

Children 'exploited' by 0055 services

Young children were being exploited by Telecom's 0055 phone services which encouraged them to play games for big prizes, Government and Opposition MPs said yesterday.

Advertising during children's TV programs in the past few months has encouraged children to phone 0055 numbers any number of times to win prizes — calls which clock up at 70c a minute.

The Opposition said the 0055 competitions were an example of the "Australian gambling syndrome gone mad".

Senator Margaret Reynolds (Lab. Qld) said Telecom and the service providers should have an obligation to state the cost involved at the beginning of the call.

Senator Reynolds is chairwoman of the Senate select committee which was established last year to look at community standards of phone services, particularly those providing sexually explicit information.

The cost warning was one recommendation in the interim report of the committee issued in December last year.

Senator Reynolds said the final report, due out at the end of May or early June, would also include rulings on the children's games.

Telecom representatives are due to meet with the committee on Thursday about what measures they have taken so far to implement the committee's recommendations.

"I know the argument is that parents have the responsibility to monitor the child but I don't think that Telecom and service providers are making it any easier," Senator Reynolds said.

"We've adopted fairly specific standards about advertising in children's viewing time so it's a pretty sad state of affairs if kids can't watch TV without continually being encouraged to spend a bit of mum and dad's money."

"I just don't believe it's particularly ethical."

The Opposition spokesman on communications, Warwick Smith, said the matter should be considered by the Senate select committee but the content of such services was not a matter for Telecom.

"The content is for the community to judge and I would imagine that most parents would be horrified," he said.

Car sales rebound, forecasts optimistic

By TOM CONNORS, Economics Writer

NEW CAR REGOS

The number of new-motor-vehicle registrations increased by a solid 9.5 per cent in March, prompting hopes that the economy has turned the corner.

These figures could herald a good week for the Keating Government: tomorrow's Consumer Price Index for the March quarter is expected to show that Australia's inflation rate is still declining.

This might justify a decision by the Government and the Reserve Bank to make another reduction in interest rates in the next week, probably by 0.5 per cent, because of the reduced risk of deflationary pressure. The Treasurer, John Dawkins, said at the weekend that the Reserve Bank would have the CPI result firmly in mind at its regular monthly meeting next Tuesday.

An economic forecaster, BIS Shrapnel, said yesterday that the housing industry, already displaying some growth, was poised for a strong recovery, fuelled by declining interest rates, improved housing affordability, continuing high levels of immigration and strong demand for housing. It expects dwelling commencements to increase by more than 20 per cent to 160,600 in 1992-93.

It says the time is ripe for a return of confidence in housing, given the signs that the recent mass retrenchments and the rising level of unemployment are about to end. Even though unemployment remained high the unemployment rate needed only to level off, not decline, for there to be a strong upturn.

Housing has long been tipped as the industry to lead the nation out of

	March	Feb	Year ago
Adjusted.....	48,866	44,614	40,997
Unadjusted..	51,237	41,080	40,229
Trend.....	47,082	45,754	41,811

recession but motor-vehicle registrations are also considered an important indicator of the strength of the economy. The strongest factor in yesterday's car figures is the seventh successive month of increase in the trend figures of both passenger and commercial vehicles. The trend figures smooth out irregularities in the seasonally adjusted statistics and are regarded as the best guide. The trend was 2.9 per cent higher in March than in February and 12.6 per cent higher than in March last year.

In seasonally adjusted figures the increases were 9.5 per cent and 19.2 per cent respectively.

The Motor Trades Association of Australia welcomed the new registration figures and declared that the reduction in the sales-tax rate on cars, from 20 to 15 per cent, as outlined in the One Nation statement, had "obviously made an impact on the market".

Its executive director, Michael Delaney, said the impact of the tax reduction would have been greater but for the fact that some manufacturers and distributors decided against passing on the full price reduction to car buyers by introducing immediate and perhaps unjustified price increases.

The Commonwealth Bank said that One Nation had had an influence on the increase in registrations and expected them to continue increasing throughout 1992.

First Fat Cat, now Hector!



Although not the regular Hector, Dene Yeaman, who first donned the illustrious suit five years ago, says farewell yesterday to the cat who taught thousands of youngsters about road safety.

