

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

25th November 2011



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BRIMBANK

LIGHTS ACTION IN DELAHEY

Brimbank Leader—23rd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/323/story/144728.html>

Brimbank Council will lobby VicRoads and the Federal Transport Minister to request that money saved from a multi-million-dollar road upgrade in Taylors Lakes be used to remove a notorious Delahey roundabout.

The council will write to both parties, also requesting they consult with residents over proposed closures to Sunshine Ave under Calder Freeway interchange works.

The Federal Government announced earlier this month that the \$50 million Calder Freeway and Kings Rd intersection upgrade would be completed before Christmas, six months ahead of schedule.

The government plans to use money left over on other projects, including improving safety and traffic flow at the Calder Freeway and Sunshine Ave interchange.

Delahey Action Group secretary David Anderson said the surplus would be better spent replacing the roundabout at Kings and Taylors roads with traffic lights.

"It is criminal to leave that intersection without traffic lights when they're going to be pouring more traffic down it," Mr Anderson said.

He was concerned the decision to prioritise the Sunshine Ave interchange had been made without consultation.

"The community needs to be involved in the process to make sure it can be the best it can be," he said.

Administrator Meredith Sussex said consultation with residents was essential.

"While these proposals are important safety issues, closure of Sunshine Ave has a potentially significant impact on residents, and there has been no consultation," Ms Sussex said.

She said replacing the Taylors Rd roundabout with traffic lights was a "clear priority" for the council.

"Anyone who uses that road knows this intersection is a significant problem, a very significant safety issue," she said.

"It will be made worse by work that has occurred on Kings Rd, and it should be funded as part of that project."

Brimbank Council and VicRoads are also set to widen Taylors Rd west of the roundabout which will add to traffic flow and congestion.

SEVEN STOREYS ST ALBANS

Brimbank Star—22nd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/323/story/144738.html>

Ideas for future development in St Albans include buildings up to seven storeys high, closing Alfreida St to create a pedestrian mall, installing parking meters and student housing.

The proposals were listed in the draft St Albans Activity Centre Structure Plan (SAACSP), which the Brimbank City Council administrators last week voted to exhibit as an amendment to the area's planning scheme.

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Asip Demiri, from the St Albans Traders Association, welcomed the plan and said businesses saw it as a good vision for the area's future.

In the SAACSP was a guide for the future development of the St Albans district, by 2025, which said many of its proposals depended on the future grade separation of the rail line below Main Rd.

Allowing building heights of between two and seven stories were recommended in the plan, with the highest developments being targeted at St Albans Rd, Main Rd East and Alfrieda St.

A SAACSP consultation report also said the council could "get rid of the stigma associated with St Albans" and build on retail diversity to attract new markets such as the "white middle-class mortgage belt".

The results of a community survey in the report highlighted many positive aspects of St Albans but also said residents were concerned about crime, theft, shoplifting, drugs and alcohol problems, "visible gangs and racial conflict" and vandalism.

Within the St Albans CBD, installing parking meters, provide multi-level car parking, "more local law surveillance", closing Alfrieda St and create a pedestrian mall, student housing and developing an anti-hooping strategy were on the agenda as possible developments.

The document also encouraged "higher density, medium-rise" apartments of up to four storeys for the Kruger site, near Gratz St and McKenzie St.

The SAACSP draft said the council would, "continue dialogue with Kruger representatives regarding potential relocation" and soil contamination investigations could be needed before any further development of the spot.

As well, the council hopes to "encourage redevelopment of Safeway and the community centre to incorporate increased density and additional services/facilities" and lobby for medium density townhouse development in Collins St.

Relocating or redeveloping the Errington Reserve Community Centre was also proposed.

CAFE IS A HIDDEN GEM

Brimbank Star—22nd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/323/story/144740.html>

A Sunshine café, which is committed to showcasing work by students and artists across the West, has been featured in a YouTube video about discovering Brimbank's hidden gems.

The Granary Café was among the attractions included in the 'Your Own Backyard, Brimbank', featured, and was produced by Wine.Food.Hotel in collaboration with Destination Melbourne and the Brimbank City Council.

The Sunshine Golf Club, Alfrieda St and Organ Pipes National Park were also featured in the clip.

The Granary director Tom Nielson said he has been at the café for three years.

"I guess from my point of view, I started a café in Brimbank, particularly in Sunshine, because there's a lack of café culture here," he said.

"The community can come out and call it a second home, that's what I'm trying to create.

"I love it here in the morning because the local people come in and they know everyone and mingle."

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The café is located in the Sunshine Harvester Centre, in the building which was once the headquarters of the Sunshine Harvester Works, established by HV McKay in 1906.

"People come here and say, 'My grandmother used to work there'," Mr Nielson said.

He has used the building's old tin roof to construct the café's counter and said it was important to decorate the business, in the historical theme.

For the past four years, director of Gallery Sunshine Everywhere and Victoria University Professor Maureen Ryan has been working with the café to showcase the work of artists and school pupils, many from the West.

The café changes its artworks every few weeks and has opening nights for the community to attend.

Ms Ryan said as a professor in the School of Education at the university's Footscray Park campus, she kept in contact with schools across the West and invited them to display artwork at the café.

Ms Ryan said she was thrilled when café patrons asked to purchase student's artworks.

CALLING FOR ROUNDABOUT FIX

Brimbank Star—22nd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/323/story/144732.html>

Brimbank City Council has called on the Federal Government to install traffic lights at a notorious Delahey roundabout, instead of devoting leftover funds for a different project.

At last Tuesday's council meeting, Brimbank administrator Meredith Sussex said the council would write to Federal Infrastructure and Transport Minister Anthony Albanese, asking for traffic signals at the intersection of Taylors Rd and Kings Rd.

Mr Albanese recently announced there were funds leftover from upgrading the Calder Freeway and Kings Rd intersection.

He said the remaining money would be used for safety improvements between the Calder Freeway and Sunshine Ave intersection.

Ms Sussex said this was an important issue, but she was concerned about the Delahey roundabout, which was under VicRoads' control, so could not be upgraded by the council.

"Anyone who uses that roundabout coming either way knows this intersection is a significant problem and two lanes of traffic going into one is a very significant safety issue," Ms Sussex said.

She said there had been no fatalities at the intersection and the council "would prefer not to be in the position of waiting for this to happen".

Ms Sussex's statement was backed by former Brimbank mayor Margaret Giudice, who welcomed the recent road improvements in the area, but said traffic lights, would make the intersection "much more secure".

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"I lobbied and lobbied and lobbied for that as long as I was a councillor for the area which was 10 years," she said.

"If VicRoads could please make-up their minds, for I and many other motorists use the roundabout - and it is a nightmare - it would be very beneficial."

Back in 2009, Star reported Delahey residents Emmanuel Mifsud and Tony Attard collected a petition of 200 signatures, asking for traffic lights at the intersection, which was presented to parliament by MP George Seitz.

Mr Mifsud said he was disappointed the situation was still the same two years later.

"At the moment, the roundabout is atrocious," he said.

"That was back in 2009 and now we're nearly over 2011 and into 2012. If they really wanted to do something, they would do something.

"If someone gets killed there they will do something, but it's too late then."

FIGHT FOR TRANSPORT

Brimbank Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/323/story/144728.html>

The Brimbank Social Justice Coalition will lobby the State and Federal governments for a raft of improvements to the municipality's public transport system, from around-the-clock staffing at St Albans railway station to better bus services.

The coalition - made up of council staff and representatives from community agencies like LeadWest - will also campaign for the long-awaited lowering of the St Albans Main Rd rail line, to remove the spot's dangerous level crossing.

The coalition's priority list stated future electrification of the Sunbury rail line was set to make the spot a "nightmare".

The coalition's call to improve the notorious crossing came at the same time as the State Government submitted to the Federal Government a list of future projects they would like funded.

Included in the list was a proposal to replace various level crossings across Melbourne for \$16 million, with the St Albans crossing one of seven the State Government considers a priority.

Asip Demiri, from the St Albans Traders Association, said residents had campaigned on the issue for more than a decade.

"It needs the section - which is so often talked about as 'the crossing', which everyone knows about - to be put below road level so people can cross without being killed," he said.

In addition, the Brimbank Social Justice Coalition (BSJC) will lobby both levels of government on many other public transport issues, including "24/7 staffing at St Albans station".

They will also request improvements at railway stations in "Sunshine, St Albans and other areas perceived as being unsafe by the community" and for St Albans station to be included in Zone 1 rather than Zone 2, to qualify for cheaper fares.

Metlink's website states the journey from St Albans to Melbourne takes 29 minutes, the same as from Glenroy and Laverton stations - both of which are in Zone 1.

The council's advocacy campaign will also focus on lobbying for resources to extend bus routes, as the 2010 Bus Service Review recommended.

Delahey Action Group secretary David Anderson said better bus services were desperately needed in Brimbank.

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"The most important issue is for the full range of recommendations from the Brimbank bus review to be instigated, as what has been instigated so far has really only been beneficial to Melton," he said.

The Opposition's Public Transport spokeswoman Fiona Richardson said Public Transport Minister Terry Mulder had neglected the West," she said.

"Terry Mulder recently told parliament that he has fixed all of the problems in public transport after only 11 months in government.

"Clearly, the minister would benefit greatly from listening to some of the problems identified by the Brimbank Social Justice Coalition."

Star contacted the office of Public Transport Minister Terry Mulder, but received no reply by deadline.

DEER PARK'S HISTORIC SITE UNDER THREAT

Brimbank Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/deer-parks-historic-site-under-threat/2365172.aspx>

A historic Deer Park site remains under threat despite last-ditch efforts to save it from demolition.

The former Western Autistic School is being knocked down by the Education Department to clear the way for residential redevelopment.

The site is affected by two Brimbank Council heritage overlays but the council is powerless to stop the department from carrying out demolition works.

Former student Sean McAlpine-Jones has been fighting to keep an old classroom on the site.

"This building has a long history that should be preserved. It was a key school in the area and the first place many of the new post-war migrants came to learn English. They would be very upset to see it go," he said.

The buildings on the corner of Ballarat and Station roads are thought to hold historical and social significance. The council notes the school "developed to serve the somewhat impoverished 19th century local rural community, and greatly expanded to serve new families in the growing suburbs created by post-war immigration".

Most buildings have already been bulldozed, but the oldest and most significant building is still intact.

The council has convinced the company undertaking demolition to stop works until further discussion with the Education Department.

General manager of city development, Stephen Sully, hopes further talks with department officials this week to discuss a report by council's heritage adviser will ensure the building's retention.

"The heritage advisor's report is a heritage assessment of the site and profiles what on the site council would like to see retained."

Mr McAlpine-Jones said the matter would be raised in Parliament next week, with Western Metropolitan MP Bernie Finn backing those fighting to save the site.

A spokeswoman for Mr Finn confirmed he would be raising the matter with Education Minister Martin Dixon.

"He is going to take this as far as it can go."

The Education Department did not respond by deadline.

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MAULING TURNS UP HEAT ON MELTON COUNCIL

Brimbank Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/mauling-turns-up-heat-on-melton-council/2365177.aspx>

Melton Council has come under fire for its handling of dangerous dogs after a baby boy was attacked in Burnside.

The one-year-old was in a pram being pushed by his grandmother when the dog, a bull terrier-cross, approached the pram just before 11am on Thursday and attacked the boy.

His 53-year-old grandmother was also attacked as she desperately fought to save the child.

Passerby Damian Hall saw the incident while driving down the street and quickly jumped out to tackle the dog and get it away from the child.

He described the dog as "possessed" and said it was completely focused on harming the child.

The child and his grandmother were taken to Sunshine Hospital.

The boy was released on Friday with stitches to his face and ear.

Western Suburbs Animal Rescue Service president Nathan Miles said the council needed to take some responsibility for the latest incident, claiming it was not responding effectively to call-outs about dangerous or suspicious animals.

The attack comes after a Melton couple's small beagle was viciously attacked by three dogs while being taken for a walk in September.

In August, an Eynesbury census collector was left bloodied after she was attacked by what was thought to have been a pit bull cross.

"The time has now come for Melton Shire Council to outsource its entire animal management services, including the pound, to a professional organisation such as the Lost Dogs Home or RSPCA which can carry out these duties effectively, professionally and ensure community safety," Mr Miles said.

However, council's general manager of corporate services, Peter Bean, said the council took such matters extremely seriously.

"Council has started its investigation and will work closely with Victoria Police and we will, along with police, interview the dog owner and take statements from the victims at the earliest possible opportunity."

Mr Bean said before the attack took place, the council had received a call from a resident at 9.45am reporting a dog sitting on the front step of a Burnside property.

A council ranger who arrived about 9.54am interviewed residents and patrolled adjoining streets and grasslands area four times, but no dog was sighted.

The ranger patrolled again about 10.30am but did not find the dog.

Mr Bean said the council was not certain the reported dog was the same one which attacked the boy.

He said the dog would remain in council custody until the matter was resolved.

Burnside resident Doug Chappel, who was attacked by a dog in Melton last year, said owners should do more to ensure their animals didn't go out and attack people.

"I think it's more about the way a dog is raised as opposed to the breed of the animal," he said.

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CLASSICAL MUSIC IN KEILOR

Brimbank Leader—22nd November 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/lifestyle/story/classical-music-for-west-fbready/>

The soothing, hollow sounds of the flute will drift into Brimbank this weekend.

The Victorian Flute Ensemble will hold its annual concert at the Brimbank Anglican Church in East Keilor.

Flautist and Keilor resident Jen Bladon-Clark has arranged for the group to perform in the west, frustrated with the lack of classical music activity available for residents.

"Melbourne has a vibrant and active flute culture, with concerts, master classes and ensemble competitions, but they're nearly always on the other side of town," she said.

"We have lots of up and coming young flautists in the north-west, and young players really benefit from being exposed to advanced ensemble performances to understand what is technically and musically possible."

Ms Bladon-Clark said the concert would feature a range of classical music adapted for the ensemble.

"It's classic, easy listening music, and creates a lovely instrumental sound," she said.

The concert, including music by Handel, Liszt, Palmer, Rimsky-Korsakov and Vivaldi, is on this Saturday, at 3pm at the Anglican Church, Ely Court, East Keilor. Tickets \$15 (\$10 concession).

POWERLINES FIGHT: PEOPLE POWER PREVAILS

Brimbank Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/powerlines-fight-people-power-prevails/2365154.aspx>

Ardeer and Sunshine West residents have successfully campaigned for high-voltage powerlines to be placed underground, proving people power can prevail over corporate giants.

Families gathered at Ardeer Community Park on Saturday to celebrate their win following the completion of recent major works in the area.

Geraldine Brooks, of the Ardeer and Sunshine West Powerlines Action Group, said the controversial 66,000-volt powerline proposal was sprung on the community by electricity distributor Powercor without concern for residents' health and visual amenity.

"Sixty-six thousand-volt powerlines through our community would have exposed families to high electromagnetic field levels," she said.

Residents learned of the lines only when Powercor began erecting poles on Ridgeway Parade early last year.

"We found that completely unacceptable and made sure the proponent, Powercor, got this message loud and clear throughout a year of community meetings, protests, letter-writing, petitions and publicity," Ms Brooks said.

Following pressure from residents and Brimbank Council, the state government's powerline relocation committee agreed in June to help Powercor fund the \$2.8 million project.

The underground lines will supply power to Paramount Industrial Park in Deer Park and nearby residential areas.

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Western Metropolitan Greens MP Colleen Hartland said the campaign was a great example of people power.

"This community forced a multinational company to back down - it just goes to show what can be achieved when the local community works together."

POULTRY STAFF AT ODDS OVER STRIKE

Brimbank Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/poultry-staff-at-odds-over-strike/2365175.aspx>

Striking workers from poultry company Baiada were involved in a stand-off with non-union colleagues outside Prime Minister Julia Gillard's Werribee office last Thursday.

About 30 National Union of Workers' members took to Synnot Street after they failed to receive a response to a letter asking for her support.

They were met by a group of colleagues opposing the strike who chanted that they wanted to go back to work.

Union members, including many Brimbank workers, walked off the job on November 9 in protest at job insecurity and conditions at Baiada's Laverton North factory.

They claim the company employs contractors and pays them cash-in-hand below the minimum wage.

Dispatch worker Wasihun Kifley claimed management had no respect for workers and took aim at his non-union colleagues for not supporting the strike.

"We are like brothers and sisters working together."

"We are united. It doesn't matter to us what nationality you are, but they are not united."

Phuoc Dang, who has worked for Baiada for 11 years, said she joined the protest outside Ms Gillard's office to help the predominantly migrant workforce feel safe at work.

Ms Dang said many of the factory's Vietnamese workers did not speak English and felt bullied and harassed at work.

But Ljiljana Baresic, a spokeswoman for the workers opposing the strike, said it was the NUW workers who were involved in bullying.

ENDING DIABETES PROGRAM 'SHORT-SIGHTED'

Brimbank Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/ending-diabetes-program-shortsighted/2365180.aspx>

The Federal Government has cut funding to a program designed to prevent the spread of the diabetes epidemic in the west.

If a patient aged 40-49 was considered at risk of diabetes their doctor could refer them to the lifestyle modification program run by divisional practices, such as Pivot West, which services the municipalities of Brimbank, Maribyrnong and parts of Melton.

Through the program, at-risk patients were able to get free professional help to eat healthier and exercise more often.

The program will be discontinued from June 30 next year, but no new patients have been admitted since November 1.

More than 150 people have been referred to Pivot West since February last year with an extremely low drop-out rate.

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They attend a number of sessions over six weeks in an attempt to delay the onset of diabetes.

According to Pivot West, two six-week sessions can delay the onset of diabetes by as much as 15 years.

Footscray doctor and Pivot West chairman Dimitrios Kollios described the funding cuts as a "false economy". Dr Kollios said about 20 per cent of his patients were diabetic and patients were becoming younger and younger.

"That's not including those who have impaired glucose tolerance or what we call pre-diabetic. It's really short-sighted, looking at economics now and not taking a long-term view."

A spokesperson for Health Minister Nicola Roxon said participation in the lifestyle modification program was lower than anticipated.

SCHOOLS STILL WAITING TO BE REDEVELOPED

Brimbank Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/schools-still-waiting-to-be-redeveloped/2365171.aspx>

The woeful state of Brimbank's ageing schools was under the spotlight last week during a visit by the parliamentary secretary for education.

Inga Peulich joined Western Metropolitan MP Andrew Elsbury to tour Sunshine Secondary College and the St Albans campus of Victoria University Secondary College (VUSC).

Both schools were promised urgent upgrades by the ousted Labor government.

But their futures remain uncertain with no commitment by the new government for their replacement.

VUSC Principal Genevieve Simson said master plans had been drawn up for a junior school on the Deer Park campus and for a new senior campus on Furlong Road in Cairnlea.

"It's really an equity issue. Students in other areas of the state have nice, modern buildings in which to learn and our kids deserve the same."

Ms Simson said the parliamentary secretary was open to listening to what the community wanted and hoped the school's needs would be taken seriously.

"The whole community is really hopeful that the promise we had [been given] will be fulfilled."

The tour of Sunshine Secondary College revealed the school was also in dire need of attention.

Built in 1959, the west campus building is 30 years past its use-by-date with sinking footings and a leaking roof.

MP Bernie Finn described the building as the worst he'd seen in 12 years as an MP and has called for it to be demolished.

Principal Tim Blunt wants to see action on redevelopment plans approved by the previous government.

"As a college principal, I just want it to be built as soon as possible and I'm calling on the state government to make that commitment."

Ms Peulich said there was a lot of work to be done to fix problems left behind by the Labor government in Melbourne's west.

"It's only speaking with school principals and school councils will we be able to get an accurate assessment of what problems have been left behind."

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Mr Elsbury said the government had got the ball rolling by announcing a full maintenance audit of all government schools.

Opposition education spokesman Rob Hulls argued the government's school rebuilding program was politically motivated and focused on Coalition-held seats.

BRIMBANK COUNCIL ON WRONG PATH, SAY CYCLISTS

Brimbank Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/brimbank-council-on-wrong-path-say-cyclists/2365173.aspx>

The president of a Brimbank bicycle club fears new cyclists will have limited opportunities to ride if the council does not increase its spending on bike infrastructure.

A new Bicycle Network Victoria report shows Brimbank is spending far less on bicycle infrastructure than some other councils.

