

# Hotline needed to tackle bullying

Expert advice for staff and employers.



**LACK OF CLARITY:** Inquiry witnesses concerned about where to go for help

## LATEST

### MYRTLE RUST THREAT

A parliamentary inquiry has learnt first-hand about the damage being done to native trees and plants by a mysterious fungal disease which was only detected in Australia two years ago.

The Climate Change, Environment and Arts Committee has detailed its findings in the second interim report of its inquiry into Australia's biodiversity in a changing climate.

At various site inspections in New South Wales and north Queensland the committee learnt more about the effect of the spread of myrtle rust throughout both states.

"This highlights the need for cooperation between all levels of

government on effective invasive species management," committee chair Tony Zappia (Makin, SA) said.

Myrtle rust is thought to have originated in South America and Mexico.

It was first discovered in NSW in 2010 but it is not known how it found its way here.

The second interim report will be the last update on the inquiry's progress before the final report and recommendations are released next year. •

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**A** new national hotline is needed to help employers and workers deal with workplace bullying, according to a federal parliamentary committee report into the issue.

The House of Representatives Employment Committee's report *Workplace bullying: we just want it to stop* made 23 recommendations to stop bullying in the workplace, which the Productivity Commission according to costs the Australian economy more than \$6 billion per year.

Committee chair Amanda Rishworth (Kingston, SA) said the inquiry showed the need for early intervention and clear support channels.

"A chief concern of witnesses was the lack of clarity about what to do and where to go for help," Ms Rishworth said. "That is why we recommend ... the Commonwealth government establish a new national advisory service to provide advice, assistance and resolution services to employers and workers alike."

The report also urged the federal government to work with the states and territories to enact laws similar to Victoria's 2011 amendments to the Crimes Act, widely known as Brodie's Law.

Nineteen-year-old Brodie Panlock ended her life in 2006 after constant and humiliating bullying by her co-workers in a Melbourne café. The report recommended all state and territory governments consider greater enforcement of their criminal laws in similar cases of serious workplace bullying. (See *'A slow poison'* on page 20) •

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## NEWS

# Diplomatic network needs overhaul

## More diplomatic posts recommended.

**A**ustralia's diplomatic network is in urgent need of an overhaul, including a bigger budget, increased overseas posts and better use of new technologies, a parliamentary inquiry has found.

Criticisms of Australia's existing representation overseas are contained in a report released by federal parliament's Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade Committee, which described the network as "seriously deficient".

Chair of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee, Nick Champion (Wakefield, SA) said Australia needs to rebuild its diplomatic representation and has called for an increase in the number of posts around the world by at least another 20.

To do this the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) would need a significant budget increase, with the committee describing the department as being chronically underfunded over the past three decades.

"Australia has the smallest diplomatic network of the G20 countries and sits at 25th in comparison to the 34 nations of the OECD. Australia is clearly punching below its weight," Mr Champion said.

"DFAT has experienced cuts and financial constraints through successive governments and this has resulted in a diplomatic network which is seriously deficient and does not reflect Australia's position within the G20 and OECD economies."

The committee has recommended Australia increase its representation throughout north and central Asia, particularly in China. It also said deepening our relationship with Indonesia by opening a post in Surabaya should be a priority.

The review's focus on Asia complements the federal government's white paper on the increasing importance of Australia's relationship with the region.

While the focus of the report is on opening new posts it has also noted that the decision to close posts should be subject to more parliamentary scrutiny.

The report has also recommended that travellers pay an extra fee to help cover the ever-increasing costs associated with consular assistance provided to Australians in trouble overseas. Recent high-profile cases include Australian lawyer Melinda Taylor, who was detained in Libya.

An estimated 7 million Australians travel each year, and around 1,000 will end up being arrested.

The committee has recommended that the additional costs of consular assistance be met through an extra passport fee or small levy which would be tiered to take into account whether or not a traveller has insurance, or whether they cannot obtain cover.

The report has also focused on how DFAT can make better use of social media and new technologies. It has called for an overhaul of the department's websites to make them more user-friendly and the establishment of an office of e-diplomacy.

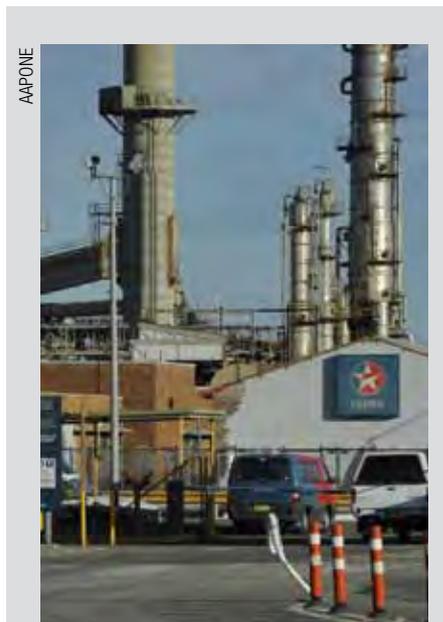
The committee has also recommended that these issues be further investigated through a white paper and external review. •

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**ON OUR OWN:** More diplomatic posts needed in Asia



**CRUDE SOLUTIONS:** Australia's oil refineries under threat

## OIL REFINERIES AT CROSSROADS

In the face of looming closures of two oil refineries in Sydney, the House of Representatives Economics Committee has launched an inquiry into the state of Australia's oil refinery industry.

The planned closures of Shell's Clyde and Caltex's Kurnell oil refineries will leave Australia with only five domestic oil refineries by the end of 2014. Those NSW facilities will be converted into import terminals.

According to Australian Institute of Petroleum figures, in 2010–11 domestic refineries supplied around 74 per cent of petroleum products required by Australia's major industries and service stations. More than a quarter of total petroleum product consumed was imported, primarily from Singapore.

