

LETTER FROM CANBERRA

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



Pre-Budget Edition
5 April to 3 May 2011
Issue 33

INSIDE

plus... Pages 9 - 12 Latest Roy Morgan findings including real unemployment, airline satisfaction, car buying intentions

Carbon tax debate brings out details
Up-coming Budget details already
Refugee challenges details
NBN shock. Stakeholders challenging
Swan No to Singapore ASX bid

Defense leaders exchange views
ANZ' Smith critical of Gillard
Finessing financial adviser industry
Finessing uniform national
work safe laws
Chubb new Chief Scientist

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Letter From Canberra is focused on the interface of business and government, with enough politics and bureaucracy to understand the, if any, relevant business opportunities.

We have been publishing *Letter from Canberra's* sister publication *Letter from Melbourne*, a public policy digest, for 16 years. Commencing with the Kennett era corporatisation and privatisation of energy and other utilities and the other fresh broom approach of a new government, where we focused on business opportunities. Increasingly, we included matters in the other states and adopted a more federal focus.

The recent change in federal government opens up new business opportunities, particularly the government's new emphasis on climate change, carbon trading, water, industrial relations, education, information technology and the traditional sectors.

For many years, our other publications have included the well-known federal government Departmental Wall Chart (NOW AVAILABLE at 03 9654 1300 or www.affairs.com.au). We conduct seminars and informal luncheons and meetings in Melbourne, Canberra and Sydney.

Most people have their clipping services and a range of email products/newsletters/etc. At the end of the month, *Letter from Canberra* gives a broad overview of what has been going on, not just in one industry but across all industries and the world of business and government generally. Objective. Independent. Read it on the plane. Or at a coffee shop in New York. And then give it to a friend who is interested in Australia.

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EDITORIAL:

Our very busy political year. Challenges for the PM.

The big issues are the challenges that the Prime Minister commenced the year with, and most of which remain unresolved. The carbon tax, the refugees issues, the NBN (lots of interesting 'little' details coming out there) and the mining tax. The PM's developing role in our foreign affairs is keeping most of us very interested.

Unemployment is appearing as an issue, in particular the debate as to whether it is high or low, on which figures. The Budget is being drip-fed to us before Tuesday 10 May at about 7pm, which annual Budget Night is one of those several touch-stones on the political calendar. Very importantly so this year.

The Royal Wedding shows how the Brits do things, including big events. Time for an important reflection by all of us about where we have come from in the past several hundred years, with the society and the system of government that we have in Australia. Without even getting into the republican debate.

Our cover includes the five buildings that have housed the national parliament of Australia over 111 years. Before the Federation of Australia on 5 May 1901, Westminster was responsible for the colonial parliaments.

The Royal Exhibition Building in Melbourne was the site of the first sitting of Federal parliament. In Section 125 of the Australian Constitution, it states that 'The Parliament shall sit at Melbourne until it meet at the seat of Government'. The Victorian Parliament House was, in fact, where Federal Parliament sat until 1927 (the Victorian Parliament met at the Royal Exhibition Building). (Old or) Provisional Parliament House was opened by the Duke and Duchess of York in Canberra on 9 May 1927, a temporary structure until New Parliament House, on Capital Hill, was opened by Queen Elizabeth II on 9 May 1988.

Lindsay Tanner's new book *Sideshow: Dumbing Down Democracy*. You will have my review next month.

This edition is a little smaller, covering just 30 days and no federal parliamentary sitting days.

Only two coffees to read this.



INDEX

IN APPROXIMATE ORDER OF INTEREST OVER THE PAST MONTH

GOVERNANCE	3	BUSINESS	10
CARBON TAX	4	DEFENCE	12
CLIMATE CHANGE. ENVIRONMENT.	5	EDUCATION	12
IMMIGRATION. REFUGEES	6	INFRASTRUCTURE. TRANSPORT	13
FOREIGN AFFAIRS	6	JUSTICE	13
ECONOMY. TAX. BUDGET	7	HEALTH	13
BROADBAND & IT	8	SOCIETY	14
INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS. EMPLOYMENT	9	AGRICULTURE & WATER	15

WANTED. SENSIBLE UNIVERSITY STUDENT, MAYBE WITH A BACKGROUND IN POLITICS OR LAW, INTERESTED IN A PART-TIME INTERNSHIP. PLEASE CONTACT.

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GOVERNANCE

All Labor, no party

Prime Minister **Julia Gillard**'s trip to Queensland in early April, which was supposed to help win votes, was tarnished by fighting within the Labor party, according to *The Australian*'s **Michael McKenna**. The events McKenna singled out included the withdrawal of **Anthony Chisolm** as a candidate for the ALP's national secretary (see next article for final results), local Labor brawling, and **Kevin Rudd**'s show-stealing visit to Queensland with foreign dignitaries and performance on the ABC's *Q and A*.

ALP's internal woes

The candidacy of former Gillard staffer **Amanda Lampe** to replace **Karl Bitar** as ALP national secretary sparked outrage amongst party members, *The Australian* reported. Lampe, who was involved in the 2010 election campaign that nearly cost Labor government, left the Prime Minister's office early this year after criticism that she put media management ahead of policy work. Labor Right faction leader **Joe de Bruyn** said that Lampe's lack of experience in the federal secretariat counted against her. Lampe's only rival for the position was South Australian state secretary **Michael Brown**, after **Anthony Chisolm** withdrew his candidacy. However, with the support of Labor's Right, former ACTU official and one-time press secretary to **Kevin Rudd**, **George Wright** secured the position. Most recently Wright had worked for the National Australia Bank.

Hyper-bole? Is that one better than the Superbowl, Julia?

Prime Minister **Julia Gillard** was the butt of jokes and cartoons after her mispronunciation of the word 'hyperbole' on the ABC's *Q and A*. Gillard pronounced the tricky word 'hyper-bowl,' much to the amusement of all around her.

Suave Rudd shows Gillard how it's done

The Australian's **Greg Sheridan** wrote an opinion article complimenting **Kevin Rudd**'s composure and eloquence during his performance on the ABC's *Q and*

A. Sheridan said that Rudd had subtly but effectively managed to undermine successor **Julia Gillard**, who had last year been opposed to Rudd's own emissions trading scheme.

Switzer slam

Peter Switzer, television host and occasional columnist, wrote a scathing opinion article in *The Australian* that slammed politicians' handling of small business issues throughout Australia. He made reference to the New South Wales Labor Party's recent electoral thrashing, lamenting that nobody knew who successive Small Business Ministers were because they hadn't made any positive changes during their time in office. Switzer also noted that any improvement on small business policy had the potential to sway up to four million votes at a federal level.

Is the New-man right for the job?

Concerns were raised that newly elected Queensland Liberal National Party leader **Campbell Newman** was too focused on Brisbane, and didn't have the experience to win over the regions, *The Australian* reported. Newman, former lord mayor of Brisbane, was questioned on his regional credentials in the LNP state parliamentary partyroom the day after being elected unopposed as leader, and he had some detailed positive answers.

Newman criticises privatisation

The Queensland government's \$14 billion privatisation program came under fire from the new leader of the Queensland Liberal National Party, **Campbell Newman**, *The Financial Review* reported. While Newman has yet to release any policies of his own as head of the party, he quickly took up the pro-public ownership stance that has served the LNP well for years.

Tasmania – those lucky devils!

The Australian's Tasmania correspondent, **Matthew Denholm**, wrote an extended feature analysing how the island state has become reliant on the mainland for financial support. Denholm noted that for every dollar it raises in GST, it gets rewarded with \$1.60

from the federal government, a rate second only to that of the Northern Territory. The fact that Tasmania produces very little in the way of resources, and receives almost 70 per cent of its budget from federal funding, has fostered 'the sentiment that the island is bludging off the rest of the nation.' Denholm also quoted **Troy Harper**, chairman of the peak Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, who said that Tasmania was 'a mendicant state and should grow up and take responsibility for ourselves, or else surrender its statehood.'

Labor finds policies taxing in the polls

The Australian published Newspoll figures showing that support for Labor had slumped to an eight-year low as the public continued to show its disdain for a carbon tax. The figures showed Labor trailing 45 per cent to 55 on the two-party preferred poll, with **Julia Gillard** slipping to 46 per cent on the preferred prime minister poll.

Ever-Greens lament party's new ways

Two inaugural members of the Greens party, former senator **Norm Sanders** and co-founder **Drew Hutton**, told *The Australian* that they were concerned at the party's new policy direction. Sanders said that the Greens had 'lost the plot' as they shifted away from their core business of the environment and into other policy areas, while Hutton took aim at the 'ludicrous' decision by the New South Wales Greens to back an international trade boycott of Israel in the recent election campaign. Both agreed that the split between old-school environmentalists and the new ideologically driven urban activists could destabilise the party.

Hanson gaffe

A humorous snippet in *The Australian* noted that controversial right-wing politician **Pauline Hanson** had unwittingly accused her supporters of being stupid after she admitted that she lost a lot of votes from people ticking below the line instead of beside her name.

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Labor: not quite Right

University of Queensland economics fellow **John Quiggin** wrote an opinion article in *The Financial Review* commenting on the Labor government's increased move towards conservative policies under **Julia Gillard**. Quiggin noted that 'Gillard shares the goals of the political right but is unwilling to take any serious action to promote them,' and described her thinking as 'not inspiring.' He made particular note of Gillard's abandonment of **Kevin Rudd's** Education Revolution, with the new leader preferring the previous Howard government's education funding system. A subsequent article by *The Financial Review's* **Geoff Kitney** noted that Gillard's shift towards the right might have been an attempt to steal some of **Tony Abbott's** conservative vote, but was causing unrest within her own party.

Rudder's astray

Outspoken Labor personality **Bill Ludwig** took a swipe at **Kevin Rudd's** loyalty to the party, accusing him of putting his personal interests 'first, second, third and fourth,' *The Australian* reported. Ludwig's outburst came amid internal fears that Rudd might be trying to destabilise the party as revenge for his ousting as prime minister.

Young voters abandon Labor

Extraordinary data collected by Newspoll over a decade and published in *The Australian* showed a huge decline in Labor's share of the youth vote since 2002. Labor's share of the 18-24 year old vote peaked at 51.8 per cent in 2007, just before **Kevin Rudd** was elected prime minister, but has now dropped to 32.1 per cent under **Julia Gillard**. The Coalition's youth vote has remained remarkably consistent, rising from 30.9 to 31.1 per cent over the decade, whereas the Greens have skyrocketed from 8.2 to 27.3 per cent. A similarly gloomy poll published a day later in *The Age* had Labor's two-party preferred vote slipping down to 44 per cent, the lowest in 15 years.

Swan dive

Newspoll results published exclusively in *The Australian* showed that **Wayne Swan's** approval rating as preferred Labor leader had fallen to just 10 per cent. The news was also negative for Prime Minister **Julia Gillard**, whose rating fell to 29 per cent, significantly behind predecessor **Kevin Rudd** at 36 per cent.

