

# LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

## 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011



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## BRIMBANK

### MORE THOUGHT ON SPORT IN BRIMBANK

*Brimbank Leader –2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011*

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/more-thought-on-sport-in-brimbank-fbready/>

Brimbank Council will extend the public consultation period on its draft sports plan after overwhelming community interest.

Released last month, the Draft Sports Facility Development Plan outlines the council's 10-year plan for the management and development of sport and recreation facilities.

The council will focus on ensuring there are opportunities for the whole community to join in leisure activities.

Submissions were to close on December 2, but administrator Meredith Sussex said it was important residents had more time to consider the strategy.

"We've had a range of discussions, there is a lot of interest in the plan, so we need to extend the period so people know what it is that is in place, and to provide amendments before it is considered," Ms Sussex said.

Public exhibition of the plan will be extended to March 2.

Community consultation sessions will be held in December, and two discussions in February will seek feedback to the draft plan, to be presented in April 2012.

Copies can be found online at [brimbank.vic.gov.au](http://brimbank.vic.gov.au) and at various libraries, community hubs and centres across the municipality.

### LOST BELLA'S HAPPY HOMECOMING

*Brimbank Leader –2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011*

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/lost-bellas-happy-homecoming-fbready/>

A woman has been reunited with her dog 13 months after it disappeared from its Kings Park home.

Bella, an eight-year-old Maltese-shiitzu cross, was returned to Lisa Pauchenet last Friday by Brimbank Council officers after being reported wandering around Kings Park and being identified through a microchip.

"I've had Bella since the day after she was born to a litter of one of my father's dogs, so I was distraught when she ran off," Ms Pauchenet said. "I put up flyers, drove around every night and went on to Facebook."

Despite moving to Nagambie, Ms Pauchenet said she never gave up hope of finding Bella.

"I could hardly believe it when my mother got the call from Brimbank Council to say she'd been found and identified, thanks to the microchip."

Brimbank animal management officer Laura Robinson said: "It's rare to have such a happy ending after so much time has passed."

Ms Pauchenet said Bella has since been shaved, and will not stop licking her face.

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"Bella is back to sleeping on my bed," she said.

### **COUNCIL CASH FLOWS**

*Brimbank Star –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/324/story/145202.html>

Community groups across Brimbank received much-needed funds last week as the council announced the recipients of its community grants program.

Seventy groups, including family support groups, cultural and sporting clubs and community service organisations, were successful in securing a total of \$329,000 in funding.

Peter Lewinsky, chair of Brimbank administrators, said the annual program provided community groups with resources for activities that supported and improved the community's health and well-being, strengthening the community, and building their capacity through partnerships and networks.

"Community groups and organisations play such an important role in Brimbank and it is only fitting that we as a council provide support to these groups so they can run these programs and events that benefit the wider community. It's about working together and supporting one another," Mr Lewinsky said.

Community West was one of the lucky recipients and executive officer Robyn Shilton said the grant would help the organisation, which provides integral services to families and individuals across Melbourne's West, deliver workshops which would respond to the community's needs.

Ms Shilton said the organisation responded to a lot of queries from new migrants who were unsure of their legal rights and responsibilities and often landed in trouble because of this.

"Without the grant we would not have been able to host these workshops."

Ms Shilton said the grants were an example of how the council and community groups could work together to offer residents better services.

"There's not enough programs out there. Brimbank is a complex cultural community. These kinds of workshops are just the tip of the iceberg. But there is definitely progress."

### **HOUSES SAFE BUT ANDERSON RD GRADE SEPARATION WILL ACQUIRE PARKLAND GARDEN GRAB**

*Brimbank Star –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/324/story/145188.html>

The Regional Rail Link (RRL) Authority is making a "land grab" for Barclay Reserve and HV McKay Memorial Gardens in Sunshine, according to a local community group.

The design plans for the Anderson Rd grade separation were released last week.

An RRL Authority spokesperson told Star they had "worked hard" to design the grade separation with minimum impact to the community and would not be acquiring any residential or retail properties.

"However, there will be a need to acquire a very small amount of land on the Anderson Rd side of Barclay Reserve and on the edge of the (McKay) gardens," the spokesperson said.

"We are working closely with Brimbank City Council to minimise the impacts."

Artists' impressions of the separation show a rail overpass will be built near the King Edward Ave intersection, with a rail underpass near the Sun Crescent and Forrest St intersections.

Each of the separations will include cycling and pedestrian paths.

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Friends of the McKay Gardens president Catherine McDonald said she was “absolutely disgusted” by the “land grab”.

She said the 102-year-old garden, which is heritage-listed, is one of only two industrial gardens in Australia.

“The Friends have spent five years rescuing these gardens from council’s previous attempts to destroy them, but within a heartbeat they are apparently back to their old ways,” Ms McDonald said.

“Brimbank is just not capable of looking after heritage assets.”

Ms McDonald said she had been “assured” by council that they would resist any moves to allow the grade separation to impact on the gardens.

“Now it appears they have been working in cahoots with the Authority and the Friends have been completely out of the loop,” she said.

She said brochures, which were distributed by the RRL Authority in Sunshine last week, gave no indication of the size of the land that would be acquired or what would happen to the footbridge.

Both the RRL Authority and Transport Minister Terry Mulder did not answer questions from Star on the size and position of the land to be acquired.

But council general manager of infrastructure and environment Paul Younis said the designs were “preliminary only”.

“We acknowledge that there will be a need for some acquisition of land, which has been kept to a minimum and does not involve the acquisition of or relocation of any residences or businesses,” Mr Younis said.

Mr Younis said the council had developed design principles aimed at preserving the “heritage values” of the “much-loved” McKay Gardens.

Residents are invited to attend RRL Authority information sessions. For information visit [www.transport.vic.gov.au](http://www.transport.vic.gov.au)

### **BRIMBANK BUS BOOSTS TOO SMALL**

*Brimbank Leader –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://brimbank-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/brimbank-bus-boosts-too-small-fbready/>

A new bus route launched yesterday in Brimbank will do little to improve the city’s ailing bus services, local groups say.

The 462 route starts at Watergardens station, before heading towards Taylors Hill and Hillside and finishing in Caroline Springs.

Route 461 has been extended to connect Taylors Hill and Caroline Springs Square.

The route was implemented as part of a 2009 Brimbank Melton Bus Service Review, with a second done May 2010.

Of the 25 bus routes reviewed, 19 covered Brimbank suburbs.

But little has been done to improve services for bus users.

Delahey Action Group’s David Anderson said Brimbank residents had once again missed out. “More services have been given to Melton despite Brimbank being a lower socio-economic area,” he said. “The west needs urgent attention.”

Brimbank Council infrastructure and environment general manager Paul Younis said it was “disappointing” review proposals for the city were not being implemented.

“The new service from Caroline Springs to Watergardens Station is welcomed but there are more bus services and urgent improvements required in Brimbank,” he said.

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He said the council wanted extra services, improved timetables and frequency to meet other bus and train connecting services, as well as seven-day-a-week services.

Mr Younis said the State Government needed to ensure adequate funding for transport through Brimbank, including public transport and rail grade separations.

Transport department spokeswoman Elise Gidley said the new 462 route would boost public transport to the growing area.

### **BIG SAMS MARKET: TIME RIPE FOR A RETURN**

*Brimbank Weekly –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/big-sams-market-time-ripe-for-a-return/2373153.aspx>

Shoppers have returned in droves to visit a St Albans icon after a six-month closure due to fire.

Big Sams Market reopened last Wednesday, the first day of trading since fire tore through the premises in May.

Maribyrnong MP Bill Shorten, St Albans Traders Association president Sebastian Agricola and Brimbank Council representatives (pictured) dropped by on Friday to see the reborn markets again attract a crowd.

Owner-manager Nick Lopresti said a lot of work had gone into getting the markets up and running but it was great to be back in business ahead of Christmas.

### **FAITH FOLLOWERS TAKE THE BUS**

*Brimbank Weekly –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/faith-followers-take-the-bus/2373623.aspx>

Brimbank and Maribyrnong Interfaith Network will host the third Places of Worship bus tour next Tuesday.

The free tours allow residents to explore places of worship and work towards increasing tolerance for the practice of all religions.

Gurudwara Sri Guru Singh Sabha, in Craigieburn, and Holy Apostles Anglican Church, in Sunshine, will be visited as part of the tour.

Buses will depart from Brimbank and Maribyrnong council offices.

Details: 92494437 or email [Metet@brimbank.vic.gov.au](mailto:Metet@brimbank.vic.gov.au)

### **GET ON WITH NEW RAIL SERVICES, SAYS HARTLAND**

*Brimbank Weekly –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/get-on-with-new-rail-services-says-hartland/2373171.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.

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"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.

"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.

### **MP PROMISED AUTISM SCHOOL 'IN FIRST TERM'**

*Brimbank Weekly –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/mp-promised-autism-school-in-first-term/2373165.aspx>

Parents fighting for a P-12 autism school in the west have welcomed moves to finally release a report on the proposal.

Western Metropolitan Greens MP Colleen Hartland successfully moved a motion in the upper house demanding that the report on education for students with autism be released by next week.

Ms Hartland said the government had been sitting on the report since August despite claiming the communication process was "public and transparent".

"Families were informed that the study would only take three months. It's now more than 12 months since the study commenced and families are yet to see the results," she said.

The government went to the election promising the western suburbs a prep-year 12 school for children with autism.

"One year into the government's term and not only have they not delivered on this commitment, but they are failing to release the related reports and recommendations," Ms Hartland said. "What are they hiding?"

The Grant Thornton report on educating prep-year 12 students with an autism spectrum disorder was commissioned by the Education Department.

Ms Hartland hopes it will shed light on the number of students diagnosed with autism, how well they are being served by the current system, and recommendations for improvements.

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Western Metropolitan Liberal MP Bernie Finn supported the motion, sharing stories about his 10-year-old son's autism.

"In the north, the south and the east, kids have been given 12 years of education. In the west they are given four," he said.

"I think that is wrong. I think that is discriminatory and I think that stinks."

Mr Finn said he had received a personal guarantee from Education Minister Martin Dixon that a P-12 autism school would be built in the west in the government's first term.

Autism Schools Action's Liz Websdale said Ms Hartland had been working closely with families.

"We are very grateful for the support she has given to families of children with autism in western Melbourne, and that she has taken the time to meet us personally and understand the situation. Let's hope now that the study ... will be released without further delay."

### **BERNIE FINN BULLISH OVER BOOKS**

*Brimbank Weekly –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/bernie-finn-bullish-over-books/2373621.aspx>

Western Metropolitan MP Bernie Finn has thrown his support behind Brimbank Council's quest for Sunshine library funding.

Mr Finn told Parliament last week that the council's application through the Living Libraries capital infrastructure program was worthwhile.

"It's a great resource for the community, and one has to remember that this is a community in the fullness of rejuvenation."

"We have a number of migrant groups there as well. So the need for a library service is very strong, stronger than it has been for a long time."

### **NOT A BEAUTIFUL SET OF NUMBERS**

*Brimbank Weekly –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/not-a-beautiful-set-of-numbers/2373624.aspx>

Brimbank police detected 139 offences during automated numberplate recognition operations in Deer Park and Derrimut last Monday and Tuesday.

During the operation, 7668 registration plates were scanned and 139 offences were detected, including 40 licensing offences, 57 people caught driving an unregistered vehicle and four seat belt offences.

Four people were caught using a mobile phone while driving and there were 25 other traffic offences.

Two vehicles were impounded and one person was arrested on an outstanding warrant.

### **POOL FENCES: WISE WORDS TO SAVE A LIFE**

*Brimbank Weekly –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/pool-fences-wise-words-to-save-a-life/2373170.aspx>

With summer almost here, Brimbank residents like Keilor grandmother Nancy Hayes (pictured with Wade, 15 months) are being urged to check their swimming pool fences.

Drowning is the state's most common cause of preventable death for children under five years.

According to Life Saving Victoria, seven toddlers drowned in Victoria in 2009-10.

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Children aged four and under make up 6 per cent of the state's population but represent 18 per cent of all drowning deaths.

Laws require all of the estimated 128,000 backyard swimming pools in Victoria to have safety barriers installed.

Owners face fines of up to \$5000 for ignoring the rules.

Council's general manager of city development, Stephen Sully, says it is also important that parents ensure their child is safe when near a pool.

"Drowning can happen so quickly. If a resident's property has not been inspected and they are concerned about any aspects of the pool barriers, they are welcome to contact our building development and compliance unit to arrange an inspection of the pool barriers."

More details: 92494000.

Pool owners must:

- \*Have a safety barrier for all swimming pools and spas with a depth greater than 30 centimetres.
- \*Obtain a building permit for the construction of the pool and barrier.
- \*Never prop open any gate providing access to the swimming pool or spa.
- \*Prevent access from dwellings directly into the pool area.

### **HOOKEO ON BOOKS AT SUMMER READING CLUB**

*Brimbank Weekly –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/hooked-on-books-at-summer-reading-club/2373172.aspx>

A new page is turning for young Brimbank bookworms like Kaine, Maverick and Luke.

Children aged 5-13 can join the Summer Reading Club, a national program encouraging children to read over the holidays.

A national website provides interactive creative writing, arts activities and online games to boost literacy and computer skills.

Children can chat online to authors Morris Gleitzman, Andy Griffiths and Oliver Phommavanh, write their own wacky fairytales, as does Pat Flynn, and finish a story co-written by Paul Jennings and Sally Rippin.

Register at any Brimbank library for a reading record and activity kit.

### **ST ALBANS ON THE UP AND UP WITH NEW VISION**

*Brimbank Weekly –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/st-albans-on-the-up-and-up-with-new-vision/2373167.aspx>

Years of planning for St Albans' growth has come together in a new vision for the town centre.

Brimbank Council has adopted a draft activity area structure plan and district connections strategy that could bring a long-awaited revitalisation of the shopping strip and surrounds.

Buildings up to seven storeys high could feature along with improved public spaces and better transport connections.

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Brimbank chairman Peter Lewinsky said the plan and strategy aimed to help revitalise the streetscape, create greater building diversity and improve transport and accessibility.

"Both the structure plan and the connections strategy are the culmination of a lot of work which has engaged all sectors of the St Albans community, increased and informed discussion and, importantly, allowed for a high level of community participation," he said.

The council wants to work with the state government and St Albans community to improve the area's character, amenity, safety and vitality.

Under the plan, business potential would be increased via a mix of retail, commercial, residential and community facilities.

Public spaces would be improved as would leisure, recreation, arts and cultural activities.

Transport would focus on key destinations such as shops, schools, parks, open spaces and community facilities.

St Albans Traders Association secretary Asip Demiri has welcomed the attention being given to improving the town centre.

### **ANDERSON ROAD LEVEL CROSSINGS TO BE REMOVED**

*Brimbank Weekly – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/anderson-road-level-crossings-to-be-removed/2373164.aspx>

Work to remove notorious level crossings on Anderson Road in Sunshine could begin as early as next year following the release of preliminary designs for the project.

On Saturday, Public Transport Minister Terry Mulder released the plans for the long-awaited removal of two level crossings.

A new road will pass beneath the Sydenham, Bendigo and Sydney rail lines and the road will be raised at the southern crossing near Sun Crescent to create a new rail underpass.

Bicycle and pedestrian access will be provided over the railway lines via new shared paths.

Mr Mulder said the separation would mean 25,000 vehicles using the busy arterial road each day wouldn't have to stop for every passing train.

"This will alleviate congestion, reduce travel times and improve safety for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians."

The works are required to prepare for extra trains passing through Sunshine when the \$5 billion Regional Rail Link project is completed.

Brimbank Council wants the project to proceed but has argued against encroachment into the heritage-registered H.V. McKay Memorial Gardens.

A Regional Rail Link Authority spokesman said no residential properties would be acquired.

But the project will affect a small land parcel on the Anderson Road side of Barclay Reserve and on the edge of the gardens.

"The area potentially to be acquired will be used to reinstate a bike/footpath and nature strip."

General Manager of infrastructure and environment Paul Younis said the gardens were a much-loved site.

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"Council will work with the Friends of the H.V. McKay Gardens, RRL and the preferred proponent to ensure that the gardens' integrity and historical significance are retained."

Brimbank Transport Action Group spokesman Peter Thomson said the release of the designs was a welcome step in the fight to remove the dangerous crossings.

"It's going to make a big difference to the traffic flow there and to safety. There have been a lot of accidents because of those crossings."

Mr Thomson said the next step was to remove the Furlong Road and Main Road east to west crossings in St Albans.

"We've got four of the worst crossings in Melbourne here so this will at least be a start."

Community information sessions on the proposal will be held from 4.30-8.30pm tomorrow and 9.30-1.30pm, Saturday, at Sunshine Convention Centre, Victoria University, Gate 1, 460 Ballarat Road, Sunshine.

### **SOCIAL JUSTICE GROUP TO HARNESS PEOPLE POWER**

*Brimbank Weekly – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/social-justice-group-to-harness-people-power/2373154.aspx>

Improving access to public transport, increasing affordable housing and developing local employment and education opportunities are the three key priorities for the Brimbank Social Justice Coalition next year.

The coalition outlined the challenges Brimbank faces at the launch of its new website and social justice kits at West Sunshine Community Centre last Wednesday.

Brimbank Council administrator Meredith Sussex said the website and advocacy campaign were crucial steps in the quest for social justice.

"The situation here in Brimbank is stark," she said.

"Of the 31 municipalities across Melbourne, Brimbank is No.1 for diabetes, gambling, hoons and stolen vehicles and No.2 for social disadvantage and the number of new refugees, most of whom arrive with little or nothing."

Held as part of Social Inclusion Week, the event was aimed at reducing inequality in Brimbank.

Ms Sussex said community agencies, service providers, residents and Victoria University and council representatives - which comprise the coalition - had worked together for two years to campaign for social justice.

She said the downloadable kits would help residents and groups target government and decision-makers for change.

"The kit comprises form letters, fact sheets and real-life stories, which will help Brimbank residents, agencies and others to campaign for the resources and programs needed to reduce inequality and improve social justice in Brimbank.

"We hope that in the long run the website will be interactive, that people involved in the coalition will blog about what they're doing, include more views, reports, articles and photographs."

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### **BRIMBANK FORUM EXPLORES YOUTH SERVICES**

*Brimbank Weekly –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/brimbank-forum-explores-youth-services/2373155.aspx>

Young leaders from the western suburbs will share tips and ideas at a special forum this Friday.

Youth services in Brimbank and surrounding areas have spent six months planning the Western Region Youth Participation Forum, the first since 2006.

More than 80 young people will meet at Harvester Technical College in Sunshine North from 2-7pm to share information and pick up ideas on ways to get more young people involved in community activities.

Michaela Rodgers, a member of Visy Cares Hub's youth action committee, says it will be a great chance to strengthen the different committees.

"I'm really excited by this and we don't really know what the other committees have been doing," the 20-year-old said.

"This way we can share with each other what we have been up to and what we can do to improve."

Guest speakers and workshops will cover how to set up and sustain a youth committee, talk of the importance of social networking, how to run events and how to source funding for youth projects.

Ms Rodgers says a lot of work has gone into planning the event and she's picked up invaluable experience to take into her planned career in youth work.

### **BAILLIEU GOVERNMENT: TOO QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT**

*Brimbank Weekly –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/baillieu-government-too-quiet-on-the-western-front/2373151.aspx>

After 12 months in power, the state government has received a mixed response to its performance in the west.

LeadWest chief executive Anton Mayer said the lobby group welcomed the Regional Rail Link and commitments to WestLink and rail to Avalon Airport.

But it was disappointed at \$50 million in VCAL funding cuts and lost opportunities.

"I guess we are a little disappointed that there has been no commitment to look at improving residential amenity of truck traffic," he said.

"The government came into office on the back of a range of promises principally aimed at the east and south east and, by and large, the west only featured to a minor degree."

He said one pleasing aspect had been the willingness of senior ministers to visit the region to look at issues first hand.

But Western Metropolitan MP Andrew Elsbury is proud of his government's early achievements.

He said education and transport infrastructure remained his two driving passions.

"I would mark getting the Regional Rail Link back on track as one of my proudest moments," he said.

An \$800 million cost blowout and the federal government's postponement of \$500 million in funding had threatened to scuttle the project, but the \$5.8 billion joint state and federal project was now back on track.

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Brimbank schools remain a focus, but Mr Elsbury is warning there will be no overnight fix.

He blamed the previous government for serious problems due to ongoing neglect and promised an additional \$100 million maintenance fund and an audit on every school. He argued Labor failed to plan for the growth and ageing of the population, particularly in the west.

He said the government was investing more than \$2 billion into health over the next four years including \$1.3 billion to improve hospital services.

Mr Elsbury vowed the grade separation of Main Road East and West in St Albans would go ahead before the next election.

Local Labor MPs have been highly critical of the new government, echoing the views of the Opposition Leader Daniel Andrews.