Recent refinery closures have been attributed to the rise of huge refineries in the Asian region such as in Singapore, where a surge of new capacity has depressed profit margins for the Australian industry. The profits of Australia's refineries have declined for several years, mainly due to Asian competition and the high cost of importing and refining crude oil in Australia.

It is becoming more cost effective for oil companies to import refined fuel from Asian mega-refineries, such as Reliance Industry's Jamnagar refinery or ExxonMobil's and Shell's Singapore refineries.

In light of these changes, committee chair Julie Owens (Parramatta, NSW) said it was timely for the committee to examine Australia's domestic refinery capacity, and potential impacts of declining capacity on the economy, energy security and employment.

The committee will identify the current international and domestic trends and pressures impacting on the competitiveness of Australia's domestic oil refineries, and will investigate the likely impact of declining refinery capacity in Australia.

The committee will also consider any potential issues for Australia's future energy security from possible further closures of oil refinery capacity and look at the implications of refinery closures on their workforce.

According to an Australian Strategic Policy Institute report, the fact that domestic oil refining capacity falls short of local demand means Australia is already vulnerable to any future disruption of supplies of imported petroleum during times of crisis. ●

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AAPONE



**LIFETIME DAMAGE:** More education needed to cut FASD

## Action plan launched on baby alcohol disorders

### Community awareness campaigns needed.

**C**ommunity leaders and health workers have urged parliament to take action to prevent more children being born with Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders (FASD).

The Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education (FARE) launched the *Australian Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorders Action Plan 2013-16* at Parliament House, presenting the plan to members of the House of Representatives Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee, which has been inquiring into the incidence and prevention of FASD.

Brain damage caused by exposure to alcohol in the womb can lead to a range of disorders including poor memory, impaired language skills, poor impulse control and mental, social and emotional delays.

FARE's plan has called for community awareness campaigns about the dangers of alcohol during pregnancy; improved diagnostic capabilities; support for people with FASD to achieve their full potentials; improved data collection on the extent of FASD in Australia; and closing the gap on the higher prevalence of FASD among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

These recommendations were highlighted through a documentary about a young boy, Tristan, who lives with FASD at Fitzroy Crossing in Western Australia.

Bunuba community leader and chief executive of the Marninwarntikura Women's Resource Centre at Fitzroy Crossing, June Oscar said Tristan was one of many children and adults living in her community with special needs because they were exposed to alcohol before they were born.

She said since the community had started to focus on the issue, people were better educated about how to recognise FASD and how to prevent it.

"I'd like to think that our community is now much more informed. People are now sharing in discussions on this issue," Ms Oscar said. "Young people are advising each other that it's harmful to drink during pregnancy, so there is hope.

"I am very optimistic that we'll reach a point where everyone knows about this and everyone can understand those who have been exposed to alcohol in utero.

"The conditions people with FASD have throughout their lives are not just because they want to behave badly or they're doing for the heck of it – it's a condition that they have no control

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over. And so it's in their interests and the interests of the whole community that we become better informed about FASD."

FARE said its action plan would cost \$37 million to implement, but the investment would save public money in the long run if it prevented just eight children from being born with FASD and needing the costly extra health and educational support they require.

Professor Elizabeth Elliott from Westmead Children's Hospital in Sydney has been working with the Fitzroy Crossing community on a study into FASD.

She said there was good evidence early diagnosis and special support also has positive outcomes and can save money in the public health and education systems.

"By making an early diagnosis, you can identify areas of need, such as help with literacy or help with gross motor skills," Professor Elliott said. "In studies from the US, children with FASD who were diagnosed earlier had up to four times decreased rates of secondary complications; they were more likely to be employed, less likely to use drugs and alcohol, less likely to have sexual problems, and less likely to end up in jail."

But Professor Elliott said prevention of FASD cases would be the best outcome of the inquiry and the action plan.

"The precautionary principle should be to avoid alcohol during pregnancy," she said. "We know that the mother's blood alcohol level crosses the placenta very readily, and that the baby is then exposed to the same level of alcohol. I'd feel tipsy after a bottle of wine – can you imagine what a developing foetus would feel, and what that is doing to the brain cells in a rapidly developing brain."

Professor Elliott said she wanted to stress that FASD is not just a problem in Indigenous communities.

"It's a problem across society and in fact many of our tertiary educated women are the highest drinkers. In my clinic in Sydney I don't see Indigenous children – I see non-Indigenous children from the whole spectrum of society," she said. •

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FISH OUT OF WATER: Research gap affects fisheries management

## Aquaculture expertise gone fishing

### Inquiry hears about 70 per cent drop in research.

Scientists are finding a new species of fish in Australian waters at the rate of one per week but the work of scientifically classifying species is under threat from a decline in funding, staff and jobs, a House of Representatives inquiry has heard.

The inquiry into the science of aquaculture and fisheries by the Agriculture, Resources, Fisheries and Forestry Committee was told funding for pure scientific research has dropped by around 70 per cent.

Brian Jeffriess, Director of the Commonwealth Fisheries Association, told the inquiry this funding is being diverted to fulfil a range of obligations Australia is now required to meet.

"The requirements under the act that govern the marine environment like monitoring marine parks, climate change, oil and gas and quota monitoring – all those things are taking funding away from straight scientific research," Mr Jeffriess said.

Australia's fish fauna is one of the largest in the world with almost 5,000

species of fish known in Australian waters. The Australian Museum plays a key role in identifying and classifying these species, which research scientist Jeffrey Leis told the inquiry is crucial to fisheries management.

"In order for fisheries biologists to do their work, there has to be a proper understanding of what species they're working with," Dr Leis said. "Otherwise they risk lumping species together and not getting the fisheries management plans right."

His colleague Patricia Hutchings said this is already happening, citing the example of the Sydney fish markets.

