

LETTER FROM MELBOURNE

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

(AND THE HIGH COUNTRY)



Issue 162 Autumn Edition

14 February to 23 March 2011

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Victorian MP Footy Chart
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14 Collins Street
Melbourne, 3000
Victoria, Australia
P 03 9654 1300
F 03 9654 1165
info@affairs.com.au
www.letterfrommelbourne.com.au

Editor Alistair Urquhart
Associate Editor Gabriel Phipps
Sub-Editor RJ Stove
Subscription Manager Camilla Orr-Thomson
Advertising Manager Eddie Mior
Editorial Consultant Rick Brown
Design Richard Hamilton

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

Written for the regular traveller, or people with meeting-filled days, you only have to miss reading The Age or The Herald Sun twice a week to need Letter from Melbourne. It's more about business opportunities (or lack of them) than politics. It's not Crikey.com. We keep words to a minimum.

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

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

Increasingly, Letter from Melbourne is developing a federal and national coverage and also an increasing synopsis of national business issues.

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EDITORIAL

Our new government settling in.

Architects are planners. They bring together many issues. Modern issues. And some history. The architect premier of the newish Victorian government has the professional, business, personal, and political and government experiences to design good things.

27 February. One hundred days of the new government. Reviews continue for transport ticketing systems, the Healthsmart project and other spending projects of the former government, the latter will be more fully explained to us all in the Budget on 3 May.

Several ministers are being kept busy in the budget kitchen, slicing and dicing their way through departmental demands and dreams, and the government's own election promises. An important distraction from their own specific portfolios.

The budgetary process is bringing strong focus on industrial relations. Teachers, police, community workers, other civil servants, to date, are perhaps looking towards less pay than the (newish) government promised before the election. Watch this space. *(continued next page)*



ABOUT THE EDITOR ALISTAIR URQUHART

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

For 30 years, he listened every Sunday evening to the late Alistair Cooke and his Letter From America. His early career was mostly in the coal industry, where he became involved with energy, environmental and water issues, and later in the SME finance sector.

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

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EDITORIAL (cont)

Just last week, a new chief of staff arrived at the Office of the Minister for Health, a deputy secretary from a Commonwealth department in Canberra, all part of a wider gene pool for choosing ministerial staffers than the former government. This edition includes a draft list of senior staffers. Still some important staffers to arrive. A fuller hard copy **Victorian Government 2011 Chart** will be sent out to subscribers in about three weeks. And will also be available for a few dollars to others.

Acts of parliament are starting to flow through the system, with many first and second readings of bills, which in due course will become acts of parliament. Not flood gate stuff, but activity.

The 'high country' features on our cover, in the main text and also in a piece from Hansard. Cattle in the High Country provides a clear focus for those closely involved, on both sides of the fence so to speak, including the editor who spent much his early years on farms in Gippsland. Another federal/state stoush on the way. The editor took the photo, inset here, on 9 June, 2005 for our 104th edition. The main cover photo was taken by a friend in 2005, when the cattle were being driven into the High Country for the last time, last time.

Prince William flew in from north of the Murray into Kerang in central Victoria to visit, and cheer up the local community, and then onto Tullamarine for the trip home. No calling in to M for Melbourne. This old editor reckons that we need more reminders of the history of our country, of reasons for its stability of government and society. Naturally, this includes the emotional republican debate.

The fourth estate, the media, sometimes get emotional when reporting financial matters outside of the financial pages, so as to place less emphasis on accounting reality. Such as a recent item in *The Age* on Victorian government agency VicForests, details herein. We are bringing together the news from many sources and try to rely on the accuracy of others!

Bernie Finn, Liberal MP for Tullamarine and Richmond football tragic launches the **Letter from Melbourne MP Footy chart** on Thursday as the AFL season starts. Footy charts are on the way to subscribers and are also available to the rest of the world for a small fee. Have a good season.

STATE GOVERNMENT & POLITICS

First 100 days

Looking back on his first 100 days in office, Victorian Premier **Ted Baillieu** says he is proud of his performance and confident that the government is 'moving in an appropriate manner'. Commentators at *The Age* had described Baillieu as looking relaxed. Perhaps that's because at the 100-day mark the new government has not changed a single law. He has, however, promised numerous reviews. As one Liberal MP put it, Baillieu is extremely cautious about making decisions, and he likes to go into detail.

Parliament floor

State politics reporter for *The Age* wrote a good wrap on the mood of the floor in Parliament House: 'The opposition is trying to work out how to be an opposition government and the government is getting its head around... well, governing. **Rob Hulls** presently sits across the table from **Peter Ryan** in State Parliament... After 11 years of bully-boy dominance over the former opposition, Hulls' loss of power

seems acute. And to make matters worse, Ryan is a study in smug. He smiles smugly, swings his chair smugly, he even manages to cross his arms smugly... Labor is grumbling about Smith, who has an impressive record for being evicted from the chamber by previous speakers. They say, rather predictably, that he is partisan... Which leads us to the quality of debate. It hasn't improved at all.'

Promises evaporate

The state government has been criticised by the *Herald Sun* for abandoning a commitment to transparency after all its policy promises were removed from the Liberal Party's website. The 98 press releases spelling out the Coalition's election pledges were nowhere to be found online. Affairs of State has the full policy guide, which includes much more detail than was on the website originally. Call us on 9654 1300. The second change to a costly election promise, announced in *The Age*, was a warning of possible job cuts and reduced services if the government had to fund a large pay rise as part of a landmark women's pay case for community workers. Before the state election, the Coalition had committed to funding the

BAILLIEU GOVERNMENT ADVISERS Based on our current information. Corrections welcome.

Name	Minister	Portfolio
Peter Poggioli	Asher	CoS
Brett Hogan	Asher	Innovation, Services and Small Business
Julie Baird	Asher	Major Events and Tourism
Michael Kapel	Baillieu	CoS
Tony Nutt	Baillieu	Director-General, Cabinet Office
Zoe McKenzie	Baillieu	Arts, Education and Skills
Douglas Campbell	Baillieu	Health, Tourism
Paul Price	Baillieu	Media
David Vorchimier	Baillieu	Planning
Richard Clancy	Clark	CoS
James Copsey	Clark	Political Adviser
Rosemary Calder	Davis	CoS
Bretty Barton	Davis	Adviser
Nathan Robinson	Davis	Adviser
Katherine Walsh	Davis	Adviser
--	Delahunty	CoS
Tony Parkinson	Dalla-Riva	CoS
Duncan McGauchie	Dixon	Adviser
Lucy Toovey	Dixon	Acting Adviser
Meg Bartel	Guy	CoS
Damien Farrell	Hall	CoS
Con Allimonos	Kotsiras	CoS
Anthony Moate	Kotsiras	Adviser
Nitin Gupta	Kotsiras	Adviser
--	Lovell	CoS
Matthew Malone	Lovell	Housing
John Pesutto	McIntosh	CoS
Peter Greenwood	Mulder	CoS
Edmund Carew	Mulder	Adviser
Patrick Clancy	Napthine	Senior adviser, all portfolios
--	O'Brien	CoS
--	Powell	CoS
Brian Fitzpatrick	Rich-Phillips	Adviser
Clay Manners	Ryan	Adviser
Ben Hindmarsh	Ryan	CoS
John Deela	Smith	CoS
Luke O'Sullivan	Walsh	CoS
Simon Price	Walsh	Water
Michael Brennan	Wells	CoS
Terry Barnes (acting)	Wooldridge	CoS

pay even if it cost more than the \$200 million over four years for which they had budgeted. But according to *The Age*, in a submission to Fair Work Australia, the government said if the case cost more than \$50 million a year and it was not funded by the federal government, there might be a 'gap' between the pay rise awarded by the tribunal and 'funding of the sector'.

Knight of the round table

The *Herald Sun* notes that Premier **Ted Baillieu** has pledged to put families at the centre of every decision the Coalition Government makes in the next four years. The centrepiece of this commitment is the plan to set up a 'Families Round Table'. According to the Baillieu, community groups, non-governmental organisations, church leaders and ministers would have seats at such a table.

New governor chosen

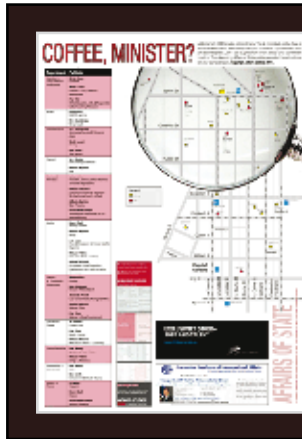
Premier **Ted Baillieu** has appointed 72-year-old Lithuanian-born **Alex Chernov** to replace **David de Krester** as the 28th Governor of Victoria. Chernov, who attended Melbourne High School, is currently chancellor of Melbourne University and is a former Supreme Court judge. Chernov will only serve a three-year term, whereas previous governors have had a five-year mandate. The *Herald Sun* described him as neither a monarchist nor a republican and won't participate in any debate on the issue.

Awaiting new rules

The Age reported that a \$1,500-a-head Liberal Party fundraiser was being sponsored by the company reviewing the Myki ticket system for the government. Also, the meeting was to be headlined by Transport Minister **Terry Mulder** and Planning Minister **Matthew Guy**, both of whom the paper accused of bad judgement over the matter. *The Age* pointed out that while in opposition, now Premier **Ted Baillieu** and senior shadow ministers slammed what they called the Labor government's culture of corruption over its dealings with big business and promised the highest standards of 'probity, transparency and integrity'. The event was cancelled. In response to the fallout, Baillieu announced that no Minister would attend fund raising events until a code of conduct had been drawn up and released. As a result, many events were cancelled or postponed, including functions for the Liberal Party-oriented 500 Club. *Letter from Melbourne* waits with anticipation for the arrival of the new code of conduct. The Labor Party continues to operate its fundraises as normal.

Opposition tactics

The Age says that Victoria Police is investigating allegations that Baillieu government minister **Richard Dalla-Riva** improperly checked police records of his neighbours while serving as a police officer. *The Age* revealed Dalla-Riva was under investigation after the state opposition made the claim in Parliament that he had



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accessed the LEAP database while considering buying a property to check out on would-be neighbours. Dalla-Riva denies he did so, and has threatened legal action if the claims are repeated outside of State Parliament, where defamation laws do not apply.

Labor calls hypocrisy

In a move that Victorian Labor has labelled hypocritical, a Baillieu government department is tendering for a media-monitoring contract, despite heavily criticising such contracts when in opposition. *The Age* said that the Department of Treasury and Finance has requested a tender for monitoring that would provide media clippings to 1,500 staff by 7.30am on the morning of publication. A similar 2008 Treasury contract was worth \$474,000.

State conference dates

The Victorian Nationals will hold their State Conference on May 13 and 14 in Shepparton, and the Liberals on May 28 and 29 at the Melbourne Convention Centre. Labor and the Greens have not yet set dates.

Baillieu pushes defamation case

During last year's Victorian state election, the Labor party ran advertisements targeting **Ted Baillieu's** former real estate firm. Baillieu has now brought his defamation case, launched in December, to the Supreme Court.

EDUCATION

Funding Gap

Independent schools in Victoria are the best-resourced schools in Australia, according to data from the re-launched My Schools Website published in *The Age*. The independent schools operate on an average of \$15,201 per student, compared to \$10,178 for government schools.