Mr Andrews said Victorians had been let down by the Baillieu government.

"The Premier still has no plan for jobs, no plan for education and health, no plan for skills, no plan for infrastructure investment, and no plan for the regional areas."

Western Metropolitan Greens MP Colleen Hartland said regardless of whether it was a Labor or Liberal government, the west was neglected.

"People in Brimbank are suffering the worst health of any region in Victoria."

Ms Hartland also criticised cuts to VCAL.

"In the west we have a proportionally high number of students enrolled in VCAL, a program which has been cut by the Baillieu government."

### **BRIMBANK, WHERE THE LIVING AIN'T EASY**

*Brimbank Weekly—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/brimbank-where-the-living-aint-easy/2373168.aspx>

Brimbank suburbs are among Melbourne's least liveable, according to a new study.

The Age's Liveable Melbourne study ranks suburbs according to schools and beaches, public transport, crime, cafes and restaurants, roads, open spaces and shops, and ease of access to the CBD.

According to the annual study, Braybrook, on the edge of Maribyrnong and Brimbank, is the area's highest-ranked suburb at 95. Next best is Sunshine at 208.

At 312, Sunshine North is Brimbank's least-liveable suburb and third least-liveable in Melbourne.

Keilor Lodge (311), Sydenham (307), Deer Park (304) and Keilor Park (302) also fared poorly.

South Yarra remained No.1 on the list. Study author Adam Terrill said the north-west's newer suburbs were playing catch-up with older suburbs in terms of services and facilities.

"Fortunately, many of the services needed are planned and so we should see improvements in the next study." He said councils needed to focus on public transport, shops and tree coverage.

LeadWest chief executive Anton Mayer said the north-west's rankings suffered due to pockets of significantly disadvantaged residents.

"It has greater challenges ahead and I think it will become more attractive. In the end, it's not far from the CBD and is a lot less expensive than places the same distance away on the east side of the city."

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Brimbank Council general manager of city development Stephen Sully said the council was improving 'liveability' through new works in parks and playgrounds, library upgrades, community centres, bike paths and initiatives like Sunshine Rising and St Albans Connect.

He said research for the council's draft housing strategy, Home and Housed, revealed residents were proud to live in neighbourhoods where they had family ties, friends and access to good services and facilities.

"There are methodological limitations to the Liveable Melbourne study which prevents it from capturing a true representation of the situation in Brimbank."

Keilor Residents and Ratepayers Association Susan Jennison also questioned the study's findings.

Residents in the Keilor area valued living in a 'green belt' with a long history.

"It was a farming community. It has built upon that and there's a feeling that's important to the community."

Suburbs within Melton Shire were not included in the study.

### **ALBION RESIDENTS THROUGH WITH LITTER**

*Brimbank Leader—25<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/albion-residents-through-with-litter-fbready/>

A laneway littered with syringes next to a primary school in Albion is still a sore point for nearby residents, who want it closed.

A petition containing 172 signatures requesting the thoroughfare - between Derrimut St and the corner of Wyalong and Albion streets - be closed was handed to the Brimbank Council in September. The council has increased its inspections of the lane from weekly to daily, and collects an average of five syringes a day.

But residents say the situation, first brought to the Leader's attention in February, has not improved.

Mark and Paula Bissett, who have two young children, said the council was taking too long to respond to complaints and remove syringes.

The council's infrastructure and environment general manager Paul Younis said he understood the "issues and concerns" of residents and the school community.

"We can only reiterate our commitment to this process," he said. "There has been quite a detailed investigation but it has not been finalised.

"We are getting more information and a better indication of what is going on."

Mr Younis said the report would be tabled at the next ordinary council meeting in December.

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### HOBSONS BAY

#### **A FINE WAY TO WIPE OFF YOUR LIBRARY DEBTS IN HOBSONS BAY**

*Hobsons Bay Leader—2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011*

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/more-news/rules-mean-some-kids-may-miss-out/story-fn7x8me2-1226211777309>

Children may suffer as a result of new regulations, Hobsons Bay Children's Centre co-ordinator Maria Bircher said.

The changes would either lift fees for parents or force childcare centres to cut costs.

"The new regulations mean there is less and less spent on the children because you need to spend the money on staff to comply with the new ratios," she said.

The centre will have to drop places in its baby room from 16 to 12 when the reforms take effect.

"We won't be able to have as many children due to the new ratios, so we'll have to drop some kids," Ms Bircher said.

"As further demand comes in we'll have to go up again and hire another staff member without any extra income, so that will have to be put up in the fees."

Ms Bircher said centres across the state could crack under the burden of the changes.

#### **A FINE WAY TO WIPE OFF YOUR LIBRARY DEBTS IN HOBSONS BAY**

*Hobsons Bay Leader—2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011*

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/a-fine-way-to-wipe-off-your-library-debts-in-hobsons-bay/>

Library users with outstanding fines have a novel way of paying off their debts and helping those less fortunate this Christmas.

For the third year Hobsons Bay libraries are running Food for Fines - a program that allows customers to donate food to charity in lieu of paying their library fines.

The program started in 2009 when 1300 food items were donated, wiping off fines of more than \$5500.

Last year, 1956 items were donated and organisers are keen to improve on that this year.

Hobsons Bay Mayor Michael Raffoul said donated food would be packaged into hampers and distributed to local charities.

"Food for Fines relies entirely on the goodwill and generosity of the community," Cr Raffoul said.

"I urge everyone to celebrate the true meaning of Christmas and give to those who need a helping hand."

Donated items must be non-perishable and with a use-by date of 2012 or later. Food can be donated at any Hobsons Bay library until December 16. Details: 1300 462 542 or [libraries.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au](http://libraries.hobsonsbay.vic.gov.au)

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### **HOBSONS BAY COULD GET THE STATE'S FIRST INTERSEX MAYOR**

*The Herald Sun—2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011*

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/more-news/mayor-race-is-history-in-the-making/story-fn7x8me2-1226211732065>

A local councillor could become Victoria's first mayor who says he is both male and female.

Hobsons Bay Deputy Mayor Tony Briffa, who has publicly spoken on TV about his genetic intersex condition, says on his website he is "not male or female, but both".

Cr Briffa's mayoral run hit a glitch yesterday when his website was accidentally updated, pre-empting his possible victory before the council votes tonight.

"I am the Mayor of the City of Hobsons Bay, having previously served two terms as the Deputy Mayor since being elected to the council in 2008," the website read.

"People I work with know I can lead and influence with honour and integrity and make tough decisions when necessary."

Cr Briffa turned to Twitter to defend the website, saying it was "a demo version of my new website ... if I'm elected".

He told the Herald Sun he did not know the updated "about me" section of his website would be online until after the election results were finalised.

"I am not pre-empting the decision of the council in relation to the election of Mayor and Deputy Mayor. That is a decision for the councillors," he said.

"I am keen to take on the role, have announced my candidacy some time ago, and have spent my own personal funds to invest in a new website that will be launched following the election should I be successful."

Cr Briffa has appeared on 60 Minutes twice to talk about his experience being born with physical attributes of both sexes. He was raised as a girl and was not told the truth about his condition until years later.

"Years later I feel very comfortable having accepted my true nature. I am not male or female, but both," he writes on his website.

"I am still Antoinette and have now also incorporated and accepted my male (Anthony or Tony) side. I feel whole."

In August a disciplinary panel found Cr Briffa had breached local government laws and was guilty of misconduct over accusations he sent threatening emails to a female resident.

The panel found that in one email, he called for a woman to be sacked and told him to apologise, and be counselled and mentored for 12 months for "personal conflict resolution".

### **GATES FOR OUR CROSSING: DOOR LEFT OPEN FOR POSSIBLE UPGRADE AT NORTH WILLIAMSTOWN**

*Hobsons Bay Leader—1<sup>st</sup> December 2011*

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/gates-for-our-crossing-door-left-open-for-possible-upgrade-at-north-williamstown/>

The Department of Transport has "left the door open" for a possible upgrade to the crossing at North Williamstown railway station, Hobsons Bay Council says.

The council's works and assets director Phillip McDonald said a letter from the department hadn't "entirely dismissed" the council's plea for automated safety gates.

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"It actually says they'll raise the matter with the Victorian Railway Crossing Safety Steering Committee's Rail and Crossing Technical Group ... for consideration of our request and advise the outcome," Mr McDonald said.

"So they haven't entirely dismissed our request at this stage."

Mr McDonald said the council would also ask the department whether the station's subway underpass could be upgraded to improve access for people with disabilities.

Cr Angela Altair said she remained optimistic that the station's crossing and underpass could be upgraded.

"It's true to say that they have left the door open but it's also probably true to say that if anything does happen, it may not be in our lifetimes, the way things are going," she said.

"But we do stay optimistic."

The council reissued its plea for the crossing upgrade, first made in 2008, after a September 28 accident when a 27-year-old cyclist was hit by a train at the station.

### **HOBSONS BAY COUNCIL IN HIGH-RISE BATTLE WITH STATE GOVERNMENT**

*The Herald Sun—1<sup>st</sup> December 2011*

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/more-news/hobsons-bay-council-in-high-rise-battle-with-state-government/story-fn7x8me2-1226210562289>

A local council and a residents group have accused the State Government of leaving the way open for higher apartment towers at a development planned for Williamstown.

Hobsons Bay Council said that Planning Minister Matthew Guy had backed away from an independent panel's recommendation that the Nelson Place Village project have mandatory height limits of about six storeys.

It also said that Mr Guy had ignored a recommendation that the developer pay \$900 per dwelling to fund community facilities.

Former Liberal Party heavyweight Ron Walker is one of the people behind the proposed development, which involves more than 400 flats and townhouses, including towers of up to 13 storeys.

But Hobsons Bay councillor Angela Altair said the Government's proposed planning controls for the site disregarded the panel's advice about height controls.

"Without a mandatory limit, developers will inevitably seek to go higher than the indicative height," she said.

### **SPOTSWOOD STRIP JOINT CLOSES**

*Hobsons Bay Leader—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/spotswood-strip-joint-closes/>

The last pint will be pulled at one of Hobsons Bay's oldest and most controversial pubs this week.

The Spottiswoode Hotel in Hudsons Rd, Spotswood, which became a local icon not only for its historic charm but as the only hotel still employing strippers and topless barmaids in Hobsons Bay, will close on Thursday night.

Publican and lessee Themis Babalis said the closure of the old pub, a popular haunt for tradesmen, would leave a hole in the social fabric of Hobsons Bay.

"You'll get people who are happy to see us gone and then there's the locals and the tradies who can come here and never have any hassle," Mr Babalis said.

"I've got a lot of locals and tradies whingeing and asking where they can go."

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The pub, built in 1888, used to trade seven days a week with strip shows four times a week. The opening hours were recently cut back to six days with strippers only on Friday nights.

Mr Babalis said new licensing laws and fees made trading harder than it used to be.

“The way it’s going, every pub in the suburbs is going to become a housing estate,” Mr Babalis said. “We’re going to lose what Australian culture was.”

The pub was sold for a reported \$2.335 million and is tipped to become a boutique restaurant.

### **HOBSONS BAY'S GREAT RATES CHASE**

*Hobson Bay Leader—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/have-your-say-hobsons-bays-great-rates-chase/>

Hobsons Bay Council is chasing more than \$3 million in unpaid rates.

At the end of the 2010-11 financial year, council was owed \$3.098 million in rates from 782 individual ratepayers.

About 40 per cent, or 313, of those ratepayers were residential homeowners.

The council’s director of business and finance Glenn O’Sullivan said it was important residents paid their rates on time.

“This revenue is used to provide services and essential amenities to the people of Hobsons Bay,” he said.

In 2010-11, \$70.6 million was collected in rates, accounting for 68 per cent of the council’s total revenue.

Residents experiencing financial hardship or those unable to pay their rates can apply for payment plans or may be eligible for the council’s hardship register.

Mr O’Sullivan said several processes were available to the council to try and recover unpaid debts including writing to the ratepayer, issuing final notices, making phone calls, managing payment plans, administering debt control and possibly taking legal action, where necessary.

Motorists are also racking up debts, with 7183 parking fines worth \$1,191,230 still outstanding as at the end of last month.

The value of the unpaid parking fines that council is chasing outstrips the \$1.15 million in fines the council issued last financial year.

### **HOBSONS BAY TO MAKE CALL ON HIGH-RISE DEVELOPMENT**

*Hobson Bay Leader—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/hobsons-bay-to-make-the-call-on-high-rise-development/>

Planning Minister Matthew Guy has confirmed Hobsons Bay Council will have the power to decide the future of the former Port Phillip Woollen Mills site in Williamstown.

The land is owned by Nelson Place Village Pty Ltd, which is seeking to build a 451-dwelling, 13-storey development on the 2.7ha site.

Mr Guy today announced that, despite a planning advisory committee’s recommendation that he be the responsible authority for the site, he would hand control back to the council.

“The Government was elected to listen to people of Victoria and that’s precisely what we’re doing,” Mr Guy said.

“This is a clear example where there is a role not only for local council and the local community to have their say and, hopefully, come up with a development which not only allows for growth and jobs, but also produces an outcome which residents

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and those visiting the area believe is a positive addition and not something that detracts from the community's amenity."

The minister's spokesman, Nicholas McGowan, said the community and the council deserved the opportunity to be involved in the decision-making process.

"A critical aspect of the (minister's) decision is to restore the involvement of the local council and most importantly, the local community," Mr McGowan said.

"That was the drive in making the decision he has."

Mr Guy today released the advisory committee's report and Mr McGowan said the council would need to consider the committee's recommendations during the planning approvals process.

"The rest of the report is accepted as presented," Mr McGowan said.

"The minister has accepted those, so the council will need to take those into consideration. We hope they will welcome those."

Williamstown Labor MP Wade Noonan, who made a submission to the committee, welcomed the release of the report.

"I'm very pleased that the report picks up many of the recommendations from our joint submission, including the references to the design review panel, social infrastructure, and industry interface issues," Mr Noonan said.

EARLIER REPORT, 11.43am: A REPORT that the Planning Minister plans to hand the decision-making power for a proposed 13-storey development at the former Port Phillip Woollen Mills in Williamstown back to Hobsons Bay Council has caught the main players by surprise.

The report in today's Herald Sun states that Planning Minister Matthew Guy will pass responsibility for approving or refusing the development back to the council.

But a spokesman for the developer, Nelson Place Village, said it had not yet received any official confirmation from the Baillieu Government about the decision.

"We haven't seen any official confirmation so we're reluctant to comment until we do," spokesman Ashley Williams said.

Save Williamstown spokesman and community advocate Godfrey Moase said he was awaiting official notice but he cautiously welcomed the news.

"The community views it as a victory for local democracy that this is coming back to council," Mr Moase said.

"I thought there had been an overwhelming community response about this and I think that it was only a matter of time until the State Government had to listen to the views and feelings of the community.

"It never should have gone to State Government in the first place."

Western Metropolitan Greens MP Colleen Hartland said although she had not heard officially, she would be pleased to see power returned to the council.

"It's what should happen with these projects," Ms Hartland said.

"Councils are the best placed to make these decisions."

Former Planning Minister Justin Madden took control of the decision away from the council in March 2010 when he rezoned the 2.7ha parcel of land for residential use and appointed an independent advisory committee to recommend planning controls for the site.

The committee sat for 15 days and heard more than 145 submissions earlier this year.

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Following the hearing, the committee produced a report for Mr Guy which has not yet been released to the public.

Mr Guy, the Department of Planning and Community Development and Hobsons Bay Council have been contacted for comment.

### **HOBSONS BAY MAYOR: A TIME WELL SPENT**

*Hobsons Bay Leader—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/hobsons-bay-mayor-a-time-well-spent/>

Overseeing one of the city's largest capital expenditure programs and leading a "progressive and dynamic" council were the highlights of his year in office, says Hobsons Bay Mayor Michael Raffoul.

The 2011-12 budget, which was adopted in July, allocated nearly \$34 million for capital works, including \$3.2 million for roads, \$1.26 million for traffic and parking, and \$4.9 million for parks, recreation and culture.

And Cr Raffoul, whose 12-month term ends this Friday, December 2, said the success of his Mayoral Program was his greatest achievement.

The 2011 Mayoral Program focused on supporting vulnerable families, youth services, promoting indigenous culture and the environment.

Through the program, Cr Raffoul funded a \$20,000 parent educational support system which provided home-visits by maternal and child-health nurses for more than 40 vulnerable families.

The program is due to conclude in March 2012 and while the council has approached the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, further funding has not yet been secured.

Cr Raffoul said juggling his responsibilities and managing his time was his greatest challenge.

"Being mayor is a great experience but it's impossible to be at four places at once," he said.

"It's given me a greater appreciation of our community and the work of our many volunteers and community groups."

Cr Raffoul said a mayor should be able to make tough decisions and see "the big picture".

He cautiously backed Cr Tony Briffa's bid to become mayor for 2012 at the election this Friday, saying he would "probably support him".

"But we have a number of good councillors that could step up to the role," Cr Raffoul said.

### **ALTONA'S PIER-REVIEWED WORKS**

*Hobsons Bay Leader—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/altonas-pier-reviewed-works/>

Two artists with strong ties to Altona reunited at the Louis Joel Art and Community Centre last week.

Mentone artist Bruce Hargrave, whose exhibition *Pics 'n' Spokes* is at the gallery until tomorrow, November 30, has another common bond with Lurg artist Pauline Fraser - he is a former teacher at Euroa Primary School in central Victoria, where Fraser currently teaches.

Fraser sculpted the five bronze sea creatures near the Altona pier that have become a drawcard for tourists.

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"If you pick up any brochure about anything in Hobsons Bay, particularly Altona ... there are the five sculptures in bronze," said Hargrave, a watercolour painter and vintage bike enthusiast.

"They are very prominent and very much enjoyed by everybody."

### **HOBSONS BAY COUNCILLORS' ROW OFF TO VCAT**

*Hobsons Bay Leader* – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://hobsons-bay-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/row-off-to-vcat/>

Hobsons Bay Council has refused to comment on a dispute between two councillors which is headed to VCAT.

The council also declined to say whether ratepayers would be footing any legal bills in relation to the hearing, which comes about after one councillor levelled accusations of misconduct against another.

Cr Tony Briffa applied to have the matter sent to VCAT after being brought in front of a second Councillor Code of Conduct Panel by Cr Peter Hemphill.

A conduct panel in August found Cr Briffa had engaged in misconduct by sending emails to a group of people about Mobil's then-public relations adviser Maureen Short.

The panel ordered Cr Briffa to apologise to Ms Short, undergo counselling, and be mentored for 12 months.

The Leader understands the second panel, which concluded earlier this month, heard further allegations of misconduct against Cr Briffa regarding his apology, but the matter was referred to VCAT before a determination was made.

The Victorian Local Government Association said that unless VCAT ordered otherwise, the council must pay the legal costs of both parties if a matter between councillors was referred to the tribunal.

It is understood Cr Briffa has engaged a lawyer while Cr Hemphill has not yet done so.

A Hobsons Bay Council spokesman would not comment on whether the council would be paying the legal fees.

In a media release, Cr Briffa said he had complied with the original panel's directions and believed the latest hearing was a "political witch hunt" to coincide with this week's mayoral election.

The VCAT hearing is expected early next year. Cr Hemphill declined to comment.

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## MARIBRYNONG

### SPARKS FLY AS PARK BECOMES PITCH

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/sparks-fly-as-park-becomes-pitch/2377158.aspx>

Seaholme residents say they felt "provoked" by soccer players using their local park last week.

Hobsons Bay Council will next month vote on a controversial plan that would allow Altona City Soccer Club (ACSC) juniors to use Fell Reserve as a juniors' training pitch.

More than 500 people have signed a petition supporting the use of Fell Reserve for soccer, while more than 200 have signed a petition against the move.

Residents at the neighbouring Noordenne Estate said they felt "provoked" when they saw adults training in Fell Reserve while on their way to last week's council meeting.

"I think it's provocative. They did that on purpose," said resident George Said. "They went out of their way to defy us. If I wasn't coming to the council, I would have gone round and gathered a few people and we wouldn't have let them play. We would have taken their ball away."

Diana Rice said the ACSC could use other grounds while its home ground received an upgrade. "We are aware that Williamstown Soccer Club and Barnstoneworth in JT Gray Reserve have offered the Altona City Soccer Club to train on their grounds while Kim Reserve is being upgraded," she said.

Club member Robert Palmaricciotti said players had not intended to provoke residents. "The club has had some girls' and women's teams training at Fell Reserve for a couple of weeks now every Tuesday and Thursday with the sole purpose of preparing for next season, just like we have for seven years. [It's] nothing to do with mocking this group of residents. We have absolutely no animosity towards any of the residents who are opposing the use of Fell Reserve for sporting activities."

The soccer proposal is expected to be decided by the council on December 13.

