

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



BRIMBANK	3	SOMALI FAMINE ADDS EDGE TO RAMADAN.....	13
KEILOR PARK BAKEHOUSE CUTTING ENERGY FOR THE PLANET	3	CARERS WIN GOVERNMENT ALLOWANCE BACK	14
HEALTH SCHEME TRIMMED FOR BRIMBANK SCHOOLS	3	MARIBYRNONG COUNCIL JOINS TRUCK ACTION QUEST	15
REGAL HONOUR FOR STUDENTS	4	RESEARCH REVEALS INFORMAL VOTE PATTERN	15
SPRINGS' CHINESE SCHOOL OPENS ITS DOORS WIDE.....	4	REAL LOW FOR MARIBYRNONG'S SKY HIGH	16
LIFE DEDICATED TO OTHERS	5	BID TO PLUG HOLE IN WEST DENTAL SERVICES	18
SALVATION STRIKE	5	WHEELS KEEP TURNING BUT RIDERS NEED PATHS	18
CALDER INTERCHANGE PROJECT GATHERS PACE	6	MAIDSTONE RESIDENTS RAIL AT 'INCONSISTENT' VCAT RULINGS	19
CALL TO GUARANTEE DISABILITY CARE	6	'OLD-FASHIONED' POLICE WORK REAPING REWARDS IN FOOTSCRAY	19
BRIMBANK VOTERS WAITING ON MINISTER POWELL	7	HIGHPOINT EXPANSION: SALES DROP AS CENTRE GROWS	20
CENSUS: NATION PAUSES TO YIELD ITS FACTS, FIGURES.....	8	HIGHPOINT EXPANSION: 'NO WORRIES' FILLING 100 SHOPS	20
LIBRARY USERS TAKE DIM VIEW OF FUNDING CUTS	8	MIGRANTS' ANGUISH TO BE INVESTIGATED	21
BRIMBANK IS STILL CAR-THEFTS CENTRAL.....	9	SOMALI CHARITY FILLS CONTAINER	21
DOG ATTACKS UNLEASHED IN BRIMBANK.....	10	COUNCIL ONTO WEST FOOTSCRAY COMPLAINTS.....	22
BRIMBANK GEMS HAVE A GIFT FOR RECYCLING	10	WARDS SWITCH ON CARDS FOR MARIBYRNONG	23
BRIMBANK COUNCIL STRUCTURE REVIEW	11	COUNCIL ONTO WEST FOOTSCRAY COMPLAINTS.....	23
MARIBRYNONG.....	11	FOOTSCRAY CENTRE NOT JUST ACADEMIC.....	24
EXPERTS ATTACK SENTENCING SURVEY	11	BUS STOP-GAP SOLUTION FOR MARIBYRNONG	24
GAMBLING'S GRIP ON MARIBYRNONG TIGHTENS	12	MELTON	25
		MELTON MEGA TOWN SET FOR 600 PER CENT POPULATION BOOM.....	25

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



DONKEY VOTERS GALORE IN MELTON SHIRE	25	CARELESS MOONEE VALLEY ROAD USERS TARGETED.....	36
TREE AMIGOS PLANT AT MELTON	26	GROG VIOLENCE PLAN	36
MELTON SHIRE DOG PARKS ARE LET OFF THE LEASH	26	MOONEE VALLEY MODE.....	37
NEW FACILITIES KICK OFF AT COIMADAI	27	WYNDHAM.....	38
YOUTH HOUSING: A SPOKE IN RESIDENTS' WHEEL	27	TARNEIT IN THE SWIM?.....	38
COIMADAI PUPILS FAST-TRACKED AS PLANNERS	28	HOUSING DESIGN 'A HEALTH COST'	38
TAKING TO LESSONS LIKE DUCK TO WATER	28	WILLIAMS LANDING: GROUNDWORK LAID FOR NEW RETAIL HUB.....	39
CARBON TAX AN ONEROUS LOAD, TRUCKIES SAY	29	TRAFFIC 'WILL WORSEN' NEAR MEDICAL CLINIC.....	40
WE JUST WON'T COP IT, SAY MELTON POLICE	30	VICROADS' CASH CUT LABELLED A 'DISGRACE'	40
TRAINS BACK WHILE DIGGERS REST STATION CLOSED	30	POSITION, PRICE: POINT COOK SELLS ITSELF.....	41
SUDANESE DROP-IN CENTRE BID FOR MELTON	31	ERIC SEEGER: CHEAPER ON WESTERN FRONT.....	42
MOBILE MENACE IN MELTON SHIRE.....	31	ROAD CARNAGE MUST END, SAYS INSPECTOR	42
MOONEE VALLEY	32	WYNDHAM EN ROUTE TO FILL BIKE PATH GAP.....	43
INSPIRING ARTISTS FLOCK TO MOONEE PONDS EXHIBITION	32	POINT COOK RELAY EVENT A STEP CLOSER.....	44
WESTERN SUBURBS HAVE HIGHEST HOMELESS RATE.....	33	FIGHT FOR HERITAGE WERRIBEE SITE	44
MILLEARA CENTRE THRIVES ONE YEAR ON	33	POKIES FIGHT IN WYNDHAM.....	45
MOONEE VALLEY WORKSHOP GOES ON SHOW	34	REFUGEE A RECOGNISED WYNDHAM ROLE MODEL.....	46
FIRED UP BESIDE THE KOROROIT CREEK.....	34	CUT WYNDHAM'S TOLL NOW	47
EXCELLENCE IS CHILD'S PLAY AT KEILOR EAST CENTRE.....	34	ACROSS THE REGION.....	47
MOONEE PONDS CAFE'S OUT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE	35	'WORK-IN-KIND' SCHEME ANGERS COUNCILS, LABOR.....	48

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



MAN HURT IN TRUCK ROLLOVER AT FOOTSCRAY	48
TOP COP PROMISES FULL REVIEW OF SUBURBAN GANG VIOLENCE.....	48
NO WALK IN THE PARK FOR BRIMBANK	49

BRIMBANK

KEILOR PARK BAKEHOUSE CUTTING ENERGY FOR THE PLANET

Brimbank Leader– 4th August 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/keilor-park-bakehouse-cutting-energy-for-the-planet-fbready/>

Despite being in an energy-intensive industry, a Keilor Park bakehouse has cut its carbon use significantly through environmentally friendly measures.

Over the past four years, Ferguson Plarre Bakehouses have implemented heat recovery techniques, a rainwater collection, and a diesel hybrid truck to help cut energy costs.

Operations director Steve Plarre said based on 2009 rates, they had saved \$300,000 a year.

“We did this years ago without knowing there would be a carbon tax,” Mr Plarre said.

Since 2009, their gas use has dropped 76 per cent and electricity by 62 per cent.

Their ultimate goal is zero emissions with their sustainability principles extended to all levels of the business.

“It is possible to do, and we would encourage other small businesses to look into ways of doing so too, asking questions and seeking advice.”

While visiting the bakehouse last month, Maribyrnong Labor MP Bill Shorten said small business would be shielded from paying a carbon price under the federal government’s Clean Energy Future package.

Mr Shorten said \$240 million would go towards helping small businesses save energy and get advice to help grow their business sustainably between 2014 and 2015.

HEALTH SCHEME TRIMMED FOR BRIMBANK SCHOOLS

Brimbank Leader– 4th August 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/health-scheme-trimmed-for-brimbank-schools-fbready/>

A program aimed at reducing childhood obesity and encouraging Brimbank students to eat healthy food is the latest of several to get the chop from the State Government.

Keilor state Labor MP Natalie Hutchins has criticised the government’s funding cuts for the Kids - Go For Your Life programs in Brimbank schools.

Ms Hutchins said Keilor, St Albans, Sydenham and Taylors Hill schools and students would be adversely affected by cutting the \$6.2 million program, which ran for five years and encouraged better eating habits and exercise for 320,000 students.

“About one-quarter of Australian children are overweight or obese, which is largely due to poor diet and increasing inactivity,” Ms Hutchins said.

A spokesman for Health Minister David Davis said the government had provided extra funding to extend the program until December. In that time a range of new initiatives would be developed to better meet community needs.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Western Metropolitan state Liberal MP Bernie Finn said the government would spend nearly \$40 million on a new program called Healthy Children to “provide the environments, information and support which will promote healthy habits for children and young people”.

The axing of Kids - Go For Your Life is the latest in a string of cuts to affect the west. State funding ceases at the end of this year for the Take a Break occasional childcare program, which subsidises 9000 families, many in Brimbank.

And the government has told councils it would cut recurrent public library funding by \$130,000 this year.

Kororoit state Labor MP Marlene Kairouz condemned the cuts.

“This is the latest blow in the Baillieu Government’s savage \$960 million cuts to Victorian education, early childhood and health budgets,” she said.

REGAL HONOUR FOR STUDENTS

Brimbank Star– 2nd August 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/307/story/137854.html>

He's used to rubbing shoulders with politicians and bureaucrats, but Alex Chernov faced an audience of a different kind in Sunshine West last week.

The Governor of Victoria visited St Paul's Primary School on Wednesday in response to an invitation by its pupils.

Students from Grades 5 and 6 wrote to Governor Chernov asking to meet him after learning about migration in class. The youngsters peppered the Queen's representative with questions about his birth in Lithuania and migration to Australia as a young boy.

Principal Damien Casamento said the students had been thrilled when Governor Chernov accepted their invitation.

“We were quite surprised that he was able to fit it into his schedule,” Mr Casamento said.

“The visit caused quite a buzz at the school – the official car drove into the school grounds, and it was all very exciting for the students.

“It's a great honour and we're very proud to have had such a distinguished visitor to our school.” Mr Casamento said at least eight students had written to Governor Chernov.

“They've been learning about persuasive texts, so their letters must have been very persuasive,” he said.

SPRINGS' CHINESE SCHOOL OPENS ITS DOORS WIDE

Brimbank Weekly– 2nd August 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/springs-chinese-school-opens-its-doors-wide/2244685.aspx>

The man behind a new Chinese school in Caroline Springs says it will help meet the needs of Melton Shire's growing Chinese population.

The Xinjinshan Caroline Springs Chinese School opened on July 23 and runs classes on Saturdays for pupils from grade 1 to year 8.

The school, which is jointly run by the Melbourne Chinese Cultural Association and the Xinjinshan Chinese School, has 15 students enrolled and provides a LOTE class for students from a non-Chinese background.

Principal Ivan Chan says the school will make it easier for local Chinese families because it will dramatically reduce travel times.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



"The closest Chinese school is in Braybrook and it can be hard for parents in the north-west to drive their kids on Saturdays if they are working," Mr Chan said.

"We have 60 families behind the new school and we are expecting our enrolment rates to rise in coming months."

Mr Chan said the college, which is the first Chinese school in Melton Shire, will also benefit residents of a non-Chinese background.

"Children can learn the Chinese language, which is beneficial as there are job opportunities in China and China has a growing economy," he said.

"We want to advocate multiculturalism and it's important we cater for people from non-Chinese backgrounds."

LIFE DEDICATED TO OTHERS

Brimbank Star— 2nd August 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/307/story/137859.html>

Only someone with true community spirit would wake in the wee hours of the morning to peel and chop 20 kilograms of onions by hand – all in the name of a good cause.

The Sunshine resident has dedicated her life to helping others and has vowed to continue her mission for many years to come.

Her tireless work as a volunteer for the Salvation Army and Red Cross has helped many disadvantaged residents and the 62-year-old grandmother said she can't imagine life any other way.

"It makes me feel wonderful," Ms Scanlan said.

"I want to be in a dozen places at once. I just love people."

Once a month, Ms Scanlan wakes at 5am to cut dozens of onions – by hand – for the Bunnings sausage sizzle in Sunshine. She also regularly rattles tins on Ballarat Rd and door knocks throughout the municipality.

And her house is filled with toys, clothes and household items handed over by residents, which she promptly passes onto the Salvation Army.

"I'll do it for as long as I can.

"Even if my legs have caved in, I will still be out there helping people. What I do comes from the heart."

The passionate resident called on more members of the community to volunteer, saying it is one of the most rewarding things a person can do.

Jenny Scanlan is the subject of the week's Pride in Brimbank, a series Star launched to highlight the stories of everyday heroes who take pride in their community. If you know someone who fits the bill, call Star on 9933 4814.

SALVATION STRIKE

Brimbank Star— 2nd August 2011

<http://www.starnewsgroup.com.au/star/keilor-taylors-lakes-sydenham/307/story/137860.html>

Sunshine child protection workers went on strike last week in a bid to improve their pay and conditions.

Employees at Sunshine's Salvation Army Westcare rallied at the Devonshire Rd office last Monday following a breakdown in negotiations for a collective agreement.

Workers walked out of the Salvos' residential units at 5am, leaving management to take over the care of children living in the facility.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Australian Services Union organiser Leon Wiegard said the walk out would give Salvation Army command a taste of life in the shoes of their employees. Westcare staff have been fighting for a pay rise for more than three years, and have gone on strike four times in recent months.

Mr Wiegard said some workers at the Sunshine office worked four days a week, but were still eligible for a healthcare card due to poor pay.

"The pay is shamefully low and yet the management continues to drag the chain, forcing our members to lose more pay as a result of industrial action," Mr Wiegard said.

The Salvation Army management is currently offering a pay rise of three per cent per annum with no paid parental leave and no overtime payments for staff on 12 hour shifts, Mr Wiegard said.

"They are essentially asking ASU members to accept an Enterprise Bargaining Agreement that contains worse conditions than they had three years ago."

Salvation Army spokesman Major Bram Cassidy told Star there had been no disruption to services during the walkout, with non union staff and management picking up the slack.

Mr Cassidy said the situation had reached stalemate with a final offer already on the table.

"The management has acted in good faith and actually implemented the offer.

"We can't offer any more because of the implications for other sites."

CALDER INTERCHANGE PROJECT GATHERS PACE

Brimbank Weekly– 2nd August 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/calder-interchange-project-gathers-pace/2244687.aspx>

The president of the Calder Action Group is delighted the \$62million Calder Freeway and Kings Road interchange at Taylors Lakes is on track for completion next year.

The group started lobbying the state and federal governments for the interchange in 2007 and President Russell Mowatt says it is a great outcome that the project is nearly complete.

"I'm really looking forward to the opening of the interchange and we will now be pushing for an interchange at the Calder Park Drive and Calder Freeway."

Last week, VicRoads put up 14 concrete bridge beams (pictured) in a major operation which required overnight closures of the Calder Freeway.

