RESERVOIR

Drivers face disaster

Jim Andriopoulos spent $462,000 on his taxi licence. N01PT308

Madeline Healey

FELS REJECTS CLAIMS OF FUTURE CATASTROPHES

RESERVOIR cabbie Jim Andriopoulos says he stands to "lose everything" if the State Government was to introduce open market taxi licences.

The 29-year-old mortgaged his family home to buy his taxi licence for $462,000 in 2006.

But he now fears for the future of his investment, after an independent inquiry into the Victorian taxi industry recommended making metro licences available for only $20,000 a year for five years.

Mr Andriopoulos said if the plan was adopted, the market would be flooded with taxis and the extra competition — coupled with the falling value of his licence — could see him lose his home, cab and career.

Taxi Industry Shareholders Victoria treasurer George Yannas said hundreds of owner drivers in Melbourne would face significant financial hardship.

But taxi inquiry chairman Prof Allan Fels said owner-operators were the victims of a scare campaign by large scale taxi investors who were trying to "promote their own agendas".

"The facts are that existing licences will continue to be worth a significant amount of money and will be a solid investment," Prof Fels said.

Are independent taxi drivers' livelihoods at risk?
northcoteleader.com.au

AT A GLANCE

- **March 2011**: Premier Ted Baillieu announces an independent inquiry.
- **May 2012**: A draft report is released with 145 recommendations.
- **July 13**: Public submissions on the draft report close.
- **Details**: taxiindustry inquiry.vic.gov.au

DAREBIN

Fears fish will die in repeat spills

REPEATED detergent spills in Darebin Creek could deoxidise the water and kill fish living there, says a ranger.

Darebin Parklands ranger Peter Wiltshire said the spills of the industrial detergent-like substance — which caused the water to froth up into foamy peaks — were happening on Fridays.

Mr Wiltshire said the spills had happened at least four times in recent months and, although reported to the Environment Protection Authority, the source was yet to be found.

"People walking their dogs have been freaking out because there's all these soap suds flying around everywhere and the dogs are swimming in it," he said.

The EPA's Scott Samson urged residents to report sightings of any foaming as soon as they saw it. Past attempts to find the source were hampered when heavy rain washed away "potential fingerprints".

Report sightings to the EPA hotline on 1300 372 842.

PRESTON

Moira Tyers has won praise for her work raising awareness about bowel cancer. Picture: ADAM ELWOOD N01PT305

Cancer screening can be a life-saver

PRESTON West's Moira Tyers has appeared on television screens across the country to send a strong message: a simple bowel screening test could save your life.

Ms Tyers lost her brother Dennis to bowel cancer three years ago.

He was only 54, and Ms Tyers tells viewers that if he had been screened, the cancer would have been found earlier and she believes he would still be here.

The advertisement, funded by the Cancer Council, was part of a campaign for the Federal Government to expand the bowl cancer screening program so all Australians aged over 50 would receive a free screening every two years.

It ran from March until May, when the Government announced $50 million to extend the screening to Australians turning 60 from next year, those turning 70 by 2015 and everyone aged over 50 from 2017.

Ms Tyers has been nominated for a Pride of Australia Community Spirit Award.

For more information, phone the Cancer Council Helpline on 131 120.

local business news

spruiker

Legal firm opens

NORTHCOTE Lawyers and Associates has opened its doors to the local community. Over 20 mentors, friends, and local traders, joined director Peter Lynch and Mayor Steven Tsitas (below) for the official opening of the practice last week. Northcote Lawyers and Associates is a general practice law firm, offering clients expert, timely and cost-effective advice that achieves results. Mr Lynch said he was delighted to be launching the firm in 118 High St, Westgarth, and had appreciated the warm welcome by local traders and residents.

Business festa

THE Victorian Small Business Festival is less than a month away. Co-ordinated by Small Business Victoria, events cover a wide range of practical business topics such as business planning, marketing, social media, networking and financial management. The festival runs from August 1-31. Details on events and how to register can be found at the Business Victoria website, business.vic.gov.au

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