

Call for big city revamp

EXCLUSIVE
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CITY EDITOR

Plans to enhance Melbourne's liveability

CHEAPER off-peak public transport fares and a car congestion charge should be considered by the next state government to enhance Melbourne's liveability, says a key city lobby group.

Committee for Melbourne also wants the next government to reassess and reprioritise major infrastructure projects, including the \$100bn-plus Suburban Rail Loop.

Led by CEO Mark Melvin, the committee represents more than 150 groups spanning business, academic and community sectors to support

Melbourne as "a leading global city".

In its pitch for next month's state election, the organisation said since the 2018 poll, Victoria had suffered major impacts such as devastating bushfires and the pandemic.

Mr Melvin said Victoria had the highest public debt of any state, and with the economy facing skills shortages, the government needed to ensure its projects would not be "an inefficient drag on skills".

"We need to also ensure there are sufficient skills available for crucial sectors of the

economy such as health, visitor economy, research, technology and innovation," he said.

Mr Melvin said the committee wanted the government to reprioritise its infrastructure spending based on timeliness, productivity and effectiveness.

"The Suburban Rail Loop should be included in the reprioritisation of infrastructure spend, and put through the same lens as all other projects," he said.

The committee is also calling for better use of existing assets to include cheaper public transport fares at certain times

of the day, significant reform of the bus system, and a charge based on vehicles' use of roads.

"These relatively cost-effective reforms might increase connectivity across the whole of Greater Melbourne while having the added benefit of reducing congestion and carbon emissions," Mr Melvin said.

"We understand that off-peak fares have been trialled

with some success, and Infrastructure Victoria has proposed varied fares for different modes of transport," Mr Melvin said.

The committee's previously released Benchmarking Melbourne 2022 report highlighted a "tale of two cities", in which not all the city's residents could take part in Melbourne's "wonderful offerings".

It wants the next government to hold a summit on CBD revitalisation and its integration with other parts of Greater Melbourne.

And it's calling for the creation of a body reporting to the

state Treasurer that would develop effective engagement to promote the entire city's tourism and experience economy.

Other priorities identified by the committee include a broad-based levy to fund cheaper housing, attracting venture capital to commercialise new research and technologies, and better support of the overseas student industry.

The committee also wants the government to provide clear timelines and plans for the transition away from natural gas, and policies to encourage the take up of zero-emission vehicles, including electric cars.

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Fein quits campaign for teal

EXCLUSIVE
CARLY DOUGLAS

ONE of the teal movement's most senior strategists has quit just weeks out from the election.

Alex Fein, Voices of Caulfield president, who has been working on the teal campaign in one of the state's most high-profile seats, alongside candidate Nomi Kaltmann, has resigned from her position just two months after signing on.

The Herald Sun understands that Ms Fein was not happy with how Ms Kaltmann's Caulfield campaign was being run, with fears that volunteer mobilisation was lacking in the electorate.

But Ms Fein said she had ditched the campaign because of her role at Redbridge.

"I work for a political research company and feel it's best, at this stage, to stay at arm's length from campaigns," she told the Herald Sun. She confirmed she was on good terms with Ms Kaltmann.

At the federal election, Ms Fein was head of strategy for independent MP Zoe Daniel, who snatched the blue-ribbon seat of Goldstein from Liberal MP Tim Wilson.

The independent strategist was recruited to the Caulfield campaign to unseat Deputy Liberal leader David Southwick because of her strong ties with Climate 200.

While Ms Kaltmann was the first teal announced this election, she was one of the last to receive formal backing from Climate 200, the activist group adding her to its website only four weeks ago.

Ms Fein had selected the 30-year-old mother of three in August, calling her a "clear winner" in the search for the high-profile seat's first teal.

"Caulfield deserves the best independent candidate to represent it in the parliament and we think Nomi is a brilliant candidate who has the drive, passion and community backing to succeed," she said.



MEGHAN SLAMS BIMBOS IN PARIS PODCAST

LOS ANGELES: The Duchess of Sussex has described how being a "briefcase girl" on the American version of the TV game show Deal or No Deal in 2006 made her feel "objectified" as a bimbo.

Despite being grateful for the work as a struggling actress, she found being valued for her beauty and not her brains made her feel "not smart", and she quit the show.

In the latest episode of her Archetypes podcast, called Breaking Down "the Bimbo" with Paris Hilton, who is interviewed on the show, Meghan said she wanted her daughter Lilibet to be valued primarily for her brain rather than her beauty or her body.

Meghan discussed the difference between her job on the show and her time spent as an intern at the US embassy in Argentina, which she said focused on her abilities.

She admitted it was hard to think about what she would talk about with Hilton when so much of The Simple Life star's identity "was about not leaning into being smart".

Hilton said she had played the role of "dumb blonde," while her co-star Nicole Richie was the troublemaker. "I almost got stuck and lost in the character and at some point it's like lines got blurred and I forgot who I was," she said.

Security worry in pilot hunt

CLARE ARMSTRONG

AUSTRALIA must tighten laws to prevent former military personnel passing on security knowledge and skills to foreign governments, the Opposition says amid fears China is using big pay cheques to lure war pilots to work for them.

Opposition defence spokesman Andrew Hastie said he knew of "two" former Australian pilots who had been approached by the Chinese government to train their armed forces.

"I understand that they haven't participated," he said.

"But approaches have been made." Describing reports that British and Australian pilots were being enticed by China with large compensation packages as "quite concerning", opposition foreign affairs spokesman Simon Birmingham said the federal government should strengthen laws to prevent it occurring.

The UK has announced it will take measures to stop such recruitment schemes amid national security concerns, with Senator Birmingham calling on Labor to do the same.

Defence and contracted personnel already have ongoing responsibilities as Australian government clearance holders, which extend beyond their employment with Defence. It is understood outgoing personnel are reminded of their continuing obligations under the Crimes Act 1914 and other relevant legislation before their employment ends.

Opposition Leader Peter Dutton said the reports from the UK were "alarming".

"If (fighter pilots) worked with an adversary or with another country to share those secrets whilst they were employed in the Australian Defence Force, then that would be a very serious breach of the law," he said. Mr Dutton called on Defence Minister Richard Marles to introduce legislation to deal with the issue.