

Funds ready for child-care centre

Federal funding would be provided to maintain a child-care service recently established at Melba, the Member for Fraser, Mr Langmore (Lab), said yesterday.

The Melba Neighbourhood Centre would receive up to \$34,000 a year to help run its new occasional-care centre at the Melba Flats complex.

The Government would provide up to \$19,035 a year toward the cost of the salaries of a nurse and child-care worker and an estimated \$15,000 to help the centre reduce its fees for lower-income families, Mr Langmore said.

Two hours to clean up chemical spill

Toxic chemicals were spilled when a truck overturned near the junction of Fairbairn Avenue and Oaks Estate Road shortly after 8pm yesterday.

The ACT Fire Brigade took about two hours to clean up the chemicals, which included insecticides aldrin, heptachlor and dichlorvos.

Three units attended under Station Officer Bill Parkhill.

Because of the toxic nature of the insecticides, the clean-up had to be very thorough. The material was taken to a special area at the Belconnen tip, where it was buried last night.

Police closed the road to traffic while the material was being cleaned up.

The truck was operated by W. A. Flick and Co pest control services.

Fatal accident



A police officer inspects the wreckage of a car in which Mr David Burrows, 66, of Hackett, died yesterday. The car, which had been travelling north, left the Federal Highway and hit a tree at about 3pm. A NSW police spokesman said Mr Burrows had been killed instantly. He was thought to have had a heart attack. The accident happened about 3km north of the ACT border.

'Drugs in Australia: National Action' meeting Cannabis argument splits advisory committee

By DEBBIE CAMERON

The vexed question of marijuana legalisation has divided a government advisory committee and posed a difficult problem for this month's "summit".

The Drugs in Australia: National Action conference, which involved more than 40 community representatives, was sharply divided on whether possession of cannabis for personal use should be decriminalised.

The conference failed to reconcile the disagreement but recommended that "criminal records of those convicted of possession for personal use should be destroyed at the end of two years".

The conference was set up to devise recommendations for the Minister for Health, Dr Blewett, to present to the forthcoming special Premiers' conference on drugs.

The chairman, Professor Ian Webster, speaking yesterday at the end of the three-day conference, said cannabis issues "polarised the workshop".

He was confident that the compromise recommendation would be supported at the "summit".

It will, however, be difficult for the Premiers to resolve the issue, which, despite growing acceptance of the use of

cannabis, is still able to split the community.

The provision for records to be expunged would be a big step for Australia, which has consistently resisted calls from groups such as the National Organisation for Reform of Marijuana Laws for its decriminalisation.

In a submission to the conference, the marijuana lobby said "large numbers of people break the present law feeling that they do no harm or moral wrong."

"From every reasonable viewpoint, the criminal sanctions against cannabis possession, use and cultivation have failed in both their stated and implied objectives. Neither regulation, control nor prohibition have been effectively achieved."

The opponents of legalisation at the Canberra conference said that cultivation,

possession and use of the drug should remain illegal.

Professor Webster said the conference recommendation about clearing marijuana possession-and-use convictions from criminal records was "a move toward the liberalisation of attitudes towards marijuana".

He added, "Broadly speaking, people do realise that there are quite a number of young people using cannabis and to carry that mark against them in their subsequent employment and other records would be most inappropriate."

The recommendation says that records should be cleared only on "the application of the person convicted, except in stipulated circumstances; access to such records should be restricted to members of law-enforcement agencies, and to authorities having lawful access to police records from criminological research."

Tobacco sponsorship of sport is criticised

The Government has been advised to phase out sponsorship of sport by tobacco and alcohol companies, outlaw tobacco promotion and curb liquor advertising on television.

The advice came from the conference discussing strategy for this month's "summit".

The conference also recommended restrictions on the number of liquor licences.

The chairman, Professor Ian Webster, said the workshop wanted "much tighter statutory controls on alcohol advertising".

There had been moves at the three-day conference, which ended yesterday, to recommend a total ban on alcohol advertising on television but a compromise which involved tight restrictions on when advertisements for liquor could be screened was adopted instead.

"There needs to be more funding of treatment and rehabilitation programs and we believe that the funding of health and community services dealing with alcohol is insufficient and would need to be increased," Professor Webster said.

He criticised "insufficient" training of medical students about alcohol-related

diseases and said a big improvement in teaching programs for doctors, paramedics and nurses was needed.

"There were also very strong recommendations that in a national policy one should be concerned about the overall consumption levels in Australia and that the provision of licensing should be controlled in such a way that it was in some way related to the population growth and distribution," he said.

"We should be concerned not to allow licensing of outlets for alcohol sale to grow disproportionately... licensing provisions should be examined critically and should be determined in relation to population growth and development."

Professor Webster was quick to defend the recommendation against accusations of wowsers.

"Behind that was the notion that increased availability was associated with increased consumption and that increased consumption was the essential problem," he said.

"Of course it's not wowsers; it's a sensible and proper judgment... we all recognise that alcohol is intrinsically part of Australian life."

