

# THE TIMES

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# Bulletin 'brain washes' towns

## VicRoads brochure under fire for bias, spin

VICROADS has distributed a mass "information bulletin" to the population of Echuca-Moama about the proposed Mid-West Bridge, however has come under fire from opponents, who say it has "brain washed" the community.

The bulletin sent to roughly 10,000 people across the district has been described



as a glossy brochure spruiking the benefits of the Bridge. It mentions how VicRoads has 'engaged'

with the community, talking about the Community Consultative Group and the numerous public display sessions.

"These sessions were an opportunity to view the latest information and receive your feed back," it wrote, however did not mention the negativity which resulted at the >P2

## The sad tale of Sydney Ferres

DESPITE all the police help, air support and sniffer dogs, the search for missing man Sydney Ferres ended tragically last weekend. A local man, walking his dog, stumbled upon the elderly man's body on Friday morning.

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An image of Sydney Ferres published in the hope of finding the missing man.

# Bulletin's spin concerns locals

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sessions. It says that the February 2008 meeting “attracted more than 500 people”, although failed to mention that the majority of people were there to protest against the Bridge.

When Northern Region manager for VicRoads Mal Kersting was pressed on this issue at a CCG meeting, he was unable to produce a positive feedback slip.

Although being four pages long, the bulletin is relatively light on words – with just over a 1000 words printed, quite short considering it is such a complex issue, says CCG members.

They were particularly upset with this line: “The

Community Consultation Group (is) an advisory body made up of 15 community representatives... This helps provide a forum for sharing information on the study proposals.” The CCG says that they have not been able to share information with the rest of the community because of the various confidentiality clauses, stamped on the studies. However next week the



final studies will be released to the public, after months of suppression from VicRoads.

Important reports, such as Cultural Heritage, Traffic Analysis and Hydrology assessments will be unveiled to a CCG meeting this Wednesday.

It will not be open to the public.

The verdict from the Cultural Heritage report will

be the most important, as the Yorta Yorta is a major stakeholder. Elder Henry Atkinson met with tribe members in Melbourne recently to discuss the Bridge, however the outcome of that meeting is being kept quiet.

VicRoads could not be reached for comment from *The Times*, promised to be transparent when the final studies are released.

Echuca College  
Crofton Street

Briefly...

### Street

- THE search for missing 82-year old Sydney Ferres ended in tragedy last Friday when his body was found in a paddock behind the Echuca cemetery near Warren Street. A man walking his dog made the discovery, and police also found a gun near his body. There were no suspicious circumstances.

### Local

- THE Community Consultative Group is concerned that a VicRoads information bulletin on the proposed Mid-West Bridge is 'brainwashing' the community with its propaganda. They say there are a number of untruths and neglected facts in the publication, which was distributed to almost 10,000 homes.

### National

- A COVERT intelligence gathering naval mission, on board a submarine almost ended in tragedy when 5 crew members were washed into the ocean by a freak wave aboard the HMAS Farncombe in March 2007, *The Australian* reports today. The dramatic rescue of these crewmen was kept quiet for 2 years.

### World

- EIGHTEEN people have been killed in an apparent suicide bomb blast in a Pakistani market this morning, which was crowded with locals preparing for the Ramadan festivities. The explosion destroyed vehicles and shops in the village of Ustarzai in the countries North-West.



Photos of rubbish bags Mrs. McLaurin collected.

# College rubbish a disgrace, says resident

ECHUCA College's Crofton Street campus has been criticised for its amount of litter that's blowing into surrounding bushland.

Crofton Street's Kay McLaurin took up the challenge her self of picking up some of the rubbish that had strayed past the school boundaries.

She says that in the first hundred meters of litter collection, she picked up four bags of rubbish. "Instead of being angry about, maybe we should have some proactive solutions. Chip packets are probably the worst offenders – maybe the canteen should ban non-recyclable packaging from the canteen," she said.

The school uses picking up rubbish as a punishment for bad behaviour and also participates in Clean Up Australia Day. However Mrs. McLaurin concedes the rubbish may be attributed to recent winds that spread across the state.



