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2. Lyndale Secondary College
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Gladstone Road, North Dandenong 9795 2366

3. Highways Tabaret
(See page 5)
Cnr Princes Hwy & Corrigan Rd, Springvale 9518 1370

4. Plaster Fun House
54 Burke Rd, Malvern 9572 2009

5. Villa Maria - Disability Services & Aged Care
(See page 3)
9769 5276

6. Chomley House
113 Chomley Street, Prahran 9529 8107

7. Monte Carlo Receptions & Casavini Ristorante
(See page 4)
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8. The Print Place
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For more information, contact Cathy Kenny, Coordinator of The Berwick Day Club on 9769 5276, fill in the coupon below and return to Villa Maria Berwick Day Club.

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SWINGING INTO GOLF LESSONS

BY TONY MASCARO

and why what you don't know is more important than what you think you know!

I have been a part time golfer (i.e. social hacker) for more than 20 years, in fact, so part time, that in some of those 20 years I would be lucky to get one game in. Therefore I never saw any reason to take lessons. Sure, I read some books on golf and watched the odd video or two, as I attempted to find the stance or secret that might help me shave a stroke or two off my game, but why would I need to take lessons? Surely lessons would be too expensive and anyway, it's an ego boost to say after a nice shot or good game that I'm a self-taught golfer. Of course, those good shots are rare, and a good game occurs about as often as a Greg Norman major win.

The reasons for this are many, but I think I've narrowed it down to two things: poor technique and that, regardless of the situation, I'll usually pull out my trusty six-iron. It's the only club I feel comfortable with and I often get more distance with it than I do with my wood off the tee. Therefore my game has never improved, even during those rare times when I was able to get out and have a couple of games a week. Usually, a solid tee shot would be followed by a series of shocking ground shots and poor putts. If I fluffed my tee shot, I might get myself back into the hole with a solid fairway shot but then my short game would let me down. And every so often I might fluke a hole and then convince myself that that was the true player in me and the rest could all be put down to bad luck!

So why do I persist with a game that I know I will never fully master? Well, there is something I love about chasing a little white ball over 18 holes and five to 10 kilometres (depending on how straight you hit that

little white ball) and somehow, I can see myself doing this well into my retirement. However, I realised, unless I take some action I will never improve my game.

So when the opportunity arose to receive some expert coaching, at first I thought "na... this is not for me", but after some contemplation, I figured I had nothing to lose other than a few strokes off my game and I certainly had plenty of those to spare. And who knows, these lessons might just provide me with the answers as to why my game has never improved and why my shot making is so inconsistent. With that in my mind, I decided to give it a try and this is my account of the learning experience at Golf Park Driving Range with Golf Professional, Martyn Andrews.

Lesson 1

Lesson one was an eye opener. To start off, Martyn took me through the many aspects of golfing. He then got me to hit a few balls and videotaped my golf swing. It was fascinating seeing my swing in slow motion and I realised straight away that it wasn't right. Little things stood out, and I noticed that after I had set myself to take a swing, I would move up to the ball and then re-grip my club. How silly is that? Martyn then asked me what my beliefs/thought processes were when getting ready to strike the ball. Most of my beliefs were simple and were referenced from several sources (books, videos, watching the professional golfers on TV and of course the always helpful golfing partners). In short, my beliefs/thought process went like this:

continued next page



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- Keep your eye on the ball
- The ball will travel in line with the edge of my toes
- I need to hit the ball with flat surface of the club
- The lower I hit the ball the higher it goes
- I need to swing around my neck
- The swing motion needs to be constant and semi circular
- My grip needs to be firm and both thumbs must point down

So when Martyn informed me that my belief that applying the above methods would help improve my game was a fallacy, I was more than a little surprised, but eager to find out what methods were the right ones. The first lesson was invigorating and it whet the appetite to learn more about this frustrating game.

Lesson 2

Today we began to work on the following items:

How to Swing; How to Stand; The Pivot; The Grip

Martyn suggested I aim for just in front of the ball and this seemed to work. I also learned that *top spin* makes the ball go down and *back spin* makes the ball go up. Although I keep being reassured that the game of golf is simple, it still appears at this stage to be very complicated.

Lesson 3

That old saying 'old habits die hard' was particularly appropriate this week. While I learned a lot from the previous lesson, a week later and it seems as if I have forgotten even more. Practice during the week would have made a difference, but other commitments meant that I couldn't get out for a hit. Martyn suggested that slipping back into old habits is not unusual and so spent the lesson revisiting the areas covered in Lesson 2. At the end of Lesson 3, the things that I was hoping would start coming naturally were still proving difficult. How do those pros make it look so easy?