Traffic was diverted along the Calder Freeway via the new interchange ramps as the 55-tonne beams were lifted in place for the 64-metre-long overpass.

A spokesman said bridge works were well advanced and the project remained on target.

CALL TO GUARANTEE DISABILITY CARE

Brimbank Weekly– 2nd August 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/call-to-guarantee-disability-care/2244571.aspx>

Kathleen Schroeter hopes a new support system will be implemented soon to help make life easier for Australians living with a disability.

Ms Schroeter, 73, has cerebral palsy and requires full-time nursing care.

The St Albans resident will attend a DisabiliTea event in Sydenham today to push for implementation of a national disability insurance scheme (NDIS).

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



She said having guaranteed access to full-time support would ensure her needs were met and reduce the burden on her family.

In February, the Productivity Commission recommended the federal government implement the NDIS to ensure all Australians can receive long-term care and support if they acquire a significant disability.

The commission's draft report described the current disability support system as "underfunded, unfair, fragmented and inefficient".

The current system gave people with a disability little choice and no certainty of access to appropriate support.

The commission presented its final report to the government last Sunday.

State co-ordinator of the Every Australian Counts campaign James O'Brien wants the government to implement the recommendations.

"The draft report by the Productivity Commission calls for the federal government to spend about \$12.5 billion a year to provide high-level support," he said.

"The NDIS will ensure the 360,000 Australians living with a disability get the care and support they need."

Keilor Labor MP Natalie Hutchins, who is hosting today's DisabiliTea event at her office on Hume Drive, said carers needed to be recognised for the work they did to help people with disabilities.

About 900 DisabiliTeas will take place across Australia today.

BRIMBANK VOTERS WAITING ON MINISTER POWELL

Brimbank Weekly – 2nd August 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/brimbank-voters-waiting-on-minister-powell/2244570.aspx>

Brimbank residents are being kept in the dark on whether they will be voting in next year's council elections.

Local Government Minister Jeanette Powell is refusing to say if the council will remain under administration beyond the October-scheduled local government elections.

Brimbank's councillors were sacked by then local government minister Richard Wynne in 2009 following a damning report by Victorian Ombudsman George Brouwer into the strife-torn council.

Administrators Peter Lewinsky, Meredith Sussex and Joanne Anderson were brought in to oversee the operation of the council until the 2012 election.

Ms Powell's spokesman has confirmed the minister is seeking an update from the three administrators in regards to the council's progress under their watch.

"The minister will make a determination regarding the administration of Brimbank Council after she has received a full briefing from the administrators and consulted with key stakeholders, including the community."

Chairman Mr Lewinsky said the administrators believed they had made significant progress.

Their key focus has been improving services, consolidating district-based planning and improving the appearance of city centres, parks and playgrounds.

"We have also tackled long-standing issues such as the Brooklyn industrial precinct," Mr Lewinsky said.

"Any decision in regard to the return of elected representatives is for the minister to make. Requirements for the return would need to be in line with legislative requirements set by the state government."

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



The scrutiny comes as the Victorian Electoral Council undertakes an electoral representation review in Brimbank, focused on the number of wards and councillors. Submissions must be made by August 9.

Hosing down speculation of boundary changes, Ms Powell's spokesman said the minister was not considering a review of the boundaries of councils in outer-western Melbourne.

Greens Western Metropolitan MP Colleen Hartland said there might be sense in reducing the size of Brimbank and for some suburbs to become part of Maribyrnong, but she doesn't want to see Brimbank dissolved.

She insists the area must return to democratically elected representation.

"I work reasonably well with the administrators, but they don't have a personal attachment to this community."

CENSUS: NATION PAUSES TO YIELD ITS FACTS, FIGURES

Brimbank Weekly– 2nd August 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/census-nation-pauses-to-yield-its-facts-figures/2244569.aspx>

Decision-makers planning the future of the western suburbs will be counting on residents to fill in their census details next Tuesday night.

Almost 30,000 census collectors have begun hand-delivering forms to every household in Australia - the nation's biggest peace-time operation.

This will be the 16th census and marks 100 years of national census-taking in Australia.

Sunshine area supervisor Tony Lee Nguyen said data collected by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) was vital for ensuring the right services were matched to the community.

"It only takes a little bit of time and makes a big difference," he said.

"The information people provide is vital for the community and for identifying the needs in public transport, aged-care, child-care facilities, and more."

Mr Nguyen works in community development, which relies heavily on building an accurate picture of an area. This is the second time he has been involved in the census process and he's keen to ensure Brimbank's multicultural community is engaged.

"We want to get the message out to newly arrived migrants in particular."

Forms will be delivered to 2.5million households in Victoria by 7000 collectors.

Collectors in the Sunshine area speak languages including Vietnamese, Mandarin and Indian.

Residents will be asked more than 60 questions about their work, income, religion and family.

Head of the ABS population census program Paul Lowe said the census lit the way forward for planning such things as schools, hospitals, roads, health services and public transport.

LIBRARY USERS TAKE DIM VIEW OF FUNDING CUTS

Brimbank Weekly– 2nd August 2011

<http://www.brimbankweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/library-users-take-dim-view-of-funding-cuts/2244567.aspx>

Residents angry at state government cuts to library funding have stepped up their 'save our libraries' campaign.

The state government plans to cut \$5million from Victoria's public libraries despite councils having already allocated their budgets for the coming year.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



The funding clawback means libraries face cuts to staff, opening hours and programs.

Sunshine's Nadia Xureb said libraries were a central part of a community and should not have funding targeted.

The mother of two is a frequent user of Sunshine library and would hate to see a reduction in services.

"I take my kids down there all the time. They love borrowing books and it's a great way to keep them occupied."

Municipal Association of Victoria president Bill McArthur said the cuts were fiercely opposed by councils, the Australian Services Union, the Public Libraries Victoria Network, regional library corporations and Public Libraries Australia.

"Recurrent funding helps councils to cover the daily running costs of public libraries - paying staff, opening the doors each day; ensuring books, CDs and other resources are current, and providing free internet access."

Greens Western Metropolitan MP Colleen Hartland said public libraries were particularly important in low-income areas such as Brimbank.

"I don't understand why anybody would think cutting library funding is a good idea.

"They can throw \$50million at holding the grand prix but then cut money from libraries. What's more important?"

The Greens argue Victoria's public libraries already receive the lowest level of funding of any mainland state.

Local Government Minister Jeanette Powell has sidestepped the matter, blaming "poor financial management" by the previous government and a cut in GST revenues.

"The government has re-established the ministerial advisory council on libraries to review future funding arrangements for public libraries.

"The government has also invested \$17.2million in the public libraries capital works program and \$4.5million in the Premier's Reading Challenge book fund."

Petitions are in place at local libraries.

BRIMBANK IS STILL CAR-THEFTS CENTRAL

Brimbank Leader – 2nd August 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/brimbank-is-still-car-thefts-central-fbready/e>

Brimbank is still the top spot for car thieves in Victoria.

National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council figures show 800 vehicles, not including motorcycles or trucks, were stolen from the area in the 12 months to March this year, up 78 on the previous year.

With 210 thefts, St Albans was the suburb with the highest number of cars stolen, followed by Sunshine with 135 and Deer Park with 113. One year on, Melton Highway in Taylors Lakes remains Brimbank's street with the most thefts with 20, followed by Harvester Rd in Sunshine with 18.

The majority of cars stolen continue to be older-model vehicles, with 67 per cent of those stolen made before 1996.

But despite the increase in thefts, overall the number of cars stolen in the area has declined by 35 per cent over the past four years.

Council executive director Ray Carroll said commuter and shopping centre car parks were a hotspot for thieves.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



"A number of the large train station car parks in Brimbank in particular do have significant environmental design issues, allowing thieves to ply their trade with little risk of detection," he said.

"These older vehicles are vulnerable to attack using simple tools such as a coathanger and screwdriver," said Mr Carroll, adding that installing an engine immobiliser provided the most effective protection against theft.

Brimbank Council and the theft reduction council are preparing this year's Operation Bounce Back program, the sixth run in Brimbank, raising awareness of vehicle theft and encouraging motorists to see the issue as a shared responsibility.

DOG ATTACKS UNLEASHED IN BRIMBANK

Brimbank Leader— 2nd August 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/dog-attacks-unleashed-in-brimbank-fbready/>

A savage dog attack in St Albans that left a small terrier dead has provoked calls for better dog management by owners.

Keilor Downs resident Andrew Watter said his father-in-law, who wished not be named, was taking the family's dogs for a walk on July 22 when they were set upon by two wandering dogs.

His father-in-law, 77, was bitten on the hand by one of the dogs - thought to be a pit bull terrier or pit bull cross - and his Chihuahua cross jack Russell terrier, Jesse, was badly mauled and had to be put down because of her injuries

Mr Watter's Pomeranian, Toto, escaped unharmed.

"I'm a dog lover but if it was a child (that was attacked), where do you go from there?" Mr Watter said.

Brimbank Council acting general manager of city development Stuart Menzies said despite patrols the dogs had not been found.

Dogs Victoria spokeswoman Sylvia Power said it was a serious problem that a dog was running around out of its owner's control.

"It's the owners' fault," Ms Power said. She said some dogs were placed in inappropriate situations.

Ms Power also warned against stereotyping breeds, saying it was the "deed, not the breed" that was the problem.

Last year, 84 dog attacks were reported to Brimbank Council.

In just four of those cases dog owners were issued with fines. "The frequency of dog aggression incidents in public places is of concern," Mr Menzies said.

Councils have the right to ask for attacking animals to be euthanized and matters of a more serious nature are brought before the Magistrates Court.

The State Government introduced tougher laws against dangerous dogs in 2010, providing councils more power to prosecute.

The maximum penalty for the owner of a declared dangerous dog that has attacked a person or animal, causing serious injury, is \$14,334 and six months imprisonment. The maximum penalty for a dog which is not declared dangerous is \$4778.

BRIMBANK GEMS HAVE A GIFT FOR RECYCLING

Brimbank Leader— 31st July 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/brimbank-gems-have-a-gift-for-recycling-fbready/>

Recycling the right way is paying off for Brimbank residents.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



The be a Brimbank Gem campaign started last month and has already found more than 100 gems who recycle responsibly.

The council's Recycling Inspection Team has randomly inspected more than 800 bins and handed out more than 100 re Leg 1 wards cards. The campaign encourages all Brimbank residents to recycle right by placing only recyclable material into their recycling bin.

The team awards a sticker to the bins they see containing only the right recycling material and puts a certificate with an attached \$50 reward shopping voucher in the letterbox. Annette Medley, of St Alban's, is one of the first Brimbank Gems.

"We have always tried to recycle everything we can, so to be recognised by the council is a real honour," she said.

The campaign runs until mid August.

BRIMBANK COUNCIL STRUCTURE REVIEW

Brimbank Leader– 29th July 2011

<http://brimbank-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/brimbank-council-structure-review-fbready/>

A review has started of Brimbank's council electoral structures, which could include changes to ward boundaries and the number of councillors.

With administrators in charge, any changes would be in place ahead of the next council elections scheduled for November 2012.

A public information session was held on Monday night in St Albans for residents who wanted to make submissions for the review, to be conducted by the Victorian Electoral Commission.

An Electoral Representation Review is required for each municipality at least every 12 years.

The review will consider the number of councillors, the number of wards and councillors a ward, the names of wards and the position of ward boundaries. The previous review was in 2005, increasing the number of councillors from nine to 11 and cutting the number of wards from nine to four.

The changes angered the Keilor Residents and Ratepayers Association because the final recommendation had different ward boundaries than the options put forward in the commission's preliminary report. President Susan Jennison said it was still "fresh in our minds".

Ms Jennison said the association would ask whether the commission would "stick to a procedure" this time.

She said the group did not want a multi-ward system and it was important to ask questions about how districts were divided.

The deadline for submissions is August 9.

MARIBRYNONG

EXPERTS ATTACK SENTENCING SURVEY

Maribyrnong Leader– 4th August 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/experts-attack-sentencing-survey-fbready/>

Matching criminal sentencing to community expectations would do more harm than good, according to experts.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Last week Attorney-General Robert Clarke launched the My Views survey seeking views on the appropriate punishment for murderers and rapists down to vandals and hoons.

The survey is part of the Baillieu Government's election commitments to get tough on crime by strengthening sentencing laws, including abolishing suspended sentences, ending home detention, setting four-year minimum terms for violent offenders and specific non-parole periods.

But youth worker Les Twentyman said the average person had no idea about the court system, rehabilitation or what was best for offenders.

"People think the corrections system means correcting, but it's a brutal system - young people go in drug free and come out addicts," Mr Twentyman said.

"Money should be spent on education to keep people out of jail - that has a far bigger impact on reducing crime."

He said knee-jerk reactions and talk-back radio statements only aggravated the issues behind crime.

Footscray Community Legal Centre manager and lawyer Dennis Nelthorpe agreed sentencing should not be viewed as black and white.

"Tougher sentencing inevitably ends up applying to really disadvantaged people committing low-level crimes," Mr Nelthorpe said.

"We don't want to end up like the US where they put more money into prisons than universities."

He said regardless of how realistic the survey was, the Government needed to be careful about how it interpreted and used results. The results of the survey will be made public after it closes on August 26.

GAMBLING'S GRIP ON MARIBYRNONG TIGHTENS

Maribyrnong Weekly—3rd August 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/gamblings-grip-on-maribyrnong-tightens/2246808.aspx?storypage=0>

Maribyrnong punters put more than \$400million through the pokies in the past financial year, losing \$56.6million in the process.

The losses, marginally up on last year's figure of \$56.2million, are the equivalent of \$986 for each person in Maribyrnong - well above the average state loss of \$611 per person.

It takes into account a reduction in the number of pokies from 463 in 2009-10 to 439 in 2010-11. The municipality's 10 gaming venues raked in an amount not far off the more than \$60million the council raises in income through rates and charges.

Braybrook's Ashley Hotel had the largest windfall, taking in \$11.7million in the year to last June 30.

The latest figures come as Maribyrnong Council and the Western Bulldogs prepare to go back to court over a proposal for 70 electronic gaming machines at Club Edgewater.

The Bulldogs were required as part of the planning permit to submit a plan to relocate its pokies from its other venues. The council says the plan is not to its satisfaction and the parties will have a preliminary hearing at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal on August 22.

Monash University gambling researcher Dr Charles Livingstone said the highest losses continued to be focused in areas of great disadvantage, including the western and northern suburbs.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



"This reflects the targeted marketing of pokie operators such as Woolworths and AFL clubs including Collingwood, Geelong and now Hawthorn who either have, or are planning, major 'club' venues in the west.

