

**CB**

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**The Right man for the job**

The safe Liberal seat of Flinders has grabbed headlines for the colourful battle playing out between sitting MP and Health Minister **Greg Hunt** and former colleague turned independent **Julia Banks**.

But it turns out there is an even bloodier stoush involving Flinders, which takes in the Mornington Peninsula, and Labor, which thinks it has an outside chance of stealing the seat from Hunt.

A week ago, ALP officials endorsed 27-year-old staffer and peninsula resident **Joshua Sinclair** as the party's candidate.

Some sources within the party say the decision to pick the younger operative over a field that included educator and former Age columnist **Tracee Hutchison** as well as former Navy officer **Steve Bruni** blindsided some of the membership. They were under the impression the party was in the hunt for a higher-profile candidate.

Sinclair has worked for Labor MP-on-the-rise **Clare O'Neil** and now works for newly minted state Labor MP **Chris Brayne**.

In the past he's also worked inside a children's disability organisation. But he's hardly a household name.

Never mind. For Victorian Labor, arguably his most pertinent credential is his alignment with the party's Right, which has been aggressively trying to grow its stable of Victorian seats.

Up against the media-hungry Hunt and Banks, Sinclair has his work cut out for him on the peninsula. But if recognition is what he's after, he might have to start with his own party first. Some members were still under the impression Hutchison was in the lead as recently as yesterday.

Either way, Sinclair was burning the shoe leather on Sunday in Somerville and at Baxter yesterday.

Hunt had been out and about to be seen at the Red Hill Show on Saturday, before darting to Melbourne on Sunday for a

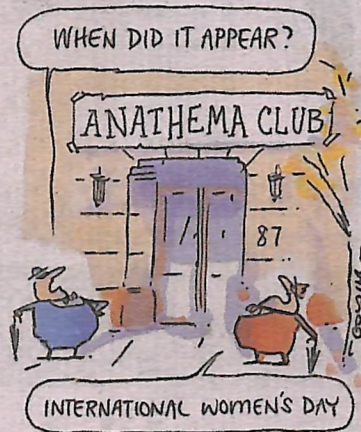
healthcare announcement.

Meanwhile, Banks, his main rival and current Chisholm MP, spent Sunday in Sydney fronting a panel alongside her outgoing former colleague **Julie Bishop** (herself a notable absence at the preselection appointing her successor in her own seat of Curtin).

**TIDE AIN'T HIGH FOR CHANGE**

It's been a bracing three days for Victoria's coterie of gentlemen's clubs, which have been the target of pointed questions over their restrictive entry policies.

Dwindling finances have prompted some clubs including Melbourne's Kelvin Club and Sydney's Tattersalls Club to throw open their doors to women.



\$955,000, but there's still \$1.5m cash at bank and \$500,000 in term deposits. A look at the investment committee handling the finances is insightful.

Veteran stockbroker (and father of four girls) **Patrick Cody** heads the committee, alongside former Takeovers Panel member **Andrew Sisson** and economics aficionado **Ian Harper**.

Other members include **Lindsay Fox**, **Rod Eddington**, **Tim Wilson** and **Eddie McGuire**.

Club accounts state that members bond over a shared interest in advancing discussion and understanding of the prosperity of Australia, public affairs, the arts and "appropriate sporting activities".

There's also a packed schedule of guest speakers. A memorable recent guest? Tennis great and diversity advocate **Margaret Court**, who headlined a fundraiser for **Tony Abbott** at the club in late 2017.

**LOVE-STUCK ON THE GAMING FLOOR**

It's not always easy being a crazy rich Asian.

Or so it appears in the case of Malaysian squillionaire casino owner **Joey Lim**, who heads his family's ASX-listed gaming outfit, Donaco International, which makes a profit out of the risky business of owning casinos in border towns close to Thailand and China.

Lim announced in December he was taking three months' leave from Donaco, citing personal reasons, and appointed his brother **Ben Lim** as the interim boss.