The Bicycle Expenditure Index (BiXE) report shows the council spent \$3.68 per resident on bicycle infrastructure in 2010-11, well below its five-year BiXE average of \$5.73.

Wyndham and Melton councils spent well in excess of the \$5 per person threshold outlined in the index.

The report outlined a need for Brimbank Council to fix gaps along the Kororoit Creek path at Deer Park and complete the Kororoit Creek trail between Somerville Road and the new Federation Trail.

The president of local bike users group BrimBUG, Ferdi Saliba, said cycling was becoming more and more popular in Brimbank and the council needed to meet the needs of residents.

"The statistics show other councils are spending double what Brimbank Council is, and that's a concern because we are starting to see more people in the municipality take up cycling.

"There is a definite need for more on-road bike lanes to be created and people can't get to work or to school by bike if these lanes don't exist."

Mr Saliba was pleased with the work the council had done on the Kororoit Creek trail but added more needed to be done.

Council's general manager of infrastructure and environment, Paul Younis, said it had to balance many competing priorities when developing its annual works budget.

He said many cycling projects were being planned for construction in the future.

Priorities included the development of a shared trail along the Sydenham railway corridor connecting Sydenham, St Albans and Sunshine, with links through to Footscray and the Melbourne CBD.

Mr Younis said the council was committed to closing the gaps in the cycling network along the Kororoit and Taylors creeks and had sought funding from the state government to boost cycling expenditure in Brimbank.

"It is disappointing the state has provided limited funding for cycling in the outer metropolitan zone.

"We wish to increase our investment in cycling and we need the state government to support us in this objective, as they have in the inner-metropolitan region."

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

25th November 2011



PRIMPED AND PAMPERED IN KEALBA

Brimbank Leader—20th November 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/lifestyle/story/primped-and-pampered-in-kealba-fbready/>

Brimbank pooches can be primped and pampered to help raise money for a local pet group.

The Pet Neighbourhood Watch Action Group will hold a dog grooming fundraising day next Saturday, November 26 in Kealba.

Professional dog groomer Maggie Gawart will offer a full groom for small breed dogs, with appointments available from 9am to 2.30pm.

Cost is \$35 with all money raised going to the PNW.

To book, contact Maggie on 0405 693 016, Liliana Iuri on 0422 378 515 or send an email to petneighbourhoodwatch@hotmail.com

SPRING SOAKING

Brimbank Star—17th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/stalbans-deer-park-caroline-springs/322/story/144476.html>

When wild weather hit Melbourne last Wednesday, Caroline Springs resident Simon Jakovac snapped stunning photographs of the storms rolling across the West. The talented photographer and his sister ventured onto their rooftop to watch the rain come down, where Mr Jakovac also took several photos of black clouds filling the skies above Melton. There were reports of damaged roofs and fallen trees across Brimbank when the storms hit on Wednesday evening, and some flights at Tullamarine airport were delayed, due to the ferocity of the weather. VicRoads also asked motorists across the West to be careful in traffic, as several streets were subjected to minor flooding.

DIABETES HOTSPOT

Brimbank Star—17th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/stalbans-deer-park-caroline-springs/322/story/144509.html>

Diabetes is on the rise in Brimbank with figures released last week showing an average of 15 new cases diagnosed each week.

Figures from Diabetes Australia-Vic revealed Brimbank is the number one spot for diabetes in Melbourne, with almost 12,000 residents suffering with the disease.

The alarming data also showed a soaring increase of 212 per cent over the past 10 years, with just 3774 cases in 2001.

Diabetes Australia-Vic chief executive Professor Greg Johnson said the main drivers of the current epidemic include weight gain across almost all age groups and all ethnic groups, driven by unhealthy diet and lack of physical activity.

“The genetic mix of communities also plays a part and Brimbank includes a mix of ethnic groups with a higher risk of developing type two diabetes,” Prof Johnson said.

He also called on local councils to make better planning decisions to create healthier communities.

Greater Dandenong and Hobsons Bay followed Brimbank as Melbourne hotspots for the disease, which can lead to potentially fatal complications including heart attack, stroke, kidney failure and blindness.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

25th November 2011



ART THAT CONNECTS

Brimbank Star—17th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/322/story/144500.html>

Art enthusiasts from across Brimbank will have their ideals and emotions challenged by the current exhibition on at the Hunt Club.

Social Confessional is the latest display at Deer Park and presents an innovative body of new work by studio artists based in the heart of Melbourne's West.

Talented writer Demet Divaroren participated in the project and said the showcase looked at the era we live in and the affect modern technology had on our daily lives.

Ms Divaroren had a significant influence on the Tree of Regrets, which allows people to write down the things they regret not saying.

"It's raw emotion and the tree reads like a stream of consciousness. It was an opportunity to let go and vent," the 30-year-old said.

There is also a Pinata of Hearts which explores the things many people wish they had not said.

Ms Divaroren said the interactive exhibition allowed viewers the chance to air grievances and could almost become a cathartic experience.

She also said it delved into the role social media plays in our lives and how it has almost become pervasive.

Describing it as "clever, playful, and discursive", the exhibition also explores consumerism and disposability.

"The things we say online are there forever.

"It's sad we rely on status updates to see what our friends are doing.

"Often we can be communicating with someone in person and texting someone else at the same time."

She said while media like Facebook were often a great way to stay connected with people, many users often tried to gain acceptance through how many likes they gained.

"Teenagers are under pressure to perform online and in the classroom.

"The exhibition was motivated by disconnection within society and what we choose to say.

"It's empowering and therapeutic."

Social Confessional will run to 26 November.

HOUSE FAIL CLAIM

Brimbank Star—17th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/stalbans-deer-park-caroline-springs/322/story/144502.html>

The issue of public housing, and the lack of it, has once again reared its head in Brimbank after figures revealed the waiting list in Keilor increased in the last quarter.

Keilor MP Natalie Hutchins slammed the State Government last week, claiming in the past year it had done nothing to support residents across Melbourne's North West who required urgent housing.

"The number of people waiting for housing in Keilor rose over the last three months by 0.5 per cent," Ms Hutchins said.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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"This means there are now 19 more people waiting for housing now than three months ago."

She also claimed the government showed little empathy for families' desperately seeking housing and that without an increase in funding, the list would continue to grow.

Ms Hutchins said these latest figures were further proof that the Baillieu Government was failing the most disadvantaged members of the community.

She cited the release of a "do-nothing" homelessness plan that failed to set out any plans for assisting young people experiencing homelessness, women and children escaping domestic violence, or people currently living in crisis accommodation, the failure to provide any new funding for building or acquiring public and social housing in this year's budget and a "blow out" in the waiting times faced by families on the early housing waiting list.

This was all additional evidence that residents would continue to wait longer for essential accommodation.

CALDER UPGRADE AHEAD OF TIME, UNDER BUDGET

Brimbank Star—17th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/322/story/144506.html>

Motorists in Brimbank's North West can breathe a sigh of relief, after the Federal Government last week announced a multi-million dollar project would finish ahead of schedule and under-budget.

The upgrade to the intersection between the Calder Freeway and Kings Rd at Taylors Lakes will now be completed before Christmas, six months ahead of schedule and under-budget, allowing the savings to be used to deliver a more extensive upgrade than originally anticipated.

Federal Infrastructure and Transport Minister Anthony Albanese said the Federal and State Governments were working together to build and modernise roads that families and businesses across Melbourne's West relied on in their daily lives.

"The savings will be used to do even more locally, including safety improvements at the intersection between the Calder Freeway and Sunshine Ave."

Gorton MP Brendan O'Connor welcomed the news and said the work would ease congestion and improve safety around an intersection, which in recent years had been the scene of countless serious accidents.

"This is the culmination of a community and political campaign started more than five years ago to see the project funded and completed."

The Calder Freeway/Kings Rd Interchange project includes building an overpass on the Freeway, installing new on/off ramps and duplicating Kings Rd between Melton Highway and the Calder.

The new additional work will be undertaken between February and June of next year, and includes extending an access road linking Highland and Oakbank roads to the new Kings Rd interchange; and upgrading the Sunshine Ave and Calder Freeway intersection.

Keilor MP Natalie Hutchins said the announcement was a victory for a community that had been plagued by significant road safety concerns.

"In 2010, I surveyed the residents of the electorate of Keilor about the issues of importance to them; roads and traffic flow was the number one local problem identified in 90 per cent of the surveys returned," Ms Hutchins said.

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"In recent weeks, I have sent out the 2011 residents' survey, to date I have received about one hundred surveys back, and again roads and local traffic is still a very significant issue in the local area."

David Anderson, secretary of the Delahey Action Group, said the community was pleased that the project would be completed so quickly.

However, he said both the Federal and State Governments, along with VicRoads, needed to put the unspent funds to better use.

Mr Anderson said the intersection of Kings and Taylors roads was an accident waiting to happen, and called for the round-about be removed and traffic lights installed.

CLEANER FUTURE

Brimbank Star—17th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/stalbans-deer-park-caroline-springs/322/story/144498.html>

Brimbank Council is one step closer to winning the battle against the rubbish epidemic in Baldwin Ave, North Sunshine.

The council is confident it will soon see its vision of the North Sunshine Industrial Area becoming a place of improved amenity levels and ambience and quality investment opportunities after the successful clean up.

Council officers first realised three blocks on Baldwin Ave were being used as dumping grounds in 2007 by the property's tenants.

The tenants ran a recycling business, hiring recycling bins to the community, but once the bins were returned the contents were dumped on the empty property.

Prosecution officers were hindered in their proceedings for a number of years as the tenants first moved overseas and then sold the property to a third party, however the land has now been fully cleared.

Brimbank chief administrator Peter Lewinsky said he was pleased to see the land void of garbage.

"This outcome justifies the council's commitment to improving the overall image of the area and to remove these types of illegal activities from within the North Sunshine is a credit to and also highlights the ongoing efforts from the Brimbank's compliance team to address non-compliant operators despite difficult circumstances," Mr Lewinsky said.

"After more than three years the land has been cleared of all illegally imported material and will now be fenced. The cost of removal of the material from the site was previously estimated to be approximately \$90,000."

The council has spent more than \$18.1 million to redevelop the area, including the construction of essential services and infrastructure such as roads, footpaths, street scaping, stormwater drains, sewer mains and water mains.

DIABETES HOTSPOT

Brimbank Star—17th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/322/story/144510.html>

Diabetes is on the rise in Brimbank with figures released last week showing an average of 15 new cases diagnosed each week.

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The alarming data also showed a soaring increase of 212 per cent over the past 10 years, with just 3774 cases in 2001.

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Diabetes Australia-Vic chief executive Professor Greg Johnson said the main drivers of the current epidemic include weight gain across almost all age groups and all ethnic groups, driven by unhealthy diet and lack of physical activity.

“The genetic mix of communities also plays a part and Brimbank includes a mix of ethnic groups with a higher risk of developing type two diabetes,” Prof Johnson said.

He also called on local councils to make better planning decisions to create healthier communities.

Greater Dandenong and Hobsons Bay followed Brimbank as Melbourne hotspots for the disease, which can lead to potentially fatal complications including heart attack, stroke, kidney failure and blindness.

HERITAGE GETS NEW LEASE OF LIFE

Brimbank Star—17th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/stalbans-deer-park-caroline-springs/322/story/144487.html>

Works to enhance and restore the condition of 25 heritage properties in Brimbank are underway, thanks to the latest round of Brimbank Heritage Assistance Fund grants.

The Brimbank Heritage Assistance Fund, which was launched in 2009, provides financial support to private individuals, community groups and organisations for restoration and maintenance works to heritage properties throughout the municipality.

In 2011, 25 successful applicants received funding to carry out works that improve the structural condition and integrity of contributory buildings, which restore altered features to their original appearance, or generally improve the appearance of the property.

Chair of Brimbank Administrators, Peter Lewinsky, said the fund formed part of the council’s ongoing commitment to conserving and enhancing the city’s heritage.

“Brimbank has a vibrant and rich history, which is reflected in the many historic buildings and places found throughout the city.

“By providing financial assistance to owners of these important heritage places, we are helping to maintain our city’s heritage.”

The Heritage Assistance Fund will continue in 2012 with the next round of funding to commence mid-year.

All owners of heritage-listed places are notified of the funding opportunity each year.

LINGERING SMELL

Brimbank Star—17th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/322/story/144493.html>

Derrimut MP Telmo Languiller has called for a State Government investigation into foul odours, which have been bothering residents of the Brimbank Gardens estate in Derrimut.

In parliament, Mr Languiller appealed to Environment Minister Ryan Smith to launch a “comprehensive investigation of and report on complaints received by me, about the Brimbank Gardens estate in my electorate with a view to reaching a resolution”.

Mr Languiller quoted a resident of Sterling Drive in Derrimut, who has contacted him about the smells.

The resident said there was “a foul odour in the air around our area, which smells like a rubbish tip mixed with sewage” which was “actually very bad at times”.

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The resident has contacted the Environment Protection Authority Victoria (EPA) over the unpleasant pong.

Mr Languiller said the EPA called his constituent back and suggested the odour could be coming from the Boral quarry area, impacting on both Brimbank Gardens and Caroline Springs.

When contacted by Star, an EPA spokesman confirmed there have been 26 calls to their Pollution Hotline in the last 12 months, from the area surrounding Boral Recycling's licensed landfill at Ravenhall.

The spokesman said the EPA conducted a compliance visit to the site in May and asked Boral to "make improvements to landfill gas monitoring, leachate management and groundwater quality, which should improve the amenity for the local community".

"EPA expects Boral to adhere to their licence conditions designed to prevent offensive odour from being discharged beyond its boundary. Penalties apply to licence breaches," he said.

Mr Languiller told Star he has experience with similar odour issues in other parts of Brimbank.

"It becomes upsetting for families; it can be distressing and once you notice it, you notice it more every day and it starts to get on your nerves," he said.

He said Boral was a "very good company" which provided jobs for many Brimbank residents, and he supported a solution which would help residents and industry co-exist.

Star contacted the office of the Environment Minister, but received no response.

Residents who experience bad odours can contact the EPA's Pollution Hot Line on 1300 372 842.

HOBSONS BAY

SHOWING SOME LATITUDE

Wyndham Star – 24th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/williamstown-altona-laverton/323/story/145008.html>

Last week more than 100 people turned out to the Latitude Youth Housing fundraising dinner where Larrikin Catholic priest Father Bob Maguire spoke.

The unique organisation and staff work hands on with young people at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Manager of the Altona office Rhonda Collins said the organisation is funded to assist someone for just 13 weeks but in reality it takes about six years of support.

"It's a long but slow journey," she said.

Father Bob was the dinner's special guest helping to launch Latitude's new booklet.

The priest, who is well known for his work with homeless and unconventional ways, spoke to the crowd about his own charity work at his parish in South Melbourne.

He noted the differences between the location of his parish and Melbourne's West and entertained the crowd by challenging political correctness and the use of the word "poor".

"If you're poor, you know it," he said.

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The dinner's MC was Youth Voice delegate Cr Luba Grigorovitch.

Representatives from the Youth Voice Committee, who raised just under \$1000 for Latitude through a Fun Run and festival held the week before, presented Rhonda with the cheque. Father Bob said: "You (Latitude) shouldn't have to beg for 1000 quid."

"What you're involved in is far more important than what Obama and Julia Gillard are doing in the Northern Territory," he said.

"You're involved in community building.

"You only want \$400,000 a year – someone can do it."

Father Bob had the group laughing, stating Aussies respond better to humour rather than sob stories and passionate protests like Americans.

Last year Latitude supported 175 young people, for more information or to make a donation call 93150061.

CELEBRATING 50 FIREY YEARS

Wyndham Star – 24th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/williamstown-altona-laverton/323/story/145015.html>

For half a century Altona Fire Station and those stationed there have been protecting the people of Hobsons Bay.

Last week dozens of people turned out to celebrate the station's 50th anniversary including retired fireman Robin Mills.

Robin, who has worked with at every station in the western suburbs, said he was stationed in Altona for 12 years.

"I like to come back and see the old blokes I used to work with, friends and good comrades," he said.

"I went to many fires with them."

Robin said despite being retired now for four years certain images from his career still haunt him.

"When you see someone burnt to death and a car accident – it stays with you," he said.

"You wonder if you could have done more."

The Hoppers Crossing resident said he found settling into retirement after 37 years as a firey easy but still misses "the blokes".

Last Tuesday's celebration was a golden opportunity for many of the retired firefighters who served in the West to catch up on old times and pass on words of wisdom to the younger lads.

The station, which was officially opened in 1961, has already responded to more than 230 calls this year.

The Altona station has played a key role in Hobsons Bay with firefighters turning out to all major incidents that have occurred in Altona, Newport and surrounding areas, in particular many industrial incidents including the 1995 critical leak at the Mobil Refinery in Altona.

Two firefighters were injured while attending the incident where about 10,000 litres of crude oil escaped and the pipe work was severely damaged.

Station Officer Ken Pannell used the anniversary as an opportunity to reminisce about the good times and said the station has been home to some star personalities including Robin Mills.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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WARD REVIEW BEGINS

Wyndham Star—24th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/williamstown-altona-laverton/323/story/145017.html>

HobsonS Bay's electoral review is now underway.

The Local Government Act 1989 requires the Victorian Electoral Commission to conduct an electoral representation review of each municipality in Victoria at least every 12 years.

An electoral representation review considers the appropriate number of councillors for the municipality, whether it should be divided into wards, the number of wards and councillors per ward, names of wards and positioning of ward boundaries.

At the end of the review, the VEC makes it's a final recommendation to the Minister for Local Government.

Any changes to the electoral structure of the municipality apply at the next Council general elections, which are due to be held next year.

At present the city of Hobsons Bay is made up of seven wards, each with one ward councillor.

Victorian Electoral Commissioner, Mr Steve Tully, is inviting anyone interested in the review to attend the public information session.

The session will be held at 7pm in Meeting Room 3, Hobsons Bay Civic Centre, 115 Civic Parade, Altona on Thursday 1 December.

The VEC has prepared a Guide for Submissions to explain the review process.

"The review considers a range of information, including evidence put forward in public submissions," said Mr Tully.

Any person or group can make a written submission to the VEC about the review.

BAY IS A HOON HOTSPOT

Hobson Bay Star—24th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/williamstown-altona-laverton/323/story/145009.html>

Hobsons Bay is one of the hoon capitals of Victoria.

While Wyndham continues to be a hotspot for dangerous drivers with police in the municipality nabbing more hoons than neighbouring areas, Hobsons Bay is running a close second.

According to statistics given to Star, in the first 10 months of this year 97 hoons had their cars impounded in Wyndham.

Hobsons Bay came in second with 74 impoundments while Maribyrnong had 44.

The majority of offenders in Wyndham, 47, were nabbed for speeding by more than 45km/h while four were caught at more than 70km/h over the speed limit.

Of the 97 offenders, 40 came from areas outside Wyndham.

Wyndham Highway Patrol Acting Sergeant Graeme Crouch said the statistics should be looked at in a positive light. "I think it shows that we're the best at catching them (hoons)," Acting Sgt Crouch said.

"A lot of them are what we call transient hoons, meaning they are coming from other areas and hooning here."

Ninety of the dangerous drivers were male, and Acting Sgt Crouch said constant warnings seemed to be falling on deaf ears.

"We've got a dedicated team of officers on the roads and as long as they keep hooning here, we'll keep catching them," he said.

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"A lot of these drivers just don't get the message and can't be educated."

Acting Sgt Crouch said in the lead up to the Christmas holidays more police than ever would be on the roads enforcing the road rules.

HOBSONS BAY ARTISTS TO SHARE STUDIO SPACE WITH COMMUNITY

Hobsons Bay Leader—22nd November 2011

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/hobsons-bay-artists-to-share-studio-space-with-community/>

Altona Meadows artist Karin Zeller will open her studio doors to the public this weekend as part of the western suburbs' Open Studios program.

Artists all over Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong and Wyndham will take part in the event, which gives people the chance to see artists at work and attend workshops and demonstrations.

For fans of Zeller, it is a chance to see the confessed "eclectic" artist at work and, perhaps, even catch a glimpse of her muse - her neighbour's cat.

"I'm sort of building a reputation for my colour abstracts, but, particularly, my cats. People love my cats," Zeller said. She said the Open Studios event enabled people who were interested to have a look at an artist's studio.

More than 50 artists and studios will take part in the event, offering self-guided tours, art sales, live music and puppet shows.