# Public opinion doesn't register in council

## Opinion

IT IS inexcusable for the Murray Shire council to ignore the concerns of its ratepayers and go ahead with its fluoridation plans.

Lines such as "You're entitled to express your opinion, but we're going on with the plan anyway," are angering and undemocratic. Perhaps Mayor Brian Sharp believes he is so embedded in the council and community – being mayor for 13 years – that being voted out isn't a plausible possibility. Maybe he believes he is Murray Shire royalty, only losing power at death. But as his council voted down four separate motions, which would give the community some say in the water they drink, a dark anger was brewing. No, they can't be bothered factoring in the majority opinion of the issue to guide its decision, to call in expert speakers, or even to debate the issue. It's lazy. They don't even want to inform the community with letter box drops. Like the Mid-West Bridge issue, a group of angered locals formed a delegation to criticise the issue. The council has stayed relatively untouched by scrutiny on major issues in the past few years. Keeping their head low on the Bridge issue and procrastinating on the new town planning schemes, it's about time the council, and its councillors, were grilled on issues that concern the people, as it's their vote which keeps them employed.



Sydney Ferres, 82.

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Although it's not quite clear what happened to Sydney, 82, he was said to be found in tall grass out the back of the Echuca cemetery, near Warren Street.

Police can only guess what was going through his mind when he went walk-about, but they say a gun was found near his body. Police will not say how he died, but it there are "no suspicious circumstances." The town had been on high alert since Wednesday, looking for Sydney, but unfortunately the posters in shop windows and the vigorous search across the area could not save him.

Sydney leaves behind four children and eight grand-children, and his family sent out their thanks for the effort the town put into the search. Police are expected to make a report for the coroner.

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# SPORT



Michael Gardiner marks the football as Jason Akermanis and Daniel Cross home in on him.

## Saints into grand finals

DESPERATION from both sides last night was what fuelled a nail biting game in the preliminary final. But it was the Saints who eventually did come off winners, after a quick goal in the dying minute of the match against the Bulldogs. St. Kilda will now face either Geelong or Collingwood in the grand final.

# U/18's still have hope

ECHUCA'S under 18 league have made it through a thrilling semi-final against Shepparton Swans unscathed, to make it into the finals.

The team now carries the Echuca bombers torch in the GVFL finals, after the senior team suffered a dismal season. Hopes are riding high that the under 18's can make it into the grand final.

The win against the Swans was a surprise for most observers, who rated Echuca as an underdog. The first half saw Echuca kick a whopping eight goals to Shepparton's 4. While the opposition battled to block Echuca's accurate disposals and defend their graceful running play, they did little to shorten the margin. In the third quarter, Echuca's lead widened to five goals,

thanks to some good work in the mid-field.

Although the Swans onslaught in the final quarter had Echuca biting its nails, the sound of the siren confirmed that they had won by just nine points. David Ismail, Axel Childs, Matt Costello and Jake Mills were top performers. Echuca will play against rivals Rochester this Sunday.

# EDITORIAL

## How country beats the city any day

**CROWDS.** Traffic lights. Queues. Congestion. Pollution. Sounds like the city to me.

I have just spent two weeks in Melbourne, experiencing life like a “city slicker.” Catching an overcrowded train in the early morning and making my way through the hustle and bustle was how my morning began. But I soon discovered how impatient I am. Why should I wait unnecessarily longer to cross the road compared with in Echuca! But the business people around me seemed to be rather patient, so I didn’t make a scene by continuously clicking the pedestrian crossing button, hoping that it would make it quicker for the green light. Life in Echuca is so much simpler. And friendlier. Who would have thought it was so complicated to catch a train? Stupid MetCard ticket! And people don’t say hello to each other in the street, although I guess going grocery shopping



would be a lot quicker. Everybody is on their phone or on their iPod. In fact, sitting on a train surrounded by people with iPods in is like sitting with a pack of zombies. It’s awkward and kind of scary how conformist many city people have become. Then there’s the emos, who try to be different by being emo, but really they are

conformists as well because there are so many people exactly like them. The city is a weird place, but if 3 million people put up with it everyday, I’m sure I can for 2 weeks. It’s a more intense place in the city, but it’s much less friendlier. And in Echuca we don’t have to bother about catching a train to a different side of the town.