"At any visit there are several undescribed species of octopus in the catch," Dr Hutchings said. "Some are identified and some are not, yet it is all managed as one fishery."

Dr Leis said the rising misidentification of fish species is happening in tandem with a fall in the Australian Museum's expert knowledge base. During the 1980s the museum had 11 curators whose specialty was fish. Today there are only four.

“That sort of decrease in capacity is common in all marine animal groups,” Dr Leis said.

The ability of this expertise to be replenished by a new generation of marine biologists is being undermined by funding cuts for research institutions, which means new positions are not being created for graduates.

“They move from one side of the country to another or even overseas for jobs but eventually they get discouraged because there is no career path for them,” Dr Leis said. “Ultimately they drop out and go into another field.

“We are constantly looking for outside sources of funding. We are even looking for endowments – getting people to write the museums into their wills, which a few people have done.”

Despite the concerns about the scientific base supporting aquaculture in Australia, the inquiry heard Australia can have a competitive advantage in the growing industry.

Warwick Nash, of Queensland’s Department of Agriculture and Fisheries, believes Australia’s biggest advantage would be to sell high-quality aquaculture products that have been grown sustainably.

He rates the quality of Australian product far above that coming out of Asia and the Middle East.

“I know from talking to people who sell into that region, that as soon as they find out there is an Australian producer, that is the product they want,” Mr Nash said. “The products coming out of parts of Asia are seen as being of poor quality and of questionable production having used chemicals or having been grown under poor conditions.”

Dr Len Stephens, Managing Director of the Seafood Co-operative Research Centre, said Australia should and can produce high-value expensive products that go into top-line markets.

“We emphasise the quality of our product and its freedom from disease and contaminants,” he said. “There is simply no way we can compete with the Asian aquaculture industry [on a quantity basis].” •

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# Data deficiencies limit law enforcement

## Criminal data kept on 30 different systems.



**MISSING LINK:** *Crime databases not well connected*

**O**utdated and poorly connected data systems are limiting the ability of Australia’s law enforcement agencies to collaborate and share information.

The Australian Crime Commission (ACC) told federal parliament’s Law Enforcement Committee criminal intelligence is currently stored in more than 30 different systems which only have limited connections between them.

“There is no single and complete point-of-truth for Australian criminal intelligence holdings, or an automated process for searching across all systems simultaneously,” the ACC said.

“While the ACC can lawfully request information and intelligence from its partners, this can be a highly inefficient process. The absence of a consistent request for information (RFI) process amplifies this problem.

“Access to a single and complete point-of-truth for Australian criminal intelligence holdings, as well as a

consistent approach to RFI, would resolve this issue.”

The ACC said criminal intelligence must be treated as a national asset that is available to and shared by all relevant agencies. It claimed issues with current methods of collecting and sharing intelligence cause duplication of effort and inefficiency.

“Producing the national picture of serious and organised crime is complicated by a number of issues relating to the collection, use and sharing of criminal intelligence, including limited availability and accessibility of current and complete criminal intelligence and other information used in the production of criminal intelligence; and the absence of agreement on a consistent way in which Australian agencies collect, collate, analyse, produce, store and disseminate criminal intelligence,” the commission said.

“To address these issues, the ACC is pursuing an environment where

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criminal intelligence is treated as a national asset – something that is collected once and used often for the benefit of many – and support is given to an Australian Criminal Intelligence Model and Strategy that secures the free flow of criminal intelligence across the law enforcement, policing and national security domains.”

The national information-sharing service for Australia’s police, law enforcement and national security agencies, CrimTrac, said it is important for all agencies to collect and enter data in the same way and using the same coding so they can link with each other.

“If reference data provided by the agencies is consistently provisioned, linked to a common ‘code’ and provides a search tool operating on the basis of this standardised code directory, the time, cost and complexity placed on the investigative and intelligence functions may be reduced,” CrimTrac told the inquiry.

Senior lecturer in criminal intelligence at Charles Sturt University and former analyst with the ACC, Patrick Walsh said part of the problem is that the ACC and Australian Federal Police (AFP) have inherited legacy databases which were never designed to be utilised as intelligence databases.

“For example, the PROMIS system used by the AFP and the ACC is a case management system – good for investigators during an operation – but not good for sharing intelligence across an agency amongst intelligence officers or between agencies,” he said.

“Another poor ‘intelligence database’ which is coordinated by the ACC on behalf of all law enforcement agencies is the Australian Criminal Intelligence Database (ACID). Again this is not a user-friendly system and while the ACC regularly post its intelligence products on it ACID is not used extensively by all law enforcement agencies.

“This reduces national knowledge about certain criminal threats and degrades law enforcement’s ability to do effective strategic intelligence which can provide warning to government about the potential development of future organised crime threats. ACID needs replacing with a system that all law enforcement agencies will distribute national significant intelligence onto.”

The Police Federation of Australia believes the future of law enforcement is the free flow of criminal intelligence through modern intelligence-sharing technical capabilities.

“In an ideal world all law enforcement and other relevant agencies would be connected into a single criminal intelligence database,” the federation’s CEO, Mark Burgess said.

“The ACC has a legislative mandate to maintain such a database, but is hampered by a lack of modern technology, and an absence of mandatory requirements for agencies to contribute intelligence to that database.”

The federation has asked the parliamentary committee to recommend the development of technical capacity to facilitate the free flow of criminal intelligence between law enforcement agencies, and to put in place legislation that obliges agencies to share intelligence. It said the current system of ad hoc memorandums of understanding, individual agreements or requests for information create an incomplete intelligence picture.

“The free flow of intelligence would greatly assist police officers in the performance of their day to day duties,” Mr Burgess said.