Zeller will open her studio on Saturday, while elsewhere in Hobsons Bay, artist Bruce Hargrave will give a talk at the Louis Joel Art and Community Centre, Altona, on Sunday and painter Helen Pollard will host a workshop at her Altona Meadows studio, also on Sunday.

DOG LAWS COSTLY FOR HOBSONS BAY

Hobsons Bay Leader—22nd November 2011

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/dog-laws-costly-for-hobsons-bay/>

Hobsons Bay has missed out on a share of \$135,000 handed out by the Baillieu Government to help councils implement the state's new dog registration laws.

Eight councils, including Wyndham and Brimbank, which have experienced a "significant increase in work", were allocated between \$10,000-\$30,000 to help them enforce the laws.

"Local governments' obligation to enforce dog laws has not changed but the decision to end the amnesty and increase penalties has resulted in more work for some councils," Agriculture and Food Securities Minister Peter Walsh said when announcing the grants.

But while no extra funding was headed this way, Hobsons Bay Council's business and finance director Glenn O'Sullivan said council staff's workload had increased.

"In the short term, additional resources are required to check that restricted breed dogs presently registered are complying with the legislation in relation to enclosures, signage, etc; assess whether dogs now registered as pit bull crosses or Staffordshire terrier crosses should be declared restricted breed dogs; and to investigate whether any dogs registered in September following the amnesty period should be declared restricted breed dogs," Mr O'Sullivan said.

"The council would welcome any support the State Government can provide in enforcing the new legislation."

Mr O'Sullivan backed a call by the Australian Services Union, which represents many council staff, for more consistency and support from the Government.

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"While financial assistance would be appreciated for all councils, further guidelines on applying the new standard for restricted breed dogs would also be encouraged to ensure a consistent approach across all councils," Mr O'Sullivan said.

The ASU welcomed the extra funding but said more needed to be done to protect animal management officers.

HOBSONS BAY WOMEN URGED TO STEP UP

Hobsons Bay Leader—22nd November 2011

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/have-your-say-hobsons-bay-women-urged-to-step-up/>

Hobsons Bay's two female councillors have backed a State Government "call to arms" for more women to nominate in next year's local elections.

Crs Angela Altair and Luba Grigorovitch supported the call by Local Government Minister Jeanette Powell and Women's Affairs Minister Mary Wooldridge.

Ms Powell said although there were more women than men in Victoria, fewer than 30 per cent of the state's councillors were women.

Hobsons Bay Council has two women, four men and one intersex councillor, putting it in the middle of the pack with regards to gender equality.

Cr Altair, who was the only female councillor when she was elected in 1999, said it was vital to have a good gender balance in local government.

"I crave the day when gender doesn't come into it, but the sad fact is men still dominate the seats of power everywhere," she said.

"At grassroots level it's even more vital to have a good gender balance given women's different life experiences and views and the many decisions we make that directly affect their lives - from rates to childcare fees to the height of pram ramps."

The council has established a women's advisory committee that Cr Grigorovitch said would actively involve women in the community in council issues.

EMERGENCY SAVIOURS

Hobsons Bay Leader—22nd November 2011

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/emergency-saviours/>

Firefighters helping in medical emergencies are being held up by those who think they should not be there.

Since 2000, fire crews have been dispatched to medical emergencies, often arriving on a scene before paramedics.

But the Metropolitan Fire Brigade says many people don't realise firefighters are trained lifesavers and try to send them away.

Despite this, firefighters are attending an increasing number of medical emergencies.

Crews in Hobsons Bay were called to 102 medical emergencies in 2010-11, up 13.3 per cent from 90 call-outs the previous year.

Altona C platoon station officer Russell Breguet said people needed to understand that when they called for an ambulance, a fire crew might be the first to show up.

"Quite often, people don't understand that when they call an ambulance, we might be the first to attend," Mr Breguet said.

"Initially they might be a little bit shocked, but most people are happy someone in a uniform has turned up and is doing something to help."

In some areas, including Altona, firefighters attend more medical emergencies than fires.

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Altona crews have responded to 231 callouts in 2011, including 25 structure fires and 30 medical emergencies.

MFB chief executive Nick Easy said the medical response program complemented Ambulance Victoria's work and was a vital link in saving lives

"We need to raise public awareness about the MFB EMR service so that they are not confused when a fire truck arrives," Mr Easy said.

"Any time lost managing that confusion could be a life-and-death difference."

Firefighters are trained in basic lifesaving techniques, including CPR and defibrillation.

RUNNING FOR A CAUSE

Hobson Bay Star – 18th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/williamstown-altona-laverton/322/story/144645.html>

For a group of conscientious young people, giving up their free time to give back to their community is just something they love to do.

Over the weekend young people from Hobsons Bay's Youth Voice Committee (YVC) headed up by Youth Voice Delegate Cr Luba Grigorovitch organised a fun-run to raise money for local not-for-profit organisation Latitude Youth Housing.

The event saw scores turn out to give back, raise awareness and donate much needed funds to the organisation.

YVC member Alejandro Zambrano, who came up with the idea for the fun run, wanted to engage the community in a healthy way whilst at the same time raise money for a good cause.

Through his studies the 18-year-old had worked previously with Latitude and the group thought they would be the ideal organisation to sponsor.

"They're such an important part of Altona," he said.

For Elias Assaf, YVC was the perfect opportunity to get involved in Hobsons Bay.

"I wanted to get involved, especially in youth events," he said.

The group organised the 4.2 kilometre event off their own back and in their own time.

Twenty-year-old Alex said the result was a huge team effort.

"We're trying to get the YVC name out there and raise funds for a charity that affects our community," she said.

For Cr Grigorovitch, seeing the day come to fruition was a particularly proud moment.

"I've been with them since joining the council," she said.

"The events have gone from strength to strength.

"I'm extraordinarily proud."

This Wednesday an inaugural fundraising dinner will be held at Grand Star Receptions for Latitude where a cheque from the YVC will be presented to the organisation.

WORK CLAIMS SOAR

Hobson Bay Star – 18th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/williamstown-altona-laverton/322/story/144648.html>

Hobsons Bay has had the second highest number of WorkSafe claims in the West since 2006 – coming a close second to Wyndham.

A week after Victorian workplaces were confirmed as Australia's safest; WorkSafe has launched a campaign urging safety improvements before an inspector visits.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

25th November 2011



The new campaign, 'Any Day Now' went to air last night and comes on the heels of the Federal Government's annual benchmarking report which confirms Victoria as having the lowest number of injuries per-thousand workers of any state or territory.

Despite this, there were 4681 standardised claims reported in Hobsons Bay from July 2006 to June 2011.

And despite coming second, Hobsons Bay boasted the highest payments, with more than \$101 million being paid to workers since 2006.

In Wyndham there were 4911 WorkSafe claims paying out more than \$96 million in worker's compensation.

The figures indicate only those whose injuries caused them to be off work 10 days or more and those who had treatment costing more than \$580.

They don't include self-employed people unless identified as employees of a company.

As a whole there were 17,720 claims in the West with more than \$366 million in worker's compensation paid out.

In 2010-11 inspectors visited 1546 workplaces across Victoria issuing 2,118 safety improvement notices and 24 prohibition notices where there was an immediate risk to safety or health.

In 171 cases safety issues were fixed on-the-spot.

Commonly-found issues include dangerous manual handling including non-use of suitable lifting devices, damaged storage racking, unguarded machines, unsafe scaffolding, inappropriate storage of dangerous goods, inadequate return-to-work plans for injured workers and poor forklift traffic management.

MARIBRYNONG

VOICES AGAINST VIOLENCE

Maribyrnong Star—24th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/323/story/145053.html>

Maribyrnong City Council will transform the Footscray railway station this Friday as hip hop crew Urban Voices join forces with White Ribbon Day participants to support the elimination of violence against women.

Participants and performers will catch trains into the city from 1.15pm to join the 2.30pm Not1More Walk Against Family Violence Event, which marches from Melbourne Town Hall to Federation Square.

Free Metcards will be available for participants.

The council has a range of projects underway to support the elimination of violence against women, including a recently endorsed statement supporting gender equity and prevention of violence against women.

The council has also begun a joint three-year project with Brimbank and Wyndham City councils to develop a whole of community model to prevent violence against women and build more equitable local governments and communities in the West.

The council will work closely with schools, sports clubs, women's and community health and other key partners to prevent violence together.

White Ribbon Day is the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women held on 25 November each year.

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FURY AT TREE CULL

Maribyrnong Star—24th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/323/story/145046.html>

Maribyrnong City Council has condemned a recent act of vandalism that saw eight trees destroyed in Braybrook last week.

The trees in Skinner Oval appeared to have been attacked with a chainsaw or axe, with all eight trees cut down to their stumps.

The damage was so extensive that none of the trees could be salvaged and the council's leisure and open space team had to clear away the trees and cut the stumps to ground level for the public's safety.

The eight trees were planted in 2008 through a joint council and Neighbourhood Renewal partnership.

Mayor Sarah Carter branded the attack a senseless act of vandalism and has called on anyone with information to contact Footscray police.

Stony Creek Ward councillor Sel Sanli added: "Trees in our parks and gardens play a big part in making our city a great place to live and we'll be looking at getting new trees planted as quickly as possible."

"This is a mindless act that has damaged a great local park.

"Even once the trees are replaced, they will take several years to grow again."

The council intends to replant the trees in autumn next year.

Tree plantings are usually done in cooler months to give trees the best chance of survival.

WISDOM OF THE AGES

Maribyrnong Star—24th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/323/story/145039.html>

Meet the West Footscray resident trying to make life easier for Maribyrnong seniors.

Mali Wilson, 62, is the secretary of the Older

Persons Reference Group, Maribyrnong City Council advisory group that examines council policies from the point of view of the older citizens of Maribyrnong.

The group, which started in February this year, has seven members and meets monthly to discuss topical issues in the municipality.

The group recently put out a survey to Maribyrnong's senior citizens asking for their opinions on any amenities and issues concerning them.

The results of the survey will be released in January.

"We as a group will take that survey and concentrate on what things are the most difficult for the aged in Maribyrnong and try to work towards improving them next year," Ms Wilson said.

It is also currently involved in helping the council shape its Ageing Well strategy, which provides a plan for meeting the needs of the area's ageing population and to define the changing role of local government.

"I've become quite passionate about the area, and I really enjoy the community," Ms Wilson said. "I'm quite passionate about making sure that this part of the world is good from the point of its ageing residents."

To find out more about the Older Persons Reference Group, call Helen on 9314 9368 or send an email to maribyrnong.oprg@gmail.com.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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MARIBYRNONG OPTS FOR POSTAL VOTE

Maribyrnong Star—24th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/323/story/145041.html>

Maribyrnong ratepayers will take to the polls next year via postal voting.

Maribyrnong City Council voted last week to use the postal method in the 2012 council election and has appointed the Municipal Association of Victoria to conduct the tender's process for electoral services.

The council adopted the postal vote for the first time in the 2008 election, achieving a 66.89 per cent participation rate.

In 2005, attendance voting saw a 65.84 voter turnout rate.

Councillor Sel Sanli said he would have preferred the council put the postal versus attendance debate out for community consultation prior to the decision, adding that last year's State election was ran by attendance voting.

But fellow councillor Michael Clarke supported postal voting, saying it was a cheaper option that allowed for a greater level of representation, particularly for residents who are unable to leave their home to put in their vote.

It is not yet known how much the election will cost ratepayers, but in 2008 a postal election was priced at \$195,000.

Council elections will be held across the State on 27 October.

WORKING WOUNDED COST \$72M

Maribyrnong Star—24th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/323/story/145051.html>

City of Maribyrnong workers have claimed nearly \$72 million in work-related accidents over the past five years.

Workplaces in the municipality have forked out \$71,799,233 to cover the medical expenses, wages and other expenses for cases where the person was off work for 10 days or more and/or had treatment costs exceeding \$580.

A total 3698 claims were made between July 2006 and June 2011. The figure does not include self-employed people.

The statistics are part of a new WorkSafe campaign that is reminding business owners it pays to keep your workplace safe.

The campaign is calling on businesses to make any necessary safety improvements before a WorkSafe inspector visits.

A recent Comparative Performance and Monitoring report compiled by Safe Work Australia revealed a 30 per cent drop in the rate of workplace injuries in Victoria between 2004 and 2010.

WorkSafe's health and safety executive director Ian Forsyth was thrilled with the result, but said Victorian workplaces should not rest on their laurels.

"This campaign reminds employers that WorkSafe inspectors are out and about and that they are serious about safety," Mr Forsyth said.

"Plenty of people are doing the right thing, but our inspectors come across the same problems over and over again.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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"They're generally basic matters that can be fixed at little or no cost, but if left undone can have devastating consequences.

"They are known hazards with known solutions. Workplaces need to find and fix problems, not wait for an inspector to come or for someone to be hurt or killed."

FASHION TO A TEE

Maribyrnong Star—24th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/323/story/145058.html>

It's the business that started out as a hobby.

The Gently Unfurling Sneak is the work of Yarraville designer Anika Cook, who started the label as Sneak Design in 2006 to make extra cash while studying.

Today, it is an online business and wholesaler, with more than 27 stockists across Australia.

"I wanted to teach myself screen printing, so I bought myself a whole load of equipment and to start paying back for the cost of the equipment I was selling T-shirts at local markets," Ms Cook said.

"I never really thought I was building it up into a full-time business – if I'd known how long and how hard it would be, I don't think I would have even started in the first place. It's an amazing job to have, very rewarding. I do love it."

Inspired by old-time imagery and Victorian illustrations, The Gently Unfurling Sneak is an eclectic mix of clothes, accessories and art work.

Ms Cook also exhibits her wares at various markets across Melbourne, and will be one of more than 80 stallholders who will exhibit their made-in-Melbourne creations at the Maribyrnong Makers Market's Christmas Bonanza this Saturday.

"I love doing markets because it's really good to be able to speak to your customers face to face and also to spy on them and see what they pick up first and what comments they make to their friends and things," she said.

"Also, a lot of stockists come to the markets and see if you do wholesale."

The market will run out of Seddon's Uniting Church Hall from 9.30am to 3.30pm, go to www.maribyrnongmakersmarket.com.au for more information.

MARIBYRNONG COUNCIL BRAKES ON BIKE FUNDING

Maribyrnong Weekly—23rd November 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/maribyrnong-council-brakes-on-bike-funding/2368124.aspx>

Maribyrnong is falling behind the pack, slipping adrift of other metropolitan councils on bike-related spending, according to the Bicycle Network Victoria's latest analysis.

The Bicycle Expenditure Index (BiXE), compiled by the network, ranks each council based on the total bike-related spending allocated in its annual budget divided by the number of residents in the municipality.

A benchmark of \$5 per resident is considered an amount that will adequately improve bike facilities and increase cycling rates.

Maribyrnong spent \$2.85 per resident in 2010-11, making it one of only two "inner zone" councils to fall below the \$5 threshold. The latest figure was below the inner zone average of \$10.16 per resident and below Maribyrnong's five-year average of \$4.16.

The Melbourne-wide average is \$12.43 per resident. Twenty-nine Victorian councils spent more than \$5 per resident in 2010-11, compared to just six in 2007.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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The Weekly last week reported that a cycling route linking Tottenham and Sunshine railway stations and upgrades to the dangerously narrow Shepherd Bridge over the Maribyrnong River were not going ahead as part of major, state government-funded projects.

However, the BiXE report puts the responsibility in the council's hands by recommending it could improve cycling rates by investing more money into bike routes in central Footscray, more on-road bike lanes and off-road bike lanes close to schools and on council-maintained roads.

Council's Ian Butterworth said: "The Footscray master plan has a strong emphasis on accessibility that includes consideration of bikes as transport into and within Footscray."

\$70 MILLION PLAN FOR NOT-SO-LITTLE SAIGON

Maribyrnong Weekly—23rd November 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/70-million-plan-for-notsolittle-saigon/2368122.aspx>

Footscray's iconic Little Saigon market will undergo a \$70 million redevelopment after Maribyrnong Council approved plans for the construction of residential towers on the site.

The present three-storey building will be demolished to make way for a four-storey podium made up of the market on the ground floor, office space and two levels of car parking.

Eight- and 12-storey residential towers with 260 one, two and three-bedroom apartments sit atop the podium.

The proposed height is double that recommended in the council's skyline study, but planning officers recommended it be approved because its location in the

heart of Footscray made it "an ideal candidate for a significant redevelopment". "The size of the site ... and abuttal to three local roads provides an opportunity for a development that exceeds the preferred heights," the planning report put to the council stated.

It also noted that in several other cases, the council's preferred height limits have been overturned at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal, setting precedents for taller buildings.

Approval was subject to a host of conditions that include landscaping, and minor modifications to the designs.

The council has also stipulated the developers, Sparkling Waters Pty Ltd, put money towards streetscape works on Byron Street and a public artwork near the site.

Eleven objections were lodged in relation to the height of the buildings, car parking and noise.

Little Saigon owner and Footscray Asian Business Association president Binh Le said they would try to keep the market open during construction. "We will try not to close the market and do the work in stages. If it's too difficult then we have to close for a short while.

"It will be better than just apartments. A lot of them have big balconies, there will be a barbecue area and rooftop gardens."

Little Saigon opened in the late 1980s and Mr Le took over in 1992. The busy market caters to Footscray's large Asian population and has become a favourite with locals and visitors of all backgrounds.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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Councillors at last week's meeting voted unanimously to grant a planning permit. Mayor Sarah Carter said it was a worthwhile development that met the council and state government's aims of increased density in Footscray.

"It's a good design outcome and that's what we want to see in Footscray," Cr Carter said.

"We support development in the right areas and in this instance we believe they've got the design component right."

The approval continues an upward trend for development in Footscray: Planning Minister Matthew Guy earlier this year approved a \$90 million, 25-storey tower near Footscray railway station while a \$350 million development with student apartments, residential units and office space at McNabb Avenue is awaiting approval.

The minister is also considering rezoning the old Kinnears rope works on Ballarat Road.

Concept plans for the site show a maximum of 1350 homes for more than 2500 people, as well as retail space, a residential hotel, offices and a medical centre with building heights from 4-18 storeys.

The council predicts the municipality will need an extra 15,800 homes by 2031 and much of that will be through increased urban density in places like Footscray.

Work at Little Saigon must start within two years or the planning permit expires.

HAIL, THE MENTORED MUSOS

Maribyrnong Weekly—23rd November 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/hail-the-mentored-musos/2368130.aspx>

Three years of beats, rhymes that have been used to build self-confidence, literacy skills and forging a career in music will be on show in a new DVD.

Emerging hip-hop artists have recorded their music and learned about the business of the music industry as part of Maribyrnong Council's hip-hop program.

Now, the results of their work - a DVD called Urban Voices - is to be launched at the Phoenix Youth Centre at 2pm on Saturday.

The launch will include the unveiling of a documentary and music video created during the workshops and release of a CD for White Ribbon Day to spread the message of prevention of violence against women. In the hip-hop program, participants were mentored by professional musicians.

DIABETES SPENDING CUTS 'FALSE ECONOMY'

Maribyrnong Weekly—23rd November 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/diabetes-spending-cuts-false-economy/2368121.aspx>

The Federal Government has cut funding to a program designed to prevent the spread of a diabetes epidemic in the west.

If a patient aged 40 to 49 was considered to have risk factors such as obesity, physical inactivity and an unhealthy diet, their doctor could refer them to the lifestyle modification program run by divisional practices, such as Pivot West, which services the municipalities of Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong and parts of Melton.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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Through the program, at-risk patients were able to get free professional help to eat healthier food and exercise more often.

The program will be discontinued from June 30 next year, but no new patients have been admitted from November 1 this year.

More than 150 people have been referred to Pivot West since February last year and there has been an extremely low drop-out rate.

Pivot West says people who take part in two six-week sessions can delay the onset of diabetes by as much as 15 years.

Footscray doctor and Pivot West chairman Dimitrios Kollios described the funding cuts as a "false economy".

Dr Kollios said about 20 per cent of his patients were diabetic. He added that patients were being diagnosed with diabetes at a younger age. "That's not including those who have impaired glucose tolerance or what we call pre-diabetic."

Dr Kollios added: "One diabetes-related case of kidney failure, blindness or a heart attack, apart from the human suffering, costs thousands of dollars down the track.