Regional allowance back down

Federal Tertiary Education Minister **Chris Evans** will end eligibility distinctions between inner city outer regions from January 1 next year. The move represented a back-down by the Gillard government on a fight to extend youth allowance to up to 40,000 extra rural students.

Moving the apostrophe

The Premier's Reading Challenge, which has seen students from prep to Year 10 read more than 18 million books since 2005 under **Steve Bracks**, is getting a new name. *The Age* reported that, at his own request, Premier **Ted Baillieu** will be joined by all five living former Premiers in the support of the program now known as 'The Premiers' Reading Challenge'.

Fares fair

Hundreds of Melbourne University students are ineligible for concession fares on public transport because of the new 'Melbourne Model'. According to an article in *The Age*, technically, students undertaking the second part of the model are defined as postgraduates. However students at other universities undertaking similar qualifications in such as a law degree, are considered undergraduates, and are therefore eligible for concession cards, unlike their Melbourne peers.

ENVIRONMENT

CONSERVATION

VicForests. Correction. And some facts.

In the last issue, we quoted *The Age* as saying that VicForests lost lots of money, but it seems that the journalist cannot read a balance sheet. The 'loss' referred to by *The Age* represents simply an increase in overdraft financing granted to the company to deal with the aftermath of the 2009 bushfires. VicForests made \$5,266,000 in earnings before interest and taxes in the 09-10 financial year. We apologise for any confusion we may have inadvertently perpetuated.

More recently, *The Age* wrote that a Treasury report found VicForests twice breached Department of Sustainability and Environment rules by logging too much, and its backlog of forest that needed replanting had nearly tripled.

State Agriculture Minister **Peter Walsh** blamed VicForests' problems on bushfires and the former Labor government's logging

WANTED

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restrictions. He said the government would work with the company to implement the report's recommendations.

VicForests provides some more realistic details and perspectives. VicForests is the government business enterprise responsible for the sustainable harvest, regeneration and sale of timber from Victoria's State forests. VicForests harvests and regenerates approximately 5,500 hectares, or less than 0.1 per cent of Victoria's native forest, each year. According to the company's own press release, a detailed external review commissioned by the Department of Treasury and Finance has endorsed VicForests' operations and business model. An assessment of VicForests' first five years of operations by consultancy firm URS recognised the company's 'significant achievements' since its inception'.

VicForests' CEO **David Pollard** said he, quote, 'strongly believes the interpretation of the review included in a recent article in *The Age* is incorrect and misleading. The review by URS actually revealed the VicForests has achieved many of the objectives set out by government when our organisation was founded in 2004. Some media outlets have



chosen to focus on the recommendations for improvement contained within the review, rather than present a balanced picture of the overall report. There are two very different perspectives on this issue, one is the actual content of the review itself, and the second is the incorrect manner in which this content has been interpreted by outlets such as *The Age*'.

Dr. Pollard acknowledged the need for VicForests to continually improve practices, but disagrees with some of the reviews findings and recommendations. VicForests rejects the assertion by *The Age* that it is 'running out of timber' as well as the claim by *The Age* that VicForests has failed to keep track of how much forest is left to log. VicForests also does not agree with *The Age's* interpretation of the review's assessment that VicForests cannot manage its costs, because the review did not say that.

Oddly, the recent State election was the first for some time in which native forestry did not figure as a key issue. Despite the fact that VicForests' take of timber is less than 6000 hectares per year (versus, for example the 1 million hectares lost in the most recent fires) the issue of sustainable harvesting is still a rallying point for committed Greens. Labor spent its 11 years in office systematically reducing the area available to its commercial forestry agency and pushing the costs of production through the roof through new regulatory imposts. In the six years since it was hived off from DSE, VicForests has been quietly and efficiently rationalising the industry to a size and efficiency more consistent with the shrinking amount of wood that the government has made available. In all this, it managed to make a profit in all but two years - and this in a globally competitive commodities sector: no mean feat.

VicForests' CEO, (pictured) is the former Commissioner of State Revenue and has held a number of top management positions in both the Commonwealth and state government.

Cows in Burke's backyard

Federal Environment Minister **Tony Burke** attacked Victoria's Alpine National Park cattle grazing trial, setting federal Labor on a collision course with the state Coalition. *The Age* said Burke questioned the legitimacy of the research and accused the Baillieu government of treating public land like a farm. *The Age* later reported that cattle farmers had raised the money for the scientists leading the experiment. A few weeks after voicing his concerns, Burke 'ordered' the Victorian government to remove the cattle by April 8, saying the Baillieu government needed to seek his approval before launching the trial.

According to *The Age*, this effectively restores a 2005 Bracks government ban, which was based on advice that grazing harmed the environment and was not a significant factor in reducing bushfires. However, Victorian Environment Minister **Ryan Smith** accused Burke of grandstanding, pointing out that the deadline coincides with the end of the grazing season anyway and that he would consider his options going forward. Soon afterwards, 774 ABC Melbourne reported that a protest calling for a complete end to the grazing trial was staged on the steps of Parliament. It was organised by the National Parks Association and featured participants dressed as cows. Spokesman **Matt Ruchel** said that the door was still open for cattle to return to the high country next season, and 'to keep in mind that this is a six year trial'.

High country blackmail

The Baillieu government reportedly sought to blackmail the University of Melbourne into overseeing its controversial Alpine grazing trial by threatening to withdraw millions of dollars in research funding. *The Age* obtained emails between executive director of the Department of Sustainability and Environment, **Peter Appleford**, and acting head of the School of Land and Environment, associate professor **Gerd Bossinger**. Appleford implied the government would withdraw contracts 'worth millions of dollars' annually to the faculty, if it did not co-operate.

The University originally responded to the request to work on the trial, designed to measure if cattle grazing would reduce fire

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risk in the Alpine National Park, with 'an expression of concern,' as 'much of the work that is being proposed has already been done'. Bossinger said previous studies had found that incidences of fire in the high country were not cut by cattle grazing.

EPA internal report

Last year Victorian EPA chief executive **John Merritt** ordered an internal investigation after damning external reviews by the Victorian Ombudsman and Auditor-General. The investigation was headed by former WorkSafe Victoria investigations director **Stan Krpan**. In his latest report he said: 'A reactive strategy, limited procedures and lack of accredited training meant that the EPA had not adequately supported authorised officers to consistently and effectively apply and explain the law.' The report is in line with *The Age's* understanding of Merritt's public position since joining the EPA: that the authority had stopped prosecuting at the level it should and faced a perception that it was toothless. According to *The Age*, Environment Minister **Ryan Smith** expressed confidence in the authority.

Platypus rescue

A baby platypus was washed at least 50 kilometres down the Mitchell River into sea water by the Victorian floods. The *Herald Sun*



There has been a lot of noise up this end of town as helicopters have done their security practice by hovering over buildings near Spring St.

reported that little Yamacona, whose name means water spirit in Wurundjeri, weighed only 335 grams when she arrived in critical condition at Healesville Sanctuary.

Cash-for-cans

State Greens MP **Colleen Hartland** was reported by *The Age* to be re-introducing her bill for a 10c bottle and can deposit scheme. She introduced a similar bill in 2009 that passed the Upper House with the support of the Coalition but was defeated in the Lower House by the Labor government. This time her chances look much better, as Victoria's new Environment Minister **Ryan Smith** promised to support the scheme during the last election.

Busy lake

Coalition Against Duck Shooting campaign director **Laurie Levy** told *The Age* a 43 year old female volunteer was struck by shotgun pellets in the face at about 9am on the first day of the season, after pellets ricocheted off the water. A team of 130 Department of Sustainability and Environment, Parks Victoria and Victoria Police patrolled the wetlands across Victoria to ensure the start to the season was orderly. Hunters were issued with 23 infringements and protestors were issued with 54 infringements for illegally entering wetlands during prohibited periods the *The Age* said. Seven hunters will be charged on summons to appear in court. Levy said between 1,500 and 2,000 shooters and 150 volunteers were at Lake Buloke. **Rod Drew**, chief executive of shooting association Field and Game, said the incident was terrible.

WEATHER

Wet summer

Bureau of Meteorology climatologist **Harvey Stern** said in *The Age* that Victoria's summer rainfall, averaged throughout the state, had already exceeded the 1910-11 record of 237 millimetres. He said the La Niña ocean/atmosphere, the cause of Queensland's massive flooding, had also been responsible for Victoria's recent soaking. The story ran with graphics illustrating that the 2011 summer was by far the coldest and wettest in recent years.

State of insurance

In an interview on Channel Ten, *The Age* felt that federal Treasurer **Wayne Swan** hinted that an enquiry may be established to examine

whether states should be forced to take out commercial insurance for natural disasters.

Infrastructure down the drain

Large parts of inner Melbourne are expected to flood every 10 years unless there are urgent upgrades to the city's drainage, a Melbourne City Council report has found. The report into flood mitigation for existing flood-prone sites was analysed by *The Age*, and identified 10 "very high-risk" locations for flooding and another seven "high-risk" areas and called for an urgent \$5 million upgrade of drainage capacity. *The Age* said that very high-risk areas included locations on Spencer and Flinders streets, Wellington Parade, and Flemington Road. Locations at high risk include sections of Flinders Lane, Collins and Queen streets.

ENERGY

Electricity price shock

The Australian Industry Group reports that power prices will double from their 2008 levels by 2015. The details published in the *Herald Sun* also claim the Federal Government's small-scale renewable energy scheme is expected to add a further \$1.2 billion to electricity costs for consumers this year alone. The *Herald Sun* calculates that the forecasted rises will entirely negate the Baillieu Government's extended help for low-income Victorians.



Adjunct Professor Bjorn Lomborg of the Copenhagen Business School addresses the Australian Institute of International Affairs at the RACV Club, 7 March.

Coal won't get burnt

State Treasurer **Kim Wells** has promised to protect Victoria's brown coal competitive advantage 'come hell or high water'. *The Age* quoted Wells as saying he would not put at risk hundreds of thousands of jobs that rely on cheap power.

He also said that the government has not yet decided whether Victoria would sign up to the federal government's carbon tax, but would honour a commitment to cut state greenhouse gas emissions by 20 per cent over the next decade.



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WATER

Officials in hot water

Board members at Goulburn-Murray Water have been told that they have lost the confidence of Victoria's new Water Minister **Peter Walsh**. *The Age* reported the officials have been asked to either resign or explain why they should not be sacked. The dramatic ultimatum came amid fears of insolvency at one of the state's most important water authorities.

Without a paddle

A host of urban waterways, including the Yarra River, Maribyrnong River, Merri Creek, and Moonee Ponds Creek, were subjected to the dumping of raw sewage during Melbourne's floods. Melbourne Water sought to prevent sewage backing up into private homes as the city's waste network failed to cope with the deluge.

Target 155

Victorians will no longer live with personal water consumption targets, as *The Age* reported that the Coalition government scraped the 'Target 155' policy and campaign. Water Minister **Peter Walsh** said the strategy had been little more than a 'political slogan' and would be discontinued. Water authorities spent close to \$9 million last financial year on promotional campaigns to influence water consumption in Melbourne, of which Target 155 was most prominent. Walsh said the target had not played a major role in reducing water consumption. However, 'people understand they need to be careful with water use,' he said. The move is meant to be part of the **Ted Baillieu's** 'no-spin' promise made when he took office. However, water retailers are at odds with the new governments' position, with City West Water releasing a report crediting the campaign with saving eight weeks' worth of water supplies for the city. Some 155 advertising currently remains in place, such as under the Swan Street bridge.

