

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

16th December 2011



For past editions please visit www.leadwest.com.au

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BRIMBANK

ANGER AT EDUCATION CUTS IN BRIMBANK

Brimbank Leader—15th December 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/anger-at-education-cuts-in-brimbank-fbready/>

More than 100 Brimbank residents have signed a petition urging the State Government to reinstate funding for the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning.

Keilor State Labor MP Natalie Hutchins tabled the petition in Parliament last week.

Mrs Hutchins said almost 9000 people across the state had signed petitions after the government announced in August it would cut \$12 million in funding for schools to co-ordinate the program.

“Our local community will not accept this decision and is angered by the government’s poor vision into our children’s future education,” she said.

“VCAL provides an important alternative educational pathway to VCE, giving students hands-on vocational training that can lead to a job or further study.”

More than 20,000 students undertake VCAL each year.

A government spokesman said in August, funding cuts would not hurt students or teachers and the co-ordinators were no longer needed.

AUTISM BATTLE: AT LAST, WEST TO HAVE P-12 SCHOOL

Brimbank Weekly—14th December 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/autism-battle-at-last-west-to-have-p12-school/2393307.aspx>

An autism school catering for children up to year 12 in Melbourne's west has been approved by the state government.

The P-12 school will be located next to Laverton P-12 College, Education Minister Martin Dixon announced today.

Mr Dixon said the stand-alone school would be less than a kilometre from the Western Autistic P-3 school.

“Identifying the eventual location of the new school will provide the community with a sense of certainty and will allow long-term planning to commence,” Mr Dixon said.

“Western Melbourne is the only metropolitan region that doesn’t have a stand-alone P-12 autism school.

“Once completed, the school will bring autism education in Melbourne’s west into line with other metropolitan areas.

“The timing for construction of the new school will be subject to future budget deliberations.”

Western Autistic School (WAS) - which has campuses at Niddrie and Laverton - caters only for children from prep to grade 3.

Autism Schools Action founders, Altona Meadows couple Liz and Mark Websdale have two children with 'classic autism' who transferred to specialist schools after their first four years at WAS.

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"It is great news that finally the region will eventually have an autism specific P-12 [school]," they said in a statement.

"However, a new autism specialist school, with [a] separate budget and administration from Western Autistic School, is what is needed. Autism Schools Action believes WAS is not the right organisation to oversee the implementation of such a key part of autism education provision in the region.

"WAS is geared towards early school years and early intervention, and the school administration has expressed reservations about the appropriateness of WAS expanding into secondary school years. We agree. The numbers warrant a new school. We now know a school alone is not the answer but is one of the badly needed options for the western metropolitan region."

Action for Autism Education founders, Werribee couple Danny Sorbello and Angela Hickey-Sorbello, welcomed the news.

Their young son is starting his transition from WAS to a mainstream school.

A spokesman for Mr Dixon, James Martin, said WAS would continue in its own right.

VU TEACHERS CAN STAY, OTHERS INVITED TO QUIT

Brimbank Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/vu-teachers-can-stay-others-invited-to-quit/2390015.aspx>

Administration and support staff at Victoria University will be asked to take voluntary redundancy as it seeks to reduce costs.

Over the next three months, staff from all departments of the university who are not involved in teaching and research will be asked to apply for redundancy.

The move follows changes to the way the federal government funds universities.

The government has lifted the cap on the number of students a university can enrol to try to increase attendance rates.

However, it will mean more competition among universities to attract students.

VU has said it needs to rebalance its spending on academic and general staff to remain competitive.

Vice-chancellor Peter Dawkins said in a statement the university had negotiated the cuts with the National Tertiary Education Union and would go out of its way to avoid forced redundancies.

He said no target had been set for the number of redundancies.

"In some areas, staff affected by the organisational change will be offered redeployment within the university."

The union's VU branch president, Richard Gough, said it had asked for greater clarity on the university's budget position and urged it to campaign for more funding.

"VU has one of the worst per capita funding situations of any university in Victoria and this should be recognised."

Mr Gough said the union would "not accept under any circumstances a program of forced redundancies" and the departure of staff should not add to the existing workload.

He said the union had also asked VU to consider austerity programs for the university council and senior management and consider cuts in executive entertainment, travel and other bonuses to help cover shortfalls in the university budget.

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LET'S GET PHYSICAL

Brimbank Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/lets-get-physical/2390016.aspx>

Derrimut residents have more opportunities to engage in physical activity following the opening of a new health and aquatic centre.

YMCA's Derrimut Health and Aquatic Centre, which opened on December 6, includes a gym and pool area, a spin studio for cycle classes, an indoor sports stadium and community room.

Pool facilities will be available for use in January.

YMCA Victoria executive officer John Summers said: "We're incredibly excited to open this new centre and hope it will serve as a community hub for healthier and more active lifestyles for the region's families, schools and individuals."

CASTLE HOME

Brimbank Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/sunshne-ardeer-albion/326/story/145945.html>

They say a man's home is his castle, but for Les Norton his home is a castle.

Les and his family are the proud owners of Overnewton Castle in Keilor, a 162-year-old structure that sits on a hill overlooking the suburban sprawl of Brimbank.

It may seem like an unlikely spot for a castle, but in 1849 it was the perfect spot for sheep and cattle farmer William Taylor to build.

The property was originally built on almost 14,000 acres, the massive dams eventually being renamed to the suburb Taylors Lakes.

Taylor designed the castle in the Scottish Baronial style, inspired by buildings from his home country like Balmoral Castle.

Les said his heritage-listed home was built of bluestone, covered with a technique known as harling, which he described as a "creek sand covering".

A spiral staircase that climbs up the whole height of the building is just one of the amazing features of the property, which also includes parapets, bartizan towers and amazing fittings.

Les bought the property in 1975 after falling in love with the building – his family is only the third to have owned the castle, which he believed is due to no one wanting to part from the building.

"It's fantastic," he said.

"It's got a very warm feeling to it."

Daughter Emma Stott said the gardens were just as fantastic as the castle, estimating that some trees, including a lone pine, could be as old as the building itself.

"I've lived here all my life and I take pride in it," Emma said.

The family is puzzled by rumours of haunting – neither Emma nor Les have come across a ghost or ghou on the property.

Instead it's the romance that Emma said was the heart of the castle.

The family will open the castle to tours next year and Emma said visitors should keep an eye out for the initials William Taylor and his wife Helen carved into the castle.

Although it's their home, the Norton family is passionate about sharing the history of Brimbank with everyone, hosting weddings, high teas and, in 2012, taking part in the Australian Open Garden Scheme. For more information on Overnewton Castle, visit www.overnewtoncastle.com.au

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SCARED COMMUTERS

Brimbank Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/326/story/145938.html>

Only 20.2 per cent of people feel safe on public transport in Brimbank at night, while 71.3 per cent feel safe during the day.

The figures obtained exclusively by Star come from the National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing, which details community perceptions of police in the 12 months to September 2011.

Public transport in the Brimbank Police Service Area (PSA) was ranked the sixth most unsafe service to use during the day and the fourth most unsafe to use during the night out of the 54 PSAs in Victoria.

Brimbank PSA Inspector Mick Grainger said he was concerned about the figures.

“It is really difficult,” Insp Grainger said.

“We’ve got quite an excellent relationship with local government; we work with them on environmental design, things like that.

“Despite our best efforts, sometimes we come out under benchmark figures.” The average safety rating for public transport in Victoria during the day was 83.1 per cent, while at night it was 35.5 per cent.

Insp Grainger said many crimes were occurring away from the major railway stations, like Sunshine, at smaller stations and bus stops.

He said in the past year transit police had permanently joined Sunshine police station, which he hoped would make a difference to perceptions of safety on public transport.

“The perception and reality are sometimes different and that’s the bit we’ve got to get better at,” Insp Grainger said.

“We need a strategy now to communicate with our public about what we’ve been doing.”

He is also hoping additional police coming into the area over the next few years will increase perceptions of safety, along with the protective service officers (PSOs) being employed by the Baillieu Government.

But a spokesperson for Police Minister Peter Ryan told Star stations in the Brimbank area could be waiting until November 2014 to see some of the 940 PSOs being recruited.

“The first 21 recruits have started training at the Glen Waverley Police Academy with 93 PSOs to be recruited by 30 June 2012 and the remaining PSOs thereafter,” the spokesperson said.

“The roll-out of PSOs across every metropolitan train station and major regional centres from 6pm until last train every night will be determined by Police Command based on operational demands,” the spokesperson added.

MURDER REIGNITES SAFETY FEARS HORRIFIC ATTACK

Brimbank Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/326/story/145935.html>

Scared Deer Park traders have called for safer streets after a murder on the Ballarat Rd shopping strip last week.

The body of 48-year-old Dung Nguyen was discovered by his family at around 8.30pm on Tuesday night at the Deer Park Post Office.

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Mr Nguyen had been stabbed multiple times in an attack police described as “horrific”.

Bacchus Marsh 32-year-old Riad Barbour was arrested at about 2.20pm on Thursday charged with murder and armed robbery.

Police allege he took more than \$12,000 after stabbing Mr Nguyen with a knife and a wooden table leg.

Barbour has been remanded in custody to appear in the Melbourne Magistrates’ Court in April next year.

Tuncel Irgat, who owns a kebab shop on the Ballarat Rd shopping strip, said he heard Mr Nguyen’s daughter crying out “dad, dad, dad” on the night of the murder.

He said Mr Nguyen was a “quiet man” who was hard-working and friendly.

Mr Irgat said traders had been trying to convince Brimbank City Council to close off the car park at the back of the shopping strip, increase lighting in the area and install cameras.

Mr Irgat was stabbed with a syringe at his shop last year, and was one of several shopkeepers targeted in a series of unrelated crimes including bashings, armed robberies and drug offences (Syringe attack, 17 August 2010, Star).

Another shop owner, who did not want to give his name, said his employees had been stalked, and that he had been robbed multiple times.

I thought it was getting better for a while but... not anymore,” the shop owner said.

Some traders have even taken to arming themselves with weapons, fearing they could be next.

Mr Irgat said police had supported the traders, but that they were limited in what they could do.

“They (council) have to put cameras here, they have to light it up, council have to do something,” Mr Irgat said.

“We’ve talked to the council but they do nothing. They ignore it.”

Star contacted Brimbank Council but they did not respond before Star went to print.

Brimbank Police Inspector Mick Grainger said he wasn’t aware that the Ballarat Rd shops had become a trouble spot for crime, although he acknowledged it had been in the past.

“We did a doorknock yesterday where we dropped letters and spoke to people,” Insp Grainger said.

“We want to assure them we’re out and about 24/7 and I’m really open to hearing those (concerns).”

CONTAMINATED SITES: FULL COUNCIL RESPONSE

Brimbank Weekly–13th December 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/contaminated-sites-full-council-response/2391198.aspx>

Brimbank Council general manager city development, Stephen Sully, responds to our questions on the Victorian Auditor-General’s ‘Managing Contaminated Sites’ report tabled in Parliament on Wednesday:

Q. On page 42 of the report, it said the council have identified the need for more proactive compliance activities, and planned to increase resources. Can you please tell us specifically what this will involve?

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A. In the last budget, Council increased resources for planning compliance and the management of strategic sites. This has included doubling staffing for planning compliance work with 2 new positions and the creation of a strategic sites officer to work with major landowners on the redevelopment of contaminated sites. A new prosecutions officer position was created in Council's City Compliance Department that, among other things, assists with planning compliance matters.

Council has entered into a Memorandum of Understanding with the EPA (the first and only one of any local council in Victoria) to work jointly on environmental compliance and contaminated land issues. Coordinated works between the agencies in Brooklyn and North Sunshine have seen significant improvements in environmental conditions.

Q. What are the "higher profile contaminated sites" about which Brimbank Council has been gathering information?

A. Potentially contaminated land that requires an environmental audit to be completed before a sensitive use (such as housing) can take place, has been identified and mapped in the Brimbank Planning Scheme under the Environmental Audit Overlay. Information about the application of the Environment Audit Overlay and the maps showing these areas are available publicly via Council's website which has a link to 'planning schemes online' hosted by the Department of Planning and Community Development.

In addition to this, Council has been researching former landfills, older industrial land, closed service stations and other similar sites which may be potentially contaminated. In many of these instances no sensitive uses are proposed and no redevelopment of the land has taken place. This information is being recorded and mapped on Council's Geographic Information System to ensure that the history of

a site is, to the best extent possible, known by Council. The information is able to be used by Council in its planning, enforcement and risk management activities.

The council has spent \$2.6 million over three years for a single site and \$5 million since 1997 for another site, "because these sites pose risks for human health and the environment."

Q. Which sites were these 'high-risk' sites and what are the risks?

A. The site where around \$2.6m has been spent on a clean-up is in Fitzgerald Road and Whitesides Avenue, West Sunshine, and was a former industrial site. A clean up of the site was undertaken with funds from ICI (now Orica) and the land is now car park and open space. An environmental audit has been completed to the satisfaction of the EPA and a statement issued by a qualified environmental auditor.

The site where around \$5m has been spent is the former Sydenham landfill in Sydenham Road, Sydenham. Expenditure has been on management of the former landfill, including capping and ongoing environmental monitoring. Part of the site is currently used for a car park. The site is identified on the EPA Priority Sites Register.

Q. Why hasn't Brimbank Council undertaken a soil or site assessment for all of its child care centres or community use sites?

A. Council has completed all soil assessments which are required by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, pursuant to the Children's Services Act 1996, to ensure that children's service sites are satisfactory for that purpose. The Soil Assessment Guidelines Practice Note by the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development requires a soil assessment to be undertaken:

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At all proposed sites of children's services where children will be likely to have access to the soil (there is no need to undertake soil assessment if no outdoor space for the children's play is offered).

At existing sites where there is access to soil;

Application is received to alter or extend the premises, and the alteration or extension requires earthworks or deep excavations (exceeding the depth of 1 metre); and the works are going to take place in an area that is used for children's outdoor play or will be used for children's outdoor play after the work is completed; and soil assessment has not previously been undertaken at the children's service.

Council undertakes this assessment if a new children's service licence is required for any facility that Council constructs. As part of the children's services regulations an environmental site assessment is completed as part of this application.

For other childcare and community use sites where the legislation or practice note does not require an assessment, Council will be considering a progressive review of these sites as part of a revised contaminated land management system.

Q. What improvements will be made to information management?

A. Council currently has a very good system for managing information about potentially contaminated land, including mapping of sites, documenting environmental audits and file management for development proposals affected by the Environmental Audit Overlay. Further improvements are planned to better link digital mapping to electronic versions of documents, so that the processes are quicker and comprehensive.

Q. What is the estimated cost for complete environmental site assessments and/or remediation of all contaminated sites in Brimbank?

A. Brimbank has a long industrial history, as well as many sites that were former landfills, so there is a prevalence of potentially contaminated land. The cost of an environmental audit can be in the hundreds of thousands of dollars and the costs of remediation or on-site management can be in the millions.

The costs of a complete assessment and remediation of every site would be substantial and is unlikely to occur. The issue of contaminated land is a problem across metropolitan Melbourne and the regions and is of State significance. Council has previously called on the State Government to investigate better planning regulations and financial incentives which make the redevelopment and clean-up of contaminated sites more attractive.

Q. Can Council guarantee the safety of all residential, community and publicly accessible sites in Brimbank?

A. Council believes the protection of human health and the environment from the potential effects of contaminated land is of the utmost importance. Council has policies and procedures in place to ensure that its role as a planning authority and public land owner is undertaken to meet planning, health and environmental regulatory requirements in relation to potentially contaminated land.

Council's planning processes for residential areas, such as Cairnlea which was the former Albion Explosives Factory, have been undertaken in accordance with EPA requirements and subject of independent review by the Victorian Auditor-General's Office.

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UPGRADE, OR NEW TRANSPORT FARES UNFAIR

Brimbank Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/upgrade-or-new-transport-fares-unfair/2390012.aspx>

North-West commuters are urging the state government to increase public transport services in line with its decision to raise fares for trains, trams and buses from New Year's Day.

Public Transport Minister Terry Mulder announced last week fares for public transport would rise as much as 8.6 per cent from January 1, with residents on the Sydenham train line needing to fork out nearly \$12 a day for a full-fare ticket to the CBD.

A spokeswoman for Mr Mulder did not respond before the Weekly went to print.

Speaking to 3AW, Mr Mulder said the rises had been flagged in a Labor transport policy three years ago.

He said it would have been counterproductive to try to "rip" money out of other areas of the transport budget.

Delahey resident David Anderson said the sharp increases were disappointing, particularly given the pressures already faced by north-west commuters.

He said more buses should be introduced so commuters wouldn't have to use cars to get to train stations.

"Many families around the Brimbank area have a second car just because they need it to get to the station. If you get better train and bus services, it makes it easier for people to accept the fact they have to pay more."

Mr Anderson said there was no bus service within 800 metres of the Wintringham housing estate, which provides accommodation for financially and socially disadvantaged elderly people.

He repeated calls for the state government to extend the 902 SmartBus route through Brimbank.

Caroline Springs resident Franka Dolphino said many people were already struggling to cope with rising living costs.

Western Metropolitan Greens MP Colleen Hartland said if residents had to pay more to travel then there should be better services.

"The Sydenham train line is completely overcrowded and the money raised from the fare increases should go towards creating a Caroline Springs train station."

LEG-UP FOR ADULT EDUCATION

Brimbank Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/legup-for-adult-education/2389996.aspx>

Adult education in Brimbank has been given the boost of \$150,000 in funding for Learn Local organisation Think West.

The cash will help learners at Sunshine's Duke Street Community House, Footscray's Angliss Neighbourhood House and Williamstown Education Centre.

Western Metropolitan MP Andrew Elsbury (pictured with Duke Street's Ormond Butler) says the funds will be used to draw more people into the programs.

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PRETTY AS A PICTURE

Brimbank Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/pretty-as-a-picture/2390013.aspx>

Brimbank's playgroups have celebrated year's end with a picnic at the West Sunshine Community Centre.

Last Tuesday's event marked another successful year for community and supported playgroups with a range of family-focused activities.

The number of Brimbank playgroups has soared from 41 in 2008 to 79 this year.

The picnic featured a four-metre 'rangoli' - traditional decorative folk art of India.

Artist Preety Durba (pictured) is with Freya, 2.

PARKS OFF-LIMITS AS STAFF DOWN TOOLS

Brimbank Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/parks-offlimits-as-staff-down-tools/2389997.aspx>

Opening hours at one of Brimbank's most popular family destinations could be disrupted by industrial action in the lead-up to Christmas.