### ON A CRUSADE

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/on-a-crusade/2377159.aspx>

White Ribbon ambassador Phil Cleary (pictured in Altona) has spoken to Hobsons Bay Council staff about family violence. In 1987, his sister Vicki, 25, was stabbed to death by her ex-boyfriend outside the kindergarten where she worked.

Last Thursday, Mr Cleary spoke about his sister and about Julie Ramage, 42, who was strangled by her estranged husband James Ramage in 2003. "While we've made a lot of progress ... it's still a problem for women," Mr Cleary said. "The courts are a problem, the public narrative is a problem, the way media reports it is a problem and the way police deal with it is a problem. People still labour under pressure from men, and men are not doing enough when it comes to constraints on their mates."

In Hobsons Bay last financial year, reports of family violence rose from 509 to 550. A report to the council stated that violence from a partner is the most significant health risk for women aged 15-45 in Victoria. - Goya Dmytryshchak

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### LOWER KOROROIT CREEK PROTECTION MEANS HAPPY TRAILS

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/lower-kororoit-creek-protection-means-happy-trails/2377160.aspx>

Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek president Geoff Mitchelmore has applauded moves to protect the waterway, as Hobsons Bay City Council last week approved an 'environmental significance overlay (ESO)' for it.

The 81-kilometre creek winds from its headwaters at Mount Aitken, Deverall Hill and Beatties Hill to enter Port Phillip Bay between Altona and Williamstown.

"Prior to the ESO, private ownership of land to the banks of the creek made access to this important environmental corridor almost impossible in certain sections," Mr Mitchelmore said.

"As well, private and business ownership, along with local, state and federal government ownership of the creek corridor, ensured planning control of this important environment was almost impossible."

He said the ESO, extending 30 metres either side of the creek, would enable the Kororoit Creek shared trail to go ahead, opening up Melbourne's west to the metropolitan shared trail network.

"[It's] a fantastic result for the community and hats off to the Friends of Lower Kororoit Creek who were responsible for driving this wonderful environmental outcome," Mr Mitchelmore said.

Brimbank, Wyndham and Melton councils will also implement the ESO.

### TRAMS BACK IN FASHION! WERE THEY EVER OUT?

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/trams-back-in-fashion-were-they-ever-out/2375689.aspx?storypage=0>

When Jack Harrison started work at the Maribyrnong munitions factory in 1944, a vital transport artery almost single-handedly supported Australia's war effort: the humble tram.

Trams were introduced to Footscray in 1916 and a branch line to the munitions factory, on which route 82 now runs, was extended from Ballarat Road via Gordon Street to River Street in 1941.

Its sole purpose was to carry workers who made explosives and ammunition for Australian forces.

"There were about 6000 people working there at one time," said Mr Harrison, pictured at the tram depot near the Maribyrnong Defence site, where he worked as a carpenter until 1973.

"They changed their shift at 7.30am and there would [be] hundreds of workers from one shift getting off the trams and one [shift] getting on."

For security reasons, trams serving the munitions factory during World War II displayed only the destination "West Maribyrnong", rather than "explosives factory", "ordnance factory" or "ammunition factory".

"Very few people then owned a car and, of course, with the war on there was no petrol due to rationing. [Tram] patronage started to drop off when the explosives factory started winding down in 1970, but it's gone back up again now," Mr Harrison said.

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The work boots may have disappeared from the west's trams, but the trams are just as vital to residents and workers today as they were when the factories were in full production, according to analysis by the Department of Transport.

Route 57 from West Maribyrnong to Elizabeth Street in the city services 19,765 households along its 11.6-kilometre route. That's 1703.8 households per kilometre.

There are about 90,087 jobs within 400 metres of the route's tram stops.

Last financial year, 6.1million passengers used route 57; up 15per cent on 2007-08.

Route 82, Moonee Ponds to Footscray, services 8971 households along its 9.2-kilometre route - 975.2 households per kilometre - with 11,976 jobs being within 400 metres of stops. A Transport Department spokeswoman said the data illustrated the tram network's key role, and ongoing potential, in moving people in and around Melbourne's higher-density inner suburbs.

She said short trips within communities allowed people to support local businesses while reducing congestion by providing a viable alternative to the car.

A recent draft transport strategy released by Maribyrnong Council suggested shifting route 82 from Wests Road to Rosamond Road via a transport hub closer to Highpoint shopping centre.

That route has had a marginal growth in patronage, from 1.4million passengers in 2007-08 to 1.5million in 2010-11.

Another suggestion is to extend it north to serve the 3000 homes that will be built as part of the Maribyrnong Defence site redevelopment.

"The Department of Transport recognises that it's essential to plan each route according to the community's needs," the spokeswoman said.

"It also recognises the important role local government and communities play in shaping urban design outcomes that support a well-functioning tram network. Once established, the Public Transport Development Authority will take a leading role in liaising with local councils and other stakeholders in how best to develop the network to service future generations."

For men like Jack Harrison, the value of the trams is a no-brainer.

"If I'm going to the city there's no way known I'd take the car."

### **WATER BILL, CPI A MEAN TEAM**

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/water-bill-cpi-a-mean-team/2377161.aspx>

More than 700 Hobsons Bay and Maribyrnong residents lodged complaints with the Energy and Water Ombudsman in the past financial year, it has been revealed.

The report of Energy and Water Ombudsman Fiona McLeod, released last week, showed most complaints related to high bills, billing errors and disconnections.

The report found a record 54,289 Victorians sought assistance for paying their bills.

In Hobsons Bay, 765 people sought help, compared with 545 the previous financial year.

After a drop in the previous financial year, complaints in Maribyrnong rose to 739, up from 535.

Laverton Community Centre's Jelena Pincic said more people were seeking help because of rising costs of living.

"We've definitely noticed a change in the number of people coming in wanting help. Most are coming in complaining about increased prices [of bills]," she said.

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"We can't help them pay their bills ... we can help with food vouchers and the need for them has increased, too. We outline things people can do to ease the situation, like referring them to the utility relief scheme."

Joan Greig, a spokeswoman for Braybrook and Maidstone Community House, said it also had more people coming in with problems paying bills, and it had a financial adviser on staff to help.

### **A LITTLE TOO QUIET ON THE WESTERN FRONT**

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/a-little-too-quiet-on-the-western-front/2375943.aspx>

After 12 months in power, the Victorian government has received a mixed response to its performance in the west.

LeadWest chief executive Anton Mayer said the lobby group welcomed the Regional Rail Link project and commitment to WestLink and rail to Avalon Airport, but it was disappointed at the \$50million VCAL funding cuts and lost opportunities.

"I guess we are a little disappointed that there has been no commitment to look at improving residential amenity of truck traffic," he said.

"The government came into office on the back of a range of promises principally aimed at the east and south-east, and the west only featured to a minor degree."

He said one pleasing aspect had been the willingness of senior ministers to visit the region to look into issues first hand.

But Western Metropolitan MP Andrew Elsbury is proud of his government's early achievements. He said education and transport infrastructure remained his two driving passions.

"I would mark getting the Regional Rail Link back on track as one of my proudest moments."

The \$9million to help Rosamond Special School relocate was another highlight.

He said the government was investing more than \$2billion in health over the next four years.

Local Labor MPs have been highly critical of the new government. Footscray MP Marsha Thomson cited the \$9 million redevelopment of the ageing dental clinic at Western Region Health Centre, the first stage of the Truck Action Plan and WestLink as major projects the Coalition had failed to deliver despite the planning work that had been done.

Williamstown MP Wade Noonan said the Baillieu government was prepared to sacrifice the growing community in Melbourne's west to shore up marginal seats in the eastern suburbs.

"We've had no capital funding for schools, no extra money for our hospitals, no new public transport services, not one cent for a new major road to ease pressure on the West Gate Bridge."

### **AUTISM P-12 SCHOOL REPORT DUE NEXT WEEK**

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/autism-p12-school-report-due-next-week/2375698.aspx>

Parents fighting for a P-12 autism school in the west have welcomed moves to finally release a report on the proposal.

Western Metropolitan Greens MP Colleen Hartland successfully moved a motion in the upper house demanding that the report on education for students with autism be released by next week. She said the government had been sitting on the report

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since August despite claiming the communication process was "public and transparent".

The government went to the election promising the western suburbs a prep-year 12 school for children with autism.

The Grant Thornton report on educating prep-year 12 students with an autism spectrum disorder was commissioned by the Education Department. Ms Hartland hopes it will shed light on the number of students diagnosed with autism and how well they are being served by the current system, and offer recommendations for improvements.

Autism Schools Action's Liz Websdale said Ms Hartland had been working closely with families. "Let's hope now that the study will be released without further delay."

In fact, the report must be tabled in Parliament by next Tuesday.

### **PLUG PULLED ON 'OLDEST SKILL' COURSE**

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/plug-pulled-on-oldest-skill-course/2375696.aspx>

Victoria's only TAFE-based, government-subsidised boatbuilding course, run by Victoria University at Newport, is about to go under.

And despite receiving a \$3.4million government grant to move its boatbuilding campus to Williamstown, VU's relocation plans have also been scuttled.

Boatbuilding teacher Bill Pride was gutted by the news.

"I've got no time for bureaucrats who don't understand what's happening in the world," said Mr Pride.

"It's the oldest skill in the world. It goes back to the pharaohs, who would build boats out of papyrus reeds."

Student John Marks said sinking the state's only boatbuilding course was wrong.

"We destroy part of our history and part of the tapestry of the seas and our trades. I think it's a very unfortunate thing because it represents probably the only chance for anybody in Melbourne to build a traditional wooden boat."

"We shouldn't dismantle valuable resources like that."

State Williamstown MP Wade Noonan said Victoria was about to lose a whole generation of trade-qualified boat builders.

Calling on Higher Education and Skills Minister Peter Hall to intervene, Mr Noonan said about 40 apprentices would be unable to complete their marine craft construction certificates, while two teachers and 14 part-time night students would also be directly affected.

"Now, I'm sure the Baillieu government will argue that this is a matter for Victoria University, but I'd remind them of their active support for the Victorian College of the Arts, both in opposition and in government."

James Martin, a spokesman for Mr Hall, said the decision was made by VU on the basis of declining enrolments.

VU's technical and trades innovation executive dean, Coralie Morrissey, said apprenticeship enrolments had declined and training targets had not been achieved, resulting in an operating loss.

"Victoria University will support the 34 apprentices currently enrolled in the boatbuilding course to complete their qualification."

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"However, with only nine first-year commencements scheduled for 2012, it will not be possible for us to take new enrolments."

■Victoria University is believed to be preparing to cut 30 jobs from its TAFE operations and discontinue some courses following state government funding cuts of \$3.2million.

An email to staff from VU vice-chancellor Peter Dawkins said:

"Consequently, courses that are not attracting the numbers to keep them viable will be closed. In turn, this will have an impact on staffing and organisational structures and, unfortunately, means that a number of positions will be excess to requirements."

### **WHITE, BUT NO SURRENDER TO VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN**

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/white-but-no-surrender-to-violence-against-women/2375693.aspx>

Maribyrnong residents last week sent a message that violence against women would not be tolerated, turning out at Footscray railway station on Friday for this year's White Ribbon Day, the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women.

Maribyrnong Council had worked with community representatives to develop a statement, which read: "We ... declare our commitment to a community where opportunities for success are equally available to women and men; where our mothers, daughters and sisters live free from the cycle of violence; where their thoughts, ideas and opinions are heard and respected and their choices and goals in life celebrated and supported".

Charges were laid in 114 family violence incidents in 2010-11 in Maribyrnong - up 14.9per cent on the previous year.

### **TRIBUNAL SAYS NO TO \$2.5M MAIDSTONE DEVELOPMENT**

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/tribunal-says-no-to-25m-maidstone-development/2375695.aspx>

Maidstone residents are celebrating a victory they say will protect the character of their suburb after a decision by the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

The tribunal has upheld Maribyrnong Council's decision to refuse an 18-unit development in Thomson Street, Maidstone.

The council in April rejected a \$2.5million proposal by developer WH Architects to turn a single-storey former aged-care centre on a 2736-square-metre block into 18, two- and three-storey buildings.

Thirty-three objections were lodged by neighbouring residents.

VCAT member Jeanette Rickards in her judgment concluded that the size and scale of the proposal was not appropriate for that part of Maidstone.

"While the site is large compared to neighbouring sites which contain residential development, this does not mean that any proposed development should attempt as intensive a built form as possible in the site," she said.

The existing buildings are presently being used by settlement agency AMES for services such as training and accommodation.

Spokesman Adam Baxter said the organisation had a three-year lease until October next year and at this stage planned to remain there.

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Maidstone and West Footscray Residents Group organiser Wendy Lang said the rejection was a sign the community would not accept developments that did not respect the character of the suburb.

"The site was the same size as about three house blocks. Based on three to four dwellings per block, it should've had a maximum of nine dwellings," she said.

"Residents are keen to see that developments coming in do show that respect for the neighbourhood.

"The council shouldn't necessarily think they will always lose at VCAT. You can't just let any inappropriate development through on that basis."

### **REGIONAL RAIL LINK: VACANT BLOCKS MARK SACRIFICES**

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/regional-rail-link-vacant-blocks-mark-sacrifices/2375692.aspx>

It may be only a bald patch of land, but the vacant blocks where homes once stood are testament to the progress of the \$5 billion Regional Rail Link project.

Demolition of buildings on Irving and Buckley streets, between Victoria Street and Geelong Road, is now largely complete.

Sixty-three homes and businesses between Southern Cross railway station and Deer Park have been wholly or partially acquired to make way for new tracks as part of the project.

The next stage of demolition will begin next month near Byron and Shelley streets and will continue until March.

Gallery: Compulsorily acquired properties at Middle Footscray.

Fair Go for Footscray Rail Residents spokesman Nick Fahey said it would be fitting to consider the human cost of progress.

"People have [pulled] up stumps and moved on and it has been a huge wrench for that part of Footscray.

"A huge chunk of the community has been excised. It's not just buildings; it's the community and a whole lot of people.

"These sorts of projects need to go ahead for the benefit of the state, but it would [be] decent of everyone to remember the sacrifices some have been asked to make and give thought to the human cost as you go past on a train."

A Regional Rail Link Authority spokeswoman said the authority was in the final stages of organising work between Footscray and Sunshine, including Footscray station.

A contract is expected to be signed by early next year and main work will start soon after.

Details will be announced when contractors are on board.



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### **FOOTSCRAY SHINES AS SURVEY REVEALS HOW THE WEST HAS WON**

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/footscray-shines-as-survey-reveals-how-the-west-has-won/2375691.aspx>

Footscray is leading the charge as a number of Maribyrnong suburbs make big gains in the ranking of Melbourne's most liveable suburbs.

A 'Liveable Melbourne' study, compiled for The Age Melbourne Magazine, assessed 314 suburbs on 14 indicators of 'liveability', including shopping centres, schools and beaches, public transport, crime rates, cafes and restaurants, roads and open spaces.

Footscray was ranked the 37th-most-liveable city in the study, up seven spots from its listing in a 2005 survey.

Yarraville, ranked 58th, jumped 30 spots. Seddon (49), West Footscray (55), Kingsville (91) and Maribyrnong (119) are all up by more than 25 places.

Maidstone, which is ranked 153th, had the biggest gain, rising 109 places from its 2005 listing.

Adam Terrill, of Tract Consultants and Deloitte Access Economics, which conducted the study, said Maribyrnong was no longer seen as an industrial heartland.

"Negative perceptions have always held the inner west back, but what this survey shows is that when you strip away the suburban prejudice, it has many - if not most - of the elements of a very liveable place, rivalling the inner east.

"It's close to the CBD, has good public transport, and is strong on cafes, restaurants and shops." Aberfeldie (14) has replaced Williamstown as the most liveable suburb in Melbourne's north-west.

Overall, South Yarra remains Melbourne's number one suburb.

Footscray cafe owner Nani Osman-Phomas said she moved her shop, Oliveessence, to Footscray because of its diversity. "It's colourful, interesting, very diverse and certainly not boring. I'm not surprised [it has risen on the list]. I've lived here for 20 years and it's gone from strength to strength."

Manager of the Dancing Dog Cafe Ben Coyle agrees. His cafe, in the middle of Footscray, has been selling 'I love Footscray' T-shirts for eight years.

### **FOOTSCRAY CITY, STENIER: PARENTS' BID TO SAVE CLASSES FAILS**

*Maribyrnong Weekly—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/footscray-city-stenier-parents-bid-to-save-classes-fails/2375690.aspx>

The axe has officially fallen on the Footscray City Primary School council despite an Education Department review and pleas to state Education Minister Martin Dixon to save it.

Letters were last month handed to children notifying parents that the school's Steiner education stream would end. Separate letters bore the news the school council would be sacked.

Parents rallied to save the Steiner stream and submissions were put to the department. School council representatives met Mr Dixon as recently as last week.

In emails to parents this week, deputy secretary Chris Wardlaw, as a delegate of the minister, confirmed the Steiner stream would go and the school council's term of office was terminated.

The minister's spokesman, James Martin, said: "Senior officers of the department reviewed submissions made for and against the continuation of the school council and concluded that it was in the school's best interests that the council membership be dissolved."

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A department spokeswoman said Collingwood College was considering adding extra classes to accommodate any rise in student numbers if parents chose to enrol their children in its Steiner stream.

She said Footscray City's new school council was permanent and the members were experienced teachers, including two principals from the local network of schools.

"Much of their experience has been gained in the schools of the western suburbs. Their wealth of experience is critical in developing and supporting a new direction for the school."

### **GRAFFITI FEARS FOR MARIBYRNONG**

*Maribyrnong Leader*— 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/graffiti-fears-for-maribyrnong-fbready/>

A Footscray resident fears a community arts program will encourage graffiti bandits to express their freedom illegally and at the community's expense.

Footscray Community Arts Centre's Hip Hop Academy workshops, run since September, explore "the fundamentals of hip-hop practice, including MCing, beat-making, breaking, graffiti, rap and DJing, as well as hip-hop fashion, film and documentaries" for people aged 8-25.

But Tony Holmes said he was concerned public funds were being used to develop adolescents' graffiti skills through the program.

He fears participants will "inevitably" attempt to develop those skills on public sites.

"One would have to be naive to believe that these children are not going to practise their new art in an environment where they can deface property and cause irreparable damage," Mr Holmes said.

Arts Centre chief executive Jennifer Barry said the centre did not run graffiti classes.

"We have a multi-arts workshop, which covers music, writing, dance and 'graff' art," she said.

Ms Barry said participants learnt in an "arts context" and she had no concerns that students would graffiti inappropriate places now the program had finished.

"The young people we are engaging with show us, each other, and their communities a great deal of respect," she said.

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## MELTON

### **MELTON MEETING IS CALLED OFF OVER THREATS**

*Melton Leader—2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011*

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/melton-meeting-is-called-off-over-threats/>

A meeting of a new Melton Shire residents' group was abandoned after threats were made against Deputy Mayor Broden Borg and another resident, it has been revealed.

The November 8 meeting of the newly established Cambridge, Coburns and Watts Residents' Association was called off when tempers reached boiling point.

Cr Borg said he and another resident were threatened, but security and police were not called to the meeting at Melton Community Hall.

Cr Borg said he was now taking further action and had since spoken to police about the altercation.

The Leader understands the second person threatened is also seeking a restraining order against the man concerned.

"It was quite a hostile environment," Cr Borg said.

"Threats were made and one of the people involved abruptly got out of his seat, slammed it down, and then threatened a resident before he was then told to sit down.

"I interjected as the meeting was on council premises and I felt it was my duty of care, so I asked the resident to sit down. The resident then threatened me and threatened to take me outside."

When the meeting temperature escalated further, the meeting was promptly abandoned.

Cr Borg said he waited behind after the meeting ended with the threatening man, who was then "coaxed" away by fellow residents.

"It wasn't the best of meetings," Cr Borg admitted.

"We need to make sure everyone is safe at community meetings."

Melton police declined to comment on the matter.

The group's next meeting is on December 13. The venue is yet to be determined.

### **MELTON STUDENTS GETS TIPS FROM THE TOP**

*Melton Leader—2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011*

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/melton-students-gets-tips-from-the-top/>

Renowned illustrator Craig Smith has given some Melton students tips and tricks on drawing.

Mr Smith, an illustrator of hundreds of children's books, including the Too Cool and Emily Eyefinger series, took Mowbray College's junior school students through their paces, conducting a drawing master class that included step-by-step instructions on how to create a caricature.

School spokeswoman Elizabeth Yates said the students, armed with paper and pencils, gained a lot from the session.

"Craig delighted the children with his humorous sketches and shared some artistic secrets, such as when drawing a face always sketch the nose first," she said.

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### **RECYCLED WATER ON CARDS FOR MELTON**

*Melton Leader—2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011*

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/recycled-water-on-cards-for-melton/>

It may still be a generation away, but recycled drinking water will eventually be on tap, Western Water says.