Desal here to stay

Premier **Ted Baillieu** was quoted in *The Age* as saying Victorians are 'stuck' with Australia's largest desalination plant, despite an eventual price tag of \$24 billion that is expected to double household water bills over the next five years. He criticised the former Brumby government for initiating the project, but would not break contracts because of cost and the fear of discouraging future investment in Victoria.

Water challenge

The Board of the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority is seeking a dynamic leader to continue to nurture a highly responsive performance based culture focused on natural resource management outcomes.

Directing the flow

South East Water is owned by the Victorian Government and is one of Melbourne's

three metropolitan water retailers. They provide water, sewerage, and recycled water services to residential, business, industrial and institutional customers in the south east of Melbourne. Their focus is on meeting their customers' changing water and waste disposal needs and promoting efficient water resource management across their customer base. The advertisement in *The Age* called for a managing director with executive experience in regulated utilities or services environments.

GAMING

Community fights pokies

Whittlesea Council has gone to the VCAT in a bid to reverse a decision by the state's gambling regulator. Tattersalls was granted a licence to install 40 machines in a venue at the new housing estate in Laurimar, a community that was devastated by the Black Saturday bushfires.

Carlton hits pokies jackpot

The Age reports that Carlton Football Club is set to make millions of dollars over the next decade from the purchase of 30 poker machines from the North Melbourne Giants Basketball Club. Because the Giants' status as a club is under investigation, Carlton was able to snap up the operating rights at a third of the market rate. The deal to transfer the entitlements to Carlton is being helped by poker machine company Australian Leisure and Hospitality Group.

HEALTH

Federal health deal

Victoria has agreed to **Julia Gillard** government's national health reform deal. The new agreement requires the federal government to provide its current base amount of funding, now about 38 per cent of the total, plus 50 per cent of growth funding from 2018. *The Age* reported that Federal Health Minister **Nicola Roxon** said that the states would remain responsible for investing in capital projects, including new hospitals and expansions to existing ones. **Ted Baillieu**, however, said more work needed to be done with the Commonwealth on this.

The myki of health

Health Minister **David Davis** said in *The Age* that he was considering abandoning Victoria's \$360 million HealthSMART health technology program. The project was originally supposed to link computer systems in all major Victorian hospitals and give medical staff immediate access to patient records and test results. The features have only been introduced in two hospitals – Box Hill and the Royal Victorian Eye and Ear, with two more due to come online soon. Davis was quoted as describing the

program as ‘the myki of the health system’, but also that he had not yet made a decision to scrap it. Australian Medical Association president **Harry Hemley** was also quoted by the paper, saying that Victorian health technology bordered on embarrassing, and that ‘patients would be appalled at the lack of IT, computers and connectivity between different areas of the health system.’

Bishop to Victoria

The federal governments top medical advisor **Jim Bishop** decided to leave his position to head up Victoria’s new billion dollar Comprehensive Cancer Centre and spend more time with his family.

According to *The Age*, Professor Bishop will become director of the centre in May, bringing together seven institutions involved in cancer research, treatment and education to develop what will be the largest concentration of cancer specialists in the southern hemisphere. He will

also become the chair of cancer medicine at Melbourne University.

Board position

The State Minister for Health is seeking applications for part-time board member positions to Health Purchasing Victoria.

INVESTMENT

BUSINESS

Bookstore bankruptcy and BHP

Borders and 125-year-old chain Angus & Robertson were placed into voluntary receivership. They have 26 and 103 stores respectively, that will be affected by the financial situation. *The Age* cited the growing popularity of the internet as a place to purchase books, fuelled by the strong Australian dollar, as well as the advent of e-books and e-readers, as making it harder for bricks-and-mortar shops to compete. *The Age* speculated that the world’s biggest mining company, BHP, is fast becoming one of the world’s most profitable after it posted record profits. The last interim profit was \$US10.5 billion, a 72 per cent increase from last year, putting the company in posting a June-year profit of \$US23 billion.

Death funds kill portfolio

An investigation by *The Age* detailed how the Victorian Funds Management Corporation lost \$500 million through investing in an unsound new financial product known as a Death Fund. The basic premise of Death Funds is to buy out life insurance policies from individuals who want the money now, and pay them out a lump sum smaller than what their insurance would pay if they were to die. Then one pays premiums on the policy until the original owner dies, at which point one claims the insurance and theoretically makes a profit. Such an undertaking requires a very large pool of liquidity, which the VFMC had, seeing as they manage three-quarters of the state government’s assets. Unfortunately, this product relies on actuarial tables to estimate life expectancy, tables that are not entirely accurate, and premiums eat into returns on investment the longer a policyholder lives. The investigation gives more details as to how it all unravelled, and points to flaws in the way the Victorian Funds Management Corporation does business. Be careful in reading some newspaper articles from the non-finance papers as they can become quite emotive on financial matters.

Coles roadside assist

The *Herald Sun* reported that supermarket giant Coles is moving in on the RACV’s territory, offering roadside assistance for drivers at \$75 per year. The program links those offered with bonus fuel discounts or FlyBuys loyalty program points.

ICT support

In a press releases, the Victorian government has affirmed its strong commitment to support the development of the local ICT industry. The release on the Multimedia Victoria website said the government was currently developing a new ICT plan to be release some time this year. Part of that project is a survey of the Victorian ICT industry, which businesses can participate in via the website.

More competitive grants

The Competitive Business Fund is a Victorian Government initiative to assist businesses to take maximum advantage of new opportunities that are emerging in the global economy. The Fund supports growing and competitive businesses with the potential to move into new markets, to develop processes and solutions, or to invest further in their business in order to enhance competitiveness and capitalise on emerging opportunities. Funding in the order of \$3 million is available in the second round of grants on a competitive basis. The Fund provides two streams of financial assistance on a co-contribution basis:

Enterprise; up to \$250,000 for a project involving one company, to be matched by a minimum of \$3 for every \$1 granted. Supply, and Chain; up to \$500,000 for a collaborative project involving multiple companies, to be matched by a minimum of \$2 for every \$1 granted. Apply through the Business Victoria website by April 8.

Vague Westpac communication

In a letter to its business customers, Westpac seemed to be saying it is refreshing the Bank of Melbourne. This letter to the editors office did not clearly explain how things would change.

AGRICULTURE

Flooded with assistance

State Agriculture Minister **Peter Walsh** is urging the federal government to continue paying drought assistance payments to affected Victorian farmers, despite many being inundated with rain to the point of flooding. *The Age* article says regular payments are due to stop around April and a decision on whether they can continue is expected soon.

Where your food comes from

A *Weekly Times* investigation found few small greengrocers comply with regulation requiring them to identify clearly the country of origin of all unpacked fresh produce. Unlike their smaller cousins, Coles, Woolworths and Aldi were all found to be abiding by the regulations.

Young farmers

A Parliamentary rural and regional committee will investigate strategies to encourage more young people to be farmers. *The Age* writes that the one-year inquiry is expected to examine profitability of farms, career paths for

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Milk wars

Rival supermarket giants Coles and Woolworths have been undercutting one another in a price war over generic branded milk, forcing the price down to just \$1 per litre. *The Herald Sun* reported that Nationals MP **Bruce Scott** told federal parliament that the low prices could ‘destroy dairy farmers’. There has been much speculation as to the consequences for the dairy industry and smaller retail chains, as well as the long-term price effects of what some have described as anti-competitive behaviour. More recently, the price wars seem to have spread first to eggs, and then beer.

JUSTICE

Jails full

Figures made available to the *Herald Sun* show that Victoria’s jails are operating at capacity and are unable to support an expected surge in incarceration under the new state government’s ‘tough on crime’ approach. The prison population at the start of February was 4488, despite there being only about 4230 permanent prison beds in the state. Police and prison authorities say police station cells are routinely overflowing with prisoners unable to be assigned a proper prison bed.

Police brutality

Figures obtained by *The Age* under Freedom of Information laws revealed that in 2010 police were set to record more than 20,000 incidents where force was used against them. That is 2.5 times for every operational member over the course of the year, the highest it has been since 2005 and an increase of 15 per cent over the past 3 years. The Police Association has blamed the rise in violence against its officers on chronically under-resourced police. According to *The Age*, Victoria has the smallest force population per-capita in Australia, and liberal liquor licensing laws.

Corruption

State Crime Prevention Minister **Andrew McIntosh** told *The Australian* it would be unacceptable for head of the Office of Police Integrity **Michael Strong** to have a role in Victoria’s new anti-corruption commission. McIntosh said that other staff from the OPI and Victoria Police might have rolls when the

2011 Melbourne Awards

The 2011 Melbourne Awards are open for entry.

The Melbourne Awards honour the individuals and organisations who have made a significant contribution to Melbourne’s sustainability, community and profile.

The City of Melbourne wants to hear from anybody who has worked hard to make a difference, or who knows someone who has.

Winners will benefit from increased media exposure for their business or cause. All entrants will have the opportunity to establish relationships with senior business leaders and gain valuable feedback from industry experts.

Entries for the 2011 Melbourne Awards close on Monday 2 May and finalists and winners, including Melburnian of the Year, will be announced at a prestigious gala ceremony on Saturday 27 August.

Visit www.melbourne.vic.gov.au/melbourneawards to download an entry form or call 9658 9348 for more information.



Jim Stynes, 2010 Melburnian of the Year, and Lord Mayor Robert Doyle

Coalition establishes the Independent Broad-Based Anti-Corruption Commission (IBAC).

Powers to sting

Andrew McIntosh told the *Herald Sun* that Victoria’s first independent broad-based anti-corruption commission was on track to be operating by July. He said it would be up to the IBAC how and when it used its powers but promised to ensure it had an ‘armoury that would be greater than a royal commission’. Undercover sting operations are likely to be launched against suspected corrupt politicians, judges, local government officials and public servants as a result. Victoria’s new anti-corruption body is also expected to use secret integrity tests to tempt shonky public sector workers into committing crimes. *The Age* later reported that the commission’s formation has been pushed back by at least 10 weeks by legal complications. Canberra may need to introduce legislation in order to provide the sweeping powers desired.

Speeders court

A special court has been set up to deal exclusively with the large volume of speeding fines being contested by EastLink motorists. *The Herald Sun* reported that Dandenong Magistrates’ Court will have two sessions a week dedicated to hearing the cases.

Who’s your daddy

A donor-conceived woman who asked a tribunal to review a decision not to write to her biological father and inform him of a donors’ voluntary register has been knocked back. The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal said it did not have jurisdiction to review a decision made by the Registrar of Births, Deaths and Marriages. *The Age* said the ruling could affect challenges to decisions made about various sensitive personal and family issues.

Cop recruitment pay

The Age reported that Premier **Ted Baillieu**’s promise to recruit a record number of police is under threat. The powerful police union has warned that the Coalition’s new pay offer may sink the governments pledge to acquire more officers.

City violence

Victoria police crime figures published in *The Age* show street assaults and domestic violence increased by 3.7 per cent across the CBD last year. Crime is also up in outer growth corridors, where assaults and robberies have risen up to 30 per cent in some cases. The cities of Casey, Hume and Wyndham recorded the highest increases in assaults, while Hume, Greater Dandenong and Geelong had the highest increase in robberies. Deputy Commissioner **Sir Ken Jones** told 3AW some of the figures were disappointing, and that police would have to step up their efforts over the next 12 months.