The gates to Brimbank Park were closed on Sunday as workers took action in response to "stalling tactics" by state parks management over a new work agreement.

Three other parks, including Point Cook Coastal Park, were closed as Parks Victoria workers rallied to get the state government to lift its 2.5 per cent ceiling for pay increases across the public sector. Workers want a 6per cent increase but say they are willing to consider any offer.

Australian Services Union Victoria assistant secretary Richard Duffy said while it was regrettable that Christmas functions would be disrupted, it was up to the government to meet workers' requests and prevent further strikes.

"There are about 500 members between three unions who will be striking and these closures will continue until the government recognises the contribution these people make to the vast majority of public areas across the state.

"Parks Victoria employees are certainly not happy to be causing disruptions, but they have been left with no other choice until the state government is prepared to sit at the table and negotiate properly," Mr Duffy said.

Parks Victoria spokesman David Petty said it would work to minimise any disruption to the public.

He said alternative arrangements would be made to ensure services continued to be provided.

SUBURBAN HOMES IN BRIMBANK AT BUSHFIRE RISK

Brimbank Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/suburban-homes-in-brimbank-at-bushfire-risk/2389995.aspx>

Residential streets across Brimbank have been named in a list of urban areas at risk of bushfire this season.

A new risk assessment from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade says streets bordering open parkland in suburbs stretching from Sunshine North to Taylors Lakes could face bush or grass blazes, as fears mount that the upcoming fire season could be the worst in years.

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Firefighters from the Keilor Fire Brigade will next week issue safety brochures to homes in 67 streets in the north-west and 32 streets in Brimbank, identified among 36,000 at-risk houses in metropolitan Melbourne.

Taylors Lakes had 26 streets listed; Keilor had 23 and Kealba, 17.

MFB assistant chief fire officer Rob Taylor said homes most at risk were those backing onto bush, grassland, reserves, scrub, paddocks or parks.

He said the number of streets deemed at-risk across urban municipalities like Brimbank, Moonee Valley and Hume could come as a surprise to residents.

"You don't normally think of Melbourne as being susceptible to bushfires but we have a lot of parkland right up to the CBD," he said.

Firefighters feared this year's bushfire season could be severe, Mr Taylor said, following forecasts of above-average heat waves and rainfall.

"The longer it keeps wet and warm, the more growth we'll have, but when it stops, it can all quickly dry out and we've potentially got a larger risk on our hands," he said.

The fire-safety brochure will inform residents of how they can safeguard their homes around high grasslands, Mr Taylor said.

"Keep your gutters clean, keep your grass low, keep vegetation as wet as you can, and if you've got grass leading up to your back fence, make sure it's at least three metres back," he said.

"Have a plan - it doesn't have to be as complicated as the things you'd need in regional Victoria, but if you're backing onto those areas, you need to have it clear in your mind if you're going to stay, or if on a code-red day you say, 'I'm going to a shopping mall today'."

CONTAMINATED SITES IN BRIMBANK AN 'ATROCITY'

Brimbank Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/contaminated-sites-in-brimbank-an-atrocity/2390010.aspx?storypage=0>

A damning report into contaminated sites has unearthed a bureaucratic mess endangering human health.

The Victorian Auditor-General's Managing Contaminated Sites report, tabled in Parliament last Wednesday, argues state bodies and local councils cannot show they are reducing to acceptable levels a potentially significant risk to health and the environment.

Brimbank and Maribyrnong came under particular scrutiny as they contain a number of sites that may pose immediate or long-term health and environment risks.

Auditor-General Des Pearson found human health risks from contaminated sites ranged from minor health problems, such as allergic reactions and hypersensitivity, to serious problems like cancer, respiratory illness and birth defects.

He blamed the lack of action on "an undue emphasis on avoiding legal and financial liability rather than protecting human health and the environment".

Many of the 10,000 contaminated sites estimated to be in Victoria are in Melbourne's western suburbs.

The report found that Brimbank Council had carried out soil testing for new childcare centres but had not assessed all existing centres or community sites.

Council's general manager for city development, Stephen Sully, said it was considering a review of these sites as part of a revised contaminated land management system.

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16th December 2011



Brimbank has spent \$2.6 million on a clean-up of a former industrial site on Fitzgerald Road and Whitesides Avenue, Sunshine West.

About \$5 million has been spent on the former Sydenham landfill in Sydenham Road.

The site is on the Environment Protection Authority's priority sites register.

But councils said they lacked the funds to clean up, manage or even assess contaminated sites.

"The costs of a complete assessment and remediation of every site would be substantial and is unlikely to occur," Mr Sully said.

Western Metropolitan Greens MP Colleen Hartland called the report "frightening".

"Children are particularly vulnerable, so it is shocking to read that playgrounds and schools are examples of the sorts of places that are falling through the gaps."

She said the Department of Planning and Community Development (DPCD) needed to take control, starting with a statewide audit of potentially contaminated sites used by children.

Environment Minister Ryan Smith said the damning document bared the "embarrassing" detail of 11 years of "environmental atrocity and neglect" permitted by the former Labor government.

The report criticised the lack of information and oversight of high-risk sites and found a "lack of rigour" by the DPCD, EPA and councils in managing risks.

Brimbank Council conceded it needed to be more active in ensuring compliance with regulations.

Mr Sully said the council was now working closely with the EPA, researching and mapping potentially contaminated sites and appointing a strategic sites officer to work with major landowners on their redevelopment.

He said Brimbank would work with the DPCD and EPA to improve planning compliance.

An EPA spokesman said it would implement the report's recommendations.

"We have identified 'dealing with past pollution' as a strategic priority and acknowledge there is more work to be done in this area."

TOP COP'S PLEA ON BRIMBANK TOLL

Brimbank Leader—13th December 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/top-cops-plea-on-brimbank-toll-fbready/>

Brimbank's top cop is appealing to drivers to be cautious over the festive season as the local road toll is more than quadruple last year.

After nine deaths on Brimbank roads to date, Inspector Michael Grainger said he was concerned for the community.

The alarming jump from only two fatalities last year is also 33 per cent higher than Brimbank's long-term average of six road deaths a year.

Highway Patrol Sergeant Rod Stein said there had been 330 collisions on Brimbank's roads so far, resulting in death, serious injuries or injuries.

The deaths are split evenly three ways between motorists, pedestrians and motorcyclists.

In an open letter Inspector Grainger said a high percentage of collisions occurred on major arterials such as Ballarat Road and the Western Ring Road but minor

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arterials such as St Albans Rd and those in the Sunshine CBD also had a high volume of collisions, he said.

“With the lead up to Christmas, there is a tendency for us all to rush, there also seems to be an expectation that businesses must meet more pressing deadlines,” Inspector Grainger said. “This lack of concentration results in collisions that can kill and seriously injure people.”

Inspector Grainger said following vehicle too closely, distractions such as using mobile phones or reading maps or business documents, or even drinking coffee or applying make-up while driving were among contributing factors to accidents.

In the latest fatality, a 28 year old female motorcyclist was travelling east along Frost Drive in Delahey at about 7:45am on October 19. After overtaking and colliding with another vehicle, the rider suffered fatal injuries.

In early September a 67 year old male collided with a truck on the Western Ring Road at about 7pm. The driver may have suffered a heart attack.

And on August 9 a 72 year old female pedestrian was struck by a car on Glengala Road West Sunshine at about 6:45am.

AN EXPLOSION OF FUN IN DEER PARK

Brimbank Leader—11th December 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.whereilive.com.au/lifestyle/story/an-explosion-of-fun-in-deer-park-fbready/>

A former paddock in Deer Park has been transformed into a park.

The Isabella Williams Memorial Reserve was officially opened last Saturday, as part of the Brimbank Council’s Creating Better Parks Policy and Plan.

It has children’s play equipment, a fitness circuit and outdoor gym equipment, shade shelters, barbecues, gardens and trees.

Brimbank’s chairman of administrators, Peter Lewinsky, said the park’s design was inspired by the volcanic, geological history of the western plains.

“The small hill already in the park wasn’t actually a volcano, but now we can all pretend it was and have lots of fun with it,” he said.

” While it’s first and foremost for the residents of Deer Park and Albanvale, once the word gets out, we expect that people from all over Melbourne will flock to it. “

The first section of the Kororoit Creek Trail extension was also opened.

Isabella Williams arrived in Keilor from Hobart in 1854, and in 1875 was listed as a farmer and the nominal owner of a stretch of land on the north side of Kororoit Creek.

WE'RE BACKING BRAYBROOK

Brimbank Leader—10th December 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/were-backing-braybrook-fbready/>

Maribyrnong Council is advocating to bring about “real change” in Braybrook.

Braybrook remains the second-most disadvantaged suburb in Victoria, according to the Social Economic Index for Areas (SEIFA) despite being part of the State Government’s Neighbourhood Renewal program for eight years.

Council’s Revitalising Braybrook strategy aims to coordinate council expenditure to get maximum community benefit and to gain support and investment from external stakeholders.

Mayor Sarah Carter said revitalising Braybrook was a passion project for her and Cr Sel Sanli. “We’re sticking around to get this project done,” she said. “We will get this done short of building it ourselves.”

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Cr Sanli said the council needed to ensure it provided opportunities to the residents of Braybrook.

“We do have a lot of work to do,” he said.

One of the major projects outlined in the strategy is the development of a Community Learning Centre and Early Years Hub which, as reported by Leader, Cr Carter recently pitched to Prime Minister Julia Gillard.

Ms Gillard said she was interested to hear of Maribyrnong Council’s plans for new community infrastructure.

“My Government is of course committed to social policies that benefit families living in Melbourne’s west,” she said.

Ms Gillard said the council would be eligible to apply for federal funding for its proposed Community Learning Centre as part of the Regional Development Australia Fund.

Federal Health Minister and Member for Gellibrand Nicola Roxon said that as the west was growing rapidly an investment in education and early childhood development was an investment in our future.

Ms Roxon said she was encouraged to see Cr Carter advocating passionately for the facilities.

HOBSONS BAY

HAMMING IT UP IN WILLIAMSTOWN

Hobsons Bay Leader—16th December 2011

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/hamming-it-up-in-williamstown/>

Nothing says Christmas like a juicy ham and this festive season Hobsons Bay residents are heading to Williamstown to get their hands on Victoria’s best ham-on-the-bone.

Phillip Elg and Peter Robinson of Elg & Robinson butchers in Douglas Pde won top prize in the Meat Industry Council’s smallgoods competition for the second year running.

The duo, who have been in business together for three years, are busily making hams to fill hundreds of orders before Christmas.

“It’s pretty good for a little butcher’s shop in Williamstown,” Mr Robinson said. “We source the best quality produce and we’re pretty particular with what we accept.

“We use really good quality ingredients for our curing, smoking and cooking processes.”

The hams are soaked for seven days before being dried, then smoked and cooked for 12 hours with a secret woodchip recipe.

Mr Robinson said Elg & Robinson were among the few butchers in Victoria licensed to Cryovac hams - a storage process that retains moisture and allows the hams to keep for longer.

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“That means that we’re able to start producing hams a bit earlier,” Mr Robinson said. “We’ll probably make 200 leg hams in the lead-up to Christmas. If you had to do it in the week before Christmas, you wouldn’t be able to.”

PUSH FOR SPORTS FACILITIES

Hobson Bay Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/williamstown-altona-laverton/326/story/146002.html>

If Melbourne is to remain the sporting capital of Australia it must extend its sports infrastructure into the booming West, according to a leading professor.

The director of Victoria University’s Institute of Sport, Exercise and Active Living, Professor Hans Westerbeek, said Melbourne’s cluster of sports infrastructure and concentration of sport business professionals was a major reason it could maintain the saturation of sport the city was famous for.

“Melbourne has this critical mass of sports infrastructure that began with the hosting of the 1956 Olympics and really picked up in the 1980s with the construction of Melbourne Park next to the MCG, more targeted government investment and a major events strategy,” Professor Westerbeek said.

Prof Westerbeek was speaking at the Sports West conference held last week and attended by AFL CEO Andrew Demetriou, Grand Prix CEO Andrew Westacott and Tennis Australia CEO Steve Wood.

Prof Westerbeek said for Melbourne to host more professional teams, extend its major events and maintain its position as number one sport city it needs to extend the reach of its sporting infrastructure.

He said existing infrastructure and growth forecasts were providing momentum for that to happen in Melbourne’s West.

“In the West we have VU as a specialist tertiary education and research provider in sport, Maribyrnong College as an elite sport specialist high school, the Western Bulldogs as a professional sport organisation and the Victoria Racing Club as a premier elite sporting venue, just to name a few,” he said.

“Logical extensions to that network are sporting links into education through the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, into community health through Western Health, community development through LeadWest and business development through the Victorian Employers’ Chamber of Commerce and Industry.”

FESTIVAL GETS BOOST

Hobson Bay Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/williamstown-altona-laverton/326/story/145999.html>

The Williamstown Literary Festival has announced that Victoria University and Hobsons Bay City Council will continue to support the 2012 festival on 4-6 May.

The volunteer-run event is the region’s largest and longest running writer’s festival and has gained widespread recognition over the past nine years.

In addition to being a major sponsor, VU and the festival organising committee work to find meaningful ways that students and staff can contribute to and learn from the festival.

A popular feature of the Festival is the Ada Cambridge Short Story Competition.

VU Professional Writing teacher Sherryl Clark won the inaugural contest in 2005, and former student Annette Signori was winner in 2006.

Festival president Angela Altair said she was delighted to continue this fruitful partnership with the West’s own tertiary institution.

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"We are grateful for VU's ongoing and generous support and look forward to working with VU's students and staff to promote arts and culture and provide opportunities to enhance skills and learning," she said.

Entry for the Ada Cambridge short story and poetry prize is open to all who live or work in the western suburbs.

For more details or to download entry forms or for full program details go to www.willylitfest.org.au.

NUMBER PLATE WARNING

Hobson Bay Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/williamstown-altona-laverton/326/story/146009.html>

Hobson Bay police are warning all car owners to do what they can to prevent their number plates from being stolen.

The theft, which can prove to be quite costly for the victim, often results in plates being used on another car while a crime such as petrol theft is committed.

Hobsons Bay Community Liaison Officer, Senior Constable Sharon Radau said preventing the theft is as easy as fitting plates with one way screws.

"Number plate theft is a big issue," she said.

Sen Const Radau said installing the one way screws was easy and could only be removed with a special tool not sold to the general public.

"The screws are free at Altona North Police Station or you can buy them from Bunnings," she said.

"Standard screws are easy to come off with a screwdriver.

"Stealing number plates is like stealing the car's identity and often used for petrol drive-offs or for other more serious crimes."

Mary Mammoliti from Bunnings, who has been a victim of number plate theft, agreed installing one way screws was a good idea.

Hobsons Bay Police will be holding a Safe Plates Day on Saturday 17 December in the Coles car park on Douglas Pde Williamstown, between 9am and 12pm.

Residents will be able to have their number plates fitted with one way screws for free.

NIGHT TRAIN FEARS

Hobson Bay Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/williamstown-altona-laverton/326/story/145986.html>

Hobsons Bay has ranked the worst in the state in a commuter survey of day-time perceptions of public transport safety.

A Star Freedom of Information investigation has revealed only 64 per cent of commuters travelling on Hobsons Bay's public transport felt safe by day – the lowest in the entire state.

The figures, from the September quarter's National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing, also revealed only 19.6 per cent of commuters felt safe travelling on Hobsons Bay's public transport by night – the third lowest in the state.

Hobsons Bay Inspector Bill Mathers said he was surprised by the figures because they did not reflect the crime statistics.

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“The hard thing about public perceptions is you never know what causes people to feel unsafe – it doesn’t reflect the crime statistics in and around the railway hubs and the public transport,” he said.

Insp Mathers said recent changes to train timetables across the Williamstown and Werribee lines could be influencing perceptions.

“Recently there have been a number of changes to the rail system which have meant that people have had to change their transport habits,” he said.

“It could be because a lot of people have to wait around at stations for longer than their used to.

“A number of our stations don’t have large numbers of people getting on to them in the daytime ... we suspect that might be one of the reasons they’re feeling unsafe.

“People generally feel safer when they’re on a crowded platform and a number of our platforms aren’t well patronised.”

Insp Mathers said Hobsons Bay Police along with the Police Community Consultative Committee (PCCC) were working hard to improve safety perceptions on public transport.

“We conducted our own survey at Laverton Station with the people using the train system there,” he said.

“The people who were using it generally felt quite safe in the daytime... generally we’re finding people would like to see more visible police.

“We’re hoping that with the PSOs (Protective Service Officer) eventually being rolled out to stations that this will alleviate people’s fear for their safety at railway stations.”

Insp Mathers said at this stage there will definitely be PSOs assigned to the Newport and Laverton train stations.

“We’re continually working on perceptions of safety,” he said.

“The difficulty we’ve got is that it’s very hard because the perceptions aren’t always linked to the danger.

“Hobsons Bay would be, in terms of crime statistics, one of the safest areas across the West.”

Maribyrnong Police Acting Inspector Steve Reynolds said the amount of people who felt unsafe at night on public transport was a concern.

“We’re certainly conscious it is high-risk at night and people feel less safe at night, and we target that in a variety of different ways such as proactive operations and patrols and we try and be highly visible, so people can see us,” he said.

BE SEATED, ALTONA MEADOWS COMMUTERS

Hobsons Bay Leader– 10th December 2011

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/be-seated-altona-meadows-commuters/>

Wary commuters now have somewhere to sit at the Altona Meadows bus stop in Central Avenue after a bench seat was finally installed there.

The bus stop gained notoriety in July this year when Leader reported how an elderly resident, fed up with the lack of seating, took matters into his own hands and chained a folding chair to a pole.

At the time, Altona Meadows’ Amos Croxford said he had been waiting “a long time” for a seat at the stop, but believed that one would never be put there.

But following Leader’s July 12 report, then-Hobsons Bay Mayor Michael Raffoul confirmed a seat was on its way.

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DROWNINGS DOWN, BUT PARENTS WARNED TO STAY VIGILANT

Hobsons Bay Leader— 11th December 2011

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/drownings-down-but-parents-warned-to-stay-vigilant/>

Hobsons Bay residents and visitors are heeding the water safety message, with the latest statistics showing no drownings in the municipality in the past financial year.

This marks a significant change from the Life Saving Victoria data for the previous year, 2009-10, when there were two drownings.

But Life Saving Victoria manager of research and injury prevention Dr Bernadette Matthews said it was important that parents still actively watched their children around water, even at beaches such as Altona and Williamstown, which have lifesaving patrols.

