

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

27TH MAY 2011



This is the 4th edition of LeadWest's News Summary. In the local newspapers this past week we saw less reporting on local wins and losses with respect to the State budget and attention turn toward the councils' budgets. Reports of some data from the Victorian Adolescent Health and Wellbeing survey highlight some of the region's social issues. Aside from that, most of the local news reflects an ongoing theme – our region's growth and our "growing pains".

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BRIMBANK

TEENS FEEL UNSAFE

Star News – 24th May 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/sunshne-ardeer-albion/297/story/133838.html>

Brimbank teenagers feel less safe in their neighbourhoods and are more likely to commit crimes than other Victorian youth, a new report has revealed.

Released this month, the Victorian Adolescent Health and Wellbeing survey provides a fascinating glimpse into the health, lifestyle, education and safety of adolescents aged between 10-17.

The report found that between 2005-2010 almost 3700 Brimbank teenagers between the ages of 15-17 were convicted of a crime, more than double the Victorian average.

But adolescents aged between 10-14 were better behaved, with 20.1 out of every thousand listed as an offender, lower than the Victorian average.

The report also revealed that 22.8 per cent of 15-17 year olds admitted to trying marijuana, while 8.1 per cent had sniffed glue or chromed and 1.1 per cent had tried another form of illegal drugs.

More than 75 per cent of 15-17 year-olds had drunk alcohol, with more than half admitting to doing it in the past month.

Meanwhile, Brimbank school leavers were finding it tough to gain employment, with 24.3 per cent still looking for work six month later, compared with the Victorian average of 16.6 per cent.

Alarminglly, only 73.6 per cent of adolescents reported feeling safe in Brimbank, with after dark public transport and streets highlighted as the scariest situations.

Karen Hart, General Manger of Sunshine's Visy Cares Hub youth service said the report's findings were not surprising.

Ms Hart said the municipality's diverse demographics posed significant challenges, with concerning levels of criminal activity and anti-social behaviour among older teens.

She said perceptions of safety were low around the Sunshine Railway Station, where large numbers of youth are known to congregate.

“On the whole young people are reluctant to be out and about in Brimbank at night,” Ms Hart said.

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A MODEST RATE RISE FROM BRIMBANK BUDGET

Brimbank Leader – 24th May 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/a-modest-rates-rise/>

In what Brimbank Council describes as a modest increase, rates are set to rise by 4.5 per cent across the board if the recently released draft budget is adopted.

Administrator Meredith Sussex said the council was trying to keep a relatively smooth level of rate increases. Last year, taxes increased by 4 per cent.

The budget will raise taxes on residential homes by 4 per cent, commercial and industrial properties by 6 per cent and vacant land by 8 per cent.

The average residential property value in Brimbank remains at \$308,000 but it is expected to rise at next year's evaluation.

Based on that average, rates and charges - including the fixed municipal charge, the environmental charge and the State Government's landfill levy - would be \$1090 a year. Households will pay \$13.50 for a standard 140-litre bin or \$32 for 240-litre bins due to an increase in the landfill levy.

In the meantime, \$47.5 million of new spending for capital works will be delivered mostly on roads (\$17.4 million), community facilities (\$10.2 million), parks, playgrounds and gardens (\$4.7 million) and sports facilities (\$4.5 million). This includes \$5.8 million for the proposed Sunshine Youth and Community Hub, which is dependent on external funding worth \$3.8 million. With about 80 per cent of the money already committed, including \$2 million from the Federal Government, the council said it is confident the work on the hub would go ahead.

Parks and open spaces are winners in the budget with what council calls an "unprecedented" 20 per cent investment increase of \$1 million.

Sunshine district will receive the largest share of capital works (\$16 million), but chairman of administrators Peter Lewinsky said he thought the balance was right. "We've been focusing on a lot of catch-up work," he said. "You can't put 20 per cent on each area."

BRIMBANK RATES HIKE TO BENEFIT PARKLAND

Brimbank Weekly – 24th May 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/brimbank-rates-hike-to-benefit-parkland/2172057.aspx>

Improving Brimbank's parks and open spaces is the key focus of council's 2011-12 draft budget.

Increases of 4 per cent to residential rates, 6 per cent for commercial property and 8 per cent for vacant land will help the council collect an expected \$106 million in rates and charges. That will help finance a 20 per cent boost to open space spending.

Council chairman Peter Lewinsky said the rate rise could best be described as modest.

Based on the average \$308,000 residential property value in Brimbank, residents will pay \$1090 in rates and charges. He added that comparing rates with rises across neighbouring council areas was "comparing apples with pears".

The overall \$148 million spending package includes \$47.1 million for new infrastructure.

Mr Lewinsky said it was necessary for council to accelerate its works package to bring the area's spaces and facilities up to scratch. "We are doing a lot of catch-up in the area," he said.

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Spending will include \$17.4 million on road works, \$1.3 million on bike pathways, \$4.7 million on parks, gardens and playgrounds, and \$4.5 million on sports facilities. A further \$10.2 million will be spent on community facilities and \$4.2 million on sustainability projects.

Centrepiece of the package is a \$5.8 million redevelopment of the Sunshine Youth and Community Hub, in partnership with Visy Cares and the state and federal governments.

Administrator Meredith Sussex said the 20 per cent spending boost followed criticism of the poor state of many parks and open spaces.

The council will carry out extensive works at Buckingham Reserve (\$1.45million) and Isabelle Williams Reserve (\$850,000). A \$2million investment in the Balmoral Sports Pavilion at Derrimut Community Hub is the biggest sports spend, with a further \$850,000 earmarked for sports ground reconstruction.

The draft budget and 2011-15 council plan can be downloaded from www.brimbank.vic.gov.au. Submissions must be made by June 15 before final consideration of the plans on June 22.

1868 KIELOR BRIDGE TO BE PRESERVED

Brimbank Weekly – 24th May 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/1868-keilor-bridge-to-be-preserved/2172055.aspx>

Keilor residents are pleased an iconic bridge off the Old Calder Highway will be preserved for future generations to enjoy.

VicRoads is preparing to transfer ownership and responsibility for the 1868 wrought-iron box girder bridge to Brimbank Council.

The bridge was used as a gateway to Keilor Village for cyclists and pedestrians until VicRoads closed it on April 7 due to concerns over the safety of the bridge deck.

At its meeting last week, council indicated it will accept responsibility for the bridge, provided VicRoads honours a commitment to undertake a structural assessment, complete all works required to improve the safety of the bridge and provide on-going inspections and basic maintenance.

Keilor Historical Society president Susan Jennison is pleased the takeover will involve improved maintenance. "We at the historical society think it will be a grand idea if the council takes it over, especially as it will mean residents will feel safe while using the bridge," she said.

"The bridge crosses over the Maribyrnong River and it's a beautiful place for people to visit.

"We need to preserve the historic sites in Keilor."

The bridge was erected on bluestone abutments to replace an original 1854 timber bridge which had been washed away.

It was an important structure for residents in surrounding areas, as it was on the major route to Mt Macedon and the goldfields of Bendigo and Castlemaine.

The council said the bridge was architecturally significant, being a rare example of a substantial iron bridge.

It said the average annual maintenance cost was estimated at about \$8500.