Illegal brothels

There are an estimated 300 to 400 illegal brothels in Victoria, according to an *Age* investigation. The illegal sex industry has enjoyed a decade of unparalleled growth, due to a systemic failure by police, Consumer Affairs, the Immigration Department and local councils, which are variously hamstrung due to inadequate powers, legal loopholes and under-resourcing.

Not so fine

Tens of thousands of parking 'fines' issued by private operators of carparks may be invalid. *The Age* claims that if the request for penalty payments resembles official fines, then they contravene new Fair Trading Act legislation. Consumer Affairs Victoria and the Consumer Action Law Centre are urging customers who have received such notices since the law came into effect, on January 1, to challenge them if they look like official local government fines.

Law Institute

Victorian Attorney-General **Robert Clark** graced the cover of the March edition of the Law Institute Journal entitled 'Stepping Out of the Shadow'.

TALES OF BUREAUCRACY**Reel issues**

Yarra City Council has shut down the screenings of art-house movies at a Collingwood site for the second time, this time in part because the operator did not have a \$572 building permit to install four light fittings. *The Age* reported that the Speakeasy Cinema has been bogged down in the planning system for almost a year. Cinema director Ghita Loebenstein said, 'if you were to make a comedy about planning issues you would only have to follow us around.'

Superficial Bruising

The federal government has allowed the banana industry to sell fruit damaged by cyclone Yasi. Regulation specifying that fallen bananas, rather than harvested, cannot be sold. According to *The Age*, such an exemption was not allowed after Cyclone Larry in 2006, which caused a shortage of bananas that lasted 9 months and drove prices up five-fold.

MELBOURNE**Good night**

Last month Melbourne's Lord Mayor **Robert Doyle** was on a crusade for more civil behaviour, such as keeping to the left on the sidewalk. Now he is looking for a cultural change in the city's nightlife, expressed in an open letter for the *Herald Sun*. He wants to change the dynamic of Melbourne at night by taking the focus off alcohol consumption and aggressive

clubs, to night markets and engaging inner city activities like mid-night basketball. 'These are just some of the activities that, along with our established festivals like the Comedy Festival, Fringe Festival and Melbourne Festival, will transform this great city', he wrote.

Safety street

Melbourne City council's newest plan for Swanston Street includes four new tram super-stops, with a bike trail running between the tram tracks and the footpath. But *The Age* revealed that Transport Safety Victoria wrote to Yarra Trams in November outlining concerns about the 'management of passenger safety' at the planned upgrade to Tram Stop 8 on the corner of Swanston and La Trobe streets.

Liveable city

Melbourne has come in at number two on the Global Liveability Survey list, behind only Vancouver, Canada. The *Herald Sun* quoted Lord Mayor **Robert Doyle** as welcoming the news.

Great jobs

The Minister for Environment and Climate Change is seeking expressions of interest for five positions, including the deputy chairperson, on the Zoological Parks and Gardens Board from July 30. The Board oversees Zoos Victoria, responsible for the management for the zoos at Melbourne, Healesville and Werribee.

Good circulation

The *Sunday Herald Sun* has been Victoria's biggest selling newspaper over the past three months. New Audit Bureau figures almost 580,000 copies sold per week.

ARTS**Director required**

Melbourne Recital Centre, Australia's newest producer and cultural centre, is committed to creating, exploring and presenting great music. Based in the heart of Melbourne's Southbank arts precinct, it is fast becoming internationally acclaimed as the nation's landmark centre for music.

The MRC is looking for two driven professionals to fill the rolls of Director of Marketing and Customer Relations and Director of Development.

Performing arts appreciation

The Melbourne Recital Centre and Opera Australia at the Arts Centre released their Autumn 2011 schedule, giving dates for upcoming performances in April, May and June. Music Viva also released its international concert tour dates.

Laugh it up

The Melbourne International Comedy Festival begins at the end of March. Tickets on sale for a wide variety of show throughout April.

EVENTS**Royal visit**

Prince William arrived in Kerang, Victoria, by helicopter north of the Murray, with the *Herald Sun* claiming he reportedly flew some of the way himself. He was warmly received as he visited sites in the flood-affected area such as St Joseph's and Kerang South Primary Schools, and a farm at Appin about 30 kilometres south of the town. The *Herald Sun* says about 1,500 people turned up to greet the prince, a fair chunk of Kerang's 3,700 population. The prince then left for home via Tullamarine airport without coming to Melbourne, allowing greater focus on the bush and its recent woes. Premier **Ted Baillieu** was there with the prince to announce the government's latest flood assistance package, worth over \$12 million.

Grand Prix has Mayor driving in circles

As the Melbourne Grand Prix has edged closer, the debate rages on as to the future of the event. Lord Mayor **Robert Doyle**, who has been a fierce critic of the race, backed up his rhetoric, confirming to the *Herald Sun* that he would not attend the race despite the Melbourne City Council being an official sponsor... That is, until he pulled a U-turn on March 18, saying he had been convinced by members of the 'business community' that 'regardless of my personal opinion about the cost, the race is still an event in our city'. The *Herald Sun* later released racy photos of Doyle at an F1 promotional event posing with 'grid girls'.

The premise of Doyle's argument against the race is that the event loses the city \$70 million per year. However, this is disputed by Grand Prix Corporate chairman **Ron Walker**, who claims the event brings \$180 million in economic benefits into the state. A confirmed no-show at the race is Formula One boss **Bernie Ecclestone**, who is scheduled to be in New York when the checked flag falls, to hear Mayor **Michael Bloomberg's** bold plan to poach the event.

Challenging decision

A small controversy was caused when Victorian RSL boss **David McLachlan** said his organisation would not review its decision to ban relatives from walking with veterans in the day's parade. WWII veteran **Geoff Wisby** called on the RSL to scrap the ban in *The Herald Sun*, but Premier **Ted Baillieu** and Opposition Leader **Daniel Andrews** defended the changes, saying that the safety of old diggers was paramount and that critics should keep in mind that the RSL had to strike a difficult balance.

Funny money

Melbourne Comedy Festival chairman **Bill Shannon** spoke at the inaugural Funny Business fundraising dinner. The *Herald Sun* covered that event held at the Plaza Ballroom on February 23.



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Finding No. 4648
Available on Website: www.roymorgan.com
On March 18, 2011

Clear majority of Australians (61%) don't want Nuclear Power Plants, but do want to export Uranium for 'Peaceful purposes' (59%)

In the first Morgan Poll taken after the devastating Japanese earthquake and tsunami and subsequent problems at the Fukushima nuclear power plant a clear majority of Australians (61%) do not want nuclear power plants in Australia – up 26% since September 1979. However, a majority of Australians (59%) say Australia 'should export Uranium to other countries for peaceful purposes' according to a special telephone Morgan Poll taken over the last two nights this week, March 16/17, 2011.

The majority of Australians (59%, down 3% since June 1991) support exporting Uranium to other countries for 'peaceful purposes' compared to 34% (up 3%) that don't want to export. However only 44% support exporting Uranium to other countries for their 'nuclear power needs' while 50% of Australians don't want to export for their 'nuclear power needs.'

The majority of Australians 61% (up 26% since September 1979) believe Australia should not develop nuclear power plants to supply electricity, while only 34% (down 18%) of Australians believe Australia should develop nuclear power plants to supply electricity and 5% can't say.

If Australia were to develop nuclear power plants, a large majority (73%, up 23% since September 1979) of Australians would oppose a nuclear power plant being built in their area compared to just 12% (down 6%) that would agree to a nuclear power plant being built in their area while a further 13% (down 8%) would be anxious but not oppose it – meaning a total 25% (down 14%) would not oppose a nuclear power plant being built in their area.

A plurality of Australians (49%) object to other countries building nuclear power plants compared to only 37% that say other countries should build nuclear power plants.

Gary Morgan says:

"Australian opinions on nuclear power have changed significantly over the last 30 years with 61% (up 26% since September 1979) of Australians now saying they don't want nuclear power plants in Australia while just 34% (down 18%) support the development of nuclear power plants.

"Despite not wanting nuclear power in Australia a majority of Australians (59%, down 3% since June 1991) support the export of Uranium for 'peaceful purposes' although only 44% support the export of Uranium for 'nuclear power needs' and more Australians (49%) don't want other countries to build nuclear power plants than those that do (37%).

"Following on from the recent disaster in Japan at the Fukushima nuclear power plant, these results show that there is no likelihood of Australians supporting nuclear power as part of Australia's energy mix to reduce carbon emissions in the next few years."

This special telephone Morgan Poll was conducted over the last two nights, March 16/17, 2011 with an Australia-wide cross-section of 635 Australians aged 14+.

"Do you believe Australia should develop nuclear power plants to supply electricity to Australia?"

	Sep	Mar 16/17,		Federal Voting Intention				
	1979	2011		ALP	L-NP	Greens	Others	Can't say
	14+	14+	Electors					
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Yes, develop nuclear power plants	52	34	34	29	39	29	36	18
No, don't develop nuclear power plants	35	61	61	66	54	66	64	65
Can't say	13	5	5	5	7	5	-	17
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100



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Finding No. 4647
Available on Website: www.roymorgan.com
On March 18, 2011

L-NP (50.5%) just in front of ALP (49.5%)

The latest telephone Morgan Poll conducted over the last two nights, March 16/17, 2011, shows the L-NP (50.5%, down 5% in a week) now has only a slight lead over the ALP (49.5%, up 5%) on a Two-Party preferred basis.

- A reduced majority of electors (54%, down 3%) oppose the Gillard Government's proposed legislation to 'place a price on carbon' but support for the carbon tax is now at 38% (up 5%).
- A large, but falling, majority of electors (68%, down 4%) agree that Prime Minister Gillard lied about the proposed carbon tax before the Federal election when she stated 'There will be no carbon tax under the Government I lead.'
- Opinion is still divided on Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's promise 'to rescind' the Government's proposed 'carbon tax' legislation if the Liberal Party is elected: 44% support rescinding the legislation cf. 46% oppose rescinding the legislation.

Voting Intention

The latest telephone Morgan Poll conducted over the last two nights, March 16/17, 2011, shows on a Two-Party preferred basis the L-NP (50.5%, down 5%) now has only a slight lead over the ALP (49.5%, up 5%). The L-NP primary vote is 42.5%, ahead of the ALP 35.5%. Support for the minor parties shows the Greens 12%, (up 2%) and Others/ Independents 10%, (down 1%).

Also released today is last weekend's Face-to-Face Morgan Poll (conducted March 12/13, 2011) which also showed a swing back to the ALP away from the L-NP three days before the telephone Morgan Poll: L-NP (51.5%, down 2.5% in a week) ahead of the ALP (48.5%, up 2.5%) on a Two-Party preferred basis.

The Roy Morgan Government Confidence Rating is down 2 points to 118 – 52.5% of Australians say Australia is 'heading in the right direction,' while 34.5% say Australia is 'heading in the wrong direction. The latest [weekly Roy Morgan Consumer Confidence Rating](#) for the weekend of March 12/13, 2011, was 118.8 up 3.3pts from March 5/6, 2011.

Gary Morgan says:

"Both Morgan Polls (face to face and telephone) show the ALP gaining much of the ground lost after a terrible couple of weeks. Prime Minister Gillard and the Government have begun to explain their proposed carbon tax and also potential compensatory measures for lower income households and although a clear majority of Australians (54%, down 3%) still oppose the carbon tax, a rising number of Australians (38%, up 5%) are now supporting Gillard's proposal. If the measure is enacted into law Australia is still split as to whether Tony Abbott should rescind the legislation if he wins the next election: 46% say Abbott should not rescind the carbon tax if he's elected while 44% say he should.