“Active supervision of children is an absolute key to preventing drownings and accidents, which is why it is so important to never let children out of your sight around water,” Dr Matthews said.

And she said that “active supervision” was “more than the occasional glance”.

“If children are under five, we recommend they are within your arm’s reach at all times and that children under 10 are always in sight,” Dr Matthews said.

Across all of metropolitan Melbourne, there were 14 drowning deaths in 2010-11, which is down by five on the previous financial year.

The municipalities with the highest number of drownings were Moreland, with three, Cardinia (two), Melbourne (two) and Mornington Peninsula (two).

Beachgoers are reminded to always swim between the red and yellow flags.

MARIBRYNONG

KICKING OFF THE NEW YOU IN MARIBYRNONG

Maribyrnong Leader—16th December 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/kicking-off-the-new-you-fbready/>

Maribyrnong Council is investing in the community’s health and wellbeing.

The council is launching its Incredible, Edible, Movable Maribyrnong project by celebrating with a Picnic in the Park this Saturday.

The project aims to increase awareness of the importance of healthy eating and keeping active.

There will be healthy eating and gardening workshops, Heart Foundation walking, sport team initiatives, Pryme Movers and the My Healthy Lifestyle program.

Cr Sarah Carter said it was an opportunity to make a difference to community health.

“The council is committed to providing a healthy community and recognises that a focus on preventive health is vital to achieving this,” Cr Carter said.

Cr Carter said the day would provide residents with more information about the project and the option to sign up to a range of free and low-cost programs.

The council is working with several partners to deliver the initiative, including Maribyrnong Swifts Football Club, Pivot West, SpiritWest, RecWest and Western Region Health Centre.

Picnic in the Park is on tomorrow, Saturday, December 17, from 11am-2pm at Maidstone Community Centre, 21 Yardley St.

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HOMES ON MARIBYRNONG'S TOXIC LAND

Maribyrnong Leader—15th December 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/homes-on-maribyrnongs-toxic-land-fbready/>

A damning report into contaminated land sites - some in Maribyrnong and Brimbank - has sparked calls for a mandatory reporting register.

In handing down the report last week, Auditor-General Des Pearson said the Department of Planning and Community Development, the Environment Protection Authority, and councils were not effectively managing contaminated sites.

"Consequently (they) cannot demonstrate that they are reducing potentially significant risks to human health and the environment to acceptable levels," he said.

Mr Pearson said the inaction was in part to avoid legal and financial liability.

One case study found a site in Maribyrnong had been significantly mismanaged with children's health put at risk.

A total of 22 properties were built on contaminated land, which the Maribyrnong Council knew in 1994 but did not report to the EPA until 1998.

"Twelve of these properties pose a potential health risk to children ... and a further four pose an actual risk to children residing at these properties," Mr Pearson said.

Western Metropolitan Green MP Colleen Hartland said the report was frightening and called for mandatory reporting of contaminated sites.

"Part of the problem is that we don't know where the toxic sites are, because many potentially contaminated sites have not been tested, and it is not compulsory to report all of them to the EPA," she said.

"There should be a publicly available register of all known contaminated sites."

Environment Minister Ryan Smith said action would be taken with \$5.4 million allocated to address the sites. He said the EPA had been told to review the sites and develop a risk management tool.

HERE'S TO LEARNING

Maribyrnong Weekly—14th December 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/heres-to-learning/2392937.aspx>

Adult education in Maribyrnong has received \$150,000 in state government funding for Learn Local organisation Think West.

The 320 Learn Local organisations across Victoria provide vocational, language, literacy, numeracy and work skills courses to more than 100,000 people each year.

The cash will help learners at Footscray's Angliss Neighbourhood House, Williamstown Education Centre and Sunshine's Duke Street Community House.

Liberal Western Metropolitan MP Andrew Elsbury (pictured with Angliss Neighbourhood House co-ordinator Meg Higgins) said the funding would be used to draw more people into programs offered by Learn Local.

BLACKSMITHS PLEDGE TO KEEP FLAME ALIVE

Maribyrnong Weekly—14th December 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/blacksmiths-pledge-to-keep-flame-alive/2392935.aspx>

If you see the artisans at Waterside Metal-Art Workers belting large nails into a tree trunk - fear not - there is ancient method in what might be seen as madness.

Seddon blacksmith Estebaan Dante quotes ancient lore: hammering a hot, hand-forged nail into a tree would help rid a person of whatever ailed them. By the time

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the tree had grown over the nail, the person who drove it into the trunk would be cured of their malady.

Nail trees, or nagel booms, as they are known in Belgium, proliferate in its countryside.

To celebrate the completion of their new forge by the Maribyrnong River in Footscray, Waterside members installed a "nagel boom", which was once a pile at a wharf at Docklands.

The opening of the forge (a hearth for heating metals) will help the Waterside Metal-Art Workers, a group of the Australian Blacksmith Association (ABA), pursue their art and preserve the ancient craft of blacksmithing.

JINGLE BELLS TO RING OUT IN YARRAVILLE

Maribyrnong Weekly—14th December 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/jingle-bells-to-ring-out-in-yarraville/2392933.aspx>

When Ron Palmer (pictured with seven-month-old Maddie, left, two-year-old Lily, and Santa) started Christmas carols in Yarraville Gardens almost 20 years ago, it was just him, a microphone and a few hardy souls.

In the years since, the annual non-profit Yarraville Carols in the Gardens has begun drawing more than 5000 people and is supported by the Rotary clubs of Yarraville and Footscray, and Maribyrnong Council.

This year's event features a number of local performers and special guests including the Choral Institute of Melbourne, the Footscray-Yarraville City Band and opera singer Margaret Haggart.

There will also be an appearance by Santa, with the evening to conclude with a fireworks display.

TOTTENHAM FACELIFT TO ATTACK COMMUTER SLUMMING

Maribyrnong Weekly—14th December 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/tottenham-facelift-to-attack-commuter-slumming/2392930.aspx>

Commuters using Tottenham railway station - rated in a survey as Melbourne's worst - will finally get a sealed car park and better lighting.

The Regional Rail Link Authority last week released preliminary designs for Footscray, West Footscray and Tottenham railway stations, which will be rebuilt as part of the \$5billion project.

A commuter survey by the Metropolitan Transport Forum this year rated Tottenham as Melbourne's worst station with complaints concerning its shabby appearance, cleanliness and poor lighting.

The station will undergo what the authority has called a "facelift".

Calls have also been heeded for the well-used informal car park on the north side of the station - a dust bowl in the dry and a bog in the wet - to be upgraded. The area will be sealed, lit and have space for about 100 cars.

The underpass along Ashley Street will also have improved lighting.

Footscray station, which has been criticised for its steep stairs and lifts which break down, will finally have escalator, lift and ramp access to all platforms.

Extra Myki readers, toilets and CCTV security will be installed at the station while the forecourt area on Irving Street will be landscaped.

West Footscray station will be moved 160 metres to the west with its ticket booth, waiting rooms and toilets to be built on the overpass. The existing overpass on Geelong Road will be demolished to make way for the two new Regional Rail Link

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tracks, with pedestrians crossing from one side of the tracks to the other via the station and a signalised crossing on Sunshine Road.

Public Transport Users Association spokesman Paul Westcott said the station designs should include adequate space for people waiting on platforms. Large car parks were "self-defeating" as commuters from St Albans or Ardeer, who would otherwise pay for a zone 2 ticket, might drive to West Footscray (zone 1), creating added congestion along Sunshine Road.



MAYOR CUMMING SHARES DREAM OF A SAFE, STARRY NIGHT

Maribyrnong Weekly—14th December 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/mayor-cumming-shares-dream-of-a-safe-starry-night/2392934.aspx>

It will be a hard act to follow ... that's how newly elected Maribyrnong mayor John Cumming describes taking over from outgoing mayor Sarah Carter.

During her term, Cr Carter took on a planning minister in a public spat, worked at patching up relationships with trader groups, soothed past disagreements with

some of the municipality's biggest hitters, and tried to convince the rest of Melbourne that Maribyrnong was the next big thing.

"She was fantastic," Cr Cumming said. "I don't think we've ever had a better mayor and I feel a bit overwhelmed following her."

Cr Cumming was elected to council in 2008, having served a term as a City of Footscray councillor from 1992-95.

He said a major challenge was for council to provide the social infrastructure, such as open space and community centres, that would encourage the private sector to continue investing.

"I'd like to go out at 10pm on a Friday night and sit down with friends and do something. Restaurants close and that's it, end of story. I'd like to sit in a public space and not be confronted with antisocial behaviour."

Cr Michael Clarke was elected deputy mayor.

Several councillors, including Martin Zakharov, were in the running for the top job though Cr Cumming was the sole nominee at the December 6 meeting.

"There's some disappointment," Cr Zakharov said. "I suppose it was expected for a while that I would be elected. At the same time I have to abide by the decision of councillors and I'm happy to work with the new mayor."

It was their last opportunity for the \$67,634 job in this term of council.

Local Government Minister Jeanette Powell is considering recommendations of a review that, if approved, will mean Maribyrnong will go from seven wards with one councillor in each to three multi-councillor wards.

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'PLATES A KEY POLICE ALLY

Maribyrnong Weekly—14th December 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/plates-a-key-police-ally/2392939.aspx>

More than 80 fines were handed out by Footscray police in a three-day road safety blitz on Maribyrnong's streets last weekend.

Police used automated numberplate recognition (ANPR) to target unlicensed, suspended and disqualified drivers, and unregistered and stolen vehicles.

In the operation, police checked 303 drivers and conducted 303 breath tests. They caught 19 unlicensed, suspended and disqualified drivers, and found 55 vehicles to be unregistered. A 25-year-old Robinvale man was arrested over an outstanding warrant.

Footscray's Sergeant Dean Waters said police would continue to target high-risk drivers during the festive season.

He said numberplate recognition alerted police to unregistered and stolen vehicles, unlicensed drivers or people driving while disqualified or suspended. "It [also] gives police the ability to detect vehicles on 'hot lists' associated with reported crime."

AUTISM 'TSUNAMI' FORECAST FOR WEST

Maribyrnong Weekly—14th December 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/autism-tsunami-forecast-for-west/2392936.aspx>

State Parliament last week heard Melbourne's west faces "a tsunami of autistic students".

The claim by Keilor MP Natalie Hutchins follows a report into P-12 education for children with autism across the region.

Politicians and parents are calling on Education Minister Martin Dixon to release the full Grant Thornton report, not just the 26 pages made public last Wednesday.

Ms Hutchins said two significant companion reports were missing - the first looking at supply and demand, the second containing details of community consultation.

"With the population growing in the west and 41 babies being born every week just in the Melton Shire, we face a tsunami of autistic students in the years to come," Ms Hutchins told Parliament last Thursday.

"We have an average that's 50per cent higher than the national estimated average of autistic students, and the need for services is real." The report found 75per cent of students with an autism spectrum disorder in the west lived in Brimbank, Wyndham and Melton. Brimbank had the highest percentage at 32, followed by Wyndham (24), Melton (19), Hobsons Bay (9), Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley (both 7).

Autism Schools Action founders, Altona Meadows couple Liz and Mark Websdale fear the real figures could be even higher.

They say the report included only children funded under the Program for Students with Disabilities in the autism category, excluding students with ASDs at special schools (except Western Autistic School) and students who did not qualify for PSD funding.

The report recommends localised primary and secondary ASD provision where most students live: Melton, Wyndham and Brimbank.

James Martin, spokesman for Education Minister Martin Dixon, said he wasn't aware of any papers missing from the report.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

16th December 2011



The Weekly contacted Mr Thornton on Friday, but was told everyone was in a meeting.

YOUNG, ELDERLY 'EXPOSED TO DEADLY TOXINS'

Maribyrnong Weekly—14th December 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/young-elderly-exposed-to-deadly-toxins/2392931.aspx>

A scathing report by the Victorian Auditor-General has found children and the elderly have been exposed to deadly chemicals and toxic vapours from contaminated land as a result of poor management by Maribyrnong Council and other state government agencies.

Auditor-General Des Pearson singled out Maribyrnong's management of two sites as part of his wider investigation of contaminated sites across the state.

The exact locations of the contaminated land were not identified.

Referring to one site, a privately owned quarry redeveloped for low-density housing - thought to be in Leigh Street, Footscray - the Auditor-General concluded the council and Environment Protection Authority showed lack of due diligence and duty of care in protecting the health of residents and the surrounding community.

Twenty-two homes near the site, including four still occupied by families with children, are contaminated with benzoapyrene and lead, the by-products of fuel burning.

The chemicals pose health risks such as brain impairment, reduced intellectual development, and cancer.

According to the report, the council has known about the contamination since 1994 yet attempts to assess and clean-up the site in partnership with the EPA did

not go ahead because the council was worried about litigation if its management regime proved inadequate.

"There is no management plan and no clean-up has occurred, hindered by there being no clarity around roles and responsibilities for the ongoing management," the report said.

"This has potentially resulted in long-term exposure to high levels of contaminants known to pose a health risk, particularly to children."

Work to clean up the site began only this year.

The second site mentioned in the report, also a former quarry site, has contaminated soil and toxic vapours. It is close to homes and on-site are two recreation centres: one used by old people and the other for outside school hours care.

However, the council has not told residents or users of the recreation centres about the risks because "there are no mandatory reporting requirements" and it "is not required to report the site to the EPA or any other agency".

In a statement, council chief executive Vince Haining said there were 89 former quarry sites that contained residential and industrial waste within the 32 square kilometres of the municipality.

Council-owned sites with sensitive uses, such as childcare centres, have been thoroughly investigated and the sites remediated or made safe for use. Soil testing is conducted whenever council develops public land. "Council does not possess the financial means to immediately investigate and remediate potentially contaminated sites across the city. Furthermore, it is not council's responsibility to cover the costs of remediating private land," he said.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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Cr Catherine Cumming said there would not be a park in Maribyrnong if not for reclaimed quarries and landfills. She said the state government had increased the landfill levy paid by councils from \$30 to \$44 per tonne, earning it millions in additional revenue.

"The state government needs to give us a greater share of our waste levy so we have the funds to be able to mitigate our risk and learn more about all the different sites and do testing. That would alleviate [the] risk to the community."

Environment Minister Ryan Smith said in a statement the EPA had been instructed to conduct a comprehensive 'contaminated environments review' and develop a risk management tool for contaminated sites.

Full council response

RE: auditor-general's report on contaminated sites

The City of Maribyrnong is one of the oldest areas of Melbourne and has a long history of industrial use stretching back over 100 years. Within the 32 square kilometres of the municipality there are 89 former quarry sites that contain residential and industrial waste.

Many of these old industrial sites were privately owned and have been redeveloped and on-sold by these private owners in past decades.

Council takes a proactive approach to managing former industrial and landfill sites and has joined with the MAV in advocating for a State-wide coordinated approach to managing contaminated sites and is advocating for assistance for Councils with a high number of contaminated sites.

Any Council-owned sites that are now used for sensitive uses such as child care centres have been thoroughly investigated and the sites remediated or made safe for use. Soil testing is conducted whenever Council develops public land.

Council does not possess the financial means to immediately investigate and remediate potentially contaminated site across the City. Furthermore, it is not Council's responsibility to cover the costs of remediating private land. The owners of privately-held land are responsible for remediating their sites.

The sites mentioned in the Auditor-General's report are known to Council, and Council is working closely with the EPA and environmental consultants to investigate and remediate these sites. Where there is a potential risk to health, Council has worked with the EPA to alert owners or occupiers of these sites, and to communicate plans for remediation work.

As noted in the report: "Since August 2011, Maribyrnong City Council has begun to collaborate with the EPA in an effort to move forward with managing issues associated with Site A."

In regards to the site identified as Site E in the report, Council is currently undertaking a environmental assessment. This assessment will determine what remediation work, if any, needs to occur at the site. Any communication with surrounding residents will occur once the nature of the remediation work is known.

Council is committed to working with the EPA and DPCD to address management of contaminated sites across the City. Council is currently finalising a risk management approach to better align planning controls on development within the City to help manage and mitigate the risks of contaminated sites.

Vince Haining

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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City of Maribyrnong CEO

TRAIN FEARS

Maribyrnong Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/323/story/145929.html>

A police survey has revealed almost three quarters of commuters who use Maribyrnong's public transport system feel unsafe at night.

Statistics exclusively obtained by Star revealed only 26.1 per cent of people who travel on the area's trains, trams and buses feel secure during the evening.

This put Maribyrnong in the top 10 areas, across the state, perceived as unsafe after dark – compared to Melbourne, where 48 per cent of commuters felt safe at night.

The statistics were included in the National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing, which covered the 12 months until September this year.

Star obtained the survey through a Freedom of Information request.

Although only 26 per cent of people felt safe travelling on Maribyrnong's public transport network at night, other municipalities in the West were rated worse.

Only 14 per cent of commuters reported feeling safe at night in Wyndham, 19.6 per cent in Hobsons Bay and 20.2 per cent in Brimbank.

However, more than 85 per cent of Maribyrnong commuters said they felt safe on public transport during the day, the highest ranking in the West.

Maribyrnong police also recorded a 67 per cent 'customer satisfaction' rating across the 12 months, the lowest in the state – compared to the rest of the West's police service areas, which all scored above 75 per cent.

Maribyrnong Police Acting Inspector Steve Reynolds said the amount of people who felt unsafe at night on public transport was a concern.

"We're certainly conscious it is high-risk at night and people feel less safe at night, and we target that in a variety of different ways such as proactive operations and patrols and we try and be highly visible, so people can see us," he said.

"It's a range of things, graffiti, public order and anti-social behaviour, drug dealing, there have been some robberies. It is a wide range of issues and that is certainly something we do target in a variety of ways.

Insp Reynolds said he was pleased Maribyrnong had the best ranking in the West, for people who felt safe on public transport in the day time.

"That figure is obviously encouraging, but we certainly aim to achieve a higher threshold than that, in terms of people feeling safe at public transport hubs during the day," he said.

"If you see suspicious behaviour, call us. Be mindful of your surroundings and don't have anything valuable on display, put it in a bag."

TOTTENHAM STATION EYES FACELIFT

Maribyrnong Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/326/story/146024.html>

Surveillance cameras could be installed in the notorious Ashley St underpass at Tottenham Railway Station, as part of the Regional Rail Link project.

Last week, the construction manager of the Footscray to Deer Park section of RRL construction, Adam Maguire, said the Regional Rail Link Authority was considering fitting out the underpass with CCTV cameras and better lighting as part of a Tottenham station "facelift".

