a phone call that suggests an unauthorised person tried to access Health Minister **David Davis's** legal-bill details. In parliament, Davis accused the Victorian opposition of intercepting mail and then using that information illegally to score political points. The opposition claimed the Liberal Party's fundraising arm paid for legal expenses incurred by Davis after he was sued for defamation by former Australian Labor Party state secretary **Stephen Newnham**. Labor then produced a document that purport to show the 500 Club was billed by legal firm Piper Alderman for Davis's legal defence. But the row appeared to backfire on Labor when it emerged an illegal attempt was made to discover Davis's private details. *The Australian* understood that the legal firm incorrectly sent a bill to the Liberal Party via an old office address. That Spring Street, Melbourne, address is now used by the new Labor Opposition Leader **Daniel Andrews**.

Liberal with words

State Opposition Leader **Daniel Andrews** was accused of hypocrisy for criticising Liberal Party fund-raising arrangements despite the Labor leader headlining a \$1000-a-place fund-raising lunch. Baillieu government spokesman **Paul Price** was quoted in the *The Age* calling the Labor opposition 'staggering hypocrites'. But Andrews said his party had 'never criticised fund-raising'. 'We have only highlighted the hypocrisy of Mr Baillieu and his ministers who complained about them in opposition but are only too happy to attend now they are in government,' he told *The Age*.

Public sector productivity

The Age reported the Baillieu government's announcement that the so-called 'efficiency dividend' would be increased to 1.5 per cent in the Budget and the 2012-13 Budget. That would mean the public service produced the same output with 1.5 per cent less resources. It will return to 1.25 per cent in 2013.

The Labors of youth

It came to the attention of *The Age* that a rift between Victorian ALP Right factions had reared its head in the party's youth wing. A bitter row over the election of its next president

has engulfed Young Labor, with allegations of forged ballots and illegal access of personal files.

Out of town representation

The new Honorary Secretary of the Consular Corp in Melbourne is **Linton Lethlean**, Honorary Consul General of the Republic of Maldives. He replaces **Carlos de Lemos**, Honorary Consul General of Portugal who held the job for only 20 years. Well done to Carlos, and wife Marion.

Welcome to country

Under the Labor government, ministers and public servants acknowledged traditional Aboriginal land owners at official events. However, the *Herald Sun* reported that Premier **Ted Baillieu** believes the old stance was dictatorial, and told his ministers that no such acknowledgements were necessary. Wurundjeri elder **Auntie Di Kerr** said she was saddened by the change (which came as the AFL was preparing for its indigenous round). An editorial in the *Herald Sun* praised Baillieu's stance, saying it 'removed unnecessary political correctness'.

A Labored attack

Labor launched advertisements attacking **Ted Baillieu's** policies, as well as his personal wealth. The newspaper advertisement and flyer distributed in marginal Labor seats criticised the Baillieu government's decision to means-test a \$300 payment for students starting primary and secondary school. It also accused the Premier of never experiencing family Budget pressure and failing to understand families doing it tough.

The day after

The Age's post-Budget wrap announced that the Baillieu government's first Budget would double Victoria's public debt as the Coalition delivered on the election promises that helped it win power. The paper summarised it as 'a workmanlike' Budget containing few new spending announcements. The government revealed plans for \$2.2 billion of spending cuts. For instance, the \$300 school start bonus would be denied to about two-thirds of eligible families. Treasurer **Kim Wells** unveiled a modest \$140 million surplus for next financial year - almost \$700 million less than Treasury's

December 2010 forecast. According to *The Age*, delivering around \$5.2 billion in election commitments was a key focus. Stamp duty relief for first homebuyers, more hospital beds and more police and protective service officers for train stations are to be delivered earlier than planned by 2014 - but at a higher cost. Wells also signaled that public sector job cuts were off the agenda, with around 4,000 new positions to be added to the public service over four years. The controversial myki transport ticketing system appeared likely to stay.

BUDGET

Budget in brief

The *Herald Sun* broke down the State Budget by department for a useful quick guide. Some of the spending points from the paper are listed below.

HEALTH

\$13 billion package including:

- More than half a billion dollars on hospital upgrades;
- 800 new hospital beds, to cost \$448 million over four years;
- \$241.9 million to halve ambulance membership fees;
- \$151 million to employ 340 extra paramedics and patient transport staff;
- \$88 million mental health package.

TRANSPORT

Seven new trains for Melbourne will be purchased worth \$11.4 million.

Planning work will begin on new train lines to Doncaster, Rowville and Avalon and Tullamarine airports.

Initial work to reduce 10 level crossings in Melbourne.

EDUCATION

\$11 billion for education including:

- \$25 million slashed from School Start Bonus;
- Non-government schools to receive a \$240 million boost;
- \$208 million to renovate government schools;
- \$100 million for school maintenance fund;
- \$24 million 100 maths and science specialists;
- 150 extra primary welfare officers, along with 250 existing officers, at a cost of \$124 million.

HOUSING

\$400 million over five years to halve stamp duty by 2014. First homebuyers will save up to \$6200 on stamp duty from July this year. This will rise to more than \$15,000 when the promised 50 per cent cut is implemented in late 2014.

COMMUNITY SERVICES

\$98 million over four years to improve child protection and 47 extra full-time child protection workers.

REGIONAL

- \$500 million towards the \$1 billion regional growth fund;
- \$160 million over four years on roads and bridges;
- \$20 million for regional aviation;
- \$100 million for energy for regions program;
- \$100 million local government infrastructure.
- \$3.5 million over three years to support regional tourism.

ENVIRONMENT AND WATER

- \$169m will support the management of Victoria's parks, including \$31m for 65 park rangers over four years;
- \$32m in grants for community groups and Landcare;
- \$17m to manage weeds and pests on public land;
- \$9.5m to improve Port Phillip's beaches;
- \$121m for new water management projects, including a \$50m water projects fund, \$40m rebates for homes and businesses;
- \$5m for household rebates to use energy efficient appliances.

SKILLS

- \$103 million to reintroduce concession fee places at TAFE;
- \$35 million for TAFE upgrades.

SPORT

- \$25 million over two years for the redevelopment of Skilled Stadium at Kardinia Park;
- \$15 million to complete the State Athletics Centre in Albert Park;
- \$2 million over four years to eliminate drugs in elite sports;
- \$530,000 over four years for the Stawell Gift;
- \$800,000 over four years Active Sports Partnership Program.

Give and take

The Age wrote that the Coalition went to the election promising \$1.6 billion in savings, but announced deeper cuts in the Budget totaling an extra \$638 million. Treasurer **Kim Wells** conceded the Budget cuts would cause some 'pain' to tax-payers, naming the School Start payment. But he said the government had to stabilise debt and deliver on its election commitments. *The Age* pointed out that despite the Baillieu government's promise to pay down debt, it will almost double to \$23.2 billion in 2015. The new Budget savings would also see cuts to the schools' information technology system, the dumping of the former Labor government's Respect program and reduced funding to advocacy groups such as Environment Victoria.

Blowout blame

The *Herald Sun* said Treasurer **Kim Wells** blamed cost blowouts of major projects under the previous government and a cut to GST revenue for debt levels blowing out. 'Labor left us with a number of financial messes,' he said.

Reaction time

Trades Hall Council secretary **Brian Boyd** promised in *The Age* that the government's decision to maintain its offer of a 2.5 per cent rise for public sector workers would be fought by Victorian unions. Victorian Employer Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief **Wayne Kayler-Thomson** said the Budget met pre-election promises but more needed to be done to encourage business investment. Greens MP **Greg Barber** slammed the Budget, telling *The Age* that there was little in it to fight climate change.

Revenue looking fine

The *Herald Sun* reported that analysis indicated that government income from fines was expected to increase over the next year. Despite a review into the state's speed camera system, the government expected cameras would generate an extra \$14 million in revenue during 2011-12. But the biggest growth will be seen in fines for toll evasion, which will soar by 7.5 per cent and deliver \$110 million to the state government. Overall, the *Herald Sun* said that the government will rake in \$24 million extra in fines, bringing in a total of \$545 million over the coming year. The paper claims that fines revenue, which raised just \$137 million in 1999-2000, has soared over the past decade.

Two Budget gaffs

Treasurer **Kim Wells** got his premier into hot water with two Budget gaffs. According to the *Herald Sun*, on Budget day Wells gave the strongest possible hint that the myki ticketing system would be approved, despite an ongoing cabinet investigation into the botched smart card. Also, Wells' admission of a broken promise on the \$250 million Monash Children's Hospital at Clayton forced premier **Ted Baillieu** to publicly state the next day that he stood-by the commitment to provide \$60 million for the

project in his first term.

Unknown cuts

An *Age* headline claimed that the 'Baillieu government cant account for savings' of \$638 million. The paper said the government has not yet decided on where more than half a-billion dollars in extra cost cutting measures would come from.

BUDGET VIEWPOINT**Gordon Rich-Phillips**

On Tuesday 3 May, Victorian Treasurer Kim Wells delivered the 2011/12 State Budget. The Baillieu Coalition Government's first Budget successfully delivers on our election promises, while providing for a Budget surplus each year over the forward estimates period.

The environment in which the Budget has been delivered is particularly challenging.

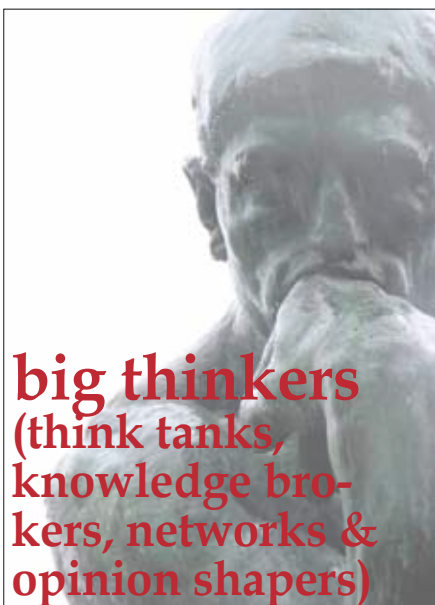
In February, the Government commissioned former treasury secretaries Michael Vertigan and Don Challen along with Professor Ian Harper to undertake an Independent Review of State Finances. Released in April, the Review's interim report demonstrated that Victoria's Budget has been on an unsustainable path. Expenditure growth has outstripped revenue growth over the past decade, and the Budget has relied on one-off Commonwealth payments to underpin the operating surplus. As a consequence, Victoria's infrastructure program has been increasingly funded from debt. This trend cannot continue indefinitely.

Labor left Victoria's financial position vulnerable to unexpected shocks, which have now materialised, with our GST revenues slashed by \$4.1 billion over five years due to a shrinking GST pie, and a major re-assessment by the Grants Commission of Victoria's share. During the past decade, the Budget was underpinned by strong windfall revenues from the property boom, which are unlikely to be repeated in the medium term.

Victoria's economy has been hit hard by the recent floods, which meant the Budget had to allocate additional funding to repairs and rebuilding. Also, a number of major projects inherited from the previous Government, such as myki, the Regional Rail Link and HealthSMART face significant cost overruns of around \$2 billion.

Despite these challenges, the Budget:

- meets the Government's commitment of a \$100 million minimum operating surplus each year, with average surpluses of \$164 million over the forward estimates;



big thinkers (think tanks, knowledge bro- kers, networks & opinion shapers)

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- achieves savings of \$2.2 billion over five years;
- improves scrutiny of major capital projects by the Department of Treasury and Finance and the Treasurer; and
- stabilises General Government net debt at 5.9% of Gross State Product.

Victoria has the great strengths of a diverse economic base and a skilled workforce. In recent years, much of Victoria's economic growth has been on the back of population growth. Real prosperity though requires more than just population driven economic growth, it requires genuine productivity growth.

In the 1990s, Victoria's productivity growth exceeded the national average. Since 2000, Victoria has fallen behind. Reversing this trend requires a strong productivity reform agenda. The Baillieu Government sees productivity growth as the key to our future economic growth and prosperity.

The Government has already announced its plan to cut the cost of regulation on Victorian businesses by 25 per cent over three years. We have commissioned two important independent inquiries by the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission, one into manufacturing and the other into a state-based economic reform agenda, focused on becoming more competitive than other States.

This requires improving our education and skills, and ensuring that our major capital works planning targets Victoria's key economic and service delivery needs.

Victorians have high expectations of government. They expect governments to honour commitments and support them in their daily lives. They want their State to grow and they want that growth to be managed, for services to keep pace with demand. They want new infrastructure to serve new communities, and for our streets and civic spaces to be vibrant and safe. They expect responsible government – focused and disciplined – but also a caring government.

The Budget delivers the Baillieu Government's election commitments, focused on these basic community needs:

- record investment in community safety, centred on a significant rise in police presence;
- a \$1.2 billion package of measures to ease cost of living pressures for Victorian families;
- the first steps towards achieving an additional 800 beds across our public hospital system;

- purchasing new trains, fixing level crossings, planning new investments to expand and rejuvenate the rail network, and investing in arterial roads;
- establishing a \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund to assist country communities as well as regional centres; and
- enhanced disability services, expanded child protection, new mental health initiatives and funding for a massive upgrade of special and autistic schools across the State.