Black future for Gillard

Former Labor senator turned CEO of Australian Development Strategies, **John Black**, wrote an opinion article in *The Financial Review* predicting that Prime Minister **Julia Gillard's** days were numbered. Black noted that all the major parties had suffered an identity crisis and were not targeting their policies at those they were supposed to represent, and that the worst offender was federal Labor, which had been drifting towards the right ever since Gillard took the reins. The article was accompanied by a picture of Gillard with ousted New South Wales Labor premier **Kristina Kenally**, and Black wrote that '90 per cent of the net two-party-preferred swing against Labor was driven by a visceral loathing of New South Wales state Labor – but Gillard and Swan are now down

there with them.' *The Australian's* **Paul Kelly** wrote an opinion piece along similar lines, noting that Gillard had put her entire political career in the hands of the carbon tax, and that if it failed she could be doomed.

Soylent green is Melbourne

Former federal Finance Minister **Lindsay Tanner** told *The Australian* that he 'realises now' that the seat of Melbourne would have fallen to the Greens, even if he had contested the last federal election. Tanner is promoting his book, *Sideshow: Dumbing Down Democracy*. Until recently, he has said little since leaving politics last year. His book evidently emphasises that the media (cycle) creates the message, it is their entertainment industry. And the politicians follow the media rules. The media is not interested in issues. Lindsay Tanner.. Book of the year, Australian of the year, perhaps!

Public service money man

New legislation that is still to pass through the Senate would give unprecedented power to one public service 'paymaster,' *The Financial Review* reported. If the legislation were to pass through the Senate, the secretary of the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, currently held by **Terry Moran**, would have power to decide his peers' pay and classification.

Skeletons in Wilkie's closet

The *Herald Sun* broke a sensational exclusive story revealing that independent MP **Andrew Wilkie** had been involved in 'bastardisation' rituals during his time at Duntroon Military College in 1983, including allegedly forcing cadets to perform a Nazi salute in commemoration of Adolf Hitler's rise to power. Wilkie admitted participating in initiation rites but said he did not recall the Nazi incident.

Landmark Labor appointment

The first indigenous woman to be elected to the New South Wales parliament, **Linda Burney**, became New South Wales Labor's deputy leader.

Federal Libs catch the Vic-ups

A pre-selection fight between Victorian Liberal senator **Helen Kroger** (former wife of power broker **Michael Kroger**) and fellow senator **Scott Ryan** threatens to upset Victorian party players in the run-up to the next election, *The Australian* reported. Kroger has been in the senate longer, where as Ryan has more senior shadow minister responsibilities.

As the French say

Controversial comments by West Australian Minister for Women's Interests **Robyn McSweeney** on the validity of the burka sparked heated debate, but drew support from her federal colleagues. McSweeney told *The Australian* she thought that the burka was 'alien' to Australia's way of life, and saw it as a symbol of oppression, although she refused to support laws banning it. However her federal colleague, Liberal **Cory Bernardi**, continued his call for an anti-burka law similar to that in France, saying that the garment was a security threat and restricted social interaction.

CARBON TAX

French cuts sick at tax rate

An opinion article published in *The Australian* and written by **Seamus French**, CEO of Anglo American Metallurgical Coal, claimed that Australia's carbon tax would generate more revenue in its first three months than the European Union's emission trading scheme has made in six years, if the price is set at the proposed \$25 a tonne. French argued that this was a ridiculous rate, noting that Europe accounts for 14 per cent of global emissions, 10 times Australia's contribution of 1.4 per cent.

What a Ruddy mistake...

Former Labor leader **Kevin Rudd** admitted that dropping his proposed carbon pollution reduction scheme had been a major mistake, *The Financial Review* reported. Rudd made the decision because of a rift in the Labor cabinet that could not be bridged.

Doomed to fail

An extended feature by **Geoffrey Lehmann**, **Peter Farrell** and **Dick Warburton** in the 'Inquirer' section of *The Australian* predicted that 'any action to increase the price of carbon enough to change behaviour is bound to fail in a democracy.'

Combating community fears

Climate Change Minister **Greg Combet** was being pro-active about public opinion, announcing that he hoped to build a community consensus for the introduction of a carbon tax, *The Financial Review* reported. He listed an increase in extreme weather events and the destruction of irrigated agriculture in the Murray-Darling basin as consequences of not introducing the tax.

Some carbon support

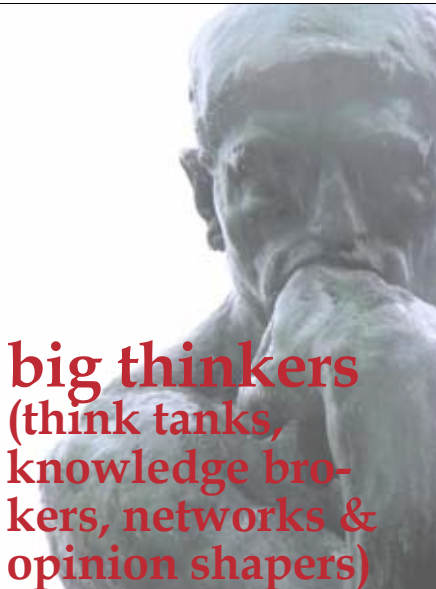
The Labor government's controversial carbon tax received some much-needed support, with *The Financial Review* reporting that chief executives of several of Australia's largest investment managers and superannuation funds had backed the policy. All six participants in the Investor Group on Climate Change, including heads of Colonial First State, AMP and BT, said that the tax would have little impact on company earnings and that investment would be lost offshore without it. However, concerns were raised that uncertainty over a carbon price was already affecting investment, and that this would need to be rectified.

Budgeting for carbon

The Financial Review's political editor **Laura Tingle** wrote that the proposed carbon tax would create further confusion within the budget, as the scheme is supposed to be revenue neutral. Tingle wrote that options for household compensation had been heavily debated in the federal cabinet, but the aim to get the legislation into parliament put a tight timeline on the plans.

Give us a break!

Australia's big gas companies demanded to be excluded from the proposed carbon tax, warning



big thinkers (think tanks, knowledge brokers, networks & opinion shapers)

The 2009 edition of Affairs of State's latest publication Big Thinkers (thing tanks, knowledge brokers, networks & opinion shapers) has just been launched by historian Geoffrey Blainey.

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that a carbon price could lead to the cancellation of much of the \$130 billion due to be invested in Australian gas projects in coming years. *The Financial Review* subsequently reported that this demand had been dismissed by Climate Change Minister **Greg Combet**.

Gillard plays house with tax

In an effort to win back community support and play down **Tony Abbott's** 'great big new tax' talk, the Labor government announced that an annual figure of around \$6 billion in revenue from the carbon tax would be used to support households. *The Australian* reported that this figure made up more than 50 per cent of total revenue from the carbon tax, a figure that outraged big businesses who argued that it would lead to a loss of jobs. A subsequent article in *The Australian* reported that petrol was also likely to be excluded from the tax in a bid to further soften the blow for lower and middle-income earners.

Carbon break for struggling exporters

The Gillard government announced that it was considering special carbon tax assistance to exporters struggling to deal with the high Australian dollar after the steel sector voiced strong concerns, *The Financial Review* reported. Under the plan, emissions-intensive, trade-exposed industries would receive the same enhanced assistance given during the global financial crisis.

Details, please

The Australian ran an opinion article by environmental editor **Graham Lloyd** and an editorial criticising Climate Change Minister **Greg Combet** for not releasing full details of the carbon tax, arguing that judgements cannot be made until the picture is complete. Lloyd's article quoted Combet as saying 'every cent raised from the carbon tax will be used to assist households, support jobs and encourage a clean energy future,' but said further details needed to be released before this could be assessed.

One job is all it takes

An exclusive article in *The Australian* revealed that the Australian Workers Union would drop its support for the carbon tax if it looked as if even 'one job' would be lost. National secretary **Paul Howes** told *The Australian* that 'if one job is gone, our support is gone.' *The Australian's* **Dennis Shanahan** wrote a related analysis article which pointed out that the reluctance of the working class to accept the tax was out of fear of losing jobs, not because working-class people were anti-environmentalists.

Chiefs' carbon challenge

Leading CEOs officially challenged the government's controversial decision to award a generous portion of carbon tax compensation to households, arguing that the decision will put jobs at risk, *The Financial Review* reported. A subsequent story in the same paper reported that the Prime Minister responded by challenging the Business Council of Australia to back the country's emission reduction targets, and confirmed that industry leaders would get the same compensation package they received in 2009.

BCA comes round... kind of

After lengthy deliberations and much public criticism, the Business Council of Australia finally decided that it would officially 'recognise' **Julia Gillard's** plan to reduce carbon emissions by 5 per cent before 2020, although it remained wary of the design of the scheme. *The Financial Review* reported that, as at April 21, the BCA was willing to back the plan, although only on the condition that it wouldn't harm exporters.

Carbon complications

The task of administering the carbon tax has not yet been appointed to any specific agency, but concerns were raised that, if the Australian Taxation Office gets the job, the complicated implementation of its \$879 million technology upgrade could be further delayed. *The Financial Review* reported that having to deal with the carbon tax would add at least 12 months to the implementation process.

CLIMATE CHANGE. ENVIRONMENT. ENERGY

Take the money and run

A new plan under consideration from **Julia Gillard's** carbon pricing committee would pay high-emission, coal-fired power plants to shut down, *The Australian* reported. The 'tender for closure' process would invite bids from power generators to withdraw coal-fired machinery from all or part of their plants.

Carbon's on the House

The House of Representatives ran a series of advertisements in *The Australian* designed to clarify new carbon farming bills, and encourage members of the public to make submissions to its climate change committee. The advertisement said that 'the bills seek to provide farmers, forest growers and landholders access to voluntary and international carbon markets in order to utilise abatement opportunities that exist in the land sector.'

Different spin on cyclone warnings

A report by the CSIRO made the surprising finding that tropical cyclones in Australia might be halved in coming years, *The Australian* reported. The findings contradicted government warnings that extreme weather events will become more frequent, due to the effects of climate change.

Extinction index

A team of Australian scientists came up with an index to quantify and rank how close endangered species are to extinction, *The Australian* reported. The Species Ability to Forestall Extinction index shows how close certain species are to the minimum number required to survive. **Corey Bradshaw**, director of the Adelaide University project, said the index worked on the assumption that at least 500 members were needed for a species to survive, and that if a species' number dropped below that, the index would be an invaluable tool in helping save it from extinction.

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Power costs soar

The Financial Review reported a call from a senior Labor energy adviser to scrap the federal green energy scheme, which had contributed to electricity price rises of up to 18 per cent. **Rod Sims**, chairman of the New South Wales Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal, said that 'we basically need to start again and just relook at the whole thing,' after the release of figures showing that the scheme was responsible for about a third of the price rise. According to calculations in the article, the rise meant an annual increase in power bills of up to \$316 for households and \$528 for small businesses.