"It's really short-sighted. The cuts to the lifestyle modification program result in short-term savings but don't take a long-term view."

Dr Kollios said the program provided valuable nutrition advice, an individualised exercise plan and goal-setting and were aimed at keeping at-risk patients motivated through the use of accredited allied health professionals.

According to research by Diabetes Australia Victoria, there are 3.6 new cases of diabetes each week in Maribyrnong.

The number of those with the disease has risen from 1895 to 3190 in the decade to 2011 - an increase of 146 per cent.

A spokesman for Health Minister Nicola Roxon blamed the lower-than-anticipated participation rate for discontinuing the program.

HIGH RISE HOPE

Maribyrnong Star—22nd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/322/story/144795.html>

A \$70 million redevelopment of Footscray's Little Saigon will transform the market into a high-rise shopping and apartment Mecca.

Plans tabled at Maribyrnong City Council last week reveal the proposed construction of two apartment blocks – including an eight-storey tower fronting Ryan St and a 12-storey tower fronting Byron St – housing 260 apartments, ranging from studios to three bedroom abodes.

The two apartment blocks will be joined by the existing Little Saigon Market on the ground floor and will feature a rooftop garden on the eight-storey tower.

The plans defy Footscray City Skyline guidelines and draft revised studies that recommend a preferred building height of six storeys for the Little Saigon area.

The plans also include a drastic cut in recommended car parking, allowing for 287 car parking spaces, despite ResCode recommendations of 425 for a development of that size and use.

Eleven objections were received to the proposal, with objectors concerned about the lack of car parking, increased traffic, noise, privacy, and the impact on heritage buildings fronting Barkly St and future development opportunities for adjoining sites.

Nevertheless, the development has been praised by councillors and traders alike.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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Councillors John Cumming and Michael Clarke said the redevelopment would enhance Footscray's CBD as a prime activity centre, while Dina Lynch said the car parking was ample for the area, despite the reduction of spaces.

"There's nothing but good that can come of what's proposed," Cr Cumming said.

"I believe this will be a catalyst for further development in Footscray."

Fellow councillor Sel Sanli added: "this is a good way forward ... I'm pretty optimistic it will increase our employment opportunities and economic development."

Councillors unanimously voted in favour of the redevelopment last week.

Footscray Traders Association president Grant Miles applauded the redevelopment.

"It's by far the best development I've seen in Footscray – it's high quality, it's a good mix of different sized apartments, it's got plenty of car parking, more than any other development I've seen in Footscray," he said.

"I'm really happy about it."

Little Saigon opened in 1992 to cater to the growing Asian population in Footscray, but has since developed a cult following from all backgrounds.

FOOTSCRAY TWIN TOWER PLAN

Maribyrnong Leader – 3rd November 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/footscray-twin-tower-plan-fbready/>

Maribyrnong Council has hailed an innovative, green, dual-tower development as the future of Footscray.

Little Saigon Market is set to be transformed into two multi-level buildings, one of eight storeys and one with 12, after councillors unanimously voted in favour of the Nicholson St development at last week's council meeting.

The development will contain 3056sq m of retail space and 260 apartments along with 89 bicycle spaces, 11 for market use and 78 residential and a minimum 287 car spaces, 96 of them for the market.

Footscray Asian Business Association president Binh Le, co-owner of the property, said the development was a way to modernise the Little Saigon Market.

Mr Le said the building's fourth level would be a communal outdoor space called "the podium" and included landscaping and a barbecue area, while the top of the northern building would be a garden. He hoped the project would be completed within two years.

Mr Le said the architects had created "liveable apartments".

"The people would feel just like they're living in a house instead of a box," he said.

Techne Architects' director Nicholas Travers said the market would be rebuilt entirely but reconstructed in a similar format to the existing building. "A complex staging solution would enable the existing market to continue to trade throughout the period of construction," Mr Travers said.

Footscray Traders Association president Grant Miles said of all the development plans for Footscray, this was the best one.

Mr Miles highlighted the amount of parking, the incorporation of open space and the mixture of apartment sizes as positive.

Mayor Sarah Carter said the council was pleased with the development because it was in an area that could handle high density.

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Cr Michael Clarke said it was a project that demonstrated the future.

SKINNER CHAINSAW MASSACRE IN BRAYBROOK

Maribyrnong Leader– 22nd November 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/skinner-chainsaw-massacre-in-braybrook/>

Tree vandals have destroyed eight trees at Skinner Oval, Braybrook Park.

The trees, planted in 2008 through a Maribyrnong Council and Neighbourhood Renewal partnership, appear to have been attacked with a chainsaw or axe.

“This is a senseless act of vandalism that has destroyed trees that belong to everyone in the community,” Mayor Sarah Carter said.

She said it was alarming to know vandals would walk around with an axe or chainsaw to cut down trees.

Stoney Creek Ward Councillor Sel Sanli said: “Trees in our parks and gardens play a big part in making our city a great place to live and we’ll be looking at getting new trees planted as quickly as possible”.

The trees were too damaged to regrow naturally so the council has removed them for public safety.

Cr Sanli said new trees would be planted after summer to give them the best chance of survival.

“This is a mindless act that has damaged a great local park,” he said.

The councillors called on people to contact Footscray police with any information about the attack.

MELTON

MELTON MP WANTS BAILLIEU TO SPARE CFA BUILDING

Melton Leader–25th November 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/melton-mp-wants-baillieu-to-spare-cfa-building/>

Melton State Labor MP Don Nardella has urged the State Government not to demolish the Toolern Vale CFA building.

Speaking in Parliament last week, Mr Nardella suggested the building in Creamery Rd, which is set to be replaced, was perfectly suited to be used by the Toolern Vale Landcare group, the Red Cross and other community groups.

“I’m requesting that the Baillieu Government keep the excellent building for community use and build the new Toolern Vale CFA station elsewhere in the town or close to the station,” he said.

“The CFA building is becoming too small for the new generation of tankers and equipment, but it is well suited to house the equipment of the Red Cross and Landcare group and for use as a meeting room for the community, which already uses the building.”

Mr Nardella said the community worked well together to improve the environment, and it should be easy to find land to build a new CFA station. “Toolern Vale is a great community that is proud of its school, its CFA and its hall,” he said. “Our residents are very community minded, with lots of great work occurring in the district. “I urge the Baillieu Government to keep the CFA building for community use.”

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Mr Nardella said he would make further submissions after discussions with the community.

GRASS GOES IN MELTON FUEL FIGHT

Melton Leader—25th November 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/grass-goes-in-melton-fuel-fight/>

Melton firefighters are refreshing their skills and keeping an eye on long grass ahead of this year's bushfire season.

Melton Fire Station Operations Officer James Dullard said high growth conditions throughout the shire had created the potential for grass fires in windy conditions, and firefighters were already reducing the risk.

"The grass still looks green but it will only take two or three warm days to dry out and quickly change into a high fire risk," he said.

"We have put in place a strategic plan of fuel reductions and grass slashing to create a buffer."

Mr Dullard encouraged Melton and Moorabool residents to start working on their own fire plans.

"Residents should be reducing fuel in and around their buildings and blocks and putting a plan in place, especially in high risk areas like Toolern Vale, Diggers Rest and Eynesbury.

"Be aware of your local risks through observation and inquiry; have a plan to activate on high fire risk days and practice that plan; and be confident in your decision making once you activate your plan."

Mr Dullard also encouraged residents to attend the CFA's regular Fire Ready meetings.

Meetings are scheduled for Diggers Rest on Thursday, November 24 at 7.30pm at the Diggers Rest Fire Station and in Rockbank on Monday, November 28 at 7.30pm in the Rockbank Community Hall, Leakes Rd.

For more information about bushfires or community meetings, visit cfa.vic.gov.au or call the Victorian Bushfire Information Line on 1800 240th667.

ANGER OVER KURUNJANG TREE PRUNING

Melton Leader—25th November 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/anger-over-kurunjang-tree-pruning/>

A Kurunjang man has taken the axe to Melton Council claiming it unnecessarily pruned a healthy tree on his nature strip.

Black Knight Way resident Richard Sikorski says a branch from a "perfectly healthy" tree was cut from his nature strip without notice on November 8.

He said the 3.5m red flowering gum was "hacked" at 7.30am.

"We were given no notice and they hacked down a perfectly healthy tree," he said. "The tree was not near any powerlines, didn't obstruct any pedestrians and they just hacked it down."

Mr Sikorski said the council should instead "look after their own backyard" and trim boxthorns on an adjacent council-owned parcel of land.

"Across the road on a council-owned block there are boxthorns going wild which they (council) do nothing about," he said.

"They (boxthorns) are four to five feet high, but they leave them alone - the hypocrisy of this council is unbelievable. I just can't believe it and we've been given no explanation."

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Melton Council's manager of operations Greg Wood said the tree was pruned, not hacked. "The tree was formatively pruned due to the tree's structure," he said. Mr Wood said the council was mindful of the noise generated from chainsaws, but 7.30am was "not considered an unreasonable time" to start work.

MELTON'S BIG SPEND FOR PUSH BIKE USERS

Melton Leader—24th November 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/meltons-big-spend-for-push-bike-users/>

Melton Council spends more than most Victorian municipalities on bicycle users, but more improvements are still needed, a cycling group says.

Bicycle Victoria expenditure figures show the council spent \$9.18 a person on cyclists in the 2011-12 financial year, almost double the \$5 threshold.

It is the seventh highest spending council in the state behind Surf Coast (\$26.32 a person), Yarra (\$24.64), Wangaratta (\$15.83), Wyndham (\$14.92), Melbourne (\$12.43) and Bayside (\$9.66).

But Melton Cycling Club president Fabian Zappone said there was still more work to be done.

"I think the bicycle tracks need improving," he said.

"Some of them are quite old and need upgrading and they could link up better.

"But overall I'd rate the shire quite well for cyclists at this point - the council works in quite well with us and help us as much as they can."

The council's spending on cyclists was the second highest in the outer zone.

Its five-year average spend a person was \$4.80.

The BiXe report commends the shire for taking part in Super Tuesday Bike Count as well as commissioning a BikeScope in 2011.

It suggests the council ensures new growth corridor areas are linked to central Melton and the rest of the Metropolitan Trail Network, improves Coburn Rd and ensures works in new developments are connected to schools and activity centres.

Bicycle Network's Bike Futures program manager Mike Williamson said the report was compiled each year so councils and their communities could compare the level of commitment to providing bicycle transport and recreation.

NEW BLOOD FOR MELTON RESIDENTS ASSOCIATION

Melton Leader—24th November 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/new-blood-for-melton-residents-association/>

The sister of Melton Mayor Justin Mammarella has joined the committee of a newly formed residents' group.

Lara Carli, a former Whittlesea mayor, has been appointed secretary of the Cambridge, Coburn and Watts Residents' Association.

A resident of Taylors Hill for seven years, Ms Carli said she joined the group after meeting its president and founder, Michael Matalewski, at a council meeting.

"I was really inspired to see a young person with so much passion for the community," Ms Carli said.

"What I liked about Michael's idea was that the group represents the whole municipality, it doesn't just pick one suburb."

Ms Carli said while she and her brother shared a "passion for local government", she had not discussed her new role in the residents' group with him. "I had spoken to Justin when I'd met Michael," she said.

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“However, we haven’t really discussed what part I will play on the committee.”

She said the group was diverse.

“I think what makes the group so great is that we have so many different ages’ groups that attend, so you get different viewpoints around the table,” she said.

Other office bearers for the group include Matthew Matalewski (vice-president) and Charmaine Luck (treasurer).

Meanwhile, president Michael Matalewski has said that Diggers Rest resident David O’Connor was welcome to join the new group provided he leaves the Diggers Rest Residents’ Association.

Mr O’Connor said he was told he could not be a member of the new group due to his membership links to Diggers Rest.

CLEARING THE AIR AT MELTON RESERVOIR

Melton Leader—24th November 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/clearing-the-air-at-melton-reservoir/>

Sixteen new signs around Melton Reservoir will be reviewed after complaints they were confusing.

Southern Rural Water installed the signs around Clarkes Rd and Hopetoun Park as part of a crackdown on illegal water access and anti-social behaviour.

But the signs have confused walkers and fishermen, who are allowed access to the area.

“The signs have caused some confusion and we are reviewing their wording,” said Southern Rural Water’s manager of water supply west, Edward Smith. “We want to emphasise that we welcome passive recreation in this area, such as fishing and walking.

“However, we do ask that people leave their vehicles at the top of the escarpment where there is no safety risk to themselves or others, and also no danger of causing erosion - we also ask that people take their own rubbish home.”

The signs also explain that access by jet skis and boats is prohibited.

Mr Smith said the signs were part of an ongoing campaign to “discourage illegal access to the northern end of the reservoir (also known as Melton Weir and Exford Weir) where the water has been deemed too dangerous for boating for various reasons including the narrowness of the waterway, fluctuating water levels and submerged hazards”.

“We have had reports of accidents and near-misses in this area by illegal boaters and jet skiers, and have strong concerns for public safety,” he said.

SORRY STATE EDUCATION IN MELTON

Melton Leader—23rd November 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/sorry-state-education-in-melton/>

Almost \$3 million is needed to repair some run-down Melton Shire schools.

State Government figures show 971 faults waiting for repair in six of the shire’s 17 public primary and secondary schools, part of an Education Department audit of 492 Victorian state schools.

The most damage was found at Melton Secondary College, which had 391 faults, including leaking skylights and carpet damage, and a repair bill exceeding \$1.4 million.

Staughton College needs more than \$1 million of repairs to fix 184 faults including replacing tiles and waste pipes.

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Caroline Springs Secondary College (256 faults, \$154,000 damage), Melton Primary School (72 faults, \$134,000), Melton Specialist School (42 faults, \$33,000) and Kurunjang Secondary College (26 faults, \$28,000) were also audited.

Western Metropolitan state Liberal MP Andrew Elsbury said every state school in the electorate would get a full maintenance audit.

"The severe maintenance problems that schools in the western suburbs are facing has been caused by Labor sitting on its hands for 11 years," Mr Elsbury said.

Education Minister Martin Dixon said the audit, to be finished by May 2012, would assess the condition of all rooms in schools, outbuildings and covered walkways. "This Government's commitment of additional maintenance funding will enable schools to start making inroads into their maintenance backlog," Mr Dixon said.

But Melton state Labor MP Don Nardella said all Melton electorate schools had upgrades under the former Labor government. The maintenance audit was a "smokescreen" for not continuing Labor's work.

DIABETES PROGRAM CUTS 'SHORT-SIGHTED'

Melton Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/diabetes-program-cuts-shortsighted/2366210.aspx>

The federal government has cut funding to a program designed to prevent the spread of the diabetes epidemic in the west.

If a patient aged 40-49 was considered at risk of diabetes their doctor could refer them to the lifestyle modification program run by divisional practices, such as Pivot West, which services the municipalities of Brimbank, Maribyrnong and parts of Melton.

Through the program, at-risk patients were able to get free professional help to eat healthier and exercise more often.

The program will be discontinued from June 30 next year, but no new patients have been admitted since November 1.

More than 150 people have been referred to Pivot West since February last year with an extremely low drop-out rate.

They attend a number of sessions over six weeks in an attempt to delay the onset of diabetes.

According to Pivot West, two six-week sessions can delay the onset of diabetes by as much as 15 years.

Pivot West chairman Dimitrios Kollios described the funding cuts as a "false economy".

"It's really short-sighted, looking at economics now and not taking a long-term view."

A spokeswoman for Health Minister Nicola Roxon said participation in the lifestyle modification program was lower than anticipated.

As reported by the Weekly, the number of diabetics in Melton has almost tripled in the past 10 years.

Diabetes Victoria's latest study shows the number of diabetics in Melton jumped from 1488 in 2001 to 4550 this year. It said 5.9 new cases are diagnosed in shire each week.

Melton mayor Justin Mammarella said the cuts were a real concern.

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"The council continues to advocate for further support for people that suffer from diabetes and we are discussing ways to improve the matter."

NO SOLUTION YET IN NURSE DISPUTE

Melton Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/no-solution-yet-in-nurse-dispute/2366205.aspx>

Nurses at Bacchus Marsh and Melton Regional Hospital are persisting with industrial action, with eight beds remaining closed and a number of elective surgeries cancelled last week.

The strikes continued after Fair Work Australia last Thursday ordered nurses to stop industrial action.

On Sunday, the workplace ombudsman sought court action against the closure of beds as part of the ongoing pay dispute.

This threat was withdrawn when the Australian Nurses Federation advised its members would comply.

But the union's assistant secretary, Paul Gilbert, told The Age that members could vote to take new unprotected action that would not defy Fair Work Australia's latest order.

Djerriwarrh Health Services chief executive Bruce Marshall said the hospital's primary concern was to minimise disruptions.

"The health service will continue to review the impact of the ANF action on a daily basis to ensure that patient care is not compromised. Discussions with union representatives have been ongoing."

At an ANF meeting on November 11, nurses voted to close hospital beds across the state in protest at plans to cut the nursing budget by \$104 million by slashing

nurse-patient ratios, cutting shifts and replacing some nurses with unqualified, lower-paid 'health assistants'.

Several Djerriwarrh nurses, who asked to remain anonymous, told the Weekly their chief concern was not pay but nurse-patient ratio modifications and lower-skilled assistants the state government wants to introduce.

"Bacchus Marsh hospital will continue to close beds and cancel surgeries, and Grant Lodge nursing home has closed a respite bed," one nurse said.

"It's not about wages. Victorian nurses have consistently traded wage rises for improved conditions, which demonstrates our commitment to patient care."

An ANF spokesman said nurses would be open to taking in nursing students as 'assistants' but would oppose the introduction of lower-skilled employees.

"All wards have beds set aside to admit emergency patients, and any nurse who finds themselves without work should be redeployed to emergency, resulting in more staff. Cancelled surgeries actually means more beds on wards available for emergency patients."

This was confirmed by Mr Marshall, who said all emergency patients assessed as having a condition that could deteriorate within 24 hours if they were not admitted to a hospital bed would be admitted to beds closed by the industrial action.

He said the hospital looked forward to a swift conclusion to the dispute.

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MELTON DRINK BAN DROPPED

Melton Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/melton-drink-ban-dropped/2366209.aspx>

Melton councillors will be able to drink alcohol during briefings after a 10-year ban was lifted last month.

Cr Sophie Ramsey said she opposed the introduction of alcohol to briefings, which was discussed and adopted during a council briefing on October 6.

"I believe we are there to determine on governance issues and need to be uninhibited by the affects of alcohol," Cr Ramsey said.

But mayor Justin Mammarella said the decision was aimed at creating a hospitable atmosphere when briefings included guests.

Melton was among the "very few" municipalities that didn't have alcohol available.

"On occasion people would ask for a glass of wine," he said.

The decision would bring Melton into line with other councils.

BURNSIDE HEIGHTS BEARS JOIN EDFL

Melton Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/sport/football-australian-rules/burnside-heights-bears-join-edfl/2366198.aspx>

Burnside Heights has formed a football club and will join the Essendon District Football League for its inaugural season in the junior divisions.

The EDFL's open offer for clubs to join its ranks may have attracted interest from the Sunbury region, but it's Melton Shire that is providing the first official new arrival into the league.

The Bears are yet to unveil their inaugural guernsey, but they have a logo (pictured) and will build an identity as a club based at Burnside Reserve.

Both the EDFL and Western Region Football League were interested in the expansion club, but it was Burnside Heights that ultimately decided on its home after hearing presentations from both competitions.

The Bears aim to field three teams across under-10s and under-12s next year, with the potential for an under-14 side if numbers are strong.

The club hopes to grow into a senior outfit within a decade.

Burnside Heights president Justin Peagram said small differences between the EDFL and WRFL swayed the club.

"The parents felt that a two-year age gap in juniors compared to one year was a preferred model," he said.

"Things like [EDFL] licensing fees are also lower than the WRFL, so we had to look at it from a financial point of view.

"The grading of the club was also an important issue. With eight divisions, there's that opportunity to be competitive with our teams."

Peagram said being on the border of EDFL and WRFL territory, but surrounded principally by WRFL clubs, gave the opportunity to provide a point of difference.

"We're confident in fielding under-10s and under-12s next year and maybe under-14s, which would be a bonus.

"We're blessed with having one of the best grounds going around for juniors. Hillside (seniors) played there this year; interleague has played there. It's a good place for community sport and for building an identity."