In challenging times, this Budget delivers the responsible and caring government that Victorians expect.



Gordon Rich-Phillips MLC, Assistant Treasurer

ARTS

Auction action

The Age claimed a new Melbourne art auction record had been struck when *Autobahn in the Black Forest II* (1979-1980) went under the hammer for \$850,000 at South Yarra auction house Deutscher and Hackett. The Artist is Adelaide born expatriate **Jeffrey Smart**, Australia's quintessential painter of road scenes and traffic signs. With its vibrant, graphic road signs of red and white, the painting is one of the foremost examples of Smart's work. It was purchased on behalf of **Stewart Purves**, director and owner of Australian Galleries in Collingwood, who will pay \$1.02 million after buyer's fees have been added. Interestingly, the work has been in private hands since it was purchased from the Purves gallery in 1983.

Going, going, gone

Auctioneer **Mark Fraser** was appointed as the new chairman of the Australian arm of UK firm Bonhams.

Opera drama

According to *The Age*, Opera Australia's audiences shrank by 16 per cent in 2010, leaving the company \$500,000 in the red. It is the second year running the company has run a deficit, as it ended 2009 down \$900,000. Chief executive **Adrian Collette** said 'two operational deficits in succession make a compelling argument for change'. Opera Australia's annual report has called for the company to broaden and deepen its appeal to audiences. Artistic director **Lyndon Terracini**, appointed after the death of **Richard Hickox** in 2009, will stage a popular, high-end *Ring Cycle* in Melbourne in 2013.



Ann Blainey, author of *I am Melba*.



One of the Melba Opera Trust singers in action.



Scot's Church - a part of Melba's life.

Melba's birthday

The Melbourne Leader reported that the 150th birthday of early stage star **Dame Nellie Melba**, born in Richmond, would be celebrated with a series of free events in Melbourne and Richmond. **Ann Blainey**, author of *I am Melba*, gave a talk about Melba's early life on May 22 at the Richmond Library.

Dame Nellie Melba

A plaque to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Dame Nellie Melba was unveiled at the fountain courtyard between the Scots' Church and the Assembly Hall at 156 Collins Street on May 19. Melba was born in Burnley Street, Richmond to Scottish immigrants David and Isabella Mitchell. She worshipped at The Scots' Church, attended Presbyterian Ladies College and made her operatic debut at the Monnaie Theatre in Brussels in 1887. Thereafter she dominated opera in Great Britain, Europe, North America and Australia, and earned global fame through the new medium of the gramophone. She chose the stage name of Melba in homage to her birth-city, Melbourne. She was buried from The Scots' Church on February 26, 1931.

EDUCATION

Budget paper cuts

A \$57 million program that funds hundreds of maths and science coaches to help teachers at struggling schools is to be axed at the end of the year. *The Age* said the change was part of hidden cuts in last week's Victorian Budget. *The Age* also learnt that a \$22 million scheme under which literacy specialists visit schools where year 3 to year 8 students have fallen behind in reading and writing would be discontinued at the end of the year. The cuts came as the state government warned in a post-Budget briefing that the Education Department would have to find \$441 million in savings over the next four years - \$103 million more than previously thought. The Australian Education Union said the program cuts would affect the most disadvantaged students and lead to 310 teachers losing their jobs.

Red rag to a bull

Victorian public school teachers are to wear red and protest against \$481 million in education in education Budget cuts whenever a Coalition MP visits their school. That's according to *The Age*, who said that the Victorian state council of the Australian Education Union also voted to display placards bemoaning the governments 2.5 per cent pay offer and failure to honor its election promise to make the state's teachers the highest paid.

Mission impossible

Controversy arose this Easter when the Christian organisation that provides chaplains and religious instruction teachers in state schools advertised its services as a 'mission' in an area of Melbourne with a large Muslim population. An Access Ministries advertisement feature showed a Christian chaplain at multicultural Glenroy Primary School talking to two Muslim children wearing hijabs. The headline read 'Your Community Our Mission'. Access Ministries provides chaplains, Christian religious education curriculum and courses.

Chaplain preaches review

Melbourne Grammar chaplain **Reverend Ron Noone** used the school newsletter to express support for a review of the controversial religious instruction program conducted in state schools by the Christian group Access Ministries. According to *The Age*, Noone argued that 'the state school classroom is not the place for conversion or proselytising, and while Access Ministries would claim that's not what they do, I'm afraid that is their default position, and when challenged they will revert to that stance'.

Monash export award

Monash University was recognized in the 2011 Governor of Victoria Export Awards for its success in exporting high caliber education causes and services. 'Monash is a leader in Victoria's international education sector, with more than 60,000 students from around 158 countries and total export revenue in 2009-10 of more than \$346 million. It exports a range of educational services, including more than 600 courses and a suite of innovation programs'.

Melbourne model movement

A senior Monash University academic has criticised rival Melbourne University's undergraduate model. The dean of Monash University's business and economics faculty, **Stephen King**, told *The Age* it was 'one of the best things to ever happen to Monash' because it had pushed more students to study there. The Melbourne Model, introduced in 2007, shifted vocational degrees to graduate courses and created generalist undergraduate degrees in areas including arts, biomedicine, science and environments. Since the model was introduced, Monash's share of first preferences has steadily climbed, pushing ahead of Melbourne's.

Parent back to school

According to *The Age*, several submissions to the latest state inquiry into the child protection system highlight an urgent need for parenting classes and support services for families who don't know how to care for children. The calls echoed police Chief Commissioner **Simon Overland**, who said in April that parenting had become 'a lost skill'. Agencies have submitted their recommendations to the inquiry. Reports from agencies such as Berry Street, Bapcare,

OzChild and Windermere recommend state funding of programs for families before things get so bad that children must be removed. Many agencies told *The Age* that the Department of Human Services' focus and funding is directed only at the worst cases.

Gotta have faith

The *Herald Sun* reported that Religious schools would be able to reject teachers belonging to different faiths under Baillieu Government changes to Victoria's equal opportunity laws. Strict equal opportunity laws banning discrimination against teachers were initiated by the Brumby government last year and were to take effect on August 1. However, the changes mean that Christian schools could ban single-parent teachers or others not fitting their beliefs. Jewish and Islamic schools will be able to hire only those teachers who uphold their values. Islamic schools would also be able to make head scarfs compulsory for female students in changes that allow faith-based schools to uphold their religion through uniform and behaviour standards. The reforms will also strip Victoria's Equal Opportunity Commissioner of powers to investigate and enter workplaces.

Apply yourself

The Victorian Department of Education invited people who have a commitment to higher education to nominate for appointment to the council of a Victorian university. Expression of interest forms would remain current until June 30, 2012.

University gets top marks

The Age reported that **Melbourne University** was ranked the top Australian university for medicine, psychology and biological sciences. Melbourne was ranked eighth in the world for psychology, 15th for medicine and equal 25th in biological sciences, according to rankings compiled by careers and education research firm Quacquarelli Symonds. The rankings are based on surveys of academics and employers, and research citations.

Melbourne pipped interstate rival **Sydney**, which was ranked 11th in psychology, 29th in medicine and 40th in the biological sciences.

The next best Australian performers were the **Australian National University** and the University of Queensland, both of which ranked in the top 50 in all three disciplines. Monash was ranked 35th in psychology, equal 36th in medicine and was placed between 51 and 100 in the biological sciences. The company does not assign exact rankings outside the top 50. La Trobe University was also ranked between 101 and 150 in psychology. Harvard topped the global tables in all three subjects. Oxford and Cambridge both featured in the top four in each.

Voice speaks of clever things

Melbourne University's recent monthly *Voice* publication, a ten page supplementary in *The Age*, gave readers a look at some clever things going on around the institution. It will host the biannual Festival of Ideas 2011 between 13 to 18 June. Festival director **Patrick McCaughey** said that the festival would be a platform for the University to discuss and debate issues of major social importance and great public interest – the pursuit of identity.

Adult education shortfall

The Centre for Adult Education is Victoria's largest provider of adult education courses. *The Age* reported that the organisation posted an annual loss of more than \$3.5 million, after revenue fell well short of expenditure in 2010. CAE chief executive **Denise O'Brien** said the financial problems would not force the CAE to shut its doors, and that she was confident the problems could be managed.

Speaking in tongues

Premier **Ted Baillieu** vowed to make language education compulsory for most students, starting with prep in 2015, and progressively increasing compulsory participation to year 10 by 2025. *The Age* said Children would be required to learn core subjects such as maths and science in a foreign language, under a state government plan to curb the decline of languages in Victorian schools. *This Age* also learnt that the government was preparing to create a pilot program that would train dozens of primary school teachers to conduct lessons in a language other than English.

ENVIRONMENT

CONSERVATION

Budget all fired up

The Weekly Times announced that 60 Country Fire Authority stations are to be built or upgraded within the next 12 months as part of a \$65.8 million injection into the volunteer fire service from the state Budget. The funding would also be used to buy an extra 101 firefighting vehicles, including 74 light tankers and 20 heavy tankers. Emergency Services Minister **Peter Ryan** said the Budget delivered on the government's election plan to build 250 new or upgraded stations.

Crash bandicoot

The Age reported that a pack of about 50 eastern barred bandicoots bred at Melbourne Zoo was released in grasslands near Melbourne airport. The rabbit-sized marsupials are virtually extinct in the wild and are listed as critically endangered in Victoria. Such is their value that a group from Conservation Volunteers Australia and Parks Victoria worked for months to clear the release site at the 300-hectare Woodlands Historic Park of predators including cats and foxes. Hume City Council also cleared weeds and replanted natives.

A sustainable position

The Department of Sustainability and Environment advertised an invitation from the Minister for Environment and Climate Change for expressions of interest regarding four positions on the **Sustainability Victoria Board**. The Board is responsible for facilitating and promoting environmental sustainability in the use of resources.

Merde

Toulouse in southwestern France is a postcard perfect town with a population of 400,000. However the town is otherwise soiled by its 50,000 dogs that step outside to leave tonnes of poo each year. This requires 300 sanitation

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F.R.Barnard, advertising trade journal Printers Ink, 10 March, 1927

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workers and consuming a third of the city's sanitation Budget.

Sustainability Victoria

An advertisement in *The Age* congratulated the finalists of the Premier's Sustainability Awards 2011 in categories such as tertiary education, local government, state government, and small and large business.

The winds of change

The Age announced that the Baillieu government had proved its' first wind project. Planning Minister **Matthew Guy** approved three turbines for a six-megawatt wind farm at Chepstowe, west of Ballarat, and said the decision was 'consistent with the Victorian government's wind farm policy'. The Coalition promised to 'give local communities the key role in deciding where wind farms will go' before last year's election. Guy called in the Chepstowe wind farm application from Victoria's planning tribunal in February.

Residents who live near the site for the new turbines and the local Pyrenees Shire have expressed confusion and disappointment at the decision. **David Shapero**, managing director of Future Energy, the company behind the Chepstowe wind farm, welcomed the decision. 'The three wind turbines will produce enough energy for over 3000 homes,' he said. But he said the Baillieu government had to make clearer its intentions regarding new wind farm applications. Guy announced planning changes in March to make local councils the decision makers for wind farm applications of 30 megawatts or more, and any new application would need to identify all residential properties within two kilometers.

ENERGY

Budget concessions

The bill for gas, electricity, water, council rate concessions and emergency relief is expected to top \$515 million in 2011-12. That represents a \$140 million jump in a year. The *Herald Sun* reported that the Baillieu Government expected to pay an extra \$414.3 million over the next four years to

help pensioners and low-income families pay for necessities. Community Services Minister **Mary Wooldridge** said the increased funding delivered on the Coalition's promise to address cost of living pressures. A \$382 million initiative gives concession card holders cheap electricity all year around, with 38,000 extra households expected to receive this discount for the first time in 2011-12, taking the total to 844,000. Also, an extra 57,000 homes are expected to get gas concessions, taking the total to 807,000. Almost 710,000 households will benefit from a \$63 million increase in the water and sewerage concession, a rise of 32,000 households. The public purse would also fund 10,000 extra concessions for rates and municipal charges.

Morwell that ends well

The cost of a taxpayer-backed plan for Victoria's first coal-fuelled power plant in nearly 20 years has blown out by more than 50 per cent. A memo obtained by *The Age* showed that Melbourne company HRL's proposed coal gasification plant at Morwell is now estimated to cost \$1.18 billion, up from \$750 million. Other documents released to the paper under freedom of information requests showed the scheme was initially rejected for federal funding in 2006 on the basis it was 'not realistically based' and involved 'a high degree of risk'. An expert panel advising the Howard government on technologies to lower greenhouse gas emissions later changed its mind, decided the risks were similar to other projects it had funded and recommended it be offered a \$100 million grant. New details of the HRL plan emerged as the Environment Protection Authority started assessing its application to build the 600 megawatt plant, with a decision expected by May 27.

Fire danger burns hole in pocket

According to a report published in the *Herald Sun*, household electricity bills would almost double if the Coalition agrees to replace all power-lines in high-risk fire areas within 10 years. The State Government promised to implement all 67 recommendations of the bushfires royal commission, which included putting all regional lines underground. A consultation report from the Powerline Safety Taskforce estimated it would cost \$41.5 billion

lifting average quarterly electricity bills from \$315 to about \$610.