Garnaut report mistaken

A small but significant mistake in the Garnaut Climate Change Review's 2011 update upset global projects firm Sinclair Knight Merz, *The Financial Review* reported. The report said one of SKM's findings 'confirms the economic viability of coal-fired baseload operating as a plant with intermittent production.' However, SKM claimed it was only commissioned to compare Latrobe Valley power stations when they were running at limited capacity, not at full capacity as implied in the report, which incorrectly portrayed SKM's conclusions.

Dig deeper and consider soil: Garnaut

Climate change adviser **Ross Garnaut** called for the government to include agricultural carbon sequestration as part of its emissions reduction scheme by using revenue raised from the carbon tax to fund research into the technique. *The Australian* reported that Garnaut's comments were made during a lecture in Armidale alongside independent MP **Tony Windsor**.

All go for LNG

With \$70 million worth of liquefied natural gas projects due to receive investment approval this year, the mood at a conference of Australia's leading oil and gas figureheads was optimistic, despite the looming carbon tax. *The Financial Review* reported that the conclusion of the Australian Petroleum Production and Exploration Association conference was that Australia's growing gas industry would be the leading supplier of LNG within a decade. However, the carbon tax remained unpopular amongst the group, with Woodside Petroleum chairman **Michael Chaney** later saying that it might encourage customers to turn

elsewhere for LNG, or even turn to cheaper, dirtier fuels. **Julia Gillard** hit back days later, announcing she was confident that the unparalleled strength of Australia's LNG industry in coming years and Asia's increasing demand would keep energy exports on the rise and protect jobs.

IMMIGRATION. REFUGEES

Villawood protests

The Australian estimated that about 300 people marched on Villawood Immigration Detention Centre in Sydney's west on Monday April 25 to demand an end to mandatory detention of refugees. According to *The Australian*, the ANZAC day demonstration was organised by the Refugee Rights Action Network in solidarity with the asylum seekers inside the facility who had been staging their own protest. Acting Prime Minister **Wayne Swan** condemned the rally. He told reporters in Cairns 'I don't think that's necessarily appropriate at all. There has been unacceptable behaviour by people inside the facility'. According to the *ABC online*, at the peak of the unrest almost 100 rioting detainees burned down nine buildings inside the compound. 22 were taken to Sydney's Silverwater jail for questioning. A standoff with several detainees on a roof ensued over the weekend. Greens' MP **Adam Bandt** said his party would not withdraw support for the government over its handling of the riots. During the month there were also protests at the Curtain detention centre in Western Australia and Christmas Island detention centre.

Temporary protection

It was reported by *The Australian* that the Gillard government planned to use de facto temporary protection visas to punish troublemakers at immigration detention centres. However, Immigration Minister **Chris Bowen** vowed to reintroduce the controversial Howard-era temporary protection visas. Instead, he announced the introduction of a tougher character test that would prevent asylum seekers who had committed offences from gaining permanent protection in Australia.

Lose-lose on asylum seeker stance

An analysis article in *The Financial Review* by **John Kerin** suggested that **Julia Gillard's** attempt to

emulate former Prime Minister **John Howard's** tough stance on boat people was not helping her popularity with either side of politics. Kerin pointed out that Labor had struggled to get its policy on the issue right since **Kevin Rudd** became prime minister and scrapped the hardline 'Pacific Solution.' He also wrote that 'no matter what Labor tries it cannot match the rhetoric of **Tony Abbott**,' and that Gillard's 'halfway-there' approach was not doing her any favours.

English test in way of resource boom

China Metallurgical Group has called for the English test to be removed for skilled Chinese workers, allowing greater migration into Australia that could accelerate large resource projects in Western Australia, *The Financial Review* reported. However, the union movement was upset by the idea.

FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Israel boycott puts Green council in red

The move by an inner-Sydney Greens-led council to boycott products from Israel came at a cost of \$3.7 million, with products such as Holden cars and Hewlett-Packard computers needing to be replaced, *The Australian* reported. Marrickville, which approved the boycott in response to worldwide action of a similar nature, is the only Australian council to take such action. The council has been a source of political controversy since former Mayor **Fiona Byrne** promised to push for the boycott to go state-wide if elected to the New South Wales lower house in the recent election, a move which cost her votes and resulted in failure.

It's no Chernobyl

The UN's peak nuclear body backed the Japanese government's stance that the Fukushima nuclear crisis is not as bad as Chernobyl, *The Australian* reported. The International Atomic Energy Agency said that the two incidents were very different, describing Chernobyl as 'a huge explosion, vapour, power explosion, and then you had a huge graphite fire.'

New Tibetan leader-in-exile

The Australian reported from Dharamsala that a new prime minister had been elected for Tibet's government in exile. **Lobssang Sangay** was chosen as 'kalon tripa' by the global Tibetan community after the **Dalai Lama** announced his retirement from politics a month previously. Dr Sangay was born in a Tibetan refugee settlement in India's hill station of Darjeeling in 1968. He is a senior fellow at Harvard Law School, where he studied Tibet's exiled government and international law.

Chinese cooperation not containment

Julia Gillard made her first official visit to Beijing as prime minister. *The Australian* reported that Gillard used her meeting with Chinese president **Hu Jintao** to promote increased defence cooperation. After the

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meeting she stated that Chinese naval vessels are welcome in Australia, and that she wants to encourage links between Australian military officials and their Chinese counterparts. *The Australian* also reported that during a meeting with Chinese premier **Wen Jiabao**, Gillard made it clear that Australia wanted to deepen its engagement with China. She rejected any notion that the US and its allies should seek to contain the rising superpower. The prime minister also visited Japan and South Korea on her way to the wedding.

Kevin in London

Foreign Affairs Minister **Kevin Rudd** made the news by arriving in London before prime minister **Julia Gillard** during the royal wedding celebrations. The happening was mere fortuitous circumstance for Rudd, as his purpose for being in town was not the wedding but official diplomatic business. However, he did find time for a high rating bit of television with channel Seven's *Sunrise* presenter **David Koh** in the lead up to the nuptials. Rudd commented on the BBC's decision to deny live wedding coverage to the ABC for a satirical commentary by *The Chaser*. He told 'Koshie', 'my personal view is I really think the BBC needs to lighten up a bit'. He also expressed his surprise that while former Tory prime ministers **Margaret Thatcher** and **John Major** had been invited to the wedding, recent Labor prime ministers **Tony Blair** and **Gordon Brown** had not. Rudd's reason for being in London was a meeting with his British counterpart, **William Hague**, and a Commonwealth foreign ministers meeting before the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in October.

ECONOMY. TAX. BUDGET

Old tax undermines reform

2010's bitter mining tax debate overshadowed important aspects of the tax reform agenda, several members of the Henry tax review claimed. *The Financial Review* reported that **Greg Smith**, **John Piggot** and **Heather Ridout**, all senior members of the review, were disappointed in the government's failure to take action on the bigger ideas of tax reform. In a similar vein, **Robert Milliner**, chairman of the Business Council of Australia's business reform taskforce, said that politicians must get over their fear of talking about tax and establish a sensible debate

as to what is the most practical tax system for the country.

ASIC focus needed

Liquidators claimed that a crackdown by the Australian Securities and Investment Commission on their sector was wasteful, ill thought out and driven by a few bad eggs, *The Financial Review* reported. **Jim Downey**, an insolvency practitioner from Melbourne, said that the whole industry had been damaged by just a handful of cases, and that focus needed to go to those directors who caused insolvencies. **Denise North**, chief executive of the Insolvency Practitioners Association, subsequently wrote a letter to *The Financial Review* that made the same argument as Downey.

\$3.1b company tax hole

An exclusive article in *The Australian* revealed that company tax for this financial year will reach only \$60.6 billion, \$3.1b short of the \$63.7b that had been forecast in November 2010. The figure is 10 per cent short of the 2010 budget's original estimate of \$66.5b. However, *The Financial Review* later reported that Treasurer **Wayne Swan** vowed to go ahead with a cut in the company tax rate.

Swansong for ASX/Singapore deal

The Australian Securities Exchange was desperate to continue its merger with its Singapore counterpart, but Treasurer **Wayne Swan's** move to block it looked to be the demise of the deal, *The Financial Review* reported. Swan believed the deal was 'not in the national interest.' A subsequent article in *The Australian* reported **Peter Costello's** view that the plan should be debated in parliament. The editor of *Letter From Canberra* believes that a parliamentary debate is a good idea, as it would bring some facts and passion to the table, and help clarify the decision not to proceed with the merger.

Pre-lodgment tax checks

Big business was up in arms over the Australian Taxation Office's plan to conduct 'invasive' pre-lodgment reviews of tax returns in order to uncover tax strategies in advance, *The Financial Review* reported.

GST distribution in a right state

The Financial Review reported that state treasurers planned to confront their federal counterpart, **Wayne**

Swan, over the Commonwealth Grants Commission's distribution of the GST between states. Under the current distribution, Western Australia was the worst off, likely to lose up to \$12 billion over five years. Victoria was pushing for the GST review to be completed by 2011, not 2012.

Stevens earns big bucks but economy falters

The Australian reported that the continuing mining boom was papering over weaknesses in the real economy, with sectors such as retail, housing and construction in serious trouble. Despite this, the newspaper reported that **Glenn Stevens**, governor of the Reserve Bank of Australia, had received a pay rise that took his salary to \$1 million a year. According to the article, the pay increase could filter through to other public servants, including **Terry Moran**, head of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet, and **Martin Parkinson**, head of Treasury, who currently earn half of Stevens' salary. So far, the Remunerations Tribunal has withheld its report detailing what it thinks department secretaries should earn.

Foreign concern over business policies

According to **Rob Whitfield**, institutional banking chief at Westpac, admitted that foreign investors had shown concern about the policies and attitudes of the Gillard government, which had led to some putting Australian investment projects on hold, *The Australian* reported. Whitfield's comments followed Treasurer **Wayne Swan's** block of the ASX's bid to merge with its Singapore counterpart. He described the sometimes-controversial policies as 'a political reality that we have to deal with in 2011,' and said that investors in the energy sector, which would be affected by the mining and carbon taxes, commonly 'deferred decisions' until the politics of the situation became clear. However, he believed that offshore investment would still take place to a significant extent.

ANZ boss savages Gillard

The Australian reported that ANZ chief executive **Mike Smith** launched an extraordinary attack on **Julia Gillard** in a speech in Sydney, criticising almost every major government policy, especially the carbon tax, mining tax and Labor's association with the Greens. He described the country's tax system as

complex and discouraging of inbound investment into Australia, and said that the minority government would lead to the development of poor economic and business policy. To top it off, Smith said the Labor administration was part of the 'weak government club' that included European and US governments.

Gillard's free trade

An exclusive article in *The Australian* revealed **Julia Gillard's** intention to further liberalise trade in a bid to drive economic productivity in non-mining states that are struggling to keep up with the resources boom.