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EDFL general manager Marc Turri was understandably rapt to have a new addition from an area his league considers to be a major population growth corridor.

"We hoped the structures we've got for juniors would be seen in a positive light and I'm pleased (Burnside Heights) viewed it that way," Turri said.

"With the growth that's happening in this particular area, it has the potential to become a powerful club."

On other expansion matters, the EDFL is hoping to hear a determination from AFL Victoria soon on league-switch applications by Riddell junior clubs Rolling Meadows and Sunbury Lions.

"The deadline is early December, but we are hopeful we'll have an outcome before then," Turri said.

MELTON BIKE SPENDING ON RIGHT TRACK

Melton Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/melton-bike-spending-on-right-track/2366204.aspx>

A new report shows Melton cyclists are getting a better deal than some of their outer-suburban neighbours, but more can be done to improve bicycle infrastructure.

The Bicycle Network Victoria's Bicycle Expenditure Index (BiXE) reveals Melton Council spent more than \$9 per person in 2010-11, well in excess of the outer-zone average of \$6.

Council's acting manager of leisure services, Glenn Mulcahy, said the spending was justified, with cycling consistently among the top three recreational activities listed in annual resident surveys.

"Given that our population has increased to 118,000, it is anticipated that 14,000 residents would cycle today," he said.

While Melton was praised for its cycling-related expenditure, the report recommended that the shire ensure new growth corridor areas were linked to central Melton and the rest of the metropolitan trail network.

It also called for safety improvements on Coburns Road.

Mr Mulcahy said the council was in the process of creating new shared path networks and was scheduled to review its bicycle strategy next year.

Linking growth corridor areas to existing population bases and improving existing shared pathways and connections to schools would be considered.

Mr Mulcahy said the council invested a significant amount in cycling infrastructure each year with shared paths and pedestrian bridges being regularly added to the cycling network.

"Council has recently mapped its entire bike network to determine the missing links and potential future projects. This identified list of projects will set the program for the short and medium term and will be considered as part of council's annual budget process."

Having recently returned from studying in Canberra, Melton cyclist Sarah Bishop said she had noticed a major improvement to infrastructure.

"I've been riding in Melton since being back and there are plenty of new-looking bike paths," she said.

"But when comparing Melton to Canberra, Canberra is far superior and that's because you can get to most places without having to be on a road."

Ms Bishop said Melton needed more bike lanes and routes.

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"In some parts of Melton, you still have to ride on the edge of the road;

I think Canberra is one of the better places for bike riding."

GET ON WITH ELECTRIFIED RAIL SERVICES: MP

Melton Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/get-on-with-electrified-rail-services-mp/2366207.aspx>

The state government says it will seek funding from Infrastructure Australia for the electrification of railway lines to Melton but is yet to announce a timeline for the project.

Announcing the plan last week, Premier Ted Baillieu said the upgrade of regional passenger lines was focused on providing additional tracks and an electrified service between Sunshine and Melton. It includes track upgrades on the Ballarat and Bendigo lines.

The project is dependent on the completion of the Regional Rail Link, Sunbury electrification and Laverton upgrade projects.

"This project will facilitate sustainable growth in regional Victoria and the outer areas of Melbourne," Mr Baillieu said.

"It will also boost productivity by better connecting people to jobs and maintaining liveability by giving people choices about where they live."

But Western Metropolitan Greens MP Colleen Hartland said the government needed to "get on with the job".

"It has been known since 2006 that electrification and duplication of the Melton line is economically viable. I obtained a government report through freedom of information which stated as such," she said.

"Can the Premier tell the people in the west how much longer they have to wait to get a decent train service?"

Ms Hartland said the fact that growing suburbs like Melton, Deer Park and Ardeer still had a regional V/Line service, and that Caroline Springs had no train service at all was ridiculous.

"The outer west is growing at a rate faster than any area in Victoria, yet it has the poorest public transport," she said.

Melton mayor Justin Mammarella said the electrification of lines to Melton needed to happen immediately.

"Without it, it will continue to be detrimental to our community. There is a natural need for the upgrading of the rail service as we are the fastest-growing population."

BURNSIDE MAULING TURNS UP HEAT ON MELTON COUNCIL

Melton Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/burnside-mauling-turns-up-heat-on-melton-council/2366211.aspx?storypage=0>

Melton Council has come under fire for its handling of dangerous dogs after a baby boy was attacked in Burnside.

The one-year-old was in a pram being pushed by his grandmother when the dog, a bull terrier-cross, approached the pram just before 11am on Thursday and attacked the boy.

His 53-year-old grandmother was also attacked as she desperately fought to save the child.

Passerby Damian Hall saw the incident while driving down the street and quickly jumped out to tackle the dog and get it away from the child.

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He described the dog as "possessed" and said it was completely focused on harming the child. The child and his grandmother were taken to Sunshine Hospital.

The boy was released on Friday with stitches to his face and ear.

Western Suburbs Animal Rescue Service president Nathan Miles said the council needed to take some responsibility for the latest incident, claiming it was not responding effectively to call-outs about dangerous or suspicious animals.

The attack comes after a Melton couple's small beagle was viciously attacked by three dogs while being taken for a walk in September.

In August, an Eynesbury census collector was left bloodied after she was attacked by what was thought to have been a pit bull cross.

"The time has now come for Melton Council to outsource its entire animal management services, including the pound, to a professional organisation such as the Lost Dogs Home or RSPCA which can carry out these duties effectively, professionally and ensure community safety," Mr Miles said.

However, council's general manager of corporate services, Peter Bean, said the council took such matters extremely seriously.

"Council has started its investigation and will work closely with Victoria Police and we will, along with police, interview the dog owner and take statements from the victims at the earliest possible opportunity."

Mr Bean said before the attack took place, the council had received a call from a resident at 9.45am reporting a dog sitting on the front step of a Burnside property.

A ranger who arrived about 9.54am interviewed residents and patrolled adjoining streets and grasslands area four times, but no dog was sighted.

The ranger patrolled again about 10.30am but did not find the dog. Mr Bean said the council was not certain the reported dog was the same one which attacked the boy.

He said the dog would remain in council custody until the matter was resolved.

Stephen and Melva Hirt and their dog Oscar were attacked by three dogs during a walk in September this year.

"Oscar has now fully recovered and we've started walking again," Mr Hirt said.

"I can't help but think though, when I see the elderly and kids walking their dogs, that if they had of been attacked as we were they would have had no hope whatsoever. It makes me shudder."

TWO RESIDENTS GROUPS, TOO MANY VOICES?

Melton Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/two-residents-groups-too-many-voices/2366214.aspx>

Some Melton residents fear the formation of another residents' group will weaken advocacy in the shire.

Melton Residents Association president Peter Rowan also questioned whether the eastern corridor's new Cambridge, Coburn and Watts Residents Association was a community or a political group.

"Considering we have a residents' group for every area of the shire, why should another group get together to represent the whole shire?" he said.

Mr Rowan also claimed the new group's leaders included close friends and relatives of councillors.

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"You would have to ask whether you have to be a friend of relative of those who hold positions of power in the community. Is that healthy?"

"Is that representation of the community?" But the new association's president, Michael Matalowski, said membership was open and the group wanted to represent the entire shire.

"Its purpose is to advocate ... on the behalf of the residents and advocate for increased services and facilities for the entire shire of Melton," he said.

"We welcome anyone who is concerned about the community to come along to meetings to express your opinions and concerns. The association is as inclusive as possible."

Deputy mayor Broden Borg said any member of the community was entitled to set up a committee or lobby group.

"Most committees are apolitical and what they choose to discuss or lobby is entirely up to them. I've attended a meeting of the [new] association and it was very heated."

AVENUE GROUP TO GUY: LISTEN TO US

Melton Weekly—22nd November 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/avenue-group-to-guy-listen-to-us/2366217.aspx>

Avenue of Honour Preservation Group members are disappointed they have been unable to meet Planning Minister Matthew Guy as a decision on the road's fate looms.

President Damien Strangio said the group respected the fact it couldn't consult with Mr Guy while this year's Heritage Council hearing proceeded.

But the group has since tried repeatedly to arrange a meeting after the minister was handed the Heritage Council report almost three weeks ago.

A meeting has been arranged for this week, but a spokesman for Mr Guy said this would not affect timing of his decision.

"An announcement could be made before or after the meeting," he said.

Last week, Mr Guy's spokesman told the Weekly the minister had been out to visit and "walk" the avenue to familiarise himself with the terrain.

But the preservation group said it was important that he also met those who had relatives commemorated on plaques anchored to elm trees that are at risk of being relocated.

"These people want to be heard," Mr Strangio said.

"These relatives have come down to be photographed today in horrible weather - and they're all pretty frail - because they feel so strongly.

"Heather Shugg's father and his three brothers fought in World War I. Gwen Rasdell's uncle died at war - the Avenue of Honour plaque is the only memorial they can visit for him as he is buried in France.

"Mr Guy hasn't heard first-hand these residents' experiences."

Mr Guy's spokesman said he was well aware of the views and concerns of the preservation group.

"He is an avid reader and all the different points of views and opinions are not lost on him. He will certainly take all viewpoints into consideration."

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Meanwhile, the group said it was relieved that Moorabool mayor Pat Griffin had issued an apology to several members over offensive comments he made towards protesters prior to becoming mayor.

"He said he didn't mean to offend anyone, but if he did, he was sorry," said Mr Strangio, one of those the comments were directed at.

"He's apologised, we've accepted, and now there's closure."

Cr Griffin said differences had been resolved with two independent people present.

"We shook hands. Hopefully, we can now get on with it."

TROUBLE IN AIR FOR WIND FARMS

Melton Leader—19th November 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/trouble-in-air-for-wind-farms/2366221.aspx>

Moorabool mayor Pat Griffin says roads around Mount Wallace and Lal Lal could be damaged by heavy truck traffic when wind farms are built in the shire.

He said he was worried about reports from Moyne and Southern Grampians shires, where roads had crumbled under the weight of trucks carrying building materials for the 140-turbine Macarthur wind farm.

"We're becoming incredibly concerned about the prospect of damage to our roads because other shires are talking about incredible damage caused to smaller, local roads and to larger arterial roads as well," he said.

Cr Griffin said Moorabool was seeking the support of the Municipal Association of Victoria and was trying to arrange a meeting with Planning Minister Matthew Guy to discuss the matter.

But the developer of the wind farms slated for Moorabool, WestWind, has lashed out at council's "continual misinformation".

Project manager Phil Burn said the council was spreading unfounded fear across communities neighbouring the wind farms.

Under the planning permit, WestWind must have in place a traffic management plan, do ongoing maintenance and repair works, and run a program to rehabilitate roads to their pre-existing condition.

But Cr Griffin said he was concerned about enforcing compliance to the planning permit, saying the conditions were "vague" and could not be amended.

"There's no substance and no detail, and any variations will have to come from Minister Guy, not from us" he said.

BE A RAIL BLAZER IN MELTON

Melton Leader—19th November 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/be-a-rail-blazer-in-melton/>

Melton residents are being urged to unite and help beautify the town's railway station - with a little bit of elbow grease thrown in.

Melton state Labor MP Don Nardella has commissioned resident Karen Hickman to co-ordinate a community action group to help improve the visual appearance of the railway station and its surrounds.

Ms Hickman said with no forthcoming government funding set aside for station improvements now was the time to look at what the community could achieve.

"The main thing is to start with things that are achievable and don't require a lot of money like sweeping, general cleaning and picking up rubbish," she said.

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Ms Hickman said work at the station would be ongoing and an approach had been made to V/Line to explore what the group could work towards in the long-term, including permission to work in the gardens and possibly install some kind of community artwork.

“We have started some of the work, but we really need to get a group together to get input as to when and what can be done.

“I’ve also put together a Facebook page called ‘Clean Up Melton Railway Station’ and have 19 members.”

Ms Hickman said she had been inspired by seeing some of the great things that could be achieved at other railway stations, including Sunbury and Canterbury, and she would meet with those groups to gather ideas for Melton.

“The people who live, work and play in a place know the area best and that’s who we are looking for,” she said.

Meanwhile, the Melton Railway Station Advisory Committee had its first meeting with the Department of Transport on November 3.

The committee will now write to the Department, V/Line and VicTrack, requesting urgent improvements including trimming gum trees, weeding and revegetating existing garden beds, and cleaning and repainting the existing underpass.

To get behind this community beautification initiative, contact Mr Nardella’s office on 9743 9825.

CAROLINE CHISHOLM COMES TO CAROLINE SPRINGS

Melton Leader—19th November 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/caroline-chisholm-comes-to-caroline-springs/>

Melton Shire residents now have better access to pregnancy and family support services with the opening of the Caroline Chisholm Society head office in Caroline Springs.

The Caroline Chisholm Society offers pregnancy and counselling support enabling women to continue their pregnancy, as well as material aid and family support services. After serving Victoria from Moonee Valley for more than 35 years, the society identified there was a chronic shortage of its services in Brimbank and Melton shires.

Society president Helen Cooney said the people of western Melbourne deserved to have support available near their homes and schools.

The new head office at 1 Darebin Place, Caroline Springs, was officially opened by Melton Mayor Justin Mammarella on October 25.

Cr Mammarella said the society provided a vital service to the community, particularly young families, and he encouraged everyone to support the not-for-profit organisation.

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MELTON GROWS UP FAST

Melton Leader—6th November 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/melton-grows-up-fast/>

Residents are being urged to embrace Melton Shire's rapid growth, which will see the municipality rival Canberra in size.

The shire is expected to house about 300,000 people by 2030. Its present population is 110,000.

The Melbourne West Growth Corridor Plan, released last week, has earmarked several new developments in the shire including at Toolern, Rockbank, Plumpton and Diggers Rest.

The plan includes three new train stations and more industrial space, including a large estate off the Melton Highway at Plumpton Rd.

Melton Council chief executive officer Kelvin Tori said Melton residents should not be fearful of growth.

"As a community we really should be looking at this as a wonderful opportunity to expand," he said.

Mr Tori said growth meant bigger shopping centres, more local services, opportunities for youth and better transport.

"It's the next stage of the transition from Melton in the 1950s, which was a tiny little country town on the Western Highway, to what's now a significant township," he said.

Melton Council's planning and development manager Luke Shannon said the government plan would now be analysed.

Other plans for the shire include:

Arterial road routes, including the north-south connection between Wyndham and Melton, will be designed to have a strong boulevard character;

A new regional park is under development along Toolern Creek, south of Melton; and,

Additional regional parks have been earmarked along Kororoit Creek, west of Caroline Springs.

BABY ATTACKED BY DOG IN BURNSIDE

Melton Leader—17th November 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/baby-attacked-by-dog-in-burnside/>

A dog attacked a one-year-old boy and an elderly woman in Burnside this morning, before being restrained by a passerby.

The dog, a bull terrier cross, lunged at the baby in its pram, giving the boy minor scratches to his face.

An elderly neighbour rushed out to assist the boy and his mother before she was also attacked, suffering injuries to her back.

Paramedic Matthew Singh was called to the scene just after 11am and found the elderly woman lying on the footpath.

"We were initially called to a dog attack and found an elderly woman on her back, it appeared she had tripped over in the incident," Mr Singh said.

"The dog had lunged on to her back and she suffered minor abrasions, but didn't require ambulance treatment."

A man who was driving past at the time, pulled over to assist the baby and his mother, shielding them in his car.

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Mr Singh said the man was also attacked by the dog but was unhurt.

"He put woman and boy into his vehicle as the dog was still circling and threatening to attack.

"The man then drove them to a nearby medical centre.

"His efforts certainly reduced the chance of further attack," Mr Singh said.

Melton Council general manager corporate services Peter Bean said the council has launched an investigation and will work closely with Victoria Police.

"The dog, a bull terrier cross was taken to the Melton Pound by the Council ranger," Mr Bean said.

The dog was registered to a property in Burnside and was micro chipped.

"Council and Victoria Police will interview the dog owner and take statements from the victims at the earliest possible opportunity," Mr Bean said.

"The dog will remain in council custody until the matter is resolved."

Under the Domestic Animals Act, Council can declare the dog to be a dangerous dog or put in an application to have the dog destroyed.

TRAIL BIKE TO EXAM

Melton Star—17th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/stalbans-deer-park-caroline-springs/322/story/144474.html>

Police are continuing to crack down on dirt and trail bike riders who flaunt the law within Melton.

Melton Highway Patrol's Leading Senior Constable Alan Edwards said trail and dirt bike riders breaking the law was "an issue all through Melton".

Leading Sen Const Edwards said he recently encountered a teenager riding in a side street off Caroline Springs Blvd.

"I actually pulled a young bloke up on Monday morning; he only had a learner's permit," he said.

"I believe he was riding to his school exams; he was actually wearing a school uniform.

"He stopped for us immediately, which most don't do.

"So we gave him a warning and he pushed his bike home."

Leading Sen Const Edwards said the young man was wearing a helmet and riding correctly, but was travelling in an area he was not permitted to.

Leading Sen Const Edwards said the Highway Patrol Unit also recently caught a 16-year-old rider to whom they have issued with \$1000 infringements after he ignored previous warnings.

"It's extremely difficult to police; it's often younger kids and if they don't pull over when asked to we can't chase them unless we can justify going into a pursuit," Leading Sen Const Edwards said.

Long-time Caroline Springs resident Joy Cox said she often saw a dirt bike rider travelling illegally on the footpaths along Caroline Springs Blvd on weekends.

"He just cuts straight across the road and he doesn't care; we have a lot of older people in the area and we are worried one day he will hit someone," she said.

Senior Sergeant Nicole Warner from Caroline Springs police station said they have been receiving complaints from residents of Westwood Drive about the dirt and trail bike riders.

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However, she said, police were hopeful the hoon activity would abate, after Powercor last week finished installing lighting to part of the street, which enabled it to be closed off from a nearby trail.

MOONEE VALLEY

HEALTHY WIN FOR LEADING CARE GROUP

Moonee Valley Leader– 25th November 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/healthy-win-for-leading-care-group/>

A local health service has been recognised as the among the best in the state for public care.

Moonee Valley-based Douutta Galla Community Health was named primary health service of the year at the recent Victorian Public Healthcare Awards.

The awards recognise Victoria's top health care leaders and acknowledge their contribution to the public service.

Doutta Galla prioritises access to its services to those in greatest need.

This includes helping people in marginal housing or homeless, adults with mental illness, people with complex alcohol and drug issues, public housing residents, frail aged, new and emerging communities, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and people with chronic illness and complex care needs.

Acting Douutta Galla chief executive Dianne Couch said the award was a tribute to her hard-working staff.

“This is an acknowledgement of our continuing commitment to excellence in healthcare services and I would like to thank our staff and volunteers for their efforts to continually provide high quality responsive services.

“This award is recognition of the important work we do every day.”

The awards were assessed by eight healthcare experts and were presented by Premier Ted Baillieu, Health Minister David Davis, Mental Health Minister Mary Wooldridge and Department of Health Secretary Fran Thorn.

CALL TO ACT ON AIRPORT 'EYESORE'

Moonee Valley Leader– 24th November 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/call-to-act-on-airport-eyesore/>

Moonee Valley Council will urge Essendon Airport to honour its promise to install a barrier between the airport and Strathmore homes.

Residents say they were given assurances by the airport's former chief executive Tim Anderson that visual barriers would be installed in a 20-metre buffer area along its eastern boundary.

Strathaird St resident Judy Woods said the airport was an “eyesore” for those living across the road.

“If you look at the atrocity that's facing us now, it's not really acceptable to anybody who thought they were living in a nice area,” Mrs Wood said.

“It's very disappointing that they just don't want to move an inch just to do something to make it look more attractive.

“It's not going to help with the noise or the fumes but visually, (the landscaping) could have made it quite attractive.”

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Councillor Jan Chantry said small trees planted in “token” in the area had struggled to survive and she called for mature trees to be planted at the rear of Mascoma and Strathaird street houses.

“The mature street trees planted in the boulevards are attractive, healthy and, above all, inviting to tenants who may wish to take up occupancy at Essendon Fields,” Cr Chantry said.

She said residents were calling for similar landscaping to create a visual barrier.

Cr Narelle Sharpe said the issue had been ongoing for a number of years and asked Essendon Airport to follow through with their promise.

The community representative on Essendon Airport’s consultative committee, Clive Judd, said inaction on installing the barriers was a concern many residents had brought up.