Carbon concerns

A Galaxy poll commissioned by the Australian Coal Association found 53 per cent of Victorian and Tasmanian respondents opposed the carbon tax, 40 per cent supported it with 7 per cent unsure. 73 per cent believed they would be worse off under the scheme

Hazel-would be to expensive

The Age reported that Energy Minister **Michael O'Brien** would not continue with the former government's talks with Hazelwood over a staged closure. O'Brien said Labor's commitment to pay International Power to close a quarter of Hazelwood's generation capacity by 2014 would have cost hundreds of millions of dollars, reduced electricity supply security and increased household electricity bills. 'The Coalition does not and will not support such irresponsible and costly gestures,' he said in a statement.

Power and politics

The Age announced that **Patrick Gibbons** had been appointed as the Baillieu government's top energy and resource advisor. His appointment is controversial not just because he lobbied governments on behalf of the company that owns the brown-coal-fired plant Hazelwood — he was once a Labor staff member, working for former Bracks government minister **Theo Theophanous**. Gibbons has had a long and successful career in energy policy. He worked recently as corporate affairs manager at Alcoa, the aluminium giant that for years has been influential in arguing against a price on carbon. The appointment came after **Ted Baillieu** described Victoria's legislated target to cut emissions 20 per cent by 2020 as 'aspirational'.

Alcoa related

The Australian Financial Review claimed that because of the carbon tax, Victorian taxpayers were facing a multi-million dollar bill under a controversial long-term energy supply arrangement with Alcoa. State Budget papers showed that a carbon tax might have a 'negative impact' on the State Electricity Commission of Victoria, which has energy supply contracts with Victoria. According to the

Financial Review, the conclusion of the Budget papers was that the SECV had 'significant' exposure to electricity prices due to the 'onerous' contracts with Alcoa's aluminum smelters. Although the Kennett government privatised the state's electricity businesses in the 1990's, the corporate shell of the SECV still has contractual obligations to Alcoa dating back to the Cain Labor government in the 1980's.

TEPCO not tepid

Loy Yang Power told *The Age* it was confident the ailing Tokyo Electric Power Company would persist with its Australian investments, despite catastrophic financial problems in the wake of the Fukushima nuclear disaster. Chief executive **Ian Nethercote** said TEPCO had given him no sign it was wishing to sell its stake. Uncertainty over TEPCO's stake in Australia's Loy Yang Power, one of Victoria's biggest electricity generators, came after warnings from TRUenergy that the Gillard government's carbon tax plans had sparked an 'investment freeze' in the local electricity sector. Loy Yang is a crucial player in the Victorian power sector, supplying about one-third of the state's electricity through its Loy Yang A power station in Gippsland.

WATER

Rain cheque for desal

The companies building Victoria's desalination plant have sought compensation from taxpayers because of the impact of this year's floods on construction. The state government confirmed to *The Age* that the Aquasure consortium has lodged a 'force majeure' claim under the contentious 28-year contract signed by the former Brumby government in 2009. Previously, the consortium had only sought relief for the impact of February floods on pipeline work near Koo Wee Rup, south-east of Melbourne. But *The Age* said other parts of the project have also been dogged by rain and wind, particularly construction of the main plant, which is up to 12 months behind schedule and unlikely to meet a December completion deadline.

Rain cheque for desal

The Age reported that Melbourne water users would not be compensated for a \$300 million investment in the north-south pipeline. Water Minister **Peter Walsh** said Melbourne Water and his department were still thrashing out details, but that the pipe would be used only in emergencies, and only with sufficient water in the north to supply Melbourne. *The Age* quoted Walsh as saying that 'In the 2½ years since this project was first moved, we have been very clear about our policy that as a last resort for Melbourne the north-south pipeline would be an emergency supply'.



The Stanford Fountain. Photo courtesy of John Tozer.

Melbourne awash

An *Age* article said Lord Mayor Robert Doyle would be spending \$900,000 on restoring six of the city's most prominent fountains this year.

The fountains on the list are:

- Macpherson Robertson Fountain, The Shrine
- Walker Fountain, Kings Domain
- Hochgurtel Fountain (pictured on the front cover)
- Westgarth Fountain, Royal Exhibition Building
- Mockridge Fountain, City Square
- Stanford Fountain, Gordon Reserve

Melbourne's fountains had either been turned off or had been working on low power for many years of drought.

Fountains currently turned on include:

- Ball Memorial, Lincoln Square, Carlton
- Coles Fountain, Parliament Reserve
- Tianjin Garden water feature, Spring Street
- Pioneer Women's Garden, Kings Domain
- River God Fountain
- Conservatory Waterjets, Fitzroy Gardens

Other Melbourne fountains that will be repaired include:

- The Looking Glass, City Square
- Grey Street fountain, Fitzroy Gardens
- Boy with Urn, Fitzroy Gardens; Edward the Seventh, Fitzroy Gardens
- Dinny; Ahern, Lygon Street
- Faultline Rowboat, Southbank
- Grants Fountain, Exhibition Street
- Children's Lake, Queen Victoria Gardens
- Carlton Garden's Lake Grotto, Kings Domain

SPORT

Jumps racing faces hurdle

The Australian reported that a rider-less horse jumped a fence and galloped into a group of racegoers, injuring seven people, in a dramatic Grand Annual Steeplechase at the Warrnambool race carnival. Racing Minister **Denis Napthine** told Racing Victoria to hold an inquiry into the incident. The *Herald Sun* quoted Racing Victoria chief executive **Rob Hines** who said 'It's a freak accident'. Since the incident, more horse deaths have led animal welfare groups to call for the sport to be terminated again, as it was in 2009 before industry pressure reopened it in early 2010.

ANZAC classic

Collingwood and Essendon played out a classic Anzac Day match before a packed house of 89,626 at the Melbourne Cricket Ground, with Collingwood emerging the victor. One attendee wrote to the *Herald Sun* 'what a massive honor it is to attend [the match]. It is a game that has become tradition in my family. Please AFL don't take the game away from us'. Other clubs are eyeing off the match, wanting to share the spotlight that the popular football fixture shines on the game.

Birds ruffle fans feathers

According to the *Herald Sun*, seagulls have become the bane of angry footy fans at the Melbourne Cricket Ground. Spectators reportedly want league chiefs to do more to stop what the paper described as the Alfred Hitchcock-like invasion every time a contest is played under lights. They want birds of prey such as hawks, eagles and other raptors to be given a full-time gig at the stadium to shoo away the gulls. However, Melbourne Cricket Club said that seagulls are a protected species and the Department of Sustainability and Environment had stopped an application to allow raptor patrols for fear the gulls could be ripped apart in full view of horrified footy crowds. Collingwood fan **Joffa Corfe** said he'd consider it half-time entertainment. 'Shoot 'em... they are annoying and make the game look second-rate. They were everywhere during the last Collingwood-Bulldogs match,' he said. MCC spokesman **Shane Brown** told the *Herald Sun* that several options were being considered. 'We are limited in the methods available to deter them due to their status as a protected species' he said. Investigators had apparently ruled out the light towers as attracting the flocks. This editor established with a phone call that it is the worms below the grass that attract the birds.

AFL smorgasbord

The Australian Football League secured a record \$1.253 billion broadcast rights agreement with Foxtel, the Seven Network and Telstra for the next five years. *The Age* said that under the deal, every game would be televised

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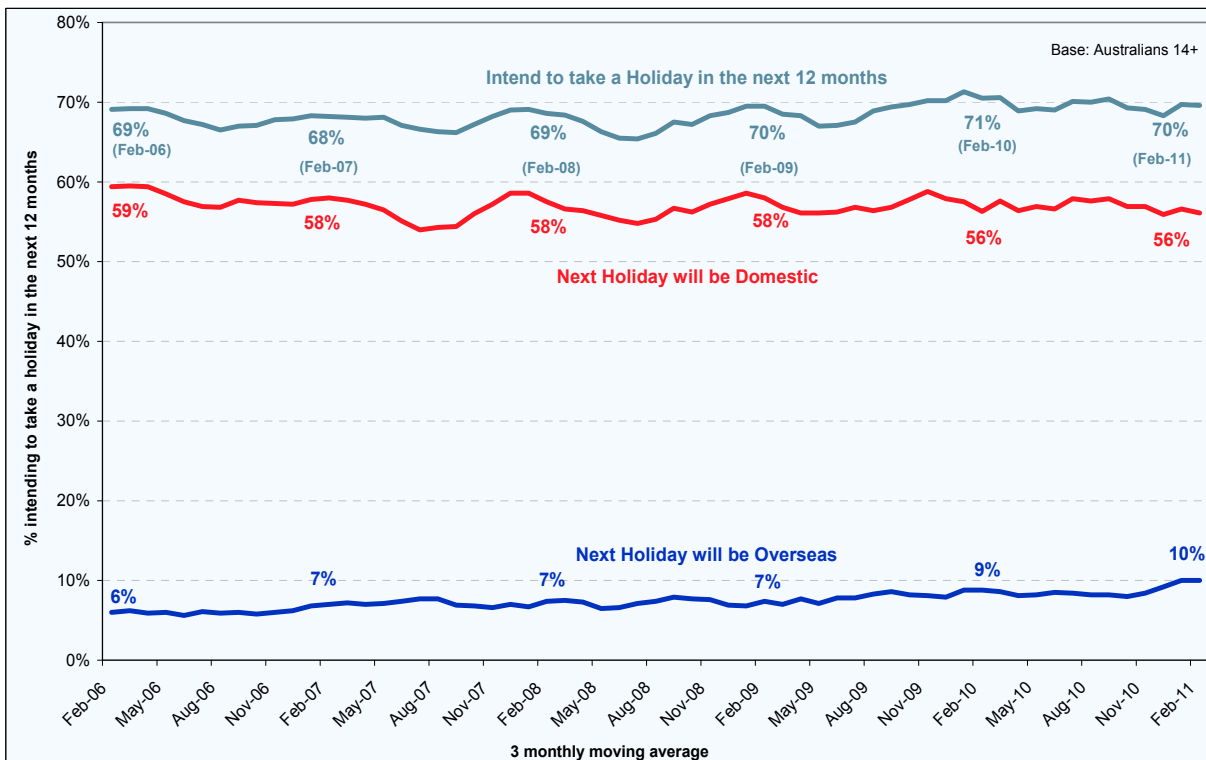
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Overseas Holiday Intention remains high in February 2011 Quarter

12.9 million (70%) of Australians 14 years or older intend to take at least one holiday in the next 12 months, according to the latest Roy Morgan Research Holiday Tracking Survey conducted in the three months to February 2011.

The percentage of Australians who intend to go overseas on their next holiday in the next twelve months remains at a high of 10% for the February 2011 quarter. By contrast, the percentage who intend to stay in Australia on their next holiday remains historically low at 56%. 4% can't say whether their next holiday will be in Australia or overseas.

Intention to take a holiday in the next 12 months



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (December 2005 – February 2011, average sample per quarter n=5,238). N.B. A small percentage of holiday intenders cannot nominate where they will be going on their next holiday. As a result, the percentages shown as intending to go overseas or domestic on their next holiday do not add to the total intenders.

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

“The appeal of a holiday overseas is growing for Australians, and with the strong Aussie dollar there is no better time. In contrast, domestic holidays are declining in appeal while becoming relatively expensive.

“Domestic destination marketers have a difficult task ahead of them trying to win a share of a shrinking pie, and need to exploit the heavy reliance of domestic tourists on the Internet as both an information source and booking method. 62% of holiday intenders find the Internet the most useful media in selecting travel or accommodation.”