ASIC gets tough on investment pitches

The Australian Securities and Investments Commission proposed a toughening of regulations on pitches used to sell investment products, *The Financial Review* reported. The plan aimed to protect retail investors by forcing directors to disclose bankruptcies, criminal convictions and past links with failed companies, and ensuring that key investment risks would be disclosed in a clear and easy-to-understand way.

Another bloody tax

A front-page article in *The Financial Review* reported that financial planners, accountants and trustees called for self-managed super funds to be taxed, a move which would give them protection against investment fraud similar to that offered to members of large pooled funds.

Tax collectors get biblical

Senior accountants and lawyers accused the Australian Taxation Office of bullying small businesses, saying that their tactics presumed guilt and were excessively invasive, *The Financial Review* reported. Hall and Wilcox lawyer **Andrew O'Bryan** described the ATO's actions as 'bully-boy tactics' and said that the heavy-handed behaviour unnecessarily increased both the cost and the length of audits.

ATO's not A-OK

The man responsible for reviewing the Australian Taxation Office's audits of large businesses, Inspector-General of Taxation **Ali Noroozi**, was concerned that a lack of expertise in the office's staff was leading to lengthy and costly investigations, *The Financial Review* reported. Noroozi said that 'technical expertise is an issue,' and that a lack of experience had been cause by 'a significant turnover of staff in that area.'

All boom, no budget

An article in *The Australian* that revealed China had delivered a \$60 billion boost to Australia's economy over 12 months gave weight to economists' claims that Treasurer **Wayne Swan** had played down gains from the mining boom to give him and excuse for making unpopular budget cuts. **Michael Stutchbury** wrote an analysis in the same day's edition, noting that the budget problems would have been less significant if Swan had have applied a medium-term fiscal framework to managing the resources boom economy.

Free trade with China

During her recent visit to Beijing, prime minister **Julia Gillard** committed the government to pushing for free trade with China to help strengthen the economic relationship between the two countries, *The Financial Review* reported.

Labor softens package

The Financial Review reported that Labor announced its long-awaited reform package, designed to improve advice to investors, reduce payment conflicts and strengthen regulators' powers. The announcement included the banning of trailing upfront commissions and volume-based payments. However, planners were given more leeway than expected, with the requirement that clients renew their advice agreement increased from one year to two.

Don't be too trusting

Calls to eliminate a well-established loophole by taxing private trusts increased, but *The Financial Review* reported a warning from experts to Treasurer **Wayne Swan** that the move could adversely affect thousands of small and family-run businesses.

Kickback but don't relax

According to *The Australian*, assistant Treasurer **Bill Shorten** would shrug off industry lobbying and ban financial planners from taking commissions or kickbacks. The laws, which would go into effect from July next year, are designed to prevent such payments from distorting advice to mum-and-dad investors.

Lawyers and accountants

The federal government is considering the expansion of taxpayers' rights to claim legal privilege with their accountants. That's according to *The Financial Review*, which reported that while accountants backed the plan, some lawyers fear that accountants could receive the privilege of client confidentiality, without standards such as the duty of the court.

Super good advice

Australia's largest industry superannuation fund created what *The Financial Review* described as a 'one-stop superannuation advice shop'. The move by AustralianSuper takes advantage of the federal government's recent financial planning reforms and provides its 1.75 million members access to cheaper, lifelong advice from the fund's six selected planning firms.

Accountants come up shorten

Assistant Treasurer **Bill Shorten** has called out the 18,000 inhabitants of the financial advice industry for low trade association membership. *The Financial Review* said that according to **Mathew Rowe**, chairman of the Financial Planning Association, an estimated 6,500 planners were not members of a trade association, and that those individuals 'work in an ethical and professional vacuum'. According to *The Financial Review*, Shorten said Rowe could count on the government's and his personal support to help improve professionalism in the sector.

Science star becomes chief

Well-respected neuro-scientist and former university vice-chancellor **Ian Chubb** was appointed Australia's chief scientist, replacing **Penny Sackett**. *The Australian's* **Stephen Matchett** was glowing with praise for Chubb, who has years of administration experience at the University of Wollongong, Monash University and the Australian National University. He also spent time working with Federal Industry Minister **Kim Carr's** department.

Taxman's till rings hollow

According to *The Age*, government tax receipts are running \$6.55 billion behind the mid-year economic forecasts. The paper aired speculation that the 2010-2011 outcome could be a \$50 billion deficit, compared to the \$41.5 billion deficit forecast. Shadow Treasurer **Joe Hockey** described it as 'the worst deficit in Australian history'.

BROADBAND & ICT

Conroy defends NBN shock

NBN Co's surprising decision to suspend a vital network-building tender indefinitely was defended by Communications Minister **Stephen Conroy**, who said it was important that the government-owned business stays within its budget. Speaking on ABC television, Conroy said the construction bids were too high. Evidently, many of the likely tenderers are already quite busy on Telstra work.

Deal time

The Financial Review reported that NBN Co and Telstra are close to a deal. The paper claimed that the two companies were seeking to conclude delayed talks on the historic \$11 billion deal with the goal of a definitive announcement before the end of May.

IT cost cut

The Gillard government expected the Australian Government Information Management Office to find ways to cut technology expenditure without damaging the industry before the upcoming budget, *The Financial Review* reported.

NBN budget struggle

Comments from a senior NBN Co board member led opposition communications spokesperson **Malcolm Turnbull** to claim that the national broadband network will exceed its \$35.9 billion budget, *The Financial Review* reported. NBN Co executive **Kevin Brown** said that he was 'reasonably confident' the project would be completed within budget, but that the company would 'come back and say to the government we couldn't do it at that price' if necessary. In response to Brown's statement, Turnbull said 'if this was a listed company, you can only imagine what direction the share price would be going.' Several companies in the race to build the network agreed, raising concerns that the project could blow out to as much as 50 per cent over budget.

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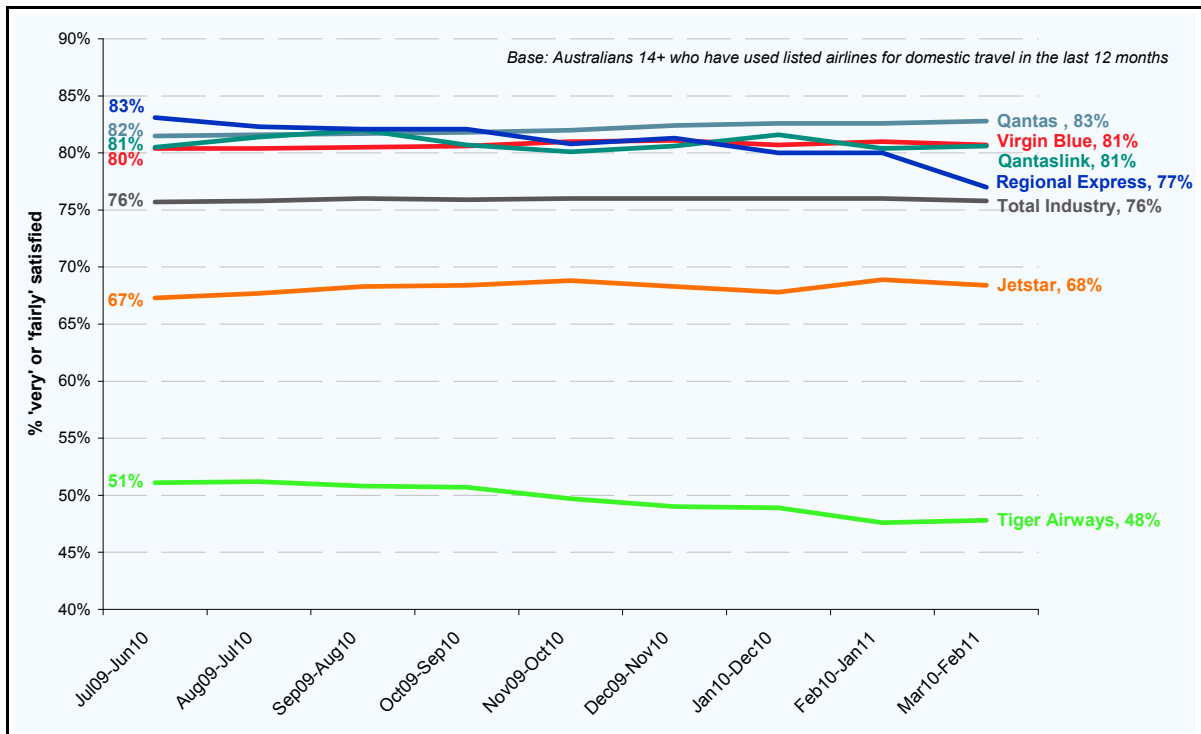
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On April 29, 2011
[Roy Morgan Online Store](#)
[Roy Morgan Airline Satisfaction Report](#)

Qantas still number one for customer satisfaction

The latest Roy Morgan Airline Satisfaction Report shows 83% of Qantas customers were “very” or “fairly” satisfied with the airline’s domestic services as at the year ended February 2011, enabling Qantas to maintain its hold on the number one position.

Virgin Blue and Qantaslink continue to battle for second place, with 81% satisfaction for both airlines for the year ended February 2011. Regional Express (77%) has decreased slightly in satisfaction in recent months, however still sits above the industry average of 76%. Jetstar remains relatively stable at 68%, while less than half of Tiger Airways’ customers were satisfied (48%) as at year ended February 2011.

Satisfaction with Domestic Airlines used in last 12 months



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source, July 2009 – February 2011. Total using domestic airline in last 12 months n=7,525. N.B. ‘Total Industry’ average also includes other domestic airlines not shown. “% satisfied” is the proportion of all customers who are “Very” or “Fairly” satisfied with that Airline (on a five point scale).

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

“Qantas has a narrow lead over Virgin Blue in terms of domestic customer satisfaction levels. Both leisure and business customers are giving Qantas’ domestic service a higher satisfaction rating.

“Despite its high rating amongst the domestic business market Qantas has nevertheless lost market share to Virgin Blue, which is focussing strongly on attracting the business customer.”