"The Western Bulldogs are also planning their purpose-built gambling venue in Maribyrnong, which is likely to further increase pokie losses in that area, which includes some of the most disadvantaged suburbs."

Dr Livingstone said low-intensity poker machines and pre-commitment would help a great deal by giving people more control over gambling.

Council's community well-being manager, Arden Joseph, said the council was concerned that gambling losses continued to grow despite the reduction in gambling machines.

"Current installed machines are working harder and provisions introduced by the state government, such as non-smoking areas, restricted access to ATMs, and problem gambling programs, appear to have had little or no effect. Council is particularly concerned that areas like Braybrook have the highest gambling losses per head of population in the world.

"These have been sustained losses over 20 years in areas of highest disadvantage."

The council's recent opposition to the Bulldogs' Edgewater proposal was a direct response to reducing the gambling losses and associated harms to local residents.

Mr Joseph said the council's gambling policy was being reviewed with a focus on reducing gambling-related harm to the most disadvantaged communities and problem gamblers.

Pokies: A link to abuse

The push for pre-commitment technology being considered by the federal government as part of pokies reform has been backed by a new survey on Australian attitudes to gambling.

The report, Public opinion on gambling - by the Australian National University and based on a national phone poll of 1213 people aged 18 and over, conducted from April 27-May 10 this year - found that 80per cent of respondents said gambling was dangerous for family life and 70percent said gambling in Australia should be more tightly controlled.

Poker machines were most often associated with gambling problems, thought 69per cent. That was followed by gambling on horse and greyhound races and casino table games.

Problem gambling was seen to be linked with alcohol abuse, suicide, marital problems, parental neglect and being less compassionate.

SOMALI FAMINE ADDS EDGE TO RAMADAN

Maribyrnong Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/somali-famine-adds-edge-to-ramadan/2246812.aspx>

This year's Islamic holy month Ramadan fast will have a particularly sombre meaning for Muslims in Melbourne's west whose thoughts turn to widespread famine in Africa.

Muslims gathered for Friday prayers last week at the Australian Light Foundation mosque and community centre in Tottenham prior to the 30-day fast that started on Monday.

Foundation co-ordinator Fatih Yargi, who won a council award in 2009 for his community work with migrants and refugees, said all worshippers, not just those

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



from the Horn of Africa, were worried about the famine in Somalia, which was going through its worst drought in 60 years.

More than 11million people are in danger of starvation.

"We will be talking to the community about the famine and what we can do to help," he said.

About the significance of Ramadan, Mr Yargi said: "It's about understanding hunger and disciplining your body.

"If you don't feel hunger you won't feel what they [the poor] feel."

The Tottenham mosque, on a site once a hotel and pub of ill repute, is now a place of worship, recreation and learning for up to 250 people of dozens of cultural backgrounds.

During Ramadan, Muslims can eat only after specific times after sunset and before sunrise dictated by the lunar calendar.

On Saturday nights during Ramadan, the foundation will throw open its doors to the public - regardless of their faith - for the Iftar dinner when the fast is broken.

Maribyrnong councillor Sel Sanli, a devout Muslim of Turkish background, said Ramadan was a time to reflect on life's meaning.

"It's similar to when we as Australians go overseas to travel; we often appreciate Australia much more," he said.

"When we start fasting we appreciate the simple things like food on the table. It brings you back to reality and makes you more human."

CARERS WIN GOVERNMENT ALLOWANCE BACK

Maribyrnong Leader– 3rd August 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/carers-win-government-allowance-back/>

Today was a special day for parents of children with type 1 diabetes.

After a five-month battle with the government, they have won back their axed carers' allowances.

Minister for Families and Community Services Jenny Macklin stunned families when she announced allowances would no longer be cut when children turned 10.

Ms Macklin said there would be automatic eligibility for the \$55-a-week allowance and health care card for children up to 16.

Parents involved in Leader's Save Our Children campaign, which started more than five months ago, cried tears of joy when they heard the news.

They were bursting with excitement and happiness as they waited for the minister to finish her speech to present her with flowers in Footscray today.

Cranbourne's Mairi-Anne McCartney, who was first to contact Leader when her 13-year-old daughter Tess was cut in February, said the news was still sinking in.

"It's fantastic and so great to know all the hard work paid off," she said.

"I feel such a huge emotional burden has been lifted from my shoulders."

Holt MP Anthony Byrne, who supported local families in their bid to win back their allowances, said it was a monumental achievement by all involved.

"This announcement is a testament to those families, particularly from this community and organisations including The Leader," he said.

"This campaign has been an overwhelming success.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



"These kids have effectively helped shape national policy in the area and I am extremely proud of them."

Liberal senator Mitch Fifield, who raised the issue at the Senates Estimate hearing during the review, said the Government back down was a huge win for parents of children with type 1 diabetes.

"It is a tribute to the ceaseless dedication of these parents and is an excellent demonstration of how everyday people can influence government policy," he said.

"I congratulate all the parents who have been involved in this campaign for change, as well as the Leader newspaper group whose Save Our Children articles formed the bedrock of the campaign."

MARIBYRNONG COUNCIL JOINS TRUCK ACTION QUEST

Maribyrnong Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/maribyrnong-council-joins-truck-action-quest/2246814.aspx>

Maribyrnong Council has added its voice to calls for action on removing trucks from residential streets.

Councillors voted in favour of motions asking the state government to review current curfews, which ban trucks from Francis Street and Somerville Road, Yarraville, between 8pm and 6am on weekdays, and from 1pm on Saturday to 6am on Monday.

Councillors also called for a study of health impacts created by noise and exhaust pollution.

The council is backing residents' calls to have curfews extended to cover Moore, Buckley and Whitehall streets, which bear the brunt of truck traffic cutting through the suburb.

Less Trucks for Moore spokesman Andreas Pineros said it was an issue for the whole municipality, not just residents, particularly as the population and port traffic were both growing. "VicRoads and the state government are increasing their liability by bringing more people to Footscray and exposing them to the health and safety effects." he said.

The previous state government's Truck Action Plan, which would take trucks to the West Gate freeway via a new Hyde Street connection, appears to be all but dead and buried.

Mayor Sarah Carter said Transport Minister Terry Mulder needed to release the latest reports on truck counts and the number of trucks breaking curfews.

An EPA spokesman said the agency was scoping and planning for further air quality monitoring in the Francis Street area.

A VicRoads spokesman said results of this year's truck counts would be released in the next couple of weeks.

The minister's spokeswoman, Larissa Garvin, said the government was still reviewing a number of projects announced by the previous Labor government, including the Truck Action Plan and WestLink.

She said the review would consider how the proposals addressed the issues of freight access to the port and impact on residential areas.

RESEARCH REVEALS INFORMAL VOTE PATTERN

Maribyrnong Leader— 3rd August 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/research-reveals-informal-vote-pattern/>

Two safe Labour seats in outer Melbourne have recorded the highest informal votes in Victoria after an analysis of data from last year's state and federal elections.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



The state seat of Niddrie, held by high-profile former Attorney-General Rob Hulls, had an informal vote of 8.31 per cent while the federal seat of Gorton, held by the government's Minister for Home Affairs, Brendan O'Connor, recorded almost seven per cent informal vote.

The research, carried out by the Museum of Australian Democracy (MoAD), revealed that 93.6 per cent of voters on the Niddrie electoral roll voted in last year's election and 92.4 per cent of voters turned out in Gorton for the federal poll.

Niddrie, which covers Niddrie, Avondale Heights, Essendon West and Keilor Park, is a safe Labor seat. Gorton, which includes Sydenham, Deer Park and Melton to the city's west, is also a traditional Labor stronghold.

The data reveals a complicated picture. Acting MoAd director Andrew Harper said it was surprising the number of Australians who were not having their say at the ballot box.

"While some of these numbers on their own are small, when you combine voter turnout with the number of informal votes, the number of people who are not registered and those who choose to submit a donkey vote, you find that you could have around a quarter of the voting population not having their say," he said.

The most diligent of voters in the state and federal polls were in the leafy inner city Liberal seats, Hawthorn – which is Premier Ted Baillieu's seat – and federally, Kooyong, a blue riband Liberal seat held by Josh Frydenberg.

Mr Harper said it was vital that Australians valued their democratic freedoms, and had their say on issues at the national and community level.

The Museum of Australian Democracy, based at the old Parliament House in Canberra, is promoting Have Your Say Day on Wednesday August 10.

"We are encouraging everyone to use the day as a central point to talk about the issues that matter most in their lives," Mr Harper said.

REAL LOW FOR MARIBYRNONG'S SKY HIGH

Maribyrnong Leader – 3rd August 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/real-low-for-maribyrnongs-sky-high-fbready/>

They say that when you buy a new car, you start to see the same model everywhere.

Ten years ago, new mums and dads in the inner west began to realise they weren't just noticing more babies, there were more babies.

Now, the lobby group SKY High, which started as 10 families and became 1200, is back at square one.

Education Minister Martin Dixon told SKY High Working Group recently a secondary school for Seddon, Kingsville, Yarraville just did not have the numbers.

The group thought they were meeting to discuss the options report, which detailed potential site locations and academic philosophies for their new school, not whether it should exist at all.

The State Government said Labor's 2008 projections report showed the area fell short of the 1100 potential students needed to start discussions about a new high school.

Instead, Mr Dixon offered to look at ways to better use transport links and improve maintenance on existing secondary colleges.

Cr Martin Zakharov, involved with the group since the first whisperings of a need for another school, said it was frustrating "It was disappointing to say the least, where do we go next?" he said.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



“They’re delaying the inevitable, the numbers will be there, this is a waste of everyone’s time,” he said.

STUDENT NUMBERS NOT ADDING UP

A Department spokesman said independent reporting put projected school demand in Seddon, Kensington, and Yarraville at about 800 students by 2021.

But Cr Zakharov said that calculation was based on 50 per cent attendance rate of eligible students at government secondary schools.

He said in reality the state average attendance at government schools was nearly 60 per cent and in the inner west more like 70 per cent.

“They’re playing statistical games,” he said.

When the 2008 projections were released, the group argued it was based on 2001 Census figures and out of date.

In the three years since, the inner west has continued to boom.

This year’s Census figures, to be taken on August 9, won’t be available for another year.

Former Education Minister Bronwyn Pike pushed the Education Department to conduct the student number projection and suggested a Year 7-9 school.

This was among options detailed in the report handed down at the meeting with Mr Dixon.

Others included expanding a local primary school to Year 9 or creating an off shoot campus of another school.

“We had the numbers for 7-9 but the Minister basically said ‘we don’t like them so you can’t look at that anymore’ - it’s just an excuse,” Cr Zakharov said.

He said within four to five years the government would have to respond to the growth.

Under pressure from the lobby group the government has agreed to review the report figures.

SUPPORT WITHDRAWN

Going into the state election last November, SKY High believed they had support from both sides of politics.

But their first scheduled meeting since Mr Dixon took office was cancelled and numerous requests for a copy of the options report prior to the July 21 meeting were ignored.

Williamstown MP Wade Noonan, who worked with the group over a number of years, said the back down was a clear snub.

He said promises of monthly meetings between SKY and the Education Department would come to nothing, as the department was the biggest opponent to the plan.

“The department’s focus was always on the middle and outer regions in the west and upgrading existing schools rather than establishing a new campus,” he said.

“They have a very rigid way of determining whether new schools ought to be given the green light and they don’t entertain lighting other options. The department only think creatively for as long as the Minister wants them to think creatively and he’s made his position pretty clear.”

Mr Noonan said transport options were the “barest minimum” the government could have offered to address the need.

Given the area’s current transport issues, Mr Noonan said he would not be holding his breath.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



BID TO PLUG HOLE IN WEST DENTAL SERVICES

Maribyrnong Weekly– 3rd August 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/bid-to-plug-hole-in-west-dental-services/2246815.aspx>

The deteriorating state of dental facilities in the west has prompted employees at the Western Region Health Centre to take to the streets to drum up public support.

Centre staff asked the public to sign a petition calling for state funding to improve facilities.

Staff said the story of the ailing dental services at the WRHC clinics in Footscray had generated plenty of interest.

WRHC spokeswoman Anna Ritman said the public response had been fantastic.

"Everyone has really got behind the cause. We've had over 1000 signatures."

Concerned residents are still able to put their name on petitions at any of the WRHC clinics. Staff will also take the petition to Nicholson Street mall on Thursday.

"The public support has just been amazing. As well as the petitions, the more letters to MPs from residents about the issue, the better," Ms Ritman said.

She said some parents feared the dental facilities were so archaic in the west that they may not be able to be fixed and the service would disappear.

Brooklyn resident Sathima Rafai has used the WRHC dental service on Geelong Road for her young children and was dismayed at the prospect of the service collapsing.

"It would be definitely disappointing. I wouldn't know what to do if they closed," she said.

"We have been so grateful for the job they do. They do terrific things considering they have so much trouble with facilities."

WHEELS KEEP TURNING BUT RIDERS NEED PATHS

Maribyrnong Weekly– 3rd August 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/wheels-keep-turning-but-riders-need-paths/2246821.aspx>

Cycling in Maribyrnong is becoming increasingly popular, according to recently released figures, and advocates want more done to improve connections across the municipality.

The Super Tuesday bike counts taken this year and compiled recently show that cycling numbers remain at historically high levels, though there's been a small drop compared to last year's figures.

The counts, an annual cycling census, conducted during the 7am-9am peak, showed 267 cyclists crossing the Maribyrnong River at Dynon Road, compared to 321 last year but more than 100 up on 2008.

At Footscray Road, 577 riders were counted near the notorious Shepherd Bridge, compared to last year's figure of 612, and close to 25per cent more than 2007.

The counts also recorded a spike of more than 50per cent in cycling numbers in West Footscray following completion of the path along Rupert and Cross streets.

Maribyrnong Bicycle User Group member Hector Burton said cycling conditions in the municipality had improved but there was still work to do. "You've got to put the dollars where you'll get the most bang for your buck, so improving connectivity to the city is money well spent. Linking paths that go near train stations is also a good thing.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



"The path [along Rupert and Cross streets] was meant to be extended to Sunshine, but that hasn't happened. Out there [in the west of Maribyrnong] you are riding on busy roads like Somerville Road with a lot of trucks."

According to Bicycle Victoria's BiXE index, an analysis of council spending on bike infrastructure, Maribyrnong spent \$5.99 per resident in 2010-11, above the \$5 per resident threshold but well below the average \$10.79 spent by inner-city councils.