"The improved standing for the Gillard Government also comes after Prime Minister received the rare honour of addressing a joint sitting of US Congress and also the devastating news from Japan of last week's major earthquake and resulting tsunami and subsequent issues with the Fukushima nuclear power plant. Polling experience covering more than 70 years shows in times of crisis like during the last week the incumbent political party usually experiences a jump in their support."

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

For further information:

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

Carbon Tax Questions

A majority of electors (54%) oppose the Gillard Government's proposed legislation to 'place a price on carbon' – including a clear majority of L-NP supporters (83%), however only 27% of ALP supporters and just 15% of Greens supporters oppose the proposed legislation.

Although only 38% of electors support the proposed legislation, a majority of ALP supporters (62%) and Greens supporters (72%) agree with the proposal but only 12% of L-NP supporters want this legislation.

Question 1:

"In recent weeks Prime Minister Julia Gillard has announced the Gillard Government will seek to 'place a price on carbon.' Do you support or oppose the Gillard Government's proposed legislation?"

	<u>Electors</u>		<u>Federal Voting Intention</u>				
	<u>March</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>ALP</u>	<u>L-NP</u>	<u>Greens</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Can't say</u>
	<u>8-10, 2011</u>	<u>16/17, 2011</u>					
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Support	33	38	62	12	72	23	25
Oppose	57	54	27	83	15	73	59
Can't say	10	8	11	5	13	4	16
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The Morgan Poll also asked electors whether they believe Prime Minister Julia Gillard lied about the proposed carbon tax. A large majority of electors (68%) agree that Gillard lied including 86% of L-NP supporters, 48% of ALP supporters and 49% of Greens supporters. Although only 9% of L-NP supporters say that Gillard didn't lie, sizeable minorities of ALP supporters (39%) and Greens supporters (29%) also say that Gillard didn't lie.

Question 2:

"Prime Minister Gillard has claimed that she has not broken an election promise in which she stated – 'There will be no carbon tax under the Government I lead.' Do you think Prime Minister Gillard lied about this promise?"

	<u>Electors</u>		<u>Federal Voting Intention</u>				
	<u>March</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>ALP</u>	<u>L-NP</u>	<u>Greens</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Can't say</u>
	<u>8-10, 2011</u>	<u>16/17, 2011</u>					
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Gillard lied	72	68	48	86	49	73	84
Gillard didn't	19	23	39	9	29	23	16
Can't say	9	9	13	5	22	4	-
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The final question related to Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's promise 'to rescind' the Gillard Government's legislation if elected. Marginally more electors (46%) oppose Tony Abbott's promise 'to rescind' the Gillard Government's proposed 'carbon tax' legislation if elected than support (44%).

However, a large majority of L-NP supporters (75%) support Abbott's promise compared to only 18% of ALP supporters and 15% of Greens supporters. A clear majority of ALP supporters (71%) and Greens supporters (80%) do not want Abbott to rescind the 'carbon tax' if elected compared to only 16% of L-NP supporters.

Question 3:

"Do you support or oppose Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's promise 'to rescind' the Government's proposed 'carbon tax' legislation if elected?"

	<u>Electors</u>		<u>Federal Voting Intention</u>				
	<u>March</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>ALP</u>	<u>L-NP</u>	<u>Greens</u>	<u>Others</u>	<u>Can't say</u>
	<u>8-10, 2011</u>	<u>16/17, 2011</u>					
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Support Abbott rescinding tax	44	44	18	75	15	47	19
Oppose Abbott rescinding tax	45	46	71	16	80	43	32
Can't say	11	10	11	9	5	10	49
TOTAL	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

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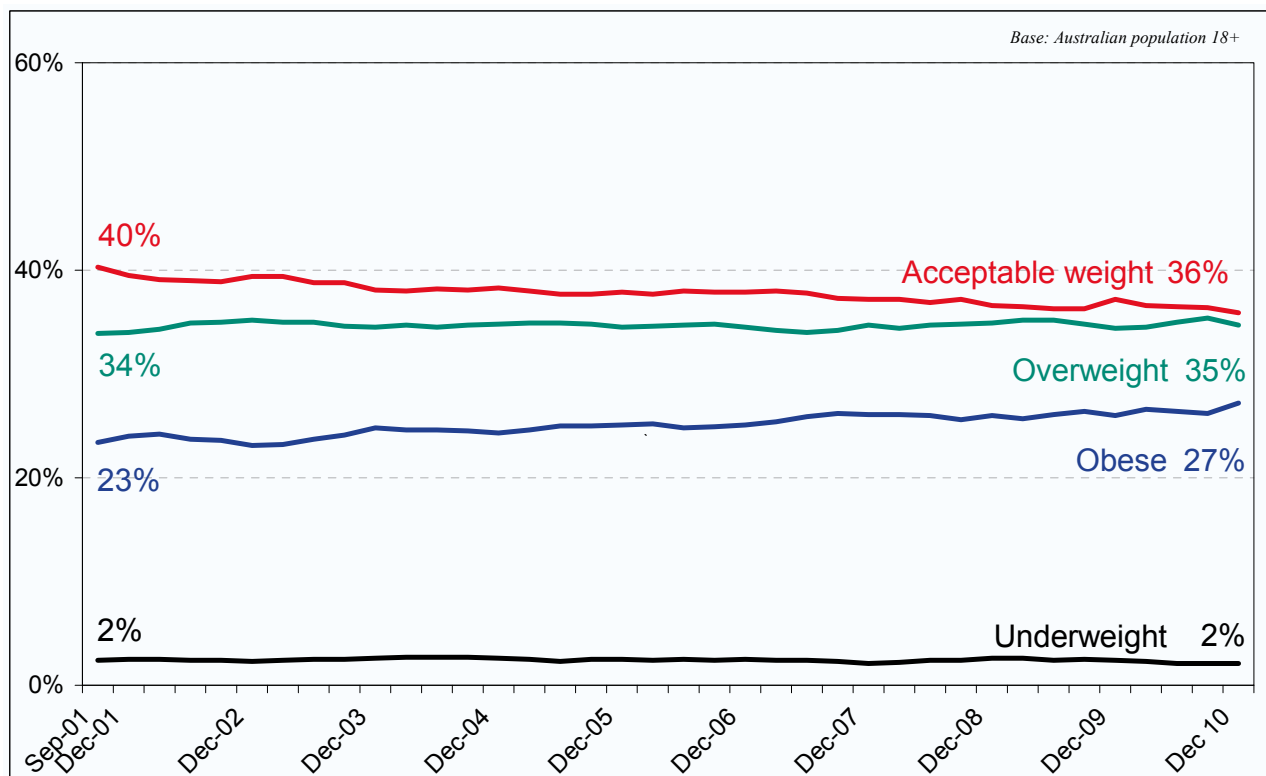
Australians Losing Battle of the Bulge – 6 in 10 now overweight or obese

The number of Australian adults classified within an acceptable weight range continues to decrease, according to the Roy Morgan State of the Nation report – a major study of Australians spanning well over a decade with almost a million interviews.

In December 2010, only 36% of Australians had a Body Mass Index (BMI) indicating an acceptable weight, down from 40% in September 2001.

The shift towards a larger body mass is supported by figures showing 27% of the population were obese in December 2010, up from 23% in September 2001. Over the same period, those considered overweight rose from 34% to 35%.

Body Mass Index of Australians



Source: Roy Morgan Single Source, Australians 18+, average 12 monthly moving average Sept 01 – Dec 2010, n = 51,851.

Similar shifts are reflected in attitudes to weight loss. As of December 2010, 64% of the population reported they would like to be able to lose weight, compared to 62% in March 2001.

Despite this, those who considered a low fat diet a way of life declined from 36% to 33% between March 2001 and December 2010, and the number of Australians constantly watching their weight was down from 42% to 40% over the same period.

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

“Our rising weight is likely an indication of our changing lifestyles. But despite more Australians becoming overweight and obese, we seem to be becoming less interested in dieting and weight watching.”

Please visit the Roy Morgan Online Store for more information: www.roymorganonlinestore.com

THE HIGH COUNTRY

On Tuesday, March 2, a motion was put before the Victorian Legislative Council by the Opposition that:

The House should express its dismay at the government's decision to reintroduce cattle grazing to the Alpine National Park...

Letter from Melbourne's editor, **Alistair Urquhart**, in the chamber at the time, listened to the long and animated response to the proposed motion by Member, and farmer, **Philip Davis**. Davis made a number of arguments in favour of the return of cattle to the region, including a theory that it lowered fire risks in the area by clearing particular types of flora. His words are as follows:



'My take is that there is a bit of fraud going on here. I thought that there was some evidence being fabricated about damage that cattle are doing because claims were made. One of the features in the Age story was that cattle were moving along a track in front of a vehicle, which was part of the video. Clearly those cattle had been mustered together for that vision, so somebody had disturbed the cattle that otherwise would have been dispersed and grazing. There were wheel tracks on Shepherds Plain, where clearly the mustering activity had been going on. So we know that there has been some fabrication.

The real tell about this was that on the way out of the site I found the spot where a photo which is on the Age website was taken. It shows Dr Wahren crouching down and taking a photograph — in other words, a set-up — of the golden everlasting daisy, which is a very common high country plant that cattle do not eat because it is a coarse plant. There were claims in that article, repeated by Dr Wahren, that cattle are eating these plants. I found the exact site, which was easy.

If you do a bit of map reading, as I do, you can actually work out reference points. I found the reference points and coordinated all of them and found exactly the clump that was used for the purposes of the Age article. In fact I now have a photograph of me kneeling down and taking a photo of the daisies

in exactly the spot where Dr Wahren knelt. So I did my research.

An honourable member interjected.

Mr DAVIS — Absolutely. But when I measured it what I found was that those everlastings were not on the trial site. They were 3 kilometres from the trial site and there was a fence between them and the trial site. So Dr Wahren has fabricated evidence for the purpose of getting a political campaign going — lining up and being associated with the Victorian National Parks Association and other campaigners — on an issue which has absolutely no credibility at all.'

Most interesting was Davis's anecdote of the federal Environment Minister's February odyssey to the Alpine National Park in search of a frog pond.

'I was told by some local people in that area — which was formerly a grazing-licensed area held by the Treasure family and which in simple terms is to the north of Dargo and to the south of Mount Hotham — that, interestingly, Dr Wahren's claims about this site so excited everybody that the federal minister thought he must come and intervene. The federal Minister for Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities, Tony Burke, jumped into an aeroplane and flew to the Dinner Plain airport on Mount Hotham.

He picked up a convoy of vehicles for his entourage, including advisers, bureaucrats and media representatives — a great circus. He picked up five of the biggest and shiniest four-wheel drives. Is the federal government not concerned about greenhouse gas? They flew to Mount Hotham, and then they got into five of the biggest four-wheel drives you could find, and they drove from Mount Hotham to Shepherds Plain. That was fine; they were going for a look.

The only problem with that — apart from being what I view as an incredible waste of resources and the fact that the minister was on site at the frog pond for less than an hour — was that it cramped my style. There is probably no-one in this house who does not know that I spend a lot of time up in the rarefied air of the alpine region because I happen to have a certain passion for high country, and it happened to be that I had scheduled a visit to that site and was there when the minister arrived.