**For more information and to purchase the complete Airline Satisfaction report.
Visit the Roy Morgan Online Store. www.roymorganonlinestore.com**

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Finding No. 4662
April 2011 Figures
Available on Website: www.roymorgan.com
On May 4 2011

Surge in part-time employment to 3,631,000 (up 313,000) offsets fall in full-time employment to 7,314,000 (down 168,000) driving Unemployment down 0.2% to 7.2%

- In April 2011 Australia's total unemployment as measured by Roy Morgan was 847,000, down 16,000 (down 0.2%) from March 2011, but up 87,000 (up 0.6%) since April 2010.
- The Roy Morgan April 2011 'underemployed'* estimate has risen substantially to 949,000 (8%), up 83,000 (0.6%) and is up 56,000 (0.2%) since April 2010.
- In total in April 2011 an estimated 1,796,000 (15.2%) of Australians were unemployed or underemployed, up 67,000 (0.4%) on March 2011 and up 143,000 (0.8%) since April 2010.
- Overall full-time employment in Australia for April is 7,314,000 (down 168,000 since March 2011 but up 70,000 since April 2010) and part-time employment is 3,631,000 (up 313,000 since March 2011 and up 193,000 since April 2010).
- There are now 485,000 (up 17,000 on March 2011 and up 37,000 since April 2010) Australians looking for full-time work. An additional 362,000 Australians are looking for part-time work, (down 33,000 on March 2011, but up 50,000 since April 2010).
- The latest Roy Morgan unemployment estimate is 2.3% above the 4.9% [currently quoted by the ABS](#) for March 2011.

Roy Morgan Unemployed and 'Underemployed'* Estimate

	Unemployed or 'Underemployed'*		Unemployed		Unemployed looking for		'Underemployed'*	
	'000	%	'000	%	Full-time '000	Part-time '000	'000	%
2010								
Jan-Mar 2010	1,688	14.7	873	7.6	491	382	815	7.1
Apr-June 2010	1,592	13.8	748	6.5	437	311	844	7.3
July-Sep 2010	1,603	13.7	737	6.3	400	337	866	7.4
Oct-Dec 2010	1,741	14.7	826	7.0	442	384	915	7.7
2011								
Jan-Mar 2011	1,715	14.5	913	7.7	484	429	802	6.8
Months								
April 2010	1,653	14.4	760	6.6	448	312	893	7.8
May 2010	1,687	14.6	803	6.9	466	337	884	7.6
June 2010	1,435	12.4	682	5.9	397	285	753	6.5
July 2010	1,677	14.4	737	6.3	367	370	940	8.1
August 2010	1,612	13.7	718	6.1	448	270	894	7.6
September 2010	1,520	13.1	756	6.5	384	372	764	6.6
October 2010	1,664	14.0	760	6.4	360	400	904	7.6
November 2010	1,627	13.7	815	6.9	465	350	812	6.8
December 2010	1,931	16.5	903	7.7	502	401	1,028	8.8
January 2011	1,818	15.1	948	7.9	459	489	870	7.2
February 2011	1,596	13.6	927	7.9	524	403	669	5.7
March 2011	1,729	14.8	863	7.4	468	395	866	7.4
April 2011	1,796	15.2	847	7.2	485	362	949	8.0

The Gillard Government's 'Fair Work Australia' Act was implemented on January 1, 2010, replacing the Howard Government's 'Work Choices' Legislation.

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Gary Morgan says:

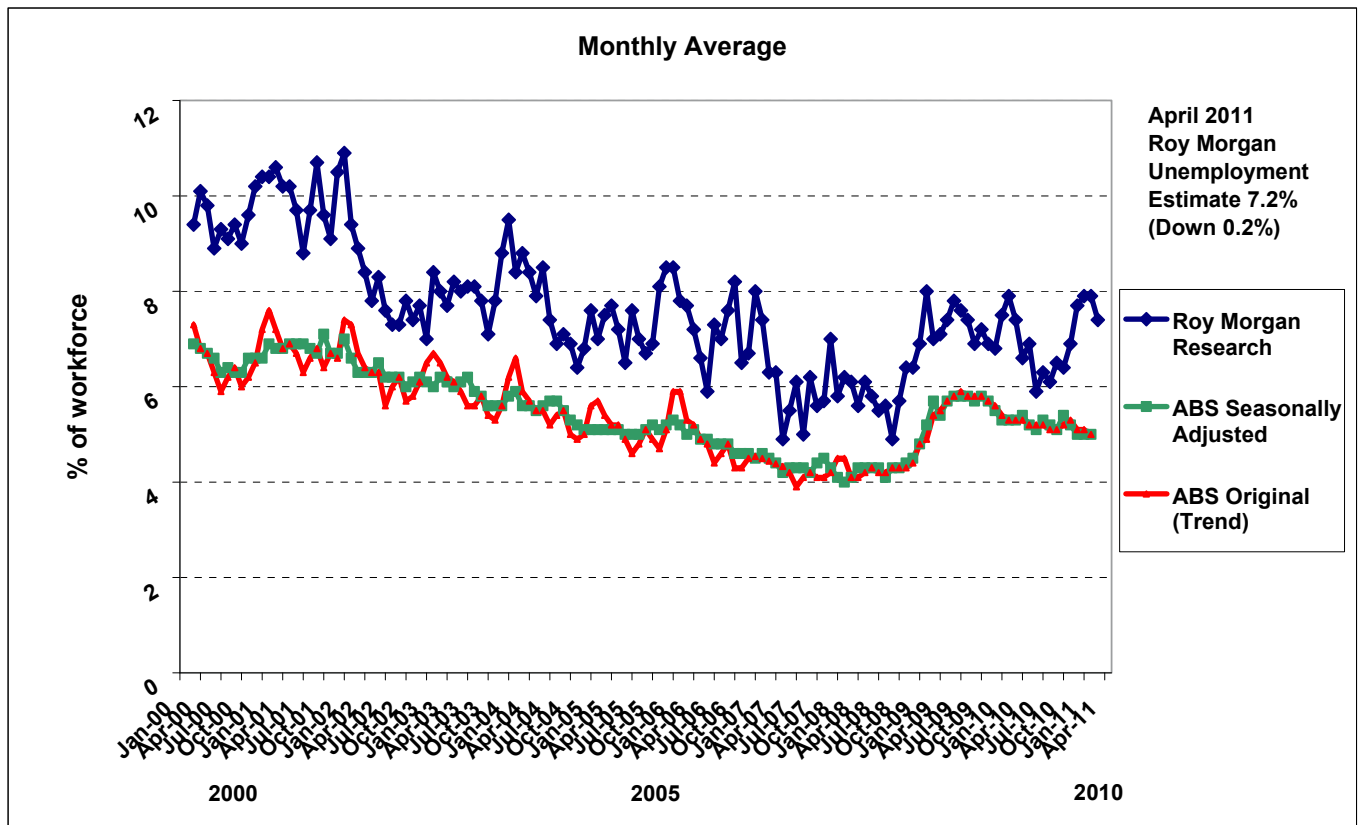
“The April 2011 Roy Morgan employment estimates show employment rising for the second straight month to 10,945,000 (up 145,000 from March 2011) as a large rise in part-time employment (up 313,000 to 3,631,000) offset a fall in full-time employment (down 168,000 to 7,314,000).

“The rise in overall employment led to a drop in Australia’s unemployed to 847,000 (7.2%), down 16,000 (0.2%). Although part-time employment increased significantly, it appears many of those taking part-time jobs really want to work more hours as Australian underemployment rose considerably in April – up 93,000 to 949,000 (8.0%).

“Seasonal variability in Australia’s employment shows that overall Australian employment often rises in April – and has risen in April in nine out of the last ten years in April. Combining Roy Morgan’s estimated unemployment and underemployment shows there are still nearly 1.8 million Australians that are looking for work or looking for more work – a figure that has increased by about 150,000 since April 2010.”

This Roy Morgan survey on Australia’s unemployment and ‘underemployed’* is based on weekly interviews covering January 2007 – April 2011 and in total 224,307 Australians aged 14 and over were interviewed face-to-face including 4,129 interviews in April 2011.

*The ‘underemployed’ are those people who are in part-time work or consultants who are looking for more work. (Unfortunately the ABS does not measure this figure in their monthly unemployment survey.)



The Roy Morgan Unemployment estimate is obtained by surveying an Australia-wide cross section by face-to-face interviews. An unemployed person is classified as part of the labour force if they are looking for work, no matter when. The results are not seasonally adjusted and provide an accurate measure of monthly unemployment estimates in Australia.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Unemployment estimates are obtained by mostly telephone interviews. Households selected for the ABS Survey are interviewed each month for eight months, with one-eighth of the sample being replaced each month. The first interview is conducted face-to-face. Subsequent interviews are then conducted by telephone.

The ABS classifies an unemployed person as part of the labour force only if, when surveyed, they have been actively looking for work in the four weeks up to the end of the reference week and if they were available for work in the reference week.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics Unemployment estimates are also seasonally adjusted.

For these reasons the Australian Bureau of Statistics Unemployment estimates are different from the Roy Morgan Unemployment estimate. Gary Morgan's concerns regarding the ABS Unemployment estimate is clearly outlined in his letter to the Australian Financial Review, which was not published.

<http://www.roymorgan.com/news/papers/2003/20030801>

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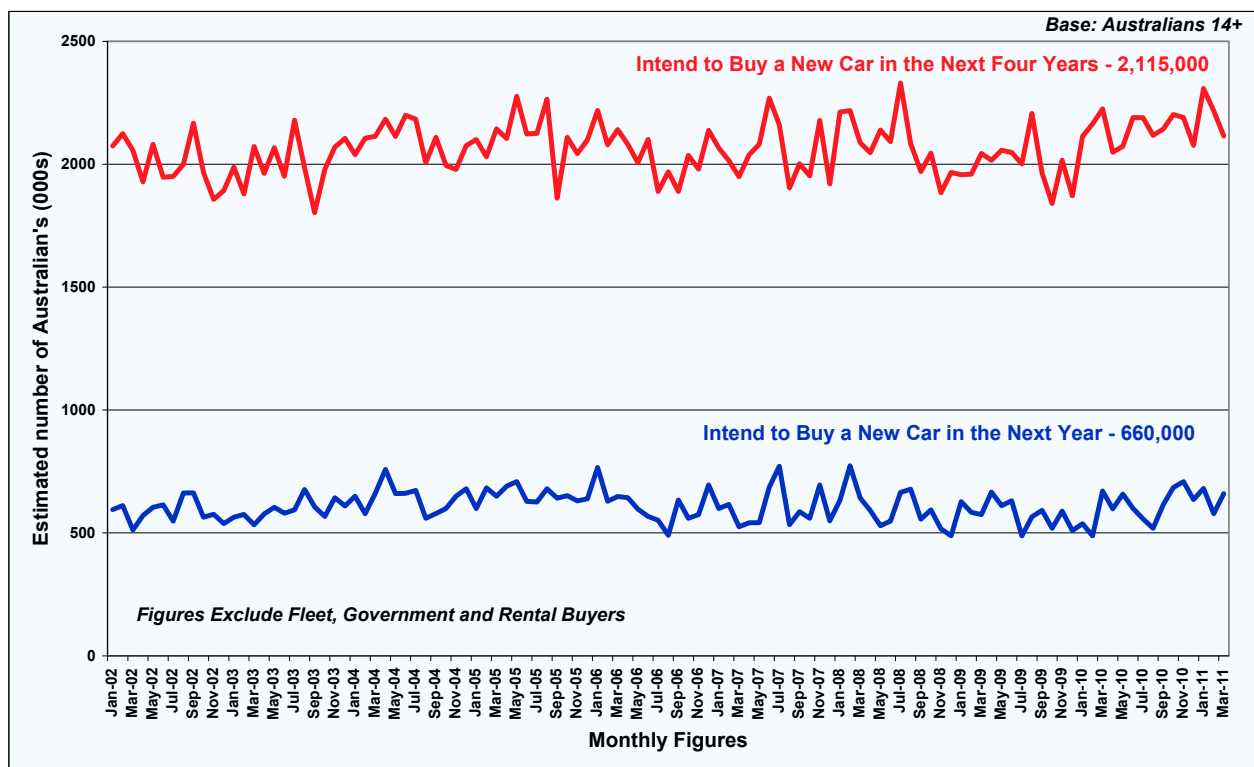
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Long-term Car Buying Intentions decline in line with Consumer Confidence

With automotive implications from the Japanese disaster yet to be determined, the latest Roy Morgan Automotive Leading Indicators Report shows long term car buying intention is down in March. An estimated 2,115,000 Australians intend to buy a new car in the next 4 years (excluding Fleet, Government and Rental Buyers). This is down on the February 2011 figure of 2,217,000, but remains 52,000 vehicles above the long term average²; according to the latest Roy Morgan Leading Indicators Report for March 2011.