BRIMBANK TO ACKNOWLEDGE RECONCILIATION WEEK

Brimbank Weekly – 26th May 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/wurundjeri-to-guide-a-wise-up-way/>

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Overcome inequality, learn the indigenous history of your surrounds and get fit all at the same time during Brimbank Council's Ride and Walk for Reconciliation.

The event, to be held on Sunday, is part of this year's Reconciliation Week and will be guided by representatives of the Wurundjeri Land Tribe Council.

It will start at the Hunt Club Community Arts Centre in Deer Park and finish with lunch at Overnewton Castle in Keilor.

The BrimBUG cycling group has helped organise the ride, and president Ferdi Saliba said he was looking forward to it.

"It will be great to hear about the indigenous culture of our area and the traditional owners of the land," Mr Saliba said.

"I'm looking forward to hearing about the indigenous history, especially around Kororoit Creek and the Maribyrnong River."

The bike tour will leave the arts centre, at 775 Ballarat Rd, Deer Park, at 8.30am while the walking tour will leave from the Sunshine and St Albans libraries.

Walkers will be taken by bus to Overnewton Castle.

MARIBRYNONG

BRAYBROOK SCHOOL'S PRAYERS ANSWERED

Maribyrnong Leader – 24th May 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/braybrook-schools-prayers-answered/>

Eight years of dreams for a new Rosamond Special School are now a reality.

In the recent State Budget the crowded school received \$9.5 million to build a new facility at the former Sunshine Harvester Primary School site in Braybrook.

Education Minister Martin Dixon said students could expect to move into the new facilities for the start of the 2013 school year.

Principal Kate Christensen, who spoke to the Leader last September while frustrated at the long wait, said she had been either smiling or crying since the unexpected good news.

"The whispers were we were unlikely to get funding, we were all ready for being disappointed again. I didn't even listen on the day," she said.

Ms Christensen said she was delighted with the 2013 scheduled date. "I'm just thrilled it's going to happen and it will be rolled out in a timely manner.

"We've been working with architects for two years. We're right down to picking the colour of paint, but until now it was a fairly academic exercise," she said.

"I've walked around the (Braybrook) site at least 50 times dreaming and it's a reality now."

The school has 106 students with mild intellectual disabilities on a site meant for 48. The new site will be designed for 130 students, and there will be room to grow.

"We don't need a new school to be a good school, we are a good school. (But) I know a lot of parents of children eligible to come here are put off by the appearance and once word gets out (about the new campus) we'll get to 130 quickly."

Meanwhile, advocacy group Action for Autism Education is concerned because promised plans for the expansion of the Western Autistic School, to a prep to year

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12 school, is under a cloud. More on the future of the Western Autistic School in next week's Maribyrnong Leader.

PAIN FOR RAIL GAINS IN FOOTSCRAY

Maribyrnong Leader – 24th May 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/pain-for-rail-gains-in-footscray/>

Regional Rail Link is back on track, but the Greens and residents have accused the Government of leaving them stranded.

Last week, Transport Minister Terry Mulder announced preliminary works would begin on July 1, forcing the closure of Tottenham, West Footscray and Middle Footscray train stations for 18 days.

During the shutdown, the tracks will be realigned to accommodate the Regional Rail Link lines and Middle Footscray station will receive drainage improvements and platform maintenance.

Buses will ferry people to Footscray station following the Sydenham and Werribee line routes.

Mr Mulder said the shutdown had been timed over the school holidays and would be some pain for a big gain.

But Fair Go For Footscray Rail Residents spokesman Nick Fahey said that yet again, residents had been told one thing and another had happened. He told the Maribyrnong Leader he was puzzled the Government was going ahead with work before gaining planning approval for the project and before receiving the noise and vibration impact report.

"There was a tiny review and now it's all systems go, there's been a huge leap and I don't understand how we've got there," Mr Fahey said.

A list of questions compiled by the group and sent to Mr Mulder in April has not been answered.

The group has again written to clarify what other work would be classified as preparatory.

Residents whose properties are being compulsorily acquired have to vacate by August 31.

Greens MP Colleen Hartland called on the Government to "come clean" on the project's timeline.

"Tell us upfront what to expect and when to expect it, and ask commuters what measures they want to replace the disrupted service," she said. "We're being fed information in dribs and drabs."

Maribyrnong Mayor Sarah Carter said while she understood the residents' concerns, she believed the preparatory work was being done in good faith.

She confirmed the council had not yet seen last year's damning EPA environmental impact report.

FOOTSCRAY FURORE: 25-STOREY TOWER PLAN GETS GOVERNMENT GO-AHEAD

Maribyrnong Weekly – 25th May 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/general/footscray-furore-25storey-tower-plan-gets-government-goahead/2173642.aspx>

Footscray will be home to the tallest housing tower in the west after the state government ignored Maribyrnong Council's recommended building heights and approved a 25-storey tower.

State Planning Minister Matthew Guy on Monday approved a \$90million, 25-storey building in the Joseph Road precinct.

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The building is almost double the maximum height recommended in the council's planning guidelines for that sector of Footscray. Mayor Sarah Carter said the council would oppose the development because it showed "contempt" for the community and could set a dangerous precedent for future proposals in the area.

Cr Carter called on Premier Ted Baillieu to "immediately and personally intervene to instigate discussion and engagement with council on this proposal".

"The high-handed and arbitrary nature of this decision can only lead to constant and unnecessary conflict with local councils."

The site, bounded by Moreland and Warde streets and Neilson Place, is within the Joseph Road precinct, a 15-hectare triangle of industrial land beside the railway line that was set aside for priority development.

Cr Carter said the 25-storey tower was not in keeping with what the council and the community wanted for that site.

"We will certainly be challenging the minister and calling for an explanation because of the contempt that has been shown for the community and the work done to come up with preferred heights. We're not opposed to development, but we're opposed to 25 storeys and we know from feedback what the community is prepared to accept for that site."

Cr Carter wrote to Mr Guy in late March calling for a meeting to discuss the council's concerns about the development. A meeting was set down for late July. She said the minister's approval for the tower plan was a complete surprise.

Footscray resident Amelia Bartak said: "It's really disappointing; 25 storeys is too high in inner urban areas, particularly Footscray, creating wind tunnels and overshadowing. It'll encroach on people's privacy for miles; it's out of sync with the neighbourhood character and ambience."

In response to concerns that had been raised about its height, a spokeswoman for Mr Guy said: "Matters relating to overshadowing or height limits are included in the development plan submitted with the planning permit application to the minister. The development would not have been approved if there were unacceptable overshadowing issues."

FOOTSCRAY FURORE: MINISTER'S FULL STATEMENT

Maribyrnong Weekly – 25th May 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/footscray-furore-ministers-full-statement/2173673.aspx>

Planning Minister Matthew Guy responds to Maribyrnong Council complaints over the approval of the 25-storey development.

"The previous Labor Government took planning control of this area, making the Planning Minister the Responsible Authority. I have approved this development as the Responsible Authority as I believe it fits with the Activities Area vision for Footscray, as articulated by the previous and the current state governments.

"Any suggestions that approving this development will cost the Council tens of million of dollars is untrue and misleading. The Maribyrnong Council had proposed a building height not much smaller than what has been approved.

"I met with the Mayor last week where we discussed the need for large-scale development in Activities Areas such as Footscray. At no stage did she offer any objection to these comments. At no stage did she ever bother to raise the issue of this Footscray development. I have never met the Mayor prior to this meeting; thus her comments of me providing an undertaking to her are false.