Managing director John Wilkinson says it is only a matter of time before Australia follows its American counterparts in drinking recycled water.

“In California and in Los Angeles it is actually happening (drinking recycled water),” he said.

“They treat the water, inject it into groundwater and then recover the groundwater.”

Mr Wilkinson said the State Government was not in favour of using recycled drinking water but he expected that to change.

“Treatment technology is improving all the time and it’s proven overseas that it can be treated with absolutely no harm,” he said. “On that basis I think eventually it will happen, but it’s not planned for the near future.”

Servicing growth towns including Melton, Bacchus Marsh, Sunbury and Lancefield means Western Water’s customer base will more than triple over the next 20 years - from 150,000 to 500,000 water users.

Mr Wilkinson said the growth, to start at about 4.5 per cent annually and rise to 9.5 per cent, would be managed but posed significant challenges.

“We will have the water available to us to meet the projected growth - that won’t be an issue - but it’s about how we do it efficiently and how we can maximise by being innovative,” Mr Wilkinson said.

He said “significant new infrastructure” would be needed, with about \$1.6 billion set aside over the next 20 years.

Mr Wilkinson said Western Water had a strong emphasis on water recycling. Its measures included at the Eynesbury township, where homes had dual pipes supplying Class A recycled water from the Melton Recycled Water Plant, which was used for flushing toilets and watering gardens.

Western Water will also provide water for Toolern, which aims to become the country’s first water-neutral suburb.

“We’re finding that (recycled water) really is a very well accepted product, so much so that the developers are now knocking on our door to make sure Class A recycled water is available to new developments,” Mr Wilkinson said.

### **ROAD LOBBY GROUP JOINS MELTON HIGHWAY CAMPAIGN**

*Melton Leader—2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011*

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/road-lobby-group-joins-melton-highway-campaign/>

The RACV has conceded roads in the west have not kept pace with its rapid growth, including the Melton Highway.

The admission comes as the Leader continues its push for the notorious Melton Highway to be duplicated, following 13 deaths and more than 260 injuries on the road since 1987.

Melton Council, Melton police and Melton state Labor MP Don Nardella have all thrown their support behind the campaign.

RACV roads and traffic acting manager Emily McLean said the company had previously supported duplication of the highway from The Regency (Hillside) to Ryans Lane (Melton).

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The RACV was now in the process of assessing which projects in Melbourne needed attention.

“Outer metropolitan Melbourne is growing at a staggering rate and the development of roads and public transport infrastructure has not kept pace with this growth,” Ms McLean said. “The Shire of Melton faces challenges from its rapid growth. We will be consulting with local government to identify the projects that are critical to cater for the growing population living in outer Melbourne.”

Ms McLean said the RACV identified that Melton Highway should be widened from The Regency to Ryans Lane in its 2002 Missing Links report, a blueprint for the upgrade of transport in outer Melbourne.

“In 2008, we updated this blueprint and produced Connect Outer Melbourne, which again identified the need to upgrade Melton Highway, with duplication between The Regency and Ryans Lane.”

### **CAROLINE SPRINGS COMPLEX COSTS HAWKS**

*Melton Leader—1<sup>st</sup> December 2011*

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/caroline-springs-complex-costs-hawks/>

Delays on a new Caroline Springs hotel have cut Hawthorn Football Club's bottom line by more than \$1.1 million.

The club owns the West Waters Entertainment Complex that has been hampered by construction works and a slower start-up time than expected.

The club declared a consolidated net profit of \$594,323 in its 2010-11 annual report released this month - about \$1.1 million less than its initial operating profit of \$1,712,428.

A consolidated net profit is a measure of a venture's profitability after all costs.

The Hawks club posted a \$2.3 million profit for 2009-10.

But outgoing president Jeff Kennett said the financial state of the venue, which opened in January, had begun to improve.

“These start-up issues have negatively impacted on the club's consolidated result,” he told Hawks members.

“However, the club is pleased to note that there has been some significant improvement in the venue's financial performance over recent months and believe the business is very well positioned to deliver on its strong financial forecasts.”

Mr Kennett said the club board had allowed three years for the project to “build to its potential and deliver significant revenue to the club, and it is on schedule to do so within that time frame”. “It generates another source of income ... not dependant on the performance of the football department,” he said.

In March, the Hawks and Collingwood (owner of The Club in Caroline Springs) were accused by Victorian Greens gambling spokeswoman Colleen Hartland of fleecing Melton Shire residents of millions of dollars in pokies expenditure.

### **\$4.5M OWED TO MELTON COUNCIL**

*Melton Leader—1<sup>st</sup> December 2011*

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/45m-owed-to-melton-council/>

Melton Council is almost \$4.5 million out of pocket through unpaid rates and infringement notices.

But the council says the large amount of outstanding payments will not affect services.

The unpaid fees would be enough to cover more than half of the council's 2011/12 building works, which includes stage 1 of the Melton Community Centre.

# LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

## 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011



In the last financial year, \$2.87 million in rates remained unpaid. A further \$708,000 was owed in unpaid fines, including \$218,000 in parking fines.

Fire-hazard debts are \$21,000 in arrears, while \$788,000 in sundry debts are owing.

General manager of corporate services Peter Bean said while the amount outstanding appeared large, it was about 5 per cent of rates collected each year.

“Each year council collects over 95 per cent of rates, which is a good result,” he said.

“A range of reasons were given (for not paying) including competing priorities and financial difficulties.

“Any money not collected on time will have an effect on council by way of cash-flow, but has no effect on council’s service delivery.”

Mr Bean said the council used debt collectors to recover outstanding fees and had a hardship policy to help with payments.

“Council actively follows up outstanding rates and encourages residents who have financial difficulties to enter into payment arrangements,” he said. “Fines generated pursuant to council’s Local Laws and animal control regulation are pursued through the Infringements Court and the Magistrates’ Court.”

MoneyHelp spokeswoman Carolyn Bond said those struggling to pay their rates were usually experiencing wider financial difficulties.

“We get thousands of calls a year and nearly everyone who we speak to feels like they are the only person,” Ms Bond said.

### **DOG IN SECOND MELTON ATTACK**

*Melton Leader—1<sup>st</sup> December 2011*

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/dog-in-second-melton-attack/>

A dangerous dog has been put down after a second vicious attack in Melton Shire.

The dog attacked an elderly pensioner and her poodle in Melton South last Monday (November 21).

The same dog rushed at a woman and her dog less than a week earlier on November 16.

The registered and micro-chipped american staffordshire terrier was surrendered by its owner and destroyed last Thursday after attacking 73-year-old Margaret Moore and her black toy poodle, 2 1/2, in Denny Place.

Melton Council’s general manager corporate services Peter Bean confirmed the same dog was involved in an incident five days earlier.

“In this instance the dog rushed at a woman who was walking her dog and the woman tripped,” he said.

The latest attack came just days after a bull terrier cross was euthanized when it set upon a one-year-old boy, his grandmother and innocent bystanders in Burnside on November 17.

There have been at least four other attacks by dogs on humans in the shire this year.

Ms Moore said the dog, which was believed to have lived in the same street, attacked about noon.

# LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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"I was taking the dog for a walk and when I came around the corner the dog just attacked," Ms Moore said. "It shot across the road and before I had time to pick my dog up, it was munching into it."

The traumatised dog was taken to a vet with puncture wounds, bruised lungs and fluid on the lungs. Ms Moore also has to seek medical attention for several cuts.

Neighbour Ron Barnes said the council switchboard was unhelpful when he phoned a ranger's calling card to report the attack.

"Their attitude stinks," he said. "It's like you're interrupting their day."

### **BACCHUS MARSH RESIDENTS NEED TO RAISE \$1 MILLION TO HAVE AQUATIC CENTRE**

*Melton Leader—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/bacchus-marsh-residents-need-to-raise-1-million-to-have-aquatic-centre/>

Bacchus Marsh residents can have their long-awaited indoor aquatic centre - provided they raise \$1 million.

Moorabool councillors will next Wednesday consider three designs.

But chief executive officer Rob Croxford said no matter which option was chosen, a minimum of \$1 million would need to be raised.

Leader reported in October 2010 that an architect costed the project at \$11 million, almost double the \$6 million estimated by the council.

Kyneton's Toyota Sports and Aquatic Centre attracted a \$9.4 million price tag.

Last December, the council decided to further develop the concept and committed \$160,000 in its 2011/12 budget to fund design and construction. The three design

options all differ in cost and can have a staged approach to development as cash becomes available.

Mr Croxford said the council was now seeking firm commitments from funding sources to build and run the centre.

"All options such as federal and state government grants, striking a special rate and community fundraising are all being considered," he said.

"The council is also meeting with several community groups about leading the fundraising effort and would like to talk to any interested parties to start this next phase of the development."

Mayor Pat Griffin said he was looking forward to seeing the project come to fruition. "Councillors are keen to finalise the design so we have something definitive to show the community and take to the relevant funding bodies to make this facility a reality," he said.

"I'd like to thank the Bacchus Marsh Rotary Club for its assistance and persistence and the Aquatic Stakeholder Working Group for their report and recommendations, which were pivotal."

### **PLUMPTON FAMILY ZONED OUT**

*Melton Leader—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/plumpton-family-zoned-out/>

A Plumpton family fears they will be thrown out of their home if a growth plan gets the green light.

John and Phil Galea's Plumpton Rd property is part of a large parcel of land earmarked to become industrial land under the Melbourne West Growth Corridor Plan.

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The family has owned the land for 21 years, building their dream home 15 years ago.

"It's the home that my husband and I always knew we were going to build ever since we were in our 20s," Mrs Galea said.

"You do things (to the house) as you can, as you can afford it - it's not a mansion, but it's our home.

"We've put so much time and effort into this place. We can't believe that it can all be bulldozed to make way for industry.

"What sort of message does this send to our kids?"

The mother of two said under the State Government plan, the family had no chance of keeping their home.

"Everyone knows that development is coming at some point, but it was assumed that it would be residential," she said.

"With residential, we'd have a hope of staying here, but with industrial, we've got no chance."

The family are no strangers to fighting for their home. Two years ago they halted VicRoads' plans to realign Plumpton and Taylors roads, which would have seen their home demolished.

"All those feelings are now flooding back," Mrs Galea said.

"I don't care if it's in the constitution, to me, it's stealing. You buy something, you pay for it, you own it and it's yours. You just don't expect that someone can come in and take it all away from you - but that's compulsory acquisition."

Mrs Galea said no compensation could replace their lifelong memories.

"Everyone says, 'what's your problem, you're going to get paid for it', but it doesn't replace the sentiment - the blood, sweat and tears that's gone into making this place our family home," she said.

"And the hopes and vision we've had for the place."

She said the family had not been formally notified of the plans, released earlier this month.

"We've had no correspondence from the government," she said.

"It only came to my attention through one of the neighbours and we were really quite horrified by it."

Mrs Galea said comments in the Leader by Melton Council chief executive Kelvin Tori telling residents to embrace growth and not fear it were "insensitive".

### **MELTON TO GET NBN NEXT YEAR**

*Melton Leader—30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/melton-nbn-your-questions-answered/>

Work on high-speed broadband internet services in Melton will start in June 2012.

In October this year, Federal Labor Lalor MP and Prime Minister Julia Gillard said NBN Co, the company established to construct and operate the National Broadband Network (NBN), would start work in Melton within 12 months.

About 2600 homes in Melton will be hooked up.

But head of network operations at NBN Co, Steve Christian, revealed last week that construction would start sooner than expected.

"Construction in Melton is scheduled to begin in June 2012," he said.

# LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

## 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011



“And on average it will take 12 months from the start of construction until residents and business owners will be able to order active high-speed broadband services.”

Ballarat, Melbourne CBD, and Tullamarine were among 28 locations set for the high-speed internet roll-out, announced last month.

They join Bacchus Marsh, South Morang and Brunswick, where work has started.

NBN Co's Steve Christian, Head of Network Operations at NBN Co. answers some frequently asked questions for readers of the Melton/Moorabool Leader.

What is the National Broadband Network and how are people using it?

The NBN will make high speed broadband available to all Australian homes and businesses.

Like electricity today, broadband is rapidly becoming an essential service for many Australians.

In the towns that already have the NBN connected, it is being used for exciting new education services and is helping small businesses run more efficiently.

According to the Principal at Willunga High School, just outside of Adelaide, the ability for students to work in virtual classrooms, interacting with experts as if they were in the room, will mean the four walls of the school will disappear.

“We will be able to link into lessons in other locations - for instance, a chemistry lesson delivered at Flinders University can be streamed here to our students in real time,” she said.

In the coastal town of Kiama in New South Wales, photographer and small business owner Paul Gosney relocated his family from Sydney for a sea change that would mean he could run his business more efficiently over the NBN.

“With the upload speeds I can achieve over the NBN, I can send completed jobs to clients in less than 30mins whereas previously it would've taken several hours, or I would have had to courier a DVD,” he said.

In the health sector, high speed broadband networks are being used to deliver health services to people in their homes, including video consultations, saving on travel time and extending the reach of medical specialists.\*

Enabling services in education, health and business are particularly important in areas outside our metropolitan centres, which may be held back by poor quality broadband.

For everyday consumers, services provided over the NBN may potentially be used for a range of entertainment offerings including catch-up TV over the internet (such as ABC's iView) and movies over the internet.\*

Why do we need it?

The Government has decided that it is time for Australia to upgrade its telecommunications infrastructure.

Our existing networks, such as the copper network (used for broadband services such as ADSL) were not designed for today's broadband traffic, which includes large amounts of video, images and data, not just phone calls.

The copper network is reaching the limits of its capacity to meet the demands for higher broadband speeds necessary if Australia is to keep pace with the rest of the world

We have a growing demand for data in our country, which increased more than 20 per cent in the first half of last year.\*\*

# LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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In fact data downloaded over fixed networks continues to increase while data over mobile networks user on average remains fairly static, despite the huge growth in the number of mobile devices.

The NBN is a long-term investment in Australia's future that will rollout over the next 10 years, but Australians in some areas are already starting to benefit.

Where is the rollout of the network up to?

In recent months you may have seen NBN Co contractors constructing and switching on the NBN in five First Release Sites across the country – Armidale, Brunswick, Townsville, Kiama and Willunga. These sites were chosen by NBN Co because they represent the diverse geography, climate, housing type and demographics required to trial the NBN rollout process.

Following the switch-on of the first five trial sites, NBN Co has released a 12 month plan to begin to roll out the network in other locations across the country.

The plan forecasts that construction work will begin in cities, towns and suburbs covering half a million homes and businesses over the next 12 months, and will be updated quarterly to include further construction information.

The plan is available on the NBN Co website, here <http://www.nbnco.com.au/our-network/rollout-plan.html>.

Construction in Melton is scheduled to begin in June 2012, and on average, it will take 12 months from the start of construction until residents and business owners will be able to order active high speed broadband services.

We will release more information about the rollout in your area as it draws closer.

You can also keep an eye on [www.nbnco.com.au](http://www.nbnco.com.au) for news and updates.

How do I find out more?

If you have any questions about the status of the network rollout, you can contact the NBN Co call centre on 1800 881 816 or email NBN Co on [info@nbnco.com.au](mailto:info@nbnco.com.au).

For more general information about the NBN, including case studies on how it is being used in Tasmania, visit [nbnco.com.au](http://nbnco.com.au), or visit [youtube.com/nbnco](http://youtube.com/nbnco) or [twitter.com/nbnco](http://twitter.com/nbnco) or [twitter.com/nbnco](http://twitter.com/nbnco).

Steve Christian is the Head of Network Operations at NBN Co.

\* You will need the right software, equipment and in-premises connection to access these services.

\*\* The average fixed network data download volumes per connection in Australia increased 21 % in the six months to June 2010 – source: Australian Bureau of Statistics.

### **GRIFFIN GETS NOD FOR SECOND TERM AS MAYOR**

*Melton Leader—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/griffin-gets-nod-for-second-term-as-mayor/>

Moorabool Mayor Pat Griffin is set to serve a second consecutive term in the shire's top job.

The council will elect its new mayor at a public statutory meeting next Monday.

But sources have informed Leader that Cr Griffin has again got the nod from his fellow councillors to remain in the plum role.

Like many other Victorian councils, the Moorabool mayoral vote is usually decided behind closed doors before the statutory meeting.

Voting will again take place on the night for public show despite the result already being known by councillors.

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It is not known if Cr Griffin received any challenge for the mayoral role this year.

Cr Griffin declined to comment on the story when approached, saying internal council deliberations were confidential.

But Crs Pat Toohey, Allan Comrie and Russ Hendry all told Leader last week that they would not be putting their hands up for the role.

Crs Griffin, Philip Flack and Tom Sullivan declined to comment while Cr Michael Tudball said he would decide on the night.

Elected in 2006 to represent East Moorabool Ward, Cr Griffin has had a busy year as mayor.

Controversy surrounding the future of the Bacchus Marsh Avenue of Honour has dominated his term of office and remains unresolved.

However, Cr Griffin is understood to have enjoyed his stint as mayor after taking a few months to grow into the role.

He is widely viewed by his colleagues as the best man to lead the shire in the year ahead.

Of the shire's seven councillors, five have served as mayor: Cr Griffin (2010-11), Cr Toohey (2009-10), Cr Tudball (2008-09), Cr Comrie (2002-03) and Cr Sullivan for two terms (1997-1999).

The Statutory and Annual Appointments Special Meeting will be held in the Council Chambers, 15 Stead St, Ballan, next Monday (December 5) at 7pm.

### **'SEVERE' NOISE LIMITS A REPRIEVE FOR DINGOES**

*Melton Weekly—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/severe-noise-limits-a-reprieve-for-dingoes/2374277.aspx>

Wildlife is the big winner of a Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal decision to refuse a permit for a large shed and restrict the use of a motorcycle track, according to the founders of Toolern Vale's Dingo Discovery Centre.

VCAT last week approved a planning permit for a dwelling and ancillary bike track next to the animal sanctuary, subject to strict conditions.

A proposed shed was not approved and must be deleted from the plans.

The centre's owners, Lyn and Peter Watson, objected to the proposal approved by council and said they felt vindicated by VCAT's decision.

"We had settled here secure in the knowledge that there was only a single allotment to our east that could not be altered," Mrs Watson said.

"Now that severe limits have been placed with the need for the dwelling to be erected first, with landscaping and tree plantings, we feel we can live with the result."

Mrs Watson claimed the proposed development was in direct contravention of Melton Council's 'planning scheme'.

The scheme's documents state developments must "conserve the Toolern Vale Hills area for the benefit of current and future generations".

The scheme's objective is to discourage land use and development "that would threaten the area's environmental integrity".

# LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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Mrs Watson said: "Since there are strict wildfire overlay requirements, the onus will now be on the developer of the new subdivision to deal with and adhere to the conditions.

"We went to VCAT as we felt our very legitimate objections about the proposed use and development of land adjoining the dingo sanctuary were disregarded by the Melton Shire planning department."

Mrs Watson said the council had issued a planning permit to operate the dingo sanctuary and nominated the sanctuary for a recent state environmental award, yet it refused to protect the well-being of the animals by attempting to permit a "prohibited use" on an adjacent property.

During the VCAT hearing, expert witness on dingo behaviour Dr Bradley Smith said that unusual and intermittent noises likely to emanate from the motorbike track would cause high levels of stress among the dingoes.

Council planning services manager Bob Baggio said it had supported the original planning application and issued a notice of decision to issue a permit.

VCAT's ruling had "generally" upheld the council's decision.

### **WOODGROVE EXPANSION: NEW STORES AND JOBS FOR HUB**

*Melton Weekly—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/woodgrove-expansion-new-stores-and-jobs-for-hub/2374275.aspx>

A major expansion of Melton's Woodgrove shopping centre could lead to a business and employment boom, according to the Greater Melton Chamber of Commerce.

President Ollie Tabone said the redevelopment, which is still in the planning stage, would bring many direct and indirect benefits.

"With 80 per cent of our residents travelling outside the Melton Shire for work, a development of this size means not only the opportunity for local jobs but also the ability for our residents to live, work and buy local," Ms Tabone said.

A master plan for the expansion has been approved by Melton Council.

Robert Carter, managing director of centre manager QIC Global, said the redevelopment would allow Woodgrove to meet growing demand.

"The plans accommodate redevelopment of the land west of Woodgrove to Barries Road and will introduce additional retail with new major anchor stores, some large format retail and additional specialty stores.

"Our vision for Woodgrove shopping centre is that it continues to meet the demands of a growing market with a strong retail, entertainment and dining offer."

Mr Carter said the scope and timing of the development was yet to be confirmed and would be announced at the planning stage.

Ms Tabone said the need for business growth was increasing with the shire's population.

"In 2006, an estimated 3912 businesses operated within Melton Shire.

"In August 2011, the Australian Business Register identified a total of 14,205 active Australian business numbers with a principal place of business address located within the shire."

