

THE TIMES

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Study debate 'suppressed'

CCG members claim of being gagged to speak out about Bridge studies by VicRoads

EXCLUSIVE

CONFIDENTIALITY clauses have curbed the public's knowledge about studies VicRoads have released into the proposed Mid-West Bridge, Community Consultative Group members claim. They also say that they can't

get expert opinions from outside the CCG because of the confidentiality, with consequences for breaking the clause labelled as "intimidation by inference." Several members have told *The Crofton Street Times* that the 'scientific jargon' in some reports is too difficult for community members to

understand and debate adequately. In recent weeks, VicRoads has released a detailed Hydrology report, noise report and traffic report – all of which are confidential. *The Times* has obtained copies of all these reports however can not publish details of them for fears of litigation. >P2



Swimming by...

A duck paddles past the *Hero* paddle steamer, docked in the Murray.

Members claim of being suppressed

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CCG member Kay McLaurin says that they can not talk to anyone outside the CCG about the confidential reports.

“We’ve been told verbally and in writing that we can’t discuss the reports with the media or the public,” she said.

Mrs. McLaurin also claims that they are unable to ask educated questions as they are unable to consult experts outside the CCG about the studies.

“Without being able to consult experts, or anybody else to get their advice on the report, we can’t ask the right questions.”

CCG Member Lindsay Hurn says that “everything we have is stamped confidential, even tonight’s agenda can’t be released.” He says that he, being a ‘lay person’, isn’t able to understand most of the technical terms in the hydrology report, and he is concerned about not being able to ask any experts about the items in the report.

Another member Michael Dixon says he has access to experts at Monash



University, but the clauses block him from doing so. Mrs. McLaurin believes that there is not enough time given to read the reports. “We are given these huge documents with acronyms and jargon that isn’t explained, and we usually have a very short amount of time to try and read these documents prior to having discussion with consultant who wrote document,” she said.

However VicRoads stance is that discussing preliminary reports is fraught with danger, as some details included may not be published in the final

reports, which could anger some people which the report affects.

“We should be allowed to ask peoples opinion on it so we can get positive feedback,” Mrs. McLaurin says.

In a rare comment to *The Times* before a CCG meeting this week, VicRoads Northern Region manager Mal Kersting says the community members have access to consultants during the meetings. He also said the last report yet to come out is the Cultural Heritage Report, due to be released in two weeks.

Students rejected by Gillard: Stone

Briefly...

Street

- COMMUNITY Consultative Group members have complained about being "hamstrung" and suppressed by VicRoads. The members are not allowed to discuss the studies being released into the proposed Mid-West Bridge, as they are 'confidential.' They say they can't consult experts to ask relevant questions at meetings because of this.

Local

- CAMPASPE Shire residents are spending \$1.3 million more on poker machines since last year, the Victorian Commission for Gambling Regulation has reported. This means local gamblers wasted \$9.1 million last financial year. Players at the Echuca Workers and Services Club lost the most, \$4.9 million, with \$5.7 million lost totally across Echuca.

National

- ASIO and Federal and State police have conducted a successful operation in Melbourne to raid and arrest Somali terrorist suspects, plotting to massacre Sydney's Holsworthy Military Base. A number of suspects have appeared in the Magistrates Court this week, with one man refusing to stand. "I only stand for God," he said.

World

- BILL Clinton has successfully released two US journalists arrested in North Korea last year, and has taken them home. It opens up the possibility for friendly ties with the country.

CONCERNED students and parents have been rejected by Federal Education minister Julia Gillard to have a meeting to discuss the proposed changes to the Youth Allowance scheme. A delegation of four local students, three parents and an Local Learning and Employment representative travelled to Canberra for the meeting, however Ms. Gillard declined to meet with them, instead handing the session to an advisor.

Federal Member for Murray, Dr. Sharman Stone, has been 'disappointed' by this news, saying "These students have respectfully and responsibly tried in every way to get the Government's attention and yet Minister Gillard is putting her head in the sand about the issue."

Opposition members, like Stone and Victorian Member for Rodney Paul Weller have been attacking the Labor government over the proposed changes. Continual media scrutiny and a number of petitions, however, have not possessed the Federal Government to tamper with the Allowance program, which Stone says severely disadvantages country students. Although this is a chance for Stone to attack Rudd again, with throw-away comments like



Above: Deputy Prime Minister and Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard. Right: How *The Times* reported the issue Two weeks ago.