"It beggars belief that the Mayor would oppose a new residential development, close to rail and bus infrastructure and within a defined Activities Area, that will bring jobs and growth to her Council's key commercial area. It now appears the

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Labor-dominated Council is simply using this issue to score political points rather than welcoming a great new investment that will bring jobs to Footscray.

"Council were actively consulted on and involved in all stages of the planning assessment process. Council had planning representation at all of the pre-lodgement meetings either organised by Urbis or DPCD as well as regular update and discussion meetings held after lodgement to progress the application through. Council were also provided with an opportunity to provide detailed referral comments which were considered in the assessment of the application (and responded to in the officer report)."

FOOTSCRAY FURORE: MAYOR'S FULL STATEMENT

Maribyrnong Weekly – 25th May 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/footscray-furore-mayors-full-statement/2173677.aspx>

Maribyrnong Mayor Sarah Carter responds to the approval of the 25-storey development in Footscray.

"Today's surprise announcement by the Minister for Planning on the first major project in Footscray to be considered by the current government shows a complete disregard for the views of Maribyrnong City Council and its community.

"The 25 storey development in the Joseph Road Precinct is well above existing height guidelines and is far higher than what our community has told us they want to see in Footscray. An 80-metre building with 222 apartments is an inappropriate development for Footscray and is not what the community wants.

"The decision also ignores all the preceding planning works undertaken for the precinct and allows for a massive overdevelopment of the site.

"Council estimates that there will need to be around \$25 million of public infrastructure (such as a pedestrian bridge, roads and, footpaths) required to meet the redevelopment needs of this area of Footscray.

"Council had previously received an assurance from Minister Guy that he would discuss this development with Council in July this year.

"The process of completely ignoring the local community's views seems totally at odds with the 'genuine consultation' the current Government was proposing whilst in Opposition.

"As Mayor, I call on Premier Baillieu to immediately and personally intervene to instigate discussion and engagement with Council on this proposal. The high handed and arbitrary nature of this decision can only lead to constant and unnecessary conflict with local councils.

"We don't understand why the state government is deliberately seeking this confrontational outcome rather than working in partnership with local communities and councils to deliver good quality outcomes."

MARIBYRNONG KIDS NEED SUPPORT

Maribyrnong Leader – 25th May 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/maribyrnong-kids-need-support/>

Maribyrnong youth were involved in almost double the amount of crimes in the past five years than the Victorian average, a report has shown.

The Department of Education's Adolescent Community Profiles, tracking 10- to 17-year-olds between 2005-2006 and 2009-2010, were released to be used to direct state and local government funding into areas of need.

The report paints a picture of vulnerable and disadvantaged young people - though some areas were improving.

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Almost 500 crimes were committed in Maribyrnong in 2009-2010 by young people - a rate of 102 per 1000 adolescents, compared with the Victorian average of 65.3 per 1000.

Data for the number of Maribyrnong adolescents convicted and placed on community orders was not published for 2008-09 and 2009-10, though 166 adolescents overall in the Western Metropolitan region were placed on the orders.

Of those surveyed, 79 per cent said they felt safe in their neighbourhood, compared with the Victorian average of 82 per cent.

Young people were admitted to hospital for psychiatric reasons 230 times between 2005-06 and 2009-10 - again higher than the Victoria average rate.

Western's Health's call for new dental facilities was backed by the profile which recorded a 7 per cent drop in the average number of adolescents reporting accessible dental services in their area.

Crunching numbers for young people aged 10-17 in Maribyrnong

83 per cent had someone to get advice from but only 66 per cent had a trusted adult in their lives

72 per cent had tried alcohol and 40 per cent tried cigarettes

56 per cent of families spoke languages other than English at home

MAYOR SEES NO NEED FOR SAFE INJECTING ROOMS

Maribyrnong Weekly – 25th May 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/mayor-sees-no-need-for-safe-injecting-rooms/2173649.aspx>

The controversial move by Yarra Council to push for safe injecting rooms is unlikely to be replicated in Maribyrnong, according to Mayor Sarah Carter.

While Yarra Council made headlines last week when councillors voted 6-1 to back a proposal to implement supervised safe injecting rooms,

Cr Carter said the issue had not been broached among her colleagues.

"It hasn't come up in discussions in council, but I personally would not be supporting it," she said. "I don't think there is a need for it in Footscray. Open-air drug use isn't as prevalent as it once was."

Premier Ted Baillieu immediately poured cold water on Yarra Council's plans by saying a safe injecting room would not be allowed under his leadership.

Footscray was one of only two suburbs in Melbourne to benefit from a state government funding commitment to trial 24-hour mobile needle exchange programs.

The \$3.7million funding pledge will be aimed at Footscray and Frankston to meet "growth and demand", according to a state government spokesman.

The Western Region Health Centre's Health Works program provides new injecting equipment, condoms and safe needle disposal at its Buckley Street premises.

WESTERN INTERCHANGE BUS JUST \$14,000 AWAY

Maribyrnong Weekly – 25th May 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/western-interchange-bus-just-14000-away/2173650.aspx>

For Western Interchange manager Gayle McPherson, the long battle for a new bus is nearly coming to an end. "We're after \$55,000 and we're up to around \$41,000. We're inching closer," she says.

Western Interchange provides a range of respite, recreation and parent-support group activities for western suburbs families that have a child with a disability.

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The new bus will be used to transport children, adolescents, young adults with a disability, carers, volunteers and staff in a range of social support and respite activities.

"In total, we have 27 recreation programs needing to access transport, mainly on a weekend and during school holidays," Ms McPherson said.

"Our clients come from all across the region [Maribyrnong, Hobsons bay, Brimbank, Melbourne, Moonee Valley, Melton and Wyndham], much of which is poorly serviced by public transport."

INDIGENOUS WELCOME STAYS MARIBYRNONG MAYOR SAYS

Maribyrnong Leader – 24th May 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/indigenous-welcome-stays-maribyrnong-mayor-says-gg248912/>

Maribyrnong Council will continue to acknowledge the Wurundjeri people before official events, despite the State Government making the declaration optional.

Maribyrnong Mayor Sarah Carter (pictured) said the council's acknowledgment showed respect to the traditional custodians and had been formally endorsed by a Wurundjeri elder.

She encouraged Premier Ted Baillieu to reconsider his decision last week to allow ministers the option to decide whether or not to say a welcome.

"It is a key symbolic part of council's effort at reconciliation and attempts to tackle indigenous disadvantage and redressing past injustices," she said.

Mr Baillieu said ministers should respect indigenous communities and address the welcome "where appropriate".

He used a more general acknowledgment to "all those, past and present, including our indigenous communities, whose love of this land has made this a place we treasure" at the recent inauguration of Governor Alex Chernov.

Labor figures attacked the move as a "retrograde step" but Federal Opposition leader Tony Abbott has previously called the welcome "tokenism".

CALL FOR FOOTSCRAY SCANS DISCOUNTS

Maribyrnong Leader – 26th May 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/call-for-footscray-scans-discounts/>

Patients in the west could receive better access to lifesaving medical technology if rebates are offered for the use of two MRI machines in Footscray.