VicRoads metropolitan north-west director Nial Finegan said routes linking the western suburbs with the CBD and improvements to cyclist safety were being investigated.

The state government was working on a metropolitan planning strategy to guide land use and transport planning in Melbourne, Mr Finegan said. It will include an audit of existing and any future bikeways for Melbourne.

"The outcomes of this audit will inform the government's approach to the provision of bicycle infrastructure in the metropolitan planning strategy."

MAIDSTONE RESIDENTS RAIL AT 'INCONSISTENT' VCAT RULINGS

Maribyrnong Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/maidstone-residents-rail-at-inconsistent-vcat-rulings/2246813.aspx>

Maidstone residents have, within the space of two days, won and lost battles against what they say is overdevelopment in their street.

The Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal last month ruled against an appeal by Marsh Street residents over the construction of three dwellings on one block.

Two days later, VCAT handed down a decision favouring residents and overturning Maribyrnong Council's approval of two two-storey houses on a block in the same street.

Residents had funded their own appeals to VCAT.

Resident Alan Adamson said the large-scale and modern designs were not in keeping with the style of houses built in the area up to the 1960s.

Rejecting the 18 Marsh Street building, VCAT member Bill Sibonis considered a neighbourhood character amendment to the Maribyrnong planning scheme that will guide what is acceptable in five neighbourhoods of "significant character". "Marsh Street and the surrounding streets have an evident character that is created by the detached housing forms, single-storey scale, front gardens and car accommodation that is located toward the rear of properties ... The proposed development will be at odds with these defining characteristics," he said.

Yet about the 7 Marsh Street proposal, VCAT member Alison Slattery said changes to the design were in keeping with character of the area, and she gave it the green light.

The council said last month the amendment still needed ministerial approval and so "cannot be considered as a seriously entertained planning proposal" or for there to be grounds to reject an application.

Mr Adamson said there was inconsistency in interpreting planning guidelines.

"At number 18 the development proposed was knocked back on the grounds it was not considerate of the area's amenity. But this one at number 7 is even more monstrous and they approve it."

'OLD-FASHIONED' POLICE WORK REAPING REWARDS IN FOOTSCRAY

Maribyrnong Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/oldfashioned-police-work-reaping-rewards-in-footscray/2246817.aspx>

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



A new police squad is averaging one arrest per day since it began operations on July 1, thanks in part to CCTV camera technology.

The Maribyrnong Intelligence Led Team (MILT) has emerged as a success, with Senior Sergeant Greg Hewitt labelling it a return to some "good, old-fashioned police work".

"The team's brief is to get out on the streets and forge relationships, speak to people, gain their confidence to get information and then utilise that information to target crime."

Senior Sergeant Hewitt said the four-man team was focused on crimes often triggered by transient criminals who travelled into the Footscray CBD from outside Melbourne to buy drugs, leading to petty crimes.

"In my view, a lot of crooks come into Footscray without money and looking to buy drugs. So they may steal something portable, if not cash, in order to exchange for heroin," he said. "A main focus of this team will be on those sorts of crimes - like theft from a parked car."

The most recent crime statistics show thefts from motor vehicles in Maribyrnong rose by more than 27per cent from the March quarter last year to the same time this year.

"This is a more concerted effort at tackling this sort of crime by using the same crew and building our own intelligence," Senior Sergeant Hewitt said. "If something is brewing in a certain location, in the past we haven't had the resources or the opportunity to allocate staff to it. They may have had it on their running sheet, they may have ticked off that they have attended the scene, and that was it."

Senior Sergeant Hewitt said MILT would be using CCTV cameras heavily in future and had already used the vision while the cameras were being tested.

HIGHPOINT EXPANSION: SALES DROP AS CENTRE GROWS

Maribyrnong Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/highpoint-expansion-sales-drop-as-centre-grows/2246811.aspx>

Retailers affected by the Highpoint expansion have been hit by a significant drop in sales in recent months.

Traders near the Safeway store on level 2, which has shut its doors due to the construction, have recorded a drop in sales of up to 40per cent. "Yes, we've had a big drop-off, I would say 30 to 40per cent of our sales purely due to the construction and less foot traffic," said The Reject Shop manager Trung Nguyen.

Access to The Reject Shop mall from the eastern car park has been closed due to works, and while Mr Nguyen said his store would be relocating next month, it would be much more difficult for independent operators to survive without the option to relocate.

GPT Group chief executive Michael Cameron said Highpoint had been working closely with traders affected by the expansion. "We invest an enormous amount of time and effort because unhappy retailers mean unhappy customers. It's in our interest to identify any issues."

Options made available to struggling traders included a reduced rent and help with marketing or relocating parts of the store temporarily.

HIGHPOINT EXPANSION: 'NO WORRIES' FILLING 100 SHOPS

Maribyrnong Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/highpoint-expansion-no-worries-filling-100-shops/2246810.aspx>

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



GPT Group chief executive Michael Cameron remained defiant in the face of the continuing poor retail climate as the company marked the launch of the \$300million Highpoint shopping centre expansion on Friday.

Speaking at the glamorous event, which also welcomed department store David Jones to the west, Mr Cameron referred to the GPT Group's 40-year experience in retail development to answer concerns about a flat market.

In March, Angus and Robertson's Highpoint store was shut because of nationwide cuts by its owners, while the recent announcement of future closures by the Just Group could affect Highpoint tenants such as Jay Jays and Just Jeans.

Mr Cameron said there were no concerns about filling the 100 new stores in the expansion.

He maintained the continual increase in online shopping was not a danger to the development.

"We've been doing this for over 40 years ... so we wouldn't have gone ahead with the development if we weren't totally confident that we would be able to fully lease the centre," he said.

"It [online shopping] will have an impact on surplus stores in shopping centres and it will continue to increase. For us, it's a process of continuing to adapt and change and we've been doing that for a long time. We're really confident this can happen."

Mr Cameron was also adamant traffic and transport issues would not plague the new and improved Highpoint complex.

"We're not a developer that builds something and sells it and then leaves," he said.

"Every time we do a development, it's for ourselves to own. Therefore it's important that we work with authorities, work with the community and ensure

that something we're going to deliver works as part of the community and not just as a shopping centre."

MIGRANTS' ANGUISH TO BE INVESTIGATED

Maribyrnong Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/migrants-anguish-to-be-investigated/2246816.aspx>

The Maribyrnong Immigration Detention Centre will be part of a Commonwealth Ombudsman's investigation into suicide and self-harm in detention centres.

More than 4000 people are now held in Australian immigration detention facilities, including the Serco-operated Maribyrnong venue which holds up to 99 people.

Ombudsman Allan Asher has raised concerns about the impact of long-term detention on the mental health of detainees after witnessing the deteriorating psychological health of detainees on Christmas Island.

There have been more than 1100 cases of threatened or actual self-harm reported across the detention network in 2010-11, according to Department of Immigration figures provided to the Ombudsman's office.

Mr Asher said challenges included delays in finalising protection visas, assessments and decisions; a lack of detailed plans for managing rejected asylum-seekers who could not be returned to their countries of origin; remoteness of accommodation; poor levels of decision making – evidenced by a high rate of decisions overturned upon review; and physical and mental health problems.

SOMALI CHARITY FILLS CONTAINER

Maribyrnong Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.maribyrnongweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/somali-charity-fills-container/2246820.aspx>

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Flemington resident Ahmed Ahmed has returned from a third trip to Somalia more determined than ever to make a difference to his homeland.

The community worker went to Somalia in April as project co-ordinator for the Container for Peace Project, which provides medical, educational and clothing supplies for refugee children in Somalia.

Goods donated by the community in Melbourne's west filled a 12-metre shipping container with supplies.

With help from charity group Bumble Bee and Koala Spirit, Mr Ahmed co-ordinated the delivery of the container to the Somali town of Balanbale.

"The work we are doing is making a difference and many of the people we are helping are refugees and children," he said.

Mr Ahmed fled Somalia as a 14-year-old when civil war broke out in 1991. He works long hours in Flemington as a community worker and has three children of his own, but he's determined to return to Somalia with more supplies.

"We went there last year and saw how people were living and when I came back I wanted to do something about it.

"Now I'm back I want to do it again and the best thing is there are plenty of people who are keen to help.

"Basically we are living in heaven here in Australia compared to them."

Mr Ahmed has been involved with a volunteer group that has built a school in Somalia and is planning his next mission to help.

COUNCIL ONTO WEST FOOTSCRAY COMPLAINTS

Maribyrnong Leader— 2nd August 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/council-onto-west-footscray-complaints-fbready/>

West Footscray's Martin Reserve will be upgraded following pressure from the community.

At last week's council meeting, residents presented a petition with 217 signatures urging the council to act on poor safety and lighting at the park.

Mayor Sarah Carter said she had spoken to residents about the municipality's only dog park, and urgent issues would be fixed in the next few weeks.

Are you happy with your local park? Tell us below

She said when officers went to inspect the reserve they found one light was on a timer that wasn't set to turn on until midnight.

Resident Paul Reeve said he was pleased with the council's response to the issue. "More and more people have been using the park in the past 12 months and there's a real sense of community thriving," Mr Reeve said.

But he said the growing foot traffic in the park had created muddy tracks and entrances that were slippery underfoot.

"We want to keep it natural but there are a number of people who struggle to access the park - the elderly and those in a wheelchair or with young families with prams."

Mr Reeve said poorly located and dim lighting was the number one complaint from users.

Cr Carter said the puddle-ridden paths would be levelled this month while plans were being drawn up for a crushed-rock path and changes to lighting.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Ward representative for the park Cr Catherine Cumming called on the council to review its open space policy to ensure the better lighting of all parks.

WARDS SWITCH ON CARDS FOR MARIBYRNONG

Maribyrnong Leader– 31st July 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/wards-switch-on-cards-for-maribyrnong-fbready/>

The boundaries of Maribyrnong Council will be reviewed - but not in the way councillors had hoped.

In January, Maribyrnong Leader revealed independent councillor Dina Lynch's (pictured) plan to put council mergers or boundary reshuffles on the agenda.

Rising rates, increasing through-traffic and relatively small population growth were among reasons cited for the municipality expanding or merging into a larger western council.

In March, the council voted to take the matter to the State Government.

A Victorian Electoral Commission spokeswoman said the current review would not look at the issues raised by the council, but instead would consider population growth across the municipality and ward boundaries.

Cr Lynch welcomed the internal review.

"By and large we do work well together ... and I don't think we're big enough for multi-member wards," she said.

Cr Lynch said the Baillieu Government had not responded to the council's request for a meeting to discuss external boundary changes.

"My people on the ground tell me there's quite a bit of work being done in Liberal quarters (about local governments) so I think it is progressing," she said.

The VEC review's final report, due in October, will be handed to the Local Government Minister to decide any changes to take affect at next year's council election.

The first public information session on the review will be at 7pm, July 27 at the council offices.

COUNCIL ONTO WEST FOOTSCRAY COMPLAINTS

Maribyrnong Leader– 30th July 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/council-onto-west-footscray-complaints-fbready/>

West Footscray's Martin Reserve will be upgraded following pressure from the community.

At last week's council meeting, residents presented a petition with 217 signatures urging the council to act on poor safety and lighting at the park.

Mayor Sarah Carter said she had spoken to residents about the municipality's only dog park, and urgent issues would be fixed in the next few weeks.

She said when officers went to inspect the reserve they found one light was on a timer that wasn't set to turn on until midnight.

Resident Paul Reeve said he was pleased with the council's response to the issue. "More and more people have been using the park in the past 12 months and there's a real sense of community thriving," Mr Reeve said.

But he said the growing foot traffic in the park had created muddy tracks and entrances that were slippery underfoot.

"We want to keep it natural but there are a number of people who struggle to access the park - the elderly and those in a wheelchair or with young families with prams."

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Mr Reeve said poorly located and dim lighting was the number one complaint from users.

Cr Carter said the puddle-ridden paths would be levelled this month while plans were being drawn up for a crushed-rock path and changes to lighting.

Ward representative for the park Cr Catherine Cumming called on the council to review its open space policy to ensure the better lighting of all parks.

FOOTSCRAY CENTRE NOT JUST ACADEMIC

Maribyrnong Leader– 29th July 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/footscray-centre-not-just-academic-fbready/>

Victoria University and the Western Bulldogs have cemented their burgeoning relationship with the creation of a community sports centre at Whitten Oval.

The \$5 million centre boasts four courts marked for basketball, netball, futsal (indoor-soccer), volleyball and badminton.

VU sports facilities manager Rohenna Young gave Leader a first-look at the new building which will be home to a host of new teams and community events.

“The building will open on August 1 and there’ll be an official opening a bit later, with a community open day and demonstrations,” Ms Young said.

Along with nightly competition games, the building will play host to local school groups.

“It’ll be an extension of what VU already offers. Demand for basketball and futsal is so high and for volleyball players the main stadium is in Dandenong.”

Ms Young said people often wrongly assumed VU facilities were only for enrolled or ex-students.

She hoped the new centre would alert people to everything the university had to offer the community.

It will also provide increased learning opportunities for VU students, more than 50 jobs with more traineeships and work experience places. “We want to know what the community wants and where the gaps are,” she said.

BUS STOP-GAP SOLUTION FOR MARIBYRNONG

Maribyrnong Leader– 29th July 2011

<http://maribyrnong-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/bus-stop-gap-solution-for-maribyrnong-fbready/>

Maribyrnong council will investigate operating a community bus to combat poor public transport and traffic congestion.

On Tuesday, Cr Sel Sanli moved that the council look into a higher frequency circuit bus route to key areas while the municipality waits for “bigger” solutions, such as the Truck Action Plan, Westlink and Regional Rail Link.

As public transport options were infrequent and “long-route”, Cr Senli said many people were choosing to drive short distances which added to congestion.

He said the 20-seater service he was proposing would bring back community spirit and encourage the elderly back to Footscray.

“I’m leaving it open. It’s a broad idea to go out to the community to see what they want,” he said.

The motion was widely supported by the chamber, despite issues about the cost.

“It’s something I’ve often thought over the years,” Cr Dina Lynch said, suggesting the bus route include Western Hospital.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Cr John Cumming suggested a bus route that was a workers' shuttle service during peak hour and a service for the elderly and families during the day.

Cr Michael Clarke said more than one bus would be needed, and a partnership with the State Government or private enterprise could help with costs.

MELTON

MELTON MEGA TOWN SET FOR 600 PER CENT POPULATION BOOM

Melton Leader— 4th August 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/melton-mega-town-set-for-600-per-cent-boom/>

Melton South, including the Toolern development, will be bigger than the Melbourne CBD in the next 20 years.