“Police officers should be provided with direct real time access to intelligence holdings on operational grounds. Police officers and those they interact with are most at risk when an officer is forced to operate in a situation without proper intelligence regarding the circumstances of the situation. [Information sharing] needs to be ‘real time’ – e.g. within 48 hours.” •

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AAP/ONE



**DIRECT ACTION:** Stronger steps to fight pirates

## CLOSING THE NET ON PIRATES

Australia will increase its efforts in the fight against piracy and armed robbery against ships under an international agreement reviewed by federal parliament’s Treaties Committee.

The Regional Cooperation Agreement on Combating Piracy and Armed Robbery Against Ships in Asia (ReCAAP) targets pirates by requiring member countries to take action to protect ships from piracy, arrest pirates and seize their ships and rescue victims held by pirates.

Member countries must also endeavour to extradite pirates or persons who have committed armed robbery against ships, at the request of another member with jurisdiction over them.

Piracy and armed robbery against ships remains a significant issue in the Asian region and high profile piracy incidents in Africa have drawn widespread concern.

While the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) said the risk of piracy within the Australian region is low, the threat towards Australian cargo transported via international shipping was as high as for any other international shipping country.

DFAT recommended to the committee that Australia join the agreement, saying it was in Australia’s interests to reduce piracy in the Asia region.

“For vessels transiting to and from Australian ports, piracy potentially impacts on ship routeing, cargo competitiveness, crew safety and maritime insurance premiums,” DFAT said.

“Each of these factors has the potential to contribute to increased

## Law review for sea crimes

costs for Australia's maritime cargo interests. ReCAAP provides a vehicle to facilitate closer engagement with regional states to mitigate risks to those interests and Australia's vital trade routes.

"Engagement with this organisation will further enhance Australia's reputation as a responsible maritime security nation and underline our commitment to regional counter-piracy initiatives."

DFAT also noted that joining the group would not impose a significant cost burden on the government as Australia already fulfils many of the requirements.

"Many obligations are already met through existing activities, including Australian Defence Force surveillance programs and Customs and Border Protection sponsored capability and capacity building events," DFAT said.

"Australia's maritime compliance and reporting regime is strong and effective. The measures described above demonstrate that Australia's current framework is sufficient to meet the essential information-sharing objectives."

DFAT's analysis said industry had been consulted about the treaty and there was general support for it.

"Overall, industry's response has been positive, as there is common recognition of the benefits.

"The maritime industry, seafarers and the maritime law enforcement community all stand to benefit from enhanced communications and information exchange among participating governments. Maritime industry involvement can greatly assist in the improvement of incident response by Contracting Parties, help to provide more accurate statistics on piracy and armed robbery incidents, and enhance maritime domain awareness." •

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**A**ustralia can beef up protections for cruise ship passengers without contravening its obligations under international conventions, a parliamentary inquiry has been told.

The House of Representatives Social Policy and Legal Affairs Committee is investigating the adequacy of current laws and arrangements which cover crimes committed at sea.

The inquiry was established following recommendations made by the NSW coroner in the wake of the high-profile case of Dianne Brimble, who died on a cruise ship in 2002.

The investigation and prosecution of crimes committed at sea can prove difficult due to issues such as overlapping jurisdictions, the location of the ship, where the ship is flagged and the nationality of the accused and victim.

The coroner's report into Ms Brimble's death recommended that the government consider adopting similar laws to ones in place in the United States, which mandate certain requirements for cruise ships entering US waters.

The government has expressed concern that a similar move could be inconsistent with its obligations to an international convention which covers foreign flagged vessels in Australian waters.

However, maritime law expert Associate Professor Kate Lewins said this is not necessarily the case. Dr Lewins believes there is room to move under the requirements of the convention Australia is a signatory to.

"Of course we want to encourage cruise ships as it is a big industry and cruising is something our citizens enjoy, so one has to bear in mind the views of the cruise ships' people," she told the inquiry.

"But I do not believe that measured regulations would interfere with our obligation to allow innocent passage through territorial waters."

Dr Lewins said several recommendations of the coroner's report into Ms Brimble could be implemented to provide better safeguards to passengers.

"We can implement the requirements about how to deal with medical

emergencies, notification, perhaps advising passengers of what to do in certain circumstances and CCTV would obviously be an enormous boon for any authorities investigating something that is happening on board," she said.

According to Dr Lewins, while the international convention says coastal states should not be regulating on some matters such as a ship's structure, it does provide for countries to make regulations once ships are proceeding into inland waters.

"Effectively, once a ship visits the port, we have an entitlement to require it to adhere to our laws. That is the jurisdictional peg," she said.

Some companies, like P&O, have already implemented measures such as the introduction of CCTV and the screening of passengers for weapons and drugs.

Dr Lewins also told the inquiry that Australians are "woefully unprotected" when it comes to seeking compensation for any serious injuries sustained on a cruise ship.

She would like to see a passenger liability scheme introduced.

"Cruise ship lines carry passengers according to their own conditions of carriage, and that may require people to sue in overseas countries, it may require them to sue in a place that does not have English as an official language," she said. •