I thought I was going to cramp his style, so I went and found a comfortable rock on the hill and observed the minister and his entourage going through their paces. I had the best free show in town; you had to have seen it to believe it. Let me describe it to you: five bloody great big four-wheel drives steaming through wetlands and ploughing them up. It was like the ads promoting four-wheel drives on TV that show them mudrunning; they try to spray as much mud as possible around the place. The minister and his convoy would have outdone a four-wheel drive television advertisement. There was mud going every which way.



Mr FINN [Bernie Finn, Liberal MLC] — What did that do to the frogs?

Mr DAVIS — What it did was make the track into the trial site unpassable. If Mr Finn wants to go there, I suggest he take a Caterpillar D9 tractor, because he will not get in with a reasonable four-wheel drive. Worse than that was the fact that as the minister's entourage was leaving, they were going so hard in one of the boggy wetland spots that they hit a rock in the bog and ripped the rubber off the wheel rim. The minister then had to sit on the side of the track for an hour while the tyre was changed.

An honourable member — Like *Burke's Backyard!*


Mr DAVIS — As the interjector said, it was like *Burke's Backyard*. They did not even know how to drive a four-wheel drive in the bush. They did not need five four-wheel drives to inspect the frog pond, yet they took five. The worst thing about this whole saga was that if they had been bushmen, and if they had had any clue about what they were doing, they would have driven quietly, they would have had the vehicles engaged in the proper gear, they would have made their way through the wet spots without causing disturbances to the wetland and, most importantly, they would have observed that there was a bypass around this boggy section of track. As I did in the vehicle that I went in with, they could have bypassed the wetland. They did not need to create the disturbance. Minister Burke and his party did more damage in a visit to the frog pond than the cattle could do in six summers. That is a disgrace.

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

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The second thing is that I was fascinated that on the way out, while they were changing the tyre, they decided the call of nature was inspiring. As I left that afternoon what did I find on the side of the track? There was toilet tissue just left there. Anybody who has any empathy for the bush knows what you do about the necessities of life. I do not think I need to give a picture of that here in the Parliament of Victoria. It was disgusting and it was a disgrace.



Mr ELSBURY [Andrew Elsbury, Liberal MLC] – Is he the Minister for the Environment?

Mr DAVIS – He is apparently the Minister for the Environment. The next thing I thought was that I really needed to know about what actually happened on the site on the day. Sitting and observing what was going on, I felt that I could not intervene, push all the pack aside and say, ‘Minister, what the hell are you doing?’, so I just sat back and let it go and observed.’

Eventually Davis concluded,

‘In summary, I argue that the motion before the house has no substantive merit. To the opposition’s claim that the house should express its dismay [at the return of cattle], I suggest it should state that the house should applaud the government’s initiative to do something the Labor Party has been terrified of doing — which is to look at alternative land management regimes to improve the management of our public land and reduce the impact of high-temperature bushfires on our landscape.

There are many more things I would like to contribute today, but I suspect that, as I have now been speaking for one hour and 32 minutes, I should probably sit down.’

Air superiority

The first weekend of March saw the Avalon Air show come alive, with exotic fighter jets tearing up the skies over Melbourne. Unfortunately event organisers were unable to open a third lane in time for the post-show rush, resulting in near standstill traffic along the Princess Freeway, which our assistant-editor experienced first-hand.

PLANNING & BUILDING

So what’s the plan, boss?

What is Victorian Planning Minister **Matthew Guy**’s vision for his department? ‘In my view, the key thing about the planning system that was missing over the past four years was certainty and confidence,’ Guy said in an *Age* ‘meet the minister’ special. ‘I’m committed to being quite active, quite interventionist,



Planning Minister Matthew Guy

quite open, and a minister who wants to see those issues solved,’ he said. Guy scrapped *Melbourne 2030*, Labor’s 30-year plan to manage population growth, and has begun work on a new planning strategy, although this won’t be delivered for two years.

Planning laws that allowed high-density development along transport nodes have been scrapped, two-kilometre buffers have been created around homes near wind farms, and under-utilised inner city sites - such as Fishermans Bend in Port Melbourne, the E-Gate site on Footscray Road in West Melbourne, or the Richmond train station precinct - have been earmarked for large-scale development. But, writes *The Age*, already the government has walked away from one election pledge: to scrap the Growth Areas Authority. Instead, it boosted its powers to help with housing supply.

Another inner-city suburb

The Age was the first paper to scoop a Baillieu government plan for a new suburb around Fishermans Bend near the Westgate Bridge. Planning Minister **Matthew Guy** exclusively told *The Age* that he will establish an Urban Renewal Authority in the next four months to oversee a 20-to-30 year plan for the 200 hectare light industrial area.

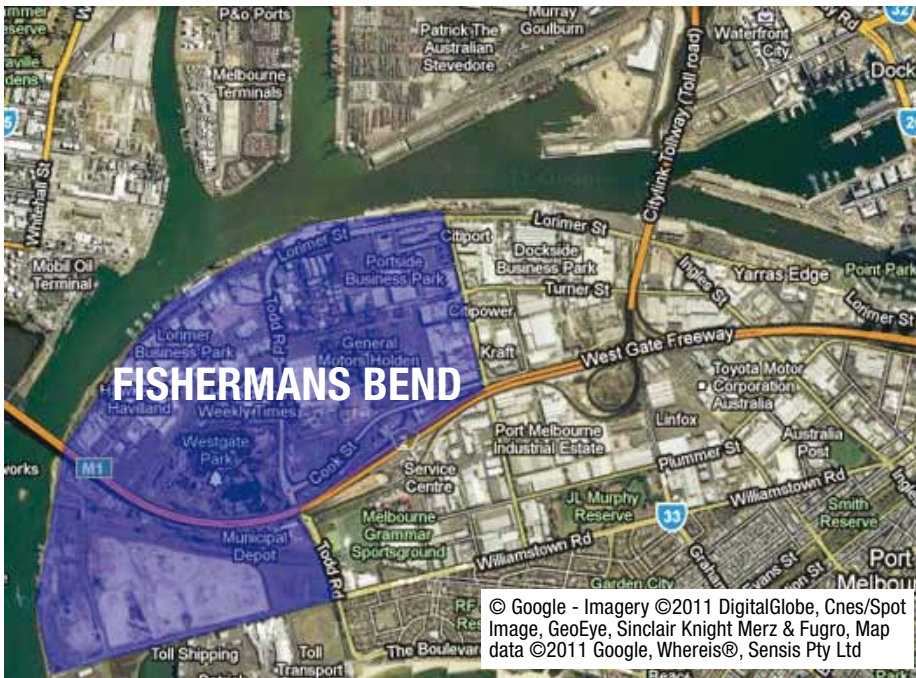
He said it would be ‘a suburb of high density accommodation that is unlike anywhere we’ve seen in Australia,’ also claiming it would be the countries ‘first inner-city growth corridor’. The project fits in with the government’s stated policy of refocusing some urban growth from Melbourne’s fringes to its heart. State owned developer VicUrban is to be heavily involved in implementing the government’s plans. See the inset map opposite.

E-Gate plan swings open

The Age said that the Baillieu government is considering plans for a carbon-neutral, high-density suburb of 12,000 on Footscray Road, in West Melbourne. It would become Victoria’s largest urban development since Docklands. Reportedly, work to turn old rail yards into a \$6 billion-plus residential area known as E-Gate could begin as early as 2014. Major Projects Minister **Denis Napthine** said work would begin on the 20-hectare E-Gate site before a bigger project on land zoned light industrial at Fishermans Bend near the Westgate Bridge.

Richmond station renovation

A *Herald Sun* exclusive announced that a multi-million-dollar revamp of Richmond station will be one of the first projects for the new Urban Renewal Authority. Preliminary plans for a 20-storey residential and office tower above the station have been drawn up. Planning Minister **Matthew Guy** said the station was “run down” and ripe for regeneration. He said the project would be a godsend for both football fans and locals fed up with the difficulty of crossing Punt Rd and Brunton Ave. The *Melbourne*



Times Weekly ran a follow up story, saying many had criticised the state government for announcing the development plan without consulting transport operators, council staff or traders to judge its impact. Opposition planning spokesman **Brian Tee** described the proposal as 'a thought bubble dressed as policy' in the article.

Phantom planner

Planning Minister **Matthew Guy** revealed that he is unable to determine who made the final decision on last year's contentious expansion of Melbourne's Urban Growth Boundary. He also promised to institute a new transparent biennial review system.

According to *The Age*, the review would look not just at expansion, but would consider arguments to contract the boundary, quoting the minister as saying: 'Councils, and even individuals, can also make applications to also go inward should they so choose. It's not a one-way street.' *The Age's* story included a graphic, plotting the 'Shrinking Australian Dream,' that illustrated the declining average residential block size. In the early 1970s the average home sat on 1000 square metres of land, which is roughly twice as large a plot compared to those today.

Incentive to move on

The Committee for Melbourne has proposed stamp duty relief as an incentive for 'grandmas and grandpas' in established suburbs to downsize. According to the *Herald Sun*, the group's CEO **Andrew MacLeod** appealed to 'empty-nesters' to free up prime space so that younger generations can be closer to schools and other services. The call came amid community concern about a move by an eastern suburbs council to earmark 48 sites for apartment blocks of up to six stories.

Student sardines

New Victorian Housing Minister **Wendy Lovell** spoke to *The Age*, declaring the student housing system in crisis. She used an example of unscrupulous landlords cramming 12 students into two-bedroom city apartments as indicative of the serious problems the state faced.

Windsor lessons

Former Victorian Premier **John Cain** said in *The Age* that the explosion in numbers of personal ministerial staff posed a particular risk for inexperienced ministers or those lacking in political skills. He cited the Ombudsman's report into the Hotel Windsor controversy as highlighting the dangers in relying too much on personal staff.

Docklands soul

Docklands has been promised more 'soul', with a plan to build a \$350 million apartment and retail complex at NewQuay. The *Herald Sun* spoke to **Kevin Hunt**, general residential manager for the developer MAB, who said the Quays would rejuvenate the area. 'It will put soul back into Docklands, it will be a landmark,' he said.

Wooden high-rise

The old Carlton & United Breweries site in Swanston Street will be converted into a \$100 million, 10-storey high-rise development. *The Age* reports that the building will be constructed from soft-wood panels imported from Europe and fitted together in weeks to create 50 apartments. An environmentally friendly development, the tower will be carbon-neutral and have its own gas-fired generator powered by waste woodchips, and a rainwater and grey-water recycling system.

Dimmeys development

The *Melbourne Times Weekly* wrote that the developers planning a 10-storey apartment building on the historic Dimmeys site in Richmond have lodged an appeal with VCAT. Yarra Council rejected their plan in February, arguing it would not suit the mostly low-rise area and could cause traffic issues. The matter has been listed on VCAT's major cases list, created to speed up decision-making on projects worth more than \$5 million.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Council cash

Hobsons Bay City Council voted to review the salaries payed to its CEOs, sparking wider scrutiny of remuneration packages across multiple districts. The *Herald Sun* published a list of the 10 highest-paying councils with Melbourne topping the list with a CEO salary of \$380,000 in 09-10.