The housing boom will see Melton South overtake the state capital to become Melbourne's second-largest suburb.

Its present population of 9494 is set to surge 604 per cent to 66,931 by 2031, higher than the Melbourne CBD's projected population of 62,077.

But researchers say available land in the west could dry up just five years later.

Matthew Deacon from id consulting said population forecasting would be a "guessing game" beyond 2036, with most land expected to have been developed.

"Based on the zoned land that we know of, we should be able to cater to 2041, but post-2041 there will be no land left in Wyndham and not much left in Melton," Mr Deacon said.

"The corridor from Clarkes Rd to where Melton ends in the west will all be developed."

Tarneit, on Melton Shire's fringe, will be the city's largest suburb by 2031 with a population of 74,932. Wollert in Melbourne's north will experience the city's largest growth, up 5719 per cent from 871 people to 50,685 over the next 20 years.

Mr Deacon said "more infrastructures must go into the west to cater for the huge growth".

He said in the past 10 years there had been a "real investment push in the west" and the stigma associated with the western suburbs was beginning to diminish.

"Melbourne's growth over the past 10 years has been due to a lot of external migration from overseas and interstate and these people don't have these prejudices about Melbourne which locals have," Mr Deacon said.

"They think, why wouldn't we live in places like Melton, Caroline Springs, Taylors Hill and Point Cook when they are so geographically accessible to the city and very affordable?"

DONKEY VOTERS GALORE IN MELTON SHIRE

Melton Leader— 3rd August 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/melton-shire-named-as-capital-of-donkey-voting/>

Melton Shire has been named and shamed as the state capital for donkey voting.

Voters in Melton Shire's eastern suburbs were named as the state's biggest donkey voters at the last federal election.

Museum of Australian Democracy data shows 6.7 per cent of votes in the Gorton electorate for the 2010 federal election were informal.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



The electorate, which included Caroline Springs, Hillside, Taylors Hill and Burnside before the electoral boundaries were changed in December 2010, recorded 7048 informal votes.

The Lalor electorate, including Melton, Melton South, Rockbank and Toolern Vale, recorded the third-highest amount of informal votes in the state with 6.24 per cent.

Melton shire voters also featured highly for donkey voting in the 2010 state election, with Kororoit, including Caroline Springs, the third highest electorate for informal votes with 7.95 per cent.

Melton also made the top 10 with 7.25 per cent.

Gorton federal Labor MP Brendan O'Connor said there were many reasons that a person's vote will be registered as informal.

"For example, some voters may mark their paper with an X instead of numbering every square, or they might accidentally repeat a number, or simply have hand writing that's illegible," he said.

"Others will deliberately spoil their ballot, but for a large variety of reasons.

"Studies in the past have shown, however, that English language proficiency is a significant factor associated with the level of informal voting.

"It is therefore not surprising that given that Gorton has one of the lowest levels of English-language proficiency in the country it would also register a high informal vote.

"Gorton had the second highest informal rate in Victoria in 2007 so not much has changed."

TREE AMIGOS PLANT AT MELTON

Melton Leader— 3rd August 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/tree-amigos-plant-at-melton/>

Fresh from being named Melton Shire's favourite landmark, Melton Botanic Garden's green-thumbed friends have taken to the soil.

The group recently planted a low-rainfall species of eucalyptus arboretum at the garden after receiving a \$132,780 grant from the Department of Sustainability and Environment.

Friends of the garden president John Bentley said he hoped the eucalyptus arboretum would attract visitors from across the region.

"We want people to recognise the use of eucalypts and other indigenous plants in landscaping both for their natural beauty and for their capacity to thrive on minimal water - and, therefore, reducing dependence on drinking water for gardens and open spaces," Mr Bentley said.

He said the grant would also help construct paths and a garden development.

"Our volunteers have completed the first plantings of eucalypts, started the primary paths and marked out the secondary paths," Mr Bentley said. "Volunteers and local nurseries have been gathering seeds and growing seedlings."

MELTON SHIRE DOG PARKS ARE LET OFF THE LEASH

Melton Leader— 3rd August 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/melton-shire-dog-parks-are-let-off-the-leash/>

Melton Shire's first off-leash dog parks will be opened within a month.

Navan Park in Melton West and Boronia Reserve in Hillside are the shire's first official areas where dogs can roam free under their owner's control.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



The parks will be fenced after being approved by Melton Council at its latest meeting.

Deputy Mayor Broden Borg presented an online petition to council in February, 2010, asking it to consider off-leash dog parks after high public demand for them. A community consultation period followed, including a community survey, which fetched 257 responses.

Mayor Justin Mammarella said it was the council's priority to ensure all residents had a variety of recreational options.

"Melton Shire Council is committed to promoting a healthy and active lifestyle for our residents," Cr Mammarella said.

"The results of the community survey show there is significant support for council to establish fenced dog off-lead areas within the municipality.

"The fenced dog off-lead areas will help encourage responsible pet ownership and ensure all park users can enjoy our facilities together."

In March, 2010, the council introduced a law to have all dogs on leads when in public places, including parks and reserves.

But the new fenced dog parks, and approved dog clubs, are exempt from the dog on-leash law.

The off-leash parks will be fenced in August and evaluated by the council after 12 months.

NEW FACILITIES KICK OFF AT COIMADAI

Melton Leader— 2nd August 2011

<http://melton-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/new-facilities-kick-off-at-coimadai/>

Improvements to Coimadai Primary School worth \$287,500 have been officially opened by Ballarat federal Labor MP Catherine King.

Ms King said the improvements included the modernisation of the original school house, built in the 1870s, that was used as a library and resource area.

"There has also been the provision of new play equipment and shade over the play areas for the students, and the administration area has been relocated to a more central location," she said.

Funded as part of the Federal Government's \$16.2 billion Building the Education Revolution program, Ms King said the new facilities were not only a benefit to the school, but supported stronger social networks and community cohesion.

"It is great to see how delighted the students, teachers and school community are about these important improvements at Coimadai Primary," she said.

"I am also delighted this particular project has supported the employment of a number of workers. This was one of the vital objectives of the economic stimulus plan."

YOUTH HOUSING: A SPOKE IN RESIDENTS' WHEEL

Melton Weekly— 2nd August 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/youth-housing-a-spoke-in-residents-wheel/2245608.aspx>

Residents who fought against a proposal for youth housing in Coburns Road fear a new application will undo their hard work.

Melton Council has received an application to subdivide the land into three lots.

Lauren Talbot was among about 600 objectors to a plan for 10 units for young people at risk of homelessness.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



The proposal was approved by Melton Council, but Ms Talbot and others launched an appeal with the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal after heading a campaign collecting signatures and objections.

Ms Talbot is angry that conditions handed down by VCAT in February, meaning proper supervision and fencing would be mandatory, could potentially be ignored if the new permit application was successful.

She said she was frustrated that council had refused to inform her of the proposed use of the land should the new permit be successful.

"I'm not against it [the original project for residential units for homeless youths], but I believe it should be done with supervision and the care and love these kids need; they are very young.

"I believe council is acting irresponsibly and unfairly. I've had legal advice that once the permit is approved, the existing permit with the orders I worked to achieve will be useless."

Melton chief executive Kel Tori said the council would not decide on the new application until it had gone through the due planning process, including public notice and referral to relevant authorities including Melbourne Water, Western Water and Powercor.

He said that given the land was in the residential 1 zone, it was likely its future use would be for residential purposes.

Mr Tori said that although a new application had been made for the land, the existing permit for community-care units would not be superseded.

COIMADAI PUPILS FAST-TRACKED AS PLANNERS

Melton Weekly– 2nd August 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/coimadai-pupils-fasttracked-as-planners/2245606.aspx>

Coimadai Primary School pupils have moved into a rebuffed, refurbished and renovated building.

The school, established in 1863, was granted \$300,000 towards the project as part of the federal government's Building the Education Revolution (BER) initiative.

While \$250,000 was spent on the renovations - which included refurbishment of the original school house, offices, and a library and resource centre - \$50,000 was allocated for the school to use as it saw fit.

Principal Vanessa Harrison said pupils took part in the decision-making process and chose to have a new playground built.

Bacchus Marsh Lions Club helped by building a wooden fort and a cover for the amphitheatre.

"The kids chose the slides and all of the colours; they really feel like they've had a say and an impact," Ms Harrison said.

"The amount of funds and resources the BER has put into schools is fantastic. We would have waited a long time if it weren't for this."

TAKING TO LESSONS LIKE DUCK TO WATER

Melton Weekly– 2nd August 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/taking-to-lessons-like-duck-to-water/2245611.aspx>

Children with special needs like Lachlan (pictured) are making a splash thanks to the launch of a new program at Melton Waves.

The KickStart swimming class is designed for children aged three and over with autism or sensory processing difficulties and those with specific learning needs.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



The project began in May and there are now 11 lessons available each week. Nineteen children are enrolled in the program.

Mayor Justin Mammarella said KickStart was a great addition to the list of classes available at the swim centre.

"By providing a tailored program to meet the learning and communication needs of these children, more children with a disability, and their siblings, are now able to learn to swim.

"Swim instructors also receive training, support and resources to provide a more welcoming and inclusive learning environment for children with specific learning needs."

The project is a partnership between the council's Access for All Abilities program and Sunbury Community Health Centre.

CARBON TAX AN ONEROUS LOAD, TRUCKIES SAY

Melton Weekly– 2nd August 2011

<http://www.meltonweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/carbon-tax-an-onerous-load-truckies-say/2245605.aspx>

Transport businesses in Moorabool say they will face soaring costs under the federal government's carbon tax once an exemption is lifted.

Under the terms of the new tax, the trucking industry, a major employer in Moorabool, will face an effective hike in fuel of almost 7 cents a litre when the changes come into effect from July 1, 2014.

Federal Ballarat MP Catherine King said the scheme would not be a tax on the transport industry, simply a reduction in fuel credits, and the government was giving trucking businesses a two-year grace period to adjust.

Bacchus Marsh-based transport company Don Watson says that, according to its calculations, its fuel consumption will cost it more than \$47,000 extra a month.

Managing director Noelene Watson said the company, which operates more than 185 trucks freighting meat and refrigerated products on the east coast, would be forced to pass on nearly all costs.

"A lot of companies haven't worked out what they're paying yet, not to mention the extra costs suppliers are going to pass onto us. And tyre manufacturers will have their own increases, too," Ms Watson said.

"Everything that goes into a person's home is transported by truck so it's going to affect every household."

She said the trucking industry had already taken steps to reduce its emissions over the past 20 years by introducing engines using new technology, which had cut carbon pollution by 37 per cent since 1990.

"We've invested in lowering emissions ourselves without having a carbon tax, but now the government is going to make us save even more. We're being hit with a double-whammy.

"Our industry has a reputation as being dirty, yet it's not; there are very few emissions from these engines."

Ms King said heavy on-road vehicles would be exempt for the first two years of the carbon tax because of the importance of the transport industry.

"The carbon price won't be imposing a new tax on this industry, which will continue to receive fuel tax credits from the government. It's just that they will be reduced by around 6.9 cents a litre when compared to the current rate."

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Ms King said the carbon tax would help to secure a clean-energy future, cutting 160 million tonnes of pollution by 2020 while increasing the cost of living by less than a cent for every dollar.

WE JUST WON'T COP IT, SAY MELTON POLICE

Melton Leader— 2nd August 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/we-just-wont-cop-it-say-melton-police/>

An African-Australian refugee advocacy group says Victoria Police's response to reports of racist gangs operating in Melton is "completely unacceptable".

Dr Berhan Ahmed from Footscray-based group African Think Tank said it was "completely wrong to say that there is not a particular issue".

Police have again played down fears, saying there is no evidence or reports made to suggest racist gangs are attacking the town's African population.

The concerns were raised after a report, Bridging the Gap, was commissioned by Melton state Labor MP Don Nardella.

The report claimed that two anti-black youth gangs were operating in Melton.

Police say one of the groups mentioned has been shut down and believe the other is not operating.

They also say online pictures and videos of the gangs are quite old, and some of the people pictured have already been dealt with by police.

Superintendent Graham Kent told Melbourne radio last week gangs were not operating in Melton.

"There are not gangs, let alone heavily armed gangs, roaming the streets of the north-western suburbs terrorising people," Supt Kent said.

"It is not happening in Melton."

Dr Ahmed said Australian-African community leaders have tried to get the police to take action regularly and frequently.

"There is a particular issue and it is growing," Dr Ahmed said.

"Just by posting their hate-filled videos and photos online, these gangs have committed a crime.

"Preaching hatred and racism must never be acceptable by anyone in Australian society."

Acting Chief Commissioner Ken Lay has reportedly held a meeting with Dr Ahmed to discuss his concerns.

Melton state Labor MP Don Nardella said he fully supported Melton police in assisting African residents in Melton.

"Their recent African Forum in Werribee, and the recent Melton Police African Community Forum in June 2011, was both resounding successes in understanding cross cultural issues and in community fabric building," he said.

TRAINS BACK WHILE DIGGERS REST STATION CLOSED

Melton Leader— 1st August 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/trains-back-while-diggers-rest-station-closed/>

Diggers Rest's train station is undergoing a makeover.

The temporary closure of the station and railway line for two weeks during the school holidays was part of preparatory works for the Regional Rail Link Project.

The closure allowed the Sunbury Electrification Project to make substantial progress on improvements to the station.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Works included levelling and asphaltting the station platforms to improve safety and installing steel frames for new platform shelters.

Public Transport Minister Terry Mulder said significant stabling track work, which would allow more trains to start their journey there, was also completed at Sunbury.

He said work by V/Line on the Ballarat and Bendigo lines included track resurfacing, drainage upgrades and the removal of mudholes that had appeared because of heavy rain.

While train services at Diggers Rest have now resumed, the station building will remain closed until late August.

Mr Mulder said that within the next few weeks V/Line passengers should notice slightly faster travel times and a more reliable service.

He said once the Sunbury Electrification Project was complete next year, Diggers Rest residents would enjoy double the number of train services and have improved safety and accessible station facilities.

SUDANESE DROP-IN CENTRE BID FOR MELTON

Melton Leader– 29th July 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/sudanese-drop-in-centre-bid-for-melton/>

A drop-in centre in Melton for the town's Sudanese residents remains a top priority for the Friends of Melton's African Communities Coalition.

FMAAC secretary Nib De Santis said the need for a centre was identified almost 18 months ago when a "quasi" drop-in centre at an African-owned grocery store went defunct. Mr De Santis said when the store ran into financial trouble; committee members met Melton police and council.