To purchase the latest Roy Morgan Holiday Leading Indicators Report

Visit the Roy Morgan Online Store: www.roymorganonlinestore.com



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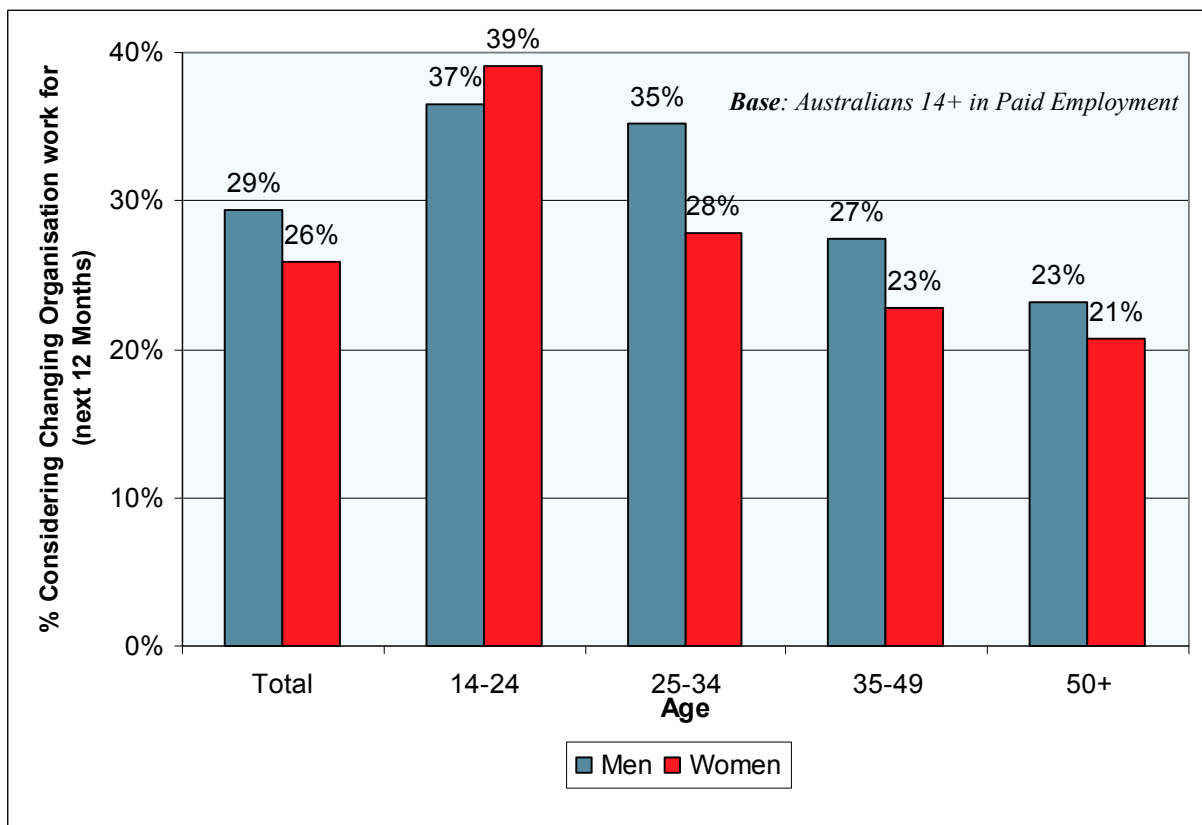
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28% of Australian employees are looking for a change

There are nearly 11 million people in Australia who are in paid employment of which 28% plan to change organisations in the next 12 months. Men are more likely than women to be considering changing organisation. Overall 29% of men and 26% of women in paid employment are considering changing organisations in the next 12 months.

Of those in paid employment, more men than women in each age group apart from 14-24 are considering changing organisations in the next 12 months. Nearly twice as many young women (39% of women 14-24 years old) are looking at changing organisations than older women (21% of women aged 50+).

Australians considering changing organisations in the next 12 months



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source: January - December 2010 n= 9,423.

Michael Duncan, Industry Director – Agencies, Roy Morgan Research, says:

“Quality staff have always been critical to the success of any organisation and the retention of these key personnel becomes even more important when we are in a period of high employment.

“With 28% of paid employees considering changing organisations in the next year, companies will need to ensure they provide the flexibility and benefits to retain their best staff.

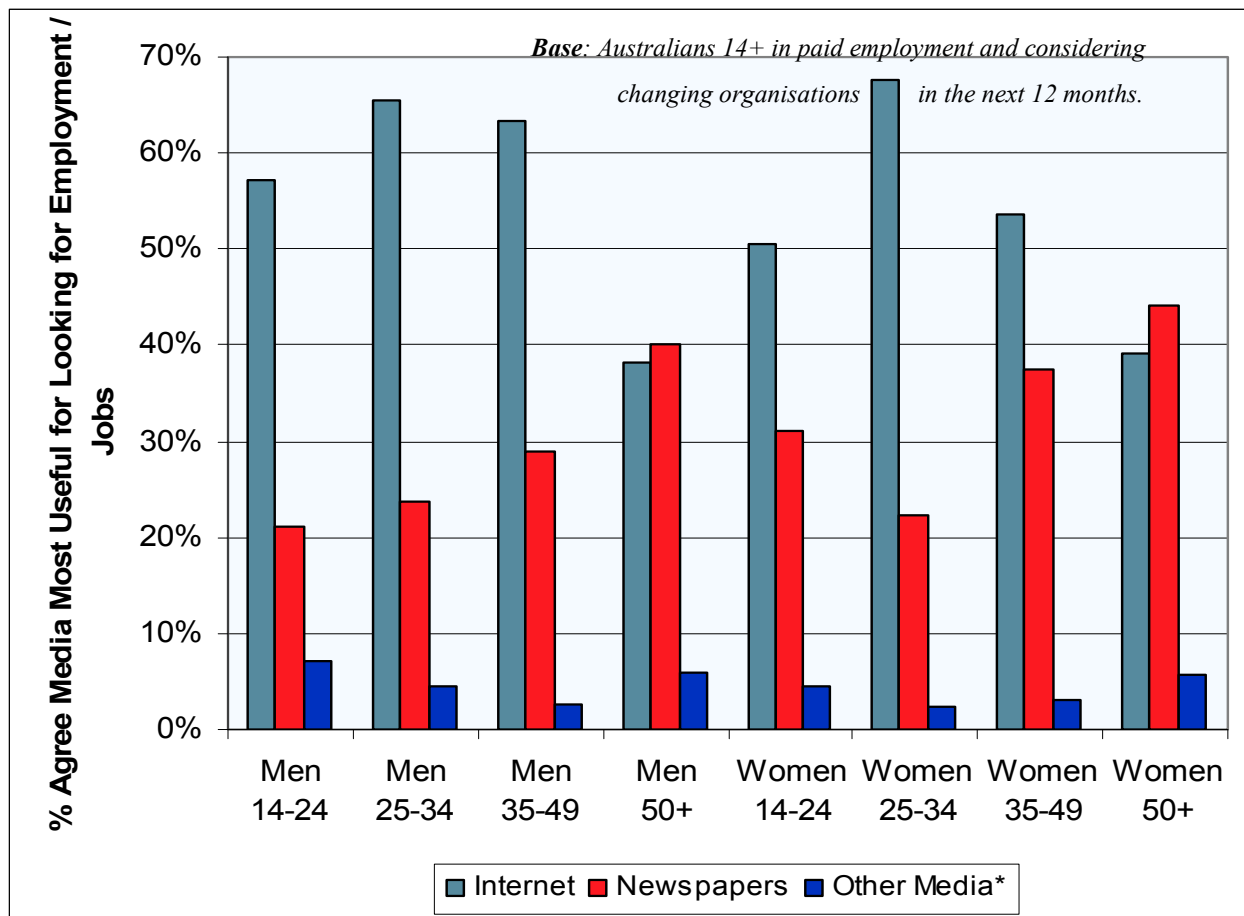
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“A major challenge facing employees is that different people value various benefits very differently, according to their life stage, their aspirations, their occupations and skill levels and risk profiles.

“The Roy Morgan suite of Employment Profiles provides a deep understanding of people in different employment situations: working in the public service, top executives, Occupational Health and Safety Professionals and many more. We also have a range of Profiles of people who work in various different Industries such as Agriculture, Manufacturing, Construction and Retail.”

There are nearly 3 million Australians who are currently in paid employment and considering changing organisations in the next 12 months. The media which this group considers most useful in looking for employment / jobs varies according to age; older Australians over 50 years find newspapers most useful while Australians 14-49 find the internet most useful.

Media considered most useful for looking for employment / jobs, by Australians considering changing organisations in the next 12 months



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source: January - December 2010, Australians 14+ in paid employment and considering changing organisations in the next 12 months n= 2,401 Other Media refers to Magazines, Catalogues, Radio, Television and Yellow Pages.*

Please visit the [Roy Morgan Online Store](#) to view our range of [Employment Profiles](#), including profiles of those who are employed in the private and public sector. We also have an extensive range of [Employment Industry Profiles](#) of people who work within different industries including finance, retail, transport and many more. These profiles provide a broad understanding of the target audience, in terms of demographics, attitudes, activities and media usage in Australia.

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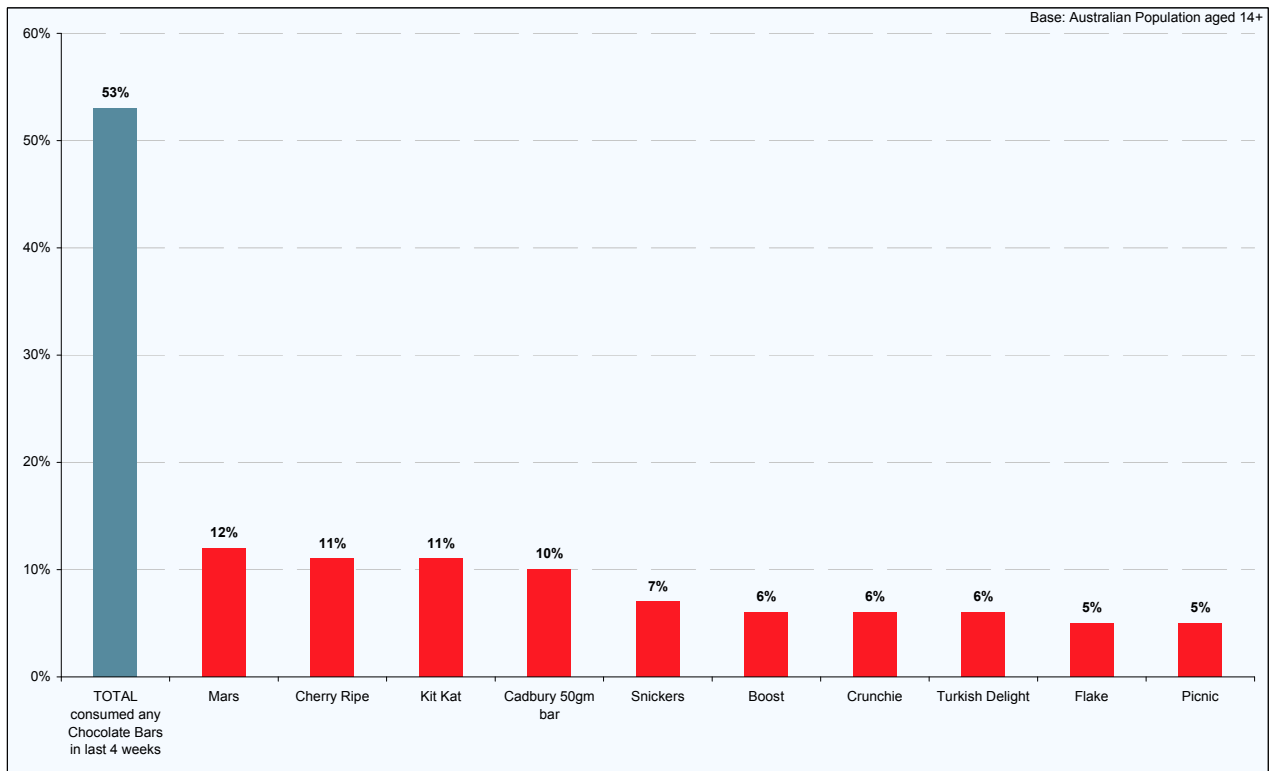
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Article No. 1341
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On May 9, 2011
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Mars Bar, Cherry Ripe & Kit Kat - the favourites amongst chocolate bar consumers

Over 9.6 million Australians (53% of the population aged 14+) consume chocolate bars in an average 4 week period, according to the latest Roy Morgan Research findings. Chocolate bar consumers are more likely to be female and aged 14-24 years. 50% of chocolate bar consumers purchase chocolate bars at least fortnightly and 69% have consumed a maximum of 3 different varieties in the last 4 weeks.

Brands of Chocolate Bar Consumed



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source, January 2010 – December 2010, n = 18,817.

The most popular brand of chocolate bar is Mars which is consumed by 12% of the population in an average 4 week period, followed by Cherry Ripe and Kit Kat, both consumed by 11%.

Mars and Kit Kat consumers are demographically quite similar; both bars appeal to males and younger consumers. Consumers of both bars favour fast food, participate in sports and play computer games at home. Mars Bar consumers show ‘laddish’ traits - they are more likely to enjoy tough physical activity and to have worked on a car when compared to the population.

Norman Morris, Industry Communications Director at Roy Morgan Research, says:

“Roy Morgan Research data reveals that whilst Mars Bar, Cherry Ripe & Kit-Kat are the most popular brands of chocolate bars the consumers they attract are likely to buy chocolate bars more often and consume a large number of different chocolate bars. Smaller brands attract fewer consumers but appeal to particular target markets.

“The Roy Morgan Online Store has a range of consumer profiles of various chocolate brands by bars, blocks and boxes that provide further insight into the demographics, attitudes and media usage of this target audience.”

To purchase the latest Roy Morgan Chocolate Buyer Profiles
Visit the Roy Morgan Online Store: www.rovmorganonlinestore.com

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live in every Australian state throughout the season and involves a cash component of \$1.118 billion with the remainder coming in advertising and marketing. The historic agreement heralds a new era of multi-media in which all games except the grand final will be televised live on pay TV and every game will be available on Telstra mobile telephones. The AFL's record payday is worth an extra \$370 million from the last broadcast deal and AFL chairman **Mike Fitzpatrick** pledged that the league would respond by keeping a lid on game admission prices and club memberships as a result. His chief executive, **Andrew Demetriou**, described the new agreement as 'a great deal for football and a great deal for the industry, but most of all a great deal for supporters who are the heart and soul of our game'. Demetriou said the deal included an agreement from Seven that the grand final would remain an afternoon game for the next five years. According to *The Age*, football fans attending the traditional Sunday afternoon 2.10 game would be forced to endure a later start time of 3.10pm to accommodate the Seven network, which has agreed to show that game live on the condition it runs directly into the 6pm news telecast.