"It seems this government does not care about country students," however she does have a valid point.

The Times reported a fortnight ago that students hoping to get the Youth Allowance for University needed to have a baby or get married to qualify, unless they don't work for 30 hours a week – a tiresome effort considering their studies. Crofton Street's Anna McLaurin would be affected if the changes pass the Senate, saying An education revolution? I think not."

Fire may hurt Southern 80 again

Dear Sir

Thankyou for another excellent edition (1 August 2009) of the *The Crofton Street Times*. Very few people, young or old, have the creativity to write a serious yet colourful community newspaper, off their own bat, for no pay. Your Editorial "Can we cope with another bushfire" (1 August 2009) was timely because Victoria and southern New South Wales fire authorities will now be gearing up to handle what is predicted to be another tinder dry summer. While you spoke generally of the fire dangers in Victoria I'd like to bring up the "elective" fire hazard to our two communities, Echuca and Moama. This is the Southern 80 - "elective" in the sense that it is not essential like houses, farms and lives. It is a sporting event.

As I wrote in your newspaper and *The Riverine Herald* after Black Sunday in February the Southern 80 is important to community spirit and the local economy, but this event

carries significant and foreseeable fire risks. What is unfortunate about the Southern 80 is that it occurs at the peak of the fire season and mainly in an area of extreme fire risk with thousands of attendees viewing the event under trees then sleeping in forest areas. Crowds, particularly on the NSW side have limited access roads for such numbers to escape any fires.

Increasing the risk is that despite many warning signs banning campfires some spectators still light fires - especially those with alcohol induced apathy. On 7 February 2009 some campfires were lit on the NSW side and a fire tender was seen speeding down Perricoota Road to put them out.

What may increase the risk to the Southern 80 in 2010 to our communities is that fewer fire, ambulance and police resources might be available. This is because the Victorian Government will probably deploy high levels of resources in areas where they are more needed



- such as forests and towns in the Yarra Valley. Adequate resourcing may be difficult for a remote sporting event like the Southern 80 which is held far from the areas that to date have suffered more damage.

I suggest it is up to the Campaspe and Murray Shire Councils to advise their communities if adequate fire, ambulance and police resources will be available for the Southern 80 for 2010. If rainfall remains far below the average our elected representatives should not rely on "she'll be right" or "the show must go on" if emergency services for the Southern 80 appear to be at too low a level.

**Peter Coates
Moama**

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SPORT

Echuca out of finals



Graffiti in the background perhaps sums up the mood of Echuca players after yet another loss.

Echuca's finals bid over after loss to Seymour

ECHUCA'S finals' bid is officially over. The team went down to Seymour on the weekend by 86 points, to a home crowd at Vic Park.

Final score: Seymour 155 d Echuca 69.

The final margin between the two teams has more than doubled since the two they met in round four. This is the fourth consecutive loss for Echuca in the past month.

The problem, says Coach Brett Henderson, is that his team is unable to play four quarters of football well. "We are really only playing one quarter a week," he said.

Although there are three more weeks in the season, it is not possible for Echuca to get high enough in the ladder to play in the finals. However Henderson is still determined to play the next matches well anyway.

The match against Seymour saw new young-gun Cameron Valentine, 15, play his first senior game, kicking two goals.

The light rain which fell during the match probably summed up Echuca's mood after they continually fell behind on the scoreboard. The best players were Andrew Briggs, Ray Dolan, Valentine, Brendan Prendergast, Axel Childs and Chris Casey.

EDITORIAL

Cyber bullying is a big problem everywhere

AT SOME age between thirty and fifty, adults start becoming very cynical about the generation that's younger than them.

"You can't wear that!"

"Why don't you make friends with *real* people?"

"In my day, it was different!" are some of the stereotypical comments adults say.

Their so called advice may seem stupid and insignificant to teenagers like me, but something they have got right is the need to be aware of the threat of cyber bullying.

Of course, back in the adults' childhood, bullying was in the form of fist fighting and name calling. But "nowadays" it's different. Instead of having pen pals we have Facebook and MySpace, instead of walkmans we have mobile phones.

These inventions are extraordinary things, and an enormous amount of teens – and 'tweens' – own a phone and have a social page. But it was inevitable that



these technologies would be abused, and it's happening now.

Cyber bullying is an ugly thing. We may not recognise it when we see it, but it's everywhere. In my time, I've seen videos of fights captured on phones, I've seen mean comments on Facebook and I've seen some pretty hurtful text messages.