At the ripe old age of 140 in "cat" years, Hector, the cat who taught thousands of young school children about road safety, was well past the prime of his ninth life when he retired yesterday.

Hector retired among the other artefacts at the National Museum of Australia in Mitchell after a long career which started in the late 1960s and ended in the 1980s. Hector the Cat was created for the Road Safety Council of the ACT in the late 1960s, and was used by the Federal Office of Road Safety of the Department of Transport as well as by the Road Safety Council.

He was particularly popular with

Hector, the road safety cat, retires to museum

the children and captured their imagination on film and television. Hector was also the subject of board games, posters and other printed instructional material promoting road safety.

The Road Safety Council of the ACT was passing Hector on to the museum because the council was closing down.

The National Museum of Australia said it was enthusiastic about being Hector's new home as the collection had held no objects dealing with road safety — what the museum said was an important social issue in Australia.

As Australia's road network expanded, the museum said the build-up of traffic in urban areas was an on-going problem. The road safety collection would have a historical perspective, giving audiences an insight into the methods of dealing with road safety in the past, it said.

Australia to have teeming millions

By CHRIS UHLMANN

Australia's population should increase by more than a million in the next three years and grow to about 26 million by 2031, according to a Bureau of Immigration study.

The bureau's *Australian Population Trends and Prospects 1991*, published yesterday, projects the population to be 18.6 million by 1995-96. It was 17.3 million in 1990-91.

If trends continue there will be 7.9 million more people in Australia by 2031, most living in the major capitals.

The growth of Australia's capitals, especially Sydney and Melbourne, has been a source of concern for some time because of such problems as air, water and noise pollution, urban sprawl and its infrastructure costs, and the efficient use of energy.

"The concern has been fuelled by projections which indicate that Sydney's population will reach 4.78 million by 2006, while Melbourne will grow by an additional 500,000 people over the next 15 years," the report says.

NSW and Victoria will remain the most populous states. The ACT, Queensland and Western Australia should grow most quickly.

In 1990 the ACT had a population of 288,700 (1.7 per cent of Australia's total population). However, it was growing at a rate of 2.29 per cent — well above the national average for that year of 1.5 per cent — and the ACT's projected population for 2031 was about 500,000.

Australia's population increased by 1.47 per cent in 1990-91, compared with a rate of 1.5 per cent in 1989-90 and 1.78 per cent in 1988-89. The rate is low in comparison with the rapid increase in the late '40s and early '50s but high compared with the growth rates in the second half of the 1970s. In the next five years natural increase should contribute more to population growth than net immigration.

The population is getting older, too. The report says the median age of the Australian population in 1990-91 was 32.5 years — five years older than in June, 1971 — and 11 per cent of people were 65 and older.

No school today for Kambah and Wanniasa High students

By KAREN HOBSON, Education Reporter

Students at Kambah and Wanniasa High Schools should not go to school today after a last-minute decision that another day was needed to finish asbestos-removal work.

The lateness of the decision, made yesterday afternoon by the ACT Department of Education and Training after a meeting with teacher union executives, left no time for parents to be officially notified.

A statement issued by the department last night said minimum supervision would be available "in areas not affected by the work" if parents are not able to make other arrangements.

Both schools had already determined that yesterday — the first day of second term — would be a pupil-free day for curriculum and planning work.

A routine occupation health and safety check last term identified asbestos fibre in the fibre-cement ceiling tiles in both schools. Their removal, estimated to cost between \$150,000 and \$200,000, was expected to be finished by the beginning of the term.

Though all of the tiles have been removed, a department spokeswoman said some loose wires in the ceilings had not been completely sealed off by yesterday.

Work was to continue into the night and was expected to be completed today. Installation of new tiles was expected to be finished by the beginning of next week.

The president of the ACT branch of the Australian Teachers' Union, Rosemary Richards, said last night that the union would be part of an inspection team to determine whether the schools were safe for students to return on Wednesday.

Assembly inquiry on ACT solar energy use

An inquiry into solar energy potential and its use in the ACT is to be conducted by the ACT Standing Committee on Conservation, Heritage and Environment.