Essendon Airport chief executive Mark Maskiell said they had planted a number of trees on the boundary and would continue with plans to install landscaping and footpaths.

“As we develop that corner of the airport, we will finish off that side,” Mr Maskiell said.

POLICE BLITZ WARNING

Moonee Valley Leader– 23rd November 2011

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

Drink-drivers will be targeted in a road blitz this summer, police warn.

Victoria Police has launched a statewide road safety campaign after a two-week period where 16 people were killed on the roads.

Fawkner highway patrol Sergeant James Bowen said police often detected drink-drivers returning home from Moonee Valley’s pubs and clubs.

“But we’re also catching a lot of drivers who have been to the CBD and are coming home to Moonee Valley,” he said.

Sgt Bowen said his unit would focus on major links drivers used to travel through the municipality, such as CityLink and Mt Alexander Rd.

“We’re asking motorists to remain aware and alert through the Christmas holiday period,” he said.

Sgt Bowen said it was important for people to arrange designated drivers or leave their cars behind and catch a taxi home if they were drinking.

The Summer Stay campaign runs until January 8.

IT'S LIKE GETTING NEW TOYS EVERY DAY

Moonee Valley Leader– 22nd November 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/its-like-getting-new-toys-every-day/>

Getting bored with toys will never have to be a problem for two-year-old Mitchell.

His mum is one of the 70 parents and grandparents who have signed up to the Moonee Valley Toy Library, which, as the name suggests, allows toys to be borrowed for a two-week period.

Fiona Ward, Mitchell’s mother and one of the toy library co-ordinators, said there was comfort in knowing their toys would not be thrown out, once the children lost interest.

“We love it, but they (the children) love it more,” Ms Ward said.

“It saves you money and it keeps the kids interested.”

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Annual three-toy memberships start from \$50(full)/\$25(concession) and six toy memberships \$80/\$40.

There is also a special grandparent membership for \$30.

All proceeds go back into the library operation costs.

The library is open Wednesdays 10am-noon and Saturdays 9am-noon at 129 Lincoln Rd, Essendon.

TAKE HEART FROM FIRE BRIGADE AID

Moonee Valley Leader— 22nd November 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/take-heart-from-fire-brigade-aid/>

People caught in medical emergencies have been told not to turn away the fire brigade if an ambulance is called.

It has been more than 10 years since the MFB joined forces with Ambulance Victoria in the Emergency Medical Response scheme to provide rapid assistance to cardiac arrest and non-breathing patients.

But MFB CEO Nick Easy said fire crews were still turned away because people did not know they had the capacity to provide lifesaving assistance.

“We’ve helped save many lives through this service, but it is still a surprise for a lot of people when the fire truck arrives,” he said.

“We provide a vital component in ensuring patient survival and the close work with Ambulance Victoria is an important example of how emergency services can complement each other’s roles in preserving life.

“Any time lost managing that confusion could be a life and death difference.”

Surviving a cardiac arrest diminishes by 10 per cent for every minute that defibrillation is delayed.

In one recent case, a woman who had called for an ambulance tried to send a fire truck away, thinking the firefighters were looking for a different emergency.

In 2010-2011, the MFB responded to more than 4500 EMR calls, including 3190 attended on-scene.

In Moonee Valley, the rate of EMR calls increased by more than 50 in 12 months - from 102 in 2009/10 to 154 in 2010/11.

SCHOOLS SET TO PUT IN THEIR ORDERS

Moonee Valley Leader— 22nd November 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/schools-set-to-put-in-their-orders/>

Communities across Melbourne have helped put thousands of new books, musical instruments and art supplies into schools, thanks to Woolworths’ Earn and Learn program.

From July to October shoppers collected more than 12.8 million Earn and Learn points, allowing 1815 schools to redeem points for classroom equipment.

Keilor Heights Primary School notched up the most Earn and Learn points in Moonee Valley, with 12,579.

Principal Paul Bastiaan said the money would be spent on new books and teaching kits.

“We’re purchasing educational resources to be used in literacy and numeracy across the school,” he said. “(The program) means we’re gaining more resources for the kids without having to outlay any costs.”

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Mr Bastiaan said all parents were encouraged to take part in the program and the school had had a “terrific” response.

The state’s top achiever was Doreen’s Laurimar Primary School, collecting 67,097 points.

Laurimar’s marketing manager Michelle McBean said the school had already spent its points on hundreds of dollars’ worth of robotics sets and Lego - all equipment the school would otherwise never be able to afford.

Woolworths general manager Elizabeth Ryley said the program would provide \$4.5 million to help 6900 schools across Australia.

Ms Ryley said the program was designed to help primary and high schools, which had a wish list their budgets couldn’t cover.

Schools have already placed their orders with Modern Teaching Aids.

Equipment will be delivered during the first term of 2012.

The Earn and Learn program is open to all primary and secondary schools.

PARKING PROBLEMS IN MOONEE PONDS

Moonee Valley Leader– 22nd November 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/parking-problems/>

A four-storey building earmarked for a busy Moonee Ponds street will add to ongoing parking woes, neighbouring residents say.

Moonee Valley Council approved the 12-apartment development with a reduction in parking requirements on 135-137 Union Rd at a meeting last week.

Roseberry St resident Marcus White said locals already had a hard time finding parking spots in their own street, before the development was approved.

“At the end of the day, I’m not against development. There was always going to be some development done there,” Mr White said.

“(But) it is about providing the right car park spaces, and I still don’t feel it is enough.”

The council approved a reduction in parking requirements which will enable the developer to provide 15 car park spaces instead of 34.

The original application included seven spaces.

There are no parking restrictions on the south side and one-hour parking restrictions on the north side of Roseberry St, which runs off Union Rd.

Mr White said there were times when his family felt “trapped” at home because they knew it would be too hard to park if they drove anywhere.

“My wife’s just had a baby. She is having to park all the way down the street and unpack and come back,” Mr White said.

Cr Paul Giuliano, who pushed through amendments with more parking requirements and additional screening, said it was an appropriate place for development.

“At the end of the day, what we’re trying to do is push these types of developments away from the residential areas and into the activity centre,” he said.

Cr Jim Cusack said his initial instinct was to reject the proposal but he felt the application would be approved if it went to the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The developer did not return calls before the Leader went to press.

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RESIDENTS FAIL TO KEEP ABREAST OF OPTIONS

Moonee Valley Weekly— 22nd November 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/residents-fail-to-keep-abreast-of-options/2366419.aspx>

Breast screen Victoria is ramping up its screening campaign in its own backyard.

Moonee Valley residents have fallen behind the state average for annual breast screening rates, despite several local clinics offering free checks and Essendon being home to a BreastScreen Victoria office.

In BreastScreen Victoria's annual report card, the state electorate of Essendon, which incorporates most of Moonee Valley, had an average screening rate of 52 per cent. Across Victoria the average rate was 53.8 per cent.

While not a huge percentage discrepancy, BreastScreen Victoria chief executive Vicki Pridmore said the numbers were disappointing.

"Rates were actually on average higher in many regional and remote areas, most likely thanks to our mobile screening service.

"But in Essendon, with clinics right on their doorsteps, it seems people have a 'put it off, I'll get round to it later' attitude.

"Essendon especially has several clinics that offer after hours screening and they are all free.

"Getting onto breast cancer early hugely improves the chances of beating it. There are a lot of compelling reasons to attend."

BreastScreen Victoria is calling on local MPs to help promote breast screening in their electorates.

Essendon MP Justin Madden said he was happy to support the campaign.

"BreastScreen Victoria's goal of 70 per cent screening rates across the state won't be met unless we make a concerted effort to improve our own screening rates," he said.

A screening service is at 262 Maribyrnong Road, Moonee Ponds. For a free appointment phone 132050.

FLEMINGTON 'HERO' FINDS HIS VOICE

Moonee Valley Weekly— 22nd November 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/flemington-hero-finds-his-voice/2365206.aspx>

Ahmed Dini hasn't always felt at home. "There were times I questioned myself as an Aussie," he admits.

"I saw myself as a second-class Aussie and I was never going to be part of the fabric of this country. But now I look differently."

Dini was last week named 'Victorian Local Hero 2012' at the Victorian Australian of the Year awards. The recognition was largely for his work as a youth leader and advocate for the integration of Somalian refugees in the Flemington community.

After years of living in camps, Dini arrived in Australia in 1996 as a 10-year-old refugee with his family.

Speaking to the now 24-year-old in downtown Flemington, there's a sense of a young man who has come full circle.

The award, he says, is validation that he's heading in the right direction with his community work.

"It's incredible. It's something that I didn't expect ... but at the same time it's an honour," Dini says.

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"It really gives me that push and inspires me to know that I'm doing something for the community."

His work is entirely volunteer-based and focused on engaging Somali migrants in events and initiatives.

One of the more successful has been creation of the Australian Somali Football Association and running a football tournament last year which attracted 5000 people.

Dini is also a project ambassador for Moonee Valley Council's Sustainability Employment and Economic Development (SEED) program that helps young people get jobs.

There have been downs, too, moments which Dini is happy to speak about but doesn't dwell on.

A few years ago he was front and centre in a group of Flemington youths alleging unfair treatment from Victoria Police, including claims of racism and assault.

Dini says things have been patched up.

"Once we started talking to each other everybody saw that we all wanted the same thing, that we all wanted a safe community," he says.

Looking to the future, Dini says he sees himself as more Australian than Somalian, but he'll never forget where he's come from.

His dreams involve wanting to be one of the first Africans in Parliament and a voice for the people.

"I'm the voice of the Somali community and the African community now, but down the track I want to be the voice of this nation, the voice of Australia."

MOONEE VALLEY RACE PLAN STILL AT THE BARRIER

Moonee Valley Weekly– 22nd November 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/moonee-valley-race-plan-still-at-the-barrier/2365198.aspx>

Moonee Valley Racing Club may have released its draft master plan for its vision for the racecourse, but it's still a long road ahead.

Rezoning proposals, community consultations and exhibiting the plan could take months, according to Moonee Valley Council.

The council has released details of how it will access the master plan and keep the community involved.

It will include two public information sessions which will be video-streamed live, and they will later be released on DVD or through YouTube.

"We have already commenced stage one, which involves reviewing the proposal to ensure all relevant information has been provided by the racing club," the council's chief executive Neville Smith said.

"Following this, we will seek authorisation from the Minister for Planning to exhibit the draft plan and rezoning and undertake community consultation.

"This process can take some time. Consultation may not begin until the first half of 2012."

Moonee Valley Racing Club hopes to secure its future by redeveloping six hectares of its 40-hectare site.

Its plans include building several 25-storey apartment towers (expected to house up to 6000 residents), a retail precinct, early-learning centre, kindergarten and a 3000-square-metre park.

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Mr Smith said there were several stages to assessing the proposal.

He said it was likely that the council would ask for an independent panel to be set up to hear community submissions.

Community meetings will be held at the Clocktower Centre, 750 Mt Alexander Road, Moonee Ponds, on December 1 and 4. Registration on December 1 is at 5.30pm for a 6pm start.

Registration on December 4 is 2pm for a 2.30pm start. Seating is limited.

To book, phone 92438888 or go to mvcc.vic.gov.au/racecourse

THIEVES TARGET ELDERLY IN MOONEE VALLEY

Moonee Valley Leader– 21st November 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/thieves-target-elderly/>

A North Essendon nursing home is the latest target for a number of break-ins, thefts and robberies that have alarmed police.

Moonee Valley CIU detective Sgt Mick Flanagan said there had been a series of theft-related crimes involving elderly people.

In the latest incident, two men broke into a car at the Keilor Rd nursing home car park about 5.40pm last Tuesday.

The offenders walked through the building before they were confronted by staff and fled into McCracken St. They are both believed to be in their mid-20s.

One is described as about 187cm, thin and wearing a black and red checked long-sleeved shirt, light-coloured cargo shorts, white runners and a dark cap.

The other offender is believed to be about 177cm, of medium build and wearing a dark long-sleeved jumper, light-coloured cargo shorts, dark runners and a white

cap. The incident followed an unrelated theft from a Niddrie woman, 79, four days earlier.

The woman was talking to a neighbour outside her Haldane Rd home at about 11.25am on November 11 when the offender walked past.

The man jumped over the fence and stole cash from her handbag before fleeing down Keilor Rd.

He is described as in his early 20s, slim and with short brown hair. He was wearing a coloured T-shirt, black and white patterned board shorts and runners.

The incidents follow two attacks on elderly women last month - a violent robbery of an 87-year-old in Niddrie and the home invasion of a 90-year-old in Strathmore.

“It’s a pretty low to target elderly people,” Sgt Flanagan said, advising people to be wary of carrying lots of cash and to secure doors.

PARKING SHAKE-UP IN FLEMINGTON

Moonee Valley Leader– 21st November 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/parking-shake-up/>

Event-only parking restrictions could be abolished around Flemington Racecourse and Melbourne Showgrounds.

A Moonee Valley Council traffic and parking study has proposed that eight precincts have different permanent parking restrictions.

Changes include introducing permit parking to Flemington’s Duncan and Wisewould streets at all times and installing more one-hour restrictions.

The proposal would also allow residents, businesses and organisations within the precincts to apply for an events area permit, increasing access to parking.

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Flemington Association president Kathryn Miller said traffic and parking around the showgrounds and racecourse was a continuing problem.

“When you have an event, you get the extra traffic and you get that traffic wanting to park somewhere,” she said.

Ms Miller said more needed to be done in enforcing any parking restrictions that are applied.

“I think there’s not enough council officers patrolling. The busy periods happen on weekends and on public holidays,” she said.

Mayor John Sipek said the council acknowledged how important enforcement was to making sure drivers complied with rules.

The council would develop an enforcement plan if the restrictions were implemented. This means the council would constantly monitor the area, Cr Sipek said.

Cr Jim Cusack said the parking situation at the racecourse and showgrounds was “one of the most vexed issues at this time of the year”, removing the event-based restrictions would remove confusion, especially as events increased in the precincts.

WYNDHAM

FESTIVAL FOR YOUTH IN WYNDHAM

Wyndham Leader– 25th November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/festival-for-youth-in-wyndham-fbready/>

Thousands of young people are set to converge on the city’s Youth Resource Centre this Friday for the city’s biggest annual youth celebration.

This year’s YouthFest will feature free performances, rides and food.

Among those performing at the alcohol and drug-free event are members of Wyndham’s Just for Guys group, a male-only youth program that meets at the centre weekly.

YouthFest is on from 4-9pm on Friday at the Youth Resource Centre, 86 Derrimut Rd, Hoppers Crossing.

FUNDING TO HELP WITH DOG LAWS IN WYNDHAM

Wyndham Leader– 24th November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/funding-to-help-with-dog-laws-in-wyndham/>

The increased workload for Wyndham Council officers dealing with dangerous breed dogs has been recognised with \$15,000 in State Government funding.

Wyndham is one of eight councils to share \$135,000 funding because the dangerous dog legislation has led to an increased workload for its officers.

Legislation was introduced in September ending an amnesty on the registration of restricted-breed dogs. Criminal penalties are imposed on owners of dangerous dogs that attack people.

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Council chief executive Kerry Thompson said legislative service officers had assessed 26 dogs and still had 160 to evaluate.

She said 23 dogs had been found to be restricted breeds and their owners had been given 60 days to comply with the Domestic Animals Act.

"The owners have been issued with the requirements for keeping these dogs," Ms Thompson said.

According to the laws, all restricted breeds must be registered, de-sexed, micro-chipped and kept in secure, escape-proof cages with warning signs.

When outside the owner's property, the dogs must be muzzled and leashed.

Ms Thompson said the council had received calls from nine concerned residents reporting dangerous dogs, but none of the reports had led to the identification of restricted breeds.

Victorian Agriculture and Food Security Minister Peter Walsh said many owners had asked councils to assess their dog against the new standards to ensure their animal did not qualify as a pit bull cross.

There have been two dog attacks in Wyndham in the past fortnight but Ms Thompson said neither had involved restricted breed dogs.

FESTIVE SPIRIT

Wyndham Star– 24th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/williamstown-altona-laverton/323/story/145005.html>

A WET and windy day did not prevent festival goers flocking to the Laverton Festival last week. The swinging '60s made a groovy comeback while residents and visitors to Hobsons Bay celebrated all things Laverton. There were free rides, entertainment, face painting and show bags as well as a special visit from Santa.

With last year's festival being cancelled due to heavy rain, residents were pleased the festival made a comeback in 2011. Jayden, 11, Luke, 13, and Matthew, 12, were among those who braved the rain over the weekend

BOOSTING PROFILE OF WYNDHAM'S ART COLLECTION

Wyndham Leader– 24th November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/boosting-profile-of-wyndhams-art-collection/>

What is art?

It's a question that, at times, the Wyndham community has demanded answers to.

In recent months public art pieces, including a \$51,000 display cabinet and a \$60,000 bronze cat, have drawn attention to the arts for all the wrong reasons.

But Wyndham's newly appointed visual art curator Megan Evans doesn't believe the controversy has been negative for art in the city.

The Werribee artist, who has served as a public art adviser for Melbourne Council, said the works had added value to the debate surrounding art.

"They (some community members) look at public art like a facility, like public seats or something more practical. If they look at it from that perspective they will always be disappointed," Ms Evans said.

"But it's good to have discussion rather than for it to be condemned."

Mr Evans praised the display cabinet piece, which was created by artist Elaine Miles for display at Truganina's Arndell Park Community Centre, saying it had encouraged community involvement with objects placed on the shelves.

"If people don't have knowledge of art, they'll look at it and say 'that's a big waste of money'.

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"Art should be about mystery, imagination and delight - if that piece was looked at from that perspective, people would have a different response."

Changing the public's perspective is something Ms Evans will try to do in her new role curating the Wyndham Cultural Centre's gallery. "The gallery is such a great venue and there are people who drive past and don't even realise it's there," she said.

"I hope people come in and see things that give them access to understanding the role of art."

She said it was "thrilling" to be able to curate exhibitions in her own community and she hoped to bring artists from both within and outside Wyndham to help boost the gallery's reputation.

Ms Evans will juggle the three-day-a-week position with continuing her work as a successful painter, sculptor and photographer.

She has a solo exhibition on display in New York this month - it includes pieces featuring bees in New York's rooftop beehives and gardens.

The next exhibition at the Cultural Centre is Wrap It Up, which runs from November 30 to December 4.

It will feature art for sale for less than \$80.

LESS NATURE, MORE STRIP, PLEADS TRUGANINA RESIDENT

Wyndham Weekly— 23rd November 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/less-nature-more-strip-pleads-truganina-resident/2368033.aspx>

A Truganina resident is appealing for Wyndham Council to encourage residents to keep their streets in better shape.

Joh Bauch said streets on the north side of Truganina suffered terribly in comparison with Point Cook, with many nature strips totally overgrown.

"The state of the grass in our area has really gone out of control, to the point where there are areas that are genuine hazards."

Mr Bauch said he had been involved in the council's Street Proud pilot project in which residents were taught the positives of maintaining tidy streetscapes. But he said the 12-month program seemed to have a minimal long-term impact.

"We held barbecues and undertook some door-knocking to try and get residents motivated to maintain the streets and their nature strips."

Mr Bauch said the council's reluctance to monitor the area meant it could be time for harsher measures.

"The council needs to possibly start handing out infringement notices as some sort of deterrent, because these areas are getting out of control."

Council chief executive Kerry Thompson said the Street Proud project had achieved results, including the development of the Truganina Community Association and a series of demonstration nature strips.

The council was also building a demonstration nature strip outside the new Heathdale Community Centre, she said.

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WYNDHAM GOAL: POPULATION BOOM WITHOUT BUST

Wyndham Weekly– 23rd November 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/wyndham-goal-population-boom-without-bust/2368022.aspx>

The population of Wyndham is growing at the rate of one person every hour, new research has found.

Wyndham Council has released data indicating the municipality will grow at a rate of 24 people per day over the next 12 months, with more than 12,000 new residents moving to Wyndham in 2010.

Wyndham's population increased by 9per cent in the past two years, more than five times the rate of Australia's population growth over the same period.

Mayor Cr John Menagazzo said such dramatic population growth meant all forms of government needed to step up to ensure the needs of the burgeoning community were met.

"The congestion on our main roads and public transport is becoming unbearable and needs to be addressed immediately.

"We need an improved road network and enhancements made to public transport infrastructure to ensure our residents are able to move freely without spending hours each week caught in traffic congestion."