FCUK

The *Herald Sun* reported Lord Mayor Robert Doyle would 'act' on a confrontational billboard near City Link in North Melbourne advertising the fashion brand French Connection UK or fcuk. Doyle described the bold white-on-black acronym as 'visual pollution' that demeans the city.

Suburban reunification

The Age reported that Carlton Residents Association had launched a 'reunification' campaign to have North Carlton annexed into the City of Melbourne from the City of Yarra. The suburbs were split under then Premier **Jeff**

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Kennett's council reforms in 1993. However, *The Age* hypothesised that the 'northern loyalists are actually economic refugees'. It was noted that the City of Melbourne recorded the lowest rate rise in Victoria this year at 1.9 per cent, while the rates in Yarra jumped 4.5 per cent, bringing the two municipalities' rates close to parity for residences. Speaking against the proposed reunification, Yarra mayor **Alison Clarke** said the loss of North Carlton would be a financial blow to her council. Moonee Valley City Council lost \$2,570,609 in annual rate revenue when Kensington was reunified within Melbourne municipal boundaries in 2008.

SPORT

Rebel with a cause

The Rebels are Melbourne's newest rugby union team. Interestingly, the team's management confirmed to *The Age* that more than half the 7,000-strong membership comes from the Weary Dunlop Club, essentially a club for affluent rugby fans. On a related note, Premier **Ted Baillieu** was a keen rugby player in his day, captaining the 1973 Colts premiership team and representing Victoria.

Girls on film

AFL player manager **Ricky Nixon** was caught in the glare of the media spotlight after becoming embroiled in the ongoing 'St Kilda schoolgirl' scandal. The 17-year-old released a video that she alleged showed her and a partially clothed 47-year-old Nixon in a Hotel room. She claimed the pair had a sexual relationship, a claim Nixon strongly denied. AFL boss **Andrew Demetriou** said Nixon may be finished as an AFL player manager after he was suspended by the Players Association following an investigation of his case. Disclaimer: This publication, apart from our MP Footy Chart, does not much follow the antics of the AFL/footballers/player managers.

A worthy cause

Former Federal Treasurer **Peter Costello** created controversy with his derision of

footballers being used to promote worthy causes. **Kevin Sheedy** was quoted in *The Age* dismissing Costello as out of his depth and not understanding the good work the players did for the community.

Federal Minister for Sport, **Mark Arbib**, wrote an opinion piece in *The Age* similarly criticising Costello's comments, calling him 'a decent man, but he should know better than that.' Speaking on the charitable undertakings of football players Arbib said 'Their philanthropy is genuine, and should be applauded.' Costello later responded to the media storm with another comment in *The Age*. He claimed the backlash against his views was because people within the entire football industry were protecting their interests and their 'access' – 'the administrators, the players, the journalists, and all those who earn an income one way or another from professional football'. 'There is a disconnect between how the industry sees itself and how the public sees it,' he said. After this, the Nixon media fun team continued to deploy.

Boys behaving badly

Chloe Saltau at *The Age* feels that men behaving badly only seems to enhance the football brand. She compared this controversy riddled preseason attendance rates with that of other seasons, finding it 13 per cent higher than that of the last four NAB cups.

AFL takes right turn

An interesting story from *The Age* analysed political climate change within the AFL. It was published following league chief **Andrew Demetriou's** visit with the new Baillieu government's Sports Minister **Hugh Delahunty**. From *The Age*: 'Demetriou was flanked by his long-serving left-leaning government relations staffer **Phil Martin** and Martin's new offsider **Jude Donnelly**. The appointment of Donnelly, a former Howard Government staffer, was a blatant admission by the AFL that it needed to improve its political relationship with right-wing Australia. The meeting with Delahunty, who enjoyed a brief career as a ruck-rover

for Essendon, was Demetriou's first official session with the new minister for sport and followed his recent first official meeting with federal Opposition Leader **Tony Abbott**. The pair discussed scalping, legislation covering ambush marketing for major events and Delahunty, who will today launch the 2011 Auskick season at Taylors Lakes, congratulated Demetriou for the AFL's recent support of bushfire and flood relief across the country. The meeting went well but Demetriou knows there is some work to do with this government.

Delahunty, like **Ted Baillieu**, is a strong AFL supporter but many of the advisers who work beneath those men have long memories and resent the fact their party was not treated fairly in opposition, rarely fully briefed and often shut out of debate.'

TRANSPORT

RAIL

Regional Rail Link

The Age's city editor **Jason Dowling** wrote a piece calling for the embattled Regional Rail Link to go ahead. The link includes 47 km of new track from Werribee to Southern Cross Station and new stations at Tarreit and Wyndham Vale. Most importantly, says Dowling, the project will separate regional trains from metropolitan trains for the first time, giving Geelong, Bendigo and Ballarat trains their own dedicated tracks through the metropolitan system to Southern Cross Station. In the five years to 2010, patronage on the Bendigo service has jumped by 138.6 per cent, on the Ballarat service by 108.9 per cent and on the Geelong line by 88.6 per cent.

The new rail tracks will also increase capacity on overcrowded suburban lines to Werribee, Sunbury and Craigieburn, where some peak-hour trains have recently carried in excess of 1,000 passengers – 800 is considered full. Dowling argues that the Regional Rail Link is precisely the kind of integrated transport and urban planning Melbourne should be doing.

Dog-eared trams

During his four years as Yarra Trams boss, Canadian **Dennis Cliche** increased the number of super stops from 10 to over 400. TramTRACKER, the mobile and internet application was a hit, and he is spoken of in an article in *The Age* as 'a true champion of the city's humble tram'. He now heads Connect-East, the owner of the EastLink toll way.

The Age wrote that Cliche loves his dogs and has, unbeknown to most Melbournians, immortalised them in the city's public transport network. Mocha, a poodle, has been depicted in the artwork on the No.5 Bumblebee tram, and the public face of tramTRACKER is modelled



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on Cliche's beagle, Jake. His consortium of French and Australian companies lost the multi-billion dollar trams contract to Keolis, a French company, in 2009. The Victorian government is negotiating to buy five bright yellow Bumblebee trams which were rented for about \$10 million from the French town of Mulhouse in 2008.

Engine troubles

Metro's chief executive has admitted in the *Herald Sun* that overcrowded train carriages are putting strains on the company's engines and playing havoc with schedules. 'They just can't do it,' **Andrew Lezala** said. 'Physically, they don't have enough grunt in accelerating or breaking.' The problems seem to lie with the Comeng trains, introduced in the 1980s. This compounds the already publicised breaking issues with the Siemens trains.

The times are a-changing

New timetables to be introduced on May 22 will see a radical shake up to the way Melbournian's travel by train. The biggest overhaul since the mid-1990s will bring an extra 127 services a day, added to the schedule. More services are just part of the changes, however. According to Metro, the new timetables will greatly simplify and streamline the entire network, preventing one train's performance affecting another's.

Myki to the future

It was reported by *The Age* that Vix Technology, owner of Metcard, briefed the state government on a new dual metcard and smartcard ticketing system called Metsmart. The new system is claimed to save the government \$100 million, compared with the cost of continuing with miki. *The Age* article pointed out, however, that Vix Technology owns ERG, the company behind the abandoned Tcard smartcard system in Sydney.

Another company positioning itself as a potential replacement to the embattled myki, is Cubic Transportation Systems. Cubic is one of the two phoenix companies that emerged from ERG limited, the remaining interests of which are in litigation with the New South Wales government over the termination of that state's smartcard, Tcard. Cubic has already

built operational smartcard systems for Perth and Brisbane, and is currently building one for Sydney.

Revenue off the rails

Fare revenue across Melbourne's public transport network was \$60 million less than forecast during myki's first year of operation, *The Age* has reported.

Police commute

The *Herald Sun* ran an exclusive announcing the introduction of a 25 man armed police task-force to ride metropolitan trains, in a bid to battle violence. The officers will be supported by 900 protective services officers promised by Premier **Ted Baillieu** to lower assault numbers on trains, which have been rising in recent months.

Good job

The Minister for Public Transport is seeking suitably qualified and experienced people to be appointer to the Public Transport Access Committee. PTAC is a Ministerial Advisory Committee that has been established to provide strategic advice to the Minister for Public Transport on issues concerning public transport access for older people and people with a disability. Advertised in *The Age*.

ROAD

Human traffic

An international study has rated Melbourne's morning commuter traffic as being worse than that of Los Angeles and New York. The *Herald Sun* says 8 out of 10 Melbournians report they are stressed out by the roads and frustrated by stop-start and slow-moving traffic.

The average Melbourne worker spends 32 minutes travelling to their job by car or public transport, which is better than the international average. The IBM Commuter Pain survey also found that Melbournians were the least reliant on cars in Australia as the main way of going to and from work or school.

Bright lights, bridge city
Ted Baillieu's government has pulled the plug on Labor's \$21-million fairy lights that were planned to adorn the Westgate Bridge as part of its revamp. The *Herald Sun* reported that the decision was driven by the discovery of an \$86.5 million cost blowout on the bridge-strengthening project.

Parking Cameras

Youth worker **Les Twentyman** was one of many opponents of the hi-tech cameras that upset traders and residents in central Footscray. He spoke to the *Herald Sun* about the City of Maribyrnong's introduction of the cameras in April 2009, to deal with 'a high level of illegal and unsafe parking practices'. 'It just enraged the whole community'.

Twentyman said the cameras sparked a people power movement against the council, with local traders storming the council offices at one stage. Maribyrnong Mayor **Sarah Carter** switched off the cameras at the beginning of March.

AIR

Parking prices

The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission has determined that Sydney and Melbourne airports are possibly extracting monopoly rents in their car parks. The price of short-term parking at Melbourne has gone up 50 per cent in just five years. All major media outlets have been reporting on the issue, revealing emotive anecdotes on the state of airport parking. In a further blow to airport commuters, VicRoads is set to erect wire barriers along the Tullamarine Freeway that will prevent drivers from waiting at the side of the road to collect people from the terminal. The newspapers seem to have picked up the scent of a good conspiracy, pointing out that the 'Smart Bus' route 901 to the airport, which was added by the state government in September last year, has recently been forced to drop passengers at the distant outer extremities of Terminal Four. This forces passengers to drag their luggage a great distance to reach their check in area. Airport spokeswoman **Carly Dixon** spoke to *The Age* and claimed that it was the state government who ordered that the bus stop be moved, and that 'We made no request to move the bus service down to Terminal Four.' However, a senior transport source contacted by *The Age* insisted that the airport had requested the move. Who could one believe?

The Federal Government Chart.
Ministers, Advisers, Departments, Agencies.