The committee will investigate alternative forms of energy use, including solar energy and solar co-generation of electricity, to see if such techniques could eventually supplement the traditional use of conventionally generated electricity in the ACT.

Industrial and domestic energy consumption levels in the ACT will also be examined.

Committee chairman Michael Moore (Ind) said these matters had been covered previously in a discussion paper issued by the committee

in December last year, during the previous Assembly.

The discussion paper barely touched on the possibilities offered by solar energy, but had sought to stimulate interest in the issues by inviting comments and responses on the paper," Mr Moore said in a statement yesterday.

"There has been a strong community response to the paper and a number of challenging ideas and proposals put forward. As a result, the committee sees considerable value to the ACT community in pursuing the matter in more detail."

Mr Moore invited submissions on the terms of reference to be sent to the secretary of the committee at the Legislative Assembly by May 18.

'Mass grave seeped blood'

ADELAIDE: A witness told the war crimes hearing in Adelaide yesterday he saw blood seeping to the top of a mass grave in which hundreds of Jews were buried in the Ukraine in 1942.

Dimitri Kostykhovich, a 69-year-old Ukraine pensioner, told Adelaide Magistrates Court he heard machine-gun fire soon after he saw Jews being led at gunpoint from their houses.

About three days after the gunfire, he had gone to the mass grave and saw blood seeping to the top through the loose earth.

Earlier, the witness said he saw defendant Ivan Polyukhovitch shoot two Jewish boys and then help lead

the column of Jews out of the village of Serniki, prodding some with his gun.

Mr Kostykhovich told the court he had been in a shed near the village when hundreds of Jews were being rounded up by Ukraine policemen.

He said Polyukhovitch, whom he knew as Ivanechko, was armed and was helping round up the Jews.

The two boys had tried to run away but Ivanechko had heard them and turned around and shot one and then the other.

Polyukhovitch, a 75-year-old Adelaide pensioner, is charged with the murder of 24 people and with being involved in the slaughter of up to 850

Jews in the Ukraine in World War II. Mr Kostykhovich began giving his testimony yesterday morning after giving a statement under oath behind closed doors on Friday because the prosecution feared his evidence may be lost.

The prosecution said he was dangerously ill with a severe heart condition and that he came out of his hospital bed in the Ukraine to give evidence at the hearing. They feared he could die in Australia.

The court heard Polyukhovitch had recovered from a viral infection and was present in the courtroom yesterday to enable the witness to tell his story.

Legionnaire outbreak claims fourth victim

SYDNEY: A fourth person has died as a result of an outbreak of legionnaires' disease in the south-west of Sydney.

The NSW Health Department said yesterday a man in his 40s, who had been in intensive care for some days, died in Liverpool Hospital overnight.

Another person died last Friday due to a different strain of legionella which is most unlikely to be related to this outbreak. A total of 22 confirmed and 35 possible cases of legionnaires' disease have been admitted to NSW hospitals since April 10.

The organism connected with the outbreak is believed to be associated with poorly maintained water cooling systems for air-conditioning units but no single source of infection has been identified.

The Health Department's statement said priority was given to eradicating all potential sources of infection from water cooling systems in the south-west of the city and the chief health officer was confident those actions had made a continuing source of infection most unlikely.

Boys escape from Quamby briefly

Six boys aged between 13 and 17 escaped from Quamby Children's Remand Shelter in Red Hill yesterday, in what police described as a "planned escape". All were recaptured within hours.

Police said the six had appeared to be scuffling with each other near the boundary fence about 8am when they had run suddenly toward the 3m-high fence and scaled it.

One boy had been caught shortly afterward by Quamby staff.

A Curtin resident had reported seeing the es-

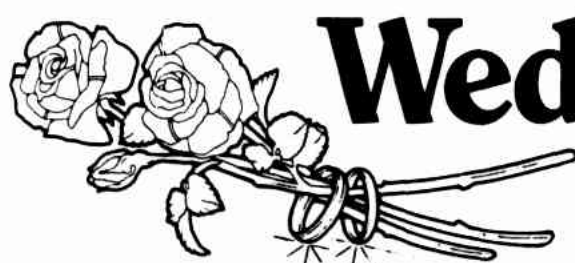
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