Last August Maribyrnong Leader revealed two multi-million-dollar MRI machines, purchased by Bell Imaging to decrease scan waiting times for western suburbs patients, had sat idle because the company could not get a licence to bulk-bill.

But under changes announced in the Federal Budget recently access to MRIs will be improved.

Eighteen extra MRI machines in Victoria were licensed for bulk-billing while from November next year GPs will be able to refer patients under 16 years directly for scans for specific conditions, including headaches and joint injuries.

From November 2013 GPs can refer adults directly as well.

Federal Health Minister and Gellibrand MP Nicola Roxon said the Health Department was in discussions with Bell Imaging to see if their machines satisfied the criteria for partial licences.

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A partial licence would allow patients to receive Medicare rebates for scans, including bowel, breast and cervical cancers, and machines would be put to better use through the direct GP referrals.

Dominik Kucera, the chief financial officer of Capital Radiology, which owns Bell, said potential benefits were there but he was still trying to find out how they applied.

"If the changes don't apply (to unlicensed machines), it will clog up the hospital system even more so. "Unless they licensed extra machines, the system will become a farce and undermine the time saved by going direct from GPs," he said. "We know the Government are under pressure and that services were deliberately underfunded for many years, but it's a very messy system."

Of the 21 Medicare fully licensed machines in Melbourne only two are in the western suburbs and are run by Western Health.

MELTON

MELTON STEPS UP HOSPITAL PUSH

Melton Leader – 25th May 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/melton-steps-up-hospital-push/>

Melton Council is ramping up its campaign for a new public hospital in the town - but not at the expense of Bacchus Marsh.

The council says it was disappointed that the State Government failed to recognise its pressing growth areas in this month's State Budget, including funding for a public hospital in Melton and the relocation of the Djerriwarrh Health Services' Melton Community Health Centre.

It is proposed that such a vital resource could be at the Toolern Major Activity Centre with good access to the Western Freeway and railway station.

Melton Mayor Justin Mammarella is urging residents to sign the petition calling for a public hospital in Melton.

"The extent of estimated population growth and existing demand in the Shire of Melton means that the Shire of Melton and surrounding regions require access to a new hospital," he said.

"Melton Shire also supports the call for increased bed capacity at existing facilities such as the Bacchus Marsh and Melton Regional Hospital in the short to medium term.

"Councillors and council staff will continue to strongly advocate with the minister and Department of Health for a hospital service in Melton and with the Growth Areas Authority for the provision of an overlay to buy land and plan for a hospital."

Visiting Melton recently, Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews encouraged the council to continue its push for a hospital.

COUNCIL TO BOOST EDUCATION

Melton Leader – 26th May 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/council-to-boost-education/>

Increasing the number of people starting tertiary education and apprenticeships are among goals set out by Melton council over the next three years.

The Melton Shire Community Learning Board last week launched the Melton Community Learning Plan, which outlined several education-related goals the shire hopes to achieve by 2014.

The plan included:

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INCREASE family and community understanding and commitment to early learning.

INCREASE the percentage of young people entering tertiary education, apprenticeships and training opportunities.

INCREASE the proportion of adults accessing formal and informal learning and training.

STIMULATE and support business and industry to employ and train their workforce locally.

ADVOCATE for equal access to learning for all members of the community.

Mayor Justin Mammarella said the plan built on the work of the previous learning plan and incorporated recommendations from its evaluation.

“Engagement in lifelong learning nurtures personal, social, cultural, economic and environmental growth across our community,” he said. “Lifelong learning activities strengthen the sustainability of our community.”

“To meet the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that high growth brings, it is essential that learning takes place right across the community.”

Cr Mammarella said the Community Learning Board would partner with other organisations, businesses, schools and universities to implement the plan and achieve its goals.

“The board promotes the importance of lifelong learning and connects people to the many learning opportunities available,” Cr Mammarella said.

MOONEE VALLEY

UNIT DEMAND RISE

Moonee Valley Leader – 23rd May 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/unit-demand-rise/>

DEVELOPERS say Moonee Valley is turning “European” as demand for multi-level apartments continues to climb.

Nearly 1300 multi-level apartments and units were approved in the 15 months to March this year, out of a total of 1880 new dwellings, according to Australian Bureau of Statistics.

North Melbourne developer Guy Miller said people were beginning to give up their backyards for close proximity to the city, following European urban living models.

“This is a reaction to a higher pricing in dwellings and a lack of affordability,” he said.

“People are starting to realise that it’s not worth spending 2 1/2 hours in traffic and paying up to \$100 a week in CityLink fees.

“All of these factors are driving people to settle in the city’s fringes, like Moonee Valley.”

Mr Miller said the municipality was a hot-spot for development and his company Start Property had built several townhouses and units here.

Moonee Valley Council’s planning portfolio spokesman Paul Giuliano said the demand for apartment-style living, closer to the city, was increasing.

“Units and multi-level apartments are a lot more affordable than single dwellings on a larger land in Moonee Valley nowadays,” Cr Giuliano said.

“But that doesn’t mean they can go up anywhere. We need to keep them in activity centres and protect our residential areas.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

27TH MAY 2011



PACK IT IN, TEENS TOLD

Moonee Valley Leader – 23rd May 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/pack-it-in-teens-told/>

Victoria's peak anti-tobacco lobby group has called for more action to deter older teens from taking up smoking.

Quit Victoria says it was alarmed by a study that revealed 51 per cent of teens aged 15-17 in Moonee Valley have tried smoking, which is above the state average.

Released earlier this month, the Adolescent Community Profile also found 33.4 per cent had smoked cigarettes in the past 30 days, which was significantly higher than the rest of Victoria.

Quit Victoria executive director Fiona Sharkie said that while youth smoking rates had never been lower, it was disappointing older teenagers were turning to cigarettes.

"More needs to be done to stop young people from smoking," Ms Sharkie said.

"The majority of adult smokers start smoking when they're teenagers and what they think is just a choice at the time can develop into a lifelong addiction."

Ms Sharkie said the Federal Government's measures to introduce plain packaging on cigarettes was a "fantastic way" to drive down smoking among teenagers.

"Research shows young people find cigarettes in plain packs less desirable and believe others who smoke cigarettes from plain packs are less stylish and sociable," she said.

Moonee Ponds TSG Tobacco Station manager Stan Liu said he rejects two to three underage customers a week on average.

"Some even come in with their school uniforms asking for cigarettes," Mr Liu said. "We ask them for ID and when they can't provide anything we turn them away."

"Underage smoking is definitely an ongoing problem and tobacconists need to make sure to obey the law and keep asking for ID."

While Moonee Ponds Central Lotto and News tobacco retailer Andrew Synak said he had never encountered an underage smoker in his three years of trade, he suggested parents or friends were the suppliers.

"With all the laws put into place I don't know where these youths are finding these cigarettes from because tobacconists certainly aren't selling them," Mr Synak said.

Higher Education and Skills Minister Peter Hall said the profiles would provide the evidence local communities and government need to identify areas of need.

PUSH FOR NEW STATE RULES ON DEVELOPMENT

Moonee Valley Leader – 23rd May 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/push-for-new-state-rules-on-development/>

Councillors have stepped up the pressure on the State Government to help protect parts of the city from multi-storey developments.

With plans for a new multi-storey dwelling being lodged each week, the council's arts and culture spokeswoman, Cr Jan Chantry, led calls last week for new rules that she said would protect the municipality's amenity.