Median house price \$85,000 in ACT

By DEBBIE CAMERON

The cost of residential real estate in Canberra rose 23 per cent in the 12 months to January, pushing the median price over \$85,000 and the ACT very close to the lead as the dearest place in Australia to buy property.

Figures issued yesterday by the Real Estate Institute of Australia in its publication, *Market Facts*, showed that Canberra house prices rose from \$69,200 in January 1984 to \$85,100 in January this year.

The 23 per cent spiral follows more than two years of rapidly escalating prices. There is no evidence that the trend will change in the short-term.

By comparison, Sydney prices in the year to January rose 4 per cent, the median stabilising at \$86,300.

Institute research for December showed Canberra prices only \$3,000 short of Sydney. That gap was pegged back substantially in the 12 months to January and could be even narrower when February statistics are made public.

The median price of home units in Canberra rose 23 per

cent in the 12 months to January. The new median is \$61,400.

The latest figures and recent results of Canberra land auctions have put in doubt real estate industry predictions at the end of last year that Canberra's prices would level out in the middle of this year.

The *Market Facts* survey also held bad news for Canberra tenants with vacancy rates falling to less than a third of 1 per cent in January.

A seasonal increase in demand for rental accommodation had led to further pressure on the rental market.

"The vacancy rate dropped to a very low 0.3 per cent in January... Houses were in greatest demand during January but, due to the increase in demand and the low level of stock available, only 7 per cent of (agents involved in the survey) were able to satisfy demand."

The highest rent levels for units and houses applied in inner-city areas, where the most common levels were \$105 and \$140 respectively.

Real Estate. — Page 14.

Falling dollar increases price of cars

By PAUL GOVER, Motoring Editor

Car buyers will feel the first effects of the falling value of the Australian dollar from today.

Mazda has announced a 3 per cent increase in the price of its products and Fiat and Subaru vehicles will rise by a similar amount.

The Mazda price rise will add \$300 to the price of a 323, \$350 to a 626, \$400 to a 929 and \$500 to an RX7.

A company spokesman said the increases were due to "the fluctuation of the Australian dollar against international currencies including the yen and the American dollar."

"Future changes to exchange rates could further influence vehicle prices."

The price increases for Subaru and Fiat — both franchises handled by LNC Industries — will take effect from the arrival of the next shipments from Japan and Italy.

"Subaru will probably be within a week, Fiat a little longer," a spokesman for LNC, Mr Nick Senior, said.

"In the case of Subaru, there has been a weakening of 10 per cent against the yen but we are covering it by 3 per cent."

"We buy Fiats in American dollars and there has been a 15 per cent weakening there, but we are still covering it by 3 per cent."

The weakening of the Aus-

tralian dollar is eventually likely to affect the prices of most imported vehicles and local products, as most use imported components.

Toyota is expected to announce an increase for its imported vehicles within a week.

Two of the few which have stated publicly that they will not increase prices are BMW and Alfa Romeo, both of which, perhaps significantly, are factory subsidiaries and not importers or distributors.

Alfa Romeo's managing director, Mr Ruggero Rotondo, said on Tuesday that he expected no increase for at least six months,

as it was the company's policy to review its pricing half-yearly.

According to BMW Australia's chief, Mr Ron Meatchem, the company protects itself against currency fluctuations.

"We manage our business in such a fashion that we have been buying import licenses in a strategic manner and buying 'forward' currency cover at favourable exchange rates, in a bid to insulate against short-term currency fluctuations," he said.

"This strategy will be in jeopardy only if the Australian dollar continues to weaken against the US dollar or maintains its current low level for a significant period of time."

Art staff consider action

By MARI GIBSON

Some staff at the Canberra School of Art could take further action to oppose a proposal for a National Institute of Tertiary Education.

A spokesman, Mr Ingo Kleiener, a senior lecturer at the school, said efforts could be made to bring the issue before the ACT House of Assembly.

Action would have to be taken within the next few weeks because that was all the time the staff had.

Their might give a petition to the Mem-

ber for Canberra, Mrs Kelly (Lab), and the Member for Fraser, Mr Langmore (Lab), for presentation in Parliament.

Staff members had met Mr Dick Johnson, one of the members of the institute working party, yesterday.

The meeting had been "fairly depressing" and staff were still concerned that a decision would be made too quickly.

The Minister for Education, Senator Ryan, set up a working party to look at the institute proposal in December last year.

Sydney hearing by war crime judges

SYDNEY: Three West German judges and a NSW magistrate heard evidence of Nazi war crimes in Sydney yesterday, almost 40 years after the end of World War II.

In a special sitting at the St James Local Court, the judges, from Dusseldorf District Court, took evidence with magistrate Mr Robert Evans in the trial of an SS Ambulance Corps officer charged with taking part in murder at a concentration camp at Riga-Kaiserwald in Poland.

The judges, who were allowed to hear evidence in Australia under the Extradition Foreign States Act, heard evidence of atrocities from an old Jewish man.