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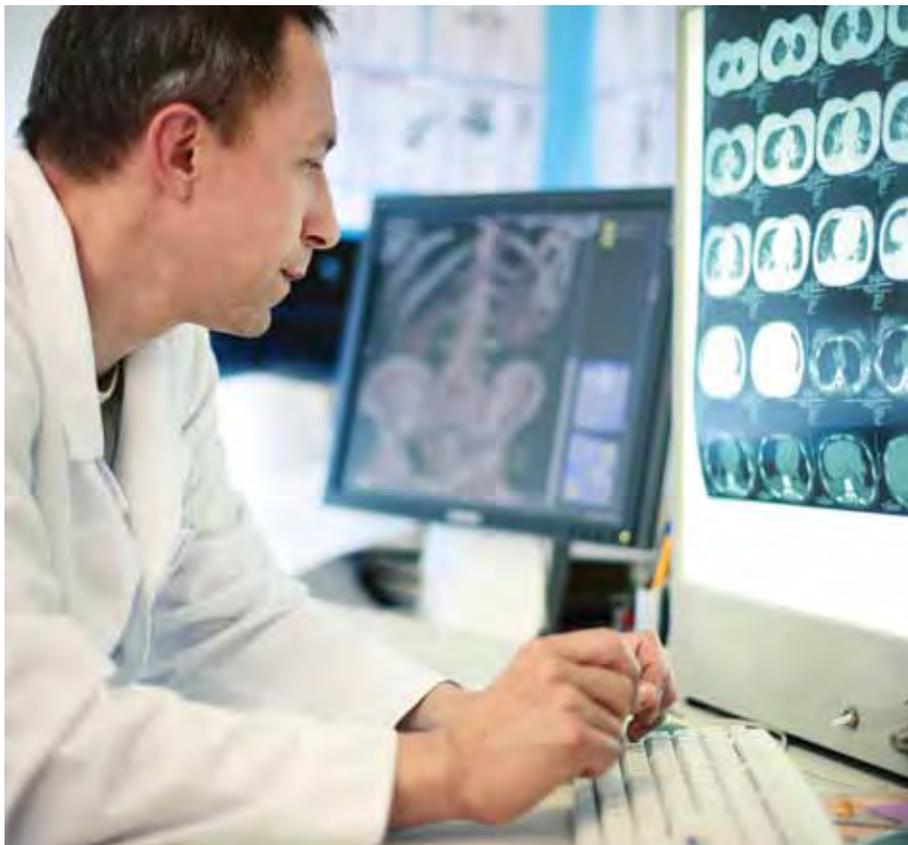
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SEA CHANGE: Law reform to protect cruise ship passengers

## NEWS

THINKSTOCK



**BREAKTHROUGH:** *New imaging technology is helping early diagnosis of dementia*

## New hope for dementia sufferers

Research targets early diagnosis and intervention.

**A** scientific study being conducted by CSIRO is providing new hope for the understanding and treatment of dementia.

With 1,600 new cases identified each week, dementia is becoming an increasing national health priority.

The House of Representatives Health and Ageing Committee is conducting a public inquiry focusing on how early diagnosis and intervention for dementia can play a role in improving the quality of life, social and community engagement and future planning for people with dementia and their families.

“The historical success of reducing the impact of chronic disorders on individuals and society rests on two

fundamental pillars – early diagnosis and intervention,” CSIRO said in its submission to the inquiry.

In its current study, ‘The Australian imaging biomarkers and lifestyle study of ageing’, CSIRO is working with other research bodies and universities to improve understanding of the causes and diagnosis of Alzheimer’s disease, the most common form of dementia.

The study involves 1,000 volunteers and brings together world leading researchers with expertise from a number of medical disciplines aimed at finding ways to diagnose dementia in its earliest stages.

“It is clear that intervention is more biologically effective and more cost effective to society and government

when it is applied at the earlier stages of the disease,” CSIRO said.

“CSIRO has identified dementia, and particularly Alzheimer’s disease, as an area of high priority and one in which we have devoted significant activity and resources within the organisation’s research priorities and in national collaborations.”

CSIRO has been attempting to identify the first measurable signs of the onset of the disease and thereby produce a platform to soundly test both lifestyle and therapeutic approaches to slow progression or prevent the initiation of the disease.

For early detection, CSIRO told the committee impressive advances in imaging technology have been made and it expects those technologies to be more refined and more sophisticated in the immediate future.

However CSIRO representative, Professor Lynne Cobiac said there is no point detecting Alzheimer’s early if we do not have an intervention.

“At this stage we do not have really strong evidence for an effective intervention, and that is part of the big challenge for this research – can we find an intervention that works,” Professor Cobiac said.

“CSIRO and its collaborators are looking at the role of lifestyle interventions, and that includes understanding the role of stress, understanding how physical activity may help to delay any further cognitive decline in people with mild cognitive impairment; and also the role of food and nutrition in terms of delaying cognitive impairment.”

The next focus for CSIRO from their research findings is to use the information available on how to detect the disease and intervene to prevent the disease from taking place.

“Prevention is a very laudable goal, and we may not be able to actually prevent it, but if we can delay the onset by as few as, say, five years, then that will have a significant impact both for health and also for the economic status of the health budget.” •

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# School tests unfair for Indigenous students

Thirty recommendations made to help preserve Indigenous languages.

**A** parliamentary inquiry has found standardised NAPLAN assessments for Indigenous language-speaking students are unfair and should not be used in early school years.

The recommendation is one of 30 in a report on language learning in Indigenous communities by the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs.

The report – *Our land, our languages* – highlights the importance of recognising, encouraging and preserving the 18 most commonly used Indigenous languages still spoken by communities in Australia.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children who speak a traditional language or creole as their first language are currently tested using the National Assessment Program – Literacy and Numeracy (NAPLAN), which applies standardised tests across Australia.

The committee said this had a negative impact on Indigenous language-speaking students because it assumed they were already fluent in standard Australian English.

“These assessments are liable to make false assumptions about learning contexts and about age-appropriate knowledge of standard Australian English,” the report noted. “In addition to being misleading, in painting a negative portrait of learners, assessments that fail to take account of these issues impact negatively on learners’ sense of worth and ongoing engagement with formal education.”

Committee chair Shayne Neumann (Blair, Qld) said these tests may contribute to disengagement with formal education.

“NAPLAN does not adequately or appropriately demonstrate what Indigenous children with traditional first languages can do or what they actually know,” he said.

Deputy chair Sharman Stone (Murray, Vic) said the recommendation



**TESTING TIMES:** *Indigenous students disadvantaged by standardised tests*

to provide more meaningful tests would help prevent the negative consequences associated with receiving ‘unsatisfactory’ marks.