The Victorian Government Chart.
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Julia Gillard	Prime Minister	Leader of the Opposition, T
Wayne Swan	Deputy Prime Minister	Deputy Leader of the Opposition
Simon Crean	Opposition Leader	Shadow Minister for the Northern Territory
Anthony Albanese	Shadow Minister for Education	Shadow Minister for the Northern Territory
Christopher Pyne	Minister for Education	Shadow Minister for the Northern Territory
Mark Vaughan	Minister for Education	Shadow Minister for the Northern Territory
Colin Craig	Minister for Education	Shadow Minister for the Northern Territory

Simon Crean	Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government	Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government
Simon Crean	Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government	Regional Australia, Regional Development and Local Government

Martin Ferguson	Resources and Energy	Resources and Energy
Martin Ferguson	Resources and Energy	Resources and Energy

Tony Burke	Sustainability, Environment, Population and Community	Sustainability, Environment, Population and Community
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HEALTH	David Davis Mary Woodrige
	Shadow Health & Mental Health Shadow Seniors & Ageing

TRANSPORT	Terry Mulder Dr Denis Napthine
	Shadow Roads, Maritime Shadow Ports, Major Projects Shadow Public Transport

BUSINESS AND	Louise Asher
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Ally Landis	Smith	ALP	Finance
David Johnston	Treasury	LP	Customs
Paul Zahra	Robertson	LP	Law
Ally Landis	Industry	ALP	Unemployment
Paul Zahra	Immigration	N.T.	Immigration
Michael Keenan	Stirling	LP	West Coast
Greg Kelly	Hughes	LP	Unemployment
Mike Kelly	Estor Mexico	ALP	Burke's Shire
Catherine King	Dalziel	ALP	Edinburg
Andrew Leung	Bowling	LP	Essendon
Andrew Leung	Reese	ALP	Geelong Skill Centre
Russell Lee	Peters	LP	Seymour

Ally Landis	Miles	ALP	Geelong
Ally Landis	Miles	ALP	Geelong
Paul Zahra	Robertson	LP	Law
Ally Landis	Industry	ALP	Unemployment
Paul Zahra	Immigration	N.T.	Immigration
Michael Keenan	Stirling	LP	West Coast
Greg Kelly	Hughes	LP	Unemployment
Mike Kelly	Estor Mexico	ALP	Burke's Shire
Catherine King	Dalziel	ALP	Edinburg
Andrew Leung	Bowling	LP	Essendon
Andrew Leung	Reese	ALP	Geelong Skill Centre
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PORTS

Bike ahoy

A spokesman for Public Transport Minister **Terry Mulder** told *The Age* that the government is drawing up plans to return the Westgate punt service to weekday operation and provide a new city transit link for Melbourne's surging number of cyclists. The service is a small boat that ferried cyclists from the Scienceworks Jetty in Spotswood across the Yarra to Fishermans Bend. However, the service currently only operates on weekends, as the weekday service was cancelled in 2006. The owner and operator of the ferry, **Rob Horner**, has also proposed changing to a more direct route, which would make the journey 'a 10-minute round trip... we would like to see [the price] get down to \$3 one way or \$5 return' he said. Bicycle Victoria spokesman **Garry Brennan** said a quicker punt crossing time would be welcomed by riders.

Next container port

Expert costing documents published in *The Age* put a price tag on the controversial port redevelopment at Hastings for the first time. It was revealed that it would cost \$9.4 billion to do the job in within 10 years, and \$12.5 billion in 20 years. The Coalition government has pledged to transform Hastings within eight to 10 years, saying the redevelopment was possible and necessary, given the massive increase in Port of Melbourne container traffic.

With \$5.5 billion of the 10-year build option to be spent on rail alone, the June 2010 costing by the Transport Department and Major Projects Victoria revealed the difficulty the government will have in finding funding to pay for the development. The costing was prepared for the former Labor Ports Minister **Tim Pallas**, with a second document by consultants Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu, validating the departmental numbers. The Port of Melbourne is Australia's biggest container port, handling more than a third of the nation's trade. Container traffic is expected to quadruple by 2035.

THE WORKPLACE

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Its advertisement in *The Age* called for an Executive Director.

New views

The City of Port Phillip is well known for its dynamic activity centres, a foreshore which stretches for nearly ten kilometres, cultural diversity and magnificent heritage buildings. The council is seeking to appoint an experienced and passionate Urban Design and Heritage Advisor.

Up there

The North East region of Victoria is one of Australia's most important tourism destinations. And the North Eastern Tourism Board is seeking a dynamic strategic leader as CEO to drive the tourism industry to new levels.

CEO, Ararat Rural City

The advertisement in *The Age* refers readers to the *Early General News* for more information.

Emergency Services Commissioner

The Department of Justice advertised in *The Age* for the position of an Emergency Services Commissioner to provide leadership in emergency management for the State of Victoria.

INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Baillieu test

A Victorian Government drive to keep down wage costs emerged as what the *Australian Financial Review* called the first test of Premier **Ted Baillieu's** willingness to take on the powerful union movement. Finance Minister **Robert Clark** confirmed that the Coalition government intended to stick with the previous administration's 2.5 per cent target for annual increases in negotiating public sector wage deals. Over the next year the government will negotiate agreements covering more than 160,000 employees including police, public servants, nurses and teachers – workers who could cause major disruptions to state infrastructure.

Unions may compromise promises

Premier **Ted Baillieu's** election commitments are under threat, claims *The Age*, by the workers needed to implement them. The union representing thousands of staff in state departments has warned that the Coalition's first-term agenda is at risk because of its wages policy which provides for annual 2.5 per cent wage increases – far short of what government employees are likely to accept as they negotiate new individual agreements. Community and Public Sector secretary **Karen Batt** said in *The Age* that the policy denoted a real wage cut, which could mean cash-strapped agencies cutting jobs or services to survive.

Telstra closes call centre

The Age announced that Telstra would close its Moe call centre on April 13, leaving its 114 staff out of a job. Company spokeswoman **Karina Keisler** said that a new call centre in

the Docklands employing 1100 people would take most Telstra customers' calls, and that any overflow would be dealt with by call centres in the Philippines.

Child safety worker retention

Victoria's child protection system is having a hard time retaining staff. According to *The Age*, 302 workers were recruited last financial year, but 247 were lost over the same period, forcing the government to run a campaign to fill at least 60 vacancies.

Community Services Minister **Mary Wooldrige** commented that low retention rates were degrading quality of service. 'They're always going to be inexperienced, they're not going to have continuity with the families and children', she said.

COMMUNITY

Right to discriminate

The Age reported that **Ted Baillieu's** government has begun the process of restoring unlimited rights to religious organisations to discriminate against gays and lesbians, single mothers, and people who hold different spiritual beliefs. Attorney General **Robert Clark** drew up the amendments to curb Victoria's anti-discrimination laws, which are to be introduced to Parliament shortly March. The move fulfils a Coalition election promise to conservative religious groups.

The Brotherhood

An Ombudsman's report was tabled in state parliament on 'The Brotherhood', after the lunchtime gathering of important figures in policing, justice, business and politics, fell under the media spotlight this month.

According to *The Age*, the report condemns The Brotherhood as an exclusive and secretive group that fosters a culture allowing for 'inappropriate networking and improper exchanging of favours and information' and potentially, illegal activity. The group's founder **John Moncrieff** defended the organisation, saying that it was not as secretive and exclusive as was being made out in the press, pointing to the huge

invitation mailing list and numerous important public figures who had attended. According to him, 'not one of them had any concerns'.

Stealing from the Salvos

The Salvation Army area manager **Judy Buchanan** said her organisation would prosecute anyone caught stealing from their donation bins. The *Herald Sun* said the Salvos were installing new \$500,000 state-of-the-art CCTV cameras to catch thieves after recent perpetrators were unable to be identified due to poor-quality surveillance footage.

Red back boom

Victorian Poisons Hotline manager **Jeff Robinson** said there had been a 16 per cent increase in redback spider bite calls from 2009 to 2010, with even more calls occurring this year.

The article in the *Herald Sun* attributed the rise in bites to a spider population boom occurring around Melbourne's suburbs, due largely to the weather creating many small insects. Exterminators have apparently been exceptionally busy this season in suburbs stretching from Essendon to Rowville.

What's the difference?

The Age reviewed a new magazine, titled *The Difference*, aimed at persuading Australia's reluctant rich to give to the poor. Australian of the Year **Simon McKeon**, investment banker and philanthropist, launched the magazine at city art gallery Utopian Slumps.

The high production values of the publication are immediately obvious, with McKeon saying 'It's almost a coffee table magazine'. Editor **Nick Bolto** revealed that the first 200 copies would be sent to 'the top 200 companies on the stock exchange'.

The Age claimed a study released by the Australian Centre for Philanthropy and Nonprofit Studies showed that many of Australia's millionaires weren't giving money to charity for several reasons, including insecurity over finances, a belief it was the government's responsibility, and a culture where philanthropists did not discuss their donations for fear of 'big noting'.

Vale

Harry (Bill) AM OBE, aged 84, veteran, honorary treasurer of the Victorian Division of the returned Serviceman's League from 1956 until 1994.

Ian Wayne Abdulla, regarded as Australia's greatest native artist, died aged 63 only weeks after being diagnosed with liver cancer.

George Marvyn Willis, Chemical Metallurgist, died at home aged 94. **William Gran Doig**, orthopaedic surgeon.

Agnes Milowka, underwater cave diver, died aged 29 after becoming separated from her companion in Tank Cave near Mount Gambier, South Australia and subsequently becoming trapped in the labyrinth like system and running out of air. Her body was recovered.

Peter Clarkson, abalone diver - shark attack off South Australia's coast.

Paul Simpson, maths and science teacher at Caulfield's Sheldford Girls Grammar, died aged 40 when he was caught by a rip tide with four school girls while on a snorkelling tour off Bells beach and suffered a heart attack.

(Sapper) Jamie Larcombe, Australian combat engineer in Afghanistan in a Taliban ambush, aged 21.

A baby died of whooping cough at the Royal Children's Hospital, the first to die since an outbreak 2 years ago.

5 Victorian children have died in driveway accidents, with Kidsafe Victoria estimating that such accidents injure one Australian child each week and kill one child each month.

An Australian died along with 11 others in Vietnam's Ha Long Bay tourist boat tragedy.

Gilbery Brian Tucker, renowned atmospheric scientist with the Bureau of Meteorology and CSIRO, died at Mornington, aged 80. Federal Labor backbencher, Member for McEwan **Rob Mitchell** was involved in a fatal head-on

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collision with a motorcyclist at Strath Creek North East of Melbourne. Apparently the motorcyclist in his 50s lost control of his bike and swerved into oncoming traffic, and died at the scene. Mitchell was discharged from hospital with minor injuries, and is recovering at home. His absence has not affected voting in parliament, due to pairing arrangements.

Howard Alton (Dusty) Rhodes, DSC & bar, age 88. **Dr James Morison Gardiner**, age 89.

Allan Lincoln OAM. Allen Alexander Baxter, of Shepparton, age 96. **Harry Cuthbert Oswald, AM, OBE**, RSL stalwart and honorary treasurer of the Victorian branch for 39 years.

Jane Russell, actress, 'Hollywood siren', died aged 89.

The final death toll from the Christchurch earthquake is expected to be 182, according to Superintendent **Dave Cliff** who gave the

estimate at a Civil Defence briefing on March 17.

The death toll is still rising in Japan's earthquake and tsunami tragedy is still rising, with the Japanese government estimating a final number of 21,000.



Il Duca restaurant in Wellington Parade, East Melbourne, great for lunch and dinner. At the latter, one of the staff often practices his opera potential for the guests.



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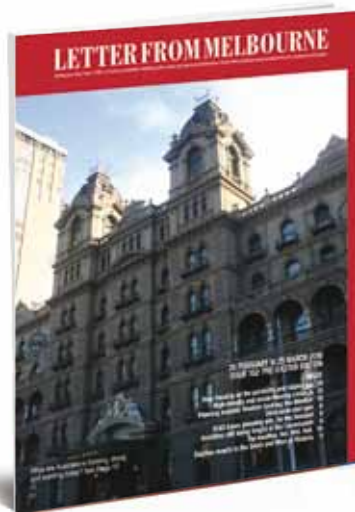
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