

Saturday forum

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MILESTONES THIS WEEK

► **FLOODED:** Large parts of central and southern New South Wales, as well as northern Victoria, following record rainfall across the states.

► **CONFESSED:** Businessman Paul Douglas Peters to strapping a fake collar bomb on the neck of Sydney schoolgirl Madeleine Pulver last year.

► **FEARS:** In George Town and throughout the state that 1000 jobs at Bell Bay may be lost — 600 at Rio Tinto's aluminium smelter and 400 at Temco.

► **THRILLER:** As Tasmanian IBF world boxing champion Daniel Geale prevails over challenger Osumanu Adama after 12 pounding rounds in Hobart.

Public deserves more from its state parliamentarians

POLITICIANS are not held in the highest regard — and nothing that happened in the past week will reverse that.

Exhibit A: The behaviour on show in question time during the first two days of the State Parliament.

When politicians return to Parliament, levels of enthusiasm tend to run high — just like when school goes back.

Unfortunately, the antics that unfolded were akin to those of a classroom out of control.

In fending off attacks on Tuesday, Greens leader Nick McKim compared the Liberal Party to the junta of China.

In attacking Mr McKim and his public commentary on forestry, the opposition accused Mr McKim of treason, and Opposition Leader Will Hodgman went as far as saying the criticism of the Chinese government had undertones of xenophobia.

Labor was no better, with Deputy Premier Bryan Green mocking Liberal propaganda by mocking up his own version of a pamphlet, which featured a photograph of Bass Liberal MHR Michael Ferguson being assisted during a fun run after he collapsed.

He was admitted to hospital with dehydration after that photograph was taken.



Exhibit B: The unoriginal state of the state address, and predictable response from the Liberals.

Neither major party leader painted an inspiring vision of where they want to lead the state.

Premier Lara Giddings talked about cashing in on the Asian century.

She had little room to move with a tight budget, but presenting a concept talked about by former prime minister Paul Keating 20 years ago is far from visionary.

Mr Hodgman talked tough in his speech on the economy, but insists on repeating tiresome slogans with no substance like "putting up the open-for-business sign".

He has begun trying to provide voters with a clear choice, but give

them a little more credit in how you sell it.

Exhibit C: The argy-bargy around how politicians should be paid.

If no action is taken in Parliament to change the law, then our state MPs will get a massive pay rise because federal politicians are (after losing entitlements) and that automatically flows on.

For someone on the base salary, that will equate to an extra \$43,736 in their pocket a year (or a 38.4 per cent rise).

For taxpayers that will mean at least an extra \$1.75 million a year to run Parliament.

When the government has already ruled that no public sector worker gets a pay rise above 2.5 per cent, it doesn't take much imagination to foresee the consequences at the ballot box.

It should be an easy enough political win for Ms Giddings — but nothing is ever that simple.

On Thursday, she presented an options paper to Mr Hodgman, Mr McKim and Legislative Council President Sue Smith.

The paper was dated January, so the timing of its release is interesting.

Could it herald talk of restoring the House of Assembly to 35 members?

After all, that was said to cost \$3 million, which would come into effect after the next election.

Ms Giddings made it clear she had a preferred position on pay — and that is to tie politicians' wages to the Tasmanian State Service Award.

This is not the preferred position of Mr McKim (who wants to see a wage freeze until the next election) or Mr Hodgman and independent Ms Smith (who want the matter referred to an independent tribunal).

Going on form, the three parties won't agree and the matter will revert to status quo — fixing pay rises at 2 per cent for another year.

Or in other words, delaying real action for 12 months.

But when you have a company like Gunns announcing yesterday that a major potential investor in its pulp mill project has pulled out, there are more important things to debate.

Tasmanians expect, and deserve, more.

■ **Dinah Arndt is The Examiner's chief political reporter.**



No computer

PETER Thompson (Letters, March 4) asks Julia Weston (Letters, February 26) if she has ever used a self-serve petrol pump, an ATM, an automatic car wash, an online travel service or a self-serve check-in facility at an airport. I have never used any of these, nor have I used a computer, the internet, a mobile phone, a personal video camera or a digital camera.

In fact, I still use my fountain pen occasionally.

— G. L. WILLSON, East Launceston.



Media irony

THE MEDIA is far more accountable than politicians, who use parliamentary privilege to slander freely yet lead the charge in pushing for a government regulator to gag the media.

Too ironic.

— LINDA VIJ, Mascot.