Lesson 4

The Body Movement: Breaking those old habits is proving to be my most difficult hurdle. Martyn keeps reminding me that golf is quite a simple game but by reverting back to old techniques I'm making it more difficult than it needs to be. This lesson revolved around teaching me how each body action will dictate the end result. While practicing in slow motion without a club appears easy, when I pick up the club and practice the swing in normal speed, a psychological shift occurs. Suddenly, my arms do what they're not supposed to do, the hips start moving in the wrong direction and the stance reverts to what has always felt 'comfortable'. It is at this stage of my lessons that the thought occurs to me that the best way to avoid those bad habits is to not have them in the first place. My recommendation is that if you or your child is yet to hit a golf ball but are considering taking up the game, invest in some lessons first. It will mean that the habits established from the start will be the right ones. The theory must come first and once you start doing it the wrong way it is very hard to correct one wrong motion as everything else tends to fall out of place to compensate.

When I mentioned this to Martyn he told me that in some parts of the world they are not as fortunate as we are when it comes to playing golf. Unless you have a **golf pass** you cannot play golf, and the only way you can get a golf pass is by taking lessons. In a way it is like getting your driver's licence before you can drive. The other thing that's important to note is that the lesson is only the start and the PRACTICE is essential even if its just fresh air practice in the office or the back yard. Having said all that, by the end of the lesson I'm starting to feel a lot better with the club in my hand. Repetition is ensuring that, mentally, the right way is starting to take over from the wrong way. Just need to make sure I get out and practice during the week.

Lesson 5

The reprogramming of my golf swing continues. The theory of today's

lesson is based on the correct order of movement: **Body; Arms; Club**. Martyn identifies that I have major problems moving my shoulders. This means that I try to force the club through, rather than just moving the pivotal parts of my body. Correct rotation will ensure that each facet of the swing will feel natural and each component will then ensure optimum contact at the point of impact with the ball. 'Pushing' the club face will not ensure greater distance or accuracy, in fact it usually has the opposite effect. A few swings concentrating on motion rather than force and I'm starting to feel pretty good with the club in my hand. Maybe you can teach an old golfer new swing tricks.

Lesson 6

Can I put it all together? After five lessons of practice without actually hitting a ball, just trying to understand the mechanics of what each body part is meant to do, Martyn finally puts a ball on the tee and asks me to hit it. Would my newly taught swing come naturally to me? Would I be able to get extra distance and accuracy? Could I stop myself from falling into old habits? The results were both surprising and encouraging to say the least. While I may not be ready to win a major just yet, I certainly can't wait to get out on the golf course to put my new and improved swing to the test.

You can delude yourself into thinking that teaching yourself how to play golf is a good thing but in reality having someone to observe and show you how to do it right will always provide a better result. The amount of time that is required to turn a hacker into a golfer depends on the individual and how far they wish to take their golf, but I would highly recommend a minimum of six weeks to help iron out the chinks in your game. Before going on to the golf course or range, I would suggest that a chat with Martyn will help you enjoy the game more. Good golfing to you all.

GOLF PARK

Golf Park Driving Range has a long and established history of being a leading golf facility in Melbourne. With continual developments and upgrades with technology, Golf Park is committed to providing the highest quality golf practice facility. Golf Park is open to the public and golfers who want to just hit balls, or practice and improve their game and also offers a free membership that rewards a person by giving back a percentage of their purchase on range balls. This can then be used to purchase more range balls. The Teaching Centre at Golf Park has state of the art computer analysis equipment which allows for precise evaluations of a person's motion. Then, one of the four PGA Golf Professionals takes this information and instructs the pupil on how to make the necessary changes. Through structured training programs available at Golf Park, people find that this accelerates the learning of their golf swing, with incredible results.

