

Push for independent inquiry on bullying and harassment claims in Victorian parliament

Bullying and sexual harassment within Victorian parliament could soon be probed by an independent panel amid allegations bullying behaviour occurred under the Premier's watch.

A push for workplace safety to be examined by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission (VEOHRC) will be introduced to parliament this week by Derryn Hinch's Justice Party.

It comes after revelations Victorian MPs reported being harassed in parliament and a former Labor MP went public with bullying claims.

"The Victorian parliament has an important role to play as an exemplar of best practice in the prevention of, and response to, bullying, sexual harassment and sexual assault in workplaces," Justice Party MP Tania Maxwell said.

"But we're out of step with the community's rightful expectations in 2022."

Police still searching for men allegedly behind 'cowardly' Melbourne bus attack

Police are still looking for the group of men allegedly behind a "cowardly" attack on a Melbourne bus last month, which left a woman with a traumatic brain injury.

Three women were allegedly kicked and punched by a group of approximately eight men while on a bus from Dandenong Railway Station to Doveton around 7.40pm on February 26.

One of the victims suffered a mild traumatic brain injury and broken nose, while the other two were left with bruising.

Victoria Police Chief Commissioner Shane Patton described the attack as "cowardly" and "ridiculous",

Skyrocketing fruit and vegetable prices set to continue as key issues spark supply chain problems

Soaring grocery prices have been blamed on mass chain supply issues which have sparked a warning prices will continue to skyrocket.

The issue has been escalated by catastrophic floods across NSW and Queensland, which destroyed major crops in both states.

Ritchies IGA chief executive Fred Harrison said a lack of produce being available for supermarkets to buy has forced an increase in fruit and vegetable prices.

"Basically there's a shortage, the floods have taken out plenty of the crops," he told 3AW.

"It's really the fruit and vegetables which are in a bit of bother and it could be like that for the next three or four months."

Among the most affected products are broccoli, which has surged to \$7.50/kilo while lettuces are five dollars for a head and red capsicums are at \$15/kilo.

\$480m election promise to improve internet in the bush

Up to 1 million homes outside of Australia's major cities have been promised faster internet under a \$750m upgrade of the national broadband network.

The Morrison government has pledged \$480m to improve NBN infrastructure in the bush in a pre-election budget sweetener in a bid to charm regional voters before Australians head to the polls in May.

The network upgrade is expected to take about two years, with NBN Co to chip in the remaining \$270m out of its own funds.

Communications Minister Paul Fletcher announced the funding on Tuesday, saying the upgrades would improve speeds for homes with fixed wireless services and increase data limits for rural properties that depend on the two Sky Muster satellites.

The NBN relies on these technologies in the bush, where the distance between properties means homes can't as easily be connected to the network with the fibre-optic cables that are used around the large cities.

Mr Fletcher said the upgrade would mean 120,000 additional homes could switch from the slower Sky Muster to NBN fixed wireless, freeing up capacity on the satellite network for those who need to use it.

Peter Dutton looks to space as the new frontier

Defence Minister Peter Dutton has flagged the possibility of Australia developing a US-style Space Force in the future.

In a major speech in Canberra on Tuesday, Mr Dutton will announce the launch of Australia's Defence Space Command to help protect against hostile acts in earth's orbit and beyond.

Justification for the new program was partly put down to recent hostile acts by Russia and rapid advancement of Chinese military capability.

The Defence Space Command will aim to develop Australia's military space capabilities to protect intelligence, surveillance and reconnaissance assets such as satellites.

Australia's Space Command will initially be small compared to similar programs overseas, but is considered a necessary first step in developing an Australian Space Force in the future.

Blast rips new district to shreds as war reaches into Kyiv

On Sunday night, the brand new Retroville shopping centre on the north-western outskirts of the Ukrainian capital, Kyiv, was hit by a Russian air strike that destroyed everything for metres around and killed six

The attack, most probably a missile strike, ripped through the southern section of the vast mall at about 10:45 pm, shaking the entire city.

The Russians "were probably targeting the power station a few hundred metres away", he surmises, pointing to a large white cooling tower in the distance.

Opened in early 2020, just before Covid struck, the Retroville was the pride of the locals -- a temple to retail therapy boasting 250 shops, Western brands, a multiplex cinema, 3,000 parking places.