Hair raising decision

An umpire who ordered an Australian Rules footballer from the field because his Mohawk was considered dangerous had misinterpreted the rules, according to the Victorian Country Football League.

Can't outrun this race

The Age reported that Victoria's new \$50 million State Athletics Centre at Lakeside Oval Albert Park would be off limits to athletes at the peak of the athletics season next year because of the Melbourne Grand Prix. The state's most important annual junior athletics event, the track and field championships, has been moved to Bendigo because of the Grand Prix and Athletics Victoria is in discussions with the Victorian government over how long it will be shut out of the venue in March. Little Athletics Victoria general manager **Dean Paulin** told *The Age* that the Grand Prix lockout was disappointing and the main reason they did not become a tenant at the new athletics facility. He said not holding the state's most important junior athletics event at the state's pre-eminent venue was a big blow for junior athletes. 'All the kids love to compete at the home of athletics, as was the case with Olympic Park,' he said. Athletic Victoria chief executive **Nick Honey** said the March Grand Prix occurred 'when our championship season is, so we pretty much understand we have to work around that'. He also said the Australian Grand Prix Corporation had indicated they were happy to meet with Athletics Victoria to discuss the access issue.

Job is not handicap

Golf Victoria advertised for a 'dynamic and visionary CEO' to shape and lead the

organisation which acts as the governing body for 370 clubs and 110,000 members throughout Victoria. It is a newly formed entity from the merger of Women's Golf Victoria and the Victorian Golf Association.

Eye of the storm

According to *The Age*, the National Rugby League report into the Melbourne Storm salary cap scandal recommended former chief executive **Brian Waldron** never is allowed to work in rugby league again. Waldron, his deputy **Matt Hanson** and two unnamed Storm financial executives should all be barred from any involvement in the game, the report said. It described a 'toxic culture of deceit' that resulted in rorting the league's salary cap as 'a bit of a game', and said Waldron, Hanson and former chairman **Rob Moodie** signed false statutory declarations. Moodie claimed that he believed at the time that what he was signing was truthful. 'If someone is deliberately, as Waldron was, trying to defraud the NRL, he is obviously trying to defraud the board as well. When this comes to the surface, it's too late,' Moodie said. NRL salary cap auditor **Ian Schubert**, author of the report, wrote that Waldron had 'shown himself to be entirely unfit for any position where he has obligations of trust, responsibility or leadership'.

GAMING

Kennett speaks up

Hawthorn president **Jeff Kennett** has claimed that mandatory gambling limits would send some AFL clubs 'to the wall'. *The Age* reported Kennett's comments after Clubs Australia said some AFL clubs would have to spend millions upgrading their current machines in order to comply with the new law.

Football punts

The Age reported that betting on AFL football has jumped to \$300 million a year. And gambling experts warned the paper of 'meteoric' growth to come as the AFL considers measures to minimise its profile on match days. The revelation on the increasing amount bet on football came as the focus switches to the MCG and Etihad stadium electronic scoreboards, which are awash with betting odds and gambling advertisements throughout matches. MCC head **Stephen Gough** confirmed he was asked by AFL Commission chairman **Mike Fitzpatrick** to explain the scoreboard's role. 'how does it work, who puts the information up and why', Gough said. The amount of money bet on football by people mainly from Victoria and New South Wales, was last estimated in a 2008-09 Productivity Commission report published last year. It showed 'sportsbetting' - gambling on all sports except horse racing - was \$228 million. Industry estimates put AFL betting then at \$100 million.

Other sports betting developments

■ Former chief steward of Racing Victoria **Des Gleeson** delivered 16 recommendations on how to strengthen the integrity of sports betting in Victoria in a report to Gaming Minister **Michael O'Brien**. *The Age* says they include a call for the state's gambling watchdog, the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation, to have more power over sports bodies and bookies.

■ The Western Bulldogs were contacted by members angry about the club's promotion of its 'doggiesbet' product linked to sports betting operator Betezy in a three-year deal. According to *The Age*, most clubs have formed lucrative commercial relationships with sports betting providers. The AFL has deals with Tabcorp and Betfair for 5 per cent of football-related takings. ■ Cricket Australia revealed it told Channel Nine that betting odds had become too ingrained in cricket commentary and that they should only be mentioned as commercial messages.

HEALTH

Good result for appeal

The Good Friday Appeal raised more than \$15 million for the Royal Children's Hospital, surpassing the \$14.4 million raised last year.

Prevention the best cure

The Age compiled statistics on avoidable hospital admissions collected by the Victorian Department of Health. The paper revealed that, in 2009-10, 180,858 people were admitted to hospital with conditions that could have been avoided with early interventions delivered by primary-care practitioners such as GPs, dentists or physiotherapists. It represented a 24 per cent jump from 2000-01, when there were 145,570 such admissions. People with diabetes complications made up the biggest group, accounting for 63,185 or one-third of all avoidable admissions in 2009-10. Dental conditions were the next most common at 16,443 admissions, followed by 14,547 admissions for emphysema and chronic bronchitis. Other conditions on the list include asthma, high blood pressure and vaccine-preventable illnesses.

Time for your shot

The Baillieu government shelved an election pledge to put 120 armed guards in hospital emergency departments. Despite announcing the \$21 million plan as part of the Coalition's law-and-order pitch during the election campaign, Police Minister **Peter Ryan** confirmed to *The Age* that the idea would be sent to a parliamentary committee for further thought.

Depression research grants

Beyond Blue: The National Depression Initiative offered research funding through the *Beyond Blue* Centre of Excellence in Depression,



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Anxiety and Related Disorders. The centre is a collaborative initiative by *Beyond Blue* and the Victorian Government. The funding was advertised as being available to support research that focuses on depression and anxiety among people of minority sexual orientation in Victoria, and improving mental health outcomes for individual communities in areas affected by natural disasters in Victoria. The grants are for up to three years duration, with funding up to \$125,000 for individual institutions, and \$300,000 for inter-institutional collaborative research.

Health reform ripples

Victoria's Health Minister **David Davis** warned in the *Herald Sun* that a key part of national health reform laws could disrupt hospitals and make patients worse off. He wrote to Federal Health Minister **Nicola Roxon** asking her to amend draft laws now before Parliament. Davis said they go beyond what the premiers and Prime Minister **Julia Gillard** agreed to in February. The laws would create a national health performance authority to ensure hospitals are held to high standards. But Davis said it should be restricted from meddling in state affairs.

Public health inquiry

Victoria's Environment and Planning Committee advertised that, at the direction of the Legislative Council, they would undertake an inquiry into the contribution of environmental design to prevention and public health in Victoria. Further information can be obtained from the committee's secretary, Richard Willis 9651 8696, or from the committee's website. Submissions should be made to the secretary by June 30.

Ambulance fees fall

The Weekly Times reported that the state Budget would halve ambulance membership fees from July 1 meeting a key Baillieu election promise. The paper also announced that regional Victorian healthcare system would share in \$80 over four years to create 800 new hospital beds across the state.

Elderly ambulance

A study published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* found that the number of ambulance trips involving people aged 85 and over increased 75 per cent between 1994-95 and 2007-08. That represented an increase beyond what was expected with population growth and shifting demographics.

INVESTMENT

BUSINESS

Business Budget blues

According to *The Australian Financial Review*, Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief executive **Wayne Kayler-Thomson** was disappointed in the lack of tax relief and urged the Government to draw up a plan for reform during the parliamentary term. 'There are very few bright spots in this Budget for business,' he said. In the lead-up to the Budget, VECCI had reportedly lobbied the Government to cut payroll tax to 4.85 per cent in 2011-12 and outline a timetable for further reductions in the years to 2015. VECCI had also called for the payroll tax threshold to be increased to \$700,000 to exempt small businesses and start-up companies. VECCI has a new CEO **Mark Stone**, former CEO of Tourism Victoria and Parks Victoria.

Don't fear deficit

Before the Budget was released a leading business group called on the Baillieu government to allow a deficit to pay for long-term infrastructure projects. Australian Industry Group Victoria director **Tim Piper** told *The Age* that his organisation didn't have a problem with a deficit as long as it paid for inter-generational infrastructure projects, 'because we recognise there are pressures on the state's finances'.

Holden profits, public pays

The Age obtained GM Holden's 2010 accounts through the Australian Securities and Investments Commission. The paper claimed that taxpayers had subsidised the carmaker by \$99.6 million through the Automotive Competitiveness Scheme. Holden's net profit for that year was \$112 million, its first profit in six years.

ACCtually a great candidate

The Age announced that **Rod Sims** would become the third head of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission. Sims was born in Lorne, Victoria, and completed honors in economics at Melbourne University. For ten years Sims worked as a bureaucrat, ending up as deputy secretary of the department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and before that for ten years he was a development economist working in Papua New Guinea and for the Commonwealth Secretariat. According to *The Age*, his current work includes regulating water, electricity, and gas prices as head of the NSW Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal and providing economic advice to the Gillard government's Multi-Party Climate Change Committee. He had also been a corporate consultant at Port Jackson Partners, advising on mergers and acquisitions, territory he would revisit as head of the ACCC.



Rod Simms, new Chairman, Competition and Consumer Commission.

Watchdog needs bite

Consumer group Choice and the Australian Food and Grocery Council told *The Weekly Times* that Australia needed a supermarket ombudsman. The two groups argued that in their submissions to the Senate enquiry examining dairy pricing, that an ombudsman would help create transparency and fairness along the supply chain.

Legislation isn't arbitrary

The Australian Financial Review reported that the Baillieu government was working on legislation to introduce modern arbitration rules for Victoria. Victorian Attorney-General **Robert Clarke** said the state was looking to introduce such legislation, following the lead of New South Wales. 'Victoria not operating under

model commercial arbitration legislation has been a significant disadvantage,' he said.

Goodbye DIIRD

Following the recent 'machinery of government' changes, implementing the policy agenda of the new government, the role of the department is being refocused. Department of Business and Innovation aims to help grow Victoria's diverse and vibrant economy by supporting pro-business policies and programs and the development of innovative industries. We engage with businesses large and small and represent their needs to government at all levels. We provide strategic economic planning advice and targeted business development assistance. DBI encourages investment and trade in all sectors through our strong local and international networks. See new *Affairs of State* government chart, out now!

ICT

New chief at CenITex

Michael Vanderheide was made the new Chief Executive Officer of CenITex. Vanderheide is currently Executive Director Infrastructure and IT for Victoria Police. He was recruited by Victoria Police to upgrade the organisation's whole IT environment and in that role he has been instrumental in introducing improved standards and levels of professionalism. This improvement process will continue as CenITex takes on responsibility for the agreed areas of Victoria Police IT functions. Vanderheide has extensive experience in the government services area, having been Head of Shared Services for the ACT Government and then being seconded to the Federal Department of Finance and Deregulation as Lead Reviewer of Shared Services. Vanderheide will start at CenITex in July, **Jim Monaghan** to continue as Acting CEO until then.

Tune out

A *Herald Sun* investigation revealed dodgy set-top boxes given to Mildura residents, the first in the country to switch to digital-only TV, had already been replaced by digital TVs. Apparently faulty television set-top boxes were sitting idle less than 12 months after they were issued under the Federal Government's controversial \$308 million set-top box installation scheme.

AGRICULTURE

Budgeting for regional growth

Victorian Farmers Federation President **Andrew Board** said the Budget had delivered a number of important funding commitments for rural communities and primary producers. '\$160 million over four years to assist local Shires and Councils to upgrade country roads and bridges will fill a significant gap in funding over recent years,' Board said. 'The

governments \$100 million Local Government Infrastructure Program, part of the \$1 billion Regional Growth Fund, has also been targeted at addressing the infrastructure backlog in country areas, including community assets. Farmers expect this will have some impact on the unfair burden of farm rates on property holders'.

Land buyback scheme

Flood affected farmers near Kerang would be able to sell their land to the state government under a voluntary buyback and compensation scheme. *The Age* reported that the scheme is part of a \$21 million flood package to be announced by the Baillieu government. Up to \$12.3 million has been made available to buy land at risk of flooding or to pay compensation to farmers who do not sell but who have flood covenants placed on their land. The measures are part of the Active Floodplain Restoration Project, which aims to 'create extra flood storage and reduce the impact of floods' in the area by reinstating floodplains.

Puppy farms

The *Herald Sun* reported that 'horror puppy farms' would be shut down and their owner's assets seized as proceeds of crime in a crackdown on illegal breeders. Under a \$5.7 million plan outlined in the Budget, the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals was given tough new search-and-seize powers, and the ability to lay charges against anyone running illegal puppy farms. Until recently, RSPCA inspectors had been powerless even when they had evidence of farms mistreating animals. They could only refer concerns to councils. The Budget package is intended to keep a pre-election Coalition promise to shut down illegal puppy farms, which was in line with a powerful RSPCA campaign to outlaw factory-type breeding conditions. Premier **Ted Baillieu**, who has three dogs of his own, said overcrowding, confinement in filthy cages for long periods, starvation, disease and psychological torture were common among rogue operators who previously continued to make large profits after paying paltry \$1195 fines.