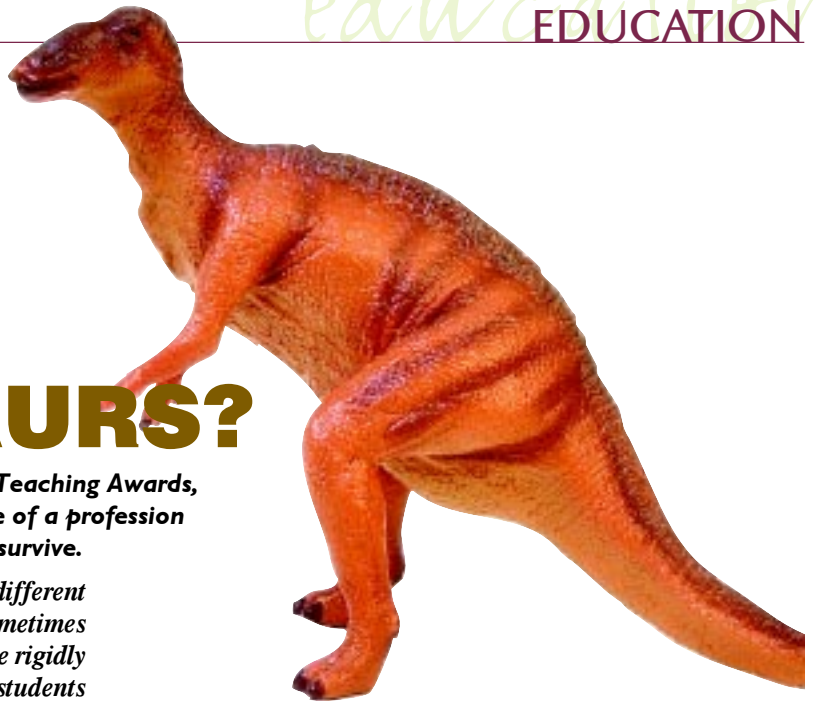
MARTYN ANDREWS

My role as a professional is to provide clear and simple instruction that people can implement in their golf game, allowing them to achieve their golfing potential and goals. I aim to clear any misconceptions about the golf swing so that this does not interfere with their most natural motion and to ensure that their swings are rewarded with great ball flight from their equipment set up. Everyone has a level of golfing that they aspire to. Through careful monitoring and clearly instructing the individual on what they need to do, I can help them achieve their aims. From this a person can, amongst other things, gain fun, enjoyment, fulfilment and satisfaction from their golf game. In short, the emotional content that we seek from playing golf.

To find out how you can improve your golfing game phone Golf Park on 9570 2202.



IS TEACHING HEADING THE WAY OF THE DINOSAURS?



A teacher honoured in the National Excellence in Teaching Awards, JAK DENNY, looks at the past, present and future of a profession that must continue to evolve in order to survive.

When I commenced teaching in the late 60s, it was very different from today. Discipline was generally very strict, sometimes enforced through corporal punishment; syllabuses were rigidly adhered to; the teacher was the central authority; and students learnt individually through a passive and highly-structured program. External, three hour examinations were the principal if not the only means of assessing our students' knowledge in years 11 and 12.

In Tasmania at this time, less than 30 per cent of the student population pursued studies beyond Year 10 and there was practically full employment. Senior secondary level years were

occupied predominantly by students with aspirations for tertiary studies, and our educational system was not designed to offer anything of consequence to the non-academic student. Family disruptions and the associated social dislocation of children were

continued page 8

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Year 8 students from Lyndale Secondary College recently attended a Graffiti Education Workshop as part of the City of Greater Dandenong's anti graffiti forum. The workshop consisted of a one man performance, acting out different scenarios regarding the social implications of graffiti. Students were educated in the legal avenues available for them to be involved in 'tagging' and 'street art'. Maria Sampey, Mayor of the City of Greater Dandenong and member of the Lyndale Secondary College Council, lent her support to the program through her participation in one of the sessions. Mayor Sampey was joined by Michael Truter, Cansu Yildez, Brad (performer), Christine Thomas and Marko Petrovic.



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hidden from public view and largely ignored by the education system.

The technological onslaught that commenced in the early 1970s and continues at an even greater rate today was undoubtedly the key factor in initiating the enormous changes in society in general and education in particular. These changes have dramatically affected the function the teacher performs today in the classroom, as well as their status in the eye of the general public.

As a teacher suffering considerable chronological exposure, I could well be described as an educational dinosaur unsuited to the present day landscape and deserving of extinction. Fortunately, our evolution as teachers is largely facilitated by working with our students and reacting actively to the changing climate. I continually reflect on the key changes that I have undergone in my evolutionary progress.

A principal factor in this change is in the relationship that now exists between teachers and students. The central authority role of teachers has been replaced with an emphasis on

cooperative goodwill and collaborative learning. Syllabuses and the teaching approach have moved towards a negotiated situation and learning is focussed more on the individual's interests and needs. Teachers' roles are now extended beyond the day-to-day facilitator of learning to incorporate expected functions such as personal and career counsellor, sports coach, mentor and legal adviser.

Despite these radical changes and new expectations for teachers, there are undoubtedly some fundamental attributes of an 'excellent' teacher that hold as true today as they did in the educational Jurassic Park of the 60s. By enunciating the desirable, if not essential, teacher characteristics we can assist in the process of identifying and training teachers for the future. I will limit this difficult task to the area of education that I feel most confident to embrace, that is, senior secondary level.

Above all else, a good teacher must be an utter enthusiast for his or her subject area, believing that there is enormous value for all to be gained from exposure to it. The benefit to students should be demonstrable beyond the simplistic ideals of 'passing this subject will enable you to go on to...'

