

# YOUR SAY

## Lives on the line



Eve FISHER

SURELY there isn't anything much more terrifying than facing a fire-front bearing down on your home.

I can't even begin to think what it might feel like finding out there is an out-of-control bushfire nearby and it's too late to leave.

Too late to leave when you've just heard about the imminent danger? Utterly and overwhelmingly terrifying.

Bushfires are alienating. And that's not just because communications are often down.

They're alienating because no one can quite relate unless they've been through them personally.

Unless it's a lived experience, people can't relate to the noise, the smell, the unpredictability and the anxiety about neighbours and animals.

And instead of those commenting on the crisis trying to bridge the gap between us on the outside and those going through hell, all we get is lip service about a specific agenda.

Most notably we've got Israel Folau (surely we can now all agree he is short of a few brain cells?) blaming same-sex marriage and abortion laws for the wrath of a vengeful god.

You're entitled to your concerns, Israel, but is now really the time to be lecturing on the matter of sex and unwanted pregnancy when people are dying and losing their livelihoods?

Then we've got Barnaby Joyce suggesting the people who died in the fires most likely voted for the Greens. They didn't.

And what does it matter anyway?

Please let's not forget our fearless leader Scott Morrison sending endless thoughts and prayers.

Thanks, Scomo, you big dunce, that's exactly what the fire victims need. It's also certainly something the 3000 to 4000 firefighters on rotation at the fire grounds need as well.

In a previously unhelpful move, in this year's state Budget the Berejiklian Government cut funding to Fire and Rescue NSW by \$12.9 million to \$774.3 million, resulting in fire station closures.

That's a decision that has certainly come to bite her.

Seriously, if the Libs are going to refuse to put climate adaptation on the agenda they can't expect much more than a country ravaged by fire, drought and flood, especially if they slash funding or let unsavoury corporations destroy the land and natural water resources.

There are about 300,000 firefighters around Australia and about 85 per cent are volunteers who are often harder to mobilise for interstate emergencies.

There have been reports that some firefighters have been forced to rack up expenses with their own money because their allocated credit cards haven't been working.

Surely these issues shouldn't be happening in one of the most bushfire-prone countries in the world?

One of my mates is a career firefighter who went up to NSW yesterday. It doesn't matter that it was his birthday. This is his life.

He spends all summer fighting fires, so it simply means his busy season has started earlier than expected.

For the next four months his home will be one fire ground or another. He will eat food provided by tireless communities and he

will sleep when others in his team are rested.

He may see his beloved partner in Melbourne once a week but likely it will be once a fortnight.

He doesn't want sympathy. This is his job.

But I know he would like everyone to spare a thought for the thousands of other firefighters doing the same thing. Risking life and limb to save people, properties, livestock and pets.

I'd like to say thanks to all our firefighters, whether they be from fire or parks authorities, local, interstate or international, volunteers or otherwise. You are true heroes.

Thank you for putting your lives on the line to protect other lives.

Thank you for working through sheer exhaustion to defend properties often far from your own.

Thank you for helping ease the fear and anxiety that comes from living through such painful experiences. Thank you for being our army against such a destructive and unpredictable invader.

We know from the experience of the 2015 Otways fire, and subsequent Christmas Day Lorne evacuation, that communities can be at risk at any time.

We need to remain vigilant. We must reduce fire hazards and have a fire plan.

I live near bush. My fire plan is to bundle up my dogs and bail.

Call me a Prepper but I'm putting together a bushfire bug-out bag — complete with dog-related essentials — so I'm ready if the day arises.



### ADDY READERS HAVE THEIR SAY - LETTERS AND TEXTS

#### COUNCIL UNMOVED BY RESIDENTS' OBJECTIONS

PLANNING applications come and go and most are not controversial.

I would like to direct your attention to one recently advertised that will, if approved, have a major impact on the amenity of the South Geelong area.

The application concerns the Big Shed site at 135 Fitzroy St. The proposal is for 40 new dwellings, including seven townhouses. Along with the application is a proposal to amend the parking requirements so the majority of the dwellings would have only one carpark.

In my view, determining the application in isolation from what is happening at the old Barwon Water maintenance depot at Carr St and also the development proposed for the South Geelong Railway precinct is a mistake.