Victorian Council of Social Service chief executive Cath Smith also called for greater commitment to public transport spending in rapid growth areas such as Wyndham. "There has been no new money for buses in growth suburbs of Melbourne in the last three years despite massive population growth.

"Without public transport most new residents will be forced to run multiple cars, spend hours driving and thousands annually on petrol just to participate in work in the major job centres that are far from these new communities."

TWO IN THE RACE FOR WYNDHAM MAYORALTY

Wyndham Weekly– 23rd November 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/two-in-the-race-for-wyndham-mayorality/2368020.aspx>

Wyndham's next mayor is likely to be either Cr Kim McAliney or Cr Bob Fairclough.

The Weekly contacted all councillors last week to find out who would stand for the role at next Wednesday's mayoral election.

Cr Fairclough said he was interested in becoming mayor after spending a year as deputy.

He said if elected as mayor, he would work with the council to provide better infrastructure, address safety issues and provide more sporting facilities and leisure centres.

Cr McAliney, who was mayor in 2008-09, said she would relish the chance to lead the council again.

"I have the time and commitment [to be mayor]. I'm a strong advocate and I'm very passionate about our community," she said.

Fellow Truganina ward councillor Glenn Goodfellow ruled out standing this year, saying it wasn't the right time for him to fill the role.

Chaffey ward's Cr Shane Bourke had previously thrown his hat into the ring, but told the Weekly he had changed his mind because of work commitments. Cr Heather Marcus has also ruled herself out of the running due to work obligations.

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Cr Marcel Mahfoud said he would like to be deputy mayor first, while Cr Adele De Crescenzo said she would not be nominating herself. Cr Cynthia Manson did not return calls.

Incumbent mayor John Menegazzo will not renominate for the role, preferring to spend more time with his family. Speaking at his last meeting as mayor on Monday, Cr Menegazzo said he was grateful for the support of the other councillors and his family over the past year.

BIKE SPENDING A SURPRISE TO WYNDHAM CYCLIST

Wyndham Weekly– 23rd November 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/bike-spending-a-surprise-to-wyndham-cyclist/2368031.aspx>

Wyndham Council is the state's fourth-biggest spender on bicycle infrastructure, according to a new report, but residents are not seeing the investment.

Bicycle Victoria's annual survey found the council spent \$14.92 per person on bicycle infrastructure last year.

Victoria's biggest spender was Surf Coast Council at \$26.32, followed by Yarra (\$24.64) and Wangaratta (\$15.83).

Bicycle Victoria said councils should spend at least \$5 per person each year.

Wyndham's five-year average was \$9.30, putting it behind Melbourne City Council which spent \$17.25 and Yarra (\$17.47).

While the report congratulated Wyndham for increasing its spending in recent years, it suggested the council provide more on-road bike lanes and cycling routes. Bicycle Victoria also said the council should link Federation Trail to schools and provide bike paths into Werribee, including a crossing over the river.

Cyclist Catherine Ryan said she was surprised by how much the council spent on bicycle infrastructure but was not convinced the money was being spent in the right places. She wanted the council to link Point Cook and Werribee so cyclists did not have to use Sneydes Road.

"It is still not safe to ride from A to B. Sneydes Road is the only bike route out of Point Cook and it's dangerous," she said.

Council chief executive Kerry Thompson said that in the past 18 months it had created a bike lane on both sides of Dunnings Road between Boardwalk Boulevard and Palmers Road, as well as on Morris Road in Hoppers Crossing and Sayers Road in Tarneit.

Ms Thompson said the council was also developing a bicycle strategy which would likely be presented to next month's council meeting.

POINT COOK DRIVERS URGED TO OBEY RULES

Wyndham Weekly– 23rd November 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/point-cook-drivers-urged-to-obey-rules/2368010.aspx>

'This does not mean slow down, roll through or anything else. Stop means stop'.

Police will increase their presence at the intersection of Point Cook and Sneydes roads following a serious crash last Thursday night.

Wyndham's Acting Sergeant Graeme Crouch said the incident happened about 8.40pm when a car failed to give way.

Two drivers were taken to hospital, one with minor injuries and another in a serious condition. The driver who failed to give way was fined for disobeying a stop sign.

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Acting Sergeant Crouch said last week's accident was not the first time police had been called to the intersection.

"There have been several near misses of drivers not slowing down and proceeding through the intersection and because they are travelling too fast, they are almost clipping and colliding with vehicles travelling south on Point Cook Road or turning from Point Cook Road to Sneydes Road.

"The intersection is controlled by a stop sign and all drivers are required to stop their vehicle before proceeding into Point Cook Road. This does not mean slow down, roll through or anything else. Stop means stop."

Drivers caught not stopping completely before turning on to Point Cook Road can be fined \$244 and lose three demerit points. Police were also concerned by drivers speeding along Dunnings Road and said patrols would be increased.

The warning comes as Victoria Police launches its summer road safety campaign. It will target drink and drug driving, speeding and other dangerous behaviour.

"This year already we have seen 11 deaths due to fatal car accidents in the city of Wyndham and 16 across the state in November. This is way too much and all these are unnecessary."

WYNDHAM POLICE WARN OF FOG-LIGHT GLARE FINES

Wyndham Leader— 23rd November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/wyndham-police-warn-of-fog-light-glare-fines/>

Wyndham police want to make it glaringly clear that drivers who use fog lights in normal conditions will not be tolerated.

Wyndham highway patrol's Sen-Constable Darin Sheehan said fog lights, often as bright as high beam lights, were a safety hazard because they blinded other road users.

"Some are so bright they distract other drivers and distraction is a major cause of collisions," Sen-Constable Sheehan said.

It has been illegal in Victoria to use front or back fog lights in non-hazardous conditions since 2008.

"We ran a campaign a couple of years ago to try to get people to stop using them and we've been actively warning people," he said.

"But one in five cars is still driving around with them on."

He warned drivers that anyone caught driving with fog lights in clear conditions would be issued a \$122 fine.

BAIADA POULTRY WORKERS WIN EQUAL PAY CONCESSION

Wyndham Weekly— 23rd November 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/baiada-poultry-workers-win-equal-pay-concession/2367516.aspx>

Striking chicken workers have won significant restrictions on the use of contract and cash-in-hand labour, with Baiada Poultry agreeing to pay temporary workers the same rates as permanent staff.

The National Union of Workers has said cash-in-hand workers were paid as little as \$8 an hour at Baiada in Laverton North, and a mass meeting of workers yesterday welcomed the news of a two-year collective deal with cries of "no more \$10 [an hour]".

Union organiser Godfrey Moase told workers they would get a 4 per cent annual pay rise, redundancy entitlements would be more than doubled, and all casual and contract labour would be paid at least the minimum site rates.

The agreement is a significant shift from Baiada and the NUW has said nearly half the 430 workforce at Laverton North were contractors, cash-in-hand or temporary

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labour. Most of the workforce are migrants and yesterday's meeting was translated into Vietnamese.

The bitter 13-day dispute was part of a broader union push to restrict the use of temporary labour and was marred by a violent incident involving picketers at the start. There was also a Supreme Court injunction against the union.

Union organiser Tim Gunstone told the meeting that the court action, along with a \$1.7 million damages claim against the union, had been dropped as part of the settlement.

The Age also reported on graphic images taken from inside the Laverton North plant earlier this year and before the strike. Those images showed cockroaches, maggots and the inappropriate storage of raw chickens.

Neither party would comment on the settlement of the dispute, but Mr Moase told the meeting that the company's managing director had agreed to meet workers yesterday without the presence of site managers.

This was to allow them to discuss the "really bad problems" at the site, he said.

Baiada is one of Australia's biggest chicken producers and a major supplier to Coles in Victoria and owns brands Steggles and Lilydale. It also supplies KFC, Aldi and Woolworths.

A worker, Sarel Singh, was decapitated at the Laverton North plant in 2010.

WYNDHAM HARBOUR GETS OFF TO ROCK SOLID START

Wyndham Leader– 22nd November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/have-your-say-wyndham-harbour-gets-off-to-rock-solid-start/>

Work on Wyndham Harbour marina has begun with 30,000 tonnes of rock being placed in the water to form the breakwater, or the backbone of the new marina at Werribee South.

The marina is expected to be completed by the end of 2013 and will provide about 1000 berths and dry storage for 390 boats.

The marina construction is part of the on-shore residential development comprising up to 240 dwellings, at least one apartment block and shops and cafes.

Construction of the \$440 million project is scheduled to run in stages until 2015.

The first stage of the marina will be completed by 2012, developer Prudentia Investments has said. Once completed, Wyndham Harbour will be the only approved safe boat harbour between Williamstown and Geelong.

RECYCLING INITIATIVE

Wyndham Star– 22nd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/323/story/144794.html>

Wyndham will soon be one of the first municipalities in the state to launch a new program that will take environmentally-friendly to a new level.

Last week the council launched a new polystyrene recycling program, which is part of the Local Government Polystyrene Resource Recovery Project run by the Metropolitan Waste Management Group, at Wyndham's Refuse Disposal Facility.

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As part of the project, nine Councils including Wyndham will soon be providing recycling infrastructure for expanded polystyrene (EPS) as part of the State Government's Driving Investment for New Recycling Fund.

Deputy Mayor, Councillor Bob Fairclough, said the program would divert tonnes of polystyrene from landfill each year.

"As the fastest growing municipality in Victoria, this program will save much needed space at the RDF," Cr Fairclough said.

"In 2008-2009 the National Plastics Recycling Survey found only 800 tonnes of EPS was collected and re-processed in Australia during that year and an estimated 19,473 tonnes of EPS land filled. When translated into lost landfill airspace, this represented between \$43 and \$73 million in disposal costs for local government. Once recycled, EPS will be transformed into building materials and other items.

"Reducing the amount of polystyrene that is sent to landfill will complement a range of other re-use and recycle options currently available at the RDF, including the Resale Shed and the converting of green waste to mulch."

The polystyrene recycling drop-off facility is now open at the Wyndham Refuse Disposal Facility and is the first of a number of locations across Melbourne as part of the Local Government Polystyrene Resource Recovery Project, which is being co-ordinated by the Metropolitan Waste Management Group at Wyndham's Refuse Disposal Facility.

GROWTH FORUM

Wyndham Star – 22nd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/323/story/144786.html>

Residents are invited to take part in an expert panel-style forum that will discuss Wyndham's rapid growth.

The growth forum will be hosted by Wyndham Council and will feature independent academic, Professor Kevin O'Connor from Melbourne University who will give an overview on the issues and challenges of urban population growth in relation to environmental sustainability and social issues.

Wyndham Mayor John Menegazzo said the Forum would provide an understanding on how to make sure that the vision of a more liveable and sustainable for Wyndham's future is a reality.

"This forum will not only challenge people's opinions and beliefs on growth, but the outcomes and priorities for action arising from the forum will feed into Wyndham City's advocacy work," Cr Menegazzo said.

"Wyndham has been growing at a rate of almost nine per cent each year, making it the fastest growing municipality in the country, which provides a major challenge for all levels of government. But it needn't be a barrier to a sustainable future provided it is adequately planned and resourced."

The forum will be held on 28 November from 6.30pm to 8.30pm at the Wyndham Cultural Centre. For more information call the council on 9742 0818.

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PLANNED RESPITE RELIEF IN SIGHT

Wyndham Star– 22nd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/323/story/144780.html>

Desperate pleas from Wyndham parents of disabled people may be answered soon with a charity making an application to build the municipality's first overnight respite facility.

As previously reported in Star, there are currently no overnight respite centres in Wyndham.

The Wyndham Respite Mapping Report issued by Wyndham Council claims that parents are sick and tired of waiting for the State or Federal Government's to do something to improve the situation.

"Parents are tired and stressed from the daily challenge of caring for their young person with special needs," the report reads.

"Many of those who have previously worked hard advocating for more respite and have seen negligible results are disillusioned."

Families are forced to travel as far as Sunshine, Glenroy or Melton if they want respite and if they can secure one of the highly sought-after rooms.

But local not-for-profit organisation Mambourin Enterprises is hoping to change this situation.

The charity has made an application to the State Government to fund a seven bedroom facility, five of which would be available for disabled customers, at the Mambourin Sensory Gardens in Werribee.

CEO of Mambourin, Rohan Braddy, told Star that if they are successful at gaining funding at the state level, they will then move on to the Federal Government to gain more funding.

Mr Braddy said parents had been waiting too long for change in Wyndham.

"Over the course of my nearly 10 years in the role, families have constantly identified it to me as one of the highest priorities in their lives," Mr Braddy said.

"I've had families in my office in tears saying Rohan, you've just got to help us."

Mr Braddy said if everything goes to plan the facility could be built by the end of next year.

DEFENDER OF THE ARTS

Wyndham Star– 22nd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/323/story/144791.html>

Expect to see a lot more art in Wyndham as the council announced the appointment of the first ever Visual Arts Curator last week.

Megan Evans, an acclaimed artist for 28 years, has taken up the position and she aims to give residents a greater understanding of art.

The job will involve setting up art shows at community centres, managing the council's art collection and selecting art works for the Wyndham Cultural Centre's gallery.

Ms Evans said art could be used to bring more visitors to Wyndham.

"I really love that we can use the gallery to raise the profile of Wyndham," Ms Evans said.

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“It doesn’t matter what we do, people still think it’s a sewerage farm out here, but I think art can invigorate a community.”

Ms Evans said art was under-appreciated in Wyndham, following the recent public outcry over two public art purchases made by the council.

“I think people need to be involved in art to understand it better,” she said.

“You can’t expect people to understand art if they haven’t had access to it and I think there needs to be more access to it in Wyndham.”

The professional artist said often once residents knew more about a piece of art they began to appreciate it more.

“Public art is difficult but when it works it’s really great and people will often start to really defend public art,” she said.

Ms Evans said she hopes to work with local artists to give them more access to greater opportunities.

ACTION OVER SCHOOL PROBLEMS

Wyndham Star– 22nd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/323/story/144798.html>

Four western suburbs schools, including the plagued Galvin Park Secondary College in Werribee, have received a high-profile visit.

Parliamentary Secretary for Education Inga Peulich visited the school last week at the invitation of the State Member for the Western Metropolitan Region, Andrew Elsbury.

Ms Peulich and Mr Elsbury also visited Sunshine Secondary College, Victoria University Secondary College, and Werribee Secondary College last Monday.

Galvin Park SC has recently struggled in the lead up to VCE exams after several roofs caved in due to significant water damage.

But Mr Elsbury insisted that the visit was organised before the school started collapsing.

“I set up agendas for this visit well and truly before the issues here started. We were coming here anyway,” Mr Elsbury said.

“It sends a strong message to the local community that the Baillieu Government will work hard to ensure that we try to fix the mess left behind by the former Labor Government.”

Mr Peulich told Star it was unknown how long the school would have to wait before it was up to code again.

“It’s fortuitous that we’re here today. This school has been the subject of a very, very substantial level of neglect,” Ms Peulich said.

“We’re here to offer the school the support they need.”

It comes just days after Mr Elsbury announced that every school in Wyndham would be the subject of a state-wide audit.

“We realise there is a lot of work to be done to fix the problems left behind by the Brumby Government in Melbourne’s West, and it is only with speaking with school principals and school councils will we be able to get an accurate assessment of what problems have been left behind,” Ms Peulich said..

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HARBOUR TAKES SHAPE AS WORK BEGINS

Wyndham Star – 22nd November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/323/story/144774.html>

Construction of Wyndham's newest and most highly anticipated housing estate has finally started with 30,000 tonnes of rock ready to be placed in the water.

The rocks will form the breakwater at Wyndham Harbour and developers have said that this is one of the most important steps for the development.

The building of the breakwater will be undertaken by BMD Constructions. Developers said last week that Wyndham Harbour's vision is to create "Melbourne's only premium master-planned marina community where you can step out from your waterfront home directly onto your boat and Port Phillip Bay".

Architects, Fender Katsalidis Mirams envisioned the master plan for the estate with the sold-out Marina Quays Apartments overlooking the central Marina Square precinct.

Karl Fender and Rob Mirams, Founding Directors of Fender Katsalidis Mirams, worked with Tract Landscape Architects and Urban Planners to develop the retail and dining setting that will become the Marina Square, a thriving centre and activity hub of Wyndham Harbour.

"The design focuses on bringing residents and visitors together in a central space that capitalises on the unique views over the harbour," Mr Fender said.

"By capturing the essence of the pristine surroundings and coastal lifestyle, Marina Square will be a vibrant village centre in the City of Wyndham."

Work on the marina is expected to be completed by the end of 2013, and will provide up to 1000 berths and up to 390 dry boat storage in the only approved safe boat harbour between Williamstown and Geelong.

PARENTS FIGHTING ON AT GALVIN PARK

Wyndham Leader – 22nd November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/parents-fighting-on-at-galvin-park/>

Parents still have concerns about the state of Galvin Park Secondary College despite visits and assurances from state politicians.

College school council spokesman Anthony Monaghan said long-term structural problems remained and the school needed to be rebuilt.

He said the State Government seemed "fraught with inaction".

"Lots of work is happening in the school but it's all temporary," Mr Monaghan said.

"Putting a plastic bubble over the top to stop water getting in is not going to fix structural damage.

"Many of these buildings are not suitable for classes in the future and the size of the school. They need to be demolished and built to modern standards."

Education Minister Martin Dixon visited the school last Wednesday.

Parliamentary secretary for Education Inga Peulich and Western Metropolitan MP Andrew Elsbury were at the school last Monday to assess maintenance problems.

As reported in the Leader, students were told not to come to school after water damage forced the closure of buildings.

The Education Department sent contractors to the school last week to seal the roof of an administration wing and the library, which had closed, leaving no room for years 7-9.

School council member Margo McLaren was frustrated by the deteriorating conditions.

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"We are one of the fastest-growing areas in Australia. Yes, we are getting new schools, governments are spending a lot of money, but they are just forgetting that the existing schools need maintenance," she said.

Year 11 students were sent by bus to and from Suzanne Corey High School in Hoppers Lane for year 12 orientation last week because buildings were closed.

Mr Elsbury said the priority was to ensure the school was ready for next year.

"It's of course going to be a matter of what resources can be brought to bear on the school and how we can get it into the budget," he said.

WYNDHAM HARBOUR GETS OFF TO ROCK SOLID START

Wyndham Leader— 22nd November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/have-your-say-wyndham-harbour-gets-off-to-rock-solid-start/>

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The marina construction is part of the on-shore residential development comprising up to 240 dwellings, at least one apartment block and shops and cafes.

Construction of the \$440 million project is scheduled to run in stages until 2015.

The first stage of the marina will be completed by 2012, developer Prudentia Investments has said. Once completed, Wyndham Harbour will be the only approved safe boat harbour between Williamstown and Geelong.

WYNDHAM PEDALS AHEAD

Wyndham Leader— 17th November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/wyndham-pedals-ahead/>

Bouquets have been awarded to Wyndham Council for a huge increase in spending on cycling infrastructure this year.

A Bike Victoria survey, released today, has found the council increased the money it spent by more than 350 per cent from just \$3.82 a resident last year to \$14.92 a resident this year.

This placed Wyndham Council fourth among the state's big spenders on cycling infrastructure ahead of Melbourne City Council, which spent \$12.43 a resident and despite about 12,000 new residents moving to Wyndham in 2010.

Bicycle Victoria's Mike Williamson applauded Wyndham Council's efforts and said he hoped funding would be maintained.

"Really, it's an investment that benefits residents in three ways. One is health tackling the obesity and diabetes epidemic we are facing," he said.

"Two is the congestion problem bikes can solve and the third point is the benefits, when you get more people riding, to the quality of the environment."

What more could be done to encourage more people to get on their bikes in Wyndham? Tell us below.

Mr Williamson said Wyndham was involved in the Bike Futures program, which included counting recreational and commuting cyclists.

"That data enables them to make really good decisions about where to build and where to spend money on infrastructure," he said.

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But improvements could be still be made including to Wyndham's section of the Federation Trail, a 23km walking and cycling path from Brooklyn to Werribee.

It is also the alternative route for parts of the Princes Highway that cyclists are not allowed on for safety reasons.

"The Federation Trail provides some great opportunities to link to schools and other activity centres," Mr Williamson said.

He said providing links to Werribee CBD, including across Werribee River, and providing bike paths on council roads should also be priorities in Wyndham.

The council is preparing a new bicycle network strategy for the next five years.

