

The Canberra Times

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BROADCAST BLUES

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SURROUND SOUNDS

MULTICULTURAL MUSIC FEAST

CRUNCHING NUMBERS

FISHER'S SELECTION DILEMMA - SPORT, PAGE 28

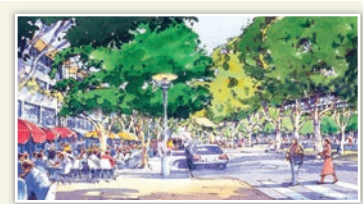
\$46m cut kills city of dreams

By John Thistleton

Canberra has lost more than \$46 million in funding for the Griffin Legacy, shattering dreams of creating the nation's ideal city.

The money was for redeveloping Constitution Avenue to accommodate increased traffic from the \$460 million new headquarters of ASIO and the Office of National Assessments and occupation of the Anzac Park East and West buildings.

If all the development goes ahead, including expansion of the Canberra Institute of Technology and redevelopment of the St John's Church precinct and RSL national headquarters, without the upgrades the expected heavy traffic in and around



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Constitution Avenue could come to a standstill.

The funding blow came in Finance Minister Lindsay Tanner's \$640 million in cutbacks announced

on Wednesday to programs backed by the former government.

NCA chairman Michael Ball said he could not fathom the Federal Government's actions, because the project was not among the previous government's pre-election commitments.

NCA managing director of major projects Graham Scott-Bohanna, who resigned on Monday over cuts to the NCA, said traffic analysis had shown Constitution Avenue could not cope with new developments without being widened and upgraded.

"The worst-cases analysis shows if there is no alternative way on to Constitution Avenue, then what you will have is traffic on Parkes Way

gridlocked on the roundabouts on Anzac Parade, potentially at Russell as well."

The \$46 million was a part of \$70 million to be spent over four years redeveloping Constitution Avenue and replacing the Russell roundabout with an overpass.

The overpass will go ahead but work to duplicate Constitution Avenue's traffic lanes and create a grand boulevard has been scrapped, as has an agreement between the ACT and Commonwealth governments for ongoing street maintenance.

Last year, the ACT Government handed over to the Commonwealth control of Constitution Avenue, Commonwealth Avenue, State Circle,

Kings Avenue, and sections of Parkes Way and other streets. In return, the Commonwealth committed to capital works and \$3 million a year for ongoing maintenance.

ACT Chief Minister Jon Stanhope said because the Commonwealth had reneged on the agreement, it would need to be reviewed and renegotiated. He said Mr Tanner had warned that tackling the inflation bogey would involve some pain.

"I am very disappointed that the vision for Walter Burley Griffin for the national capital will now apparently be put on hold."

Mr Ball said Constitution Avenue's upgrade was about more than sticking to Griffin's vision for Canberra, it was about enlivening the city and

linking it to Russell and providing critical infrastructure.

"That is a tragedy to the nation and for Canberra. It is not postponed by six months, or 12 months. It is postponed indefinitely..."

The NCA's future has been under a cloud since the Government axed 33 staff, but Mr Ball, whose tenure expires on May 8, and chief executive Annabelle Pegrum, said they would stay and implement the cutbacks.

Mr Ball intends to apply for another term. He said he'd made a mistake ignoring the slings and arrows of abuse aimed at the NCA without fighting back.



DAMNING: Paul Mullett acted in a "reprehensible" manner.

Vic police union boss faces jail sentence

By Michael Ruffles
 Melbourne Correspondent

Victoria's powerful police union boss Paul Mullett faces up to 25 years in jail after a damning anti-corruption report recommended he be charged for trying to pervert the course of justice.

And two former members of the Chief Commissioner's inner circle could each be jailed if convicted of misconduct in public office.

The Office of Police Integrity report, tabled in state Parliament yesterday, recommended serious criminal charges against Mr Mullett, former Assistant Commissioner Noel Ashby and one-time media director Stephen Linnell.

Mr Ashby and Mr Linnell could both face charges of misconduct in public office, which carries a 10-year jail term.

All three could be subject to perjury charges after discrepancies emerged between evidence at private and public hearings last year.

The office of public prosecutions will now decide whether to proceed with charges.

Mr Ashby maintained his innocence yesterday, while the Police Association stood by its leader, Mr Mullett, who has been shut out of police stations and government buildings since late last year.

The report stems from last November's public hearing into allegations a chain of leaks tipped off detective Peter Lalor to the fact he was a suspect in a murder investigation.

Mr Lalor is believed to have given a hitman the address of male prostitute Shane Chartres-Abbott, who was later killed.

In the report, Office of Police Integrity director George Brouwer found Mr Mullett used his influence to uncover classified information and pass it on. It describes Mr Mullett as "dishonourable" and says he plotted with Mr Ashby to undermine both Chief Commissioner Christine Nixon and one of her deputies, Simon Overland.

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Risky surgery 'the best gift' for patient

EXCLUSIVE

By Danielle Cronin
 Health Reporter

Stephanie Antonello, 24, had a "time bomb" in her brain which left her partially paralysed and could have eventually killed her.

The Bankstown resident was "gutted" when Sydney specialists ruled out surgery to fix the problem, arguing it was too risky to operate.