“If the children in the classroom don’t speak standard Australian English then we should not test them with an instrument that is meant to name, blame and shame the school and the teachers because the children have failed,” Dr Stone said, referring to the results being published on the *My School* website.

“That website is visited so often by family looking at how their school is performing, and it’s looked at by teachers considered going and teaching at that school, so it’s a very powerful symbol if the school looks to have failed. That’s not fair.”

Mr Neumann said the committee believed ramping up bilingual education would reverse decline in school attendance rates.

“We had strong evidence that bilingual education works – and works well – for children whose primary language is their mother language, a contact language or creole,” he said.

Dr Stone said one of the committee’s recommendations was to provide all children with a ‘first language assessment’ when they enter the education system.

“Teachers across Australia often encounter children coming to school without English. For any child when they arrive in their earliest formal education experience, they need to have their home language acknowledged, understood, and have that child learn from the basis of that language... not immediately be overwhelmed by English,” she said.

Dr Stone said it should also be compulsory for teachers to learn how to teach English as an additional language or dialect.

“It’s not new, it’s not rocket science: Australian teachers should have capacity to teach to a multilingual school group. We have ignored that basic fundamental need for a very long time,” she said.

Other recommendations include acknowledging Indigenous languages in the constitution; establishing a national interpreting service, especially for the health and justice systems; and opening up alternative career pathways for Indigenous language speakers who work alongside English speaking teachers in classrooms to receive formal teaching qualifications of their own.

The committee received 154 submissions and held 23 public hearings during its review. •

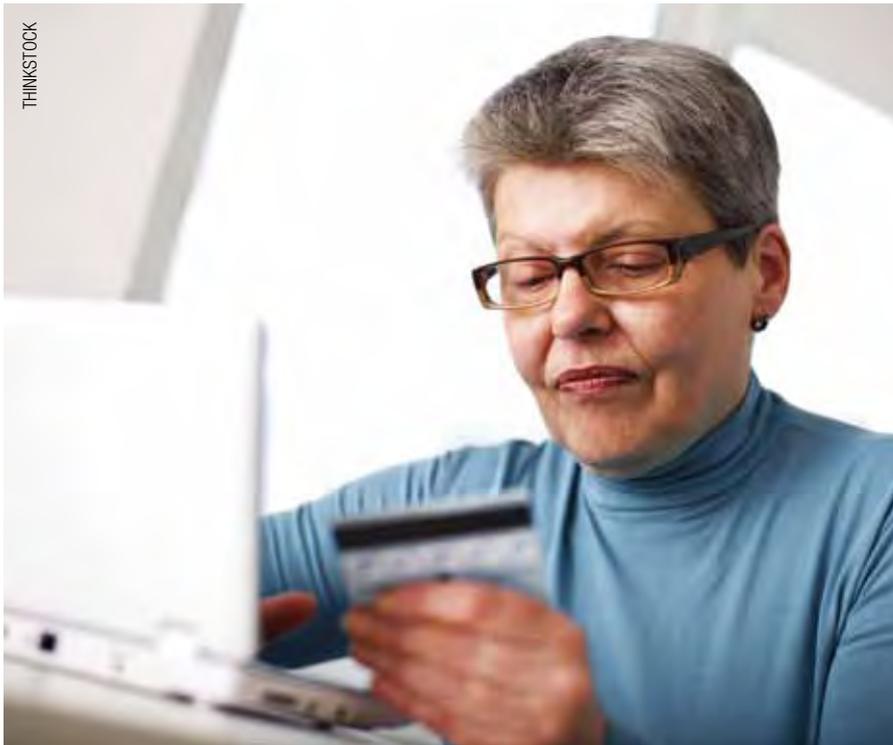
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## NEWS

# Trusting seniors at risk of cyber-scams

Committee survey shows trends in seniors' internet use.



**RISKY BUSINESS:** *Cyber skills training needed to keep seniors safe online*

**A**ustralian seniors who are 'internet-savvy' are seen as high-value targets for cyber-scammers because they are perceived to have greater assets to plunder than younger users of the internet.

That's one of the concerns raised at a federal parliamentary inquiry into cyber-safety for senior Australians, which has held 12 public hearings across Australia in the past year.

The Cyber-Safety Committee is getting a broad and diverse picture of senior Australians using the internet – some fully engaged and with confidence, and others still too frightened to use it by a lack of skills and fear of making mistakes. There is also a group not using the internet at all and the committee wants to reach them to understand their reasons for non-use

and what can be done to address their needs.

"Younger people are taught how to be safe using the internet and as they grow up they'll always use those skills. If we can reach seniors at the other end of the life spectrum, we should be able to close the understanding gap of the risks and pitfalls of using the internet in the entire community," committee chair Senator Catryna Bilyk (Tas) said.

As part of the inquiry, a survey has been asking seniors for their opinions on using the internet. So far there have been 521 responses which showed more seniors using the internet for banking and paying bills (76 per cent) than for entertainment (60 per cent), shopping (54 per cent) or social networking like Facebook (42 per cent).

"Generally seniors are more trusting as a group, so they're more

likely to put information online that could in the long-run be detrimental to them," Senator Bilyk said. "I've seen people mention on Facebook that they're going away for a six-month trip and then on another page there will be something about where they live. This could leave them open to anyone vaguely criminal who wanted to exploit them."

In its submission to the inquiry, the Australian Institute of Criminology (AIC) said one of the challenges currently facing criminal justice policy makers is a lack of knowledge about the extent of crime that is occurring online.

"This can be attributed to a low reporting rate, the multitude of state and federal government agencies within Australia that collect this type of data, how the data are recorded and a lack of resources to undertake victimisation surveys," AIC said.

The other big issue is the lack of any mandatory requirement to report to individuals when breaches of data happen.