A valuable lesson I learnt in my own evolution was to ask myself,

“The central authority role of teachers has been replaced with an emphasis on cooperative goodwill and collaborative learning. Syllabuses and the teaching approach have moved towards a negotiated situation and learning is focussed more on the individual's interests and needs.”

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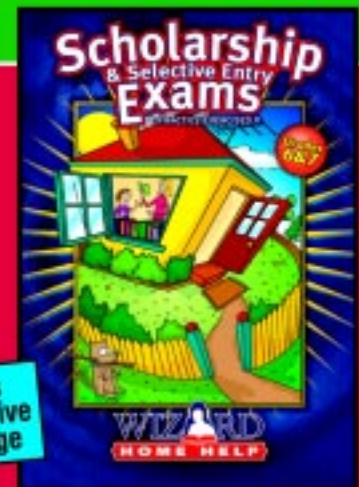
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‘Why am I teaching this information/skill and can I justify the need to know about it? For a chemistry teacher this is an easy task, as much of my subject area has direct implications to everyday life and we have devised experiments to reinforce these connections between the laboratory and the outside ‘real’ world. Examples of these experiments include those relating to metallurgical industries in Tasmania, polymer preparation and testing, extraction of essential oils and environmental chemistry.

Another attribute that appears high on my list of teachers’ essential characteristics is ‘interpersonal’ skills. The ability to understand the diversity of concerns, problems and differences within the student group allows the teacher to empathise with and understand the enormous strain imposed on young people today from all facets of society. A teacher who can stay in touch with their students’ aspirations and yet not impose their own agenda will win the respect and confidence of those students.

Teaching is a mentally and physically demanding vocation. An excellent teacher needs to be resilient, energetic and eternally enthusiastic. They must make an extra effort to provide assistance to students, show an unerring capacity to meet their work commitments and provide timely feedback. They should always set clearly defined and realistic expectations for standards of work and behaviour. Each student has their own aspirations, expectations and limitations and the teacher’s skill is to nurture these strengths and offer opportunities for each to achieve their capabilities.

Throughout my career as a science teacher I have regarded a keen sense of humour as an essential teaching ingredient and frequently use anecdotes to illustrate situations that may otherwise be less than inspirational or difficult to grasp. Working from the ‘known’ towards the ‘unknown’ is the basis of good developmental learning. As a scuba diving instructor with over 30 years’ experience, I find many instances where diving provides obvious ‘real’ examples to explain quite complex scientific concepts. For example, the gas laws come alive when related to decompression illness, or why pressure changes may hurt your ears if you don’t take the correct precautionary action.

It may be opportune for me to offer some self-appraisal at this juncture. I would hope that my capacity to adapt has maintained the necessary impetus to ensure that my efforts and value as a teacher justify my existence. I am reassured to know that at least some of my students and science teaching colleagues believe this to be true. I had the great honour of being selected to join a team of five tertiary chemistry educators from around Australia to participate in a teacher training project in the Philippines. In this role I was required to give demonstration laboratory lessons employing limited chemical reagents and equipment. The facilities

available were far from those expected today in Australia and yet, even within this different culture, the same key attributes of enthusiasm, interpersonal skills and dedicated application to students’ needs were fundamental to the success of the project. I found the process most stimulating and learnt a great deal about teaching from the project.

For the past ten years I have been chief examiner and Tasmanian State moderator for Chemistry, a task that has given me the opportunity to guide the evolution of this and other science subjects. Among our most significant developments are syllabus and assessment changes. Syllabuses are now structured so that students find out how and why things behave the way they do. Understanding and relevance to the everyday world now override previous goals such as the rote acquisition of knowledge and the preparation solely for tertiary studies. Both internal and external assessment is employed and each involves a greater emphasis on comprehension rather than accumulation of facts. Examinations allow access to textbooks and the style of questioning used tests understanding rather than the mere short-term retention of information.

Despite the large number of young men and women leaving universities today who possess all these desirable teacher attributes, we appear to be failing to encourage adequate numbers into teaching. This critical situation can only be addressed by the ongoing promotion of the teaching profession through highlighting the positive benefits to be gained through this most important vocation of all. Our failure to meet the evolving needs imposed by society will see teaching facing the same inevitable demise as that faced by the dinosaurs.



Jak Denny’s article “Is teaching heading the way of the dinosaurs?” first appeared in the EQ Australia Issue Three, Spring 2004, ‘Talking Science’ edition. EQ Australia is a quarterly magazine published by Curriculum Corporation (www.curriculum.edu.au/eq).

Jak Denny has been teaching Chemistry, Physics and Mathematics at senior secondary level in Tasmania for the past 36 years.

