

# Opinion



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## Leaving region in the lurch

Nat Anson



It's federal budget day.

Every year, it's an anxious wait to discover if our region's needs have been acknowledged by government. And, more importantly, whether they've been funded.

The Victorian budget will follow on May 23.

Modest budgets offering cost-of-living relief are anticipated.

We're not expecting major project funding announcements for the Geelong region.

But that doesn't mean we shouldn't ask. And when we politely ask, the request should be loud and clear.

The "ask" for our region is massive. This is Australia's fastest growing region of the past decade.

The next two decades will add 200,000 residents and we'll be a region of half a million people.

Looking around Australia, only South East Queensland (Brisbane, Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast) is expected to grow more rapidly.

Our biggest ask – public transport – is costly.

We need billions of budget dollars to address the car dependency that threatens the region's liveability.

And, despite the "Geelong Fast Rail" tagline, the rail network we need to underpin future mobility is not a Geelong project.

It's a regional project.

The beneficiaries of major public transport investment – to unlock rail



and bus upgrades – won't just be Geelong residents, they are Colac, Bannockburn, Torquay, Bellarine and Winchelsea residents too.

Collectively, as a region, we need to champion the same result.

The G21 Geelong Region Alliance – known as G21 – is our instrument for regional advocacy to federal and state governments, no matter the politics or economic conditions of the day. G21 was established 20 years ago to actively push the shared priorities of the five local government areas –

Colac Otway, Surf Coast, Golden Plains, Queenscliffe and Greater Geelong.

Our G21 region has successfully campaigned for major projects that have strengthened our entire community.

Last week, after 20 years of shared advocacy, the City of Greater Geelong voted to leave G21.

As its largest member, contributing 75 per cent of shared funding, it's likely a terminal decision.

City Hall now intends to resource

its advocacy through membership of Regional Cities Victoria and Regional Capitals Australia. These alliances might provide some small benefits to our region but cannot replace G21.

Regional Capitals Australia is a Wagga Wagga-based organisation with 19 member cities including Alice Springs, Tamworth, Broome and Dubbo.

With a fight on our hands, now is the time to stick together.

**Nat Anson is the Urbis Geelong director**



1985

### ON THIS day

**1502** Explorer Christopher Columbus sails with four ships from Cadiz, Spain, on his fourth and final voyage; he will chart the Caribbean.

**1671** Thomas Blood, Irish adventurer better known as Colonel Blood, steals the crown jewels from the Tower of London.

**1901** Federal Parliament opens for the first time in its borrowed home of Melbourne's Exhibition Building and then the Victorian Parliament.

**1919** A national seamen's strike starts with stoppages in Queensland. The pay dispute lasts for the whole winter and cuts off fuel supplies, causing unemployment.

**1926** US Navy Commander Richard Byrd and Floyd Bennett become the first people to fly over the North Pole.

**1960** US Food and Drug Administration approves the first birth-control pill. The Searle company's oral contraceptive is called Enovid.

**1963** Australia and the US sign an agreement allowing the US to establish and operate a naval communications station at North-West Cape, WA.

**1980** The horror film classic Friday the 13th, about a masked killer hunting summer camp counsellors, is released in theatres.

**1985** Hit man Christopher Dale Flannery (above), the hit man known as Mr Rent-A-Kill, disappears, three months after surviving a gun attack at his Arncliffe, Sydney, home.

**1986** Sherpa Tenzing Norgay, 71, dies.

**1994** A Perth jury convicts businessman Laurie Connell, 48, of conspiring to pervert the course of justice by paying a jockey to leave the country. Connell leaves jail a year later and dies in 1996.

**2006** Gold miners Todd Russell and Brant Webb leave Tasmania's Beaconsfield mine, rescued after a two-week ordeal trapped 1km underground.

#### EDITOR'S NOTE

### Waiting with bated breath

Treasurer Jim Chalmers has promised to deliver a "sensible" and "responsible" budget, that will offer some relief to Australians struggling with the spiralling cost of living.

We know there will be large national packages – like \$14.6bn to counter the cost of living, including \$1.5bn in electricity relief. Single parents are also set to win, with the Prime Minister announcing more than 57,000 people will receive government payments for an extra six years.

What is yet to be seen is whether Geelong, one of the country's fastest growing cities, will receive funding for specific projects to help cater for this growth. On Tuesday, the city will be waiting to see the hand it has been dealt.

### Blame the Premier

Mr Albanese said the road cuts was because Liberal party was pork barrelling.

What about Victoria's cuts?

Labor has been in power for more than 10 years.

You can't be still blaming them for all the road funding problems like you have been since the election.

Dan the man is to blame.

As all Victorians know he has a get-out-of-jail-free card and is not to blame because he can't remember.

**John Steven, Geelong**

### Renewables cut prices

AEMO Services has announced the tenders for power generation in NSW were not only substantial in size (1.4GW) but prices for two solar farms were at less than 3.5c/kWh and a wind farm at less than 5c/kWh, putting further downward pressure on future prices and enabling the

replacement of expensive fossil fuel generators.

**Rob Gardner, Clifton Springs**

### No longer affordable

As you are aware, the risk of homelessness for older women is a huge problem in Australia.

Having worked in the homelessness area myself, Geelong has always struggled with affordable and safe, secure housing.

In fact, some of our region's politicians set up the first housing cooperatives in Geelong which was part of some of the initial tendering for the early housing associations.

People are often overjoyed to accept affordable housing options viewing them as stable and secure long-term option and a better option than a private rental.

Since Ken Marchingo retired however, Haven has lost its way.

It's purpose to provide a range of housing, in particular affordable

housing, now fails to meet the state government's intention to retain, build and provide housing for all; not just those with complex housing needs.

People could now be forced out of their units in Bosanquet Ave, Newtown.

Tenants have received a letter with a notice of intention to sell meaning they could be forced into the tight, and unaffordable rental housing market.

There is a real risk of these vulnerable people becoming homeless or deteriorating in regards to their health and psychological well being.

It was known at the commencement of the development of Housing Associations that sustaining the model would be high risk; however, that is not the problem for the tenants of these organisations.

Shame on Haven.  
**Debra Gibbons, Corio**

## Letters & Texts