Around the shattered shopping centre, hardly a single window has survived the blast. Shards of broken glass litter the paving stones at the foot of the 20-storey tenement blocks.

Federal budget 2022: Plan to bring back international visitors

The upcoming federal budget will include \$60m to try to fast-track the return of international visitors to regional tourism destinations hit hard by Covid-19 border closures.

Prime Minister Scott Morrison will acknowledge his tourism marketing background on Tuesday to announce additional funding aimed at luring overseas tourists back Down Under.

He was the former managing director of Tourism Australia from 2004 to 2006 and signed off on the infamous "So where the bloody hell are you?" campaign featuring Lara Bingle.

Mr Morrison will announce \$45m in extra cash for the tourism agency to increase its marketing initiatives and extend its upcoming campaign to feature key regional destinations.

Places to benefit would include the Gold Coast, the NSW North Coast, the Sunshine Coast, the Great Ocean Road, the NSW Hunter, Uluru, the Kimberley and parts of Tasmania.

Another \$15m will go Tropical North Queensland's tourism body to promote the Great Barrier Reef.

Queensland: Pair fights for life after horrific caravan inferno

A pair in their 20s are fighting for their lives in hospital after a caravan caught alight in Queensland.

The man, 22, and woman, 20, who is believed to be pregnant, escaped the red-hot inferno in Logan Central, south of Brisbane, on Monday night.

Queensland Ambulance Service medical director, Steven Rashford said paramedics arrived at the Wilbur St address around 11pm to find the pair with significant injuries.

"Two patients in their 20S required significant resuscitation," Dr Rashford said.

The pair were transported to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital suffering severe burn wounds.

SPORT

Wests Tigers news: Stars Daine Laurie, James Roberts playing pokies before Newcastle loss

The Wests Tigers playing-group culture is under question yet again following revelations two players were seen gambling on poker machines at a Newcastle pub on the night before the club's humiliating loss to the Newcastle Knights.

Fullback Daine Laurie and centre James Roberts left the team hotel and were at the Great Northern Hotel until around 10pm.

[The Wests Tigers were thumped 26-4 the next day](#) by an understrength Knights team that was missing Dave Klemmer, Kalyn Ponga, Daniel Saifiti and Jayden Brailey.

Revelations that two players were out the night before, albeit not drinking alcohol, is sure to anger Wests Tigers members and fans after their shocking performance.

It says a lot about a poor attitude at the club both on and off the field.

Former Bulldogs player charged over alleged 'vicious' assault

Former AFL player Brennan Stack has appeared in court over allegations he and another man brutally assaulted two women.

Mr Stack, 33, will remain behind bars until the end of the month after his bail hearing was adjourned.

The former Western Bulldogs player was charged in relation to an alleged attack on two women in a carpark in the Perth suburb of Northbridge in the early hours of Sunday morning.

Another man, aged 25, has also been charged.

The women, both aged 24, said they feared for their lives during the alleged assault.

Police say the attack stemmed from a verbal argument at around 2am.

Footage of the alleged attack shows two women on the ground being kicked, punched and stomped on.

The alleged victims were left cut, bruised and badly shaken.

Socceroos coach Graham Arnold apologises after Covid-19 breach

Socceroos coach Graham Arnold has apologised for breaching NSW self-isolation protocols, which has led to him being fined \$25,000 by Football Australia.

Arnold was in self-isolation after testing positive to Covid-19 last Thursday – the day before he was set to enter Socceroos' camp for this Thursday's World Cup qualifier against Japan at Sydney's Accor Stadium – for the second time in the space of two months.

However, Arnold broke the NSW Public Health Act on Sunday by going for a brief swim – to help with his allergies – at Narrabeen Beach.

"Graham has been diligent throughout Covid, however on this occasion he has made an error of judgment, which is clearly disappointing," FA CEO James Johnson said.

"We have sought to act as swiftly as possible on this matter and have imposed a significant fine, which underscores how importantly we value our representatives abiding by Government protocols."

Arnold expressed remorse for his "error".

"I sincerely apologise for my error of judgment on Sunday," the Socceroos coach said.

"I accept that I should not have left my home as per the New South Wales self-isolation protocols and will remain at my property until my self-isolation window concludes.