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In August this year, a survey of public transport users rated Tottenham as Melbourne's worst train station, with the underpass labelled "scary, dark and dingy" and "a horrible, dirty, wet tunnel".

Mr Maguire said the RRL project could also include more CCTV cameras being installed at Footscray station, but he ruled out locating a police kiosk at the site.

"We certainly do need to increase the number of CCTVs for station areas, pedestrian areas and the forecourt," he said.

The RRL project, which has been funded by the State and Federal Governments, will build a new rail line running from West Werribee to Deer Park and on existing lines through Sunshine and Footscray to Southern Cross Station.

An upgrade proposed for Footscray station suggests constructing new escalators and ramps to the footbridge and to all platforms from the entrances at Irving St and Hyde St, subject to heritage approval.

The Nicholson St Bridge and its buildings will be demolished and replaced by a footbridge with a three-metre wide footpath, which will include a "throw-screen" fence.

Mr Maguire said this would help "prevent people getting onto the rail line or throwing things onto the rail line".

The RRL project will also include removing the existing Irving St car park near Footscray station, and relocating 166 car parks at the new West Footscray station.

However, Footscray Traders Association president Grant Miles said this made was "absurd and ridiculous", considering the RRL was set to double patronage at the station.

TRADERS PLEA TO SHOP LOCAL

Maribyrnong Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/326/story/146034.html>

The Christmas season is approaching, and Maribyrnong retailers have said they hope residents will shop locally this festive season.

Footscray Traders Association president Grant Miles said most of the area's businesses were small, independently-owned and run by people who lived within the area.

"A big benefit of shopping in Footscray for local residents is, when you spend money in Footscray, that money stays in Footscray," Mr Miles said.

Mr Miles said he believed the customer service at Footscray's many small businesses was generally better than what larger companies could offer.

"Also there is more diversity in Footscray and there are more individual things you can find, which are unique and one-offs," he said.

Mr Miles said Footscray was the ideal place to purchase discount homewares, groceries and meals.

TREE REMOVAL FIGHT

Maribyrnong Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/326/story/146040.html>

Residents of a Kingsville street have welcomed a Maribyrnong City Council decision, which could save a number of trees slated for removal during a road upgrade.

Last week, resident Kylie McIntosh said she was horrified at the potential elimination of 23 mature trees in Queensville St.

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After contacting other residents, Ms McIntosh said she received around 25 responses from people who were also concerned about the trees.

The council had sent out a letter to residents and held a meeting about the possible removal, but Ms McIntosh said she had been unable to attend, along with a number of other interested residents.

The letter said the Queensville St works involved re-sheeting the road and replacing the bluestone kerb and channel from Webb St to Somerville Rd, and installing underground drainage - which could damage tree roots.

Ms McIntosh said that the anger and dismay voiced by residents was partly due to the same problem having already occurred at the other end of Queensville St earlier in the year, when the council advised that approximately 18 mature trees were to be removed owing to potential root damage associated with road improvement works.

It was only after action by residents and intervention by Cr Michael Clarke that an additional review of these trees was undertaken, with the second review finding that only six of the 18 trees actually needed to be removed.

Ms McIntosh said that residents are concerned that the council is not receiving the best possible advice on this issue and she has suggested that an independent arborist consultant review the trees targeted in this round of street works.

“While it has been acknowledged that the council has tried to engage with the community through the street meetings, there’s quite a lot of anger and frustration at the apparent inconsistencies in council’s approach to ‘tree issues’” she said.

Ms McIntosh said residents were also worried the tree removal could affect ‘amenity value’ in the street and that a number of people have cited the attractive leafy streetscape as part of the reason they moved into the area.

However, after she contacted the council and asked them to review the decision, Cr Clarke stopped the project and organised another community meeting.

“The principle we are working to whenever possible is we want all trees to stay,” he said.

QUARRY ALERT

Maribyrnong Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/326/story/146026.html>

Potentially contaminated soil could be endangering residents who live near a former quarry site within the Maribyrnong municipality, according to an alarming Victorian Auditor-General report.

The report – which did not identify the location of the site – said residents have not been informed of the potential health impacts arising from the possibly contaminated soil they live upon.

The report, released last week, used “site E” as a case study to represent the procedural flaws of managing hazardous sites within the Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Yarra council areas.

The report said site E was now a reserve – with two recreation centres, used for outside school care and by elderly people – with homes on its border.

The Auditor-General expressed concern that “contaminated soils were spread beyond the footprint of the quarry hole” during the site’s redevelopment.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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"As a consequence, a number of the neighbouring properties may be located on contaminated soil that potentially poses a health risk to the residents of those properties," the report said.

Maribyrnong City Council is undertaking a stage 1 environmental assessment of the area, as a part of a redevelopment proposal.

But the report said "the extent of contamination is only known to Maribyrnong City Council".

"There has been no communication with property owners whose houses are located on the footprint of the old quarry, surrounding residents, or users of the recreation centres," the document said.

The report also contained another case study – "site A" – located in Maribyrnong, where 22 homes surround another former quarry site, contaminated with fuel burning by-products.

The report said 12 properties at the site "have contamination levels that pose a potential health risk to children due to the contaminant levels exceeding recommended criteria, while a further four properties pose an actual risk because of children residing at these properties".

The Auditor-General concluded the site had been the subject of "significant mismanagement" but said after 17 years, the council and EPA have begun to collaborate to manage the spot.

Star asked the council to name these two sites – media speculation last week suggested 'site A' was Leigh St in Footscray – but did not get an answer by deadline.

However, the council's CEO Vince Haining said within the 32 square kilometres of the municipality there were 89 former quarry sites.

He said at Site E, an environmental assessment would "determine what remediation work, if any, needs to occur at the site" and "any communication with surrounding residents will occur once the nature of the remediation work is known."

FOCUS PAYS OFF

Maribyrnong Star–13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/326/story/145983.html>

The most prestigious award at Maribyrnong Sports Academy is only partly about sport.

It's also about a commitment to personal development, leadership and academic achievements.

For the first time since the awards began, two Maribyrnong College students tied for the sports director award at the Maribyrnong Sports Academy's Awards of Excellence night on 29 November.

The achievements of boxer Luke Pilarinos and lacrosse player Rebecca Lane could not be separated, according to the academy's sports director Rob Carroll.

"They both had very high grade point averages, their academic scores are in the nines out of 10s across all of their subjects," he said. "And they're both representing Australia at international level."

Lane, who plays for Footscray Lacrosse Club, represented the silver-medal-winning Australian under-19 lacrosse side at the world championships in Germany, while Pilarinos travelled to Kazakhstan to represent the Australian boxing team.

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Lane was a bottom age player for Australia as a 16-year-old, and was named an MVP in the march against Canada.

Fellow Maribyrnong College student Danelle Mollison was co-captain of Australia and named in the All-World team. Five Maribyrnong College girls made the initial Australian squad, with Mollison and Lane making the final cut.

Pilarinos has shown dedication to his schoolwork, having achieved high grades despite spending weeks at training camps with the Australian squad.

The Year 10 Coburg resident received some one-on-one mentoring at the school by former world champion Barry Michael.

Thirty students were eligible for the award. They all had grade point averages of at least eight, and had represented their sport at state level or higher.

“The quality’s really getting higher and higher and some of our ex-athletes are doing very well, so this is proving to be an excellent pathway,” Carroll said.

THE PRESENTS OF CHRISTMAS

Maribyrnong Leader—13th December 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/the-presents-of-christmas-fbready/>

Children from disadvantaged families in the west will have a present on Christmas morning.

The 20th Man Fund and Le Pine Funeral Services in West Footscray have teamed up to deliver Christmas cheer to homeless and disadvantaged families in the western suburbs.

Locals are invited to donate wrapped Christmas gifts to the 20th Man Fund at Le Pine Funeral Services.

“Without the generosity of this community, these kids would miss out on a present at Christmas,” 20th Man Fund founder Les Twentyman said.

Donate presents to Le Pine Funeral Services, 484 Geelong Rd, West Footscray. Details: 9315 3877.

The 20th Man Fund is also running Cartridges 4 Kids this week with proceeds giving homeless youth the chance to enjoy a Christmas lunch and a present.

Contact Planet Toner on 1800 229 821 or info@planet-toner.com.au to have 10 or more cartridges collected.

DRIVERS CAUGHT IN MARIBYRNONG CRACKDOWN

Maribyrnong Leader—13th December 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/drivers-caught-in-maribyrnong-crackdown/>

Police caught 19 illegal drivers and 55 unregistered cars after a blitz in Maribyrnong.

The operation, using automatic number plate recognition, ran from Thursday until Saturday and police detected almost 80 road offences.

Some of the offenders caught include:

A 20-year-old Brunswick man allegedly caught driving an unregistered car with a suspended license and was later arrested for evading police, refusing to state his name and address to police and resisting arrest.

A 17-year-old Fitzroy North boy was allegedly caught driving while unlicensed in an unregistered car with false registration plates.

A 24-year-old Point Cook man had his car impounded after he was allegedly caught driving while suspended.

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A man and a woman were allegedly caught driving while breaching their interlock conditions and will receive a summons at a later date.

As part of the operation, police checked 303 drivers and did 303 breath tests.

Police found 19 unlicensed, suspended or disqualified drivers, 55 unregistered cars, and issued a penalty notice to a learner for not having an accompanying driver and failing to display his L-plates.

NEW MAYOR, NEW POOL?

Maribyrnong Star—13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/326/story/146029.html>

Councillor John Cumming has become the new mayor of Maribyrnong, replacing Cr Sarah Carter at a meeting last Wednesday.

The area's councillors voted Mr Cumming, the Saltwater Ward representative, into the position last week, after he was the only nominee for the role.

Cr Martin Zakharov and Cr Dina Lynch were absent from the meeting, so did not vote on the decision.

In addition, Cr Michael Clarke, a former mayor himself, was voted in as Maribyrnong's new deputy mayor.

After he was named mayor, Cr Cumming spoke to Star and said there could be a potential major sporting development in Maribyrnong during his term as mayor.

"There's the real possibility of a second swimming pool," he said.

Cr Cumming said the new pool could be located in the "southern part of the municipality".

Presently, the municipality has three pools, all located at the Maribyrnong Aquatic Centre.

The new mayor also spoke passionately about sensible development and protecting Maribyrnong's heritage, but said he could not choose a top priority for his mayoral term.

"I think there's no number one thing, it's a question of progression," he said.

"Before I got elected, I wanted more open space in the CBD, and now we have a reserve and park in planning, so it's nice to have an outcome, something is actually happening."

Cr Cumming said his biggest challenge as mayor would be "getting the social planning right" such as deciding where the new parks, libraries and gymnasiums should be located.

Cr Cumming also said he was looking forward to "meeting interesting people" during his upcoming time as Mayor, and thanked the other Maribyrnong councillors for electing him to the position.

"What I would say is, it's probably the last thing I expected," he said.

"Sincerely, when you become a councillor, mayoralty's the last thing you expect."

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NEW MAYOR FOR MARIBYRNONG GROWTH

Maribyrnong Leader—13th December 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/master-plan-for-maribyrnong-growth-fbready/>

Maribyrnong's future is upwards ... and upwards, according to new mayor John Cumming.

Cr Cumming was voted in unanimously by the five councillors present at a special council meeting last week.

Councillors Martin Zakharov and Dina Lynch were absent for the vote.

Speaking the day after, Cr Cumming, 49, said he had absolute confidence in all the Maribyrnong councillors, particularly his deputy, Michael Clarke.

Cr Cumming said his priorities would be to help enact the council's master plan for Footscray and the development of the surrounds, while ensuring there was a "balanced life" in the area.

He acknowledged that with anticipated growth Maribyrnong would soon have the second-highest skyline outside the Melbourne CBD.

He said infrastructure and facilities needed to keep ahead in readiness for the inevitable influx of new residents to the city.

"They're designating now a park in Paisley St, not after development but before," Cr Cumming said.

"Council's role is ensuring we don't just have a lot of people living here, (but) we have a lot of people who enjoy living here."

The extra contribution of a larger population would help fund better facilities.

"It's going to greatly assist the rate base in the long term," he said

The council would be reviewing recreational spaces in the municipality, with the possibility of building another pool, "hopefully around the Bradmill site", he said.

Cr Cumming said more recreation and entertainment space should be encouraged in Footscray to enhance the growing restaurant precinct.

On public transport, the mayor said he supported the initiatives of the state and federal governments and would strive to keep trucks off residential streets.

Born and raised in the west, in a large Catholic family (including his sister, Cr Catherine Cumming, and former councillor and brother, Danny), Cr Cumming attended Hyde St Primary School in Footscray and then Footscray Technical College.

He spent 20 years with the defence force but is now self-employed, working on building developments including hotel refurbishments.

Deputy mayor Michael Clarke praised the outgoing mayor, Sarah Carter, for her work in forging strong relationships with the State Government.

"It is incumbent on myself and the mayor to continue those relationships ... (and) to make the city of Maribyrnong the place to be," Cr Clarke said.

NO-SHOWS EXPLAIN ACTIONS

Maribyrnong Leader— 13th December 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/no-shows-explain-actions-fbready/>

The meeting to elect Maribyrnong's new mayor on Wednesday was boycotted by two councillors - both citing disappointment with the election process.

Cr Dina Lynch said her decision not to attend the meeting was a protest at being locked out of prior negotiations on the mayoral candidates.

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"I understand the Labor councillors control the numbers and ... can do deals behind closed doors but I think the community deserves better transparency," Cr Lynch said.

"If I turned up I would have had to vote, so the best way of making a protest, was not to show up."

Cr Zakharov, who until days prior to the election had been expecting support as the new mayor, said he was disappointed with the outcome.

"Obviously there were big changes to what was expected to happen," Cr Zakharov said.

The Sheoak ward councillor said he stayed away from the meeting "on the principal on the way the decision had gone" but also because he had pressing family matters at home.

"Personally I didn't think I could support John Cumming at the meeting," he said.

But looking forward Cr Zakharov said he was happy to go with the majority of the council's decision.

"I intend to work constructively with the mayor as I have previously."

Cr Zakharov said he could "only guess" as to reasons why support for his candidacy had been withdrawn.

MARIBYRNONG MP BILL SHORTEN ENTERS FEDERAL CABINET

Maribyrnong Leader— 12th December 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/local-mp-enters-fed-cabinet/>

Maribyrnong federal Labor MP Bill Shorten has officially been confirmed as the new federal industrial relations minister.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard made the announcement at press conference this afternoon.

Mr Shorten has been the Member for Maribyrnong since the 2007 election.

The ministerial role is a major step up for the ambitious MP, who was previously Assistant Treasurer.

He is also Minister for Financial Services and Superannuation in the new cabinet.

Before entering politics, Mr Shorten was national secretary of the Australian Workers' Union from 2001 to 2007 and state secretary of the Victorian branch from 1997 to 2006.

Ms Gillard said she had asked Mr Shorten to "broaden the description and thinking" about workplace relations and to "deepen the understanding" amongst the Australian population about the importance of the government's fair work agenda.

There are now four federal cabinet ministers whose electorates are in Melbourne's west or north-west suburbs, including Prime Minister Gillard (Lalor), the newly elevated Attorney-General Nicola Roxon (Gellibrand), Brendan O'Connor (Gorton) and Mr Shorten.

Stephen Conroy, Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, also lives in Williamstown.

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The Maribyrnong electorate includes Aberfeldie, Airport West, Avondale Heights, Braybrook, Essendon, Essendon North, Essendon West, Kealba, Keilor East, Maidstone (part), Maribyrnong, Moonee Ponds, Niddrie, St Albans, Sunshine North and Strathmore (part).

MELTON

MELTON JOB SEEKERS ARE GROWING WITH THE FLOW

Melton Leader—16th December 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/melton-job-seekers-are-growing-with-the-flow/>

A group of hard-working job seekers have rolled up their sleeves to help improve the Melton Botanic Gardens.

As part of Central Victorian Group Training's work-experience program, nine people looking for work put their skills to use, helping out at the garden two days a week for the past six months.

The program wound-up last month after days of mulching, planting, weeding, fencing and revegetation.

Two of the helpers have since found permanent work.

Friends of the Melton Botanic Garden committee member Jill Bentley said she hoped a similar program could run again next year.

"They (the job seekers) were marvellous," she said. "They have been such a great help."

LEADING FROM THE FRONT IN MOORABOOL

Melton Leader—16th December 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/leading-from-the-front-in-moorabool/>

Re-elected Moorabool Mayor Pat Griffin will not be resting on his laurels next year, saying 2012 will be a year of action.

As revealed in the Leader, Cr Griffin was elected Mayor last week after being the only nominee for the top job.

With 12 months' experience under his belt, Cr Griffin said he felt settled in the role, confident, and ready for action.

"This is the last year for this council before the 2012 elections and I'll be ensuring progress continues," he said.

The council's top priorities, Cr Griffin said, would be finalising the Bacchus Marsh Indoor Aquatic Centre, reducing risks of over-development and creating a vision for Ballan.

"Development plans for the future need to be put in place to reduce the risks of over-development and a vision for Ballan needs to be consolidated this term," he said.

Better advocacy on behalf of the shire and improved community consultation were also top priorities for the Mayor.

"The Government now knows who we are and where we are," he said. "Previously ministers were driving through our shire, but we need to get them to stop here."

In hindsight, Cr Griffin admitted some things this year could have been handled differently, including getting an immediate outcome for the proposed Woolpack Rd extension rather than the present uncertainty.

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"There may have been better ways to approach this issue which would have seen it resolved earlier," he said.

COME CLEAN ON MELTON CLEANING CONTRACT

Melton Leader—15th December 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/come-clean-on-melton-cleaning-contract/>

Complaints have been made to the Municipal Inspector over the awarding of a \$1 million Melton Council cleaning contract.

Elite Property Care Pty Ltd, which Leader understands provided one of the most expensive quotes of the nine companies to tender was last month awarded the two-year contract to clean 46 council facilities.

Elite Property Care's tender was believed to be more than \$100,000 more than some of the other tender companies, leading to several complaints to the Municipal Inspector.

The Brunswick East-based company takes over from GJK Cleaning Services, which held council cleaning contracts for the past six years.

During a 2009 tender process, Elite was one of 10 companies to tender for a Caroline Springs contract.

It was the highest-ranked tender, asking \$387,398.37 for the job.

GJK Cleaning Services secured that contract for \$224,938.18.

Melton Mayor Justin Mammarella said that he could not discuss why Elite Property Care had been awarded the contract, as it had been decided on during confidential business.