“Teaching is a mentally and physically demanding vocation. An excellent teacher needs to be resilient, energetic and eternally enthusiastic. (Amongst other things) they must make an extra effort to provide assistance to students, show an unerring capacity to meet their work commitments and provide timely feedback.”

RESIDENTIAL MARKET REBOUNDS

According to figures from the Real Estate Institute of Victoria (REIV), the December quarter Melbourne median house price rebounded 5.2 per cent to \$382,500, up from a revised figure of \$363,000 in the September quarter. This represents a fall in the median price of 1.3 per cent over the past 12 months.

Mr Raimondo, CEO, REIV said “Whilst the December quarter figures are encouraging, the better than expected result doesn’t signal a return to high growth levels and should be seen in the context of the previous 12 months.

“The result can primarily be explained by a surge in market confidence following the federal election result, subsiding fears about imminent interest rate rises and a large jump in first home buyer activity. With clearance rates at around 60 per cent and evidence of renewed confidence by sellers as listings start to pick up, the market is showing a return to normal levels of activity.

“We forecast flat to modest price growth over the next twelve months, as the market continues to reflect a new property

cycle. Despite gloomy predictions last year of a ‘property price crash’, the residential housing market has proved resilient and clearly experienced a soft landing. Large scale and sustained price falls are highly unlikely in an economic climate of low interest rates and low unemployment and high levels of consumer confidence.

“Suburbs within 10 kilometres of the CBD are generally expected to perform best, and particularly homes with unique characteristics, prestige and growth history and easy access to amenities and schools,” he said.

The Melbourne apartment market recorded a median price rise of 4.1 per cent over the quarter, from \$290,000 in the September quarter to \$302,000 in the December quarter 2004. This was a 2.4 per cent increase over the past 12 months.

Mr Raimondo said “Melbourne’s new apartment market remains over-supplied, with large numbers due for completion this year, though with strong owner-occupier demand and good prospects over the longer term.”

When assessing the regional results, Mr Raimondo believes that local factors such as significant new retail, agricultural and business investment largely explain, and are expected to continue to be the main influence.

“Geelong’s median price was the same at \$250,000, representing a 3.2 per cent rise over the past 12 months. Ballarat’s median also remained steady at \$195,000, with a 2.5 per cent fall over the last 12 months. Bendigo’s median house price rose a strong 7.3 per cent over the quarter to \$220,000, a rise of 7.6 per cent over the past 12 months,” he said.

RESIDENTIAL VACANCY RATES

Melbourne’s residential vacancy rates rose marginally by 0.1 per cent to 3.8 per cent in the December quarter 2004, which is 0.1 per cent below that recorded this time last year, and moving closer to the balanced market rate of 3.0 per cent.

The Victorian regional vacancy rate decreased to 1.7 per cent, a 0.6 per cent fall from the September quarter 2004, and 0.4 percent below that recorded in the December quarter 2003, confirming the continuing strong demand for rental accommodation in regional areas.

Newly completed and previously untenanted inner-city apartment market (CBD, Docklands, St Kilda Rd and Southbank)

MELBOURNE’S MOST AFFORDABLE SUBURBS - HOUSES

Suburb	Dec ‘04 Median
St Albans	\$220,000
Werribee	\$222,000
Meadow Heights	\$227,750
Frankston	\$228,000
Hoppers Crossing	\$233,000
Sunbury	\$248,250
Narre Warren	\$249,500
Langwarrin	\$250,000
Epping	\$255,000
Altona Meadows	\$260,000

“Despite gloomy predictions last year of a ‘property price crash’, the residential housing market has proved resilient and clearly experienced a soft landing. Large scale and sustained price falls are highly unlikely in an economic climate of low interest rates and low unemployment and high levels of consumer confidence.” Enzo Raimondo, CEO, REIV

vacancy rates fell to 6.3 per cent, down 0.2 per cent from the September quarter, well below the 10.0 per cent recorded in the December quarter 2003.

The residential vacancy rate for apartments not newly completed and previously tenanted in inner Melbourne (0-4km from the CBD) fell slightly over the quarter to 4.1 per cent. Inner Melbourne (4-10km from the CBD) recorded a vacancy rate of 4.2 per cent, remaining stagnate over the quarter, with middle Melbourne (10-20km from the CBD) falling slightly over the quarter to 3.5 per cent. Outer Melbourne (20km plus from the CBD) recorded an increase in vacancy rate to 3.6 per cent.

Mr Raimondo said "Continuing the trend for the majority of 2004, there was minimal movement in vacancy rates throughout most of Melbourne due to lower levels of new stock entering the market.

"Apartment vacancy rates can be expected to rise slightly in 2005 with large numbers of apartments due for completion in inner Melbourne."