In January, he opened up about the absence, telling a local outlet: "I am currently undergoing divorce proceedings that unfortunately have turned very bitter," he said.

"The persons affected by this very emotional trauma include not only me, but my two children who are still of very tender age."

How the disengagement is progressing is unclear, but news yesterday that Cayman Island corporate advisors **Vincent Pirina** and **Mitchell Mansfield** have been appointed receivers of his 224 million share stake, valued at \$14m, is unlikely to make for smooth negotiations.

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**ODDSPOT**

Florida lawmakers are considering making it illegal for motorists to pat their pooches while driving. The ban would also cover reading, writing and applying make-up while behind the wheel. But it has divided dog lovers, including Jim Benton who says "it would be kind of hard, because you still have to deal with them like a kid, kind of".

**INSIDE**

**Comment**

The "caliphate" is almost wiped out. But the threat lives on elsewhere.



**WEATHER**

**Today** Possible shower **14-19**  
**Tomorrow** Partly cloudy **12-20**  
**Thursday** Mostly sunny **11-23**  
**Details** **PAGE 34**



NUMTOTS (from left) Luke Snelling, Mitchell Sheldrick, Adam Chandler, Matthew Rossi and Andrew Chia. Right: Mitchell Sheldrick in his seat-design T-shirt, and typical memes. Photos: Justin McManus, Joe Armao

**Life's a wild ride**

**Jewel Topsfield**  
Melbourne editor

When Angus Bergman posted on Facebook that Melbourne had the largest tram network in the world and - "also, because we are hipster as shit and drink lattes out of avocados, we also paint our trams and make them artsy" - there was a lot of love but also a frisson of rivalry.

One commentator pointed out that while Melbourne has the "largest current" network, some European cities came pretty close and "Philadelphia had y'all beat before they scrapped most of them in the '60s". (He quickly apologised after being upbraided for his passive

aggressive comment.) Welcome to New Urbanist Memes for Transit-Oriented Teens (NUMTOT), a Facebook meme group, whose more than 130,000 members are, to quote one of their own favourite expressions, "gay for public transport" (translation: love public transport.)

Any content, meme or otherwise, relating to cities, public transport and urban planning is welcome although the ground rules warn: "We are not explicitly Leftbook, but we are certainly left-leaning. We won't ban you for being a capitalist, but don't expect us to defend you either."

If there was ever going to be a Facebook meme group for urban Millennial geeks obsessed with pop

**Labor helps hotels in**

**Shane Wright**  
Senior economics correspondent

Small hotels would be able to advertise cheap room rates online without fear of being punished by web giants under a plan Labor says will reduce the financial squeeze facing the tourism sector.

In a move backed by the accommodation sector, Labor will pledge today to enable hotels to show the prices for their rooms online even if they are lower than those produced