She said that, like most growth areas, the greatest job contributors were retail trade, construction, education and training.

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### **BALLAN RESIDENTS FEAR STORM DELUGE**

*Melton Weekly—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/ballan-residents-fear-storm-deluge/2374284.aspx>

Ballan residents fear summer storms could flood their homes because of poor drainage and inadequate council planning.

Wild weather in February caused severe flooding when water gushed down a slope into homes bordered by Sunline Court, Inglis Street and Ingliston Road.

A proper drainage network along Inglis Street and into the nearby creek would have avoided the flooding, residents say.

Sunline Court resident Paul Fletcher acknowledged freak weather played a part in the floods.

"I'm not being unrealistic, I know nature has its way, but the council also has its responsibility. We were at real risk of complete inundation."

Mr Fletcher said he faced further flooding when it rained because a lane at the back of his property blocked stormwater, diverting it into his house and two neighbouring properties.

The paramedic said he often worked late night and weekend shifts and worried for his family when he wasn't home during bad weather.

"It's starting to interfere with our lifestyle. When we hear news of a big storm coming we panic and stay home.

"[The council] brought a grader down. We thought it would be fixed and resolved but they came out and did nothing. I sent off a letter to council and they said [fixing] it was above and beyond what they have to do.

"We're concerned it hasn't been sufficiently addressed and now we're back in storm season. It's not good for homes to structurally go through these things.

"[Perhaps] someone could come out to explain to us what the plan is."

Council spokesman Phil Weir said the area had two drainage reserves designed to cope with the natural watercourse.

"It appears that over time the geographic low point has been altered through unknown means. When a watercourse is on private property, it is the responsibility of the owner of that property to maintain geographic features that may affect other properties."

He said the council had worked on diverting the water to its natural course.

"In the case of extreme weather events such as we have experienced, however, the natural watercourse can be overloaded, which will exacerbate any alterations to the original conditions."

Mr Weir said Ballan, like dozens of towns across the state, suffered flood damage in last summer's freak storms.

Recovery work was under way at an estimated cost of \$12 million and state funding was being sought to quicken the repairs.

### **HALLETT'S WAY EXTENSION: PRESSURE VALVE TO LIFT IN MARSH**

*Melton Weekly—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/halletts-way-extension-pressure-valve-to-lift-in-marsh/2374287.aspx>

Traffic will ease in central Bacchus Marsh when the developer of a new housing estate spends more than \$6 million on building a north-south extension of Halletts Way, Moorabool councillors claim.

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As part of its agreement with the council, Devine Homes will fund the extension of Halletts Way and a bridge over the Werribee River to provide an additional route to the Western Highway.

Mayor Pat Griffin says the road will take pressure off Grant and Main streets and Gisborne Road, where traders have voiced frustration over traffic jams at the busy intersection.

Earlier this month, the Weekly reported that traders on Main Street were worried the heavy traffic was deterring people from stopping in the area and posing serious safety issues.

Traders said more than 22,000 vehicles passed through the roundabout each day.

In one instance, a truck had crashed through a Main Street shopfront.

Cr Griffin said the Halletts Way extension would also cater for growing traffic volumes from Devine's new 1450-lot subdivision on Balliang Road, West Maddingley, which is expected to be home to about 4000 new residents.

"It's a great result and it's part of a bigger strategy, along with the Woolpack Road extension, to get more north, east, south and west connectors."

Cr Griffin said the project was vital in planning for Bacchus Marsh's future growth.

He said the shire's population was growing at about 2.2 per cent a year, with most of it concentrated in Bacchus Marsh.

"Without suitable alternatives, everyone will continue to use Griffith Street [or] Grant Street to access the Western Highway.

"It's obvious the existing road network won't accommodate the population growth for the next 30 years on its own."

The development plan for Devine's \$778 million housing estate will also provide for road upgrades in Grant Street and Gisborne Road, a new multi-use sports complex and a maternal child health and family services hub.

### **NBN: NEED FOR SPEED ANSWERED**

*Melton Weekly—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/nbn-need-for-speed-answered/2374285.aspx>

Construction of Bacchus Marsh's National Broadband Network is edging closer, with an initial fibre construction map covering 2500 homes and businesses having been released last week.

A third of the 7500 Bacchus Marsh homes slated for high-speed internet over the next 12 months will loosely fall in a wedge bordered by the Western Freeway, Main Street, and along the fringes of Bacchus Marsh Road.

NBN Co community relations manager Tony Gibbs says on-site design, survey works and fibre installation by contractors are expected to proceed within months.

Bacchus Marsh Grammar School IT co-ordinator and teacher Phil Pyke said students would benefit from the NBN.

"We use an online learning management system called Moodle, where students upload material and access from home online, complete homework and then submit for teachers to mark, and the NBN will certainly improve the ease of access," he said.

"It also gives teachers the opportunity to upload larger files and a variety of different files for students to look at."

Mr Pyke said faster internet would increase options for school learning and communication.

# LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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"Moving into the future, we could provide parents with access to their children's records, and they will be able to log in and get online results. In society, communication has largely moved online, so of course faster internet will enhance that."

Mr Pyke said the school was looking at using video-based text rather than print to teach a year 12 programming course.

"You need reasonable net access to stream videos effectively, so the NBN will be extremely important.

"Traditionally, IT students are more receptive to video over text so I'm confident it will work better. It's an exciting development."

NBN Co last month abandoned its five-year wholesale broadband agreement in favour of interim one-year contracts, allowing telecommunications heavyweights such as Telstra and Optus to finalise NBN retail prices and put other carriers onto contracts.

The company also announced last Friday that it would create 900 jobs for Victorians in its network operations and test facility.

### **DEFIBRILLATORS: FROM A LIFE LOST, LIVES TO BE SAVED**

*Melton Weekly—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/defibrillators-from-a-life-lost-lives-to-be-saved/2374295.aspx>

Every Ballarat Football League club will get its own defibrillator next season after the tragic death of a young footballer boosted fund-raising efforts.

The league presented 18 of the life-saving devices to sports clubs from Melton to Lake Wendouree at its general meeting last week.

They will be available for all user groups at the grounds every day of the year.

Contributions for the defibrillators, valued at \$2300 each, came from the league's fund-raising campaigns and community donations

BFL chief executive Rod Ward said Nathan Prince's death earlier this year brought the need for defibrillators to the fore.

Prince, a 17-year-old Bacchus Marsh footballer, died in August after suffering a cardiac arrest during a game 11 days earlier.

While the pain of losing her son will never go away, Bernie Prince said it was somehow eased by knowing his death was not in vain.

"Despite our immense heartbreak of no longer having Nathan with us, it is so humbling to know that Nathan's memory will be honoured in enduring ways."

His coach, Doug Hawkins, said the roll-out of the defibrillators was Prince's legacy.

"It's taken a tragic situation, but something good has come out of it and sports clubs everywhere have really been made alert that they need defibrillators," he said.

Ward said although the league had had plans to supply the devices to all sports clubs since June, Prince's death "stepped everyone's determination" to raise the funds needed.

"Nathan's passing was tragic and his loss is still felt in the Bacchus Marsh community today," Ward said.

"His legacy may be that the next person to suffer a cardiac arrest on the field will be saved."

Portable defibrillator units use step-by-step voice prompts to tell operators how to give cardio-pulmonary resuscitation.

# LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

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The units determine the required rate, diagnose the patient's condition and, if necessary, deliver electric energy to shock the heart back to normal rhythm.

Representatives at each club will undergo training to learn how to properly use the devices prior to next season.

Paramedic Andrew White, founder of the Defib Your Club for Life campaign, said portable defibrillators were crucial in areas like Melton and Moorabool.

"In the west, response times to defibrillation [being delivered by ambulance] were more than 20 minutes, which is far too long," he said.

### **BAILLIEU GOVERNMENT: TOO QUIET ON WESTERN FRONT**

*Melton Weekly—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/baillieu-government-too-quiet-on-western-front/2374293.aspx>

After 12 months in power, the state government has received a mixed response to its performance in the west.

LeadWest chief executive Anton Mayer said the lobby group welcomed the Regional Rail Link and commitments to WestLink and rail to Avalon Airport.

But it was disappointed at \$50 million in VCAL funding cuts and lost opportunities.

"I guess we are a little disappointed that there has been no commitment to look at improving residential amenity of truck traffic. The government came into office on the back of a range of promises principally aimed at the east and south east and, by and large, the west only featured to a minor degree."

He said one pleasing aspect had been the willingness of ministers to visit the region to look at issues first hand.

But Western Metropolitan MP Andrew Elsbury is proud of his government's early achievements.

He said education and transport infrastructure remained his two driving passions.

"I would mark getting the Regional Rail Link back on track as one of my proudest moments."

An \$800 million cost blowout and the federal government's postponement of \$500 million in funding had threatened to scuttle the project, but the \$5.8 billion joint state and federal project was now back on track.

Western Metropolitan Greens MP Colleen Hartland said regardless of whether it was a Labor or Liberal government, the west was neglected.

Ms Hartland also criticised cuts to VCAL.

"In the west we have a proportionally high number of students enrolled in VCAL, a program which has been cut by the Baillieu government."

### **MELTON COUNCIL UNDER FIRE OVER DOG ATTACK**

*Melton Weekly—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/melton-council-under-fire-over-dog-attack/2374282.aspx>

A Melton resident has echoed published criticism of the council's handling of dangerous dogs following a series of attacks.

As reported in the Weekly, Western Suburbs Animal Rescue Service president Nathan Miles said the council needed to take some responsibility for the latest incident on November 17 in which a one-year-old Burnside boy was injured.

Mr Miles claimed the council was not responding effectively to call-outs about dangerous or suspicious animals.

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He called on it to outsource its animal management services, including the pound, to a professional organisation such as the Lost Dogs Home or RSPCA.

This week, a resident who did not want to be named, said they had been told by a council employee that 300 calls from Melton had been made to the state's dangerous dogs hotline since its introduction.

However, the council said it had received reports involving only 27 properties via the hotline.

"Most of the reports were received in September-October and it's tapered down to three reports so far this month," acting compliance manager John Russell said.

Asked how many residences had been investigated, Mr Russell replied: "The reports vary in their nature and are prioritised for action according to council's perception of their risk potential. A small number of the reports have been substantiated."

A Department of Primary Industries spokesman said that all calls about dangerous dogs received by the hotline were transferred to the relevant council.

The council confirmed the dog involved in the Burnside incident had been destroyed.

### **WE'RE STILL SHORT OF 'RECOVERY'**

*Melton Weekly—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/were-still-short-of-recovery/2374280.aspx>

Melton Council has called on the federal government to provide funding for the renewal of roads and bridges beyond 2014.

It was among hundreds of councils from around the nation that attended this month's National Local Roads and Transport Congress in Mount Gambier.

The government's Roads to Recovery program, which helps councils repair and maintain local roads, is due to expire at the end of 2014.

Council's engineering services manager, Les Stokes, said the program needed to continue.

"Council has used these funds to assist in funding the Richard Road rehabilitation, Coburns Road duplication and Gourlay Road duplication."

Mr Stokes said council was required to prepare long-term financial plans but would struggle to do so without an ongoing commitment to Roads to Recovery.

"Almost every vehicle trip starts and ends on a local road maintained by council."

Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) president Genia McCaffery said that since 2000, the government had recognised the needs of local roads were beyond the financial capacity of local government and provided supplementary funding under the program.

"In 2010, the ALGA conducted a study into local road funding which found that the shortfall in expenditure is about \$1.2 billion annually. The study confirmed what councils already knew; that the local roads system is at risk of breaking down."

The creator of a social media campaign for duplication of the Melton Highway, Narelle Bowden, said improvement of Melton's roads was sorely needed in order to keep up with the shire's rapid growth.

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### MELTON COUNCIL REJECTS SPENDING GAP

*Melton Weekly—29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/melton-council-rejects-spending-gap/2374274.aspx>

Melton Council is not keeping up with the renewal of infrastructure, according to a Victorian Auditor-General's report.

The report, which investigates the results of financial audits, is aimed at informing Parliament on the financial sustainability of the state's councils.

'Renewal gap' refers to whether a council has been maintaining existing assets at a consistent rate, and is calculated on its aggregate spending on renewal, restoration and maintenance of existing infrastructure.

The report was critical of Melton Council's lack of spending on infrastructure.

But the council's chief executive, Kelvin Tori, said the method for calculation was not appropriate for a growth municipality.

"Melton has a very high proportion of its infrastructure that is less than 10 years of age and is currently accruing annual levels of contributed assets in the region of \$40 million."

Mr Tori said it was vital the council provided new infrastructure and expanded the capacity of existing infrastructure, something which accounting regulations did not consider to be 'renewal'.

"[It's] not considered renewal, even though it renews the pre-existing asset."

Mr Tori maintained that the council was meeting renewal requirements.

"The critical period for renewal will be in about seven-10 years' time. Council is dealing with this through its strategic resource plan."

The calculation for renewal gap for growth municipalities needed to be completely revised, he said.

The Auditor-General said Melton's renewal gap risk remained high because capital spending on the renewal, restoration and replacement of existing infrastructure, property, plant and equipment was insufficient.

The report said Melton was a "medium risk" when it came to self-financing, but it forecast an improvement in the next three years.

Melton's 'indebtedness' rating indicated the council was not overly reliant on debt to fund capital programs and the risk was assessed to be low.

Melton Residents Association president Peter Rowan said the gap between infrastructure in new suburbs and the older township of Melton was widening.

"A distinction must be drawn between the original part of Melton compared to the new suburbs of Caroline Springs."

A Melton South resident who did not want to be named said she believed the council was too often concentrating on new estates like Toolern to the detriment of older areas.

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### **PUSH FOR TRAFFIC LIGHTS IN BACCHUS MARSH**

*Melton Leader—27<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/push-for-traffic-lights-in-bacchus-marsh/>

Traffic lights could go a long way to alleviating traffic congestion in Bacchus Marsh's town centre, says Central Business Bacchus Marsh.

Chairman Malcolm Trask, who trades on the busy intersection on the corner of Grant and Main streets, said traffic at peak times was already at capacity.

He feared the town could grind to a halt if a solution was not found soon. "There's not enough ways for traffic to get to the Western Highway or Darley from the south, so even the traffic that doesn't want to be there gets funnelled into Grant St and the town centre because there's no better options at present," he said.

Mr Trask suggested changing the roundabout to traffic lights, putting in turning lanes, and investigating new routes. "Doing nothing is no longer an option, change is coming to Bacchus Marsh and the Central Business Bacchus Marsh Committee is willing to work with all parties to take up the challenge and find a solution," he said.

Moorabool Council agreed that traffic signals would be an effective option and further design work was being investigated. Council's chief executive officer Rob Croxford said the council was negotiating with VicRoads to upgrade key intersections to maximise traffic flow on Grant St and plan new infrastructure projects to provide alternate routes to the Western Highway.

Mr Croxford said another solution was council's planned north-south route to the Western Highway and Darley at the western end of Bacchus Marsh over the Werribee River from West Maddingley.

"Significant funding for this new infrastructure has been successfully negotiated by council with the developers of the new estates and will be completed within five to nine years," he said. VicRoads Regional Director Western Victoria, Ewen Nevett, said another solution was the extension of Woolpack Rd to the Western Highway, which was funded and awaiting approval from the state planning minister.

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## MOONEE VALLEY

### A BRIDGE TOO FAR

*Moonee Valley Leader– 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/your-say-a-bridge-too-far/>

A plan to build a second Maribyrnong River crossing would “dump” excess traffic on Avondale Heights, it has been claimed.

Neighbouring Maribyrnong Council has plans to extend Ashley St in Braybrook by constructing a bridge over the Maribyrnong to connect it with Military Rd in Avondale Heights.

The long-term transport strategy - planning for beyond 2020 - would result in “significant traffic volume reductions ... within the (Highpoint) activity centre”, according to Maribyrnong Council.

But president of the Avondale Heights and East Keilor Residents’ Association Frank Di Blasi said locals did not want their neighbourhood used as a shortcut to other northern suburbs. “This is an unacceptable initiative (that would) pollute our environment and quality of life,” Mr Di Blasi said.

Brentwood Drive resident Ann Stevens said many residents were unaware of the plan, despite its potential to have a “significant impact” on them.

“We’re faced with a combination of more traffic on our main roads, noise pollution and the destruction of the environment where the bridge will go across,” Ms Stevens said.

“Our roads are already busy and we don’t want a whole heap of traffic coming through here on the way to Highpoint.”

Moonee Valley councillor (Rose Hill ward) Ange Kenos said it was only after receiving a phone call from a Maribyrnong Council staff member that he became aware of the plan. “Maribyrnong Council wants to feed its traffic headache across to our community,” Cr Kenos said.

“(But) Avondale Heights is not a dumping ground.”

Maribyrnong Council’s general manager of sustainable development Nigel Higgins said the river crossing had been in the Moonee Valley planning scheme for more than a decade and that its council neighbour had been consulted. But Cr Kenos said the issue had not been discussed with councillors.

He said the council would discuss the plan at its meeting on December 6, but by then it might be too late.

“Our community needs to start paying attention now or it will sting us later on,” Cr Kenos said.

The strategy is open for community consultation until December 9.

### UNITS FIGHT HITS STATE PARLIAMENT

*Moonee Valley Leader– 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/units-fight-hits-state-parliament/>

More than 2500 people have signed a petition against what is fast becoming the most controversial local planning development in recent memory.

Essendon state Labor MP Justin Madden last week presented State Parliament the petition against Moonee Valley Racing Club’s plans to build 2000 townhouses and apartments in buildings - some up to 25 storeys - at its Moonee Ponds racecourse.

The petition, sent out in August and September, called on Planning Minister Matthew Guy to stop the club’s \$1.4 billion master plan.

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Moonee Valley Council remains the responsible planning authority and received the plan only recently.

But Mr Guy can intervene in the planning process - something Mr Madden did as planning minister in the previous Labor government.

Central to residents' concerns are the proposed apartments, which will bring an extra 6000 residents into Moonee Ponds over the next 15-20 years.

Mr Madden said the petition was a strong show of opposition to the racing club's plans.

"We have seen a great response from across the local community, who expressed concerns regarding the enormous impact this proposal will have on the surrounding area," he said.

As reported earlier, the council is expected to start community consultation early next year once it gets approval from Mr Guy.

The club has previously said the residential component is crucial to financing at its redevelopment of the racetrack and grandstand, which would ensure its long-term viability.

The club has also said it would take on board recommendations from the council.

### **ABERFELDIE AMONG 'MOST LIVEABLE' SUBURBS**

*Moonee Valley Weekly* - 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/aberfeldie-among-most-liveable-suburbs/2372938.aspx>

Aberfeldie has ranked among Melbourne's most liveable areas according to a new survey.

The Liveable Melbourne study published in *The Age* last week graded 314 of the city's suburbs based on a range of criteria including closeness to the CBD, schools and beaches, public transport, crime rate, and numbers of cafes and restaurants, open spaces and shops.

In Moonee Valley, Flemington went from 73 to 44 - 29 places higher than the most recent study in 2005 - with Essendon the next best at 45.

While Travancore soared 40 spots to 52, Kensington dropped by 24 to 88th on the list.

Moonee Ponds and Ascot Vale placed 80th and 82nd respectively, with Essendon West at 99.

Despite jumping 46 places, Strathmore Heights still came in at 139th, while Pascoe Vale ranked 139 and Niddrie 181.

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### **MURPHY'S LORE: GRIM TIDINGS FOR TRADERS**

*Moonee Valley Weekly*— 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/murphys-lore-grim-tidings-for-traders/2372945.aspx>

It's troubled times for traders and customers at East Keilor's Milleara shopping centre.

The newsagent has gone, the flower shop which has been there for nearly 20 years is about to go. The municipal library went a year ago.

Many of the traders who say "we are on our last legs" claim they are getting little promotional help from shopping centre management.

Long-suffering TAB patrons will have to endure another long hot summer in a portable hut in the car park. Centre management shifted the TAB after last year's Melbourne Cup carnival to make way for discount shop Aldi.

At the time they promised the agency would be able to relocate to the Hungry Jacks site in time for this year's Flemington carnival. A foundation was poured in recent weeks.

Milleara shopping centre has been a virtual construction site for three years and there seems no end to the inconvenience for shoppers.

### **KEILOR COLLEGE MENTORS HELP TEENS STAY ON PATH**

*Moonee Valley Weekly*— 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/keilor-college-mentors-help-teens-stay-on-path/2372943.aspx>

A mentoring program at Essendon Keilor College is helping young people make the right choices in school and life.

The Maribyrnong and Moonee Valley local learning employment program has been in schools for nine years and has helped more than 150 teenagers.

As part of the program mentors give up a couple of hours each week to offer students one-on-one support with their education.

Mentor Daniella Passalacqua is a stay-at-home mum who wants to help out. She joined the program in August.