Geelong's vacancy rate fell to 0.4 per cent, Bendigo's rose to 2.2 per cent, while Ballarat's rose to 3.0 per cent, during the December quarter.

"Regional Victoria continues to reflect a balanced market with vacancy rates remaining very low and consistently below the three per cent mark, due to strong rental demand and a decrease in new stock levels as investor demand weakens," he said.

Vacancy rates for other Victorian regions again remain very low for the December quarter, with Wodonga (2.3 per cent),

Wimmera (2.2 per cent), Shepparton/Goulburn (2.3 per cent), East Gippsland/Wellington Shire (2.2 per cent), Warrnambool/Western District (1.5 per cent), Latrobe Valley/South/West Gippsland (2.6 per cent), and Mildura/Mallee (1.5 per cent) respectively.

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Camberwell	\$744,000
Beaumaris	\$710,000
Hawthorn	\$676,000
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NEW FIGURES SHOW SMOKING RATES IN VICTORIA CONTINUE TO FALL



The number of Victorians who smoke has almost halved over the last twenty years, according to research released by The Cancer Council Victoria.

The findings, released recently at the launch of a campaign marking the 20th Anniversary of Quit Victoria, show that less than one in five Victorian adults are regular smokers. In 1985, when Quit Victoria began, just under a third of Victorian adults were regular smokers. Cancer Council Director Professor David Hill said the latest results indicated that since 1985, tobacco control measures adopted in Victoria have been successful in supporting men and women across all age groups in their attempts to quit smoking. "Smoking rates for Victorian men are less than half of what they were twenty years ago and smoking rates in women have also declined steadily since 1985.

"This has been mirrored in the smoking rates of Victorians aged 18-29, which have gone down by almost half in the past two decades."

However latest figures show smoking rates remain highest amongst Victorians under 30, where 23.4 per cent are regular smokers, compared to 19.8 per cent of Victorians aged 30-49 and nine per cent of Victorians aged over 50.

Professor Hill said 16.6 per cent of Victorian adults were smokers according to the 2003 survey, however he urged caution in interpreting this data.

FINDINGS FROM THE RESEARCH INCLUDE:

- 16.6 per cent of Victorian adults surveyed are regular smokers
- Smoking rates are not significantly different between males (17.4 per cent) and females (15.8 per cent)
- Smoking rates are highest amongst young people; 23.4 per cent of 18-29 year olds are regular smokers, compared to almost 20 per cent of Victorians aged 30-49 and just below 10 per cent of Victorians aged over 50.
- Over half of Victorians surveyed (53.2 per cent) have never smoked
- 29.2 per cent of Victorians surveyed are former smokers

"It is important to focus on longer term trends than year to year data which fluctuate around this trend, however these latest figures show we can be confident that smoking levels are declining."

Professor Hill also highlighted the significant fall in the last twenty years in smoking rates among Victorians with Year 11 or less education.

"Victorians in this group still have a higher smoking rate (21 per cent) than those who have completed Year 12 (18.7 per cent) or completed tertiary study (11.8 per cent).

"However the number of regular smokers with Year 11 or less has dropped by over 10 per cent in the last twenty years, indicating real inroads have been made in this particular area to help these smokers quit."

According to Professor Hill the latest figures were evidence of the effectiveness of the partnership of organisations like Quit Victoria, The Heart Foundation, VicHealth and The Cancer Council Victoria along with successive Victorian Governments, in not only encouraging people to quit smoking, but also discouraging them from starting smoking in the first place.

"Since Quit Victoria began there has been an undeniable downward shift in the smoking rates in Victorian adults.

"In the years following 1985 we have seen bans on cigarette advertising, bans on smoking in restaurants, increases in cigarette prices, the implementation of more detailed pack warning and a raft of successful advertising campaigns spearheaded by Quit Victoria.

"There is no doubt that all of these have been contributing factors in the continuing decrease in the number of adult Victorians smoking."

Professor Hill said there had also been a change in where people smoke, pointing out the regular smokers are now more likely to smoke outdoors and away from children.

Research has indicated a rapid increase in the number of regular smokers who do not smoke around children, from approximately 13 per cent in 1989 to 42 per cent in 2003 and an increase in the percentage of regular smokers who always or usually smoke outside.

Trying to quit smoking? Call the Quitline on 131 848.

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WORLD-FIRST CAMPAIGN GIVES THE FACTS ON FAD DIETS

A world-first advertising campaign that warns women about the health impacts, and ineffectiveness, of fad diets was recently launched by the Health Minister, Bronwyn Pike.

Ms Pike said the \$300,000 campaign, believed to be a first for any government in the world, would aim to educate women about diets, which take a load off Australian women's wallets while putting their health at risk.