"Senior Australians may not even have to access the internet to become victims of cybercrime," said Dr Rick Brown, Deputy Director of Research with the AIC. "Instead personal identification information they may have entrusted to businesses or government agencies to keep safe may be breached in the online environment leaving them vulnerable to identity theft and fraud."

Dr Brown said research done by the AIC and the Australian Crime Commission into serious investment fraud showed that seniors and retirees were among those likely to be targeted by offenders principally because of the often substantial assets they have available to invest.

In relation to scams, the inquiry's survey found 24 per cent (125 seniors) had been personally affected by email scams, identity theft or other internet related fraud. Of these the biggest menace was "phishing": soliciting for donations, inheritance, banking and lottery scams at 75 per cent (90 seniors). Others included malicious software installed (31 per cent or 38 seniors) or romance and dating fraud (17 per cent or 21 seniors).

Of those scammed, 57 per cent (69 affected users) did not report the incident, indicating seniors are either

unaware they should report, or don't know how to.

Senator Bilyk said it was also to do with pride and dignity because people may not want to admit they'd been taken in.

"Some seniors don't want to feel foolish, but they shouldn't worry about that because the criminals are spending 18 months to two years setting up a scam so it looks authentic," she said. "They're building bogus websites with supporting pages to a fraudulent investment so it's very difficult to tell it's a scam. People should always report a problem – to SCAMwatch in the first instance – so they can help prevent others from being taken in too."

Only 1.3 per cent or seven respondents did not have a computer at home. But this statistic highlighted one of the limitations of the survey.

"It would appear we're reaching those seniors who are already connected and well-versed in using the internet," Senator Bilyk said. "What we're not capturing are those seniors who are not online or prefer doing things the old way."

A telling statistic was the response to the question: are you aware of friends, relatives or contacts aged over 55 who don't use the internet? Eighty-three per cent (or 428 seniors) answered yes, with the main reason for non-use being "not interested" (40 per cent or 173 seniors). Thirty-five percent (153 seniors) cited a lack of skills as the reason and 10 per cent (42 seniors) said it was the cost of computers. Only 21 respondents (or 4.9 per cent) answered that fears of security risks prevented them from using the internet.

The survey is open until the end of the year and can be accessed at: [www.aph.gov.au/jscc](http://www.aph.gov.au/jscc). If you are not online but still want to contribute, phone the Cyber-Safety Committee's secretariat on (02) 6277 4202 to request a hard copy to be posted to your address. Your response will still be anonymous. •

## LINKS

[www.aph.gov.au/jscc](http://www.aph.gov.au/jscc)  
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# Privacy caught in the web

## Concerns over new security laws.

**F**ederal MPs have questioned whether there are adequate safeguards against privacy breaches in new laws which could see a person's internet data stored for up to two years.

The federal government has proposed changes to national security legislation which would allow agencies access to certain types of information contained within a person's web browsing and electronic communication.

With concerns raised that the laws breach people's privacy, federal parliament's Intelligence and Security Committee is inquiring into the amendments.

Committee members voiced their concerns to the Attorney-General's Department at a recent public hearing.

Department secretary Roger Wilkins told the inquiry changes to legislation have been proposed because it needs to be brought up to date with the emergence of new communication technologies in the 21st century.

However committee chair Anthony Byrne (Holt, Vic) questioned whether privacy protections are sufficient.

"From what I've heard so far, I'm not satisfied there is an independent mechanism which would provide satisfaction to the public that their data was being protected," he said.

Mr Wilkins responded that the necessity of law enforcement agencies to obtain a warrant to access the content of web searches was the "ultimate protection".

"That's the current requirement. If they want to get this stuff they're going to have to get a warrant."

Mr Wilkins also said the ombudsman and privacy commissioner can be used to provide oversight.

Law enforcement officials must get a warrant to access the content of a person's web searches, but need only authorisation to see the data that allows electronic communications to occur.

But several committee members said they were not satisfied sufficient distinction between content and data



**SEARCH HISTORY:** Agencies push for greater access to personal online data

had been established and whether it was even possible to separate the two.

Independent MP Andrew Wilkie (Denison, Tas) also questioned whether the legislation would be able to catch out sophisticated criminals who are likely to use encryption methods to hide their internet activity.

The department's Catherine Smith said while some are able to hide their activity, patterns of behaviour can still be established through data that can be accessed.

Senator John Faulkner (NSW) told the inquiry concerns had been raised about a lack of detail surrounding the proposal.

"I think what seems to be lost here by some of the agencies is that this proposal is a very controversial proposal," he said.

"I want to have all the information I can available to me as I put my views before this committee in private meetings about the recommendations it should make and I've not felt I've had that information available to me."

The department revealed that the cost of the measure is not yet known, but it is working on three separate scenarios including: industry pays, government pays or a combination of the two. •

## LINKS

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## NEWS

# Sport can help close the gap

## Indigenous educational outcomes improved.



**RACING AHEAD:** Sport keeping Indigenous students engaged

**S**port can play a key role in lowering delinquency rates among Indigenous youth in regional and remote areas, according to a scholar of Aboriginal sport.

Professor Colin Tatz shared his decades of research with the House of Representatives Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Committee for its inquiry into the contribution of sport to Indigenous wellbeing.

“Proof is sufficient to say that where sport flourishes in Aboriginal communities, especially those remote and rural, delinquency rates drop, sometimes to almost zero,” Professor Tatz said. “Where sport is not a presence, rates are alarmingly high.”

“Sport provides a sense of belonging, social cohesion and loyalty, almost a substitute for clan and kinship loyalties. Sport is the only activity in which horizonless and otherwise purposeless youth can pit their bodies and skills against others – without having to go to school, college or apprenticeships.”