Elite Property Care, which has three directors listed - Mill Park pair Elizabeth and Tom Vasilevski and Brunswick West man Nick Markovski, was unavailable for

comment. A spokeswoman for Victoria's Chief Municipal Inspector, David Wolf, would not confirm or deny that an investigation had been launched.

PROSPEROUS NEW YEAR IN MELTON PROPERTY

Melton Leader—15th December 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/prosperous-new-year-in-melton-property/>

The Melton property market will be swamped by out-of-town investors next year, a leading property director says.

Hockingstuart director Julian Conte, who has recently opened an office in Melton due to overwhelming demand, says it will be the year inner-city investors make the move into the town.

"I think in 2012 we will have more interest from out-of-area purchasers," he said.

"One of the main reasons we brought the Hockingstuart brand to Melton is that we received continued interest from our inner city and bayside offices for property in Melton.

"Melton is a very exciting place to live and invest in ... I can't wait to see it flourish.

"As Melton is developing, more and more houses are being built, so there are a lot of properties available in the market.

"At the same time I believe this will move to a sellers' market in 2012, given interest rates have just dropped again and more buyers are seeing the benefits of purchasing property in the west."

Mr Conte said affordability for first home buyers made Melton a property hotspot.

"They are coming from the more expensive suburbs where they are renting and can see the great value for money that Melton has to offer," he said.

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It was a “young and upcoming area” and he expected the rental market to boom too.

“Given the affordability of the rental prices and the boom of the suburb, with the infrastructure development, including a train line, we expect demand to match this supply,” he said.

MELTON SHIRE THIEVES PUT IN PICTURE

Melton Leader–15th December 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/melton-shire-thieves-put-in-picture/>

A big brother security system is leaving Melton Shire burglars with nowhere to hide.

In a Victorian first, state-of-the-art iDetect cameras are being rolled out across housing developments in a crackdown on construction site robberies.

Police are hoping the 24-hour iDetect system will deter would-be thieves.

The cameras are already used at building sites in Caroline Springs, Taylors Hill and Melton West, and will soon be installed at Atherstone.

Perched on 4m-high red poles, the cameras are fitted at the front and rear of construction sites. Special sensors send recordings to a 24-hour manned video control room.

Lights and sirens are also triggered to warn off intruders.

Management and Monitoring Systems Australia marketing and development manager Jaye Macumber said most movement in the sensors’ line of sight, including animals, would trigger the recording, but the control room would only respond to an actual threat.

He said two arrests had already been made from the units’ footage.

“We’ve got hundreds of units out and about throughout Victoria and the cost to the builder has decreased a lot,” Mr Macumber said.

“In some cases, they’ve gone from say \$10,000 a month in thefts down to maybe \$400 or \$500 a month.”

Nostra Homes director Anthony Caruana, who has been using the system for two months, said it was “worth every cent”.

“We had two or three break-ins over the last few months, but since we’ve had the iDetect system there hasn’t been a single break-in,” he said.

And the system is not limited to protecting construction sites - it’s also being used to monitor a skate park in Doreen and a playground susceptible to vandalism in Sunshine West.

TIME FOR MELTON SHIRE KIDS TO GET A MOVE ON

Melton Leader–14th December 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/time-for-melton-shire-kids-to-get-a-move-on/>

A Melton Council’s Huff ‘N’ Puff program and Multi-Sports Days have combined to become Get Activated, giving youngsters the change to get out, about and active this summer.

The new program caters for children up to 12 years old, and offers activities that include Aussie rules football, cricket, tennis, hockey, soccer, lawn bowls and dancing.

Four Get Activated events will be held during the holidays - January 16 (6-8pm) at Diggers Rest Recreation Reserve; January 23 (6-8pm) at Ian Cowie Reserve, Rockbank; January 18 (10am-noon) at Caroline Springs Leisure Centre and January 25 (10am-noon) at Melton Indoor Recreation Centre.

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The cost is \$3 a child.

To register, visit melton.vic.gov.au/getactivated

Meanwhile, new healthy eating and exercise programs will be developed in the shire after it received a \$566,000 Federal Government grant.

The funding will contribute to a range of programs, including nutrition sessions focusing on people over 50, Life Long Cooking, the Melton Walkers Program, Shire Cycle, On Ya Bike and the development of an Active Melton webpage.

NEW MELTON SHIRE GROUP REJECTS CLAIMS OF POLITICAL SHENANIGANS

Melton Leader—14th December 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/new-melton-shire-group-rejects-claims-of-political-shenanigans/>

A new Melton Shire residents' group maintains it is independent, despite some office bearers having close ties to serving councillors.

The recently established Cambridge, Coburn and Watts Residents' Association's president, Michael Matalowski, is a childhood friend of Deputy Mayor Broden Borg, while the secretary, Lara Carli, is the sister of Mayor Justin Mammarella.

But Mr Matalowski told JM Talkback's website there were no conflicts of interest.

"Yes ... Lara Carli and I have a connection to serving councillors in the shire. But, as I understand, there are other community groups whom also share similar connections with other councillors and resident groups within our shire," Mr Matalowski wrote.

"But in saying this, this is not illegal, nor is it unethical, if associations act independently from council, as we do.

"Our association is independent from council, the secretary and I do not discuss any meeting issues with the Mayor, Deputy Mayor or any other councillor, or anyone else who is not on the executive for that matter."

Mr Matalowski also said the group did not condone antisocial behaviour at its meetings, a reference to last month's association meeting, at which the Leader revealed Cr Borg and a resident were threatened by another resident.

The meeting had to be adjourned because of the disturbance.

"We have continued to consecutively open our meetings, as we will continue to do, despite the controversy and at times bullying tactics that have been displayed by minority groups within the shire," Mr Matalowski said.

"I would like to ... reaffirm to the community that our group is a safe place, and a place that residents can voice their concerns without any fear of intimidation.

"We are taking the necessary steps to ensure that our meetings are open to all whom endeavour to make a positive contribution to the community."

The group held its December meeting last night (Tuesday) at the Caroline Springs Library and Civic Centre.

MELTON ROAD TO WRECK 'N' RUIN

Melton Leader—14th December 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/melton-road-to-wreck-n-ruin/>

One of Melton shire's most dangerous roads is cracking up, leaving motorists to dice with death this festive season.

Large potholes, loose gravel and warped edges have appeared on a notorious stretch of the Diggers Rest-Coimadai Rd at Toolern Vale.

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Despite 13 deaths on the road since 1987, and numerous injuries, VicRoads say it will take until the end of next month to fix.

Leader has received several complaints about the condition of the road from the Coburns Rd intersection to the roundabout at Gisborne-Melton Rd.

VicRoads patched that section of road earlier this year, but the defects have reappeared.

Warning signs have been installed alerting motorists to the perils.

VicRoads' northwest metropolitan regional director Nial Finegan said improvements to the road were made in October.

"VicRoads manages maintenance works along Diggers Rest-Coimadai Rd in accordance with VicRoads' Road Management Plan," he said. "Potholes identified during defect inspections in October were filled.

"Some sections of the road that required asphalt patching and shoulder works are programmed for completion by the end of January 2012."

Angry Melton state Labor MP Don Nardella has written to VicRoads urging it to repair the killer road.

"I ask that these potholes be repaired at the earliest possible time to ensure the safety of motorists and pedestrians over Christmas," Mr Nardella said.

"I urge motorists to phone either VicRoads on 13 11 70, or their local shire to let them know of road hazards so they can be dealt with quickly."

There have long been concerns about the road's surface and safety.

Earlier this year Leader reported that deep dips and potholes had reappeared on the Diggers Rest-Coimadai Rd Bridge, where eight people have died since 1980.

The bridge underwent an extensive \$2.1 million upgrade in 2009 including road widening, sealed shoulders and safety barriers.

DISABILITY SCHEME RAISES JOB HOPES

Melton Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/disability-scheme-raises-job-hopes/2391048.aspx>

A proposed disability insurance scheme will increase job prospects and quality of life for disabled people in Melton and Moorabool, according to a local disability services group.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) will reform the funding and delivery of disability services in Australia, placing them on a similar level to Medicare.

In July, a Productivity Commission report found the current system was "inequitable, underfunded, fragmented and inefficient" and gave people with a disability few choices.

Merrimu Services client Sally Heggarton is chairing focus groups, run through the Bacchus Marsh centre, to discuss the difficulties of living with a disability.

The 43-year old Melton resident said the focus groups, which often included local MPs like Don Nardella and Catherine King, were important to keep the NDIS and funding requirements on the agenda.

"Training and employment is important to me, I want to see changes there," Ms Heggarton said.

"There are no buses between Melton and Bacchus Marsh. You can get taxi cards, but it's expensive. It's hard if we want to do training in Bacchus Marsh.

"The scheme might help me get a job and help with transport."

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Merrimu's Bacchus Marsh co-ordinator, Mandy Littlehales, said the scheme was "fantastic and life-changing".

"I think they're right in saying it will be as big as Medicare."

Ms Littlehales said the NDIS would mean groups like Merrimu could send staff out one-on-one to support clients in getting training, going to the gym or applying for jobs.

"We'll be more community based," she said.

"The centre will be the hub and disabled people and workers will be out and about, and they will be covered by insurance."

A PricewaterhouseCoopers report last month found disabled Australians have the worst quality of life in the developed world, with their employment prospects next to zero.

It revealed 39.8 per cent of disabled people were employed compared to 79.4 per cent of people without a disability.

NDIS state co-ordinator James O'Brien said state-based disability services were underfunded and many people were not getting the services they needed.

"There are 3000 people on a list in Victoria for access to accommodation and these lists will grow."

An extra \$6.3 billion per year would be needed by 2018 to implement the NDIS.

CR GRIFFIN KEEPS THE MAYORAL ROBES

Melton Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/cr-griffin-keeps-the-mayoral-robles/2391060.aspx>

Pat Griffin has vowed to continue advocating for key local projects after being re-elected mayor.

Cr Griffin was unanimously returned to the position by his six fellow councillors on December 5.

It will be his second consecutive term in the role, which he'll continue in until the council elections in October next year.

Cr Griffin said he hadn't been certain whether he'd run for mayor again but was looking forward to leading the council over the next 11 months.

"I'm very honoured and I'm glad my colleagues have put their trust in me," he said.

"We've got our key projects we want to progress, like the aquatic centre, schools, roads and the Ballan structure plan.

"We really need to progress our development plans for smaller towns, to look at the infrastructure out there."

Cr Griffin has campaigned for a broad range of issues and developments over the past two years.

But he has been criticised for council-backed plans to redevelop Bacchus Marsh's Avenue of Honour, including the removal of nine brass-plated memorial elm trees and the construction of a roundabout at the Woolpack Road intersection.

Cr Griffin said he was looking forward to Planning Minister Matthew Guy finally making a decision and "it all being over".

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A public announcement has been expected for weeks now.

Four of Cr Griffin's fellow councillors have served in the top job. Pat Toohey in 2009-10, Michael Tudball (2008-09) and Allan Comrie (2002-03) served one term each, while Tom Sullivan served two (1997-99).

GARDENS BLOOMIN' AS WATER RESTRICTIONS EASE

Melton Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/gardens-bloomin-as-water-restrictions-ease/2391062.aspx>

Moorabool green thumbs and car enthusiasts are breathing a sigh of relief with water restrictions having returned to a flexible stage one this month.

Trigger nozzles can be used to water gardens and wash vehicles for the first time in more than five years.

State Water Minister Peter Walsh said periods of steady rain meant dams and water supplies were significantly higher.

He said residents had shown themselves to be water wise, with residential use at a record low.

Consumption averaged 146 litres per person per day in 2010-11.

However, many Moorabool gardens and nurseries will not be greatly affected by the loosening of the restrictions, their owners having set up systems to counter heavier restrictions during drought conditions.

Plants at Blackwood's lush Garden of St Erth were switched from ornamental types to native, which typically survive better in hot, sapping weather.

Manager Anita Fabos said staff had installed rainwater tanks and ripped out all drip irrigation.

"Our own dams and tanks are all full now; the nursery is watered on mains, but we had an exemption. Our gardens are looking spectacular right now."

She said the nursery had already noticed a hike in sales since restrictions were eased.

"I think the stage one restrictions and the green conditions all around have sparked a new interest in gardening and we've been selling lots of ornamentals and lovely, bright flowers."

THE WATER LAWS

Melton Weekly—13th December 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/the-water-laws/2391063.aspx>

Under stage1 water restrictions, residents may:

*Water gardens and lawns using a hose fitted with a trigger nozzle at any time, on any day.

*Water gardens and lawns with a watering system on alternate days between 6-10am and 6-10pm.

*Operate fountains and water features that recirculate water.

*Wash a vehicle at home using a high-pressure cleaning unit or a hand-held hose fitted with a trigger nozzle.

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EMERGENCY CARE ON TAP IN MELTON AND MOORABOOL

Melton Leader—10th December 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/emergency-care-on-tap-in-melton-and-moorabool/>

Demand for emergency health care and surgery in Melton and Moorabool is on the rise.

Between Melton Health and Bacchus Marsh and Melton Regional Hospital, more than 20,000 people seek urgent care each year.

Deputy chief executive officer David Grace said emergency care numbers were growing by 10 per cent each year.

“People present for a range of things, from chest pains to broken limbs and lacerations. Every day is different,” Mr Grace said.

“People don’t realise how valuable a service like this is until they need it, so it is good to know it’s available locally.”

As the population expanded, Mr Grace said emergency services would need to follow suit, but discounted any immediate plans to establish an extra facility.

“There is a doctor located in Bacchus Marsh 24 hours a day, seven days a week, and, in Melton, there is a doctor from 9am to 10.30pm every day,” he said.

In theatre, more than 3500 operations are conducted at Bacchus Marsh and Melton Regional Hospital each year.

Mr Grace said with two theatres and 25 surgeons visiting on a regular basis, the range of surgery options was varied.

“The types of surgeries include elective surgery, emergency caesareans, orthodontic, ear nose and throat, vascular, urology and gynaecology, to name a few,” he said.

Advances in medical technology also meant day surgery was a common practice.

“Most of the time people who have surgery can go home on the same day,” Mr Grace said.

He said an in-home nurse check-in was provided to all patients after surgery.

RIVERSIDE BLOCKS SNAPPED UP

Melton Leader—9th December 2011

<http://whittlesea-leader.whereilive.com.au/property/story/riverside-blocks-snapped-up/>

A Melton South riverside development has been ticking all the boxes for house hunters looking for a fresh water escape from city life.

Waterford, built on the banks of the Werribee River on the historic Exford farm and homestead, is believed to be the only river-based development in Melbourne offering 2.5km of water frontage.

Developed by Land Source Australia, the master-planned community is 5km south of Melton and less than 50km from Melbourne’s CBD.

It is due for completion in 2020, when it is expected to house more than 7000 residents.

The first three stages sold out in under a month, with stage two, the first released, selling in one hour.

Sanjeev Kumar said he and his wife Rajni Bala jumped at the opportunity to buy into a riverside community, which was similar to how they had lived in India before moving to Australia in 2002.

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"In India, I lived in the countryside and had a river front and I wanted to live in that environment again but still have the convenience of the city close by," Mr Kumar said.

"I wanted the greenery, the waterfront and the big open spaces and we found that at Waterford."

When completed, the estate is expected to feature a community centre, park with native vegetation, picnic facilities, bicycle and walking trails and playing areas for the children.

The estate's upcoming Southside release will feature 70 blocks averaging about 500sq m and priced from \$135,000.

The master-planned Waterford community will also have a school, playing fields, a \$15 million recreational centre and shopping centre with supermarket and specialty retailers.

The estate is 1.9km from the nearest train station, with the trip into Melbourne's CBD taking about 30 minutes.

MOONEE VALLEY

VALLEY RESIDENTS ON FIRE ALERT

Moonee Valley Weekly– 13th December 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/valley-residents-on-fire-alert/2391205.aspx>

Residential streets across Moonee Valley have been named in a list of urban areas at risk of bushfire this season.

A new risk assessment from the Metropolitan Fire Brigade says streets bordering open parkland in Niddrie, Strathmore and Avondale Heights could face bush or grass blazes, as fears mount the upcoming fire season could be the worst in years.

Firefighters from the Keilor Fire Brigade will next week issue safety brochures to homes in more than 30 streets in Moonee Valley, identified as among 36,000 at-risk houses in metropolitan Melbourne.

MFB assistant chief fire officer Rob Taylor said homes most at risk were those backing onto bush, grassland, reserves, scrub, paddocks or parks.

He said the number of streets deemed at-risk across urban municipalities like Moonee Valley, Hume and Brimbank could come as a surprise to residents.

"You don't normally think of Melbourne as being susceptible to bushfires but we have a lot of parkland right up to the CBD," he said.

"Particularly new residents to these outer urban areas might not realise that grass and scrub growing up to their back fence are potential fire risk for them and their homes on hot, dry days."

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Firefighters feared this year's bushfire season could be severe, Mr Taylor said, following forecasts of above-average heat waves and heavy rainfall.

"The longer it keeps wet and warm, the more growth we'll have, but when it stops, it can all quickly dry out and we've potentially got a larger risk on our hands," he said.

The MFB fire-safety brochure will inform residents of how they can safeguard their homes around high grasslands, Mr Taylor said. "Keep your gutters clean, keep your grass low, keep vegetation as wet as you can, and if you've got grass leading up to your back fence, make sure it's at least three metres back," he said.

"Have a plan - it doesn't have to be as complicated as the things you'd need in regional Victoria, but if you're backing onto those areas, you need to have it clear in your mind if you're going to stay, or if on a code-red day you say, 'I'm going to a shopping mall today'."

HO, HO, HOE-IN

Moonee Valley Weekly— 13th December 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/ho-ho-hoein/2391207.aspx>

Outreach organiser Jim Mangioros will be firing up the barbecue and dishing out early Christmas presents on Friday when he hosts a lunch for Moonee Valley residents doing it tough.

Mr Mangioros says a professional chef will be searing the meat and making desserts to feed up to 120 people at an end-of-year wind-up for Outreach. Volunteers in the program have been running a monthly soup kitchen for the growing number of people struggling in the area.

"There are so many kids from homes with bugger-all money to feed themselves and pay bills. I've already had six phone calls from parents asking to put their kids' name down for a gift on Friday because they can't afford a \$20 Christmas present."

The Christmas feast is at Bowes Avenue Community Centre, Airport West, at noon on Friday. Details: 0433302790.