Cr Chantry called on the council to write to Planning Minister Matthew Guy, urging the State Government to establish clear guidelines on density and population growth.

Cr Chantry said residents were looking to the council to provide clarity and probity for safe and sustainable guidelines for the future development of Moonee Valley.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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"We need to move now and protect earmarked areas from inappropriate and large-scale developments," she said.

"I call on the State Government to work with each individual council to establish a quota on population growth and cap those numbers, thereby protecting the neighbourhood character we most prize."

Cr Chantry said the council was not anti-development, but required "environmentally responsible planning tools" for the next five to 10 years.

Cr Jim Cusack said he had seen a significant demand for triple-storey dwellings in Myrnong ward, which includes Moonee Ponds, Ascot Vale, Travancore and Flemington.

"Three-storey developments are going up in areas where three-bedroom houses once stood," he said. "(The) pressure is on for activity centres, but we haven't planned anything for our streets."

Cr Narelle Sharpe said Buckley ward was also struggling with more developments.

"We need to take residents' views into account and this will enable us to protect our residential amenity," she said.

The council will write to Mr Guy after a six-month investigation into planning issues in Moonee Valley.

The research, expected to be finalised by the end of this year, will look into the number of multi-storey planning permits approved over the past two years, drawing a correlation between dwelling numbers and projected population growth.

WYNDHAM

EYES AHEAD TO CAREER OPTIONS IN WYNDHAM

Wyndham Leader – 22nd May 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/eyes-ahead-to-career-options-in-wyndham/>

More than 7000 young people attended the West's biggest careers and employment expo in Hoppers Crossing last week.

They browsed stands packed with information, listened to seminars and sought information from careers advisers.

The free expo was on last Thursday and Friday at the Wyndham Leisure and Events Centre.

Many students from local secondary schools attended.

The expo was presented by the Wyndham/Hobsons Bay Region Incorporated Careers Association.

It has been held annually since 1998.

CASH FOR WYNDHAM ADULT LEARNING

Wyndham Leader – 21st May 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/cash-for-wyndham-adult-learning/>

Manufacturing workers across the west have been given a boost with a State Government grant for adult education.

A \$150,000 grant provided to Western Bulldogs SpiritWest Services, and project partners, is part of a \$4.2 million round of funding for 125 projects at 115 Learn Local organisations.

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Higher Education and Skills Minister Peter Hall said the grants were a major investment in Victoria's adult education sector.

"This project, in Melbourne's west, will help workers in the manufacturing industry access adult education, helping them expand their knowledge and skill sets," he said.

The 15-month project is in partnership with Western Bulldogs SpiritWest Services in Footscray, the Werribee Community Education Centre, the Yarraville Community Centre and the manufacturing industry in Wyndham, Maribyrnong, Melton, Brimbank and Hobsons Bay.

"The 320 Learn Local organisations across Victoria deliver training to more than 110,000 learners each year, helping them gain new skills and make an even greater contribution to their communities and the economy," Mr Hall said.

Across the state grants will enable Learn Local organisations to build their business capacity, develop community partnerships, improve teaching and design innovative learning programs.

The grants were issued through the Adult Community and Further Education Board Capacity and Innovation Fund 2011.

Organisations can apply for a second round of funding from June 6.

RAIL BAD RESPONSE AT WERRIBEE

Wyndham Leader – 24th May 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/rail-bad-response-at-werribee/>

A civic-minded man says he was berated by a Metro employee after pointing out someone he saw vandalising a train in Wyndham.

And he said the man he reported for scrawling graffiti over the train's window was allowed to simply walk off.

Metro has backed the man and said its employee's response to the report and the graffiti would be followed up, including checking CCTV footage.

Vandalism on the train network costs Metro about \$11 million a year.

John, who did not want his surname published, said he was cycling to work when he stopped at a level crossing to wait for a train pulling into Werribee station early on May 12.

As the train passed slowly, he saw a man alone in one of its carriages defacing a window.

John said he raced to the station and told a Metro employee.

"I said 'He's coming down (the exit ramp) now, come out here, I've got the guy who did the graffiti'," John said.

"He came out and told me it wasn't my jurisdiction to help out and said 'What business is it of yours?'"

John said he told the man: "I know you're the guy, empty your pockets."

He said his treatment after reporting the crime had been "lousy".

"Even if he had said 'I'll take control, thanks for your effort'. But he sort of made me feel like I was the bad person," he said.

John said he had to regularly clean graffiti from his workplace and this spurred him to take action.

Metro spokesman Chris Whitefield said it was "exactly the right thing to do".

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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“While the staff member who the customer spoke to did eventually report this case of graffiti, his actions did not meet the level of customer service required,” he said.

“This has already been brought to the attention of Metro management to address the matter.”

HISTORIC WERRIBEE HOUSE FACING DEMOLITION

Wyndham Leader – 24th May 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/historic-werribee-house-facing-demolition/>

Werribee’s historic Davis House faces demolition with Wyndham council considering an application to knock down the 1904 house.

Last year the council approved an application from Watton St Investments to demolish outbuildings in Watton and Synott streets and now the company wants to knock down the main building.

This is despite the building being subject to a council heritage overlay and supporters’ plans to convert the house to a museum.

The Davis family was among Werribee’s founding families.

Campaigner John Brodel said the council had yet to respond to a submission to convert the house to a museum.

“Davis House is like Werribee Mansion. It is part of the history of our pioneer days. It should be left alone and let us restore it to be put back in use,” he said.

The council said last year a heritage overlay would not protect the house from demolition.

“The overlay adds an extra layer of assessment against the provisions of the heritage overlay prior to the determination of an application, “acting chief executive Bernie Cronin said.

The council will decide on the application within a fortnight.

RATES SET TO RISE 5.5 PER CENT IN WYNDHAM

Wyndham Leader – 24th May 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/rates-set-to-rise-55-per-cent-in-wyndham/>

RATES in Wyndham are set to rise an overall 5.5 per cent for the coming year.

Wyndham Council’s draft Budget for 2011-12 was passed by councillors last night, and is now out for public feedback.

The council said the rise was needed to help fund the city’s largest ever capital works program of \$106.22 million, including \$33.4 million for roads.

The council proposes borrowing \$22.7 million to help pay for the capital works.

Under the proposed draft Budget, garbage charges will rise by \$28.75 to \$224 and the municipal charge by just over one dollar to \$37.30.

Fees and charges for services will rise by about 3 per cent, slightly lower than the CPI.

The council said the garbage charge hike was mainly due to the increase in the State Government EPA levy from \$30 per tonne to \$44 per tonne.

It is proposing funds for a range of projects, including:

- Designs for upgrades at Werribee Sports and Fitness Centre;
- a pavilion and car park at Haines Drive Reserve;
- commencement of three pavilions at Point Cook Rd Reserve;

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- four soccer pitches at Galvin Park Reserve;
- redevelopment of the Glen Orden sporting oval;
- commencement of the Tarneit Gardens Ageing Well Centre;
- construction of a third kindergarten room at a new community centre at Featherbrook estate in Point Cook;
- refurbishment of the Werribee South Hall;
- commencement of ovals and courts at Wooten Rd Reserve;
- a pavilion and car park at Wyndham Vale South Reserve;
- Laverton North presentation and footpath works;
- signalisation of Dohertys-Tarneit roads;
- Armstrong Rd construction (Greens-Blackforest roads);
- Sayers Rd duplication (Derrimut-Tarneit roads);
- Sneydes Rd duplication (Hacketts-Point Cook roads); and
- Tarneit Rd duplication (Sayers Rd to Good News School).