No added hormones

This month Coles was selling its lamb with 'No added hormones' labels, following its similar campaign for beef. However, *The Weekly Times* pointed out that such hormones have never been used in Australian lamb production, and are not registered for use in lamb finishing. Coles began advertising HGP-free beef late last year. *The Weekly Times* also reported on small supermarket chain Maxi Foods advertising its Australian grown beef, lamb and pork as having no added hormones. Sheepmeat Council of Australia president **Kate Joseph** described the Maxi Foods advertising as misleading, while Victorian Farmers Federation livestock president **Chris Nixon** said it implied hormones were being used in lamb production elsewhere. Coles spokesman **Jim Cooper**

told *The Weekly Times* that the labeling was to address any misconceptions consumers had about lamb production.

It's going to be legen-dairy

The Dairy Australia Dairy 2011: Situation and Outlook report predicted a solid rise in the prices farmers will be paid next season. According to the report, Victorian dairy farmers were experiencing some of the best conditions in a decade, with strong overseas demand coinciding with a favorable season.

Methane reductions

Victorian research published in *The Age* showed that modifying the diet of dairy cows with feed supplements such as brewers' grains, a by-product of beer-making, cuts cows' methane emissions. The research demonstrated that for every 1 per cent increase in fat in the diet of dairy cows, methane emissions are cut by 3.5 per cent. *The Age* said that finding was significant because dairy cows produce 400 to 500 grams of methane per day, the vast majority of which is expelled via burping, rather than via events at the other end of a cow. Methane is a particularly potent greenhouse gas, considered to be at least 21 times more powerful than carbon dioxide.

JUSTICE

The cost of fighting crime

According to *The Age*, the state Budget spent a total of \$2.1 billion on public safety and crime reduction. \$602 million of that money was earmarked for 1600 police and 100 transit safety police. Also, \$212 million was marked over four years to fund 940 protective services officers for all metropolitan train stations. The *Herald Sun* reported that at an increased cost of \$33 million, the rollout of these extra front-line personnel was moved up by six months. Now the increased police presence will be felt on the streets and railways in November 2014, just two weeks before the next state election. Other notable Budget spending included \$30 million to fund police station upgrades and construction and an extra 108 male prison beds.

Protection thin on the ground

The Age said that fewer than 10 per cent of the controversial rail station Police Protective Services officers would be deployed in the first year of the program. Police Chief Commissioner **Simon Overland** confirmed that only 93 PPS officers would be active by the end of next financial year, falling well short of the quarter competed rollout that Police Minister **Peter Ryan** indicated was expected by July next year.

Street safety report

Assaults on streets, at bus stops and train stations have skyrocketed in recent years, a state government report obtained by the *Herald Sun* revealed. An increase of almost

290 extra bashings a year on streets, footpaths and in lanes represented a jump of roughly 10 percent since 2007-08, the *Perceptions of Justice* survey showed. More than one in four Victorians surveyed said they feared they would be bashed or robbed.

That does not compute

The *Herald Sun* revealed that seven parole violators were allowed to walk the streets because of a failure in the police computer system, and were subsequently charged with murder for killings that occurred while in breach of their parole. In another embarrassing revelation, it emerged that Victoria police sent a request to its New South Wales counterpart to ask for 'excess' recruits to apply in Victoria.

In house / out of house

The *Herald Sun* said that confusing and inappropriate speed limits could be swept away following a study by VicRoads. The review was separate from an inquiry by Auditor General **Des Pearson** into speed cameras, which was announced the previous week before.

Defensive police chief

Police chief **Simon Overland** claimed in *The Age* that he is the victim of a campaign to undermine him. Overland had been forced to defend himself against reports he was losing the support of government and that two of his key deputies were set to resign. In a public rebuke, Premier **Ted Baillieu** said he retained confidence in Overland but he was 'not happy', warning him to fix long-standing problems 'in a speedy manner'. Those problems include a failure of police to communicate child protection concerns, a \$100 million cost blowout for a replacement crime database and flaws in the existing database, which failed to identify parole violators. According to *The Age*, the Baillieu government is to be frustrated by a lack of accountability from Victoria Police command and problems implementing its law-and-order policies.

Rhyme or reason

Victoria Police Chief Commissioner **Simon Overland** shocked the government by ordering his deputy to immediately leave his post and go on leave until his final day on August 5. According to *The Age*, it was previously agreed that **Sir Ken Jones** would work until late June. Premier **Ted Baillieu** admitted to *The Age* that he did not know the reason behind the removal of Sir Ken from the post as Deputy Chief Commissioner. He also revealed he had asked Overland not to tell him anything about the episode that he could not later disclose publicly. Overland suggested on 3AW that Sir Ken had leaked details of email correspondence between them after its contents were partially reported in the media. 'It's interesting that it's a private email between a deputy commissioner and myself [and] it's now in the public domain'. Overland said he could not reveal his reasons for dismissing Sir Ken, but denied it was personal. Baillieu commented that Overland

had left the public confused and concerned about the legality of his actions in removing Sir Ken.

Exile explanation

John Silvester at *The Age* wrote that **Sir Ken Jones** believed 'senior police were polishing crime figures to present the best possible outcome to the media and the public'. Silvester offered that Sir Ken might have been forced out because he lobbied to have the raw crime data released, and then likely leaked part of the statistics to 3AW broadcaster **Neil Mitchell**. State Ombudsman **George Brouwer** is investigating veracity the crime figures, and the source of the leak.

Worth Quoting

Democracy must be more than two wolves and a sheep voting on what to have for dinner.

- James Bovard

I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts.

- Will Rogers

A government big enough to give you everything you want, is strong enough to take everything you have.

- Thomas Jefferson

Labor lobbied the law

An *Age Investigation* claimed that the Brumby government successfully pressured Victoria Police Chief Commissioner **Simon Overland** to release favourable and incomplete crime statistics four weeks before last November's state election. The decision to release the data last October was reportedly a factor in the sudden exit of Deputy Commissioner **Sir Ken Jones**. *The Age* revealed that senior advisers from the former government met with Overland, Deputy Commissioner **Kieran Walshe** and Victoria Police media director **Nicole McKechnie** in October last year to urge police to expedite the release of data showing a reduction in assaults in Melbourne's central business district. Following the meeting, senior police officials, including Sir Ken and McKechnie, privately raised strong objections to complying with the request, arguing that it could be perceived as a partisan act by Victoria Police so close to a state election where law and order was a major issue. McKechnie is reported to have told Overland of her concerns directly.

Oversea Overland

The Age reported that Premier **Ted Baillieu** ordered an inquiry into the leadership of Victoria Police and criticised Chief Commissioner **Simon Overland** for failing to consult the government over his decision to remove his deputy **Sir Ken**

Jones. However, Baillieu said Overland retained the support of the government, and denied that the announcement of an investigation into force command showed a loss of faith in the embattled chief. *The Age* said the inquiry is to be headed by former Bushfires Royal Commission counsel **Jack Rush**, QC. Rush was reportedly tasked to probe Overland's recent behaviour, as well as the structure of police management and the ability of the force to deliver major information technology and administrative functions. *The Age* revealed that Rush and his staff would not be bound by normal rules surrounding evidence and would have the power to force witnesses to surrender documents. Police Association secretary **Greg Davies** said the inquiry did not go far enough, and called for a royal commission to root out leadership problems and restore public confidence.

Crime workings exposed

'Slick and secretive' is how *The Age* described **Tony Mokbel's** massive drug syndicate operation over the past decade, with an estimated turnover of \$180 million through its manufacturing and trafficking operations. Following his guilty pleas in the Victorian Supreme Court, intimate details of the syndicate's illicit enterprise have been revealed. One of the most notorious criminal episodes in the state's history has now drawn to a close. We all wait to see what happens now that so much information about so many of Mokbel's associates.

Rapke on the knuckles

Victoria's Chief Crown Prosecutor reprimanded the Office of Public Prosecutions over its handling of sexual assault cases. Specific criticism was reserved for its director, **Jeremy Rapke**, QC, for his role in overseeing a culture that is creating false hope and 'devastating' victims. In what *The Age* described as a searing attack that will further inflame tensions between himself and Rapke, **Gavin Silbert**, SC, said the OPP's practice of pursuing weak cases with little prospect of success had led to a drop in convictions and an increase in the number of cases being withdrawn before trial. Silbert said the practice tied up court resources and inflicted unnecessary trauma on complainants when their cases failed.

Rapke resigns

Director of Public Prosecutions **Jeremy Rapke**, QC, has resigned, following an inquiry that found he had erred in promoting a junior solicitor with whom he had a perceived sexual relationship, giving rise to a perceived conflict of interest. *The Age* said that the decision by Rapke had paved the way for a government overhaul of the Office of Public Prosecutions after months of public unrest, political fall-out and a bitter rift between the state's top two prosecutors. The inquiry was headed by retired Supreme Court judge **Frank Vincent**, QC and was deemed by the government too sensitive to release.

Laws for lawyers

Victoria's Legal Services Commissioner, **Michael McGarvie**, told *The Age's Leonie Wood* that when he became regulator of the state's lawyers in late 2009 his top priority was to visit the State Ombudsman, **George Brouwer**. Just three months earlier, Brouwer had published criticism of the office of the Legal Services Commissioner, highlighting failures in its management and investigation of complaints against Victorian lawyers. According to *The Age*, McGarvie and the Victorian Legal Services Board support a national board and a national commissioner with state-based representatives. McGarvie said he did not anticipate much disruption to his role under a national system. He embraced the prospect of uniformity of regulation across borders and said he wanted the office of the commissioner to be more visible to the wider community. He also said he wanted lawyers to resolve disputes with their clients before everything spirals out of control and ends up instead with lawyers being hauled before court and tribunals.

Raising the bar

A statement from Victoria's Chief Justice **Marilyn Warren**, and reported by *The Australian Financial Review*, said that she no longer wished to select which barristers would be elevated to senior council. As a result of her statement, the responsibility of choosing will move to the bar.

Hello

Supreme Court Justice **Kevin Bell** was reported by the *Herald Sun* as ruling that the economic benefits generated by the liquor industry were less important than 'harm minimisation', street amenity and the safety of families and communities. Justice Bell's comments put the future of the CBD's only 24-hour bottle shop in doubt. He overturned a decision by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal to allow the Exford Hotel in Russell St to continue to sell packaged liquor round the clock. The ruling meant that Victoria Police and the State Government would have a second chance to challenge the venues licence in VCAT.

MELBOURNE

Read this

The *Herald Sun* said Melbourne City Council could spend millions on an underground vacuum system to collect rubbish in the CBD and surrounding areas. The proposed system would see pipes 1.5 metres underground, over several kilometres, collecting rubbish and depositing it to central collection points via air suction. Engineers from Swedish company Envac visited Melbourne in December to assess the installation of the system here after a trip to London last year by councillor **Peter Clarke** to inspect similar systems. The Melbourne 'super-

vacuum' would include surface bins for rubbish disposal and could potentially be hooked up to restaurants, hospitals and office towers. Envac operates similar systems in Barcelona, Stockholm and several Asian cities. In London, Wembley Stadium and surrounding residential zones are connected to a vacuum system with obvious implications for Docklands and Etihad stadium.

City speed limits

The RACV gave conditional support to a Melbourne City Council proposal to cut the speed limit in the CBD to 40km/h to save the lives of pedestrians and cyclists. *The Age* said VicRoads was investigating the merits of a reduction of the limit from 50km/h to 40km/h, which has the backing of the Transport Accident Commission, Victoria Police and road safety experts. According to Melbourne City Council, 800,000 pedestrians use the city's streets every day. By 2014, that will rise to 1 million. Victoria Police figures show officers are called to 20 collisions a month involving pedestrians in the CBD. On average, two pedestrians are killed as a result of being hit by vehicles in the city each year, and 200 are injured, 75 of them seriously. Lord mayor **Robert Doyle** said the city supported a reduced speed limit for the Hoddle street grid, saying the injury rate for pedestrians was 'unacceptable'. Monash University Accident Research Centre pedestrian expert **Bruce Corben** backed the push to drop the CBD speed limit from 50km/h, but he said that authorities should be aiming for 30km/h, which would reduce the risk of pedestrian deaths by up to 95 per cent. But Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry spokesman **Chris James** said the business group would not support a move to lower the limit in the CBD because it would slow down the city too much, especially on through roads, such as Lonsdale and King streets.

Salvation is just around the corner

Melbourne Leader reported on the successful Salvation Army Youth Street Teams program helping the city's youth who have had too big a night get home safely. Salvation Army commanding officer Major **Brendan Nottle** told the paper that the response to the teams had been positive.

Establishment dethroned

Melbourne strip club Showgirls Bar 20 had its liquor licence cancelled after a push by Victoria Police. *The Age* reported that police challenged Showgirls Bar 20's liquor licence after 'a series of licensing breaches and serious issues'. The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal disqualified the club's licensee, Planet Platinum, from holding and managing a liquor licence. The company's two directors were also banned from holding a liquor licence for 18 months or participating in the liquor industry. *The Age* said that outcome represented a victory for the Grollo family in a long-running battle over real estate on King Street. According to the paper, Rialto half-owners **Lorenz** and **Rino**

Grollo have long wanted to redevelop the area at the base of the office towers, but had been stymied by the existence of the Bar 20 and Inflation nightclubs, which occupy the only two buildings on the block they do not control. In 2009 the Rialto joint venture had revealed it had snapped up most of the block between Collins Street and Flinders Lane.

