

The Courier

SE OPINIONS
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Coffee volunteers lighten the load for all in hospital

I NOTICED in The Courier recently a reader made some comments about the staff at Ballarat Health Services. They were great comments that I must say I totally agree with.

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We have a great bunch of people working there from cleaners right through to doctors and specialist people and many that are missed. But I would like to point out two people in particular who are worthy of a mention.

One is a lovely older man who works on the first floor, I think. After you have had surgery, he will be there when you come back from the theatre and at just the right time he will be there with tea or coffee and biscuits. The same goes for a bright, cheery woman who comes along with the offer of the same and a word of encouragement if someone has a worried look about them.

Both are a huge plus for the rest of the staff there, but the thing that stands out the most is both of them do this as a volunteer no pay at all. So, perhaps a card at Christmas time with the name of coffee man on the first floor and coffee lady on the second floor.

BILL HOATH

Ballarat

Protect national interests from foreign investors

I AM writing this letter because I feel a great worry about our country. Worry overcomes me when I know of thousands, if not **millions**, of acres of prime agricultural land is being sold off to foreign investors.

Dairy farms in our Western District, are being bought up by the **Chinese** and cropping country is being snapped up by offshore interests. Australian farmers who can't make a decent living any more want their money, because many Australian farmers cannot afford to pay the money these off-shore investors can put up.

So the prices go up and farms of quality become too expensive for the locals to buy.

They say that off-shore investment is good for our country. But I cannot see that, in the future when all of our best land is lost to overseas interests the building of huge milk-processing plants for dairy products by **Chinese** owners can be good for our country. The free trade agreement with **China** allows for our dairy farmers to export with no tariffs to **China**, but before long we won't own the dairy farms and the **Chinese** will be producing and exporting their own produce back home.

Our dairy farmers who remain on their land will not have a market because the **Chinese** will be supplying their own milk for their needs from our land.

I believe over \$9 billion of prized agricultural assets have been sold to offshore interest in the past two years alone, mainly to China, the Middle East and Singapore.

Our water rights are being bought up as well by off-shore investors.

Who is keeping a record of how much of our land and water is being sold and to whom?

These countries don't allow any of their land to be bought up by foreign investors; you can't even buy a home in these countries.

Who is looking after our national sovereignty?

JAYNE WATT

Alfredton

Wrong effigy for Eureka Rebellion anniversary

I UNDERSTOOD ASIO to be an organisation set up by the government to keep Australians safe.

I cannot, therefore, understand why an effigy of ASIO director general Major General Duncan Lewis is to be burnt as part of the anniversary of the Eureka Rebellion. Make instead an effigy of the police camp commandant of the time.

We surely have no reason to rebel against ASIO.

ELLA SMITH

Wendouree

Time for our cricketers to step up to the plate

HOW hard is it for Cricket Australia to force cricket players at every level to wear properly safe helmets with full head coverage, all way down to the neck?

This is even more critical following Phillip Hughes' tragic death.

We baseballers in Australia have had to wear such helmets for decades. Without a standard helmet, you do not get to step up to the plate. It is that simple.

With no fatality ever on an Australian baseball ground (to my knowledge), we are lucky that Australian baseball authorities are smarter and gutsier than the cricket chiefs.

MARK JEANES

Thornbury

Disrupted by NBN work not once but twice

SO the NBN has hit town. After 12 months of harassing phone calls and people coming to inspect what works are required, it has finally happened ... we are connected!

Our driveway and nature strip had to be dug up for the works to be carried out and relaid on completion.

NBN turned up two days ago to complete works at our neighbour's house, only to have to dig up our driveway and nature strip again.

Well done to NBN management ... another happy customer. Poor time management, poor budgeting. What wonderful organising.

LEN WEIGHTMAN

Newington

Government undermining value of local skills

DEFENCE Minister David Johnston's intemperate statement that the Australian Submarine Corporation "couldn't build a canoe" was insulting to its employees. It also demeaned the reputation of our manufacturing industry.

It seems he has made up his mind about the **purchase** of our submarine fleet, likely be sourced from an overseas builder at the expense of Australian jobs.

This is a similar taunt to that of the soon-to-disappear motor industry, in which the Treasurer refused to extend funding and virtually dared General Motors to depart. Soon afterwards, GM announced closure of its **operations**, followed by Ford and Toyota.

It is clear that a government which is hostile to our manufacturing industry will be more likely to move **operations** elsewhere.

The full impact of these closures is yet to be felt, but it could be 50,000 jobs overall.

Not supporting and talking down the manufacturing industry is short-term thinking driven by narrow idealism.

This, rather than the wider picture of skills retention, workforce development and the benefits of employment versus loss of skills adds to the welfare bill instead of creating jobs.

Free trade agreements will not make up for this.

DENNIS O'CONNELL

Ivanhoe

Intrigued by Ballarat's far-from-dull history

HAVING recently moved to Ballarat, I was interested to research the city's history, starting with the principal streets.

It was intriguing to find that Lydiard was in charge of the old escort and that Dana was commissioner for native police (Aboriginals), who were the majority of the force on the **gold** fields prior to Eureka.

Also that mail was delivered to

St Kilda in under 24 hours from Ballarat all done with horses.

One young storekeeper slept with loaded Colt revolvers within reach. I presume these were the .44-calibre six-guns made famous in cowboy films.

The fall in the price of **gold** to 70 shillings per ounce in 1853/1854 would have added to miners' unrest, which culminated at Eureka.

Ballarat history is far from dull.

OLIVER GUTHRIE

Alfredton

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