Professor Tatz believes participation in sport reduces antisocial behaviour. His views concur with the experience of school teachers and mentors in central Australia, such as Samarra Schwarz, manager of the Girls Academy at the Centralian Middle School. The academy was established in Alice Springs three years ago primarily to keep Indigenous girls interested in school.

Ms Schwarz welcomed the parliamentary inquiry and believes the academy’s focus on sport and sporting role models is making a difference.

“I really hope they do realise it’s making a big impact,” she said. “Our girls’ attendance is averaging 75 to 80 per cent for the whole year. That’s massive – for 55 girls. It is making a difference and there’s a real need for it to continue. A lot of our girls don’t get the opportunity.”

Ms Schwarz said the academy gives structure and purpose to many children who live in otherwise very challenging circumstances.

“For some of them they get let down in their home lives on a daily basis,” she said. “So coming to us and seeing some continuity and knowing we’re always going to be here to support them and there’s this goal if they do well, it makes a hell of a difference.”

The Centralian Senior College is also part of the national Sporting Chance program and offers experiences beyond just sport, such as leadership, teamwork, grooming and deportment, art and craft, and music. The manager of the senior college’s Girls Academy, Beverley Angeles, said sport remains the main carrot dangled to get many of these girls to stay at school.

“It’s exercise, nutrition, leading a healthy lifestyle, and for those with the talent to go on and play at elite level, sport’s a big part of territory lifestyle,” Ms Angeles said.

“Schools go away on a lot of sporting trips and we support the kids, not just financially, but in other ways too.”

The senior college’s development officer Jessie White recalled when one of the teachers came up to her a few months ago.

“She said she can pick which girls are in the academy and which ones aren’t, because their confidence is growing, their self-belief is kicking in, their pride, participation in classes is a lot greater for those girls that are a part of the academy than those that aren’t,” Ms White said.

Committee chair Shayne Neumann (Blair, Qld) is aware of the importance of sport to Indigenous communities.

“Indigenous athletes enjoy a long and rich history of achievement in sport,” Mr Neumann said.

“Indigenous people are more likely to participate in some sports, such as Australian Rules football or rugby league, and Indigenous men participate in sport more than Indigenous women.

“We know that sport can contribute to promoting teamwork, healthy living and community cohesion in Indigenous communities. The challenge, then, is to increase participation in sport and remove barriers to participation. Sporting bodies, non-government bodies and the government all have a role to play.” •

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## Norwegians outline gambling solutions

**R**epresentatives from Norway's gambling industry have told an Australian parliamentary committee the introduction of maximum daily limits and player identification cards has helped to slash problem gambling in the Scandinavian nation.

In 2007 all slot gaming machines in Norway were removed and replaced in 2009 by networked interactive video terminals with loss limits of €50 per day or €275 per month, operated by personal identification cards preventing players from exceeding limits by changing venues or machines.

Speaking to the Joint Select Committee on Gambling Reform, Norsk Tipping senior adviser Bjørn Helge Hoffmann said the new system has allowed the government to control gambling losses and monitor problem gambling behaviour.

"That system we launched was a ground-breaking system worldwide," Mr Hoffmann said. "We used our player card to identify the players. In Norway, 55 per cent of the adult population have this player card. For all types of lotteries and games, they use the player card to register to play.

"The new machine, the new VLT, is based on a PC and has a touch screen, and is connected to a central network. That means that we have the ability to upload different limits on the machines. Since it is a central network, they can also monitor the machines and the turnover."

The Norwegian Ministry of Culture admitted the 2007 ban on slot machines led to the disappearance of an entire industry and 1,500 people may also have lost their jobs, but social benefits were considered to outweigh employment issues.

The government-owned Norsk Tipping has provided gambling services

in Norway since reforms in 2007 brought the industry under a state-controlled monopoly. Operating under the Ministry of Culture, it supplies and controls the gambling industry, which includes lottery, bingo, game machines and sports betting.

The company said that before the reforms there was nothing stopping gamblers from losing \$1,000 an hour playing the old slot machines.

"The new regime stated that in the game you have to control the net loss of each player. That is why they use the player card," said Lars Martin Ottesen, Norsk Tipping VLT games manager.

"We keep track of your net loss and your maximum net loss is €275 per month and €50 per day. The machine is disabled once you reach your maximum, so you cannot transfer any more funds to your terminal and you cannot play anymore."

In the Gambling Reform Committee's latest report, committee chair Andrew Wilkie (Denison, Tas) and Senators John Madigan (Vic), Richard Di Natale (Vic) and Nick Xenophon (SA) made additional comments comparing the Norwegian example to proposals in Australia to introduce mandatory pre-commitment, where gamblers would set a maximum limit they could lose before they start playing.

"While the environments and systems differ to those in Australia, it is clear that setting limits in Norway has reduced problem gambling and gambling harm," the four committee members stated in the report.

"Limits in Norway have been set by the government, whereas with mandatory pre-commitment the intention is to provide that tool to the gambler to set their own limit."

Responding to a question from Mr Wilkie, Mr Hoffmann said there

had been little if any community hostility or resistance to the reforms.

"No, not at all, except for some principal debate whether slot machines should be allowed or not," he said. "Since people have seen the machines there has been no protest against them as far as I know. The organisations that help people with problem gambling are all very happy with the solutions that we have introduced into the market."

Usage figures confirm the limits have been well accepted, with only 21 per cent of players reaching the government mandated limits each month.

Norsk Tipping also said the introduction of machines with limits had not introduced any new problems.

"We do not think there is very much of a black market," Mr Hoffmann said. "We cannot say that we have seen any huge movement to online gaming." •

### LINKS

[www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/gamblingreform@aph.gov.au](http://www.aph.gov.au/senate/committee/gamblingreform@aph.gov.au)  
(02) 6277 3433



**WITHIN LIMITS:** Norwegian pre-commitment scheme deals with problem gambling

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