"With obesity at alarming levels in Australia, many people are turning to unhealthy, quick-fix solutions to shed weight," Ms Pike said.

"Through this campaign the Bracks Government is attempting to raise awareness about the dangers of fad diets among Victorians tempted to use fad diets to lose excess weight.

"Up to 200,000 Victorians are estimated to be on diets, such as the Atkins diet, that cut down on or exclude carbohydrates.

"Fad diets may provide short-term results but are difficult to sustain and ultimately they deprive you of essential nutrients only balanced eating can offer.

"They can cause dehydration, weakness, fatigue, nausea, headaches and constipation. Aside from these immediate effects, many of the long-term health dangers of fad diets are still unknown."

Ms Pike said the initiative, part of the Government's *Go for Your Life* health and fitness campaign, uses the tagline, 'Over the long term, fad diets won't work'.

"Australians spend about \$1 million a day on weight-loss programs, drugs and aids in an often futile bid to lose weight," Ms Pike said.

"Our public health campaign will provide information about how Victorians can enjoy a wide range of healthy foods, be physically active and feel better about themselves. A healthy lifestyle can be more effective than a fad diet and it is easier than most people think."

The campaign, which is supported by the Australian Medical Association, highlights the negative effects of fad diets, such as energy loss, putting on more weight than you lost and bad moods.

One in four primary school children have dieted to lose weight, while 13 per cent of young women use extreme weight loss measures weekly.

Ms Pike said fad diets were easy to spot. They promise dramatic results and promote 'magic bullet' solutions such as eating half a

grapefruit for each meal. They often exclude food groups such as carbohydrates and have rigid rules such as only eating one food or food group at a time.

Australian Medical Association (AMA) Victoria weight management and eating behaviour spokesman, Dr Rick Kausman, said the key to healthy weight loss was for people to look at the reasons why they might have gained weight and examine how they can change their behavior.

"The AMA advises against the use of fad or crash 'diets', which make claims of dramatic weight loss or performance enhancement, are often not nutritionally balanced and do not promote healthy eating habits," Dr Kausman said.

Ms Pike said fad dieters will lose weight in the first few weeks, but most will put it back on.

"Thousands grapple with fad diets, mistakenly thinking that they themselves are the problem, not their diet," Ms Pike said.

"It is estimated that 95 per cent of dieters will put the weight back on after a year."

Brochures, and posters will be distributed to all GPs, community health centres, universities and TAFE colleges. The campaign will also spread the word in shopping centres, pubs and clubs and on public transport. A comprehensive website has also been developed.

Ms Pike said, as Health Minister, she had an obligation to warn Victorians about the impacts of fad diets, in the same way as the public had been educated about the risks of smoking and alcohol abuse.

"In many cases, people are putting their long-term health at risk by adopting damaging and extreme dietary habits - we need to inform people about the implications of their actions," Ms Pike said.

DR KAUSMAN'S TIPS INCLUDE:

- Decreasing the "non-hungry" eating;
- Divide food into "every day" food and "sometimes food", rather than "good food" and "bad food";
- Advising people to take time to nurture and look after ourselves; and
- Looking for opportunities to enjoy things that involve moving our body, such as dancing and walking.

**"The AMA (Australian Medical Association) advises against the use of fad or crash 'diets', which make claims of dramatic weight loss or performance enhancement, are often not nutritionally balanced and do not promote healthy eating habits."
AMA Victoria weight management and eating behaviour spokesman, Dr Rick Kausman.**

AUSTRALIANS' HEALTH GETTING BETTER BUT THERE IS ROOM FOR IMPROVEMENT



Australians enjoy good health by world standards, but there is scope for further improvement and substantial inequalities remain, according to a new report released by the National Health Performance Committee (NHPC) and the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

The National Report on Health Sector Performance Indicators 2003 is the second report prepared by the NHPC, designed to help policy makers and others understand trends and patterns in health, and to identify areas for action. It examines 44 indicators of performance across the three tiers of the NHPC's National Health Performance Framework:

- health status and outcomes
- determinants of health
- health system performance.

The NHPC chair and Director General of the NSW Department of Health, Ms Robyn Kruk, said Australia had performed well over the past few decades, particularly in relation to life expectancy and mortality rates.

"In 1970, Australia's life expectancy was ranked 16th for OECD

countries and by 2001 it was third behind Japan and Switzerland and equal with Sweden at 80 years.

"And our mortality rate has fallen 50 percent in the period 1970 to 1999, which is faster than for every other high income OECD country apart from Japan," Ms Kruk said.

In general, Australians are living healthier as well as living longer, with significantly lower rates of heart disease, stroke and injury compared with a decade ago. However, diabetes, mental illness and psychological distress are all more common.