For March, there were an estimated 660,000 Australians intending to buy a new car in the next 12 months. This is up on the February result of 578,000 and remains well above the long-term average¹ of 609,000.

New Car Buying Intention



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source (Australia): January 2002 – March 2011, n=508,055 (average monthly sample n=4,577). ¹Short Term Average = One year new car buying intention, January 2002 – March 2011. ²Long Term Average = Four year new car buying intention, January 2002 – March 2011.

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

“In light of the terrible events that have occurred in Japan, it will be important to monitor the impact this is having on consumers within the Australian Automotive marketplace and their intentions to purchase new vehicles. Many of the mainstream manufacturers have either vehicles or vehicle parts produced in Japan, with several companies looking at stock and or production related issues.”

For detailed profiles of Intending New Car Buyers or the Roy Morgan Automotive Leading Indicators Report. Visit the Roy Morgan Online Store – www.roymorganonlinestore.com

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NBN delay

The Financial Review reported that NBN Co wanted to delay its complex construction project by up to four months by seeking to develop only a limited number of sites.

Cloud with a black lining

Telstra's continuing push towards revolutionary cloud computing technology threatened to complicate procurement for the \$6 billion federal technology budget, according to an article in *The Financial Review's* Information section. The issue was further complicated by doubts over cloud technology's consistency compared to more established methods.

King-hit for NBN

Former CEO of Leighton Holdings **Wal King** announced his grave fears for the National Broadband Network's ability to stay within its budget, *The Financial Review* reported. King said that the difficulty of getting telecommunications infrastructure into houses had the potential to increase costs dramatically, saying that he'd 'seen places where rather than \$1300 for the average house it costs \$20,000 per house.'

NBN boat wouldn't float

The widespread criticism of NBN Co was added to by former Liberal politician and telecommunications expert **Paul Fletcher**. He wrote an opinion article in *The Australian* saying that the embattled company would fail if it had to fund its projects using private investors.

Tasmanian broadband barrel

Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry chairman **Troy Harper** told *The Australian* that the National Broadband Network rollout in Tasmania was 'a disgrace' and 'madness'. He went on to describe the rollout as a squandered opportunity and one of the worst examples of pork-barrelling.

Save now, spend later

Federal government spending on IT dropped by nearly \$200 million in the first quarter of 2011 compared to the same time in 2010, with the total spend expected to reach \$900 million from around 3800 contracts. However, *The Financial Review's* Information section reported that by the end of the year spending was expected to increase, with approximately \$5.03 billion

worth of deals in the works, compared to \$4.74b in 2010.

A messy break-up

An article in *The Australian's* Business section reported that Telstra's forced split of its retail and wholesale arms had been given a 90-day extension to allow the communications giant time to sift through its \$11 billion deal with NBN Co. However, there were reportedly concerns that this could delay the break-up indefinitely.

The faces of the NBN

An extended report in *The Australian* revealed a federal government plan to recruit up to 12 high-profile 'salesmen' in a campaign to increase the popularity of the \$36 billion National Broadband Network. Top of the list for the apparent positions were **Tim Flannery**, environmentalist and current climate change commissioner, and retired High Court judge **Michael Kirby**, who had previously confessed to being a 'luddite.' Other names published by *The Australian* included: Planet Ark founder **John Dee**, **Karen Tully** from the Foundation for Australian Agricultural Women, TV regular **James Bradfield Moody**, Australian Telecommunications Users Group director **Rosemary Sinclair**, the CSIRO's **Jonathon Roberts**, 'Gadget Guy' **Peter Blasina**, e-Works director **Rodney Spark**, mining academics **Ross McAree** and **Eric Nettleton**, and Westpac's **Sarv Girm**.

Don't ask don't tell NBN

South Australian Liberal senator **Simon Birmingham** had been pressing the government on the scandal involving the former employer of the top two executives at the National Broadband Network. *The Australian* reported that before taking up their current positions, executives **Mike Quigley** and **Jean-Pascal Beaufret** did not mention a major ongoing corruption investigation into Alcatel-Lucent where they used to work. In response to Birmingham's Senate estimates questions, the federal government has admitted it did not ask the two men about the investigation, nor was it aware that their Alcatel-Lucent was the subject of a US government investigation.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS. EMPLOYMENT

Two million more workers? In your dreams!

In response to a speech about raising employment levels from **Julia Gillard** in February, prominent business figure **Judith Sloan** wrote an opinion article questioning the Prime Minister's logic, as well as her figures. Gillard claimed that up to two million people, including 800,000 underemployed and 800,000 of the 'hidden unemployed,' should be able to find full-time work. However, Sloan slammed this, saying that the suggested increase in the full-time workforce of 20 per cent was absolutely unrealistic, and that a large portion of part-time workers wouldn't want to move to full-time work anyway. Sloan also noted that Australia's current employment rate is at a record high, and that at a certain point not much more can be done.

Speak up on IR laws: Reith

The Financial Review reported that former Liberal industrial relations minister **Peter Reith** had ramped up his call for Coalition MPs to speak up in criticism of Labor's new workplace laws. Reith denied that IR laws were 'electoral poison' for the Coalition after the Work Choices bungle, and said that his party's MPs needed to lead the way in exposing the flaws in the Fair Work Act.

Grand work plan not so safe

An exclusive, front-page article in *The Australian* revealed that **Julia Gillard's** plan to implement uniform workplace safety laws across Australia was in doubt after big business representatives warned that it could burden them with extra costs and give excessive powers to workers. This came despite Gillard's promise that the reform would boost productivity and cut business costs, with large companies such as Woolworths and Rio Tinto demanding changes to the draft regulations of the new laws. However, in some positive news for the plan, newly elected New South Wales Premier **Barry O'Farrell** pledged his support for the national system.

Off the street and into the workplace

The Australian reported a radical proposal from the Council of Homelessness to exempt the homeless and mentally ill from the strict guidelines of the government's welfare-to-work system. The suggested reforms would make the system more flexible and would allow disadvantaged people to find work more easily.

Welfare chief on a mission

Mission Australia chief executive **Toby Hall** told *The Australian* that half of the 800,000 recipients of the disability pension should be able to get a job. As leader of one of Australia's largest welfare organisations, he accused the Australian Council of Social Services and the welfare lobby of 'patronising' the unemployed by having a 'mindset' that they are incapable of work. 'Our sector needs to change its attitude and help people move off unemployment benefits', Hall said. Mission Australia has government contracts to help 55,000 long-term unemployed into work.

Middleclass welfare

Research published early by *The Age* claims that the extent of 'middle-class welfare' has been greatly exaggerated, and advises that a tightening of payments would cause a considerable financial burden to Australian families. Specifically, the report by the University of New South Wales Social Policy Research Centre cautions against restricting middle-class families' access to tax rebates and benefits.

No idle threat

The Prime Minister announced her plan to use the May 10 budget to wage war on 'idle' members of the community, urging all Australians to pull their weight and not give in to welfare dependency, *The Australian* reported.

Low spirits at Qantas

Qantas Airlines' dispute with its engineering staff worsened as the union continued its demand for pay rises based on seniority, *The Financial Review* reported.

Safe as houses? Not quite

The Gillard government's planned Safe Work Australia policy came under heavy fire from employers, who said that the tightened laws would leave them 'suffocating in red tape' and would force the price of houses to rise. An exclusive story in *The Australian* revealed that, under the proposed changes, businesses would be forced to provide in-depth risk assessments on most equipment in the work place, including items as small as handheld drills and electric pencil sharpeners. The Housing Industry Association said that the extra time, cost and hassle this would create on building projects over \$200,000 would risk inflating house prices.

Too old for the dole

The federal government moved to crack down on senior dole-bludgers, proposing changes to current laws that would force them to search for 10 jobs a fortnight in order to receive welfare payments, *The Australian* reported. Under current rules, over-55s can avoid the job search by undertaking 30 hours of voluntary work a fortnight.

Tough work choices

Former opposition frontbencher **Steve Coibo** called on **Tony Abbott** to toughen work place relations policy. *The Australian* said that Coibo wanted to see thousands of businesses made exempt from unfair dismissal laws.

Phantom unionists

An analysis by *The Age* showed that the bulk of new Australian Workers Union members gained under the three-year leadership of national secretary **Paul Howes** are non-financial. The findings raised doubts about the existence of the members and undermined Howes' claim that the AWU had been the fastest growing union in Australia. At the AWU national conference in February, Howes had claimed membership growth of nearly 30,000 since he inherited the leadership from **Bill Shorten**, who is now Assistant Treasurer.

Watch out

Michael Moore, secretary of the conservative HR Nicholls Society, provided details on why wages will be an issue in the near future. The federal government, like the reserve bank, is privately worried about a minimum wage of \$569.90 per week, with increases of 4.2 per cent for higher skilled workers. wages

breakout that would fuel inflation. The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry has proposed a rise of only \$9.50 in its submission. Small retailers and the restaurant and catering industry say there should be no rise at all. The government's ambiguous submission, though, contains no figure. It simply says there should be an increase that reflects changes in living costs and the economic environment. It seems to be fence sitting, worried that higher wages will affect needed productivity.

BUSINESS

Car maker feels aftershocks

The Financial Review revealed Toyota Australia's concerns that the effects of the Japanese earthquake could lead to the temporary closure of Toyota's manufacturing plant in Victoria.

Steel-ing the bricks

Leading brick manufacturers expressed concern that carbon tax compensations for the steel and cement industries could damage their business, *The Financial Review* reported. **Robert Millner**, chairman of Brickworks, wrote a letter to his shareholders voicing concern that the iniquity of the tax compensations posed a 'serious threat' to competition in the building sector.