But in a lucky twist, Ms Antonello saw a story about the Canberra Hospital team who performed life-saving brain surgery on a patient who was awake.

Last year, retired bus driver John James, 78, had ground-breaking surgery to remove an aneurysm threatening to rupture and cause vision loss.

Ms Antonello wrote to one of the neurosurgeons, Vini Khurana, who was "extremely struck" by her plea for help.

"It was a very moving letter, a very emotional letter," Dr Khurana told *The Canberra Times*.

"I got the impression that she was extremely confused as to what to do and extremely debilitated by what was going on in her life medically and... that she'd kind of reached the end of her tether."

Ms Antonello was only 14 years old when doctors discovered she had an arteriovenous malformation - an abnormal tangle of blood vessels - that had ruptured in the brain.

She had radiation therapy, which shrank the growth but caused a new problem that went undetected until 2006.

She had a cavernoma - a cluster of rupture-prone blood sacs that had repeatedly haemorrhaged into her brain and grown to the size of a "small bunch of grapes" in the past few years.

Ms Antonello said she was partially paralysed on the left side of her body and the problem was getting worse.

"I also just suffered from significant symptoms such as sharp pains, strains, headaches, dizziness, nausea," she said.

"I was like a walking drunk basically and I was a prisoner in my own home for over a year."

Sydney specialists ruled out surgery and one of them recommended more radiation but she refused, given the treatment had been what triggered the problem.

"I was told that I had to live the rest of my life the way I was and obviously I was gutted," she said.

But she saw a story about Dr Khurana, appealed for his help and had surgery at Canberra Hospital a month ago.

Dr Khurana said the problem was on the right side of her brain - relatively deep in "high-priced real estate".

"I told her that in order to get this out, because of its size and its depth and its location, that the best and safest way to get it out would be by keeping her awake during the surgery so that we could test her sensation and movement functions while we removed as much of this as we could," he said.

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GRATEFUL: Stephanie Antonello, of Bankstown, has successfully undergone a type of brain surgery which has been pioneered at Canberra Hospital. Picture: KATE LEITH

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Mother attacked me: Porritt

By Victor Violante
 Court Reporter

A 23-year-old Deakin man who killed his mother has told of how he tried to cover it up by making it look like a bungled burglary, after she attacked him with a knife in her bedroom.

On the fourth day of his ACT Supreme Court trial, Glen Malcolm Porritt told, for the first time, how his mother Nanette "Sandy" Porritt, 50, died on the evening of December 21, 2005, from 57 stab wounds and cuts to her face, neck, chest and arms.

However, prosecution counsel William Dawe, QC, questioned his account, accusing Porritt of fabricating aspects of his story, including claims he - a 195cm-tall man trained in martial arts - had struggled to overpower his diminutive mother.

Porritt, charged with his mother's murder, was called to give evidence yesterday, detailing his movements in the lead-up and aftermath of his mother's death.

He also told of his "dysfunctional" relationship with his mother, who on one occasion punished him by confiscating a doctor's prescription to treat his severe acne.

"My primary grievance with my parents was that they confiscated a prescription my doctor gave me for my acne," he told the court, outlining how he had even seen a solicitor to recoup \$7000 in compensation he paid for his own acne treatment during his adolescence.

He told of how, before his mother's



STRUGGLE: Nanette Porritt apparently enraged her 23-year-old son by confiscating his acne medication.

death, he had not spoken to his parents since he moved out of home in November 2004 to a flat in Deakin.

"I lived in the same house as my parents but I didn't have anything to do with them."

Porritt said he had gone to the family's Chapman home earlier on the day of the killing to return a book to his younger sister Amy. He had then returned to his flat.

Later that day he walked to a Cooleman Court video store, near his parents' home, to hire the cartoon series *Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles*, when he realised he did not have his wallet.

Porritt then decided to go to the house - where he expected to find both his mother and father Keith - to ask his parents to pay him \$7000 for the acne treatment.

real" and "grow up", before grabbing a knife from the kitchen bench and asking him to leave.

"I yelled at her, 'It's your fault my acne got worse,'" he said.

Instead of leaving as his mother asked, Porritt said that he would wait in the house until his father returned from work. At this point Mrs Porritt threatened to call the police, and went upstairs to her bedroom to make the call. Her son followed. Once in the bedroom, Porritt said his mother tried to attack him with the knife, and he had had to hold her wrist to stop her. "She was hysterical... she yelled out, 'Get away from me'."

"She slashed at me so I grabbed her arm and bent it back so the knife was pointing at her instead of me."

The pair struggled, and she then grabbed a clock radio from the bedside table with her other hand and started hitting him on the head, so he grabbed that arm as well. The pair then fell on the bed - him on top - at which point he saw a cut on her neck, and he proceeded to push the knife she was holding towards her neck and chest.

"She was pushing the knife towards me, and I was pushing the knife towards her." He said he eventually prised the knife from her hand - conceding she had probably loosened her grip because she was "bleeding to death" - and continued to struggle on the bed.

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WEATHER

CANBERRA: Mostly fine, 20
 Chance of rain: 40%
 Wind: E-SE 15-25km/h
 UV index: 8 (Very high)
 Outlook: A shower or two
 Yesterday: 14-24
 Last year: 18-32

SYDNEY: Shower or two, 22
 MELBOURNE: A few showers, 19
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