The council has also budgeted \$2.98 million for new initiatives, including

- Increased enforcement to improve presentation of building sites;
- Baden Powell Reserve Master Plan; and
- increased inspections of vacant land to improve amenity.

Wyndham Mayor John Menegazzo said the proposed budget struck a balance between providing infrastructure for the growing population and being financially responsible.

“The proposed rates increase will fund vital projects and allow Wyndham City to maintain financial sustainability, while reducing the burden on ratepayers,” he said.

For more on the draft budget, see next week’s Wyndham and Point Cook Leader.

To view the full draft budget, and details on how to tell the council what you think of it, visit wyndham.vic.gov.au

A public meeting to discuss the proposed budget is on Thursday June 2, 7pm, at the Wyndham Civic Centre, 45 Princes Highway, Werribee.

\$100M FOR JOBS FALLS ‘WAY SHORT’ OF NEEDS

Wyndham Weekly – 25th May 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/100m-for-jobs-falls-way-short-of-needs/2173592.aspx>

Wyndham mayor John Menegazzo believes a federal government plan to set aside \$100 million to create more jobs in suburban areas doesn't go far enough.

The program, included in the federal government's new sustainable population policy, aims to promote decentralisation and boost manufacturing hubs and business and employment precincts close to residential areas.

While he welcomed the focus on creating jobs closer to home, Cr Menegazzo said he was concerned the funds allocated, to be delivered over four years, would not be sufficient.

"The need for local jobs is imperative to the future development of our city and it was great to see this recognised in the government's strategy.

"We will advocate strongly for a significant portion of this funding to be allocated to the creation of jobs in Wyndham."

As reported in the Weekly last month, significant underinvestment by state and federal governments across Wyndham's already strained transport, community and health services has pushed the city to breaking point. The council stated local job provision was found to be "barely keeping pace" with population growth.

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In response to the policy, Cr Menegazzo last week said the government had to adopt a systematic approach to planning for growth, inclusive of "realistic" funding allocations. "Ultimately, the commonwealth has a critical role in financing infrastructure given that it collects 80per cent of the national tax revenue.

"It's disappointing there's no discussion of a minimum standard for the infrastructure required in growth areas. This would provide a more logical approach to funding allocation and would provide services on the ground more quickly."

With the federal government taking the lion's share of revenue from taxpayers, it must be more accountable in ensuring funding was provided in key areas such as Wyndham, he said.

"Their recognition of the need to manage growth is a step in the right direction, however actions speak louder than words."

EYESORES TOUR AT POINT COOK

Wyndham Leader – 25th May 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/eyesores-tour-at-point-cook/>

A tour of Point Cook eyesores has led to a commitment from Wyndham councillors to help residents find a remedy.

Truganina Ward councillors Glenn Goodfellow, Kim McAliney and Bob Fairclough and council staff took part in the two-hour tour on May 14, led by Point Cook residents Alex Frau and Adrian Phelan.

The three councillors expressed disappointment at the number of unsafe, unsightly and unsecure building sites, despite a WorkSafe Victoria crackdown three weeks earlier.

Cr Fairclough also acknowledged nature strip maintenance was an issue.

All pledged to work with residents to improve the appearance of Point Cook.

As previously reported in the Leader, residents have become increasingly alarmed by the appearance of their suburb, including dumped rubbish left for weeks, overgrown nature strips, cracked and broken footpaths and unsafe and unsightly building sites.

Mr Frau said he set up the Facebook page, Point Cook Residents United, to see if residents shared his concerns.

It has attracted more than 160 subscribers in the past two months.

"People do want a bit of action," he said.

"It was great that the councillors came along and had a look around and saw for themselves. They have realised where they can improve."

Mr Phelan said councillors conceded communication between the council and residents could be better.

"I think a lot of the problems are due to the suburb just growing so quickly that the council can't keep up," he said.

"If we can work together, we can actually see some tangible results."

WYNDHAM RATES KEPT LOW, KINDER FEES UP

Wyndham Weekly – 25th May 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/wyndham-rates-kept-low-kinder-fees-up/2173587.aspx?storypage=0>

RATES will rise by 5.5per cent for residential, commercial, industrial and agricultural properties in the next financial year after Wyndham Council's draft budget was approved on Monday night.

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The across-the-board increase applies to all of the city's 68,804 rateable properties, including vacant land and those in the urban growth zone.

As part of the 2011-12 budget, which includes a record capital works program of \$106million, the garbage charge will rise from \$195.25 to \$224.

The cost of most other council services will go up by an average 3per cent. However, kindergarten fees for 10 hours per week will rise from \$182 to \$220 by the end of second term next year.

The budget provides nearly \$35million for open spaces, which include parks, sporting ovals and streetscapes.

Wyndham mayor John Menegazzo said that as Australia's fastest-growing municipality, it was crucial to strike a balance between providing infrastructure while being financially responsible. "The proposed rates increase will fund vital projects and allow the council to maintain financial sustainability, while reducing the burden on ratepayers," he said.

"The proposed capital works program is the largest in the city's history and will see works undertaken across the municipality from infrastructure projects in growing areas to upgrading assets in established suburbs.

"It's vital that this budget allows us to keep improving our existing infrastructure including widening roads and expanding our community centres while providing for our faster growing areas with new facilities."

Despite a projected operating surplus of \$153.9million, the council still plans to borrow \$22.7million.

Major projects include \$17.9million for the construction of ovals, pavilions and car parks at Point Cook Road Reserve and \$4.1million for ovals at Tarneit's Goddard

Street Reserve. Also in Tarneit, \$2.7million will be set aside for two ovals and the design of eight tennis courts at Wootten Road Reserve, with \$1.9million each for a pavilion at Point Cook's Featherbook Reserve and ovals at Haines Drive Reserve in Wyndham Vale. There's also \$1.5million for four soccer pitches at Galvin Park in Werribee and two at Innisfail Reserve in Point Cook at a cost of \$1million.

More than \$33million is proposed to upgrade roads and pavements, with \$8million for local road reconstructions.

A number of key duplication projects have also been allocated funding, including \$4.4million for Tarneit Road between Sayers Road and Good News Lutheran School.

The budget has set aside \$2.9million for the new Heathdale Community Centre, \$1.4million for design works on the Werribee Sports and Fitness Centre redevelopment and \$1.3million for the start of the Tarneit Gardens Community and Ageing Well Centre.

New initiatives include \$20,000 to develop a smoke-free policy for outdoor areas.

Chaffey ward councillor Shane Bourke noted Wyndham's capital works budget was only \$1million less than the City of Melbourne for 2011-12.

Truganina ward councillor Kim McAliney said she was pleased with plans to improve the city's amenity, through increased inspections of vacant residential properties and greater enforcement to improve presentation of building sites.