Ms Passalacqua spent many years working in the government employment system and at a youth employment service, so says she knows how important it is for teenagers to make the right decisions.

"It's about breaking down those walls. Once you break them down and you develop that rapport [with a student], it starts getting easier.

"It's about providing vocational advice without dictating. It's about telling them what is out there after VCE or even if you don't do VCE."

Year 10 student Lauren Mendico says the program helped her make important decisions about her future.

She hopes to pursue a career with an airline.

"They [mentors] help you out and just give you advice about the future and what they've experienced," the 16-year-old says.

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"She [Daniella] has helped me choose subjects for VCE and outlined the different opportunities that I have once I finish."

Ms Passalacqua says there needs to be more government funding for similar programs to help at-risk teenager's at the most vulnerable time in their lives.

"From my experience, seeing kids who leave prior to year 10, they just struggle.

"It's almost unfair that you're at this vulnerable age and making decisions that will impact you for life sometimes."

### **SPECIAL OLYMPICS PARENTS SAY: OUR KIDS WILLING AND ABLE**

*Moonee Valley Weekly*– 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/special-olympics-parents-say-our-kids-willing-and-able/2372939.aspx>

A group of Moonee Valley parents is putting disability in the spotlight in the hope of showing the wider community that people with a disability can make positive contributions.

As part of this Saturday's International Day of People with Disability, community groups Valley Carers and Special Olympics Melbourne West will have a stall outside Kmart in Moonee Ponds Central with images recognising and celebrating the achievements of people with a disability.

Valley Carers member Nada Marusic, whose son Thomislav has an intellectual disability and autism, says it's an opportunity to encourage local employers to take a chance on someone with a disability.

She said Thomislav, who attends adult day centre Milparinka in Brunswick, had been taken on board by the Darebin Legal Service, where he spends one day a week shredding paper and cleaning as a volunteer.

It may seem small to some, but Ms Marusic says for Thomislav the work provides him with a fantastic outlet and gives him great enjoyment.

She says there are very few employers within Moonee Valley willing to take a chance on someone with a disability, a harsh reality she wants to change.

"A lot of people think they can't meet their needs. That's so sad, because our kids can make great contributions."

### **ELIZABETH GERTSAKIS: WHEN PICTURES TELL A THOUSAND WORDS**

*Moonee Valley Weekly*– 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/elizabeth-gertsakis-when-pictures-tell-a-thousand-words/2372942.aspx>

Elizabeth Gertsakis didn't grow up in Moonee Valley, nor does she live there, but when speaking about its decorated past she exhibits all the markings of a proud local.

An artist and former curator, Ms Gertsakis has collected hundreds of images taken by local photographers during the past 150 years.

She looks at the history of a community through its social clubs, sporting groups and its people in an exhibition titled Picture This City: History and Photography in Moonee Valley.

Ms Gertsakis says she's always been interested in the evolution of Moonee Valley, particularly because it has mirrored the development of the city of Melbourne.

"I find it quite fascinating. It really is a great story of settlement in Melbourne," she says about the municipality.

"If you want a window into Victorian culture, built culture and social culture, the City of Moonee Valley is probably the best example in Victoria of middle-class history."

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The exhibition consists of a series of photographic collages and multimedia presentations.

They include images of a popular festival along the Maribyrnong River where boats were decorated with flowers, social dances, grand homes, pioneering industries and perhaps Ms Gertsakis's favourite, kids lining the streets of Mt Alexander Road as the Queen walks past during a visit.

The pictures were sourced from the Essendon Historical Society, National War Memorial in Canberra, and state and national libraries.

Ms Gertsakis says she wants to give a real sense of the people within a community and what their interests were.

Her intention is not to elicit nostalgia, but instead to portray the ever-changing face of a family community with a working-class backbone.

"It really is about how the pictures keep changing as the city keeps changing," she says.

"It's about the way photography was used as a personal record by individuals in their lives."

### **BICYCLE FUNDING IN MOONEE VALLEY 'ON RIGHT TRACK'**

*Moonee Valley Weekly*— 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/bicycle-funding-in-moonee-valley-on-right-track/2372940.aspx>

The vice-president of a Moonee Valley bicycle club says the council is on the right track despite a new report showing it is spending below the recommended amount on bike infrastructure.

The Bicycle Expenditure Index (BiXE) report shows the council spent \$4.88 per resident on bicycle infrastructure in 2010-11, a figure below several other councils, but only slightly down from the recommended \$5 per person.

The report said Moonee Valley had the opportunity to invest in several key areas of bike infrastructure, including the continued upgrade of the Moonee Ponds Creek path, building the missing link in the Steele Creek path between the Steele Creek and Maribyrnong River paths and providing more cycling routes and non-road bike lanes in areas such as Epsom, Ormond and Pascoe Vale Roads.

It did commend the council for having taking part in the Super Tuesday Bike Count or the Super Sunday Recreation Count this year.

Moonee Valley Bicycle Users Group vice-president Frank Kinnersley said the group was happy with the council's commitment to developing bicycle infrastructure.

"We are not critical of the \$4.88 because we see it as pretty close to the \$5. It could have been better but we know there's more in planning in the next few years."

He said the group had a good working relationship with the council.

Moonee Valley mayor John Sipek said the report was not an accurate reflection of what the council had spent on cycling as it did not take into account funds sourced from state and federal governments.

He said future budget allocations to cycling projects would be included in a draft walking and cycling strategy 2011-21, which the council was working on.

"In the short to medium term, council plans to continue upgrading the Moonee Ponds Creek, Maribyrnong River and Steele Creek Trails."

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### **MOONEE PONDS DAIRY SITE TO REMAIN UNTOUCHED: VCAT**

*Moonee Valley Weekly*– 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/moonee-ponds-dairy-site-to-remain-untouched-vcats/2372936.aspx>

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal has rejected an application to build a 24-unit residential development at 255-257 Union Road, Moonee Ponds.

Demolition work at the site began several weeks ago despite a bid by residents and Moonee Valley Council to halt work on what is believed to be part of a former Moonee Ponds dairy.

The council refused the original application for the site on the grounds the planned four-storey development did not "fit in" with the existing neighbourhood character and was of unsuitable bulk and scale.

VCAT member Rachel Naylor supported the council decision.

In her report, Mrs Naylor said the development did not have the design elements to respect the existing neighbourhood character.

She said the development was, "taller, wider and longer than the surrounding residential buildings".

"An apartment building can be built in an established residential neighbourhood if it 'fits in' - however, I am not persuaded this design has achieved that outcome."

Her conclusion stated: "As I am not persuaded the proposal is respectful of the existing neighbourhood character, I will affirm the council's decision and order that no permit be issued."

The applicant, PAG1 Pty Ltd, has 28 days to appeal against the decision in the Supreme Court.

### **MOONEE VALLEY MEN'S SHED BLOKES FILL A TALL ORDER**

*Moonee Valley Weekly*– 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/moonee-valley-mens-shed-blokes-fill-a-tall-order/2372944.aspx>

Blokes at Moonee Valley Men's Shed have been keeping busy by building and donating shelters for native animals.

Men involved in the program have been building nesting boxes for local wildlife such as birds, possums and microbats.

The nesting boxes are being donated to schools, wildlife shelters and council parks.

The boxes are made with specific species in mind.

There are ladders for young possums, different door sizes, hinged roofs, and some even have curtains for bats to cling onto.

Several of the micro bat and duck boxes will be installed at Queens Park.

One of the islands on Queens Park lake recently had a duck nesting box installed and already it's attracted a wood duck.

Moonee Valley Council's Men's Shed program was developed by the council with support from the state government.

It helps men, in particular those who are isolated, at risk or who have a disability, by encouraging them to work together on projects in a fully equipped workshop.

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### **MOONEE VALLEY MAYORALTY TIPPED AS ONE-HORSE RACE**

*Moonee Valley Weekly— 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/moonee-valley-mayoralty-tipped-as-onehorse-race/2372934.aspx>

Unless councillors have a last-minute change of heart, Myrnong ward's Cr Jim Cusack should tonight be elected Moonee Valley's mayor for next year.

Cr Cusack has made no secret of his desire to take the top job, and after a failed tilt at the role four years ago now appears to have the required support.

If elected, Cr Cusack will be the first mayor from the municipality's south in seven years.

"It's certainly time for that to occur. While the mayoral role covers the whole municipality you certainly bring your own perspective to it.

"I did try for [mayor] a while back but for the past few years work has precluded me so I didn't bother," he said.

While quietly confident, Cr Cusack was reluctant to consider himself home in the mayoral race.

"I'm hopeful, but it's still an election. You don't count your chickens until they hatch. I've been around the block enough times to know that."

Incumbent mayor John Sipek said he would be happy to stay in the role but only if he was approached by several councillors to run again.

Rosehill ward's Cr Ange Kenos looks likely to be elected the mayor's deputy, a position that will be vacated by Cr James Rankin.

Next year could shape as a challenging year for whoever is elected mayor with the controversial Moonee Valley Racing Club development proposal already dividing residents.

The racing club's multimillion-dollar plan to redevelop part of its site and include several multi-level apartments expected to house up to 6000 people has been met with a significant backlash.

The council will be charged with consulting the community about the proposal.

Cr Cusack said the proposal was at the "forefront of his mind".

### **DISHING UP FEAST FOR CHRISTMAS**

*Moonee Valley Leader— 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/dishing-up-feast-for-christmas/>

Moonee Valley Christian Church will share its Christmas spirit in the form of a big barbecue.

The church's outreach centre will host a feast for those in need on December 16 at its Gladstone St church, with a professional chef creating the meals.

Organiser Jim Mangioros said the event would not be strictly limited to food.

"We are putting on a huge free feed, but we are going to be giving out food hamper bags, kids toys and presents for adults," he said.

Santa Clause will give away gifts and there will be a clown for entertainment, he said. The lunch will start at noon.

Moonee Valley Christian Outreach Centre is supported by 55 sponsors and volunteers, including Reno Restaurant, Jenny's Charcoal Chicken, Franko's Pizza Restaurant, Floyd The Barrister and Beauty on Rose.

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### **ASCOT VALE A QUICK SELL FOR VENDORS**

*Moonee Valley Leader* – 26<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/ascot-vale-a-quick-sell-for-vendors/>

Ascot Vale houses are likely to spend less time on the market compared with other Moonee Valley suburbs, research shows.

New statistics from RP Data shows vendors in Ascot Vale wait an average 52 days before their house is sold, whereas neighbouring Moonee Ponds takes an average extra 30 days to move.

Essendon is also fertile ground for vendors, who wait about 64 days before a suitable buyer can be found.

And the median sale prices reflect the strong interest in local real estate.

In the three months to August, the median house price for Essendon jumped 10.3 per cent to \$905,000. Although, this is still 3.7 per cent lower than 12 months earlier.

In the same quarter, Ascot Vale's median jumped 9.6 per cent to \$763,500, with 158 sales recorded. This median was up 9.2 per cent compared to 12 months earlier.

Considine Real Estate director Patrick Considine said the reason for Ascot Vale's faster selling times was its proximity to the city and lower median house price.

"One factor is because the prices are so heavy and owners are reluctant to come back in price," he said.

"In my opinion the prices have to correct themselves. Not so much crash, but I believe they were overpriced. If the prices correct, it makes it more affordable for the purchaser to buy."

Mr Considine said houses in Essendon, Strathmore and Moonee Ponds were at one stage selling comfortably within 30 days, but this had since stretched out to about 45 days and beyond.

The RP Data also showed interesting figures about the demographics of local home owners.

Avondale Heights has the highest proportion of people who own their home outright (60 per cent).

It also has the highest median age (42) and the most number of people aged over 65 (20 per cent).

Ascot Vale has the highest proportion of renters (40 per cent) and among the highest median rent asking price, \$450 a week.

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## WYNDHAM

### ROAD TRIO GET SHIRTY IN WYNDHAM VALE

*Wyndham Leader– 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011*

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/road-trio-get-shirty-in-wyndham-vale/>

People travelling on Ballan Rd, Wyndham Vale, have been seeing red.

Campaigners working to improve the road have made red campaign T-shirts and are encouraging supporters to buy them to spread the message.

Campaign founder Greg Byrne said VicRoads resurfacing of parts of the road and construction of a left-turning lane into Brockwell Crescent were welcome, but a lot more needed to be done.

“There is still resurfacing to be done and the edges done between McGrath and Bulban roads,” he said.

“Ultimately, we would like to see the road duplicated in both directions.”

To order a T-shirt, email [fixballanroad@bigpond.com](mailto:fixballanroad@bigpond.com) or go to the Facebook page Fix Ballan Rd.

### REFINED PLANS FOR WERRIBEE CBD

*Wyndham Leader– 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2011*

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/refined-plans-for-werribee-cbd/>

Long-term plans to transform Werribee into a capital city for Melbourne’s west are progressing.

Wyndham Council said its plans had been refined and would go before the council soon and then be released to the public for feedback.

As previously reported, almost 200 people turned out in February for a forum on the council’s vision for Werribee over the next 25-30 years. It wants the suburb’s CBD to link to a proposed employment precinct and serve Wyndham’s growing population.

The council will spend \$20 million over the next five years on major projects in the Werribee CBD to make the most of Werribee River and Wyndham Park.

It hopes these will attract developers, investors and businesses, which are needed to bring its vision to life.

The first project - a piazza at Watton and Wedge streets - opened in January. A pedestrian bridge from the piazza to Wyndham Park opens next month.

In future, the council plans to upgrade the park and fund a street-level promenade along the river for outdoor dining and shopping. It has set aside funds in its 2011-12 budget for a centre to promote its plans and for a kiosk at the piazza site.

Council chief executive Kerry Thompson said the council and the State Government had been refining the plans since February. The process had been completed and had not altered the essence of the plans.

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The amended plans should go before the council and be released to the public for feedback later this year or early next year, she said.

### **'MAYOR' BRIFFA IN EMBARRASSING WEB GAFFE**

*Wyndham Weekly*– 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/mayor-briffa-in-embarrassing-web-gaffe/2377908.aspx>

A new website has proclaimed Hobsons Bay deputy mayor Tony Briffa as the new mayor of Hobsons Bay — a day before the election.

The mayoral election is not until 7pm tomorrow night.

Cr Briffa states on his website: "I am the mayor of the city of Hobsons Bay having previously served two terms as the deputy mayor since being elected to the council in 2008."

He told the Weekly the website was only a "demo" which had briefly gone live so he could be shown a sample while in Canberra.

"It's not launched yet. It's just a demo site that will go live if the council elects me as mayor tomorrow night.

"There's no harm in being prepared."

Cr Briffa's website also states he is pleased to have the support of Seabrook ward councillor John Hogg as his new deputy.

Cr Hogg declined to comment.

Williamstown ward Cr Angela Altair said she hadn't seen the website and wouldn't make any comments until she had, while Williamstown North ward Cr Peter Hemphill didn't answer the a phone call from the Weekly.

Altona Meadows councillor Luba Grigorovitch, who is viewed to be Cr Briffa's closest rival for the mayoralty, declined to comment.

### **JOHN MENEGAZZO: MORE HIGHS THAN LOWS FOR OUTGOING MAYOR**

*Wyndham Weekly*– 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/john-menegazzo-more-highs-than-lows-for-outgoing-mayor/2376369.aspx>

John Menegazzo doesn't have many regrets about his time as mayor of Wyndham, but he is disappointed he couldn't convince the state government of the need for the Duncans Road interchange.

Wyndham Council has been lobbying for the interchange for years and the previous government had committed to funding it. The plans were put on hold following the Coalition's win last year.

"The previous state government had the Duncans Road interchange set aside and hopefully something would have been happening by now, so the fact we haven't been able to convince this government to date of the absolute need for that interchange to happen is probably a regret from my point of view," Cr Menegazzo said.

The Iramoo ward councillor's reign as mayor will end tonight, when councillors are expected to vote for either Cr Kim McAliney or Cr Bob Fairclough to lead them next year.

Cr Menegazzo decided not to nominate for the position for a second year to allow him to spend more time with his family.

Speaking to the Weekly about his time as mayor, Cr Menegazzo said he had found the leadership role exciting and hard work at times.

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"It's been enjoyable because you get to meet so many people, not only within the community ... but you also get to meet a lot of bureaucrats and politicians and meet with other mayors and councillors.

"It's fairly challenging [being mayor] when you are in a city like Wyndham with all the challenges we've got."

Cr Menegazzo's highlights during the past year included opening the Wyndham Vale Community Centre with Prime Minister and Altona MP Julia Gillard on November 9 and being involved in the revitalisation of the Werribee central business district.

"The biggest achievement is something that is not all that visible to residents and that is the long-term capital works budget and financial budget that has set this city up for the next 10 years," he said.

"Leaving the city in a great financial position is a really great outcome."

### **SEEDS OF DISCONTENT IN WERRIBEE**

*Wyndham Weekly*— 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/seeds-of-discontent-in-werribee/>

A dog owner has called on Wyndham Council to rid Presidents Park of grass seeds, saying they are capable of causing severe infection in pooches.

Angela Dippolito said she spent \$600 on vet bills last spring, when grass seeds embedded in the fur of her dog, Nanook, penetrated the dog's skin, causing an infection that required an operation.

Werribee Vet Clinic and Hospital vet Leonie Richards confirmed barbed grass seeds could cause skin infections.

She advised dog owners to avoid walking dogs in areas where grass seeds were present and to regularly check fur, ears and feet for seeds and swelling.

"It's a common problem this time of year," she said.

Ms Dippolito said this year grass seeds from Presidents Park, where she always walked her dog, had again caused skin infections on all four of the dog's legs, which she was treating with a \$50 cream.

She said last year she sent her vet bill to the council, but her claim was rejected.

Three weeks ago she sent the receipt for the cream to the council, but she was still waiting to hear if she would be reimbursed.

Ms Dippolito said the grass seeds had struck again despite the fact she walked her dog on lead and on the path to avoid them.

Council business services manager Tony Addley said it was the responsibility of owners to manage the care of their animals.

"Even with regular mowing, grass seeds are a natural occurrence in the environment," he said.

### **WYNDHAM COUNCIL, UNION AT ODDS ON LEAVE**

*Wyndham Weekly*— 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/wyndham-council-union-at-odds-on-leave/2376362.aspx>

Staff at Wyndham Council held urgent union meetings last week following a disagreement between council management and union delegates over who should receive end of band payments.

The Australian Services Union told its members two weeks ago that the council had agreed to add five days to the annual leave of staff who had reached the end of

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their pay band and had worked for at least 15 years. Workers with 10 years' service would get three days annual leave.

Union members voted to accept the offer, ending six weeks of industrial action. However, council management announced that the agreement put to members by the ASU was different from the one the council had agreed to, prompting the urgent meeting last Thursday.

ASU Wyndham organiser Dave Beckley said the council believed it had agreed to one day of annual leave for five years of service and two days for 10 and 15 years of service.

"The CEO had put out a notice saying people had to be on the end of their classification level for a centre length of time before getting the payments, but that wasn't what we thought we had agreed to.

"In the end we put the offer of one day for five years, two days for 10 years and two days for 15 years to the members and they voted to accept it."

One worker who did not wish to be named told the Weekly the confusion had added to the anxiety of staff who wanted the dispute to be over.

"It is really disappointing that they have appeared to change their mind."

Mr Beckley said members had called off all industrial action and would hold a formal vote on the EBA in the coming weeks.

### **POOL TRIP SHOWS DEPTH OF POINT COOK TRANSPORT WOES**

*Wyndham Weekly— 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/pool-trip-shows-depth-of-point-cook-transport-woes/2376357.aspx>

Public transport in Point Cook leaves a lot to be desired, according to Truganina ward's Cr Bob Fairclough.

Cr Fairclough joined Point Cook residents in a trip to the Wyndham Leisure and Events Centre by bus on Saturday.

The expedition was organised by the Point Cook Residents' Group to highlight the difficulties people living in the suburb face accessing Wyndham's swimming pools.

The group hoped the exercise would help convince the council of the need for a pool in Point Cook. But the only councillor to attempt the journey said it had reinforced his belief that public transport had to be improved so people could access the pool.

The group had planned to visit the WLEC and Werribee Outdoor Pool but was unable to get to the latter after trains on the Werribee line were cancelled.

Cr Fairclough said the group had to wait 40 minutes in the rain for a bus after missing the first bus.

"There was no shelter and that made it uncomfortable and difficult for the parents with children," he said. Cr Fairclough said the bus journey from Lincoln Heath to Werribee Plaza only took 25 minutes but was followed by a 20-minute walk to the WLEC.

"I would like to involve the Wyndham Transport Committee and Point Cook residents in an advocacy campaign to get more frequent services."

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### **WORKERS TAKEN TO CLEANERS, SAYS UNION**

*Wyndham Weekly*– 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/workers-taken-to-cleaners-says-union/2376359.aspx>

Major shopping centres in Wyndham are facing the prospect of no cleaners as the festive season approaches, with workers for contracting giant Spotless voting overwhelmingly in support of industrial action.