EVENTS

Rotary

2011 marks the 90th year anniversary of Rotary Australia, with a celebration on May 23 at the Members Dining Room MCG, with special guest, Her Excellency Ms **Quentin Bryce AC**, Governor-General of the Commonwealth of Australia.

Swan song in Melbourne

Federal Treasurer **Wayne Swan** delivered his first Post-Budget address in Melbourne, highlighting the challenges and opportunities in the 2011-2012 Federal Budget, and how it would impact corporate Australia. The event was held at Melbourne Town Hall on Tuesday May 17, at the invitation of the PerCapita group.

Historical Musical

During May, *Letter from Melbourne* attended the production of the much-acclaimed *Doctor Zhivago* at Her Majesty's Theatre. This adaptation of Boris Pasternak's breathtaking love story during the Russian Revolution captured the essence of the epic drama with plenty of original dialogue throughout the performance, between the beguiling songs, which makes it something of a history lesson as well. It also has its moments of rich humour.

Just for laughs

Letter from Melbourne also attended the Melbourne International Comedy Festival. Of particular note was **Joel Creasey** in *Political Animal* at The Ladies Lounge. The evening had an emphasis on comedy, rather than politics. Well done to Joel.

PLANNING & BUILDING

House collapse

Australian Bureau of Statistics figures showed housing approvals had collapsed to a 10-year low, sliding 9 per cent in Victoria. Housing Industry association economist **Harley Dale** told *The Age* that 'the results make clear that steady interest rates are appropriate'.

Shrine renovation

Melbourne's Shrine of Remembrance will undergo its biggest redevelopment since the memorial was opened in 1934. According to *The Age*, ambitious plans for a \$35 million expansion would create a permanent exhibition space and a stand-alone education centre

could be completed in time for the centenary of the Gallipoli landing in 2015.

Inner city apartments

The Age claimed that competition in Melbourne's booming apartment market is taking a toll, with some high-profile developments stumbling after well-publicised launches. BIS Shrapnel estimates about 4,800 new apartment dwellings will be completed in the CBD and inner city areas in the 2013-14 financial year, a sharp increase on the previous peak of 3,600 during the 2005-06 apartment boom.

Coles, or otherwise

Current building guidelines call for 15 homes a hectare in Melbourne's growth areas. However, research provided to *The Age* by urban designers SJB Urban shows it is not enough to make even a small local shopping centre or corner shop within walking distance viable. The report *Shall we Dense?* called for new suburbs to have an average of 25 to 30 dwellings a hectare by providing a better mix of housing, including townhouses and apartments. Report co-author and urban designer **Simon McPherson** told *The Age* that 15 houses a hectare would mean the loss of more than local shops. 'That lack of viability then extends to other types of centres and facilities,' McPherson said. 'It is not just retail, it is community facilities, it is public transport'.

Trust's tower anger

The approval of a 36-story office tower above the Le Louvre building in Collins Street sparked controversy. National Trust chief executive **Martin Purslow** told *The Age* his organisation had 'cut its teeth' defending Collins Street and was disappointed the development had been approved. He said it would establish a dangerous precedent. The development by the Queensland Investment Corporation, designed by architects Woods Bagot, won the support of lord mayor **Robert Doyle**, who described it as 'a good architectural result'. Planning Minister **Matthew Guy** pointed out that Melbourne had 'a major shortage of commercial office space' and that the development would 'integrate well into the Paris end of Collins Street'.

Planning a shake-up

The Age reported that state Planning Minister **Matthew Guy** was planning a shake-up of Victoria's planning laws. Addressing a Property Council lunch, Guy said a new 'robust code assessment process' would soon be introduced to grant building proposals that matched planning criteria much quicker approval. He reportedly said the changes would be controversial but reminded the audience that the government controlled both houses of Parliament. However, *The Age* published the concerns of a local council group, the Municipal Association of Victoria, that communities could be shut out of the planning process if the system went too far.

Fringe growth

Victorian regional cities are growing fast but the biggest population increases are still on Melbourne's fringe, according to the Victorian Population Bulletin 2011, published at the end of April. Ballarat reportedly grew by more than 2 per cent last year and its population is approaching 100,000, while Shepparton now has nearly 50,000 residents thanks to a 1.8 per cent growth spurt. Geelong, Bendigo and Warrnambool also recorded strong growth in 2009-10. The City of Wyndham, which includes Werribee and Pt Cook, had the biggest population increase of any Australian municipality, adding 12,604. The City of Whittlesea, which has South Morang and Mill Park, City of Casey and City of Melton also had solid growth.

Fringe needs a cut

A leaked confidential report seen by *The Age* revealed that Melbourne is building thousands more houses on its sprawling fringe than there is demand for - while at the same time the supply of houses in established suburbs was dramatically inadequate. According to *The Melbourne Residential Market: Demand & Supply Overview*, new housing developments on the city's fringe were the only areas in Melbourne where building approvals outstrip demand, with a surplus of 4775 houses. The report concluded that Melbourne overall had a housing shortfall of more than 6000 homes a year because of a shortage of housing in established suburbs.

License to sell

Hundreds of under-qualified real estate agents reported by *The Age* to be exploiting a legal loophole that enabled them to own and operate Victorian estate agencies after just five days training in New South Wales. The Real Estate Institute of Victoria attacked the practice as a 'blatant scam', potentially exposing home buyers and sellers to unprofessional and incompetent agents.

Last dock in the Docklands

The Australian Financial Review reported that the last undeveloped plot in the Docklands had attracted 15 registrations of interest. According to state planning authority VicUrban's acting chief executive **Sam Sangster**, the two hectare plot on Batman's Hill with '140 meters of Collins Street frontage is rare'.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

A bronze Queen Victoria

Yarra City Council is spending \$120,000 on a bronze statue of **Queen Victoria** to mark the 160th anniversary of the founding of the state named after her. It would replace a timber statue of Queen Victoria that once stood in Fitzroy North's Edinburgh Gardens but vanished more than a century ago. It claimed the project

would enhance Yarra's appeal as a cultural destination. Yarra mayor Cr **Alison Clarke** said the council strongly supported public art but there had been no money set aside, yet.

A private screening

The Herald Sun reported that the City of Monash would go ahead with the installation of a \$45,000 screen at a public pool, to allow Muslim women to have privacy at female-only swim sessions. The screen was approved despite the dissent from a female councillor.

The levy was dry

The Coalition Government has brought forward the landfill levy by 12 months in the Budget. Some local councils will have to raise an additional \$500,000, passed on directly to families through higher rates. Municipal Association of Victoria president **Bill McArthur** told the *Herald Sun* that it was another 'untenable burden' on households. The biggest burden would be on smaller rural communities. The change is expected to result in Melbourne landfill costs jumping from last year's \$30 to \$44 a tonne, while regional areas will increase from \$15 to \$22 a tonne.

Tales of bureaucracy

The City of Melbourne provided fortnightly massage sessions for its parking inspectors and local laws officers under a program to relieve stress and anxiety, according to documents released under Freedom of Information laws and seen by the *Herald Sun*. Melbourne City Council reportedly paid about \$28,000 from 2008-2010, mainly for the benefit of parking and traffic branch officers. Council CEO **Kathy Alexander** told the *Herald Sun* that several Operational Health & Safety issues had arisen 'due to the physical and sometimes stressful nature of their work'. 'Fifteen-minute corporate massages were offered to staff as a new and creative way to relieve stress and anxiety,' she said. The two-year program ended last year. Ratepayers Victoria president **Jack Davis** said it was a waste of money for parking officers to get massages.

Butt-out on beach

Smoking was to be banned on every Melbourne beach from Altona to Elwood. *The Age* reported that Hobsons Bay Council had become the third Victorian municipality to ban beachgoers from lighting up. Those caught smoking facing fines of \$200. The move was welcomed by Quit Victoria, which said public bans were critical in 'de-normalising' smoking. Hobsons Bay mayor **Michael Raffoul** said the council had acted because of a lack of state government laws banning smoking in outdoor areas. He said cigarette butts made up a significant proportion of litter at beaches and playgrounds in the municipality and a ban had been welcomed by residents. *The Age* said that the City of Port Phillip had introduced similar laws regarding smoking on beaches last year. Also, the Surf Coast Shire banned smoking in 2008 in a Victorian first. A 2009 Cancer Council

Victoria survey found 77 per cent of 4,501 Victorians polled said smoking should not be allowed in outdoor areas where children were present, with 63 per cent saying smoking should be banned on beaches.

TOURISM

Packer pulls no punches

Casino king **James Packer** expressed concerns in *The Age* that our tourist industry is out of place, out of step and running out of time to cash in the vast riches on offer from Asia. Packer, Australia's highest-profile billionaire, is spending about \$2 billion upgrading his Melbourne and Perth casinos to attract Chinese high-rollers and middle-class Asians. He saw the latest Tourism Australia ads on US television, which show three Americans in the back of a Toyota four-wheel drive, bush-bashing through a paddock while watching kangaroos jump about. According to Packer, it's not enough. 'We need to get more sophisticated if we want to attract middle-class Asian tourists'.

TRANSPORT

Little movement on transport

The *Herald Sun* said that an extra 30 million trips would be made on Melbourne's public transport in the next year. But the paper reported that there was no new money for trams or buses, nor for any major road projects, such as WestLink, in the State Budget. There was \$37 million set aside for studies, including into planning lines to Doncaster, Rowville, and the two airports, Avalon and Tullamarine. However, the first seven of 40 new trains will be ordered at a cost of \$222 million.

RAIL

Off the rails

An **Engineers Australia** report called on the Victorian government to set up an independent body to guide priorities for infrastructure funding. According to *The Weekly Times*, the group's infrastructure report card rated rail as only a 'D', and local roads a 'C-'.

Jungle Jim

A report by Yarra Trams for the Baillieu government revealed that Melbourne has one of the slowest tram networks in the world. According to the report, a 50 per cent increase in patronage over the last decade, combined with worsening traffic conditions has been blamed for the networks poor performance. The average speed of a tram in Melbourne is just 16 km per hour with 17 per cent of a journey time spent stopped at traffic lights. *Tram Priority* report makes three key recommendations based on international examples, which could

cut travel times by 30 per cent. First, trams on Swanston Street through the CBD should be given 'instant priority' at all traffic lights. Second, all routes travelling east-west across the CBD should have more 'green time' at intersections. Last, trams need a clearer run at Melbourne's 690 intersections where trams compete with cars.

Swanston street

After decades of debate, confusing changes and shambolic decision-making, *The Age* announced that Melbourne City Council had settled on the details to turn Swanston Street into a car-free thoroughfare. Safety authorities gave the plan final approval and work was scheduled begin on the \$7.8 million first stage in front of the State Library on May 20.

Snails' pace

The *Herald Sun* yesterday revealed that Metro trains had been monitoring train speeds with radar guns and checking CCTV footage to check drivers' performances. 10 train drivers had been investigated over allegations of deliberately running their trains slowly. Rail, Tram and Bus Union locomotive division president **Terry Sheedy** told the paper he was unaware of the 10 cases and accused Metro of fabricating the story. But Metro chief executive **Andrew Lezala** said all 10 drivers had a RTBU representative present when they were interviewed. Train punctuality plummeted to 77 per cent in March, the lowest on record and well below the 88 per cent minimum requirement.

The times are a-changing

The *Herald Sun* reported that Melbourne's ageing fleet of Hitachi trains were rushed back into service so Metro could cope with its new timetable. The new timetable was a major test for the rail operator, with the introduction of the biggest shake-up to rail travel in Melbourne for more than a decade, including an extra 635 services a week. Crowds were expected to grow at Flinders Street and Richmond station, where more passengers would change trains.

Colour me pink

Yarra Trams released a brochure advertising improvements to the presentation of customer information. The changes included a redesigned and brightly coloured route map on every tram, more signs at stops and mobile device timetable and tram tracking applications.

Pet friendly

In 2008, then Victorian Transport minister **Lynne Kosky** allowed V/Line to ban pets on regional train services. However, *The Age* reported that current minister **Terry Mulder** overturned the decision and that passengers could now bring their dogs and cats aboard 'select country services'. Animals on short trips will need to be muzzled, and will need to be carried in an animal container on longer trips. Bureaucracy loses sometimes! But Rail, Tram and Bus Union state secretary **Trevor**

Dobbyn told the *Herald Sun* that allowing animals on trains was in contravention of the workers' agreement with V/Line. He argued that introducing animals onto trains had occupational health and safety implications, particularly animals reliving themselves and what may occur in the even of an accident. *The Age* wrote that pets are still banned until further notice, with the *Herald Sun* reported police escorted a man and his dog off a train after he refused to leave voluntarily, citing the recent law change.

V/Line on time

V/Line management added between three and six minutes to the scheduled times of most country services. According to *The Age*, the changes had been approved by the Department of Transport. In the most extreme cases, such as the 5.50pm from Bairnsdale to Melbourne, up to 10 minutes had been added to train travel times. 'It's about making sure the timetables reflect the traveling times that passengers have been experiencing,' V/Line spokesman **James Kelly** told *The Age*. He said that it was important that travelers had a reliable timetable, and the operator had found it very difficult to meet the old schedule.