"We talked about two things - a new drop-in centre and funding for an African specific community worker within the council," he said. "What we got was an inter-cultural officer, but without financial assistance the store closed."

The push for a new centre was highlighted in the Bridging the Gap report, commissioned by Melton state Labor MP Don Nardella.

Mr De Santis said the African community needed a place where it felt comfortable to gather for meetings and cultural activities.

"The council has several neighbourhood centres and it's not uncommon for these centres to be financially supported by the council," he said.

Mr De Santis said one option could be space at the new Melton library.

Melton Mayor Justin Mammarella said: "I'm more than happy to hear about the idea."

MOBILE MENACE IN MELTON SHIRE

Melton Leader– 29th July 2011

<http://melton-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/mobile-menace-in-melton-shire/>

Melton Shire motorists are brazenly flouting the law by continuing to talk on mobile phones while driving.

Parked at the Lake St intersection in Caroline Springs just metres from the police station, Leader photographer Kris Reichl spotted 20 motorists driving and talking on mobile phones in just 20 minutes.

Among those snapped was a mother with her young daughter in the back seat (pictured). The penalty for driving while using a handheld mobile phone is a \$234 on-the-spot fine and the loss of three demerit points.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Leading Sen-Constable Allan Edwards from the Melton Highway Patrol slammed the reckless behaviour of motorists when shown the damning pictures.

He said studies showed the risk of having a collision while talking on a mobile phone was the same as driving with a blood alcohol level of .05.

"Most of the time people see you before you see them, especially when you're in a marked car, so it makes it difficult to target," he said.

"But if we see them, we certainly book them."

Better driver education and an anti-social stigma of the type associated with drink driving were highlighted by police as the key to changing driver behaviour.

"I think most people recognise it's not acceptable, it's dangerous - but they don't see how it's dangerous to them, similar to how people viewed drink driving and speeding 20 years ago," Leading Sen-Constable Edwards said.

"There needs to be more education, more publication of the dangers and increased TAC advertising."

Melton Police Inspector Mario Fiorentino said he did not believe that a higher monetary penalty for this offence would curb driver behaviour.

"We've had many instances in the past where fines are increased considerably but that does not always equate to a reduction in offending," Inspector Fiorentino said.

"Instead, motorists need to stop being selfish on our roads, start taking their driving responsibilities seriously, take heed of the road rules, and stop flouting the laws that are there to protect all road users."

MOONEE VALLEY

INSPIRING ARTISTS FLOCK TO MOONEE PONDS EXHIBITION

Moonee Valley Weekly— 4th August 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/lifestyle/story/inspiring-artists/>

Young artists inspired by indigenous art and culture will share their works at a coming exhibition.

The Youth Indigenous Art Exhibition features the work of young Moonee Valley artists who participated in workshops last month to experience aboriginal culture and art.

The workshops were led by Moonee Ponds contemporary artist Ben McKeown, traditional weaver and painter Veronica Barnett and contemporary artist Kamahi-DJordan King.

Mr McKeown, who won the 2011 Deadly Art Award, said the workshops engaged children and their parents with art and had produced some great paintings.

"They're amazing, very colourful and they have a great eye for detail," he said.

"Incinerator is a great space and the kids will really appreciate having people there to see their work."

Mr McKeown's urban landscape paintings and work from the artists who held the workshops will also be exhibited alongside the young artists' work.

Moonee Valley Mayor John Sipek said the exhibition included contemporary and traditional indigenous art, created under the guidance of well-respected artists.

"This is great opportunity to experience indigenous culture through the eyes of young people," Cr Sipek said.

The exhibition has been planned to coincide with National Aboriginal and Islander Children's Day on August 4, United Nations' International Day of the World's

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Indigenous People on August 9 and United Nations' International Youth Day on August 12.

The Youth Indigenous Art Exhibition will be at the Incinerator Gallery, 180 Holmes Rd, Moonee Ponds from August 4-14.

The official opening will be on Sunday, August 7 from 2-4pm. Entry is free.

WESTERN SUBURBS HAVE HIGHEST HOMELESS RATE

Moonee Valley Weekly— 2nd August 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/western-suburbs-have-highest-homeless-rate/2244249.aspx>

The 2009 Counting the Homeless report by the Council to Homeless Persons revealed more than 23,000 people living in Victoria are homeless.

Western Melbourne (Moonee Valley, Maribyrnong, Brimbank and Hobsons Bay) had the highest number of homeless people in any area outside the inner city (1843) and the state's highest number of people in homelessness assistance accommodation (837).

Almost one in three was living temporarily with relatives or friends and 16 per cent (288) living in boarding houses.

MILLEARA CENTRE THRIVES ONE YEAR ON

Moonee Valley Weekly— 2nd August 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/milleara-centre-thrives-one-year-on/2244246.aspx>

Milleara Children's Centre quietly celebrated its first birthday on Saturday after opening to much fanfare last year.

The centre was part of the former Rudd government's \$1 billion regional and local community infrastructure program to expand much-needed family and children's services in Moonee Valley's north.

Moonee Valley Council received \$2.8 million in federal funding to build the centre, which was one of the first of 5000 similar projects completed.

Mayor John Sipek said the Milleara centre was a model for other councils involved in the program.

East Keilor residents Kim and Troy Nguyen and their baby daughter Bexley were the centre's first clients.

Bexley has had all her medical check-ups at the centre since she was six months old, and she attends childcare at the site.

Mrs Nguyen said the timing of the centre's opening was near perfect.

"If it hadn't opened I would probably have had to travel to Maribyrnong for a childcare facility.

"This place, to me, has been fantastic. It gives you peace of mind."

While Bexley was the first child on the books at the centre, there are now 256 children enrolled in long day care and kindergarten groups.

Cr Sipek said the centre's maternal and child health nurses had provided services to 2479 children.

"It's wonderful to see that the community has embraced this facility and that it is still buzzing with energy and life 12 months on."

Cr Miriam Gillis, the council's community services portfolio holder, said the vision for the centre was to integrate all children's services.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



"With over 100 families walking through the front door every day, we have definitely achieved this."

MOONEE VALLEY WORKSHOP GOES ON SHOW

Moonee Valley Weekly— 2nd August 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/moonee-valley-workshop-goes-on-show/2244247.aspx>

The Incinerator Gallery is hosting a free exhibition this month to celebrate indigenous art and culture.

The Youth Indigenous Art Exhibition will be opened at 2pm on Sunday. Artwork will be on display until August 14.

Moonee Valley Council arts and culture spokeswoman Cr Jan Chantry said the exhibition was the result of recently held youth indigenous art workshops.

Artwork on show was created under the direction of Ben McKeown, a local resident and contemporary visual artist, Kamahi-Djordan King, a contemporary artist and cabaret performer, and Veronica Barnett, a traditional weaver, painter and widely exhibited artist.

FIRE UP BESIDE THE KOROROIT CREEK

Moonee Valley Weekly— 2nd August 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/fired-up-beside-the-kororoit-creek/2244253.aspx>

A \$105,000 artwork titled Fire Within Two has been installed on the Princes Freeway.

Fire Within Two by Adrian Mauriks (pictured) has gone up beside the freeway at the Kororoit Creek Road off-ramp.

Made from painted epoxy resin and steel, the organic forms are arranged in a 12-sided polygon or dodecagon. It will be illuminated at night.

Gippsland-based Mauriks said Fire Within Two was his "signature" piece and it expressed hope for Melbourne's western suburbs.

Moonee Valley, Maribyrnong, Brimbank, Hobsons Bay, Melton and Wyndham councils commissioned his latest installation as part of the Images of the West art project.

EXCELLENCE IS CHILD'S PLAY AT KEILOR EAST CENTRE

Moonee Valley Leader— 2nd August 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.wherelive.com.au/lifestyle/story/excellence-is-childs-play/>

Anh Phuong Tran's daily routine is like any other busy parent's where time is a rare commodity.

So it is no surprise the Avondale Heights mother is full of praise for the Milleara community centre, a one-stop shop for families with young children, which has a kindergarten, long-day care, play groups, maternal and child health services under one roof.

Anh has been taking her children Isabella and William to the centre since it opened 12 months ago.

"Then I was waiting for so long and had been calling and enquiring about when they would open," she said.

"As soon as they opened, I saw it was a great environment, with all the toys and equipment."

Having all the services in one place meant making her routine easier to follow, Anh said.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



“Before I felt really not very confident when I gave my child up for a day,” she said.

“Now I feel a lot more confident that I can plan my day properly, or when I am sick or anything I am sure I have someone taking care of my kids.”

And even Anh’s children seem just as enthusiastic.

“Every Monday they look forward to going there,” she said.

“Before they could not wait for mum to pick them up at the end of the day, but now they don’t want to go home.”

The centre officially opened in June 2010 and marked its first birthday on Saturday.

Moonee Valley Mayor John Sipek said the number of people who walked through Milleara’s doors showed a positive 12 months.

“The centre successfully delivered a range of family and children’s services to many families in the north-west region of Melbourne,” Cr Sipek said.

“In just 12 months the centre’s maternal and child health nurses provided services to 2479 children.

“We also now have 256 children enrolled at the centre accessing services and programs such as long day care and kindergarten. It is wonderful to see that the community has embraced this facility and that it is still buzzing with energy and life 12 months on.”

The council’s community services portfolio spokeswoman Cr Miriam Gillis said the vision for the centre was to create a vibrant and integrated family and children’s service.

“With over 100 families walking through the front door every day, we have definitely achieved this,” she said.

“At Milleara we embarked on a leading edge service model and as a result have become one of only two sites in the western region to participate in a research project with the Centre for Community Child Health.”

The project will focus on achieving best practice in children’s services.

MOONEE PONDS CAFE'S OUT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE

Moonee Valley Weekly– 2nd August 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/moonee-ponds-cafes-out-to-make-a-difference/2244248.aspx>

Charity group StreetSmart is encouraging cafes across Moonee Valley to join the CafeSmart campaign and raise money for homeless projects in the region.

To coincide with National Homeless Persons week, cafes taking part in the CafeSmart campaign will donate \$1 from every coffee sold on Friday.

The money will be distributed to relevant charities.

StreetSmart supports services and emergency aid programs for the homeless in Melbourne, as well as projects that promote social inclusion.

The family team at Garden of Tuscany Cafe will be counting its beans on Friday to help the charity.

Cafe owner Stella Maurici said her son Ricki told her about the CafeSmart program.

“We as a family are often making donations to different charities. If we all gave a little bit... it would really make a difference.

“If more cafes joined up, imagine the money that could be raised.”

Garden of Tuscany Cafe is at 32 Young Street, Moonee Ponds.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



CARELESS MOONEE VALLEY ROAD USERS TARGETED

Moonee Valley Weekly– 2nd August 2011

<http://www.mooneevalleyweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/careless-moonee-valley-road-users-targeted/2244251.aspx>

Moonee Valley police are cracking down on careless drivers and pedestrians who are putting their own lives and the lives of others at risk.

Police are alarmed at a spike in incidents involving pedestrians. So far this year, two people have been killed and several others injured.

A 92-year-old man died in hospital after he was hit by a car on Hall Street, Moonee Ponds, on July 4.

Earlier this year, a four-year-old boy died after being hit by a car on Epsom Road, Kensington.

On July 12, an elderly woman was hit by a tram on the corner of Maribyrnong Road and Holdsworth Street. She was taken to the Royal Melbourne Hospital in a stable condition.

On July 18, an 81-year-old man was treated by paramedics after he was hit by a 'runaway' car and pinned against another vehicle.

Moonee Ponds' Acting Sergeant Lisa Prentice-Evans said the incidents were a combination of people taking risks and drivers not adhering to road rules.

"Unfortunately there has been a spike in deaths in the area and surrounds.

"We are seeing an increase in risk-taking when people are crossing the road and pedestrians not utilising crossings, no doubt there are also drivers disobeying road rules.

"We are getting quite a few complaints from pedestrians about drivers going through pedestrian crossings."

Acting Sergeant Prentice-Evans said police would increase patrols in Moonee Ponds to stamp out the problem.

The operation will be extended to Flemington and Avondale Heights.

"It's going to be an ongoing thing every week targeting particular areas until people get the message."

GROG VIOLENCE PLAN

Moonee Valley Leader– 1st August 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/have-your-say-grog-violence-plan-fbready/>

Pubs and clubs have backed a new plan to stamp out drunken violence and crime in Moonee Valley.

Moonee Valley Council has called for feedback on its draft Liquor Licensing Accord 2011, an agreement between venues, council and police that aims to prevent drunken behaviour.

The accord is only voluntary but opens to all businesses selling alcohol in Moonee Valley.

Its members will include pubs, bars, nightclubs restaurants, police, council and Responsible Alcohol Victoria.

The accord proposes several measures, including:

- Venues to enforce a "time out" from drink service for intoxicated patrons
- Banning two-for-one and free drink promotions, drink cards, advertising of drink prices and advertising promoting heavy drinking

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



- No alcohol shots in the last hour of trading
- More plastic cups
- A door charge to reduce bar hopping.

The draft accord also includes a commitment from police to be on the streets at the weekend and for key events. The council is asked to investigate establishing safe taxi ranks near licensed venues.

“Council understands the community’s concerns around public safety and issues including noise, litter and anti-social behaviour associated with late-night drinking and is working hard with the police and venues to address this,” Mayor John Sipek said.

Newmarket Tavern manager Mark Chapple said he believed the accord would help reduce bad behaviour from drinking and the tavern would be joining up as it reflected its policies.

“We’re very much in sync with the recommendations in the accord,” Mr Chapple said.

“We’d be very keen to put our signature on that.”

Ascot Vale Hotel manager Jim Parthimos also supported the accord and said the hotel was willing to sign up, as venues sharing ideas and having the same direction would help.

Empire Club manager Tracie Borg said the accord was a great idea the club would be interested in supporting, and was similar to a successful accord introduced in Geelong.

MOONEE VALLEY MODE

Moonee Valley Leader— 31st July 2011

<http://moonee-valley-leader.whereilive.com.au/lifestyle/story/moonee-valley-mode/>

A fashion show will help local retailers show off their finest wares in an attempt to draw the attention of shoppers.

Traders have got together to organise a fashion event that will feature clothes only from Moonee Valley outlets, in a combined effort to promote shopping locally and boost the city’s events status.

Organiser and Moonee Ponds fashion designer, Zsaneta Filipovski, said the August 25 show would help local shops get maximum exposure.

“I look forward to having more of these events in Moonee Valley,” Filipovski said.

