

News Briefs

**Murder charge**

A 19-YEAR-OLD Cranbourne man will face court in October, accused of shooting dead two police officers in Moorabbin two years ago.

Mr Jason Roberts, of Merrijig Avenue, was arrested and charged last Tuesday.

Sergeant Gary Silk and Senior Constable Rodney Miller were part of an investigation into armed hold-ups on restaurants. They were shot during a stake-out on August 16, 1998.

Mr Roberts will appear in court on Tuesday, October 3.

**Vote welcomed**

LIBERAL MP for Eummemmering Province Mr Gordon Rich-Phillips has welcomed his party's rejection of the safe-injecting room policy.

"The majority of residents in this area do not support a supervised injecting facility, knowing there is a safer way to prevent drug use," he said.

**Park rejection**

GREATER Dandenong council has rejected plans to develop a 149-site caravan park in Bangholme because of environmental concerns.

The applicants, who run a dog kennel business, wanted to include a caravan park on the 5.7-hectare site in Soden Road with fully serviced and powered sites, a take-away food outlet, visitors' car park, three amenities blocks and an area for lawn bowls.

**Meningococcal death**

A FIVE year-old Cranbourne boy has become Victoria's seventh meningococcal victim this year.

Andrew Simms, a Cranbourne Primary School pupil, died within hours of complaining of a stomach ache and vomiting last Wednesday.

The youngster was taken to hospital by his mother three hours and was rushed into intensive care when a rash, associated with the disease, developed on his chest. Andrew failed to respond to treatment and died 9.30 pm Wednesday, 12 hours after being taken to Frankston Hospital.

**CD haul**

POLICE were last night involved in what was the largest seizure of illegal CDs in Australia.

The haul included 200,000 CDs, valued at \$200,000, during a raid on a market in Frankston. Operation

# Meeting planned over Heinz dispute Offer to workers

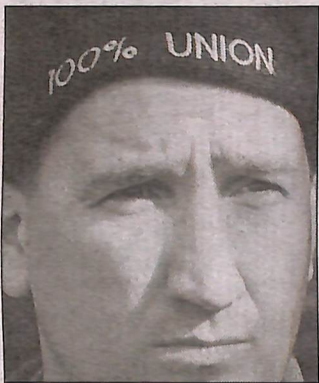
By Narelle Wilson

A MEETING was scheduled for at 8 am today (Monday) regarding the fate of sacked Heinz workers from the Dandenong plant.

Australian Manufacturing Workers Union (AMWU) officials met company representatives on Friday in a desperate attempt to keep the plant operational but union members, workers and the company have remained tight lipped over the outcome.

AMWU president Mr Craig Johnston said workers would be offered a package today but refused to disclose any details.

"Our responsibility is to keep the workers in their jobs and for the plant to remain open. The company said on Friday, the decision to close the plant is irreversible but an outcome will be known, one way or another, later today," he said.



Uncertain future: worried worker Wolf Wahl.

The talks followed a week-long protest by angry sacked workers who staged a lock-in. The protest started off in the building's canteen but spread to the entire site when the remaining Heinz administration staff departed to their Malvern office.

The protest began when workers were issued with letters from the company banning them from the premises.

Mr Johnston said the union was still trying to set up a meeting with the workers, Heinz and the Government. All attempts had failed.

"The Government has been absolutely incompetent. We have been trying to arrange a meeting for over a week and they haven't even responded to our requests," he said.

Mr Johnston said the union's primary concern was to keep the plant operational and said workers would decide whether or not to accept a company offer which was expected to be made to them today.

The sacked workers and union officials lashed out at claims the protesters broke into the premises.

"Despite media reports, no locks were broken for us to enter

the premises and we didn't smash any windows to enter the canteen," Mr Johnston said.

"The canteen hasn't been locked in years."

Mr Johnston was reluctant to comment on Friday's meeting. He said the workers should hear the outcome first.

"We can't pre-empt what the workers will decide and which way they will vote," he said.

For sacked worker Ms Carol Hanley, life has been tough without a weekly income.

"It's hard knowing there is no money coming in but it's a worse feeling knowing we might not get any entitlements," she said.

But the former Heinz shop steward said the workers would fight until they won.

"We won't give up until we win. Our spirits are high at the moment and we will continue to protest until Heinz come to the party," she said.



Straight talking: AMWU secretary Craig Johnston addresses the media at the start of the lock-in.

Pictures: Terri-Ann Varga

## Feelings high as court slows down

THE Federal Government has been labelled "vicious, contemptible and gutless" following the partial closure of the Dandenong Family Court.

The Federal Labor MP for Holt, Mr Anthony Byrne, told Federal Parliament last week: "The Government that professes to be concerned about battlers and

those on middle and lower incomes, have made a decision that treated the 1.2 million people in the region with contempt".

Mr Byrne said that in 1984, the Law Institute of Australia had highlighted the importance of the Dandenong registry.

"Back then, a decision was made, based on this growing

region, to provide a decent and much-needed resource, but now, 16 years later, this callous, contemptible Government is taking that very same service away," he said.

Mr Byrne accused the Government of reducing services by "stealth" and said the closure was a "kick in the teeth" for the

people in the region.

The chief federal magistrate last week confirmed that the Federal Magistrates' Service would provide regular court services in family law at Dandenong.

The Federal Magistrates' Service plans to start sitting daily at Dandenong when the new facilities are available.

## Parking officers king hit: council

GREATER Dandenong parking officers have been punched and hit with car jacks in attacks by angry motorists over parking fines, the council has revealed.

The city's chief executive officer, Mr Warwick Heine, said assaults on the six full-time and six part-time parking officers had become all too common.

"One officer was king hit, another hit by a car jack and another punched martial arts-style," Mr Heine said.

"One officer has been assaulted on two separate occasions in Springvale. Unfortunately, it's become an all too common occurrence."

He said one assault involved a trader who punched an officer for putting a ticket on his car parked outside his shop.

Violence towards parking officers went in cycles and, at its peak, they were required to work in pairs for protection, Mr Heine said.

The spate of assaults on parking officers follows the council's decision to increase its maximum parking fine to \$40.

The increase, which took effect on August 15, is expected to add about \$195,480 a year to council coffers, and is aimed at keeping cars moving from high-demand parking spaces.

The council considered the previous \$35 fine was not a sufficient deterrent and that the \$5 increase kept the maximum penalty below that of some surrounding municipalities.

The \$40 fines applied to offences can be levied for failing to display a valid parking ticket, parking at an expired meter, and parking for a period longer than fixed.

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