A public meeting will be held from 7pm June 2 at Wyndham Civic Centre, 45 Princes Highway, Werribee. To attend, email kylie.omalley@wyndham.vic.gov.au

ACROSS THE REGION

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RAIL DISTRIBUTION SHORT-TERM PAIN FOR LONG-TERM 'GAIN'

ABC Central Victoria – 20th May 2011

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2011/05/20/3222435.htm?site=centralvic§ion=news>

Work on the Victorian rail network during the July school holidays will add up to 45 minutes to travel times as buses replace trains from central and north-west Victoria.

The multi-billion dollar project will separate the regional and metropolitan train lines in Melbourne to ease congestion.

Victorian Public Transport Minister Terry Mulder says disruptions to train services caused by works on the regional rail link will be worth it in the long-term.

"It's imperative that this work is undertaken," he said.

"I know we're going to have some short-term pain but the gain long-term is going to be tremendous for Ballarat, Bendigo and Geelong - that they get a dedicated line into Southern Cross Station, no longer caught behind metropolitan trains and no longer caught up in disruptions in the metropolitan area."

Mr Mulder says the benefits of the Regional Rail Link will outweigh the temporary inconvenience.

PHOTOS OF UNHYGIENIC WARDS AT FOOTSCRAY WESTERN HOSPITAL SPARK URGENT INQUIRY

Herald Sun – 24th May 2011

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/national/photos-of-dirty-public-hospital-ward-spark-inquiry/story-e6frf7l6-1226061595933>

HARROWING conditions at Footscray's Western Hospital - including blood splatters, dirty beds and vomit-covered toilets - have prompted an urgent investigation into its hygiene standards.

When James Juranke, 24, rushed girlfriend Miranda Taylor, 25, to the emergency room at Western Hospital in Footscray last week to be treated for a pinched nerve, they were horrified by the state of the hospital.

"It really made me sick to go in there, thinking that this is Australia," Mr Juranke said. "We shouldn't have to have situations like this.

"The staff were friendly and they tried to do the best they could with what they had available (but) Footscray was absolutely atrocious."

After sitting in a waiting room for more than four hours, Ms Taylor was given a bed in the fast track ward.

But when she pulled back the sheets, she found the bed she was lying on was coated in filth, seen in photos provided exclusively to the Herald Sun.

The hospital said it would launch an immediate inquiry.

"Western Health is extremely disappointed at the unacceptable level of cleanliness and hygiene which is reflected in the photographs you have brought to our attention," the hospital said in a statement.

"We have commenced an urgent investigation into the matter as it appears that, in this instance, the standards we expect have not been met.

"We will be working with our staff and volunteers to identify how we might do this differently and better into the future."

When the couple arrived at 5.30am, they were the only people in the emergency waiting room other than an apparent homeless man who soon thanked staff and left.

They did not get a formal diagnosis for Ms Taylor's pain until after 9.30pm, when nursing staff confirmed it was a pinched nerve and she was discharged.

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"I felt like my leg was being ripped off, that's why we went there, and to be waiting that long in such disgusting conditions, not knowing what's going on, is pretty traumatic," Ms Taylor said.

Blood they had noticed at the hospital entrance was still there when they left, more than 14 hours later.

The only men's toilet in the waiting room was covered in vomit more than four hours after it was discovered by staff.

Wheelchairs in the X-ray department were secured with chains and when Mr Juranke asked why, he was told that if left unsecured, they would be taken by other departments.

"I wouldn't go back, not at all," Mr Juranke said.

"The conditions were just putrid and disgusting and if I'd known I would have told Miranda to wait until 8am and just taken her to Williamstown and got some painkillers from the local 7-11."

Victoria's Health Services Commissioner, Beth Wilson, said patients were entitled to be treated with respect and dignity under the Australian hospitals charter.

"Being subjected to dirty conditions is not dignified treatment, it's not respectful, she said.

The hospital said it was regularly subject to cleanliness audits and had consistently exceeded benchmarks.

EPA BEGINS SITE CHECKS

Star – 24th May 2011

[h <http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/297/story/133917.html>](http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/297/story/133917.html)

ENVIRONMENT Protection Authority (EPA) officers have started compliance checks of licensed sites across Melbourne.

Fifteen sites across Maribyrnong, Brimbank, Wyndham, Hume, Hobsons Bay, Whittlesea, Moreland, Nillumbik and Manningham will be inspected.

EPA director of Environmental Services Chris Webb said the focus of the blitz was to assess companies' compliance with licence requirements.

"EPA licences are required for companies that either produce waste or create emissions – without environmental controls they would be unable to operate," he said.

"An EPA licence dictates the acceptable environmental limits and outputs for that type of operation – it is vitally important companies adhere to these limits."

These inspections are part of a larger EPA compliance operation for the 2010-11 financial year which will see 200 licensed sites inspected.

FUNDING PAIN

Star – 24th May 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/297/story/133923.html>

THE State Government was called to task for failing to fund 12 new dental chairs for the Western Region Health Centre at a budget breakfast last week.

Former member for Footscray Bruce Mildenhall questioned why the State Government did not include a \$9 million overhaul of the service in its 2011/12 budget, which was released earlier this month.

The health centre provides dental services from two clinics in Footscray – a children's clinic in Geelong Rd and an adults clinic in Paisley St – and provides emergency and general dental care to more than 10,000 patients each year.

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The Department of Health is currently doing a feasibility study on a new dental facility that would be located on Paisley St and would have 12 dental chairs.

But State deputy secretary of budget and financial management Dean Yates told attendees at the Maribyrnong City Council budget breakfast that in organizing a budget, there was always more demand than supply.

“At some point, a line has to be drawn in the sand ... I can't comment why the government has made this particular call in this case.”

Representatives from the Federal and State governments and Maribyrnong City Council outlined their budgets for the upcoming year at the breakfast, which was held at Whitten Oval.

Mayor Sarah Carter admitted to being initially despondent at the release of the Federal and State budgets, and said the three tiers of government needed to work together to secure infrastructure for the West.

“Our city is changing rapidly, and more people are choosing to live and work here,” she said.

“It's about having a co-ordinated approach to secure the investment we need.”

HIGH TECH LEARNING LAB OPENS

Star – 24th May 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/297/story/133921.html>

A HIGH-TECH learning club for young people with Asperger's Syndrome has opened in Footscray.

In what is believed to be the first of its kind in Australia, The Lab will cater for up to eight local youths aged between 10 and 16 on Thursday afternoons.

The youths will work with computer programmers and designers on a one-on-one basis on things like programming, 3D digital design and gaming.

The idea came after a Victoria University project led by senior educator Stefan Schutt and technical manager Dale Linegar found that kids with Asperger's had improved social skills, confidence and happiness through computer tuition. “We are very excited about the opening and giving these young people a dedicated space to express themselves creatively outside the constraints of a normal classroom,” Mr Schutt said.

“By pairing these young people with tutors who have technical expertise in areas of mutual interest, The Lab seeks to improve the wellbeing and life prospects of young people who are often highly skilled but whose condition can lead them to fall through gaps in the mainstream education system.

“Kids with Asperger's often have very high IQs and they're really gifted but they don't have the social skills that most other kids do.

“They can face problems in the real world, but when you put them in front of a computer they're fantastic.”

The pair has received a lot of encouragement from parents of Asperger's children. Mr Linegar and Ms Schutt are now developing a parent support group and an information website for carers and young people.

BOTTLENECK

Star – 24th May 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/297/story/133903.html>

FOOTSCRAY train station is tipped to become a bottleneck for commuters come July when the State Government shuts down half of the Sydenham line for Regional Rail Link works.