While Spotless has pledged that its shopping centres will remain clean and tidy, cleaners at Werribee Plaza and Hoppers Crossing shopping centre are eyeing off the Christmas period as an ideal time to take a stand against what they perceive to be an unfair pay offer.

"Right now, hundreds of cleaners are condemned to poverty wages and brutal workloads, but Spotless refuses to talk to them about safe workloads and a living wage," United Voice state secretary Jess Walsh said.

"Cleaners have no option but to take strike action to get Spotless to take them seriously, which is why they have voted overwhelmingly to take strike action."

Ms Walsh said cleaners working at major shopping centres across Melbourne were struggling to raise their families on as little as \$16.57 an hour.

Spotless spokeswoman Kerrina Lawrence said the union should focus attention more on the sham operators who had infiltrated the industry.

"Sadly the union continues to target Spotless which offers job security, training and legislative entitlements while other cleaners languish on cash-in-hand and wages less than the award.

"Sham operators often pay their cleaners cash in hand, do not pay penalty rates and deny sick leave, superannuation and other entitlements."

Werribee Plaza centre manager Martin McEnallay said communication with Spotless remained open.

### **'RUSSIAN ROULETTE' CORNER A DEATH TRAP**

*Wyndham Weekly*– 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/russian-roulette-corner-a-death-trap/2376363.aspx>

The state government has been urged to upgrade one of Wyndham's notorious intersections.

The council has labelled the intersection of Forsyth and Old Geelong roads in Hoppers Crossing a death trap and has called on the government to commit to funding needed to realign the intersection and improve street lighting.

Cr Kim McAliney said the intersection was one of Wyndham's most dangerous.

Between January 2007 and last March, 16 incidents were reported, four of which resulted in injuries.

"It is a real safety concern. It doesn't matter what time of day you are at [it]," she said.

"Anyone who has used this intersection understands that there are major safety issues. Motorists can no longer be expected to play Russian roulette at this intersection."

Cr McAliney said more people were using the intersection to get to housing estates in Truganina, Williams Landing and Hoppers Crossing.

Traffic volumes on Old Geelong Road have increased from 34,800 vehicles a day in 2007 to 42,700 a day this year. Traffic on Forsyth Road has increased from 9300 vehicles a day in 2008 to 13,300 this year.

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"It's vital that the state government step in and fund their share of arterial road projects such as this to relieve traffic congestion and make our roads safer for our community and all road users," Cr McAliney said.

VicRoads metropolitan north-west regional director Nial Finegan said there had been five casualty crashes at the intersection in the five years to June 30.

VicRoads was investigating installing traffic lights to reduce the risk of crashes and improve safety.

The call for the upgrade follows a council campaign this year to have Dohertys Road duplicated between Fitzgerald Road and Grieve Parade and traffic signals installed at the Dohertys-Hume roads intersection.

### **RICH ASSETS A ROD FOR WYNDHAM COUNCIL'S BACK**

*Wyndham Weekly– 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/rich-assets-a-rod-for-wyndham-councils-back/2376368.aspx>

The Victorian Auditor-General has expressed concerns about the ability of Wyndham Council to renew and replace its assets into the future.

His report into the financial sustainability of Victorian councils was tabled in State Parliament last week and commented on the financial state of councils.

While the Auditor-General found that Wyndham was in a good financial state, the report raised concerns about the next three years.

It found Wyndham's spending on infrastructure would be slower than the depreciation rate and that it would struggle to fund the replacement of old assets.

Furthermore, Wyndham's renewal gap ratio would decline between 2011 and 2014, meaning existing infrastructure would need replacing faster than the council could afford to replace it.

Wyndham was not the only council facing the problem, with the Auditor-General noting that all councils faced an ongoing challenge to maintain existing assets.

Mayor John Menegazzo said the council was aware of the infrastructure challenges it faced given the size of its capital works budget in recent years.

"We've got the biggest capital works budget of any council in Victoria and we're going to have similar sorts of capital works for the next 10 years," he said.

"That's a challenge a) in terms of funding, and b) in terms of actually getting the job done."

Cr Menegazzo said the council was already working on replacing its depreciated assets, such as the Wyndham Leisure and Events Centre and Werribee Sports Centre, both of which were struggling to accommodate a growing community.

He was confident the council had found a balance between raising enough revenue to fund new infrastructure and not charging residents unacceptable rates.

"We've put in place a rating strategy that I think is acceptable to most residents. They understand we have challenges and you are not going to have rate rises of 1 or 2 per cent."

### **LIVEABILITY: WYNDHAM LOW ON STUDY SCALE**

*Wyndham Weekly– 30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/liveability-wyndham-low-on-study-scale/2376372.aspx>

Despite being in the middle of a population boom Wyndham is among Melbourne's least liveable areas, according to a new study.

The Age's Liveable Melbourne study assessed 314 suburbs on 14 indicators of liveability, including roads, access to shopping centres, schools and beaches, public transport, crime rates and the number of cafes and restaurants and open spaces.

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Aberfeldie (ranked 14th) replaced Williamstown as the most liveable suburb in Melbourne's north-west. South Yarra remained at the top as Melbourne's most liveable suburb.

No Wyndham suburb made the top 200, with Truganina ranked at 224. Point Cook (245), Hoppers Crossing (267) and Werribee (276) were further down the list.

Tract Consultants and Deloitte Access Economics' Adam Terrill, who conducted the study, said the liveability of Wyndham's suburbs was likely to improve.

"Wyndham contains many new suburbs where the infrastructure and services tend to follow the population," he said.

"We know that the council and state government are aware of the community needs and has plans to improve services, but in growth areas it always takes time."

Mr Terrill said that as more shops opened, trees grew and open space was developed, suburbs like Point Cook would rise dramatically on the scale of liveability.

"Point Cook needs to focus on public transport, especially trains, tree coverage and schools."

LeadWest chief executive Anton Mayer said despite its poor ranking, Wyndham was a booming area which had plenty to offer.

"They [Melton and Wyndham] are putting the west on the page, with the developments of Point Cook, Sanctuary Lakes and Taylors Lakes."

### **FLAMES BURST THROUGH THE OLD GLEN DEVON PRIMARY SCHOOL**

*Wyndham Star* – 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/werribee-hoppers-crossing/323/story/145212.html>

A 14-year-old boy from Wyndham has been charged by police for starting a fire at a derelict former school in Werribee last week that took more than 40 firefighters to extinguish.

Police closed nearby streets as fire ripped through the site of the former Glen Devon Primary School in Golden Avenue.

Operations Officer from the CFA's Wyndham catchment, Trevor Roberts, told Star that asbestos in the ceiling had made it more difficult for them to tackle the blaze that started just before 10am last Thursday.

"Two thirds of the building has been completely gutted by the fire," Mr Roberts said.

"The whole building will have to be demolished now."

The school had become neglected after it was shut down over a year ago with squatters and vandals entering it on an almost daily basis, despite all the windows being boarded up.

Ben Pedder, who lives directly across from the school, said he could constantly see people breaking into the building.

"There is a few people that go in and out all the time," Mr Pedder told Star.

"You can hear them breaking windows at night time and I think there are a bunch of mattresses and stuff in there."

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Wyndham's Mayor John Menegazzo joined calls from the Member for Tarneit, Tim Pallas, for the State Government to finally take some action on the neglected former school.

"This is an incident that should never have been allowed to happen and the impact on surrounding residents and potential safety concerns are simply not good enough," Mayor Menegazzo said.

"Urgent funds must now be committed by the State Government to ensure community education programs can operate from this site. We have long held fears that the future of the site could be questioned the longer it sat unsecured and idle, however continued inaction will not be tolerated.

"This council is seeking an urgent demolition and rebuild, or build a new facility at the Glen Devon Primary School site so that it can continue to provide vital education resources for this City."

But a spokesperson for the Minister for Education, Martin Dixon, blamed Labor for the situation.

"Mr Pallas knows full well that it was his government that not only botched the merger of Glen Devon and Glen Orden primary schools, but also the sale of the land," the spokesperson said.

"The coalition government is aware of the mess it has inherited and is working to fix the problem. As a result of lobbying by the member for Western Metropolitan Region, Andrew Elsbury, the Education Department, Wyndham Council and the Wyndham Community Education Centre are working together to try to find a solution to Labor's mess that will benefit the community."

Mr Elsbury said the State Government would continue to try and develop the site into something that will benefit the community.

### WYNDHAM TAKES A BREATHER

*Wyndham Leader*— 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/wyndham-takes-a-breather/>

After two years of unprecedented population growth, Wyndham's rapid development is showing signs of slowing down.

The council's building department has reported a 17.8 per cent drop in the number of planning applications it received during the September quarter.

The Building Commission reported 3272 applications for new buildings in the first nine months of 2011, down from 4463 in the previous nine months.

It looks unlikely the 2011 total will match the 6084 applications lodged with Wyndham Council in 2010.

How can Wyndham meet the demands of a growing population? Tell us below.

Cr Kim McAliney said it was a sign growth was on "a bit of a slowdown".

She said the council needed to take advantage of the opportunity to catch its breath after the city's rapid development led to it becoming Australia's fastest growing municipality during 2009-10, when 12,600 new residents moved in.

"We're constantly on the back foot so maybe this is time ... to catch up, she said.

"Personally I don't think we can continue to grow the way we have been."

Committee for Wyndham executive director Nik Tsardakis agreed Wyndham's growth had to "take a breather at some point".

"I don't think this is a permanent slowdown given migration and internal growth is going to continue and the areas that provide the lowest cost (housing) like Wyndham will continue to boom," he said.

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Mr Tsardakis said the committee, comprising business and community leaders, hoped to see improved public transport, funding for arterial roads, the completion of community centres, schools and health facilities to deal with the influx.

LeadWest chief executive Anton Mayer said he thought a drop in migration had caused the slowdown.

### **REPLACE THE BUILDINGS AT WERRIBEE SCHOOL**

*Wyndham Leader– 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/replace-the-buildings-at-werribee-school-1/>

Money spent maintaining old buildings at Werribee Secondary College, some dating from the 1930s, would be better spent on a rebuild, says parent and college council president Pekka Puronpaa.

He said students spent 70 per cent of class time in the dilapidated buildings and had waited years for their replacement.

Parliamentary Secretary for Education Inga Peulich and Western Metropolitan Region MP Andrew Elsbury were at the school recently to assess maintenance requirements, but did not make any commitment to funding a rebuild.

“There is no debate they are among the oldest school buildings in the western region, most of which were erected as temporary measures to accommodate the post-war baby boom,” Mr Puronpaa said.

“Technically, the Education Department has an underlying particular duty of care to replace the buildings. There are safety as well as hygiene concerns and these buildings are not conducive to 21st century teaching and learning.

“The risk to the lives of students due to unsafe and degraded electrical installations and ceilings in danger of collapse during rainy periods should not be ignored.”

Mr Puronpaa said more than 20 classrooms needed to be replaced. “Why employ two maintenance personnel to maintain old buildings when that money could be spent on a new school?” he said.

Education Department spokesman Stuart Teather said while the Government was not able to fund all schools, it recognised there were significant funding needs and was working towards upgrading schools across the state.

“Some schools employ maintenance staff to maintain their facilities. These decisions are made at school level,” he said.

### **FIRE FIGHT IN WERRIBEE**

*Wyndham Leader– 29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/fire-fight-in-werribee-fbready/>

A fire at an abandoned Werribee school has sparked recriminations from nearby residents, Wyndham’s mayor and both sides of state politics.

Many readers responded with dismay and anger to news of the fire at Glen Devon Primary School on this website.

And both sides of politics said the other planned to sell the school site for private housing.

A 14-year-old boy was charged with criminal damage by fire and lighting a fire to the endangerment of others after being apprehended by police at the school shortly after the fire started about 10am.

He has also been charged with attempted murder but Werribee police are not releasing any more details to protect the boy’s identity. He remains in custody.

Has the management of the school site been badly handled? Tell us below.

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It took six CFA trucks and 35 firefighters 30 minutes to bring the fire in the western wing of the H-shaped school building under control.

Tarneit Labor MP Tim Pallas criticised Education Minister Martin Dixon in Parliament last week for not ensuring the school site was secured and called on him to make a decision about its future.

Wyndham Mayor John Menegazzo said the council's repeated requests to secure the site had fallen on deaf ears.

"It has been our preference for this site to be retained for education purposes and plans for use by the Werribee Community and Education Centre were particularly pleasing," Cr Menegazzo said.

Mr Dixon responded that he would soon make an announcement about the future of the site but would not be held responsible for the fire.

"The school was closed and boarded up to the best possible extent but as I said you cannot stop a person from breaking the law, trespassing and setting fire to a disused building," Mr Dixon said.

Mr Pallas said he was concerned the fire would be used as an excuse to sell the site for housing.

But Western Metropolitan Liberal MP Andrew Elsbury said the former Labor government had already transferred half the school site to the Finance Department with the intention of selling it for housing, a claim Mr Pallas described as "absolute nonsense".

Werribee CIU detectives want people with any information about the fire to phone Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

### **RINGS AND OTHER SPECIAL THINGS IN WERRIBEE**

*Wyndham Leader*— 28<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/rings-and-other-special-things-in-werribee/>

Wrap up your Christmas shopping early at Wyndham Art Gallery this week where you can buy arty, crafty treats for family and friends.

The Wrap It Up exhibition will see the gallery become a gift show with small artworks created by Wyndham artists available for sale.

The range of works, which all cost less than \$80, includes small paintings, drawings, photographs, cards, jewellery, sculpture, handmade toys, crochet and knitted items.

The show opens Wednesday at 6.30pm and is on until Saturday at 177 Watton St, Werribee.

### **LIGHTING UP THE WEST**

*Wyndham Leader*— 26<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/lighting-up-the-west/>

If you think Indian culture is all about Bollywood films, then the Lamp Lighter Festival this Sunday will open your eyes.

The festival, from 3-5pm at Tarneit Community Learning Centre, focuses on the spiritual and classical stories of India through dance, song and skits, with performers including Amrita, 15, Anindya, 18, Rabya, 13, Suganya, 15, and Simrat, 16.

The centre is at 150 Sunset View Boulevard.

RSVP to [mhsg2010@gmail.com](mailto:mhsg2010@gmail.com) or 0401 016 000.

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### PLANNING FOR GROWTH IN WYNDHAM

*Wyndham Leader* – 27<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/planning-for-growth-in-wyndham/>

A growth Forum, will be held from 6.30-8.30pm tomorrow at the Wyndham Cultural Centre, 177 Watton St, Werribee.

The forum, hosted by Wyndham Council, will include Places Victoria chief executive Sam Sangster and Melbourne University academic Kevin O'Connor.

Attendees can ask questions of the panel and put forward ideas for bringing about sustainable growth.

RSVP to the council on 9742 0818 or email [gwenda.miller@wyndham.vic.gov.au](mailto:gwenda.miller@wyndham.vic.gov.au)

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### ACROSS THE REGION

#### GUY REJECTS ADVICE ON HEIGHT LIMIT

*The Age* – 1<sup>st</sup> December 2011

<http://theage.domain.com.au/guy-rejects-advice-on-height-limit-20111130-1o71u.html>

Planning Minister Matthew Guy has rejected the advice of an expert planning committee for compulsory height controls at a key development site in Williamstown, which is part-owned by former Liberal Party heavyweight Ron Walker.

The Nelson Place Village proposal by Evolve Development for the Woollen Mills site, includes 412 units and towers up to 13 storeys.

It has been bitterly opposed by some locals, including former premier Joan Kirner. Mr Walker said he had not discussed the proposal with Premier Ted Baillieu, or with Mr Guy.

"I have not spoken to or met with Matthew Guy since he has been elected, and nor have I spoken to him about it before he was elected," he said.

A planning advisory report from May recommended mandatory height limits of up to 25 metres (eight storeys) for buildings on the site.

But new planning controls expected to be introduced today by Mr Guy will instead introduce a mix of mandatory and "indicative" height limits for the controversial Woollen Mills site.

This will allow the developer to exceed the 25-metre limit if it gains the approval of Hobsons Bay Council or the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal.

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While the Hobsons Bay Council welcomed a decision by Mr Guy to make the council the responsible authority for future building applications on the site, it is unhappy about the decision not to have mandatory height limits there.

"Without a mandatory limit, developers will inevitably seek to go higher than the 'indicative height'," Hobsons Bay mayor Michael Raffoul said. "Not delivering clear mandatory height limits will only lead to uncertainty for the community, the developer and the council."

Andrew Davidson, of the Save Williamstown community group, said the government was planning to remove "the single most important control" recommended by the advisory committee.

"This will give the developer a free licence to build whatever height they can get through VCAT," he said.

A spokesman for Mr Guy said the combination of mandatory and discretionary height limits that would be applied to the former Port Phillip Woollen Mills site "are as advised by the department".

"Hobsons Bay Council will have full responsibility for any decision in relation to deciding any permit application, including consideration of any proposed heights across the remainder of the site, mindful that the maximum indicative height is eight storeys at the tallest point," the spokesman said.

He said Mr Guy had not discussed the proposal with Mr Walker in the past year.

Opposition planning spokesman Brian Tee attacked the decision to have indicative height limits at the site.

"As we have seen, this minister has a track record for picking winners and losers, and once again it appears the developer is the winner and the loser is the community and the integrity of the planning system," Mr Tee said.

### **FIRST MEETING OF MANUFACTURING TASKFORCE**

*News –30<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.news.com.au/business/breaking-news/first-meeting-of-manufacturing-taskforce/story-e6frfkur-1226210031314>

Prime Minister Julia Gillard has reassured manufacturers they will get help to adapt to changes in the industry that are threatening jobs and output.

Ms Gillard was speaking at the first meeting of the Government's new Manufacturing Taskforce, which opened in Canberra today.

"This is a moment to roll the sleeves up; government, business and unions working together for the future of Australian jobs and manufacturing," she told taskforce members.

Ms Gillard said while there were pressures on the industry, particularly from the high Australian dollar, opportunities for the sector would open up through Australia's engagement with Asia.

"Our nation will get new opportunities as we see the growth in Asia, and in particularly the growth of the middle class in Asia, more than a billion people who will want the kind of things we want," she said.

These opportunities included elaborately transformed manufactured goods and fashion.

Ms Gillard is chairing the taskforce, which includes industry, union and academic representatives, alongside deputy chair, Innovation Minister Kim Carr.

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Also in the taskforce is Treasurer Wayne Swan, OneSteel chief executive Geoff Plummer, Australian Council of Trade Unions secretary Jeff Lawrence and CSIRO chief executive Megan Clark.

A Budget update released yesterday said the nation's manufacturing output rose by only 0.1 per cent over the past year, while jobs in the sector fell 5.4 per cent.

The industry had lost around 110,000 jobs over the past three years.

Announced at the Future Jobs Forum in October, the Manufacturing Task Force will develop a plan to shore up the future of manufacturing, initially looking at the effectiveness of a raft of policies and programs already in place.

### **SCHOOL REPORT DUE**

*Star News Group –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/sunshne-ardeer-albion/324/story/145194.html>

The greens have forced the Government to release a report into autism education in the West in the next fortnight.

Western Metropolitan MP Colleen Hartland asked Parliament last week to vote on a motion for Premier Ted Baillieu to release the Grant Thornton report on Educating Year Prep to 12 Students with an Autism Spectrum Disorder in the Western Metropolitan Region by midday on Tuesday 6 December.

Ms Hartland said the Government had been “sitting” on the report and families were yet to see the results.

“The Baillieu Government made an election promise to provide the western suburbs with a Prep to year 12 school for children with autism,” Ms Hartland said.

“One year into the Government’s term and not only have they not delivered on this commitment, but they are failing to release the related reports and recommendations.

“What are they hiding?”

She said the community needed to see what the report said about the number of students diagnosed with autism, how they’re being “served” by the current system and any recommendations, before they could “get on with the job” of delivering better education in the West.

Western Metropolitan MP Bernie Finn supported Ms Hartland’s motion.

“I hope this information that is provided by the department will go some way to providing answers and much needed support for families and children affected by autism in the western suburbs,” Mr Finn said.

“It is important that parents and families are given some choice of education for their children with autism, because each child is different; each child has a different degree of autism.”

The motion was also supported by several of Mr Finn’s ministerial colleagues and members of the Labor Opposition.

Action for Autism Education spokesperson Danny Sorbello said the report would give parents “certainty one way or the other”.

“People need that certainty,” Mr Sorbello said.

“We’ve been getting mixed messages in the last six months or so since the budget.”

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Mr Finn told Star the school, which was allocated \$4 million in the State Budget, would definitely be “going ahead” and that there would be announcements “soon”.

Mr Sorbello hoped the announcements would give parents an indication of the size and location of the school.