Handbags stolen from houses

Eight break-ins were reported to police in the 48 hours to noon yesterday including: houses at Lowana Street, Braddon (two handbags containing a total of about \$200); Krichauff Street, Page (stamps and collector's coins); David Street, O'Connor (collector's coins and cash); the Edmund Barton Motor Inn, Lyneham (four archery bows valued at \$280); and J. B. Young, Kingston (a glass window was smashed and alcohol stolen).

The theft of a printing-press cylinder valued at about \$3,000 was reported from the Canberra TAFE College, Reid.

Memorial repairs

Planned repairs to the steps and retaining walls of the Desert Mounted Corps Memorial in Anzac Day, it was hoped, a statement in the name of the Minister for Territories, Mr Scholes, said yesterday.

Emergency centres under threat

SYDNEY: NSW surgical specialists indicated last night that they might stop manning crisis-treatment centres currently filling gaps in the hospital system during the Medicare dispute between the NSW Government and doctors.

The deputy chairman of the Council of Procedural Specialists, Dr Michael Aroney, said the State Premier, Mr Wran, had indicated that the Health Department was coping. This, however, was only because surgeons were manning the crisis centres, which were handling emergency

operations at the major hospitals, Dr Aroney said.

The NSW Health Department said about 850 surgeons had so far either resigned or submitted notice of their resignations from public hospitals.

Only a small number, about 50, had heeded the Australian Medical Association's call to return to their duties.

All Sydney's major hospitals said yesterday that they were coping with emergencies, but were under considerable strain.

More than 200 procedural special-

ists in South Australia met in Adelaide on Wednesday and decided to begin industrial action if the latest national talks involving Dr Thompson failed to solve the dispute.

Representatives of doctors in Western Australia, including procedural specialists, were due to meet in Perth late last night to discuss the NSW dispute.

Dr Aroney said Victorian doctors would meet on Wednesday. NSW procedural specialists would send a representative.

Police seek changes to weapons laws

By PHILIP CASTLE

Legislation to cover offensive weapons, which would soon be introduced to the ACT, was now with the Attorney General's Department, Chief Superintendent Bob Pight, said yesterday.

He was speaking at the Australian Federal Police liaison advisory committee meeting about the apparent lack of legislation covering offensive weapons, reported in *The Canberra Times* on February 13.

Superintendent Pight said the proposed legislation had been referred to the Federal police. Some changes had been recommended to the department.

The proposed legislation would include a list of prohibited items. Items such as screw-drivers would not be on the schedule.

Amendments would also be made to the NSW Crimes Act (1900) as it applied to the ACT. These would make it an offence for certain legitimate items to be offensive in some situations, such as having a knife or an axe at a disco. The onus of proof would be on the person carrying the item.

Chief Superintendent Ian Broomby, of the Commissioner's office, said the Commissioner was concerned that more effective laws were introduced to cover offensive weapons.

There were existing police powers under the NSW Crimes Act (1900), as

applied to the ACT, that if "unlawful intent" could be proved, a weapon may be offensive.

The committee agreed to write to the Special Minister of State, Mr Young, and the Minister for Territories, Mr Scholes, in an attempt to resolve the dispute between the police and ACT Fire Brigade over which service should first attend serious road accidents.

The committee chairman, Mr Kobold, MHA (Lib), said he had written to the Attorney-General's Department for its legal opinion on which service had responsibility at road accidents. He was waiting for a reply.

It had been unreasonable that the demarcation dispute had continued for more than 15 months. If the ministers did not resolve the dispute soon, the liaison committee might make a recommendation.

The next monthly meeting would be held at Jervis Bay on March 28.

IN BRIEF

Wool record

LAUNCESTON: The world-record price for a kilogram of wool was raised by more than 4,000c at wool sales in Launceston yesterday when a Japanese firm, Fujii Keori, paid 16,800c a kilogram for a 105-kilogram bale of Tasmanian merino fleece.

'Healthy-holiday' grant

A grant of \$10,846 for "healthy-lifestyle vacations" for people in the ACT's 'Operation Oldies' program was announced on Wednesday by the Minister for Health, Dr Blewett.

ABC radio director

SYDNEY: Mr Malcolm Long has been named the ABC's director of radio. Mr Long, 36, has been with the ABC since 1971 and has been manager of Radio Victoria, controller of Radio 2 and controller of programs.

Moomba today

MELBOURNE: The annual Moomba festival in Melbourne, which begins today, would acknowledge Victoria's 150th-birthday celebrations by being bigger and better than any since its inception 30 years ago, the festival's general manager, Mr Bob Moors, said yesterday.

New NFF building

The National Farmers' Federation will move tomorrow to its new \$2.8 million headquarters in Brisbane Avenue, Barton.

Algae on the lake

Blue-green algae had spread to most parts of Lake Burley Griffin and swimmers could suffer skin irritations, the ACT Health Authority's medical officer of health, Dr Sheena Macleod, warned yesterday.

Accidents

Canberra police reported 34 road accidents, six involving injury, in the 24 hours to 8pm yesterday.

CORRECTION

The decision to have girls competing against boys in ACT primary school swimming carnivals was taken by the ACT Primary Schools Sports Association, not the ACT Schools Authority as reported yesterday. This was Gang Gang's error.



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