The additional pressure on parking and traffic may have been vastly

underestimated. I live in the neighbourhood and the pressure on the carpark at the station has increased enormously over the past 30 years.

When the application was first advertised, I and many of the neighbours affected were invited to make an application to object. I did this.

I'm bound to say I was less than impressed with the manner in which the objections were handled. As a consequence of this I and several of the neighbours have requested our councillors Murrhiy and Mansfield "call in" the application so that it may be considered by the full council and not simply determined by the Planning Department.

When I contacted planning over this objection I felt I was actively dissuaded from making an objection. I was informed that I wasn't affected by the application. I said, surely I was in a better position to decide if I was affected or not than some bureaucrat working for the city.

Since then I have struggled to get an answer from Mr Murrhiy or Ms Mansfield over the status of our objections. We haven't even been given an assurance about the calling in of the proposal.

I am writing this in the sincere hope I can make our councillors accountable.

Kevin V Russell, Geelong

#### KEEP UP FIGHT TO MAKE GOVERNMENTS OPEN

CONGRATULATIONS to the Geelong Advertiser for continuing the campaign for openness in government (GA, 19/11).

Governments at all of the three levels — local, state and federal — are letting us down with their inability to make decisions and then compounding the problem with "weasel words", secrecy and obfuscation.

We want government to make strong decisions and then stand the

flak when they get it wrong. And just maybe, admit that they got it wrong.

Clouding important issues with secrecy is un-Australian. We need access for the press to all levels of government.

The move towards covert behaviour must stop.

Spencer Leighton, Torquay

#### DAN CLEANS UP WHILE PENSIONERS MUST PAY

DAN Andrews has given himself a large pay rise and cut back all old pensioners to 1.5 hours per fortnight for home cleaning instead of two hours, which is necessary for my home.

I had a bad stroke recently and have to do work after the council worker goes. I also have a heart condition. Have a heart, Vic Gov, and let councils be paid fairly.

PW, Wallington

### Geelong Advertiser EDITORIAL

## World follows region

IT is no exaggeration to say that Geelong programs and people are making an impact across the globe.

Weeks after the world's press were in town to see the local success story that is the Geelong Project — an innovative youth homelessness program that is being adopted in several parts of Canada and the US — our own Jason Trethowan has been flying the flag for another brilliant youth health program in the Middle East.

Trethowan is the chief executive of the national non-profit youth mental health program headspace.

The former chief executive of the Western Victoria Primary Health Network was in Israel last week for the opening of a headspace program in Jerusalem.

It is another example of local success stories taking their experiences from the region to the world stage.

Geelong was one of the first headspace programs launched and provides crucial government-funded mental health support to people aged 12-25 from three bases across the region.

Now with programs operating in 14 countries, including Denmark, Iceland and the Netherlands, headspace has proven that no matter the culture, people's need for support is the same the world over.

### THIS DAY IN HISTORY

1873 - Rival cities Buda and Pest unite to form the capital of Hungary.

1962 - President John F Kennedy agrees to lift the American blockade of Cuba, ending the Cuban missile crisis.

1974 - First crash of a Boeing 747 jumbo jet: a Lufthansa airliner crashes after take-off at Nairobi airport in Kenya, killing 59.

1995 - BBC Television broadcasts an interview with Princess Diana, who admits being unfaithful to Prince Charles;

2018 - Tim Cahill makes an emotional farewell to international football as the Socceroos beat Lebanon 3-0 in Sydney.

### ADDY ONLINE POLL

Yesterday's question: Do you think it is the role of local governments to declare a climate emergency?

YES 39% NO 61%

Register your vote at [geelongadvertiser.com.au](http://geelongadvertiser.com.au)

WRITE TO: POST: PO BOX 91, GEELONG 3220 or [yoursay@geelongadvertiser.com.au](mailto:yoursay@geelongadvertiser.com.au)

Letters should be less than 300 words, carry full name, address and phone number of writer and be signed. We reserve the right to edit letters.

TEXT ADDY: 0429 839 887 (THAT'S 0429 TEXTUS). Please include your name and address

If you believe the Australian Press Council standards have been breached contact [journo@geelongadvertiser.com.au](mailto:journo@geelongadvertiser.com.au) or the council at [info@presscouncil.org.au](mailto:info@presscouncil.org.au).