“It will help the businesses and we want people to invest in the Moonee Valley district.”

The idea came about after a Moonee Valley Council Events Network luncheon.

“We all met on the night of the event and I’m very persuasive, so they told me, ‘If you organise it for us, we’re in it’,” she said.

The end result has been a small army of traders getting on board.

These include: Chelsea, Mara Cino, Shuba, Paddington Coats Factory (Moonee Ponds), C.U.S Hairdressing (Ascot Vale), Sarah-Jane Events, IMS Conference and Event Management, Fine Finish Invitations, Viva Life Photography and Wings and Wizards (East Keilor).

Filipovski has experience in major fashion shows, running her own quarterly events in Docklands.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



But the council has made a concerted effort to get more events like these in Moonee Valley, and has offered to cover the costs of the Clocktower Centre venue higher for the fashion show.

Mayor John Sipek said it was heartening to see all businesses pulling in the same direction.

“Council is proud to be sponsoring this event and it’s great to see our local businesses working together to promote the events industry in Moonee Valley,” Cr Sipek said.

“They have really taken the lead following council’s formation of the City of Moonee Valley Events Network earlier this year.

“The network was formed to promote events-related businesses in Moonee Valley and encourage residents to buy locally when planning a function.”

The fashion show will be on Thursday August 25 in the Pascoe Room, Clocktower Centre Moonee Ponds, 6.30pm-9.30pm.

WYNDHAM

TARNEIT IN THE SWIM?

Wyndham Leader– 4th August 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/tarneit-in-the-swim/>

Tarneit could be home to Wyndham’s second major indoor sports complex.

A Wyndham Council review of indoor sports courts has found that the centre at Werribee needs to be expanded and that when it reaches capacity, a second complex be built.

It recommends this go up in the city’s growing northwest, possibly linked to a new public pool.

A separate council draft strategy on the development of public pools over the next 20 years recommends the city’s next public pool be built on Sayers Rd, Tarneit, by 2021 to cater for rapid population growth.

The indoor sports courts assessment says Werribee Sports and Fitness Centre on Ballan Rd is at capacity and recommends it get up to 12 indoor courts, including a show court surrounded by up to 1500 seats, as part of its planned expansion and renovation.

The council said the centre now had six courts.

The assessment says that when this centre nears capacity, the council can start planning for a second indoor court complex with four courts but with capacity for up to 10, with the northwest of the municipality the recommended location.

Anecdotal evidence suggests many Point Cook netball and basketball clubs are using local schools as training venues and playing out of the Werribee centre or at Altona Meadows but that demand for a centre in Point Cook be reviewed.

The council has set aside more than \$2 million in its 2011-12 budget for concept and detailed design work for the bigger Werribee centre.

HOUSING DESIGN 'A HEALTH COST'

Wyndham Weekly– 3rd August 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/housing-design-a-health-cost/2247175.aspx>

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Broadening the definition of housing affordability to include the direct transport and social costs of time spent travelling to work and school, rather than just the cost of a mortgage, is among Wyndham Council's recommendations to an inquiry into environmental design and public health.

As part of a report presented to a meeting on July 25, the council has urged the state government to work with its federal counterpart to negotiate minimum standards for liveable cities and develop funding for infrastructure and services which is conditional on meeting sustainability targets.

The council is also advocating the state list priorities in providing public transport and increase incentives for developers and councils to improve urban design from a public health perspective.

Truganina ward's Cr Glenn Goodfellow said the issue of environmental design and public health was especially important to growth municipalities such as Wyndham.

"Considering public health when undertaking environmental planning and design helps to shape healthy and resilient communities," he said.

"As a high growth area, Wyndham is particularly vulnerable to policy decisions regarding environmental design and its impact on community health.

"Poor environmental design is also a factor in our obesity and diabetes epidemic and makes planning for public transport, walking tracks, accessible parks and high-quality recreational facilities all the more important."

Cr Goodfellow said to achieve this, the city required state and federal commitments to fund high-quality infrastructure and to strengthen and enforce legislation around environmental design.

The urgent need to improve Wyndham's public transport and improve its residents' well-being was a key part of the council's advocacy strategy.

WILLIAMS LANDING: GROUNDWORK LAID FOR NEW RETAIL HUB

Wyndham Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/williams-landing-groundwork-laid-for-new-retail-hub/2247165.aspx>

A proposed retail and community hub at Williams Landing has been given the go-ahead by Wyndham Council.

The council last week granted a permit for the town centre project, which will include a shopping centre.

The application sets out how the town centre, to be built north of the intersection of Palmers Road and the Princes Freeway and to the west of the Laverton RAAF base, will be developed.

Developer Cedar Woods said the town centre would have a sub-regional shopping centre, office space and high-density real estate, turning it into an area to rival the central business districts of Box Hill, Frankston and Dandenong.

The company's Victorian developments manager, Patrick Archer, said the 50-hectare site would be built over several decades with work on stage one expected to start next year.

"Williams Landing Town Centre will grow and evolve over several decades with development densities increasing over time."

The approval has paved the way for upgrade of key roads, such as Palmers and Old Geelong roads and Main Street.

Mr Archer expects road works to start later this year.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Cedar Woods has submitted a development application to the council for stage one of the town centre.

"We have lodged a planning permit for stage one with council and we are expecting approval soon," Mr Archer said. It's believed the first stage of the development will have a shopping centre, featuring a Woolworth's supermarket and Big W store, as well as one of Melbourne's first Masters home improvement stores.

TRAFFIC 'WILL WORSEN' NEAR MEDICAL CLINIC

Wyndham Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/traffic-will-worsen-near-medical-clinic/2247162.aspx>

Residents fear a new medical centre planned for the corner of one of Werribee's busiest intersections will create a traffic "nightmare".

As reported last week, Wyndham Council has approved a seven-day medical clinic opposite the civic centre, despite many objections from residents.

It was initially proposed to be open 24 hours, however, it was supported by councillors under the condition of reduced operating hours from 7am-10pm.

Eighty residents objected to original plans for the development on the corner of Princes Highway and Wattle Avenue, including 12 medical and four dental consulting rooms and a pharmacy.

After consultation with residents, the developer revised plans to five medical and two dental consulting rooms and the pharmacy.

Despite this, 17 more residents lodged objections with the council.

A report stated about 40 traffic movements would be generated for every hour it was open.

But Wattle Avenue resident Bill Strong said he doubted the validity of these figures.

"You don't need a traffic study to know it's a dangerous intersection," he said.

"It [the clinic] will only make the traffic worse than it already is.

"We bought into this area on the expectation it would be a quiet residential community. I would hate to be living next door or across the road from this clinic - it would be a nightmare."

Iramoo ward's Cr Heather Marcus said the council had met with residents about their concerns and believed the amended plans were "a fair compromise".

The council has also imposed a condition on the developer to contribute \$150,000 to any future traffic improvements to alleviate congestion and safety concerns at the intersection.

VICROADS' CASH CUT LABELLED A 'DISGRACE'

Wyndham Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/vicroads-cash-cut-labelled-a-disgrace/2247159.aspx>

Vicroads has been accused of jeopardising road safety by failing to properly fund RoadSafe programs across the state.

Hobsons Bay councillor Bill Tehan, who is on the RoadSafe Westgate Community Road Safety Council, labelled the latest funding allocation an "absolute disgrace".

He said RoadSafe Westgate, which covers Hobsons Bay, Maribyrnong and Wyndham, had a \$73,000 funding shortfall for programs dealing with hoon behaviour, speeding and other dangers on our roads.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



RoadSafe WestGate had requested \$27,833 for its anti-hoon program but received only \$8000. Its older drivers' program costs \$36,823 to run but was allocated just \$10,000. Its program to cut speeding needs \$27,833 but received \$18,000, while workshops for young and novice drivers cost \$48,708 but were allocated \$32,000.

"It's an absolute disgrace that the government has allowed VicRoads to do this to councils that have been going for 20 years," Cr Tehan said. "The results will be a lack of safety on our roads, undoing the great work that's been done on this council board for 20 years."

But VicRoads safer roads director Julian Lyngcoln said funding to RoadSafe WestGate had actually increased.

"VicRoads will provide RoadSafe Westgate \$68,000 in 2011-12 for the implementation of community road safety programs compared to \$38,000 the previous year," Mr Lyngcoln said.

However, RoadSafe WestGate chairman Jim Giddings said VicRoads had also withdrawn funding for the position of a road safety officer.

"From the 1st of July that position was obsolete."

The Weekly has learned that the \$68,000 provided by VicRoads was whittled down to \$61,819 after GST was deducted.

POSITION, PRICE: POINT COOK SELLS ITSELF

Wyndham Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/position-price-point-cook-sells-itself/2247156.aspx>

House prices in Point Cook remain strong as buyers continue to flock to the suburb in search of affordable properties close to the city.

Real Estate Institute of Victoria figures for the June quarter place the median house price in Point Cook at \$515,000.

The latest figures are an increase of about \$95,000 from September 2009, when the median house price was \$420,000.

The REIV's report also found Point Cook was Wyndham's most expensive suburb, with the median house price in Werribee and Wyndham Vale at \$315,000.

For Point Cook Real Estate sales manager Peter Gaidzkar, the REIV's figures for the suburb were higher than expected.

He estimated the median house price at somewhere between \$480,000 and \$490,000.

However, Mr Gaidzkar felt the REIV's assessment of the suburb's market in recent years to be spot on.

"Point Cook remains popular because it is affordable and it is close to Melbourne," he said.

Similarly, Benlor Real Estate director Robert Fabretto felt that Point Cook had experienced unprecedented growth over the past five years. He expected the suburb to continue to prosper as young couples and families searched for affordable housing.

Mr Fabretto said a significant portion of the market in Point Cook was made up of young people who had grown up in the eastern suburbs but could not afford to buy a house there.

"There will still be more growth in the area. It will get better because unemployment is low and [Point Cook] is cheaper than the eastern suburbs," he said.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



"There is good infrastructure, good access to freeways, access to universities and schools and a major hospital."

Mr Gaidzkar also expected more people to move to Point Cook.

"There is planned infrastructure growth in the area, including roads, public transport and schools. All these things will add value to the area and will help Point Cook going forward."

ERIC SEEGERS: CHEAPER ON WESTERN FRONT

Wyndham Weekly– 3rd August 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/eric-seegers-cheaper-on-western-front/2247157.aspx>

Eric Seegers hasn't looked back since trading in his rental property in the leafy eastern suburb of Templestowe for his own house in the west.

Mr Seegers moved to Point Cook late last year after spending several months searching for the perfect first home with his fiancée, Natalie.

The couple wanted a house which was affordable but close to the city and began their search in the eastern suburbs.

They soon found they could not afford any of the houses in the eastern suburbs which were close to the city.

Then someone suggested they turn their attention to the west.

Mr Seegers said the western suburbs were not initially on the couple's radar because they did not know much about the area.

But after talking to a few people including a financial adviser, they realised the Point Cook area was a good place to buy a home.

"Price was a large factor because we were looking at it from an investment perspective," Mr Seegers said.

"We wanted a good loan-to-rent ratio and it was just a more viable option."

Another selling point was the area's proximity to Melbourne, with Mr Seegers mapping out the distance from Werribee and Point Cook and his chosen suburbs in the east to the city.

Werribee and Point Cook came out on top.

While Mr Seegers said he would definitely recommend the western suburbs to anyone looking to get a foot on the real estate ladder, he felt there were some infrastructure issues which needed to be addressed before the area got any bigger.

"Public transport needs to be looked at.

"Getting in and out of the city is a problem with the number of people moving into the west, so [better] public transport would be beneficial."

ROAD CARNAGE MUST END, SAYS INSPECTOR

Wyndham Weekly– 3rd August 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/road-carnage-must-end-says-inspector/2247161.aspx>

Wyndham's young people are being urged to get involved in a campaign to end the carnage on the city's roads.

At a forum in Werribee last week, representatives from police, emergency services, council, VicRoads, RoadSafe Westgate and Road Trauma Support Services Victoria debated strategies to tackle hoon and dangerous driving.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



They agreed the views of young people - who were not in attendance at the event, but who are over-represented in road collisions - were required to address the problems.

The summit was organised in the wake of the death of 19-year-old Laura Hallinan from Hoppers Crossing who was killed when the car in which she was a passenger slammed into a tree at the corner of Diggers and Whites roads in Werribee South on July 14. She was one of seven people in the hatchback. On March 26, a 16-year-old girl and a 17-year-old boy died when a Holden Commodore station wagon hit a power pole at the corner of Bulban Road and Thoroughbred Avenue in Werribee. The 22-year-old driver later died in hospital.

Wyndham's Inspector Bill Weatherly, who organised the forum, told the gathering of his frustration over having to send extra police to the Bulban Road site - just a day after the triple-fatality - to deal with reports of more hoon activity.

"I actually kicked the ground and said, 'What can we do? The message is not getting through'."

Magistrate Noreen Toohey said many young drivers who appeared in court were more concerned about how the prospect of losing their licence would affect their job or mortgage, rather than the potential consequences of their dangerous behaviour.

She said the trial of a court-ordered program in which young traffic offenders visited hospital to meet with victims of road trauma and their families had already proven a strong deterrent.

The forum heard the council funded a year 11 road safety program, but more had to be done.

There was a heated debate over whether Wyndham's congested roads contributed to the road toll, however, one police officer said this actually slowed down traffic and argued many crashes were actually caused by human error.

Other ideas put forward included broadening road education programs to include early school leavers, increasing the probationary period for young offenders, and using firefighters and paramedics to push the road safety message.

WYNDHAM EN ROUTE TO FILL BIKE PATH GAP

Wyndham Weekly— 3rd August 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/wyndham-en-route-to-fill-bike-path-gap/2247168.aspx>

Cyclists are being encouraged to share their thoughts on the city's new bicycle network strategy.

The draft document, which provides a vision for the development of paths and trails over the next five years and beyond, was adopted by Wyndham Council last week.

It highlights the need to deliver bicycle facilities when planning road projects and provides direction for investment as part of the city's annual capital works program. Among its recommendations is the development of the Bay Trail from Hobsons Bay to Werribee South.

It includes plans to identify new alignments for the Werribee River Trail south of the Princes Highway to Werribee South and north of Davis Creek to Melton and address problem areas such as Sneydes, Hogans, Shaws and Sayers roads.

Roads with high traffic volumes around proposed school sites would have two-metre wide footpaths and an on-road bicycle lane, with a network around the Werribee CBD also on the agenda.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



Mayor John Menegazzo said the development of the city's network would be driven by a range of organisations including the council, Parks Victoria, the Growth Areas Authority, Bicycle Victoria and developers.