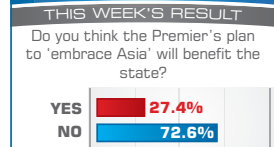
Anger at assault

SCUM, lowlife — words cannot describe people who assault people in a wheelchair.

They should be made to sit in the Brisbane Street Mall with a sign so everyone can see them and know what cowards they are.

— J. RADFORD, Newnham.

INTERNET POLL



Have your say at www.examiner.com.au

Letters should be 150 words or less. Short letters will be given priority. Send letters to The Examiner, PO Box 99, Launceston, 7250, or email editor@examiner.com.au. You can text us on 04274 FORUM or have your say at www.examiner.com.au. Writers should disclose any alliance with political or community organisations and include their full name, address and telephone number for verification. Election candidates should declare themselves as such when submitting letters.

ROAD STATISTICS

Fatalities as at Friday, March 12:	2012 — 6	2011 — 7
Serious injuries as at Friday, March 12:	2012 — 44	2011 — 65

— Figures supplied weekly by the Road Safety Advisory Council

Your say

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Carr appointment

MANY people are questioning the legitimacy of the recent appointment of New South Wales Labor Senator Bob Carr to fill the vacancy caused by the resignation of NSW Labor Senator Mark Arbib.

It is very sad that some people obviously have no knowledge of the democratic processes that are part of the Australian constitution and practice.

Here's a little history by way of explanation.

Liberal Senator Eric Abetz filled the occasional vacancy left when B. B. Archer resigned and Senator Abetz was admitted to the Senate on February 22, 1994.

He was chosen by the Tasmanian Parliament to fill the vacancy in accordance with section 15 of the Australian constitution and, following the accepted conventions, was chosen as a Liberal to replace a Liberal senator.

Senator Abetz has since been re-elected to the Senate in 2004 and 2010.

The filling of the recent Senate vacancy with Senator Carr is entirely legal and complies with the Australian constitution and accepted practice.

— BETH MULLER, Glenorchy.

Fund-raising record

DIABETES Tasmania's PolliePedal 2012 broke a fund-raising record, raising nearly \$50,000 for Tasmanians living with diabetes, with online donations still coming in.

Despite the 38-degree heat and strong wind for two of the three days over 254 kilometres, this year's event was a huge success and will provide vital funds to support the 44,000 Tasmanians with diabetes.



Today's picture of "a calm morning at Bridport" was sent in by Julie Sidnell, of Mowbray. Ms Sidnell wins a voucher for a mini poster of her photograph from Stallards Camera House, 96 Brisbane Street, Launceston. Senders of photos published will receive a voucher by post. Email your best horizontal shot as an attachment (must be no less than 1000 pixels wide) to photos@examiner.com.au. Please clearly mark Reader Photo and supply your name, address and caption.

Every day another six Tasmanians are diagnosed with diabetes, which is not surprising when you consider it is Australia's fastest-growing chronic disease.

With this in mind, it's very important that we continue to provide support and services, which can help delay or prevent diabetes complications, increase life expectancy and reduce medical expenses.

Thank you for all generous donations, our sponsors and especially everyone on the East Coast who bent over backwards to support the 21 cycling participants.

— GUY BARNETT, ambassador, Diabetes Tasmania.

Fatality causes

IT'S very disturbing that statistics show that the major causes of fatal accidents in Tasmania during the 2009-11 period were fatigue and inattentiveness along with distractions (The Examiner, March 5).

I cannot emphasise it enough that mobile phone use is downright dangerous when driving, yet without fail I see at least three motorists a day talking or texting on the things.

Even while stopped at the lights, it's just not on.

Infrastructure Minister David O'Byrne said everything done in road safety work was based on careful evidence.

A renewed police blitz on phone use is warranted, because the stats speak for themselves.

— ROBERT LEE, Summerhill.

Concern for cyclists

I AGREE with Geoff McLean (Letters, March 7), that our cyclists are open to injury or death from car and truck drivers.

My concern is for my two sons who cycle regularly in and around Launceston.

They are acting responsibly both to themselves (health-wise) and to the environment (reduction of pollution).

"My bicycle is my second car," one of them says.

I suggest that Mr McLean go cycle around Canberra.

It has separate cycleways which are entirely free from vehicles — you only have to look out for the occasional pedestrian and can cycle for days in complete safety.

Unfortunately, Launceston is not Canberra and we poor folk down here are not half as important as the residents of our capital.

We need many more cycleways like those few already existing.

Why should we get the same as Canberra when we are not so important? Please excuse the cynicism.

— HASSANAH WILKINSON, Exeter.