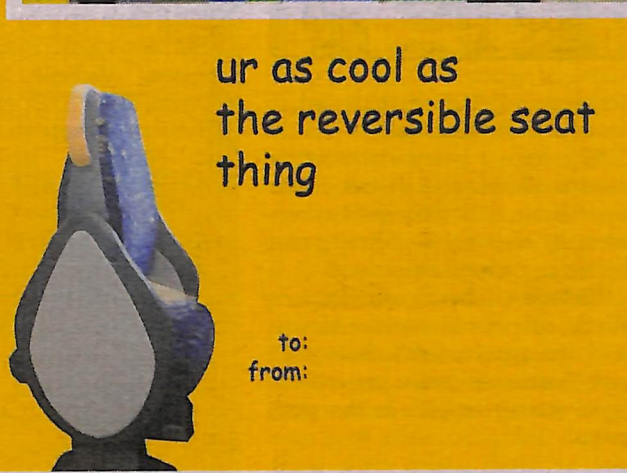
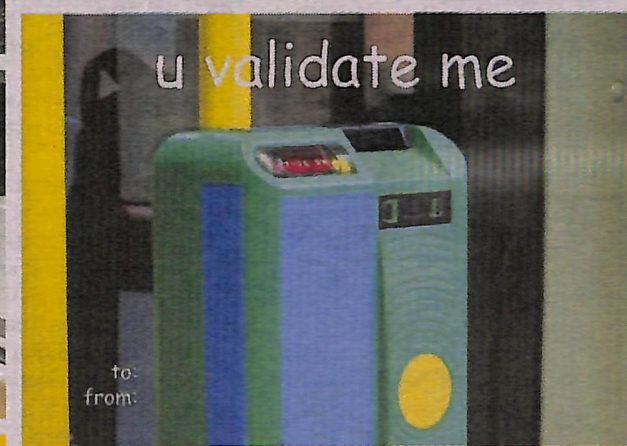
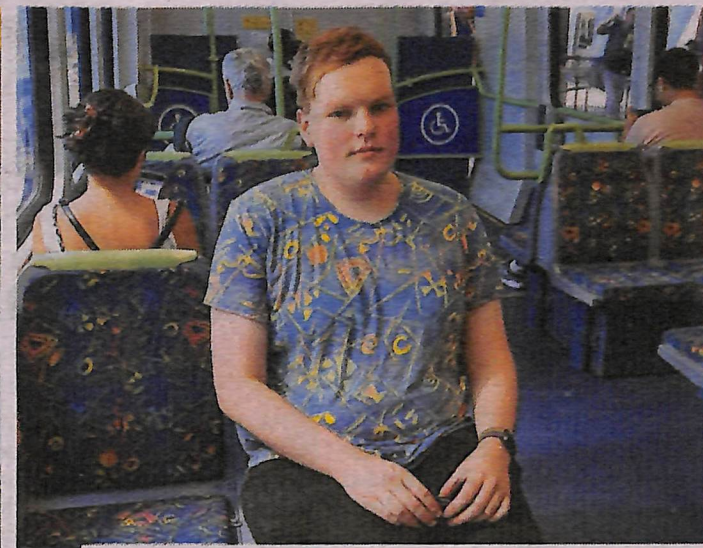
on Expedia or Booking.com websites.

Under current laws, contract terms known as "price-parity clauses" set prices between hotels and the two major booking companies. The clauses prohibit hotels from advertising on their own website prices lower than those on Expedia or Booking.com-related sites such as Trivago or Priceline.com.

If they are found to have advertised cheaper rates, they can have their presence on the major web-



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# Metro's hold on rail staff training

EXCLUSIVE

Timna Jacks  
Transport reporter

Metro is reaping millions of dollars as it trains the army of staff needed to work on the Andrews government's rail infrastructure boom.

It is estimated that since 2015, the company has made nearly \$8 million in rail safety courses.

Metro Trains' dominance in the lucrative training market is bolstered by the fact the company runs the city's railways. Its training college, Metro Academy, runs the lion's share of rail safety education in the state for workers who are employed on key government projects such as the Metro Tunnel and the removal of level crossings.

For years, the rail operator has largely refused to hire rail safety workers for upgrades and repairs if they trained at other colleges. This decision - applying to those trained in medium to advanced levels - raised concerns Metro had a monopoly in the niche training sector.

Metro owns the content for rail safety courses costing between \$500 and \$1000, and has been criticised by industry insiders for failing to share coursework with other training providers. It has, however, agreed to hire workers trained at another college owned by John Holland, which is a 20 per cent shareholder in the rail operator.

Metro made another exception for a separate college called Instruction Company, but in the past five years, the college has not trained a single student in medium to advanced level rail safety.

Between 2015 and 2018, the number of people undertaking rail safety training at Metro Academy rose from 1445 to 4639. The number of people renewing their training increased from 667 to 2323.

In recent months, Metro Academy allowed two other colleges to offer a few rail safety units, but it continues to dominate the market.

A Metro spokesman said the company delivered rail safety training "along with accredited providers to ensure rail workers can safely and competently perform their duties".