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The State Government last week announced plans to close the Sydenham line between Albion and Footscray train stations between 1 and 18 July, the term two school holidays, to realign train tracks as part of the Regional Rail Link.

Metro Trains will also use the time to conduct maintenance works to tracks, overhead wiring, platforms, bridges and drainage.

Express buses will run between Albion and Flemington Racecourse stations and between Sunshine and Flemington Racecourse stations, where dedicated trains will take commuters to the City Loop.

There will also be buses stopping at all stations between Sunshine and Footscray, where commuters can catch a train at Footscray train station on the Werribee, Williamstown or Laverton train lines.

Greens MLC Colleen Hartland was less than impressed with the strategy and urged the State Government to organise some decent replacement services for commuters.

"Tottenham, West Footscray and Middle Footscray stations will be closed, but the Government has only offered some replacement buses to Footscray, where passengers are expected to cram onto existing trains from other lines to get to the city," she said.

"On top of all that, they expect us to believe they will find enough buses and shuttle trains from the Sydenham end of the line for the 5700 passengers in the 8am-9am rush hour alone.

"The Government should come clean on the schedule of works for the whole Regional Rail Link project.

"We're being fed information in dribs and drabs, and all we know is that there will be more disruptions after this one.

"This is just one bit of track near Tottenham station, but that whole corridor will need track work, plus the station works at Sunshine.

"They can't absorb thousands of extra passengers at Footscray."

The Fair Go for Footscray Rail Residents Group were left confused by the announcement after being advised a fortnight ago that construction would not go ahead until the Government received the noise and vibration report and the environmental management report.

Spokesperson Nick Fahey wrote to the Department of Transport last week for a please explain and called on Transport Minister Terry Mulder to answer 14 questions plaguing Footscray residents.

"The quality of communication with affected residents appears to have slipped right back to the standard we experienced earlier in the project," Mr Fahey wrote.

"Nobody seems to be willing to provide straight answers to us and we are obliged to glean what we can from media reports."

WILL THE REGIONAL RAIL LINK BE SUBJECT TO DUE PROCESS OR THEY SMURFING?

The Greens Website – 24th May 2011

<http://mps.vic.greens.org.au/node/2854>

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) -- My question is to the Minister for Planning and is in relation to the regional rail link. As the minister knows, the approval of his predecessor, the former Minister for Planning, for this project was conditional on the provision of a number of environmental reports. Some of those reports had to be prepared in consultation with the Environment Protection Authority. They also

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had to be peer reviewed. The minister has confirmed this in previous questions and in public statements. It is surprising then to hear that the project is actually going to commence on 1 July and that the rail line is being shut down for the purposes of construction. Can the minister tell me if they are anticipating the minister's approval of these necessary plans, or are they simply defying the minister and commencing work anyway to back him into a corner?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) -- I thank Mr Barber for his question and ask him where were my congratulations for Chepstowe? The Greens might have begun their question by giving their congratulations to the government. I accept they might not have wanted to say something positive, but it would have been nice.

Mr Barber asks a fairly straightforward question. The issues in relation to the preplanning work for the regional rail link are being worked on at the moment, and that has been announced by the Minister for Public Transport. Obviously they will be in areas within the existing city network around the rail yards. Those issues concern an existing rail corridor, and that should be noted at this point.

Supplementary question

Mr BARBER (Northern Metropolitan) -- The minister's predecessor's finding, or permit, on this matter was quite clear. When the relevant works commence -- and I presume the minister is not arguing that these are preparatory works -- a number of things have to be in place: a plan for the effects of construction and operational noise, for the effects on amenity and surrounding areas and for traffic disruption as a result of construction activities, and we know that will be occurring. Can the minister tell me if what is happening is that they are simply smurfing their project down into little bits so as to get it under the wire of the previous government's finding, or can we expect to see this material forthcoming before 1 July?

Hon. M. J. GUY (Minister for Planning) -- They might be smurfing the project down so we can look at getting on with the project.

Honourable members interjecting.

Hon. M. J. GUY -- Through you, President, I would never respond to a height joke. The key point is that we want to make sure this project, in the areas where construction or preparatory work can begin, is not delayed. This is an important project. I would have thought the Greens would welcome a multibillion-dollar rail project. Despite the lack of federal funding to bring the project along and advance the project in a timely manner, the state government has committed to regional rail and investigative studies on a number of other areas to expand the inter-urban and urban rail network. We stand absolutely committed to those, as does our budget.

I imagine even those members opposite would be supportive of the regional rail link, irrespective of the timing and the lack of their federal colleagues coming on board with the money to bring this project to fruition. Whether it is a Labor project or a Liberal project, at the end of the day this is a project that will deliver an upgrade for passengers coming in from the western suburbs.

I think that is very important. We all would acknowledge that the western growth corridor needs it.

FOOTSCRAY STAYS CENTRAL

Star News – 24th May 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/footscray-yarraville/297/story/133919.html>

FOOTSCRAY will remain a Central Activities District under the new Coalition Government.

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Maribyrnong mayor Sarah Carter received confirmation of Footscray's future last week in a meeting with Planning Minister Matthew Guy and other CAD mayors.

The project will still be going ahead but under a new name – Activities Areas – after some concern that the Coalition might dump the project altogether.

In 2008, the then-State Government named Footscray as one of six new CADs in its Melbourne @ 5 million plan.

The idea was that the CADs would decentralise transport and job opportunities from the city, with the select areas receiving funding for housing, commercial, retail, entertainment, education and government development to make them into mini-cities.

Cr Carter told Star last week CAD mayors would now have quarterly meetings with the State Government to advocate for their infrastructure needs.

She said under new plans, the State Government would not so much make Activities Areas happen but would enable them, leaving it up to councils to lobby for funding.

WORK BEGINS ON LINK

Star News – 24th May 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/297/story/133867.html>

WORK will finally begin on the Regional Rail Link with the State Government announcing that early track works will start on 1 July.

Minister for Public Transport, Terry Mulder, made the announcement last week after months of speculation over when the \$4.3 billion project begin to take shape.

“Regional Rail Link will get started by moving part of the existing track between Sunshine and Tottenham to make way for the future country line tracks,” Mr Mulder said.

“The Regional Rail Link will mean V/Line's country trains having a separate track for the first time to improve the reliability and capacity of the Geelong, Ballarat and Bendigo lines.

“Suburban trains will no longer be stuck behind country trains and vice versa.

“This will also mean that suburban trains on the Werribee, Sydenham and Craigieburn lines will be more reliable.”

Mr Mulder said the first construction works will be carried out in July, which would see a two-week closure of the Sydenham, Ballarat and Bendigo train lines.

The two-week shutdown, from 1 to 18 July, essential maintenance works would also be carried out by V/Line on country lines and by Metro on suburban tracks.

The Sunbury Electrification Project will also undertake track works and upgrade two stations.

But Colleen Hartland from the Greens said that the government needed to be more open about what would happen and when with the RRL.

“The government should come clean on the schedule of works for the whole Regional Rail Link project. Tell us up front what to expect and when to expect it, and ask commuters what measures they want to replace the disrupted service,” Ms Hartland said.

“We're being fed information in dribs and drabs, and all we know is that there will be more disruptions after this one.”

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