TROUBLED WATERS FOR MARIBYRNONG RIVER BRIDGE

Moonee Valley Weekly— 13th December 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/troubled-waters-for-maribyrnong-river-bridge/2391203.aspx>

A proposed bridge crossing the Maribyrnong River would lead to a traffic surge in peaceful Moonee Valley suburbs, worried residents and councillors claim.

Neighbouring Maribyrnong Council wants to extend Ashley Street with a bridge joining Avondale Heights and Braybrook, under its new long-term transport strategy.

But Moonee Valley councillors launched a scathing attack on the plans at a recent planning meeting with resounding cries to object to any vehicle crossing.

Rose Hill Ward councillor Ange Kenos led the charge, saying a bridge would extend traffic "rat-runs" through Avondale Heights and East Keilor side streets.

He said new housing developments in Maribyrnong would bring a population boom and increased traffic congestion that would spill over into Moonee Valley.

"It's also going to be heavy-duty, noisy trucks that have plagued Footscray, Seddon and Yarraville for years that will be coming into our municipality, roaring past people's homes to avoid traffic delays," he said.

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Cr Kenos further argued that another vehicle bridge crossing the Maribyrnong would have a negative impact on the environment. "It would destroy the green wedge that protects wallabies, sea eagles and other flora and fauna."

Avondale Heights and East Keilor Residents' Association president Frank Di Blasi said the community would fight any plans to build another bridge.

"What we have is enough, anything else would create incredible traffic issues and Avondale Heights would become unliveable," he said.

Mr Di Blasi said he was organising a petition against any new bridge, which he would send to Niddrie MP Rob Hulls to be tabled in Parliament.

Moonee Valley Council endorsed other recommendations in Maribyrnong's new transport strategy, including the extension of the Route 82 tram into Avondale Heights and a railway link to Melbourne Airport via Keilor East and Airport West.

Cr Paul Giuliano said public transport was "virtually non-existent" in East Keilor, Avondale Heights and Airport West.

City of Maribyrnong mayor Cr John Cumming said: "The VicRoads proposal for an Ashley Street extension is one of many options council is looking at to improve accessibility in that area and welcomes feedback from all stakeholders as part of the consultation."

BIG RISE IN SMALLER DWELLINGS

Moonee Valley Leader – 12th December 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/property/story/big-rise-in-smaller-dwellings/>

More people are downsizing their homes in Melbourne's inner suburbs, new data shows.

Planning approvals for medium-density properties, which include units, townhouses and semi-detached houses, have jumped significantly in the past five years, particularly in the northern and western suburbs.

In western Melbourne, 44 per cent of new housing approvals were for medium-density properties.

This is up from 27 per cent five years ago.

Moreland, which borders Moonee Valley, had one of the sharpest increases in medium-density living.

Its proportion of medium-density approvals hit 72 per cent, up from 33 per cent.

That data, published in the BankWest Housing Density Report 2011, supports the concerns of many Moonee Valley residents who are locked in neighbourhood planning battles relating to overdevelopment.

The report relied on examining trends in dwelling approvals, along with census data on the housing stock by type of dwelling.

BankWest retail chief executive Vittoria Shott said first-home buyers and a change in lifestyle were behind the demand.

"What we are seeing is Victorians choosing different types of housing to suit our modern lifestyle," Ms Shott said.

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“Factoring in affordability, a tight rental market and lifestyle choices, it is not surprising to see a trend towards higher-density housing.”

There were 21,235 medium-density dwelling approvals in Victoria in the past year.

The number of approvals was down 7 per cent over the previous year, but 164 per cent higher than five years ago.

POOL FENCE WARNING

Moonee Valley Leader– 12th December 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/pool-fence-warning/>

Pool and spa owners have been reminded to stay aware of safety requirements to prevent backyard drownings.

Moonee Valley Mayor Jim Cusack, speaking as part of a council awareness campaign, said barriers must be installed for pools with a water capacity of 30cm or more.

“Pools and spas are for fun people of all ages during warm summer days, and most of all, children love the water,” Cr Cusack said.

“However, owning a pool or spa brings with it legal responsibilities to ensure that the required safety standards are met.”

Safety barriers include fences, walls, gates, locks, latches, bolts and fly screens and must be unable to be climbed.

Life Saving Victoria data showed there were no drownings in Moonee Valley in the 2010-11 year.

There was one drowning the previous year.

Life Saving Victoria manager of research and injury prevention Dr Bernadette Matthews said it was also important to think about water safety when going away for summer holidays. For more water safety tips, visit watersafety.vic.gov.au

COOKING TIME

Moonee Valley Leader– 12th December 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/cooking-time/>

People living in Flemington’s high-rise housing commission flats face another long, hot summer without adequate cooling.

Tenants have resorted to sleeping in nearby Debney Park in the past to escape the heat in their flats. One community health worker said temperatures can reach up to 50 degrees in the flats on the worst summer days.

Flemington Tenants Association president Faith Griffiths (pictured) said the situation had not changed since last summer.

Residents had previously asked for air conditioners to be installed, but Ms Griffiths said tenants would have trouble paying the high energy bills.

“The majority of us are here because we can’t afford things like that,” Ms Griffiths said.

“If you’re getting high bills and you can’t afford to pay them, they will eventually cut power off.”

Department of Human Services spokesman Mike Griffin said air-conditioning was provided for tenants with medical conditions. Energy concessions were also available for low-income residents.

However, as with private landlords, the government is not required by law to provide air-conditioning to public housing tenants.

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“At the Flemington housing estate, all high-rise flats undergoing upgrade work are being modified to allow tenants to supply and fit their own air-conditioning systems,” Mr Griffin said.

Doutta Galla Health Services and Flemington Neighbourhood Renewal joined forces to run a 12-month pilot project last summer that offered tenants tips on how to stay cool.

Similar heat alerts and advice will be provided again this summer.

Doutta Galla project team leader Tayfun Pelen said the health service ran information sessions in various languages, because there was still a lack of understanding about managing the heat.

“You have 200-odd flats in a building facing the sun and after a while it becomes an oven,” Mr Pelen said. “It can be quite devastating for some families to be stuck in a little unit when it’s 40 degrees outside and it can reach 50 degrees inside.”

Moonee Valley Mayor Jim Cusack said the council was working to make Debney Park a more attractive place for families to cool off on warm nights. The council was also encouraging vulnerable people such as the elderly to submit their names to a community safety register, he said.

One of the four Flemington high-rise towers and a separate elderly persons’ high-rise tower includes an air-conditioned community room.

Housing Minister Wendy Lovell said the government was developing a new housing framework that would look at all policies surrounding public housing. A discussion paper would be released in early 2012. Ms Lovell encouraged input from the community.

FOOTY CLUB COLLECTS GIFTS FOR SALVOS

Moonee Valley Leader– 12th December 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/footy-club-collects-gifts-for-salvos/>

A team of footballers and supporters are doing their festive best to help Moonee Valley residents in need.

Members of the Moonee Valley Football Club are collecting food, toys and blankets for the Salvation Army Christmas Appeal.

Club sponsorship manager Shannon West said they would be taking the donations to the Moonee Ponds Salvation Army after the club’s final training session for 2011.

“As a football club we rely heavily on the community to support us during the year with attendance and also a lot of our junior players come from the community,” Mr West said.

The Salvation Army relies on donations to its Christmas Appeal to assist 100,000 people who come to them for help over the Christmas period.

Donations of non-perishable food can be made at the club’s training sessions at Ormond Park. Or contact Mr West on 0409 135 643 to arrange a time to drop-off donations.

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GET ON YOUR BIKES

Moonee Valley Leader– 12th December 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/get-on-your-bikes/>

More bike lanes, better footpaths and upgrades to make roundabouts cycle friendly are part of a \$15 million plan to get residents walking and riding.

A 10-year walking and cycling strategy was endorsed at a Moonee Valley Council meeting last week as part of a push to promote healthy lifestyles and provide more travel options for commuters. Key ideas include:

Enhancing the Moonee Ponds Creek trail shared path.

Building a route along the Craigieburn rail corridor.

Filling in missing links in walking and cycling networks.

Lowering speed limits to reduce cycling accidents.

Mayor Jim Cusack said the council had a focus on encouraging walking and riding for short trips, instead of using the car.

Studies have shown the percentage of walkers and riders in Moonee Valley is low compared with neighbouring Moreland and Maribyrnong.

Mike and Louis Adams, who use Travancore Park to walk their dogs, said walkers and cyclists often clashed when sharing the path.

Mrs Adams said many walkers were concerned with the speed of cyclists and supported more rider/walker awareness.

One measure the council has already taken requires dogs to be on a leash while being walked on the footpath.

Mrs Adams hoped the council would look at speed humps for riders or widening the path.

Cr Ange Kenos said the strategy was “ageless and genderless” and urged residents to walk and ride.

Public consultation for the draft strategy will take place in February.

SAFETY ON THE LINE

Moonee Valley Leader– 12th December 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/safety-on-the-line/>

Mobile phone use tops the list of local driving offences detected in the early stage of a continuing police blitz.

Police had nabbed 22 motorists using their phones in Moonee Valley after only 18 days into Operation RAID, which is part of a statewide road safety campaign aimed at reducing the road toll.

Faulkner Highway Patrol Acting Sergeant Jason Lane said the results showed drivers were not listening.

“People are not heeding the warning that police are giving out and people are getting caught,” Sgt Lane said.

“People are just not obeying the laws. It would make our jobs a bit easier (if they did) so we don’t have to go out to accidents.”

Sgt Lane said drivers needed to remember they must pull over to use their phones.

Almost 400,000 motorists were breath-tested across the state in the first 18 days of the operation.

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In that period, police breath-tested 1232 drivers on Moonee Valley roads and also detected:

Eight drink-drivers;

Seven disqualified drivers;

Ten unlicensed drivers; and

Two seatbelt offences.

Operation RAID is the first phase of the 52-day road enforcement campaign Summer Stay.

FIRE'S \$750,000 BILL

Moonee Valley Weekly– 12th December 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/fires-750-000-bill/>

Niddrie traders are hoping for business as normal after a fire burned out a neighbouring shop last week.

The blaze tore through Supa Bargains on Keilor Rd about 5.30pm last Monday. Two people in the store escaped unharmed but the damage was estimated at \$750,000.

Keilor Rd centre manager Ray Jacobs said the fire had affected several of the surrounding shops along the strip.

"It's probably the worst time ever (for this to happen). Trade depends on Christmas," Mr Jacobs said.

"But everybody is relieved that nobody actually got hurt."

Tender Cut Quality Meats owner Le Cuong said his butcher's shop next to the burnt store had ceiling water damage. Stock had to be thrown out after the power was cut.

Mr Cuong said he hoped to reopen his store this week.

The electoral office of Niddrie state Labor MP Rob Hulls was also closed after it suffered smoke damage and a power cut.

The Department of Parliamentary Services said it would complete a safety assessment of the electoral office.

The shopping centre car park was reopened last Wednesday.

Moonee Valley CIU detective Sen-Constable Gerard Walsh said it could take until this week before the burnt shop was deemed safe enough to investigate.

MFB acting assistant chief officer Ken Brown said the fire was intense when crews arrived and it threatened neighbouring businesses.

"I haven't been to a fire in that area of this size," he said, saying fire crews took about 50 minutes to bring the blaze under control.

Ambulance Victoria spokesman James Howe said a woman in her 30s was treated for smoke inhalation and taken to hospital.

Police are seeking witnesses, including anybody near the shop between 4.30-5.30pm. Contact Moonee Ponds CIU detective Sen-Constable Andrew Porter on 93735200.

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TUSSLE OVER TRAFFIC

Moonee Valley Leader— 12th December 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/tussle-over-traffic/>

Excess traffic flows from a neighbouring municipality should not become Avondale Heights residents' problem, Moonee Valley councillors say.

The council submitted its review of neighbouring Maribyrnong Council's long-term transport strategy last week, saying it did not support a second bridge link over the Maribyrnong River.

The bridge, which would run from Ashley St in Braybrook to Military Rd in Avondale Heights, is an option being explored by Maribyrnong Council to alleviate heavy traffic near the Highpoint Shopping Centre.

As previously reported by the Leader, Avondale Heights residents are concerned about the amount of congestion the link would bring.

Rose Hill Ward councillor John Sipek said Moonee Valley did not want Maribyrnong's traffic problems.

"If they're going to go ahead and build an influx of massive units, then it's their problem," he said.

"They're anticipating that they're going to create all these extra people in their municipality and then come knocking on our door and asking if we can have their traffic."

But Maribyrnong councillor Dina Lynch said the municipalities should be working together to improve transport. She said the bridge proposal was aimed at reducing traffic around the Highpoint Shopping Centre area on weekends, which would help Moonee Valley residents.

Maribyrnong was not only catering for its residents but bearing the brunt of fast-growing surrounding municipalities such as Wyndham, Brimbank and Melton.

Moonee Valley Council said in its submission that it supported extensions to tram services, including on route 82 into the Maribyrnong defence site and from Highpoint to Sunshine. The feasibility of developing a rail line from Footscray station or Flemington Racecourse to Melbourne Airport should also be explored, the submission said.

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WYNDHAM

SPORTS CENTRE RIGHT ON TRACK IN WERRIBEE

Wyndham Leader– 16th December 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/sports-centre-right-on-track-in-werribee/>

Construction of a new Werribee Sports and Fitness Centre is on track for 2014-15.

Wyndham Council has awarded a \$1.59 million contract to Williams Ross Architects to design the Ballan Rd centre's renovation and extension.

William Ross was among four architect firms shortlisted for the project.

Cr Glenn Goodfellow said the renovation and extension of the centre was "crucial" to the health and wellbeing of Wyndham residents because it had reached capacity.

"We are looking forward to the next stage where ... the first sod is turned," Cr Goodfellow said. "It is a project that is long, long, long overdue."

The council expects a concept design to be completed by February with a town planning permit by May and tender documentation and a cost plan by the end of next year. Construction is due to get under way in 2014-15 with completion expected in 2017-18.

The redevelopment is expected to cost \$47.2 million and \$2.24 million has been allocated in the council's 2011-12 budget.

Williams Ross Architects designed the redevelopment of the Melbourne City Baths, the Clocktower Centre in Moonee Ponds and the Melton police station.

PM SPREADS CHRISTMAS CHEER IN WYNDHAM

Wyndham Leader– 15th December 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/pm-spreads-christmas-cheer-in-wyndham/>

Prime Minister Julia Gillard was at Werribee police station last week to help Wyndham police launch their annual Christmas rally.

Sen-Constable Fiona Reid thanked Wyndham residents who had already delivered many Christmas gifts for disadvantaged children to the station.

"We are getting a lot of gifts for very young children and just ask that if you are still thinking of donating some gifts, could you aim for the early teens?" she said.

"Werribee police will be presenting the gifts to the parents just before Christmas.

"What a lovely thought that on Christmas morning you are responsible for the smiles and happiness of some beautiful little children."

While in town, Ms Gillard also officially opened Arndell Park Community Centre at Truganina with Victorian sport and recreation minister Hugh Delahunty.

The centre has been open since February.

It includes two kindergarten rooms, two maternal health consulting rooms and community meeting rooms.

There is also a sporting pavilion.

"It also provides important services for the elderly and the disabled members of our community," Ms Gillard said.

About 15 jobs were created during the centre's construction and 10 new ongoing jobs since construction finished.

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\$23M CLINIC FOR WERRIBEE CAMPUS

Wyndham Leader– 15th December 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/23m-clinic-for-werribee-campus/>

A new health clinic will be built at Victoria University's Werribee campus, it was announced last week.

The university recently received a \$22.9 million grant for the project, a student-run inter-professional clinic.

Victoria University vice-chancellor Peter Dawkins said the clinic would provide structured opportunities for trainee doctors, nurses, paramedics and other health students.

He said the student-led clinics would be supervised by academics and health professionals and allow students to fine-tune their clinical skills.

"It will deliver innovative curricula changes across the university's health-related awards and enhanced pathways between disciplines," he said.

"These changes will be supported by the introduction of tele-presence delivery technologies whereby clinics and classrooms will be electronically connected.

"The clinic will be accessible to the public, linked to similar existing clinics at St Albans campus and at Footscray at Whitten Oval, and complement existing health care provision by working collaboratively with partners in the western region," he said.

"Victoria University's Werribee campus is located in the City of Wyndham, which has recently experienced large and rapid population growth while western Melbourne is experiencing a serious shortage of health professionals."

AMBO DISPATCH PUTS 'LIVES ON THE LINE'

Wyndham Weekly– 14th December 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/ambo-dispatch-puts-lives-on-the-line/2392604.aspx>

A Wyndham paramedic fears crews travelling long distances to treat patients will one day arrive too late to save someone's life.

The paramedic, who did not want to be named, told the Weekly that crews were concerned about the well-being of patients when there was a shortage of ambulances in the area.

"The old lady lying on the floor with a broken hip or someone having chest pains or a heart attack, the minutes and seconds are vital," they said.

"In the cardiac case, if we get there late and there is no CPR being performed the person might not survive. If we can get there quick our treatment can be lifesaving."

The paramedic's comments follow revelations that Wyndham is being serviced by ambulances from other areas. There was only one ambulance in Wyndham on the night of November 28. There was no Werribee crew because of sick leave, with officers from Laverton having to cover the area with a crew in Point Cook.

The paramedic said ambulance shortages across the state were forcing crews to respond to jobs throughout Melbourne. They said there were times they had been sent to jobs in Dandenong after taking a patient to a city hospital because their ambulance was closest.

"We are regularly sent to the city or Sunshine. It is not unusual for a crew from the city or the other side of town to be dispatched to Wyndham. I've heard of a crew

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from Broadmeadows being dispatched. You are just leapfrogging all over town putting out spot fires."

The paramedic said the heavy workload was taking its toll on crews, who were increasingly working from 5pm-2am before getting a meal break.

The paramedic called on Ambulance Victoria and the state government to fund more ambulances and fix hospital emergency departments to speed up the processing of patients.

Last week, Ambulance Victoria told the Weekly it was progressing with plans to make Hoppers Crossing a 24-hour station to increase services and relieve pressure on paramedics.

GLEN DEVON PRIMARY: MINISTER REJECTS SCHOOL SITE SALE

Wyndham Weekly– 14th December 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/glen-devon-primary-minister-rejects-school-site-sale/2392606.aspx>

The state government has moved to quell rumours that the disused Glen Devon Primary School site will be sold for development.

A fire last month ripped through parts of the Werribee School that has laid dormant for more than a year, raising the ire of residents who have awaited redevelopment of the site.

Tarneit MP Tim Pallas voiced his concerns about a possible government plan to keep the site disused in order for the asset to depreciate in value and become viable for development.