"Metro works closely with providers to monitor training demand, maximise the availability of courses and maintain quality," he said.

# for Facebook's Millennial NUMTOTs

culture and trains, it was axiomatic Melburnians would be well represented.

The niche group - profiled by everyone from *The New York Times* to *The Guardian* - was started in 2017 by a couple of University of Chicago students, reportedly following a heated online debate about the US Federal Aid Highway Act of 1956.

Of all the cities in the world, Melbourne boasts the sixth highest number of active NUMTOTs, as the Facebook group's members are nicknamed. Melbourne tram superiority is one of the hot-button topics.

Mr Bergman, a law student, said NUMTOTs from around the world were interested in the perspective of



Melburnians on transport issues.

"We are growing at quite an alarming rate in terms of population. Is infrastructure growing the way it should be?" he says. "We have exper-

ience either ends of the spectrum - we have the largest tram network on the planet in the CBD but we don't have an accessible system to get to the airport."

NUMTOT Adam Chandler, who is also chairman of the Melbourne Tram Museum, says "love it or hate it", Melburnians are actively engaged with public transport.

"Shitposting is a logical extension of that given our Australian way of not taking things particularly seriously." ("Shitposting" generally refers to random, mildly amusing memes or videos.)

NUMTOTs riff on everything from *Thomas the Tank Engine* to urban theorist Jane Jacobs, favourite

train station toilet graffiti and the NSW Greens' proposal for \$1 fares.

The pro-development YIMBY movement (Yes In My Back Yard) also features prominently.

When the T-shirts Mitchell Sheldrick designed out of the (now infamous) Metro train seat covers went viral, someone suggested he should probably become a NUMTOT.

He is now one of nine international moderators of the Facebook page.

NUMTOT has spawned multiple spin-offs including Brutalist concreteposting, Two-wheeled Memes for Bicycle-Oriented Teens and the local Urban Sprawl Memes for Hoddle Grid Teens, which already has more than 550 members.

# fight over booking

sites "darkened", whereby their offerings are pushed to the final page shown to prospective customers. The commissions paid by the hotel to the two major companies, already between 15 per cent and 20 per cent, can also be pushed even higher.

Hotels could only offer cheaper rates to people who call, are members of a loyalty program or turn up at the premises in person.

The issue is being examined by Parliament.

Opposition competition spokes-

man Andrew Leigh said Labor would follow the lead of nations such as Germany where price-parity clauses have been banned.

He said Labor would also direct the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission to investigate the use of such clauses in other industries and on other platforms.

"Increasing competition helps drive costs down for consumers by correcting the power imbalance between small business and the big end of town," he said.

# Telstra workers to strike over pay offer

Thousands of Telstra employees are expected to walk off the job today in a bid to force the company to deliver a bigger pay rise.

The 24-hour strike is expected to be concentrated in the group's maintenance area, which covers fault repairs, investigations, new national broadband network (NBN) connections and diagnostics.

Triple zero call centres, which are controlled by Telstra, and any staff performing services relating to medical emergencies are excluded from the strike action. Telstra said it

did not expect any material impact on customers.

Telstra has been in negotiations with the Communications Electrical Plumbing Union (CEPU) over a new enterprise bargaining agreement. The union has been angered by Telstra's proposed pay rise of 1.5 per cent a year, which it argues is a pay cut because it is below the current rate of inflation.

The CEPU communications division's national president, Shane Murphy, said the initial plan was for workers to take action such as refus-

ing to log on to Telstra's job allocation system 30 minutes ahead of their paid start time. But he said the union was advised this could result in staff wages being cut for a full day.

"Workers have spent many months trying to get Telstra to come to the table with a fair wage offer, and all Telstra is doing is axing jobs and slashing wages," Mr Murphy said.

Telstra chief executive Andy Penn is in the midst of a plan to slash 8000 jobs - about a quarter of the workforce.

Jennifer Duke  
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