“Hopefully the wait is worth it in terms of the outcomes for the west,” he said.

### **FINN'S PRIORITIES**

*Star News Group –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/sunshne-ardeer-albion/324/story/145198.html>

Bernie Finn has spent four of his five years holding one of the Western Metropolitan region seats, in Opposition.

This week marked a year since the election of the Liberal MP and the Baillieu Government.

So what have they achieved?

“It’s certainly been the busiest year of my life,” Mr Finn said.

He and Western Metropolitan MP Andrew Elsbury have a “comprehensive list” of issues to address in the West, which Mr Finn said they are steadily working through.

But, according to the man himself, it’s all about “priorities”, like making sure the Regional Rail Link was on track for completion.

Other big ticket items include an increase in policing.

“One of the great beefs people have had out here (in the West) for a very long time is that we haven’t had enough police,” Mr Finn said.

“Places like Werribee, Sunshine, Williamstown... have suffered for a long time.

“There are places... without a flak jacket and a submachine gun you just wouldn’t go there.

Mr Finn said the police academy is now “bursting at the seams” with new recruits, including protective service officers (PSOs) which will guard suburban stations.

There are also smaller projects he’s proud of, such as a recycling machine part-funded by the Government in Hobsons Bay to help clean up Altona Beach.

But there’s plenty left on the to-do list.

Parents of autistic children are waiting to hear more about the Baillieu Government’s promise to fund a \$4 million P-12 autistic school in the West, and elderly residents in Werribee are waiting to hear if the Government will do anything about their deteriorating public housing.

Meanwhile, the Western Hospital, which was largely ignored in the Government’s first budget, is struggling with a growing number of patients and lack of funding.

The latter issue is one that has found a place at the top of the list.

“Western Hospital is one of my key priorities, that place needs to be... well it almost needs to be bulldozed and started again,” Mr Finn said.

“In Footscray, the dental health clinic there.

“You’ve also got in the outer suburbs, in Werribee and Caroline Springs... the lack of infrastructure, the lack of roads and lack of public transport.

“That worries me a lot and that’s something we have to address.”

He said the first budget was about election promises, while next year’s budget will be the “next step”.

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### UNIVERSITY'S NEW VISION

*Star News Group –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/324/story/145209.html>

Victoria University will increase its online and international presence in a bid to become a world renowned tertiary leader.

VU's new strategic plan for 2012-16 aims to build on the university's expertise as a centre of excellence in regional, national and transnational education and boost its research output over the next decade.

Victoria University vice-chancellor Peter Dawkins has spent the past year working on the five-year strategic plan to grow and re-brand the university as it strives to expand its student population from 50,000 to 75,000.

Prof Dawkins told Star earlier this year that his vision for Victoria University had two key aspects: one being the vision for its students, the other for the wider community and industry.

Prof Dawkins said the plan sets out targets in learning and teaching, the student experience, research, knowledge exchange, engagement and excellence to boost the VU experience in coming years.

Targets include:

- To be recognised as a world leader in tertiary education of students from diverse countries, cultures, socio-economic and educational backgrounds;
- To become a top 20 university for research in Australia by 2020; and
- To become world renowned in sport, exercise and active living by 2016 and at least three other areas by 2020.

"As a pioneering dual-sector university providing a full range of qualifications from vocational certificates to PhDs, we have the capacity to support the development of workforces across whole industry sectors," Prof Dawkins said.

"In the new Strategic Plan, Victoria University sets itself the challenge of building on this set of achievements, to be a leading university by world standards in learning and teaching that prepares students for the changing world of work."

### PRELIMINARY DESIGNS RELEASED FOR THE REMOVAL OF TWO LEVEL CROSSINGS IN SUNSHINE

*VICSIG –29<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.vicsig.net/news/3367>

Minister for Public Transport Terry Mulder today released preliminary designs for the removal of two level crossings on Anderson Road, Sunshine in another major milestone for Regional Rail Link.

Mr Mulder said members of the community were invited to view the designs at two community information sessions on Wednesday 30 November and Saturday 3 December.

"Two level crossings on Anderson Road will be removed by moving the road over or under the railway," Mr Mulder said.

"This will eliminate the need for drivers to stop for trains on this busy arterial road which carries about 25,000 vehicles a day.

"This will alleviate congestion, reduce travel times and improve safety for drivers, cyclists and pedestrians.

"These works are being undertaken to prepare for extra trains passing through Sunshine when the Regional Rail Link project is completed," Mr Mulder said.

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A new road underpass will be constructed at the northern crossing on Anderson Road beneath the Sydenham, Bendigo and Sydney lines. The railway tracks will remain at their current height. The road will be lowered to allow vehicles to travel underneath.

The southern crossing near Sun Crescent will be removed by raising the road slightly and creating a new rail underpass.

New shared use paths will also be constructed at both crossings to provide uninterrupted bicycle and pedestrian access over the railway lines.

"Significant work has gone into designing the road/rail separations to improve traffic flow and safety on Anderson Road and future-proof the area for transport growth," Mr Mulder said.

"Without this work, travel times for vehicles along Anderson Road would substantially increase."

The Regional Rail Link Authority has already begun consultation with directly affected residents and businesses on Anderson Road. Feedback from the community will help the Regional Rail Link Authority and its construction contractors to develop the preliminary designs further and plan construction to minimise the impact of the works.

Community information sessions

Where: Sunshine Convention Centre. Seminar Rooms 1 and 2. Victoria University. Gate 1, 460 Ballarat Road, Sunshine

When: Wednesday 30 November: Any time between 4.30pm – 8.30pm

Saturday 3 December: Any time between 9.30am – 1.30pm

### AUSTRALIA'S FASTEST GROWING MUNICIPALITY RECEIVES RETAIL BOOST

*News Maker –28<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.newsmaker.com.au/news/13235>

Melbourne's West will be home to a major new retail destination following planning approval by Wyndham City Council for Stage 1 of the new \$100 million Williams Landing Shopping Centre.

Williams Landing Shopping Centre is set to house more than 28,000 sqm of retail and commercial office space and will include national brands and independent retailers, offering a mix of fashion, fresh food, services and convenience retail. Subject to leasing, the Centre is scheduled to open to the public in late 2013 or early 2014.

Cedar Woods' Development Director, Patrick Archer, explained that planning approval for the Shopping Centre, the first stage in the development of the Williams Landing Town Centre, was a significant milestone in the development process.

"Williams Landing Shopping Centre will be a state-of-the-art retail centre offering comfort, convenience and innovative design in an enclosed mall, surrounded by commercial and office tenancies fronting the main streets," Mr Archer said.

"The landmark development has already attracted strong interest from major retailers, with Woolworths and Big W signing on as anchor tenants earlier this year," Mr Archer concluded.

Located in Wyndham, Australia's fastest growing municipality, Williams Landing has been identified as Melbourne's primary residential growth corridor by the Victorian State Government. Williams Landing is strategically located at the heart of this rapidly growing region in the higher income areas of Wyndham.

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The State Government and developer, Cedar Woods, have positioned Williams Landing as a major mixed-use urban centre for Melbourne's West hosting business services and a wide range of professional employment opportunities that are not currently supported in the region.

Wyndham Mayor, Councillor John Menegazzo, said Williams Landing Shopping Centre would be a key retail precinct in the City.

"As our community continues to grow, it is integral that our local infrastructure and amenities are appropriate for our needs. The Williams Landing Shopping Centre responds to a major need for quality retailing, restaurants and office accommodation," Mr Menegazzo said.

The Shopping Centre will be located alongside the new Williams Landing train station and freeway interchange being constructed by the State Government at a cost of around \$100 million. Williams Landing station and freeway interchange are due to open in late 2012 ahead of the planned completion of the Shopping Centre.

### About Cedar Woods

Cedar Woods Properties is a multi-award winning property developer with a long track record of creating premium large scale developments in Australia. Cedar Woods is listed on the Australian Stock Exchange and has offices in Melbourne and Perth.

### **JOBS 101: DEALER ADDS DRIVE**

*Leader –28<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/jobs-101-dealer-adds-drive/>

A major Volkswagen and Skoda dealership group has joined our Jobs 101 campaign, offering five new apprenticeships this week.

Owner/operator Francis Mohammed, who has four dealerships and plans to open another in Ringwood next year, expects to hire 20 more apprentices within 12 months.

Mr Mohammed, who has workshops in South Yarra, Richmond, Abbotsford and Essendon, welcomed Jobs 101 as an initiative for driving young people into work.

"We need more auto apprentices and this campaign is a good way of sparking interest in people considering pursuing an automotive career," he said.

Mr Mohammed said technology had changed the car industry and apprentices were known as "service technicians" who were likely to be working on computer diagnostic equipment in an air-conditioned workshop.

Jobs 101 partner, recruitment agency WPC Group, organised automotive open days at Kangan and Box Hill institutes last week for students interested in automotive apprenticeships.

Leader Newspapers' campaign to create 101 jobs in 101 days, which ends in mid-December, has so far created 92 jobs in Melbourne.

To register interest in an automotive career with Volkswagen/Skoda or other Jobs 101 opportunities, call 1300 656 461 or go to [jobs101.org.au](http://jobs101.org.au)

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### **COUNCIL TO DECIDE ON WILLIAMSTOWN'S HIGH-RISE ROW**

*The Herald Sun –28<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/more-news/baillieu-dodges-high-rise-battle/story-fn7x8me2-1226207455945>

The Baillieu Government has dodged a potential battle with local residents over a \$200 million high rise development planned for Williamstown.

Planning Minister Matthew Guy will allow the local council to make a decision on the controversial Nelson Place Village project, despite an independent panel recommending that he take responsibility.

Mr Guy's move is a setback for the former woollen mill site's developers, including Liberal Party heavyweight and Formula One Grand Prix chairman Ron Walker.

But it will be welcomed by a residents' action group and the Hobsons Bay Council, which opposes the current plan for more than 400 flats and townhouses, including towers up to 13 storeys.

Former planning minister Justin Madden rezoned the industrial site as residential in March last year, and set up the expert panel to suggest planning controls to shape the future design.

Its report, seen by the Herald Sun, has recommended a height limit of about six storeys for parts of the site and the need for Mr Guy to take responsibility for the ultimate decision.

But Mr Guy said yesterday the council and local community should have involvement in the decision "given the contentious and highly charged nature" of the report.

"The Government was elected on a platform of giving more power to councils and we mean it," he said.

Mr Guy denied that his cautious approach was linked to embarrassment when he recently reversed a decision to rezone 23ha of farmland for residential development near the township of Ventnor on Phillip Island.

He faced a backlash over the original decision, including from US entertainer Miley Cyrus who had visited the area while holidaying with her Australian boyfriend Liam Hemsworth.

Mr Guy said there were different issues involved in the Williamstown decision.

"This is one that's obviously been around for a period of time and we believe this is the right way to manage this issue," he said.

"We've got to make a decision on the back of the recommendations and we've accepted virtually all those recommendations," he said.

### **WHY THE EAST-WEST ROAD TUNNEL IS A STINKER**

*Sydney Morning Herald –28<sup>th</sup> November 2011*

<http://m.smh.com.au/opinion/politics/why-the-eastwest-road-tunnel-is-a-stinker-20111127-1o19f.html>

Successive Victorian governments have been keen to extend the Eastern Freeway from its Hoddle Street end via a tunnel under Melbourne Cemetery and Royal Park to CityLink.

It is a stinker. As most of the 40,000 cars hitting Hoddle Street at the morning peak want to get into the city, there will need to be exit ramps into Collingwood, Fitzroy and Carlton — which will cause inner-city gridlock.

The first inquiry into the east-west tunnel proposal for the Bracks government, in 2004, accepted the evidence of academic transport planner Paul Mees, who said that most of the traffic coming off the freeway went into central Melbourne and only 15 per cent went to the northern or western suburbs.

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In other words, the public justification for the east-west link — that it would take traffic away from the central business district — was a confidence trick.

The 2004 study concluded that the need for extra road capacity was "questionable" and the "road tunnel options investigated are not considered justifiable, mainly because the economic benefits do not cover the high cost, and the social and environmental impacts are mixed".

The Bracks government did not even bother to respond to the report.

In 2007 it set up a new inquiry under Sir Rod Eddington, staffed by bureaucrats from the pro-roads Transport Department. The first question it should have asked was where did the 2004 study go wrong.

Eddington's report favoured the east-west link and two rail projects — the Melbourne Metro underground from Footscray to Caulfield and the Regional Rail Link from Footscray to Werribee. The report was delivered in 2008, two months after Eddington had been appointed chairman of Infrastructure Australia, whose task was to evaluate applications for funding infrastructure projects from state governments.

The Regional Rail Link, the most expensive transport infrastructure project ever approved, got \$3.2 billion in Commonwealth funding for the now estimated \$5 billion project. An independent review of the project in 2008 by Edward Dotson, a former transport planner for the World Bank who worked for the Melbourne Public Transport Authority, was scathing. He said the Eddington report could be best described as the "pre-feasibility stage".

This judgment was backed up by the head of the Transport Department, Jim Betts, who told an infrastructure conference two weeks ago that the \$5 billion project had been "budgeted on the back of an envelope".

Betts was forced to apologise to Eddington by Premier Ted Baillieu. Betts said in his letter to Eddington that he wasn't aware that journalists were at the conference.

He noted that the Regional Rail Link was first recommended in Eddington's 2008 report and that Infrastructure Australia had conducted its own analysis. He went on: "It would be entirely incorrect to suggest that IA would recommend a project for funding unless an adequate level of planning and development had been undertaken." In my opinion, this points to the conflict of interest inherent in Eddington's appointment as chairman of Infrastructure Australia before his report was delivered to the Victorian government.

The Eddington report urged that the Regional Rail Link and the Melbourne Metro proposals should be considered as a package, together with the east-west link proposal.

At the same time, Eddington added in "wider economic benefits" based on a concept he called "agglomeration economies" and a further \$6 billion that represented "community benefits of tunnelling".

The standard measure of "benefits" traditionally used by the Commonwealth until the establishment of Infrastructure Australia was limited to travel time and vehicle operating costs saved, reduced crash costs, reduced pollution, and revenues from tolls or fares. On this basis the benefit-cost ratio came down to 0.7, compared with 1.4 as calculated with the Eddington extras.

This means, according to a standard calculation that every dollar spent on the three projects would yield a return of 70¢, compared to \$1.40 according to Eddington. For the east-west link alone — which has now become a Baillieu government priority — the benefit-cost ratio is 0.5, according to the traditional measure, and 0.7, according to Eddington.

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The so-called "benefit" of the road tunnel is removal of congestion at Hoddle Street. But this would be more than offset by gridlock in the city centre — and it would destroy the amenity of the inner suburbs and the CBD, which is built on public transport, cycling and walking.

Why spend \$10 billion or thereabouts to get a return of \$5 billion and create a living hell, when \$1 billion to create a Doncaster rail link approaching the city down the middle of the Eastern Freeway could relieve the Hoddle Street pressure and enhance the liveability of the city?

Why have three successive governments obsessed about building the east-west link even though it will hurt motorists as much as the rest of the community? And who benefits?

### **SPRAWL PRICES PROVE NOT GOOD FOR ALL**

*The Age*— 28<sup>th</sup> November 2011

<http://www.theage.com.au/business/property/sprawl-prices-prove-not-good-for-all-20111127-1o1fv.html>

The former state government's efforts to improve housing affordability by substantially expanding Melbourne's urban growth boundary last year appear to be failing buyers badly.

After another weekend in which about half the homes auctioned in metropolitan Melbourne were sold, developers who control the subdivision of land in Melbourne's affordable outer suburbs are ensuring 100 per cent clearance rates using methods that will substantially boost company profits, but put home buyers in the vulnerable position of potentially paying too much for their land.

Recently in Toolern, a new housing estate near Melton South, Melbourne's most affordable suburb, developer Lend Lease released just 20 blocks of land for sale,

out of a possible 4900 it has negotiated with the council to develop, in part to improve affordability.

At a major event at the new TABCORP Park, the blocks were sold using a ballot method to prospective buyers, some of whom reportedly first registered interest many months ago.

Not surprisingly, the event was considered a success, with Lend Lease selling 313-square-metre blocks - 35 kilometres from the city - at prices starting from \$145,000. Across Toolern Creek, established homes on blocks twice the size still sell for less than \$200,000 (and they are closer to Melton train station).

The practice of releasing land in very limited, planned stages is happening north of the city, too. In Wallan, a township about 50 kilometres from the central business district and which is still outside the urban growth boundary - where some would expect more affordable real estate because land taxes are lower - a consortium of interstate developers is on track to making up the \$14 million it paid in mid-2010 for a 40.3-hectare farm abutting an established housing estate.

At the heavily marketed launch of the first stage of the Woodlands Edge estate five months ago, 24 allotments were offered and sold, in deals which generated \$3.5 million for the new farm owners - Brisbane based developer Metro (headed by former Devine Limited chief David Devine) and Sydney company, Oracle. This weekend the developer unveiled another stage, called 1B, which offered 22 allotments, the cheapest measuring 315 square metres and priced at \$139,000.

Assuming an entry-level house with an outdoor area costs about \$200,000 to develop, homes within the estate will owe the new owners about \$340,000.

Elite buyer advocate Catherine Cashmore has concerns that the value of homes developed in the outer suburban estates are being falsely inflated by such tactics

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and have no established sales history to prove demand will underpin the initial outlay the buyer has paid.

"Worse," she says, "homes in the outer suburbs generally lack the essential infrastructure needed to ensure a good record of capital growth. First home buyers who hope to use these properties as a stepping stone into something better often find they're lucky if they can sell the property for marginally more than they paid in the first place.

"I advise my clients to stick to areas that have a good historical record of consistent solid demand."

Savills director Clinton Baxter says that closer to town, developers of CBD and inner-city apartment projects have sought to increase density of proposed projects this year.

In practice, an increase to a proposed complex's density means a developer can increase profit, because any discount that should be imposed on apartment prices (because there are more apartments to sell) is not always passed on.

Developers have also benefited this year from a collapse in development site values, with one property in Chapel Street, South Yarra, recently selling for about \$19 million - far less than the \$25 million another buyer agreed to pay for it last December. The new owner is expected to build even more apartments on the site than the vendor sought a right to develop when it was first listed for sale last year.

RMIT associate professor Michael Buxton has previously told The Age there might be a need for a government-backed authority such as the Urban Renewal Authority (the new name for VicUrban) to play an interventionist role ensuring housing affordability.

After factoring in Sunday's auction results, the REIV this week revised its auction clearance rate to 53 per cent. Last weekend, it downgraded its estimated clearance rate to 51 per cent.

### **OIL STANDARDS PUSH**

*Shepparton News*— 21<sup>st</sup> November 2011

<http://www.sheppnews.com.au/article.aspx?id=1248988>

Olive growers will unite to guarantee that their code of practice ? a production standard and honest labelling of extra virgin olive oil ? will be enforced across Australia.

Merton olive grower and Goulburn-Strathbogie Olive Growers Association president Rob Mitchell said the problem was the supermarkets misleading the public with cheap, imported oils masquerading as extra-virgin olive oil, while local growers "are struggling, doing the right thing and producing quality products".

"It's been going on for years, the olive oil scam," Mr Mitchell said.

"The Spanish, Italians and Greeks bottle it up and flog it out here, because we don't know any better.

"They take the stuff we turn into compost, which has between three and five per cent extra-virgin olive oil, and cut it with chemicals and other oils, like canola. Their product is barely olive oil."

Australian Olive Association chief executive Lisa Rowntree said terms such as pure, light and extra light were no longer allowed to be used on labels, under the new Australian standard and industry code of practice .

"Coles and Woolies are making it very tough, not only on us, but all farmers," Ms Rowntree said.

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“Their claim to be supporting farmers is not true. Unless our olive oil suppliers drop their price to compete with the cheap and mislabelled imported oil, they cannot keep their shelf space.

“For the last couple of years our olive farmers have been forced to sell below their cost of production or at no profit, just to maintain their position. It’s not sustainable .”

In July this year the new Australian Standards came into effect, but Ms Rowntree said the major supermarkets were still trying to avoid complying with the rules.

“Coles have written to us stating that they will implement the new Australian Standards for all their homebrand and other brands, which is great news.

“Woolworths, on the other hand, have written to us stating that they will consider the AS for their own homebrand oil but not for the other branded product.”

Restoring trust in the trade of olive oil was the theme of last month’s Australian Olive Association conference in the wake of the government legislating The Australian Standard for Olive Oils and Olive Pomace Oils.

Ms Rowntree said the conference was a success, with South Africa, South America, the United States and Spain agreeing to form a new world olive alliance that would adopt the Australian Standards as their own.

“Imported oil can still come in to Australia, it will just need to be labelled correctly. Most of the oil will be labelled Refined Oil,” she said.

“Consumers need to write to Woolworths and let them know that they are not stupid and that they would appreciate having honest labelling on all olive oil products .”

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