This claim was disputed by Education Minister Martin Dixon in Parliament last week when he insisted plans were under way to establish a community education centre, including an English language school, at the site.

"I am advised that the department has been involved in discussions with Wyndham City Council regarding complementary use of the school buildings to provide a range of education and community services," he said.

"These discussions included Werribee Community and Education Centre having access to and utilising the buildings for appropriate training programs for young people."

Mr Dixon said the department had completed a cost-benefit analysis for retaining the site for educational purposes and was investigating the feasibility of rebuilding the fire-damaged block as part of refurbishment works.

Cr John Menegazzo last week said repeated requests by the council to adequately secure the site had fallen on deaf ears and he renewed calls for a language centre at the site.

Wyndham Community and Education Centre could not be reached for comment.

POINT COOK BUS USERS FUME OVER LONGER TRIP

Wyndham Weekly– 14th December 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/point-cook-bus-users-fume-over-longer-trip/2392608.aspx>

Point Cook residents are angry that changes to bus routes have left them without a direct service to Werribee Plaza.

Changes to route 413 from Laverton to the plaza came into effect on Monday, meaning the bus now terminates at Hoppers Crossing train station.

Passengers wanting to go to the plaza must change to another bus at the station. Regular bus users say this will extend a single-bus, 20-minute trip to a two-bus, 50-minute trip.

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The changes come less than a week after the state government announced public transport fares will increase from January 1, leaving many commuters fuming.

Zone two daily Metcards will rise 8per cent to \$5.40 while zone one and two daily tickets will increase from \$11 to \$11.90. Point Cook's Suzanne Butler said the fare increase was unacceptable, given the poor service.

She said she wouldn't mind paying more if transport was reliable.

Ms Butler said bus timetables did not match up with the arrival of trains at Aircraft and Laverton stations.

"I don't care how much it costs, I will pay to use [public transport] but we don't have the services. I don't particularly like driving my car to the train station but I do it because I can't rely on the bus."

Transport Department spokeswoman Andrea Duckworth said changes were made to some bus routes in Wyndham and Hobsons Bay, including route 413, following community feedback.

She said a review found bus users wanted simpler, more direct connections to train stations.

RISING WYNDHAM BIRTH RATE STRAINS SERVICES

Wyndham Weekly– 14th December 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/rising-wyndham-birth-rate-strains-services/2392613.aspx>

Wyndham Council will lobby state and federal governments for more kindergarten funding after new figures revealed about 60 babies are being born in the municipality every week.

In the year from September 2010, almost nine babies were born daily in Wyndham, an increase of 8per cent on the previous year.

The rise in the number of births is placing strain on the council's children's and family services.

Many parents are complaining they are unable to get their child into the kindergarten of their choice, with some having to travel to other suburbs. In September 2010, the waiting list for first-preference places soared from 12 to 243.

Mayor Kim McAliney said it was likely that birth rates would keep rising, making it vital that governments stepped up to fund more kindergarten services.

"Over the next 10 years it is predicted there will be 45,725 children born to Wyndham parents, equating to a 67per cent increase in our population," she said.

"Forecasts predict that the 0-4 year age group will continue to be the most populous age group in Wyndham over the next 10 years, rising from 16,000 this year to over 23,000 in 2021. Such rapid growth will continue to put a strain on our kindergarten infrastructure and services, particularly in the newer areas of Wyndham."

Point Cook mother Liz Mumby welcomed the call for more kindergarten places, believing the shortage was greater than the council believed.

She has chosen not to apply for council-run kindergartens in Point Cook because she felt there was little chance her daughter would get in.

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MENTORING HELPING MUSLIM YOUTH

Wyndham Weekly– 14th December 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/mentoring-helping-muslim-youth/2392610.aspx>

Young Muslims will team up with positive role models as part of a push for better youth mentoring in Wyndham.

A recent study commissioned by the Victorian Youth Mentoring Alliance found young people in mentoring programs were less likely to use drugs and alcohol and more likely to go to school and have clearer ideas about their future.

Tasnim Sammak, of the Federation of Muslim Students and Youth, said that in the past, young Muslims in the Wyndham area had lacked the opportunity to benefit from such programs. "Most Muslim students come from a background of blue-collar parents and we want to try and expose them to positive role models who are studying at tertiary level or professionals."

The VYMA surveyed 153 young people in mentoring programs across Victoria. It found 87 per cent of respondents felt more confident from being in a mentoring program, 75 per cent said they knew more about education, training and work options available to them and 90 per cent had a more positive view of their future.

VYMA executive officer Sarah Johnson said feedback indicated that young people gained a number of benefits from having a volunteer mentor in their lives.

"The survey confirmed what international research has already found: that youth mentoring is an effective way of providing young people with a supportive and enriching experience."

POINT COOK BICYCLE NETWORK HITS A DEAD END

Wyndham Weekly– 14th December 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/point-cook-bicycle-network-hits-a-dead-end/2392603.aspx>

Wyndham Council is calling on VicRoads to fund more cycling routes in and out of Point Cook.

The council hopes VicRoads will provide money to complete a bike path from Boardwalk Boulevard to Forsyth Road, which currently ends at a bridge across the freeway.

It also wants funding for a path from Sneydes Road at Boardwalk Boulevard to the Princes Highway and another along Skeleton Creek, passing across the freeway. The council says the paths need to be funded because there are no completed cycling routes between Point Cook, Hoppers Crossing and Werribee.

The proposed paths were identified in a priority report prepared by VicRoads and the Transport Department earlier this year.

Truganina ward's Cr Bob Fairclough described the paths as missing cycling links. "It was pleasing to see these Point Cook sites identified in the state's bicycle network plan, however now we need VicRoads to step up and commit to funding these works to create a route for cyclists along our growth corridors.

"Until these bicycle paths are constructed, more people are forced to use Point Cook's already congested road network rather than walking or cycling."

As previously reported by the Weekly, cyclists from Point Cook have urged the council to build a bike path to Werribee so they don't have to ride alongside cars and trucks on Sneydes Road.

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Catherine Ryan wants a second bike path out of Point Cook and a path along Skeleton Creek.

She said Sneydes Road was too dangerous for cyclists because it was used by large vehicles, was the direct path to construction sites and had a narrow bridge.

The council will unveil its new bicycle strategy on Monday which outlines its plans for investing in bicycle infrastructure over the next five years.

FUNDS FINAL BLOCKAGE TO EAST-WEST TUNNEL

Wyndham Weekly– 14th December 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/funds-final-blockage-to-eastwest-tunnel/2392609.aspx>

The Committee for Wyndham has called on Infrastructure Australia to support the creation of an east-west road tunnel.

The state government has applied to the federal government body for \$30million to build an 18-kilometre tunnel to link east and west Melbourne. The tunnel would link the Eastern Freeway, CityLink and the Western Ring Road.

Committee for Wyndham executive director Nik Tsardakis said it was important that an east-west infrastructure connection was funded to cater for population growth in areas like Wyndham.

"Wyndham's current population of 172,000 is projected to grow by 320,000 by 2031," he said.

"The way that growth is occurring and resourced is unsustainable, particularly to roads and public transport, in health, education, leisure and community services, as well as the creation of local jobs."

The committee believes an east-west tunnel would connect with the Regional Rail Link and eventually an outer-metropolitan ring road to improve congestion in the west.

The idea for an outer-metropolitan ring was raised by the Growth Areas Authority last month in its growth corridor plans.

The authority said a ring road from Werribee to Kalkallo would ease pressure on arterial roads already at capacity.

BABY, WE'RE CHOCKERS IN WYNDHAM

Wyndham Leader– 14th December 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/baby-were-chockers-in-wyndham/>

An average of 60 babies a week are being born to Wyndham parents, council figures show.

The city welcomed 3145 babies from September 2010 to August this year, up 8 per cent on the previous year, when 2905 babies were born.

Council forecasts show there will be 45,725 babies born to locals over the next decade. The number of children aged four and under is to rise from more than 16,000 this year to 23,000-plus in 2021.

Wyndham Mayor Kim McAliney said the council had built new kindergartens to cater for demand, but state and federal governments needed to step up and urgently fund more.

A spokeswoman for Children and Early Childhood Development Minister Wendy Lovell said the State Government had in recent years provided six infrastructure grants to establish or expand early childhood services in Wyndham.

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She said applications were now open for \$26 million in capital grants for early childhood infrastructure from the 2011-12 state Budget.

Werribee Mercy Hospital has opened a new maternity services unit to cater for the baby boom.

An expanded special-care nursery for sick and premature newborns opens early next year.

WYNDHAM MIGRANT HUB HOMELESS

Wyndham Leader– 14th December 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/wyndham-migrant-hub-homeless/>

Wyndham's only migrant resource centre will soon be homeless again, less than a year after setting up at charity Mambourin's cafe and sensory gardens in Werribee.

Migrant Hub president Walter Villagonzalo said Mambourin management had told him the hub had until the end of the year to vacate the premises it took over in March.

Mambourin provides employment and services to people with intellectual disabilities.

The hub and Mambourin signed an agreement that the hub would run the cafe and maintain the nearby gardens employing Mambourin clients.

But Mr Villagonzalo said Mambourin failed to deliver a program enabling this to happen.

"How can we deliver benefits for their clients if we do not know their clients or skills?" he said.

"According to the agreement, it is up to Mambourin to design a program and deliver it but they have not done anything."

Hub and cafe volunteer and customer parking was filled with Mambourin buses and a trailer, leading to complaints from a nearby kindergarten when roadside spaces were filled by the cafe's customers.

Mr Villagonzalo said he had no choice but to seek to resolve the matter at the state planning tribunal.

The hub was forced from its previous home in Hoppers Lane when it was demolished for a medical centre.

"We have helped a lot of people who can't access these services anywhere else," he said.

Mambourin Enterprises chief executive Rohan Braddy said the site would be redeveloped as an urgently needed respite centre

"Unfortunately, this means that the gardens will become a construction zone for a period, which means, in the interests of public safety, that we must close them," he said.

The gardens and cafe would reopen under new management.

He said the Migrant Hub's lease was for six months only.

POLICE COP A WHACK

Wyndham Star– 13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/326/story/145936.html>

Residents of the West have less confidence in the services of their police than the rest of the state, according to a new survey.

The survey reveals Brimbank Police Service Area (PSA) has the worst record, with just 53.6 per cent of respondents generally satisfied with their service and 71.5 per cent confident in their police.

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General satisfaction with police was at 66.5 per cent in Hobsons Bay, 69.7 per cent in Wyndham and 71.8 per cent in Maribyrnong.

Confidence in police was also low in the Wyndham Police Service Area (PSA), with 76.5 per cent, Maribyrnong with 77.9 per cent and 80.6 in Hobsons Bay.

The figures, obtained exclusively by Star under Freedom of Information, come from the National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing, which details community perceptions of police in the 12 months to September 2011.

Assistant Commissioner North West Metro Region Stephen Fontana said the survey results provide police with an insight into community concerns, expectations and priorities.

Mr Fontana said the feedback was "crucial" to police understanding community thinking, which was considered in their planning.

He said the survey also "highlights" that communities in the West have low confidence with police.

"There are a number of possible reasons for this, including local demographics, crime rates and the numbers of people who have come into direct contact with police," Mr Fontana said.

"Interestingly, people in Brimbank, for example, have lower satisfaction with police than other areas until they come into contact with police and then the satisfaction jumps considerably."

He said police work closely with local communities and had a strong focus on community engagement.

"How people feel, what they want, what they expect from their police is very important to us," he said.

"It is certainly recognised that people's perceptions around crime, neighbourhood issues, safety and police is really important.

"Everyone wants to be safe in their homes and around their streets, and they also want to feel safe."

He said improving service delivery and satisfaction was a "key priority" for Victoria Police and that building trust was "vitaly important" to providing a "real and relevant" police service.

THE VALE'S NEW BRIGADE

Wyndham Star– 13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/326/story/145968.html>

Wyndham Vale residents are in safe hands with the newly formed fire brigade receiving more than 100 call outs in its first few months.

The brigade was formally launched in July this year and since then the volunteers at the station have been working hard to keep up with demand.

The most common type of incidents they attend are car fires with 16 calls recorded so far. Just around four of those have been for mechanical reasons while the rest have been treated as suspicious. Firefighter for 10 years, Mark Reilly, said starting a car fire was not worth the risk.

"If the insurance companies even sniff that something is wrong then they won't pay out," Mr Reilly said.

Late last month the Member for Western Victoria, David O'Brien, said the new brigade would be a valuable addition to Wyndham Vale.

"Wyndham Vale is one of the fastest growing areas in Australia and the new brigade will ensure the future needs of the community are met," Mr O'Brien said.

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"This is the first brigade that CFA has established in the district since 2001 and is the result of a great deal of work and dedication from both founding members of Wyndham Vale Fire Brigade, Werribee Fire Brigade and CFA."

Mr Reilly, who also runs his own business, said he became a firefighter to give back to his community.

"I've been in Wyndham Vale for 30 years now so I thought it was time to give back," he said.

"It's a mixed bag of guys and girls that you're working with but mainly it's about doing your bit."

BIKE PATHS CALL

Wyndham Star– 13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/326/story/145972.html>

Wyndham Council is sending a strong message to the State Government to fund more cycling routes into and out of Point Cook.

Currently there are no fully completed cycling routes between Point Cook and Hoppers Crossing and Werribee.

A priority list of bicycle networks created by the Department of Transport and VicRoads identified Boardwalk Blvd, Sneydes Rd and Skeleton Creek as the three areas most in need of bicycle paths.

Truganina Ward Cr Bob Fairclough said as yet there had been no funding or construction commitments from VicRoads to construct these missing cycling links.

"Wyndham City was recently named one of the top spenders when it came to cycling infrastructure, highlighting the importance given to the issue," Cr Fairclough said.

"It was pleasing to see these Point Cook sites identified in the State's Bicycle Network Plan, however now we need VicRoads to step up and commit to funding these works to create a route for cyclists along our growth corridors. Until these bicycle paths are constructed, more people are forced to use Point Cook's already congested road network, rather than walking or cycling."

The call comes after Wyndham was recognised as one of the top municipalities in the state for bicycle spending, with \$14.92 being spent per person, more than Melbourne City Council spent in the last financial year.

"Next week Wyndham City will consider the Bicycle Strategy for adoption, which provides direction for investment in the municipality's annual capital works program, highlights the need for and provision of bicycle facilities when planning road projects and provides the basis for submissions to VicRoads for funding bicycle network projects," Cr Fairclough said.

"The Strategy also highlights a network for the future and actions proposed to occur over the next 5 or more years."

UNEMPLOYMENT SOARS

Wyndham Star– 13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/326/story/145966.html>

Unemployment has soared in Wyndham during the first 12 months of the Baillieu Government, according to the latest statistics.

Figures released by the Federal Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) on 25 November show that joblessness rose by more than two per cent throughout Wyndham in just 12 months.

As of September this year the number of people without a job in the northern suburbs of Wyndham had risen from 2612 to 3497, while it had risen from 680 to

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864 in the southern suburbs and had gone from 846 to 1114 in the western suburbs.

Member for Tarneit Tim Pallas said that the figures showed that the Liberal Government was out of touch with Wyndham's needs.

"These increases across Wyndham reflect this Government's failure to invest in vital infrastructure that would support and grow jobs for our community such as the Werribee Employment Precinct," Mr Pallas said.

"Wyndham families need a Government that is prepared to act in tough economic times, and that means developing a jobs plan that will support families in Wyndham.

"It's time for Mr Baillieu to put in place a plan to create and protect jobs for Wyndham workers."

A spokesperson for the Treasurer Kim Wells placed the blame back on Labor.

"The previous Labor Government announced a series of so-called employment programs without allocating any money to actually deliver them," the spokesperson said.

"Since the Coalition Government came to office in December 2010, employment in Victoria has risen by 22,900 which represents more than 40 per cent of the jobs created nationally."

The spokesperson did not answer questions about the status of the Werribee Employment Precinct but said Wyndham would get more jobs soon. "Before Christmas, Coalition Government Ministers will be announcing thousands of new jobs in Victoria including the Wyndham area," the spokesperson said.

TRAIN FEARS

Wyndham Star – 13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/326/story/145959.html>

Commuters feel least safe when they are passing through Wyndham's two train stations at night than any other stations in Victoria, new figures reveal.

According to the results of the National Survey of Community Satisfaction with Policing – obtained exclusively by Star through Freedom of Information – only 14.1 per cent of people said they felt safe at Werribee and Hoppers Crossing train stations at night.

Wyndham was by far the poorest performing municipality, with Maroondah coming in second place with 17.9 per cent of people saying they felt safe at night.

Wyndham also ranked third worst for safety during daylight with 70.2 per cent of people saying they felt safe.

Sarah Mills catches the train every day to and from work from the Werribee station and said it is a daunting task walking to her car at night.

"It's actually really creepy," Ms Mills said.

"I finish work pretty late so by the time I get to the station it is around 9pm. You get a real feeling that someone could be hiding around every corner."

Officer in Charge of the Werribee Crime Investigation Unit, Detective Senior Sergeant John Johnston, told Star that the police were working hard to make Wyndham's stations safer.

"Police of course do get regular calls to incidents at local train stations," Det Sen Sgt Johnston said.

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"It follows that these very busy locations require a police presence quite regularly, but regardless our community should be assured that police are very aware of and prepared to respond to incidents at our railway stations.

"The community should also be aware that because police are not visible does not mean they are not present. Plain clothes police often perform duty in and on public transport."

Det Sen Sgt Johnston said commuters should take measures such as wearing visible clothing, avoiding dark and isolated areas and carrying purses and handbags close to their bodies, to increase the level of safety.

A spokesperson for Police Minister Peter Ryan said Wyndham residents would have to wait another three years before Protective Service Officers (PSOs) start to patrol train stations in the area.

"The Victorian Coalition Government is delivering on its commitment to recruit 940 PSOs by November 2014 to make travelling the public transport network safer in towns like Wyndham," the spokesperson said.

"PSOs will have the power to apprehend, detain, arrest and remove any offenders or threatening individuals while they are on duty at train stations.

"The roll-out of PSOs across every metropolitan train station and major regional centres from 6pm until last train every night will be determined by Police Command based on operational demands."

GALVIN SCHOOL FURY

Wyndham Star– 13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/326/story/145964.html>

Furious and confused Galvin Park Secondary College parents and teachers have been told that the school will be a "portable city" for at least the next 12 months.

At a public meeting held immediately after an extraordinary school council meeting last week, more than 200 people demanded answers and action as the school falls down around its students.