STORM CLOUDS

Wyndham Star– 17th November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/322/story/144562.html>

As the political event of the year settled on Werribee so did the beginnings of a daunting storm. Craig Rowley from LeadWest took these photos of last Wednesday's storm approaching Werribee as the Community Cabinet, a meeting of Prime Minister Julia Gillard and her top Cabinet Ministers and residents of the West, got underway. While there was no reported damage from the night's storm, politicians like Kevin Rudd and Peter Garrett were seen running for their cars after the meeting to try and avoid the rain

ACROSS THE REGION

BABY CAPITAL CASEY AHEAD OF THE REST WITH A RUNAWAY BIRTHRATE

The Herald Sun–25th November 2011

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/more-news/its-our-happy-nappy-central/story-fn7x8me2-1226205312416>

Welcome to Victoria's baby belt. The City of Casey, stretching from the Dandenong Ranges to the bay, has claimed the mantle of baby capital.

The South-Eastern suburbs swelled with 3957 births last year, up from 3396 in 2005, Australian Bureau of Statistics figures show.

And Berwick once again snatched the title of Victoria's baby hot spot, according to council figures for 2010-11.

Casey City Council has a large lead over No.2 on the scales, Wyndham, which recorded 2894 births last year, followed by Brimbank with 2706 and 2549 in Greater Geelong.

Casey has been nappy central for more than a decade and the population boom is showing no signs of abating.

More land was released for development this year, opening the floodgates for more young families to call the area home.

"There are huge developments of new housing out in Casey, it's where all the first home buyers go," said social analyst David Chalke.

"But they may get more competition from Melton, Werribee and Craigieburn fairly soon."

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Women in Murrindindi are the biggest baby makers, boasting the highest fertility rate of 2.58 children, the ABS Births Australia 2010 report reveals.

But there is a baby drought in the Queenscliffe council area, which recorded the fewest births in the state last year at 22, followed by Towong with 43 and West Wimmera 51.

Last year Australia set a record of almost 296,000 births - up 2165 on 2009.

But Victoria recorded a fall of 352 births to 70,568, and a fertility rate of 1.75, the lowest of any state or territory.

Helping Berwick's status as a big nursery is Carolyn Gissara, 34, who bumped up her brood to three on November 1.

The family moved from Hampton three years ago for a better standard of living.

"Basically it meant we could have a bigger house, more affordable living and space," Mrs Gissara said.

"All the facilities are close by, which is handy as my oldest son starts school next year.

"There are a lot of children and babies around. You definitely notice that."

THE RISE OF THE WEST

The Age—24th November 2011

<http://theage.domain.com.au/greater-melbourne/the-rise-of-the-west-20111122-1nrmr.html>

In the endless battle for boasting rights between suburbs north and south of the Yarra, the west has often been overlooked. But the study of Melbourne suburbs compiled for this magazine, called Liveable Melbourne, could tilt the debate on its axis: it turns out the west is home to many of Melbourne's most improved neighbourhoods. It may be time we started thinking of this city not as divided

north and south by the Yarra, but divided east and west by the winding Maribyrnong.

The west has its own cultural scene, its own riverbank parklands, its own beaches, and in its railway junction, a new business district, designated as a future high-rise city. Let's start with Footscray, a civic hub that has spent the past decade shaking off its Romper Stomper reputation as one of the city's toughest suburbs. On the latest liveability rankings, it sits just outside the top 10 per cent of Melbourne's highest-ranked suburbs, at number 37. What's remarkable is that old Foot-scary now outranks several suburbs that acquired earlier real-estate cachet, including St Kilda, Williamstown and even Camberwell. It's also miles ahead of its obvious hipster rival, Brunswick, way back at number 90.

Footscray's neighbouring villages have all done well, too. Since The Age last published a similar survey, in 2005, Seddon has raced up the rankings from 111 to number 49, nudging out Brighton East and Richmond at 50 and 51 respectively. Arty, eco-conscious Footscray West, ranked at 55, is considered more "liveable" than either North Melbourne or Caulfield (56 and 57). And the west's cutest micro-neighbourhood, Yarraville, jumps 30 places to number 58, well ahead of the original gentrified suburb, Fitzroy, down at 70. And Maidstone, a sleepy collection of interwar bungalows built for factory workers, is Melbourne's most improved suburb, leaping 109 places from 262 in the bottom 20 per cent to a solid, middling 153.

Over the past decade, our western suburbs have begun to play the same role that multifaceted Brooklyn does in New York: a grittier, wittier, rival metropolis. The Big West Festival, wrapping up in November, is no community fiesta but a sprawling multi-culti biennale that talks up the inner west as Melbourne's true artistic heartland. This is where the film industry lives, where the artists' studios are,

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where the plays debut, where the music morphs in hybrids of African, Asian and electronic forms.

This artistic renaissance is harnessed to the west's working-class sensibility, as defined by its battling footy club, neon signs and musty 19th-century street names. Each wave of migrants, from the Italians to the Vietnamese to the Africans and Indians, have remade the neighbourhoods. Now the latest wave of newcomers will make their mark. But the largest group of new residents won't bring a new language: 2812 English-only speakers arrived between 2001 and 2006. They are families with young children; double-income professional couples; and singles, arriving either as professionals or students.

You can read the changing fortunes of the inner west by walking down Eleanor Street. This suburban drag is technically in Footscray, but most residents think it's West Footscray. They shop in Barkly Street village, commute from West Footscray Station and send their children to West Footscray schools where, in the words of one mother, "the prep mums are getting progressively groovier".

Eleanor Street is anchored at Ballarat Road by Western Hospital and its satellite clinics, including DASWest, the western suburbs' largest drug and alcohol rehabilitation centre. It's a campus of clinics and inpatient bungalows in the style of a 1980s blond brick civic library.

This is the centre of druggy Footscray, the suburb where more than 40,000 needles are exchanged every year, where sniffer dogs patrol the station. The local police reported a one-third drop in drug offences in the past year, but one bust was a doozy: \$44 million in heroin and speed and \$160,000 in cash found in one car back in July.

This is the Footscray Lauren Wambach, 30, worried about when she and her husband, an American who works in the film industry, bought a house on Eleanor

Street five years ago. "When I first saw very blatant (drug) deals, I thought, have I made the wrong decision, raising my children here?" says the mother of three girls under six. "But a friend said it was better for them to see the reality of addiction than live in a nice area all protected and out of sight and then find it (drugs) cool. And I have never once felt threatened in all the time I've lived here."

What Wambach also discovered was the area's amazing food. "I hardly go to the other side of town, ever," she says. The west wasn't even on the foodie radar when she launched her own foodie blog Footscrayfoodblog two years ago, reviewing everything from Sunshine's Chilean bakery to a Footscray pho joint to the latest Yarraville brunch spot.

Wambach has seen the suburbs change through food. Sims, the old-fashioned supermarket around the corner, has started stocking Phillippa's bread and fair-trade chocolate. The nearest pizza place has gone all wood-fired oven.

"There are more tiers to how we eat now," she says. "Footscray used to be just for the quick lunch or dinner with the TV on, now it can be more date night. Even the multicultural cafes are starting to diversify."

Wambach cites the sleek fit out of Footscray Vietnamese diner Sapa Hills and the pan-African fusion of Seddon fixture African Taste, where Ethiopian chef Binyam Tesfation transforms a paste called fufu into a signature dish of barley gnocchi dressed in yoghurt and berbere spice.

Did he alter his menu to attract a mainstream crowd? "Absolutely," says Tesfation. "African food has got to be the next thing to be fashionable."

It was the Vietnamese, who make up 9 per cent of Maribyrnong's population, who kick-started the food-led revival, says Tony Le Nguyen. Now working as community liaison officer at Sunshine's Buddhist temple, he is also an established actor, best

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known for playing Tiger in Romper Stomper. "The Vietnamese saved Footscray," says Le Nguyen. "When the high street died after the opening of Highpoint, it was all the Vietnamese restaurants that made the street safe and fun again. The Vietnamese are a very multicultural people; they can live in harmony with other cultures quite well."

Ninety five percent of the children at St John's, a low-fee Catholic primary on the intersection of Essex and Eleanor, speak another language at home. Overwhelmingly, that's an Asian language: Vietnamese, Mandarin, Bengali. It's the same story at St Monica's in Footscray. And in NAPLAN tests, both little Catholic schools consistently outperform the local state schools.

The Education Department's shock decision last month to shut down Footscray City Primary's Steiner stream revealed a fault line running through the area's education system. The department is determined to boost the literacy scores in an area where children have traditionally struggled to keep up (the Steiner system tends to place less emphasis on teaching children to read and write at an early age). It's complicated, though: many "new" Footscray parents are likely to have degrees, money and opinions about the schools they choose: they want vegie gardens and enrichment programs and philosophy alongside their reading and counting, which Steiner and similar schools offer. Yet there's another stream of local parents who prefer more traditional education: on evenings and weekends, many of the schools host tutoring colleges where children can cram for scholarship exams.

The pub and the milk bar that used to face St John's over the Essex Street intersection have recently been converted into apartments. The old men who once lodged at the Albert Hotel couldn't afford these gleaming new digs. (Though they might still find a berth up the street at the rooming house — though as rents rise with house prices, the poorest pay at least \$180 a week for a berth in one of the municipality's more than 400 rooming houses.) Most of the houses on Eleanor

Street are pretty double-fronted Edwardians with well-tended verandas and big backyards, selling for more than \$700,000 — a figure many easternites might find shocking. It's also home to several development opportunities. Plans for 11 three-storey townhouses on the site of a nursing home have just been approved, despite a local campaign to stop it.

By the end of 2011, Maribyrnong will have 6333 new dwellings, well on the way to the 15,800 new homes the council thinks the area needs in the next 20 years. While the City of Maribyrnong is pro-development, the state's Planning Minister, Matthew Guy, is even more gung-ho, approving a 25-storey tower on a former car yard near the river.

But growing the city too fast will mean losing the liveability that attracted new residents in the first place, say members of the dozens of residential associations that have sprung up in the past five years. "Opposing developers is almost a second job," says Wendy Lang, a 50-year-old consultant who moved to Maidstone 10 years ago for the suburb's old homes and deep blocks. Now she runs the Maidstone and West Footscray Residents Association. The new wave expects a lot more from the council than older residents, she says: community halls, upgraded parks, more vigilant governance of development. "I wish there'd been some good design by developers, but we haven't seen one example of it," says Lang.

The west is still Melbourne's industrial heart — with the benefits that brings for local residents (jobs) and the downsides (trucks, chimneys, noise) but even that's changing: many of the area's newest housing estates are on former industrial sites. Willow Park in Maidstone was once the factory belt. The Binks Ford site next to Footscray Railway Station is earmarked for \$500 million worth of shops and residences. At the bottom of Eleanor Street, across Barkly Street, the old Olympic tyre factory next to Whitten Oval is being transformed into Banbury Village. The

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graffiti-bombed concrete has been peeled off the curved brick facade of the main office, which dates back to 1939.

Kathy Henry moved into the estate a year ago, tired of commuting to the Docklands from Romsey, near Macedon. "I met one of the older residents who said (our street) used to be houses for factory workers before (the factory) expanded," she says.

"He said it was really nice to see it taken back." Local artist Mary Long has decided she's all for a high-density neighbourhood. "Bring it on," she says. She's glad the shuttered industrial site she used to walk past at night will now be full of townhouses. "It was quite a desolate stretch."

A resident for 15 years, she opened Post Industrial Design, a shop and gallery, on Barkly Street in February. On its walls are the streetscape photographs of her friend Sarah Watt, the West Footscray filmmaker who captured her own neighbourhood in her most recent film, *My Year Without Sex*. As Long sees it, she was lucky enough to buy in the 1990s, so she's ready for high-density living if it means affordable homes for those coming now. "The prices around here are pushing all the artists out," she says. She just hopes development doesn't homogenise the west. "I would hate to see the diversity pushed out. I love the crazy shops, I hope we will always have a little bit of the craziness."

PEAK-HOUR STRAIN TESTING GEELONG'S OLD TRAINS

Geelong Advertiser—22nd November 2011

http://www.geelongadvertiser.com.au/article/2011/11/22/292751_news.html

Geelong commuters are relying on trains that are more than 20 years old because of booming patronage and ageing rail infrastructure.

Every V/Line train is used during morning and afternoon peaks, which yesterday left travellers to Warrnambool on the platform when a locomotive needed repairs.

The 7.19am service was delayed by 30 minutes as a train was sent up to Southern Cross from South Geelong.

Public Transport Minister Terry Mulder told the Geelong Advertiser the Government was considering purchasing additional VLocity trains in the May 2012 Budget.

But these would not be used on the Warrnambool service because the tracks west of Geelong cannot handle Velocity's 160km speeds and because it does not offer a first-class or buffet service, a V/Line spokeswoman said.

V/Line runs 134 VLocity trains, 21 sprinters and 41 locomotives, which were made in the 1980s.

The contingency plan for break downs is either cancel the service, if there isn't a long wait for the next service, or run a bus, the spokeswoman said.

Public Transport Users Association Geelong convenor Paul Westcott said while maximum services were needed during the peak, it was "certainly not desirable" to have no back-up trains available.

Mr Westcott said if the design of the VLocity was altered to include a buffet service, it could take two years to produce after it was ordered.

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He thought the Government could hold off buying new trains until the Regional Rail Link was finished, which has already been delayed until 2016.

"The previous government and to a certain extent the current government were caught unawares by patronage increases. The last VLocity from the order was received a few months ago but there's no more coming off the production line," Mr Westcott said.

"If it came to a service or a buffet (on the Warrnambool line) I'm sure people would want the train to run. I think there must be other issues signalling issues we're not sure of the real answer why (VLocity doesn't run)."

From December 4, V/Line will rearrange 10 services on the Geelong line, switching the approximately 70-seat VLocity trains with 88-seat locomotive trains to better handle crowding.

LIFE OR DEATH: IS THIS MELBOURNE'S WORST RAILWAY CROSSING?

The Age—22nd November 2011

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/life-or-death-is-this-melbournes-worst-railway-crossing-20111122-1nrmb.html>

Paramedics fear someone could die in the back of an ambulance waiting at a notorious Melbourne railway crossing, which is just 500 metres from hospital, unless an underpass is built.

Ambulance officers say they are often stuck at the Clayton crossing with sick or injured passengers in the back, a situation made more frustrating given Monash Medical Centre is so close - but across the tracks.

Paramedics say they dread driving north up Clayton Road for fear they will get stuck at the crossing, but say the route is unavoidable given the congestion across the south-eastern suburbs.

One experienced paramedic, who declined to be named, rated the crossing the worst in Melbourne for time delays and said it was common for ambulances to be delayed for minutes at a time.

"If you go into cardiac arrest, think how much of someone's brain is going to die in one minute, two minutes, three minutes. These are people who don't have time to wait," she said.

"Just fix the damn thing. It's going to cost lives, it may have already cost lives. Just fix it. I don't think there's any other intersection ... that stands between people getting care and having care delayed."

The union representing ambulance workers claims paramedics will get stuck at railway crossings across Melbourne more often unless problem spots are earmarked for urgent upgrades.

Ambulance Employees Australia state secretary Steve McGhie said paramedics often found themselves waiting at boom gates and that the problem had contributed to a decline in Victorian ambulance response times over the past five years.

Mr McGhie said paramedics also encountered a similar problem when on Furlong Road, St Albans, where the crossing at Ginifer station delayed ambulances getting sick and injured people to nearby Sunshine Hospital.

The state government says funding is the key factor in improving railway crossings, but Mr McGhie said the benefits in improving problem spots would be immeasurable.

"It's an expensive measure but that would be offset by the saving of lives and better outcomes for people who need treatment," he said.

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Both the crossings at Clayton and Ginifer stations are high on the list of the railway crossings most deserving of upgrades, yet were overlooked by the state government in May, when it announced a list of crossings that would be improved.

A crossing in Brighton is among those to be improved despite being ranked 223rd on the list of crossings most deserving of upgrades.

Mr McGhie said the Ginifer crossing would continue to be a problem for paramedics, as the area was experiencing a surge in population.

He said the government needed to upgrade more crossings, either by building underpasses or overpasses, as a matter of urgency.

He said the issue was also a problem in country Victoria, where paramedics often had no alternate routes and where freight trains took longer to travel through crossings.

"In peak periods ambulances are going to be held up by railway crossings," Mr McGhie said.

"We're talking about matters where time is of the essence, such as cases where there is a child who's not breathing and ambulances are sitting idle for minutes at a time because they have to let trains pass.

"Ambulances can't go through them, they just have to sit there and wait.

"As Melbourne grows this problem is only going to get worse and people are going to take more and more risks to get across."

The response times of ambulances declined again last financial year, as paramedics took longer than 15 minutes to respond to almost one in four of the most urgent cases.

Ambulance Victoria's 2010-11 annual report shows paramedics responded to 77 per cent of the most urgent cases within 15 minutes. But the percentage of urgent cases in which response times were under 15 minutes has steadily declined from a high of 85.7 per cent in 2006-07.

Mr McGhie said improvements in technology could also assist paramedics avoid trouble railway crossings, but noted Ambulance Victoria did not fit its vehicles with GPS units.

He said paramedics who wanted to use GPS technology had to supply their own, a situation he described as "ridiculous".

A Southern Health spokesman said staff at Monash Medical Centre were aware of the problems Clayton Road presented, but said he was unsure if delays had led directly to the death of patients.

Police have also labelled the Clayton crossing one of Melbourne's worst, notorious for pedestrians lifting boom gates to cross the tracks.

Shoppers, traders and commuters are also desperate for something to be done to end long delays, and Monash Council says building an underpass would allow the state government to sell the land above as affordable housing or retail space.

Monash mayor Greg Male said he had raised the issue with Transport Minister Terry Mulder, but had not had any word the government would address the problem. But he had heard of ministers being late for appearances in Clayton after getting stuck in traffic.

Cr Male said the government had the chance to be innovative, while making the project "budget neutral".

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"There is land owned by the government which could be developed for retail commercial and housing and the sale or the rental for that could effectively pay for the lowering of the station and the rail traffic," he said.

"The previous government and the current one pressured communities to densify, so here's a chance. Let's be bold and say there's one here because there's not a budget implication for us."

Cr Male said upgrading the Brighton crossing before Clayton was "a waste of time".

A spokeswoman for Mr Mulder said there were no plans to upgrade the Clayton crossing, but said the government had already allocated more funding to improving crossings than the previous Labor government.

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/life-or-death-is-this-melbournes-worst-railway-crossing-20111122-1nrmb.html#ixzz1eTeWjTdk>

MELTON CHOPPER 'CRASH' A FALSE ALARM

The Age – 21st November 2011

<http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/melton-chopper-crash-a-false-alarm-20111121-1npv6.html>

Reports of a helicopter crash west of Melbourne are the result of a news chopper landing near a controlled burn-off, authorities say.

Emergency crews were earlier responding to a report of "a helicopter down" near Melton about 10am.

However, the Country Fire Authority said the false alarm was the result of a well-intentioned emergency call from a member of the public, who saw two helicopters in the air before seeing smoke.

Advertisement: Story continues below

The caller became concerned and contacted authorities.

The incident is believed to have happened at Brookfield.

It is believed a Channel Seven helicopter landed near an area where a controlled burn-off was taking place.

BALLARAT PROJECTS ON WISHLIST TO FEDERAL GOVERNMENT

The courier – 2nd November 2011

<http://www.thecourier.com.au/news/local/news/news-features/ballarat-projects-on-wishlist-to-federal-government/2361908.aspx>

Ballarat rail commuters could be winners from the Victorian government's infrastructure funding wish list given to the Federal government yesterday.

The list of priority projects includes electrified rail services between Sunshine and Melton as well as planned track upgrades on the Ballarat and Bendigo lines.

If funded by the federal government's funding body, Infrastructure Australia, the new services could relieve pressure on Ballarat V/Line trains approaching Melbourne at nearby stations including Rockbank, Deer Park and Ardeer.

Work is already underway on the \$4.3 billion Regional Rail Link project which will separate the state's regional trains from metropolitan services, increasing capacity on the Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong lines.

The government's submission to Canberra also includes an 18-kilometre roadway to link Melbourne's Eastern Freeway with the Western Ring Road, a new \$130 million metropolitan railway tunnel and a \$16 million strategy to remove crossings around Melbourne.

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