# OPINION

Your views, your say, your Opinion

**ODD BOX** A woman from South London who has smoked for 95 years is kicking the habit. Winnie Langley, 102, who says she has avoided cancer by not inhaling, doesn't "fancy it any more". She says: "My eyesight is failing, so in a few years' time I might not be able to see the pack."

## QUOTE OF THE WEEK

If God wanted us to bend over he'd put diamonds on the floor.

**Joan Rivers**

## JOKE BY JAKE

Have you heard of the garlic diet? You don't lose much weight, but from a distance your friends think you look thinner.

# HOROSCOPE



I REMEMBER the days when I was scared about moving up grades in primary school, for example going from grade 2 to grade 3... it wasn't hard at all, but I thought it would be! But now I realise that moving up a year is nothing when compared with going from year 12 to nothing! I'll have to get a job! I'll have to go to uni! How will I feed myself?! That's probably why so many people stay with their parents... I'll probably still be with my parents when I'm 40, but at least I won't have to pay for my own food. Or what if I did move out? I wouldn't have enough money to buy things. I'd probably live at the op shop and get all my food from free samples at Bakers Delight. That'd be fun... Maybe I could make friends with a rich person... that always seems to work.

# “Should fluoride be added to Moama’s water supply?”



**Dentist model**

“There’s nothing wrong with fluoride! It may make some people sick, but hey, look how white my teeth are now!”



**Matthew Strong**

“I told mum it was the fluoride in the water, not the lollies I ate!”



**Prince Charles**

“Mum says my teeth are lovely and there’s fluoride in *our* water (chuckle). So I’m not sure why Moama should be concerned.”

## Critic's choice

### Little Britain USA

**Channel 10, 10.10pm Sunday**

WHY oh why is *Little Britain* so funny? Apart from the constant nudity and sexual references, there's something really true about the show. "The computer says no" lady is a hilarious example of modern life made fun of. Sneering at a little girl for not knowing her address, then asking her to fill out a customer satisfaction form. It's a good show to watch without your grandma.

### Rove turns 10

**Channel 10, 8.40pm Sunday**

BOUND to be a nice look back at some funny moments we've forgotten about, *Rove Turns 10* celebrates a decade on TV. From interviews with celebrities like Will Smith and scenes from "What the?" and "Hughsey Loses it." It will be more hilarious than a normal episode because a decade of side-holding moments will be compressed into one show.

### Q&A

**ABC1, 9.30pm Thursday**

POLITICIANS have complained in the past about the ABC's intense questioning being bordering on rude. With question after critical question, almost scaring them – which in my opinion is good journalism – but can be quite offensive. But it was really starting to show on Q&A last week when Tony Jones pressured author John Marsden into talking about racism in his *Tomorrow* series. Leave the grilling for the pollies, Tony.

## “Why we like to count down”

I DON'T know about you, but I love reading the Guinness Book of World Records. It's funny how desperate some people are to get their name in the book, that they do some crazy stunt like eating a car piece by piece. There's also a heap of different lists in the book, counting down everything from tallest people to the heaviest weight lifted with your ears. But books are books, and in today's dumbed down world, we need information force fed into us, like TV does! Some genius executive thought of the idea of mixing the book of records with TV, and they came up with *20 to 1*. As we all know, this show has been running for a few years now, also running out of a few ideas. They've come up with some riveting lists however, like "Karaoke classics", "Scorching screen moments" and "Cougars and cradle snatchers." But the ratings don't lie, and every week millions of people watch the countdown of random subjects, mostly to do with celebrity scandals and "sexy movie moments." But after four years of broadcasting, *20 to 1* has finally run up against a competitor – channel 10's *The Spearman Experiment*. Hosted by Magda Szubanski, the show, which began just 2 weeks ago is almost a mirror image of channel 9's *20 to 1* – which is hosted by Bert Newton. The only real difference is that one has a slightly younger host. Neither of these shows have uncovered any exciting new lists, about something we haven't heard before, but the race is on to see who will win in the ratings battle.