ROAD

The knowledge

The *Herald Sun* rumored that Melbourne taxi drivers could be forced to undergo a local version of The Knowledge, the famous training regimen for London cabbies. The taxi inquiry, headed by Professor **Allan Fels**, would reportedly consider a major upgrade of driver training from the current 115 hours. The current taxi course includes 40 hours of training on Melbourne's major roads, services and attractions as part of the 115-hour course. In contrast, prospective cabbies take between two and four years to get The Knowledge to work anywhere in Greater London.

Taxi troubles

A report released to *The Age* as part of the government's taxi industry inquiry found that satisfaction had plunged to 53.4 per cent, in the first quarter of this year, the lowest level since figures were first collected in 2005. The Victorian Taxi Directorate reported almost 5000 complaints last year, marking the sixth increase in a row and up from 1543 when record taking started in 2004. Transport minister **Terry Mulder** said the survey results show the worst possible outcome. 'They're at their absolute lowest,' he said. The review, headed by former ACCC chief **Allan Fels**, will look at issues including increasing passenger safety, taxi numbers, fare rates, industry regulation and driver training.

All roads lead to cars

Analysis by the Australian Conservation Foundation showed that governments across

Australia are spending at least four times more on building roads and bridges than on public transport.

Coalition of the willing

A coalition of western suburbs mayors planned to request that the Baillieu government proceed with plans to build an alternative to the West Gate Bridge as the population in Melbourne's west booms. The mayors of Wyndham, Melton, Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong told *The Age* they would sign a letter to the state government. The move came as the future of the former government's \$2.5 billion road tunnel from Footscray to Docklands looked increasingly uncertain, with Transport Minister **Terry Mulder** refusing to say if it would go ahead.

Seal the deal

The Weekly Times reported that a 30-year campaign to fix a major road on the Omeo Highway had made progress. Member for Benambra **Bill Tilly** was instrumental in securing an \$8 million pledge from the Baillieu government to seal the road. Once completed, it is hoped that access to large population centres in Gippsland and Melbourne from the Mitta Valley would bring more tourism and life to the area.

Buckle-up bus

The Australasian College of Road Safety wrote to Premier **Ted Baillieu** to demand that all Victorian school buses be fitted with seatbelts, and more be done to ensure occupants of regional buses wear seatbelts. *The Age* said that the letter was motivated by a V/Line coach crash near Portland in 2009 in which three passengers died. A coroners inquiry reportedly found that all three would have survived had they been wearing seatbelts.

AIR

The solo patrol

A former security officer told the *Herald Sun* that Avalon Airport, which handles a million passengers a year, had only one guard patrolling the terminal, the carpark and sensitive sites that include the control tower between 10pm and 6am. 'If anything happens, they're alone. There is no one else,' he said. The paper believed that at least one other guard is present at the airport at those times but does not patrol public areas. Avalon could not be contacted, but security operator Charter Resources' boss **Mike Ramsey** said that 'There's adequate security at Avalon'.

International arrivals

A Melbourne Airport press release stated that airport had seen strong international passenger growth for the third quarter. It recorded an 11 per cent increase compared to the same period last year, taking international passengers to 1,622,462. Domestic passenger numbers also increased on the 2010 numbers, recoding a

3 per cent jump to 5,2326,056. Melbourne Airport CEO **Chris Woodruff** said that the international passenger growth reflected strong growth in key markets, increased capacity and Melbourne's strong major events calendar. 'Our passenger growth for the third quarter was driven predominantly by our key Asian markets including China, India, South Korea and the Philippines... In particular China,' Woodruff noted.

PORTS

Criminal security

More than 100 security guards found guilty of sex crimes, drug dealing and assault would lose their licences as part of the latest clean up the industry. However six years after a big industry shakeout, the *Herald Sun* believes that a hard core of criminals retained unofficial links with local security firms and doubts remain about security at airports and government sites.

Strike action

The ABC online reported that maritime union workers took major strike action over a pay dispute, disrupting shipping activity at Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane. Stevedoring company Patrick director **Paul Garaty** said the 24-hour industrial action at the end of April affected 15 ships that were carrying about 17,800 containers.

Punt pays off

The Baillieu government's Budget has put in \$1.4 million to run the cross Yarra punt ferry service daily. *The Age* reported that the Department of Transport would fund the punt for an initial four years. The punt now operates on weekends between 10am and 4pm. Under the plan in this week's Budget - which may start around October to coincide with Ride to Work Day - it will initially run on weekdays during mornings and afternoons. It now costs \$5 one-way, and \$7 return, and punt operator **Rob Horner** hoped that government funding will see that cut too. Transport Minister **Terry Mulder** said 'We are determined to think outside the square when it comes to transport solutions'.

Bottleneck of port

As the nation's largest international container port, Melbourne is crucial to southeast Australia's dairy and grain industries. But Shipping Australia chief executive **Llew Russell** told *The Weekly Times* that past and present state governments had failed to make any real investment in the port to alleviate growing congestion at the docks and within the terminals. The Port of Melbourne forecasted trade would grow from 1.9 million 20-foot containers last financial year to 2.71 million containers by 2015 and 3.55 million by 2020. Yet the Victorian Government's plan to expand the Port of Hastings to alleviate Melbourne's congestion would take at least

10 years, and more likely 15, to develop, Russell said. Another Government plan to shift car shipments from Melbourne's Webb Dock to Geelong had also been dismissed by industry analysts as too expensive and unlikely to go ahead. Engineers Australia's latest infrastructure report highlighted the need for the Government to invest in a new network of suburban freight terminals to take pressure off the Port of Melbourne.

THE WORKPLACE

IR

Oh dear!

Melbourne City Council faces a revolt from parking officers, according to *The Age*. Parking officers are unhappy with the introduction of electronic sensors and cameras that automatically detect vehicles breaching parking laws. The Australian Services Union said it would consider instructing officers to ignore parking infringements and not issue fines, if the council proceeded with the plan that will cost about 20 jobs.

The Age outsourcing

The *Herald Sun* reported that about 250 employees at *The Age* staged a picnic protest against Fairfax Media's decision to outsource sub-editing work, a move that will cost dozens of jobs. Another 150 Fairfax workers protested in Sydney. The publisher planned to outsource sub-editing of news, sport and business content for *The Age*, *The Sunday Age*, *The Sydney Morning Herald* and the *Sun-Herald* to Pagemasters, a subsidiary of Australian Associated Press from July 1. The move will mean the loss of 38 jobs at *The Age*.

COMMUNITY

Halving homelessness

The Victorian government refused to sign up to a federal target to halve homelessness by 2020. Instead, *The Age* reported that Baillieu's government was preparing its own multimillion-dollar strategy to cut the number of Victorians 'sleeping rough'. The latest census figures suggest more than 20,500 people are at present homeless in Victoria. Sate Housing Minister **Wendy Lovell** said the government did not accept the Commonwealth's goal to halve homelessness by 2020, because it was an 'aspirational goal' that would be too hard to measure given there is no nationally consistent and accepted definition of homelessness.

Elderly housing

A motion to be brought before the Victorian Liberal State Council would suggest older residents who occupy large blocks of land

should subdivide their large blocks in exchange for a new unit within their original piece of land. The *Herald Sun* said this would mean residents could be forced from their homes to live in a unit a fraction of the size, on their old block of land. Community Housing Federation of Victoria spokesman **Steve Staikos** told the paper that no one should be forced to move if the measure was taken up by the Government and became policy.

Victoria Street and drugs

The Age reported that Victoria Street, Richmond, the corner of Lennox Street, had become a tipping point in the fight against drugs. Pop on down and see the action. Just a few peddlers, buyers and the occasional police uniform. Local MP **Richard Wynne** said that the illicit drug trade and associated crime threatened the viability of a healthy community. Wynne, however, rejected Yarra City Council's call for the introduction of a safe injecting room. He told *The Age* that debate failed to win support 10 years ago when heroin deaths rivalled the road toll. They were now a fraction of that level. Instead, he supported local residents and business people in pushing for closed circuit television cameras on the street. Yarra mayor **Alison Clarke** said a safe injecting facility had been operating for more than a decade in Kings Cross, Sydney, with a consequent reduction in evidence of public drug use and no fatal overdoses during the period. Premier **Ted Baillieu** ruled out the necessary legislative changes required for a safe injecting trial.

Not aging well

In the *Herald Sun*, former Victorian Premier **Jeff Kennett** prophesied the end was nigh at *The Age*. 'As a result of competition, different buying habits, radio, the arrival of television and computers, the internet, mobile phones, the iPhone and iPad, we are seeing rapid changes. Our news and information are available almost instantly from many sources. I think we are quickly approaching the time when one of our two major Victorian newspapers will cease to publish, at least in its current form. I predict that paper will be *The Age*'.

Stop and shop

Some Coles petrol stations were reported by the *Herald Sun* to be trialing plans to turn its 650 outlets into pickup points for groceries ordered online.

Islam is-good

The Age said that Australia's first Islamic museum is to be built in Thornbury and would work to dispel stereotypes an often misunderstood religious minority. The project was spearheaded by a group of Melbourne Muslims, including prominent business figures **Ahmed** and **Moustafa Fahour**, and will seek to showcase the community's cultural contribution in a mainstream museum setting.

The pages of history

It was announced by *The Age* that Telstra would no longer deliver residential telephone



The Mockridge Fountain in the City Square. Photo courtesy of John Tozer.

directories in Melbourne or Sydney as Sensis indicated that the majority of people do not use the 1704-page tomb.

Vale

Flight Lieutenant **Henry Lacy Smith**, shot down over Normandy on June 11, 1944, aged 27, received a full military burial on April 19 after his aircraft was recovered in November 2010 from the bottom of the River Orne. Smith's 78-year-old nephew said of the ceremony 'what a fitting tribute'. **Dr David More O'Sullivan OAM**, honorary life member of the Medical History Society of Victoria. **Barry Ambrose Counsel**, Rotary club member of 41 years. **Hon Justice Hubert Frederico John Pascoe**, founding Principle of Yarra Valley Grammar from 1965-1970. **Dr Ernst H Ehrmann OAM**, member of the Australian Society of Endodontology. **Friar Anthony Robin Hally**. **Douglas Permezal**. **Jock Pirie Herbert**, senior master at Yarra Valley Grammar. **Barry Connolly**, former Footscray VFL player, legendary coach and administrator of country football, particularly Shepparton and the Coulburn Valley Football League. **John Daniel Reddan Stutt**. **Richard Palmer Rasmussen**, ex Royal Australian Navy servicemen. A 37 year old Balwyn North woman died when she was hit by a car occupied by her 3 children - aged two, four, and six, - she was taking items out of the back of the 4WD when it rolled down the steep driveway. **Gary McDermott**, aged 60, Partner at Price Waterhouse Coopers. **Greg McNichols**, aged 45, was an Australian real-estate developer proclaimed a hero by his tenants in the crime and recession-riddled US city of Detroit for whom he was trying to provide a liveable environment when he was murdered. **Lionel Edward Rose, MBE**, aged 62, famous aboriginal boxer. **James Austin Copland Mackie**, aged 86, a key player in dismantling White Australia policy. **Walther Denis Richardson**, aged 83, a librarian key in reforming and expanding the National Library of Australia and the Library at the University of Melbourne. Associate Professor

Zoran Georgievski, aged 40, eye specialist. **Clare Isabelle Mildenhall (nee Marshall)**, mother of former Victorian parliamentarian **Bruce Mildenhall**. **Grace Mitchell**, aged 94, a craftswoman and pastry cook, for 16 years from 1950, her pastry shop and Devonshire tea rooms became a popular destination for Melbournians who would catch the train to Eltham for the pleasure. **Tony Hutchinson**, managing director of HCF Life from 1985 to 2010. **Bob Davis**, aged 82, footballer who captained and coached Geelong, he was to Geelong what Ron Barassi is to Melbourne. **Ralph Hunt**, aged 83, National Party minister in several conservative federal governments, served as the party's president in 1968-69, held the health, transport and construction portfolios during Malcolm Fraser's prime ministership between 1975 and 1983, Member for Gwydir at a by-election in June 1969 and held the seat until he retired in 1989. **Colin Noel Bull OAM**, aged 88. **William John 'Bill' Hunter**, aged 71, cancer, iconic Australian actor in roles such as *Pricilla, Queen of the Desert, Strictly Ballroom, Gallipoli* and *Muriel's Wedding*, with two films yet to screen - *Red Dog* beginning August 11, and his role as Bart Cummings in *The Cup* expected to release on October 13.

Claude Choules, the last surviving veteran of WWI, died in his sleep in Perth, aged 110, where he had lived almost 85 years, served aboard HMS *Revenge* seeing the surrender and scuttling of the German fleet, served with the Royal Australian Navy in WWII, disposed of the first German mine to wash ashore in Australia, near Esperance, Western Australia, not one to look back he never returned to England after coming to Australia in 1926: 'I don't think there was anything in my life I wish had not happened' he said in 2009.

Tornados in the southern United States killed 337 people, it was the country's deadliest twister season since 1925.

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