There are also still substantial health inequalities in Australia. People living in the most disadvantaged areas have avoidable mortality rates 54 percent higher than those living in the least disadvantaged areas.

But the starkest health inequalities are between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and other Australians. Infant mortality for indigenous Australians is twice as high and, for older people, their chances of dying from circulatory disease, diabetes and injuries due to accidents, suicide and assault are much higher than for other Australians.

The report looks at determinants of health - those which have protective benefits, such as fruit and vegetable intake and physical activity, and those that are hazardous to health, such as overweight and obesity and tobacco use. For example, in 2001, 46 percent of Australians were sufficiently active to achieve a health benefit and 16 percent of adult Australians were obese. Health system performance information in the report includes indicators of effectiveness (such as childhood immunisation rates), responsiveness (such as waiting times in emergency departments) and safety (such as adverse events in hospitals).

Life expectancy at birth, selected OECD countries, 2001

	Males		Females
Iceland	78.2	Japan	84.7
Japan	77.9	France	82.9
Sweden	77.7	Switzerland	82.8
Australia	77.4	Spain	82.6
Switzerland	77.3	Australia	82.6
Canada	76.6	Sweden	82.3
Italy	76.1	Italy	82.2
Norway	76.1	Canada	81.9
New Zealand	76.1	Austria	81.8
Austria	75.9	Luxembourg	81.8
Netherlands	75.8	Norway	81.4
France	75.6	Iceland	81.3
Greece	75.5	Finland	81.2
Spain	75.3	Germany	81.1
Germany	75.1	New Zealand	80.9
U.K.	75.1	Greece	80.8
Luxembourg	74.9	Netherlands	80.7
Denmark	74.8	U.K.	79.9
Finland	74.5	Denmark	79.5
United States	74.3	United States	79.5

Source: World Health Organisation (The World Health Report 2002).

In general, Australians are living healthier as well as living longer, with significantly lower rates of heart disease, stroke and injury compared with a decade ago. However, diabetes, mental illness and psychological distress are all more common.

GARDEN ALERT: WARNING TO HANDLE POTTING MIX SAFELY

Victorian Health Minister Bronwyn Pike has stepped in to warn Victorian gardeners about the little-known but potentially deadly risks associated with everyday potting mixes, following what is believed to be the first-ever suspected cases of potting mix-related death in the State last year.

Ms Pike said three Victorians died last year from *Legionella longbeachae*, a bacteria commonly found in potting mix. In at least two of the three cases, the victims had been exposed to potting mix before their deaths.



TIPS TO OBSERVE WHEN USING POTTING MIX INCLUDE:

- Wear a particulate disposable mask to avoid breathing in dusts. These are available from large hardware stores;
- Wear suitable eye protection such as good quality sunglasses, or goggles/safety glasses;
- **Do not** shake the bag before opening it, as this will produce dust particles;
- Moisten contents of bag by spraying lightly with water upon opening. Do this by making a small opening and insert a garden hose to dampen potting mix to avoid creating dust;
- Always open potting mix bags at arms length in a well ventilated place with care to avoid breathing in airborne particles;
- Store potting mix products in a cool dry location to limit growth of bacteria;
- Clean up by sweeping whilst the product is damp to reduce dust;
- Wash hands on completion of use of potting mix and wash work clothes regularly.

“To many gardeners, potting mix may seem harmless, but it can actually be very dangerous unless the correct procedures are followed,” Ms Pike said.

Legionella longbeachae is a form of Legionnaires’ disease. It is found in minute quantities in the general environment (including soil) and is not a health hazard. But the ingredients and moistness of potting mix make it the ideal breeding ground for the bacteria. “In recent years, infections have been on the rise. During 2004 there were 27 cases of related illness, typically pneumonia, in Victoria. This figure includes the three deaths. Contact with potting mix was believed to be the cause of illness in many of the cases.”

Legionella longbeachae is different from *Legionella pneumophila*, the more well-known form of Legionnaires’ disease found in poorly maintained cooling towers and spas.

Ms Pike said gardeners using potting mix should always follow the manufacturer’s safety instructions on the bag. Victoria’s Acting Chief Health Officer Dr John Carnie said the different types of legionella bacteria all cause a rare form of atypical pneumonia.

Early symptoms include fever, chills, headache, shortness of breath, sometimes dry cough, muscle aches and pain.

“Most people who breathe in the bacteria do not become ill. The risk of disease is increased with age, smoking, and in people with weakened immune systems,” Dr Carnie said.

Further information about Legionella, legal requirements and the analysis of samples can be obtained at www.health.vic.gov.au/ideas/downloads/leg_facts.pdf or www.legionella.vic.gov.au or by contacting the Legionella Program on 1800 248 898.



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