Business finance inquiry

The Financial Review published the results of a parliamentary inquiry into access to finance for small business. The paper described the findings as 'light-handed', with recommendations mainly focusing on how the government can better monitor the sector.

Rinehart sings a sorry tune

The Australian revealed that mining magnate **Gina Rinehart** was amongst a score of creditors who lost money on the failed *Xanadu* musical. The show was cancelled halfway through its 10-week Melbourne season and before a planned national tour after withdrawals from key investors and meagre ticket sales.

Vodafone's catch 22,000

The Australian reported that 22,000 disgruntled Vodafone customers had signed up for a class action



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against the phone company, which is in hot water over its mobile network's poor coverage. Also, over the Easter weekend Vodafone customers were unable to make calls or send and receive text messages due to a network malfunction.

Telstra dodges ACCC regulation

The Australian reported that rival telecommunications companies were outraged by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission's decision not to regulate pricing on Telstra's wholesale copper broadband network. Smaller telcos which pay Telstra for use of its network believed that the decision would allow the giant to charge unfairly high prices, especially in many rural areas where Telstra is the only provider. Rival iNet's chief technology officer, **Greg Bader**, said that his company was Telstra's largest ADSL customer, and yet it did not get the best rates.

Telstra's ambitious punt

The Australian reported that Telstra had contributed \$155 million to the Australian Football League for the right to broadcast live games on mobiles, tablet devices and internet television. Telstra paid just \$50 to \$60 million for the same rights over 2007-2011.

Tragic passing of Macquarie legend

Former chairman of Macquarie **David Clarke** lost his battle with stomach cancer, tragically passing away at the age of 69. His death came just weeks after he quit the board of the investment bank.

Huge implications of cadet sex scandal

DEFENCE

The Australian's **Brendan Nicholson** and **Mark Dodd** wrote a lengthy feature piece in which they outlined the facts and implications of the Australian Defence Force Academy sex scandal that tarnished the military's image. The scandal erupted when an 18-year-old female cadet revealed that she'd been filmed without her consent while having sex, and that the clip had been broadcast live via webcam to a group of cadets watching in another room. The story subsequently grew, sparking criticism of the actions of several key defence figures, including Defence Minister **Stephen Smith**. *The Australian's* **Hugh Rimington** subsequently wrote an article accusing the Defence Force of giving the woman no sympathy, also noting that she had been brave in approaching the media, and that she had not asked for any money.

No action from military heads

Despite public outrage over the ADFA cadet sex scandal, an exclusive article in *The Australian* reported that military top brass ignored **Stephen Smith's** demand to discipline the academy chief.

Flight delay of a different kind

Another exclusive article in *The Australian* revealed that development of the Joint Strike Fighter, technology

which was intended to revolutionise Australia's air defence, had fallen well behind schedule, and that 18 more super Hornets might have to be purchased at \$1.5 billion to serve in the interim.

Watt's all this?

A speech from Department of Defence secretary **Ian Watt** to alumni from the Australia and New Zealand School of Government received praise from *The Financial Review*. Watt's message was that the Defence Strategic Reform Program is running on time and budget, and remains one of the most important reform processes ever undertaken in Australia. The scheme is designed to save the defence force \$20.7 billion in 10 years by increasing efficiency.

Fighting females

A front-page article in *The Australian* reported the Gillard government's announcement that it would remove combat restrictions on female officers, effectively allowing them to fight on the front line.

Houston, we have a problem

A week after the ADFA sex scandal broke, an 'inside story' in *The Australian* revealed details of the dispute between Defence Minister **Stephen Smith** and Defence Force Chief **Angus Houston**. According to the article, Houston felt that Smith had gone too far in calling for the sacking of ADFA boss **Bruce Kafer**, and wouldn't budge despite increased pressure from Smith to make the move.

Strong dollar a flimsy Defence

The Defence department might appear to have made savings when the 2011 budget is announced, but the positives will be the result of a high dollar and delays to purchases, not increased efficiency, *The Australian* reported.

Win for Melbourne Uni

The Financial Review reported that the University of

EDUCATION

Melbourne was rated the best in Australia and came in the top 20 in the world for computer science and engineering, according to the inaugural QS World University Rankings.

Childcare reforms too much: psychologist

New regulations that allow fines for childcare workers who isolate misbehaving children were described by a leading child psychologist as a 'fad' that goes too far. **John Irvine** told *The Australian* that the government had 'taken a good idea and gone too far,' suggesting that such punishment was still necessary in some situations.

School projects to be handed in late...

The collapse of two construction firms heavily involved in the \$16.2 billion federal schools stimulus program, Midland Constructions and Loxam Developments,

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BUSINESS AND

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postponed development projects in more than 10 schools in Western Australia, *The Australian* reported.

Tough break

A landmark High Court decision that gave students the right to claim tax breaks for study expenses was bypassed by Labor, *The Financial Review* reported. The 2010 ruling that student **Symone Anstis** could claim tax deductions for study expenses was to be cancelled out by the amendments, which would help extract more savings out of the budget.

No funding details for research plan

A research plan that took 18 months to devise and was released a fortnight before the federal budget was not allocated any new funding, leaving analysts guessing at what it would mean for the research sector, *The Australian* reported. The National Research Workforce Strategy, which was launched by Senator **Kim Carr** and newly-appointed Chief Scientist **Ian Chubb**, looked to address future challenges for the sector, but appeared to fall short in several areas, particularly the lack of funding information. Problems addressed in the plan included a lack of PhD-trained researchers, ageing in the existing workforce, and a lack of females and indigenous Australians in the sector. Doubling the number of research scholarships and investing \$9 billion in the sector in 2011 were given as remedies to the problem. **Les Field**, chairman of two committees representing deputy vice-chancellors in the research field, was disappointed in the news and described the plan as 'not really a strategy.'

Universities need unity

Incoming chairman of Universities Australia and current vice-chancellor of the University of Melbourne, **Glyn Davis**, raised concern that university funding reviews and policy changes did not always promote positive resolutions, and often created confusion and incoherence. Davis told *The Australian* that four funding reviews in 15 years had failed to find solutions, and that the new national regulator, the Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency, would change the situation fundamentally, possibly adding further confusion. 'If TEQSA's standards are higher than the amount of funding available, how can institutions meet the demands of both while expanding to accommodate 250,000 additional students.'

Public funding for private schools

National Catholic Education Commission deputy chairman **Brian Croke** criticised the way in which public funds were allocated to private schools. He told *The Australian* that the current method was 'crude and doctrinaire' and could never be applied uniformly to all schools. The current system was introduced by the Howard government in 2001, whereby federal funding to private schools is based on a school's SES score, with a lower score representing a lower socio-economic status, and necessitating a rise in funding by a set amount per student. Croke claimed that in reality, funding increases were the same, regardless of a school's ranking by SES score. He said that the Commonwealth's construction of the original calculation model was flawed. He says the solution is

to increase dollar intervals between lower SES scores and decrease dollar intervals as the SES increased.

Gillard to cut Howard era allowance

According to *The Australian*, the Gillard government plans to change a special school funding deal struck under the Howard government, which gave a favourable distribution of funding to half the nation's private schools. Schools Education Minister **Peter Garrett** said that the arrangement that maintains funding for about 60 per cent of Catholic schools has 'reached its used-by-date'.

INFRASTRUCTURE. TRANSPORT

Federal funding for Vic rail project

The federal government announced that it would contribute \$3.2 billion to Victoria's \$5 billion Regional Rail Link project, *The Financial Review* reported. However, its decision to hold back a further \$500 million until the 2015-16 financial year, as well as an under-estimation of costs from the previous state government, were significant hurdles for the project. Victorian Transport Minister **Terry Mulder** remained optimistic, saying that 'the nation's major engineering groups have shown interest in the project, with companies from the Leighton Holdings stable and Lend Lease subsidiaries Abigroup and Baulderstone already short-listed to build a 25-kilometre stretch of track between Melbourne and Geelong.'

Radio plan off the rails

The Australian Railways Association reacted angrily to a plan from the Australian Communications and Media Authority to cut its radio allocation by half. *The Australian* reported that the new system would cut the rail network's access from two 800kHz channels to two 400kHz channels, which would mean a multi-million-dollar replacement of the network's current radio equipment, and would also jeopardise a planned \$500 million safety and signalling upgrade.

Abbott's infra-red vision

The federal Coalition's proposal to overhaul the peak infrastructure agency would subject national projects to greater scrutiny, allaying concerns expressed by Treasury in 2010, *The Financial Review* reported. Under **Tony Abbott's** plan, funding for the agency would continue and Infrastructure Australia chairman **Rod Eddington** would have his job guaranteed.

Qantas launches attack, airports feel the Toll

Two of Australia's largest transport companies, Qantas Airways and Toll Holdings, blasted Australia's airports, imploring the federal government to control what they described as 'demonstrably excessive' pricing practices. *The Australian* reported that the giants wanted tougher government regulations to curb monopoly prices at airports, particularly parking fees, which accounted for 10 per cent of Sydney Airport's total revenue in 2010, and over 20 per cent of Melbourne Airport's. The attack came a week after Qantas' budget carrier, Jetstar, said it would seek

compensation for a Sydney Airport security lapse that recently stranded thousands of passengers.

JUSTICE

Jail time for work bullies

The recent introduction of workplace bullying laws in Victoria led to a push from unions for similar laws across the country, *The Financial Review* reported. The new Victorian legislation means that bullies in the workplace, or elsewhere, could face up to 10 years in jail if found guilty.

Back in the robes

Three of Australia's most successful judges were called out of retirement to hear an appeal in Australia's longest-running court case, the *Herald Sun* reported. Acting Justices **Malcolm Lee**, **Douglas Drummond** and **Christopher Carr** were called up to hear the case which involves an assortment of banks and the Bell Group, formerly controlled by **Alan Bond**. The appeal should last for 40 days and will conclude on June 23. The case, which began in 1995 and is thought to be Australia's most expensive ever, could not be heard by the other Court of Appeal judges because they were involved in the Bell litigation before they became judges.

HEALTH

Cutting back

The Australian published an advertisement written and funded by Professor **Julio Lucino**, Director of ANU's John Curtin School of Medical Research, which used his personal story to argue that cuts to medical research funding would be detrimental to healthcare in Australia.

e-Health not so health-e

According to a large article in *The Australian's* IT section, the draft plan for Australia's e-health program was a disappointment which wouldn't help clinical decision-making and had no sophisticated analytical capabilities. The draft system would also be voluntary to protect patient confidentiality, which would be a limiting factor in its usefulness in treatment, as the patient's full details might not all be available. Some revolutionary features of the plan included the patient's ability to choose what can and can't be viewed, and also an ability to put a PIN-style password on their account. Despite this, the article seemed to conclude that the \$500 million project was far from ideal. A supporting article in *The Australian* published Health Minister **Nicola Roxon** as saying that community input into the plans would also be welcomed. Days later, an advertisement seeking submissions and feedback for the project appeared in *The Financial Review*. Submissions can be made at www.yourhealth.gov.au until 31 May 2011.