To be at the opposite end of such abuse would be horrific, and for some it is

all just too much. At Western Heights College in Geelong, four, yes four, teens have committed suicide in the past five months; their deaths directly related to cyber bullying. Adults are aware of this problem, and they can start their committees and community groups, but it won't help. It's the parent's responsibility to talk with their kids, and if that works, then maybe then those horrible messages will stop.

OPINION

Your views, your say, your Opinion

ODD BOX Twelve ambulances took 34 people to hospital and emergency workers thought they had a carbon monoxide or other toxic-fume crisis affecting almost 150 people at a Bank of America branch in Fort Worth, Texas. It turned out that a bank worker's perfume was to blame.

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

Everything human is pathetic. The secret source of humour itself is not joy but sorrow. There is no humour in heaven.

Mark Twain

JOKE BY JAKE

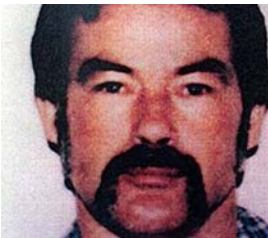
Don't spend \$2 to dry-clean a shirt. Donate it to the Salvation Army instead. They'll clean it, put it on a hanger. Next morning buy it back for 50 cents!

HOROSCOPE



HERE'S one thing to learn in life: don't do things you don't know how to do (if that makes sense). For example, I'm not going to become a tailor because I can't thread a sewing machine and I can't sew at all, and if I tried I'm sure I would hurt myself or the poor piece of fabric. I'm also not going to become a Portuguese translator because I can't speak that language. I wouldn't become a professional ballet player either for obvious reasons. Maybe I'll become a dishwasher at that café near the op shop, I'm sure I'll be good at that. But if you're considering becoming a quantum mechanic, don't.

“Is Prime Minister Kevin Rudd a camel serial killer?”



Ivan Milat

“He’s a complete bastard! Killing camels?! How low can you get?”



Therese Rein

“Well, he only sleeps for 3 hours. I don’t know what he gets up to the rest of the night...”



Camel

“Ever heard of Animal Farm? One day, us camels will take over Australia and we’ll kick Kevin away... Freedom for camels!!”

television

Critic's choice

Liberal Rule

SBS One, 8.30pm Tuesday

WE thought *The Howard Years* had covered the life and times of John Howard, but apparently not. SBS has been screening a four-part series of issues with the Howard government. I was fascinated, but that's just me. Some people would probably find it really boring, however the producers did well not to dwell on a single issue for two long, making it fast paced and intriguing.

The Farmer Wants a Wife

Channel 9, 8.30pm Monday

SINCE when did women become purchasable objects? Well according to *The Farmer Wants a Wife* they are. Now, I'm not a feminist, but I can see why some people get angry over shows like this. Some young farmer (who looks like he spends more time in the bathroom than on the farm) wants to get a wife so a dozen girls parade themselves around until somebody gets "chosen".

Rush

Channel 10, 8.30pm Thursday

APART from the repetitive, repetitive, repetitive promos for this show (I swear the same one appeared 3 times in one ad break), it's a good program to watch. Set in the streets of Melbourne, it follows the life of some police officers who fight petty crime. There's no gore, like most cop shows, but I guess Melbourne's not New York. It's still action-packed and there's a little romance every now and then. Except I still don't get why they wear their bullet proof vests everywhere – even in the office! Not logical...

“The Librarians”

I WONDER if the librarians at the Echuca Library have such a dramatic lifestyle like those on the new series of *The Librarians*? I bet there's not a pregnant, drug abusing woman that works there, or a gay Asian, or a melting pot of ethnic people all working at our local library. Well, there might be, I just might have never spotted them before...

But even if there's not, the show is still a good program.

Frances O'Brien, the white, suburban mother was head librarian in the last season; however after a legal case involving another crippled librarian, she had to serve 10 months community service. During that time Nada – “The Muslim” – took over, much to the dislike of Frances.

Frances is very racist, but that's what makes it a funny show. I'm not sure if the show itself is racist, or it's making fun of people who are racist? It doesn't matter.

When speaking to a Muslim patron, she asked him to leave his bag at the front desk, which he asked ‘Why?’, “I think we know why...” she said.

The first show was really just to remember what happened in the last series, but in the first episode the Francis' kids got expelled from school, she went to court and the Library burnt down. Pretty exciting for one show. I bet the Echuca Librarians don't get up to that!