"This strategy will allow us to develop a much more cohesive system of bicycle paths, fill in missing links and expand the network where necessary," he said.

"With the fastest-growing population in the state, it's vital that we create infrastructure that provides an alternative to our overcrowded roads and rail lines."

POINT COOK RELAY EVENT A STEP CLOSER

Wyndham Weekly– 4th August 2011

<http://www.wyndhamweekly.com.au/news/local/news/general/point-cook-relay-event-a-step-closer/2247158.aspx>

A push to launch Point Cook's own Relay for Life is gaining momentum, with supporters believing the suburb will be able to host the event at the end of next year.

Residents have decided to start their own Cancer Council fund-raiser, after witnessing the success of the Wyndham and Altona relays in recent years.

Two meetings have been held to gauge the level of community support for the event, with another planned for later this month.

One of the event's key supporters is John Ballestrino, who took up the cause after hearing stories from cancer survivors at Point Cook's first Relay for Life meeting in June.

Mr Ballestrino's life has also been touched by cancer. His mother died of breast cancer several years ago.

"When I listened to the speeches of the people who have been affected by cancer I realised it is a good way to make a difference," he said.

"It is a good way of doing something positive and looking after people who are experiencing cancer."

Also helping is Altona MP and Relay for Life patron, Jill Hennessy.

Ms Hennessy said she supported a Point Cook relay because it would help create a sense of community and raise awareness about cancer.

"In Point Cook we are over-represented in cancer statistics," she said.

"We want to get people to reflect on how they might reduce their own cancer risk, whether it be by giving up smoking, exercising a bit more or applying sunscreen."

The Point Cook relay also has the support of Wyndham's Relay for Life committee, with Chairwoman Anne Marie Dey offering to share her experiences with organisers.

"Their event won't be held for 18 months so we want to say to them to come to our event on April 21 and 22, be part of our event, and see what works for you," she said.

"Definitely the more people that get involved the better for Relay for Life."

FIGHT FOR HERITAGE WERRIBEE SITE

Wyndham Leader– 3rd August 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.wherelive.com.au/news/story/fight-for-heritage-werribee-site/>

Supporters of historic Davis House and hardware store will continue to fight for their restoration at the Werribee CBD site.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



This is despite a Wyndham council decision to allow the site's owner, Aldo di Natale, to demolish the buildings if another site for them can't be found within a year.

But moving the buildings would mean they would lose their heritage significance, said Wyndham Heritage Recovery member John Brodel.

Mr Brodel said that significance hinged on them remaining at their original site.

"Our submission for the buildings to become a museum was not even discussed at the council meeting," he said.

Council officers supported his comments in a report to last week's council meeting recommending the 1904 house on Watton St and former hardware store on Synnot St, Werribee, be retained.

The buildings are subject to a council heritage overlay.

"The heritage value is the buildings on site and the history they represent. The demolition of these buildings would be detrimental to the heritage," the report states.

Critics of the council decision also say it should not have allowed the buildings to deteriorate.

Cr Cynthia Mason argued unsuccessfully at the meeting for the buildings' retention.

"In allowing the demolition of a heritage-listed property, we set the precedent that anyone can leave a heritage property to fall into disrepair and that we approve of it being knocked down," Cr Mason said.

POKIES FIGHT IN WYNDHAM

Wyndham Leader— 2nd August 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/more-pokies-rejected-in-hoppers-crossing/>

The state's gambling regulator has approved the Italian Sports Club of Werribee's application for 13 more electronic gaming machines.

Wyndham Council had opposed the application on the grounds that the anticipated social and economic impact of the additional machines would be detrimental to the community.

Councillors voted in June to reject the Heath Rd club's plans to expand its gaming and bistro areas because it wanted to increase the number of its machines to 70.

Ultimately, the expansion decision is to be made by the state planning tribunal as the council failed to make its own decision within the 60 days required.

But, as Cr Cynthia Manson put it at the meeting, she was taking a "conscience vote".

"I'm trying to find a way to prevent an increase of EGMs in this community," Cr Manson told the meeting.

The club's \$6.8 million master plan, subject to council approval, includes new soccer change rooms and a new grandstand with four function rooms overlooking Galvin Park for the Werribee City Soccer Club.

Sports Club general manager Robert Marino said the new facilities were essential to the soccer club's ambitions to join the Football Federation Victoria's premier league.

The sports club told the commission it also planned to build new squash, tennis, netball/basketball courts and a synthetic soccer pitch.

Mr Marino successfully argued that new sports facilities would not be possible without revenue from additional pokies.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



The commission found that the risk of detriment outweighed the benefits to the Wyndham community resulting from approval of the application.

Next month, a hearing will be held at the commission on the Werribee Tigers Football Club's bid to increase the number of its machines at its Hoppers Crossing venue from 65 to 75.

The football club is expected to argue funds generated by the 10 extra machines at The Tigers Clubhouse will pay for \$10 million worth of improvements to the club's home ground, Chirnside Park, and revive its home finals hopes.

Meanwhile, the manager of a Hoppers Crossing club has hit out at Wyndham councillors after being forced to fight for a bid for 21 more gaming machines at the state planning tribunal.

Hoppers Club manager Jay Mitchell accused Wyndham councillors of using non-profit clubs like his as a "kicking bag".

Wyndham councillors last week voted to oppose a planning permit from the club to increase the number of its machines from 70 to 91.

This was despite the Victorian Commission of Gambling Regulation approving the machines in April and councillors issuing a planning permit in October for the club's expansion in order to house them.

What do you think of the council decision? Tell us below.

Cr Kim McAliney argued that the council had "Buckley's and none of winning at VCAT" and that it would cost ratepayers about \$20,000 to fight "a losing battle".

Cr Cynthia Manson's successful motion to oppose the application argued that the proposal contravened council policy not to allow an increase in poker machine density above the metropolitan average of six machines per 1000 in population.

She argued the extra machines would have "unacceptable social impact by making gaming more accessible in an area that already has a high density of gaming machines and is one of the more disadvantaged communities in the City of Wyndham".

She said the council felt bound to make a conscience vote opposing any increase in the number of poker machines.

Mr Mitchell told the Leader he thought Wyndham councillors who opposed the planning permit were "trying to put their name in lights" to the club's detriment.

REFUGEE A RECOGNISED WYNDHAM ROLE MODEL

Wyndham Leader— 2nd August 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/refugee-a-recognised-wyndham-role-model/>

A young man who has excelled since settling in Werribee from a refugee camp has been dubbed a role model to new arrivals.

Melkie Kiflu, 20, last week received a Wyndham Mayoral Youth Award recognising his achievements, against big odds.

The aspiring motor mechanic arrived from war-torn Sudan in 2008, sponsored by relatives.

He was born in a refugee camp.

Melkie had to leave behind two older sisters and a brother. His relatives, who had also been at the camp, were unable to sponsor them all.

Melkie is working with the Red Cross tracing service to find them.

His parents died in the camp.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



While searching for his siblings, Melkie has excelled at Wyndham Community and Education Centre, where he is doing Year 12, and automotive studies.

He is looking for an automotive apprenticeship.

Melkie was named the most outstanding student achiever at the Western Region Industry and Education Awards this year.

He was presented with a certificate and \$500 last Monday by Mayor John Menegazzo.

Anyone interested in offering Melkie an automotive apprenticeship should phone Teresa Vizintin on 9742 4013.

CUT WYNDHAM'S TOLL NOW

Wyndham Leader – 2nd August 2011

<http://wyndham-leader.whereilive.com.au/news/story/cut-wyndhams-toll-now/>

Various ideas to reduce Wyndham's horror road toll were put forward at last week's forum.

It heard police were out in force on local roads and Wyndham Council was helping fund a road safety program for year 11 students, but that more could be done.

Ideas included:

- Broadening road safety programs to include early school leavers.
- The forum heard two of the people killed in the triple fatality at Werribee this year had missed out on the year 11 program.
- Informing parents when young people on a probationary licence broke the law.

- It heard many young people took more notice of parents than police or the courts.
- Educating parents about road safety, to avoid children copying any bad habits from them.
- Using firefighters and paramedics instead of police to push the road safety message.

The forum heard they were more respected by young people.

Further promotion of the phone line to report hoon drivers, 1800 333 000.

Hospital visits by young drivers to victims of road trauma and their families.

The forum heard this was being trialled by courts dealing with law-breakers and had been a strong deterrent.

More police road patrols, harsher penalties for traffic offenders and road upgrades.

There was heated debate at the forum over whether Wyndham's congested roads were contributing to the road toll.

A local paramedic said arterial roads at capacity were leading to more casualty collisions.

A police officer said congestion slowed traffic and that many collisions were due to human error.

ACROSS THE REGION

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



'WORK-IN-KIND' SCHEME ANGERS COUNCILS, LABOR

The Age— 4th August 2011

http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/workinkind-scheme-angers-councils-labor-20110803-1ibpg.html?from=age_sb

Local councils and the state opposition have cried foul over new Baillieu government laws allowing developers of housing estates in Melbourne to avoid paying millions of dollars in infrastructure taxes by building roads, schools and other public facilities themselves.

The opposition is concerned there are insufficient checks and balances and will write to Victoria's Auditor-General to request an investigation of the scheme.

Councils are also concerned the new "work-in-kind" arrangement will exclude local government from decision-making and give too much power to Planning Minister Matthew Guy.

Developers say the work-in-kind scheme will result in community infrastructure being built more quickly and cheaply because the machinery and workforce is already on site.

But Melton Shire mayor Justin Mammarella said the new laws gave too much power to the minister.

"By excluding councils, what you're really doing is excluding the community."

Read more: <http://www.theage.com.au/victoria/workinkind-scheme-angers-councils-labor-20110803-1ibpg.html#ixzz1U68tAf9>

MAN HURT IN TRUCK ROLLOVER AT FOOTSCRAY

The Herald Sun— 2nd August 2011

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/more-news/man-hurt-in-truck-rollover-at-footscray/story-fn7x8me2-1226106353170>

A man was injured after his truck rolled at a council depot in Melbourne's west this morning.

Emergency crews were called to the Maribyrnong City Council depot in Southampton St, Footscray, about 5.40am.

The man, a private contractor in his 40s, suffered non-life threatening injuries.

It's believed he suffered a cut to the head.

Paramedics have taken the man to the Royal Melbourne Hospital in a stable condition.

TOP COP PROMISES FULL REVIEW OF SUBURBAN GANG VIOLENCE

The Herald Sun— 31st July 2011

<http://www.heraldsun.com.au/news/more-news/review-on-gang-violence-in-suburbs/story-fn7x8me2-1226105134313>

Victoria Police's top cop, Ken Lay, has promised a full review of gang-related violence in the north-western suburbs after an exclusive investigation by the Sunday Herald Sun.

The Acting Chief Commissioner met community leader Dr Berhan Ahmed, who was infuriated with comments by local police denying any gangs existed.

The 40-minute meeting came the day after the Sunday Herald Sun revealed Melton's African community members were living in fear of their lives and published pictures of armed youths calling themselves Bros Over Hoes.

It is claimed Mr Lay admitted in the meeting that mistakes had been made but promised he would follow up on all issues raised with a full review.

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



The organisation African Think Tank, of which Dr Ahmed is chairman, has also called on the State Government to set up a taskforce dedicated to targeting racist violence.

The plea came after Supt Graham Kent said there were no gangs in Melton.

"The response by Victoria Police is completely unacceptable," Dr Ahmed, a former Victorian Australian of the Year, said.

"It is not sufficient and completely wrong to say there is not a particular issue. There is a particular issue and it is growing.

"Racist hatred and bigotry is one type of crime that needs an early response. It needs to be stopped as soon as it appears, or it grows.

"I call upon the Premier, Ted Baillieu, to urgently form a police taskforce to target all forms of racist violence."

Police Minister Peter Ryan confirmed he was liaising with police command about the issue.

"The Government takes reports of serious crime and violence in the Melton community very seriously," a spokesman said.

"The Government will not tolerate targeted violence against any group.

The Minister has raised the issue with Victoria Police and is advised local police are working with the residents and council to address concerns."

Assistant Commissioner Steve Fontana said Supt Kent was trying to explain there were "no identified gangs" but there were "youths involved in illegal conduct, some in groups".

He said Victoria Police took the matter seriously and was rethinking police strategy.

NO WALK IN THE PARK FOR BRIMBANK

The Age—29th July 2011

<http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/opinion/editorial/no-walk-in-the-park-for-brimbank-20110728-1i26l.html>

A STROLL in a neighbourhood park is one of the quiet joys of suburban life, and it's a pleasure afforded to all because there is no cost. As it should be. Such public space belongs to the community and should be outside the province of profit (other than, perhaps, to the waistline). The bureaucrats running Brimbank Council, in Melbourne's west, however, are considering selling 14 parks to developers in an apparent revenue-raising exercise. This is troubling, not least because the municipality concerned, spanning Sunshine and St Albans to Keilor and Sydenham, contains a number of pockets of socio-economic disadvantage and has been ranked as the second most disadvantaged of Melbourne's local government areas. With demographic features including a much higher-than-average number of people born in non-English-speaking countries and a growing population, good quality public spaces are essential to build civic life and neighbourhood resilience.

The issue is also complicated by the fact that Brimbank is run by administrators who were appointed after the Brumby government sacked the elected council in 2009. Although the bureaucrats argue that proceeds from the proposed sale will go to a \$40 million program to buy or improve "more appropriate" open spaces, the level of community consultation over the proposed selloff appears to be deficient. At a public meeting with council staff last week, the only questions taken from concerned residents were those that had been emailed in advance.

Even if you are not the perambulating sort, parks are part of the social glue of any suburb in any metropolis. While the spaces involved in Brimbank are on a far more modest scale, it is instructive that Frederick Law Olmsted, designer of New York's vast Central Park, was part of a movement in the 19th century that argued for

LEADWEST'S NEWS SUMMARY FOR MELBOURNE'S WEST

5th AUGUST 2011



parks and public recreation spaces as a means of overcoming isolation and suspicion. Influential contemporary urban planner Jan Gehl also makes a persuasive point when he notes that as societies become more privatised with private homes, cars, computers and offices, the public component of our lives is disappearing. He argues that it is important to make cities inviting, "so we can meet our fellow citizens face to face and experience directly through our senses".

These ideas are echoed in the sentiments of Brimbank park activist Virginia Tachos when she says of her precious local park where she takes her son: "We feel safe, you can kick a football; there are neighbours all around."

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