Two mothers plead

The *Herald Sun* published the stories of two high-profile mothers who strongly opposed **Julia Gillard's**

plan to cut medical research funding. Western Bulldogs director **Susan Alberti**, whose daughter died of type 1 diabetes in 2001, and neuroscientist **Elisa Hill**, whose son suffers from autism, wrote impassioned letters urging the Prime Minister to scrap the \$400 million cuts, which are expected to be announced in the May budget. *The Australian's* health editor **Adam Cresswell** also weighed in on the debate, warning that budget cuts could lead to the loss of many of Australia's best scientific minds to more lucrative research environments.

Healthy boost for mentality

Opposition Leader **Tony Abbott** announced he would outlay \$290 million towards mental health funding and urge the state to contribute an additional \$150 million, while Treasurer **Wayne Swan** said the government was 'very serious' about the issue, *The Financial Review* reported.

Health groups rally over PBS fears

An analysis article by *The Financial Review's* **Emma Connors** reported that budget cuts had achieved what had rarely been done before: unite the health industry. Connors wrote that patient groups, clinicians and manufacturers had all come together with the aim of pressuring the Gillard government into stopping budget cuts and reversing the decision to delay adding new medicines to the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. This culminated on April 29 with an industry gathering dubbed the 'please explain' summit.

Research funding safe

The Financial review commented that medical researches had likely won their battle to keep \$400 million of funding that had been under threat in the upcoming federal budget. However, the paper hypothesised that cuts would need to be made elsewhere in federal Health minister **Nicola Roxon's** portfolio. The government reportedly plans to spend \$68.6 billion on health, making it the second biggest budget item behind welfare.

SOCIETY

Gillard balances Christians, Greens

Prime Minister and well-known atheist **Julia Gillard** assured leaders of Australia's 20 major Christian churches that she supported traditional values and was not ignoring their concerns over the Greens' bid to legalise same-sex marriage, *The Australian* reported. The Christian leaders implored Gillard to ensure that freedom of religion in public continued to be protected by law.

Bolt show to take off

Controversial conservative columnist **Andrew Bolt** has completed the pilot for his Channel 10 talk show. *The Australian* reported that the 10.30am time slot would follow, and perhaps rival the ABC's *Insiders* airing at 10am on Sundays.

License to... gamble?

The Financial Review published an advertisement that was heavily critical of proposed new gambling restrictions, which it said would mean that even occasional gamblers would need to apply for a 'license to punt.' The ad claimed that the scheme would 'treat ordinary punters as problem gamblers' and would compromise freedom and personal information. It was unclear at first who had paid for the ad, but the web address 'its-unaustralian.com.au' was clearly displayed. Ironically, the ad was published over the page from an article which reported independent senator **Nick Xenophon's** outrage at a \$20 million ad campaign by the clubs industry promoting various forms of gambling. A report in the next day's *Financial Review* revealed that it was in fact the clubs industry which had paid for that ad, and that the overall campaign was in direct response to independent MP **Andrew Wilkie's** plan for restrictions on poker machines.

Get up and strike back!

In response to the gambling industry's \$20 million 'license to punt' campaign, an anti-gambling group called 'GetUp!' took its own full-page ad out in *The Australian*, claiming that problem gamblers' savings had been used to pay for the industry's campaign. The ad also decried the industry's claim that gamblers would need a license to play the pokies as an 'un-Australian' lie. Results of a Nielsen poll published in *The Age* a few days later showed that 66 per cent of voters were in favour of tightened gambling laws that would force punters to nominate in advance how much they can afford to lose.

Coalition backing for gambling ads

The Australian reported that both state and federal Coalition parties announced their support of the clubs' industry's \$20 million campaign against proposed restrictions on poker machines.

PM's personal fight

An exclusive article in the *Herald Sun* revealed that **Julia Gillard's** quest to crack down on poker machines was inspired in part by first-hand stories of 'heartbreaking' gambling addictions from members of her own electorate. Gillard used examples of a young mother with no money to feed her newborn, and an entire family living in a car, as examples of how 'there's a considerable problem out there of people who just can't control their addiction.'

Not a black and white case

Sydney University health lecturer **Antony Dillon** wrote an opinion article in *The Australian* regarding Aboriginal identity in Australia, referring specifically to the **Andrew Bolt** defamation trial. Dillon, who is himself part-Aboriginal, argued that funds shouldn't be given to people simply because of their race, but should be more thoroughly checked to ensure they are only distributed to the truly disadvantaged.

Will and Kate fly high

Australia decided against a traditional royal wedding gift, and has instead donated \$25,000 to the Royal Flying Doctors Service to mark the marriage of

Prince William and Kate Middleton, *The Australian* reported. The present is in a different vein to the box of 20 silver platters given to William's parents when they got married in 1981. **See pictures opposite.**

Prices up, sales down

The Financial Review reported that residential land prices had risen but sales were in steep decline, dropping 40.4 per cent over a three month period in 2010 compared to 2009. The information, provided by the Housing Industry Association and RP Data, showed that average land values had increased by 4.1 per cent in the same quarter.

Republic support declining

Exclusive Newspann figures published in *The Australian* showed that support for an Australian republic had fallen to 41 per cent, its lowest level in 17 years. The figure was only marginally ahead of those in favour of the monarchy, at 39 per cent, with 20 per cent undecided, and was the lowest since 1994, where support dropped to 39 per cent. Importantly, the figures were published on the week of **Prince William and Kate Middleton's** wedding, which might have briefly raised the popularity of the monarchy. Chris Kenny wrote a related analysis in the same edition, noting that the republic debate has fallen off the national radar as Australians have become more ambivalent towards their head of state.

Gillard goes both ways on gay marriage

Despite having publicly expressed her personal belief that marriage should only be between a man and a woman, *The Australian* reported that **Julia Gillard** would not rule out the legalisation of same-sex marriage. The comments sparked speculation that she was pandering to the Greens, who are strongly in support of changing the law, but the only conclusion to reach was that she remained on the fence.

Solutions from source

Indigenous Affairs Minister **Jenny Macklin** indicated in *The Australian* that the federal government would support solutions proposed by Aborigines. She promised not to 'shy away' from 'concrete' action on deep-rooted problems. A recent television program emphasised that alcohol, since perhaps the 1970's, has had a significant role in lowering the living standards of indigenous Australians.

Gambling advertising

Federal Sports minister **Mark Arbib** and AFL chief executive **Andrew Demetriou** expressed concerns in *The Age* regarding gambling advertising at sports venues. Specifically, the display of betting odds and advertisements for bookies, such as SportsBet, and the TAB.

Passing of a Canberra man

Alan Fitzgerald, a Canberra journalist, political satirist and author of more than a dozen books has died of cancer. He was 75. *The Age* obituary, April 21, of this remarkable and very interesting man is well worth reading. Ask the editor to send you a copy.

AGRICULTURE & WATER

Brown's help sought for dam plan

Greens leader and outspoken anti-dams campaigner **Bob Brown** was, surprisingly, asked to write a submission to the Coalition taskforce investigating the building of new dams across Australia, *The Australian* revealed. The task group has invited around 90 submissions, mainly from stakeholders, but is keen to get as wide a range of views as possible before making any decisions.

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An exclusive article in *The Australian* revealed that Australian governments were advised to embrace new dams, recycled water and water trading because the current system would leave cities and towns unable to survive floods or droughts. A report from the National Water Commission urged the government to overhaul the management of urban water supplies or risk facing future disasters.

Probably a bad call...

Queensland's Minister for Energy and Water Utilities, **Stephen Robertson**, admitted to the Queensland Floods Commission of Inquiry that he had put on hold a plan to reduce water in the Wivenhoe Dam just days before it contributed to the catastrophic floods in Brisbane. *The Financial Review* quoted Robertson as saying that a 5 per cent reduction in water supply would be 'meaningless.' The commission also found that significant holes in recorded data left hydrologists unable to make the right decisions when the floods struck.

Sinking in the rain

The Queensland Flood Commission of Inquiry heard that the Wivenhoe Dam's flood plan didn't take into account rainfall, leaving Brisbane's flood shield dangerously close to capacity, *The Australian* reported.

Water-fail

Details of a **Productivity Commission** report published in *The Financial Review* suggested that drastic reform to water systems in Australia's major cities is needed. The report found that unification of the fragmented industry, which contains over 250 water services, and developing stronger regulations were the top priorities. It also suggested that the government was overly reliant on water restrictions and conservation programs, including desalination plants, which had proven extremely costly. Figures from the same report published in *The Australian* estimated that desalination plants in Perth and Melbourne would cost \$3-4 billion more over 20 years than cheaper water-saving initiatives.

Water woes worsen

The Australian's **Lauren Wilson** wrote a feature article that cast further doubt over Australia's water policies, adding to previous criticism from the Productivity Commission and the National Water Commission. The conclusions from all sources suggested that government spending on large water projects, especially desalination plants, had been inefficient, overly costly, and resulted in increased water bills for no increased service.

Methane hits the fan in carbon farming plan

A federal government plan designed to support farmers financially, and satisfy independent MPs **Tony Windsor** and **Rob Oakeshott**, was criticised by business and environmental groups, *The Financial Review* reported. The 'carbon farming' plan, which would reward farmers for collecting methane gas from their animals' manure and taking other steps to reduce greenhouse gases, was not backed by the Department of Climate Change, which said it would cut emissions only by 5-15 million tonnes. Other groups, such as the New South Wales Farmers Association, were concerned that international restrictions that limit the sale of carbon offsets would also reduce the scheme's effectiveness. The Australian Network of Environmental Defenders Offices also warned that the scheme could undermine existing climate policies, and urged the government to consider other plans for the rural sector.

Bush Work

The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation advertised for non-executive directors of the Corporation Board to sit three-year terms commencing July 1. Applications should be made by May 6 to RIRDCcandidates2011@gmail.com

Watershed Opportunity

Australia's peak water services body, the Water Services Association of Australia (WSA), advertised the Sydney or Melbourne based position of Executive Director. Applications can be made quoting Ref No 5893 to search@watermarksearch.com.au or (02) 9233 1200.

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Alistair Urquhart is Managing Director of independent public affairs firm **Affairs of State**, which operates in Melbourne, Canberra and beyond. He works with businesses large and small, professional associations and industry groups on a wide range of issues. He also publishes two monthly public policy digests, **Letter From Melbourne** and **Letter From Canberra**, and various state and federal government charts and directories.

Alistair graduated from the Australian National University in Canberra in Law, History and Politics and is a (non-practicing) member of the Law Institute. Before that, he graduated from high school in Washington DC. He turned to professional government relations after voluntarily lobbying for a variety of causes over many years. He is a fellow of the Australian Institute of Company Directors and a member of the Australian Institute of Public Administration.

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