Anthony Monaghan from the school council said three buildings at the school have had Provisional Improvement Notices (PIN) placed on them. "So that has resulted in us sending a whole raft of students home now for the third week," Mr Monaghan said. "There was a running joke that someone should have set fire to this building but it was too wet."

Every time it rains the school continues to flood and black mould has formed in the plant room housing the heating and air conditioning system meaning that neither can be used.

Regional Director of the Western Metropolitan Region of the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, Katherine Henderson, was inundated with questions from angry parents in place of Member for the Western Metropolitan Region Andrew Elsbury who did not attend.

Ms Henderson said the school would stay open and would be ready for students to return next year, but she could not say whether or not the school would be completely rebuilt or merely renovated.

"We are determined that by the beginning of the next school year on this site children and teachers will be working in a set of facilities that are clean, dry and

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safe and there's no question about that," Ms Henderson said. "That may well be a combination of rooms in existing buildings that are clean dry and safe and ... portables.

Ms Henderson said she was not in a position to answer any questions about exactly when or what would happen to the school in the long term.

ANYONE FOR RACING IN WERRIBEE?

Wyndham Leader— 12th December 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/anyone-for-racing-in-werribee/>

A freak storm caused Werribee's first horse races of the season to be abandoned at the weekend.

Punters inside Werribee Racing Club's buildings were among those who had to run for cover when the storm hit after the second of eight races.

The downpour on Saturday afternoon caused a section of roof in the club's fully booked dining room on the top level of the grandstand to collapse, leaving water to cascade in.

Downstairs, staff with brooms worked furiously to clear water from the betting ring and surrounding rooms. The Birdcage building was flooded.

See more pictures at our online gallery, right.

On the lawns, people huddled in marquees that lined the track.

Some drenched racegoers, including a man dressed as Santa, left through ankle-deep water to sodden car parks.

Racing was called off due to there being surface water on the track, making it unsafe.

Staff worked through the drama into the afternoon to serve diners and people in marquees.

Club chief executive Jeremy Crawford said the storm dumped 25mm of rain on the track in 15 minutes. "It was quite bizarre that it (the storm) was concentrated to Werribee. It was just unlucky," Mr Crawford said.

The club has had a run of bad luck. Racing returned to Werribee a year ago on a new track, after the old track was declared unfit for racing and closed in 2007. The club hosted just three race meets in 2010-11, with Racing Victoria transferring others to give the new track time to consolidate.

Saturday's meet was Werribee's first in 2011-12. About 1500 people attended.

Wyndham's biggest Christmas event - Carols by Candlelight at Werribee Park - was also cancelled due to the bad weather.

WYNDHAM RESIDENTS VOICE GROWTH CONCERNS

Wyndham Leader— 10th December 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/wyndham-residents-voice-growth-concerns/>

A forum last week to discuss growth in Wyndham attracted about 60 people.

Wyndham's population of 172,000 is expected to climb by 7500 people a year and reach more than 321,000 by 2031.

The forum heard Wyndham Council was continuing to advocate for state and federal government funds to cater for the rapid growth.

But residents told a panel of experts at the forum more needed to be done.

They said the council had been undercut by governments for years and asked how the community could help attract more funds to the city.

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One resident said the council should stop approving building permits unless governments guaranteed timely infrastructure.

Point Cook residents said their suburb needed a public pool.

They were told the council had a strategy to guide its advocacy in key areas and had employed an advocacy director.

One of the panel members, CPR Communications chief executive Jayne Dullard, told residents they needed to vote out government representatives if they were not happy with their performance, and consider if they would pay extra for the services they wanted.

Mayor John Menegazzo told the forum the council had to consider the needs of the whole city.

Cr Menegazzo said the council could not stop approving permits that complied with state planning guidelines.

POINT COOK UP CREEK

Wyndham Leader – 6th December 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/point-cook-up-creek/>

Point Cook residents hoping to do a bit of Christmas shopping at Werribee Plaza will no longer be able to catch the bus there.

The Transport Department announced last week that bus route 413 from Laverton train station to the plaza would terminate at Hoppers Crossing station from next Monday.

Point Cook resident Louise Shaw said that she had hoped her son, when older, would be able to catch a bus directly to plaza cinemas.

“That journey now requires him to get off at Hoppers Crossing and wait for another bus ... hanging around any bus terminal late at night is never a good thing,” she said.

“Consider mums without cars with little ones trying to get to the pool. Now they have to get on three buses or two buses and then walk the 1.2km from the plaza to the pool.”

Point Cook’s Miriam Spiess said she called Metlink, who told her the Transport Department decided to exclude the plaza from the route because the bus always ran late due to bad traffic in Point Cook.

“How can services be cut when we are all screaming from the top of our voices for more transport?” she said.

“There is no way I would catch the bus home from the plaza at night and wait at Hoppers Crossing station for another bus to turn up ... unless I was looking to put myself in danger.

“Switching buses with two young kids is hard enough but I can’t imagine how this will impact on the elderly and disabled.”

The Transport Department and plaza management are still to comment on the decision, but plaza management was unaware of it until contacted by the Leader.

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ACROSS THE REGION

REGIONAL RAIL LINK BREATHES NEW LIFE INTO SUNSHINE STATION

Minister for Infrastructure and Transport – 14th December 2011

http://www.minister.infrastructure.gov.au/aa/releases/2011/December/AA237_2011.aspx

Sunshine railway station will undergo a substantial redevelopment as part of the Regional Rail Link project, bringing major improvements to the station and its surrounds, Federal Infrastructure and Transport Minister Anthony Albanese and Victorian Public Transport Minister Terry Mulder announced today.

A new pedestrian overpass will be built at the station, with ramp, lift and stair access to all platforms. The overpass will house new station facilities, including a ticket office and waiting area, and provide a crucial connection across the rail corridor for pedestrians and cyclists.

The redevelopment of Sunshine railway station will also see the station forecourt areas improved and the bus interchange reconfigured to create a friendly new open space.

“Sunshine railway station was recently rated one of the worst in Melbourne, with passengers describing it as ‘depressing’, ‘dingy’ and ‘rundown’,” Mr Mulder said.

“This redevelopment will breathe new life into the area, complementing work already underway to revitalise the Sunshine town centre.”

The decision to redevelop the station follows a competitive bidding process during which two shortlisted consortia worked closely with representatives from the Regional Rail Link Authority, Metro and V/Line to develop the best solution for Sunshine railway station.

Mr Mulder said the competitive bidding environment had delivered a station design that addressed community concerns about safety and amenity, with the flexibility to cater for future upgrades to the public transport network, including future electrification projects.

Member for Western Metropolitan Bernie Finn said consultation about the improvements has already begun with Brimbank City Council, VicRoads and bus operators. The Regional Rail Link Authority will host a public information display at Sunshine railway station on Friday 16 December 2011 to allow the community to view the preliminary designs for the station.

Mr Albanese said a contract to construct the station, which is part of the package of works from Footscray to Sunshine, was expected to be signed by early 2012.

Designs for two road / rail separations at level crossings on Anderson Road, Sunshine, were also released this month.

“The Regional Rail Link project is not only providing improved capacity and reliability for regional and metropolitan train services, but it is also bringing much-needed improvements to transport infrastructure in Melbourne’s west,” Mr Albanese said.

The Regional Rail Link is a jointly funded project, with the Federal Government contributing \$3.225 billion and the balance coming from the Victorian Government. Main works for the project will begin in early 2012.

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WESTERN FRONT RISES

Star News Group –13th December 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/326/story/145942.html>

The Western Bulldogs have launched a new membership campaign, centred around a short film about “the West and its team”.

Last Thursday, the ‘Western Front’ movie was launched at the Sun Theatre in Yarraville.

The film featured shots of Footscray, the Maribyrnong municipality and the West’s icons – such as Scienceworks and Werribee Open range Zoo – interspersed with images of the Western Bulldogs training.

The film’s soundtrack was by Mark Seymour and its narration was done by Luke Darcy.

The AFL team’s chief executive, Simon Garlick, said ‘Western Front’ captured the essence of the Bulldogs while also celebrating the changing face of the West.

“As we head into next year we are calling on all of our members and fans to be a part of the Western Front as we strive to ‘Win the West’ and tackle our competitors head on,” he said.

“This campaign also unapologetically places a stake in the ground and sends a strong message to our competitors that the West of Melbourne is Bulldog territory.

He said the Western Bulldogs have put in place a five year plan, aimed at capitalising on the massive growth taking place in the West, with 20,000 new residents expected to move into the area, every 12 months for the next two decades.

“As a wave of growth rolls across Melbourne’s West our ambition is to ride it and in the process become a financially independent and on-field powerhouse that is respected by our stakeholders, our partners, and of course, our competitors,” Mr Garlick said.

SANTA’S SPEEDY BUS LANE

Bus News –13th December 2011

<http://www.busnews.com.au/news/articleid/77410.aspx>

The installation of a new bus lane in Altona on Millers Road between Beuron and Duosa Roads will mean a faster Christmas shopping trip to one of the area’s major shopping precincts.

Victoria’s Minister for Public Transport and Roads Terry Mulder says the \$260,000 bus improvement project will cut travel times for Altona North residents travelling to work, school, the markets or Altona Gate Shopping Centre.

Six services, including one SmartBus service, will benefit from the new bus lane.

Almost five hundred buses a day will travel on the new lane from Altona North to Queen Victoria Market and through Newport, Yarraville, Williamstown, Footscray, Sunshine, Altona and Mordialloc.

Mulder says the project included traffic light improvements, new signs and red pavement painting to highlight the bus lane from Beuron Road to the entrance of Altona Gate Shopping Centre.

New detector loops on Millers Road will prioritise northbound bus movements and left turn only lanes into Duosa Road (northbound) and Marigold Avenue and Cyclamen Avenue (southbound) were also installed.

Member for Western Metropolitan Region Bernie Finn welcomed the investment saying it would provide better public transport in Altona.

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"The support of both local residents and Hobsons Bay City Council for these new bus lanes is greatly appreciated," Finn says.

JOBS 101: WORK DRIVE HITS TARGET

Leader—12th December 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/work-drive-hits-target/>

We've done it - Leader's landmark Jobs 101 campaign has filled more than 101 jobs in 101 days across Melbourne.

And employers backing Jobs 101 have pledged to hire another 100 apprentices next year.

Since the campaign started in mid-September, 110 people have found work.

And scores more have received career advice and help.

Jobs 101 was run in partnership with the non-profit apprentice recruitment agency, WPC Group.

Chief executive Nicholas Wyman said Jobs 101 had linked motivated people with talent-hungry employers and highlighted the importance of skilled careers.

First-year apprentice chef Hilule Osman is one of the campaign's many success stories, scoring a job at the Grand Chancellor Hotel Melbourne after taking part in a cook-off competition organised by WPC Group for Jobs 101.

"This is like a dream come true," Ms Osman said. "I've been going around in circles not knowing how to get my career started.

"This means so much to me."

Ms Osman, 22, who came to Australia with her parents 15 years ago, hopes to one day open her own African restaurant.

WPC chairman Fred Maddern said Jobs 101 was Australia's biggest ever community jobs campaign.

"Thank you to all the businesses and communities that have joined the campaign to give people a go," he said.

Mercedes-Benz was one of the first to back Jobs 101, creating 12 jobs at three dealerships since pledging support in September.

This month, global hospitality and food company, Delaware North, offered the last five full-time jobs needed to hit the 101 target.

To offer work or register interest in apprenticeship opportunities for 2012, go to jobs101.org.au or call 1300 656 461.

BOOM PORT TO BUST BY 2015

The Age—10th December 2011

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/boom-port-to-bust-by-2015-20111209-1onu8.html>

Melbourne's booming port, the country's busiest, will expand dramatically over the next decade, with the movement of up to a million extra containers annually putting increased pressure on local streets.

Surging container traffic means the port will reach capacity by 2015, 10 years before an alternative port at Hastings can be established.

Business groups are pushing the Baillieu government to accelerate plans to relieve pressure by urgently expanding Melbourne's port and introducing a third stevedore to increase competition.

Container traffic at the port set a record in 2010-11, with nearly 2.4 million containers processed.

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The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission recently estimated that without expansion, "capacity problems" could emerge at the port by 2015.

It is expected that the port of Hastings will not be operational as a second container port until 2025.

The Port of Melbourne Corporation has given the government a detailed business plan for expanding the Melbourne port. The two most likely options, according to industry, are transforming Webb Dock, next to Williamstown, into a container terminal and expanding capacity at Swanson Dock by extending the processing area over part of Coode Road.

The government is expected to announce its port expansion plans early next year.

Ports Minister Denis Napthine said the government was aware of the need to increase port capacity.

He said the port of Melbourne was "our number one container port and will be for many, many decades to come".

"Even when we build Hastings, Melbourne will still be the number one container port in Victoria, so it is absolutely vital that we work with the Port of Melbourne to maximise its productivity and efficiency."

He said several expansion options were being considered.

But communities in the city's west say the government must first fix the existing truck problem before adding thousands more trucks to residential streets.

Martin Wurt from the Maribyrnong Truck Action Group said: "We can't cope with the number of trucks we are getting now. The City of Maribyrnong has 21,000 truck movements per day and they are basically coming down narrow residential streets that were designed in the 1800s."

Ninety-five per cent of full containers brought into Melbourne are moved from the port by trucks.

It is estimated that more than 20,000 trucks move through Melbourne's inner west each day, with more than 6000 trucks travelling along Yarraville's Francis Street and more than 1700 along Somerville Road.

Roads Minister Terry Mulder said the government's submission to Infrastructure Australia to build the East-West Link project - an 18-kilometre inner urban road connecting the Eastern Freeway and the Western Ring Road - would remove traffic from Melbourne's inner arterial roads.

He said the former government's "truck action plan" to remove trucks from residential streets in Melbourne's west was also being considered, "along with a range of potential initiatives to improve local amenity as well as port access".

VicRoads is also considering lifting the current peak-hour restrictions on the Western Ring Road and West Gate Freeway for giant 30-metre, 77-tonne B-double trucks.

A spokesman for stevedore DP World, which operates from Swanson Dock, said the company expected container volumes to continue to grow at the long-term rate of 6 per cent a year. Capacity at Swanson Dock could be increased to 4 million containers a year, he said.

A spokeswoman for Asciano, the parent company of Patrick Stevedores, also said capacity could be increased at Swanson Dock.

The chief executive of the Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Mark Stone, said decisions needed to be made now for increased capacity at the port, and said the government should introduce a third stevedore at Webb Dock.

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Hutchison Port Holdings recently won the right to expand container capacity at the Port of Brisbane and Sydney's Port Botany, from late 2012 and early 2013.

TONY BRIFFA OF AUSTRALIA'S CITY OF HOBSONS BAY BECOMES WORLD'S FIRST INTERSEX MAYOR

Huffington Post— 10th December 2011

http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2011/12/10/tony-briffa-intersex-mayor_n_1140840.html

Tony Briffa has become the world's first openly intersex mayor.

As Care2.com is reporting, Briffa won the position in the City of Hobsons Bay, which is situated just outside of Melbourne, Australia.

"I am excited about the future of our community and look forward to serving the city with enthusiasm and pride," he said.

As his website, Briffa.org, notes, Briffa is a "genuine independent councillor (i.e. not a member of a political party)" and his focus is on "representing our diverse community, community groups and local businesses, protecting our environment, and working to ensure future generations of local residents can enjoy our unique character and amenity."

According to GayNewsNetwork.com.au, Briffa was born with both male and female physical attributes as a result of Androgen Insensitivity Syndrome (AIS). Doctors agreed to assign him a female gender even though his genetic makeup is male and he was not told about being intersex until years later.

Today Tony says he considers himself neither male nor female, though he uses male pronouns.

He writes on his website:

"I feel very comfortable having accepted my true nature. I am not male or female, but both. I am grateful for the years I lived as a woman and the insight and experiences it gave me. I am still 'Antoinette' and have now also incorporated and accepted my male ('Anthony' or 'Tony') side. I feel whole. I'll continue to live as Tony but I feel I am now at a point in my life where I can celebrate being different."

LGBTI Health Alliance Board Member Gina Wilson says, "Tony is an inspiration and a role model for a whole generation of intersex people, both those who have suffered early interventions and those who have come to their differences later in life."

She adds, "We share Tony's hope that his election will break down taboos associated with intersex differences. Tony is a wonderful example of how intersex people can overcome the devastating and unnecessary medical treatment meted out to so many intersex children, and go on to become champions of human rights and cultural diversity for everyone."

MELBOURNE ELECTS AUSTRALIA'S FIRST INTERSEX MAYOR

Same Same— 9th December 2011

<http://www.samesame.com.au/news/local/7737/Melbourne-elects-Australias-first-intersex-Mayor.htm>

Melbourne has Australia's first openly intersex Mayor following the election of long time queer community supporter and advocate Councillor Tony Briffa to the top position at the City of Hobsons Bay at the end of November.

Not being associated with any particular political party, Tony Briffa is an independent councillor whose focus has remained on representing his community (where he has lived all his life), community diversity and environmental issues.

Speaking enthusiastically at the launch of the Midsumma 2012 program on the weekend before the Hobson's Bay election, Briffa who was a councillor at the time,

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said he was proud to be a member of the queer community and excited about the involvement of the city he represented in the full cultural life of Melbourne.

At the launch, he announced his intention to run for mayor, promising that should he get the top mayor position that he would be attending Victoria's Pride March in February 2012 in full mayoral robes. Since officially becoming Mayor of the city of Hobsons Bay, Briffa has re-confirmed his intention to march at Pride March in the official robes.

The City of Hobsons Bay, which includes the suburbs of Altona, Brooklyn, Laverton, Newport, Seabrook, Spotswood and Williamstown, has played an increasingly significant role in Melbourne's queer cultural celebration the Midsumma Festival over the past few years, becoming a major hub of the 2012 program.

"I am excited about the future of our community and look forward to serving the city with enthusiasm and pride," Briffa said following his election.

National LGBTI Health Alliance Board Member Gina Wilson says Briffa is inspiring.

"Tony is an inspiration and a role model for a whole generation of intersex people, both those who have suffered early interventions and those who have come to their differences later in life," Wilson said.

"We share Tony's hope that his election will break down taboos associated with intersex differences. Tony is a wonderful example of how intersex people can overcome the devastating and unnecessary medical treatment meted out to so many intersex children, and go on to become champions of human rights and cultural diversity for everyone."

LeadWest Ltd PO Box 2382 FOOTSCRAY VIC 3011 Tel: +61 3 9317 5794 Fax: +61 3 9317 0721



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