

## INSIDE TODAY

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RIGHT TIME,  
RIGHT PLACE

With a little planning, a memorable moment awaits at any hour - day or night.

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DRIVE  
BIRDSVILLE  
TO BATHURST

The Ford Ranger Raptor given a punishing test - crossing three deserts in three days.

LIFTOUT

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Most cases are settled in backrooms rather than open court.

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## RELIGION Beliefs on transfusion overruled

## Judge forces pregnant girl to take blood

Aisha Dow

A pregnant Melbourne schoolgirl has lost her bid to potentially refuse a life-saving blood transfusion, after doubts were cast on her maturity to consider the full enormity of the decision.

The young woman said it was against her Jehovah's Witness religious beliefs to consent to the procedure but Mercy Hospitals Victoria applied to the Supreme Court seeking authority to give her blood, in the event that not doing so would threaten her life or cause serious injury.

She was originally booked in to have her labour induced on Wednesday but the procedure has been delayed until tomorrow, with Justice Cameron Macaulay ruling on the dispute yesterday afternoon.

The court heard from experts who said that while the teenager had been very clear and consistent in her wishes, she was influenced by a willingness to please her family and the community she was dependent on.

Associate Professor Campbell Paul, a consultant child psychiatrist at Melbourne's Royal Children's Hospital, said the girl could have been trying to seek approval from those around her after committing the "transgression" of becoming pregnant out of wedlock.

"To lose the support of her community would be a major blow to her," Professor Paul said.

He said that while he did not believe she had a mental illness, he was concerned she had not thought enough about the impact of refusing treatment on herself and her baby.

It was an opinion shared by obstetrician Jacqueline Van Dam who said that the schoolgirl was immature and may have been influ-

enced by a desire to please her mother. "She still believes that all will be well and whatever happens she will be protected by her faith," she said.

Dr Van Dam said the young woman, who is of small build and carrying a larger baby, was at heightened risk of having a longer labour or requiring surgical intervention. "The biggest risk we have [with] patients having their first baby is that it is not always predictable if there will be a post-partum haemorrhage," she said.

Dr Van Dam said significant blood loss could lead to a stroke and if doctors were unable to stop the bleeding, death.

However, the teen's mother, who cannot be identified, argued through an interpreter that if her daughter was forced into having a blood transfusion it would have a great psychological impact, akin to being physically attacked.

"She said that she would be forced to do that against her will [and that] would be something like having violence done to her or being raped," the interpreter said.

The court was told that the mother had given birth to nine children herself without needing a blood transfusion and that while she would always seek medical treatment for her children when they were unwell; "it's just this matter of blood transfusion that she is not able to agree with".

In a fast-tracked decision, Justice Macaulay ruled the court would allow the hospital to administer blood or blood products that were seen as reasonable and necessary by two medical practitioners to save the young woman's life during labour. He said he was not satisfied the teenager had sufficient understanding of the consequences of her choice and that essentially allowing her the choice to die was not in her best interests.

## Arnott's biscuits for sale

**NEW YORK:** Campbell Soup plans to sell its fresh food and international units, which includes Arnott's biscuits and the iconic Tim Tam.

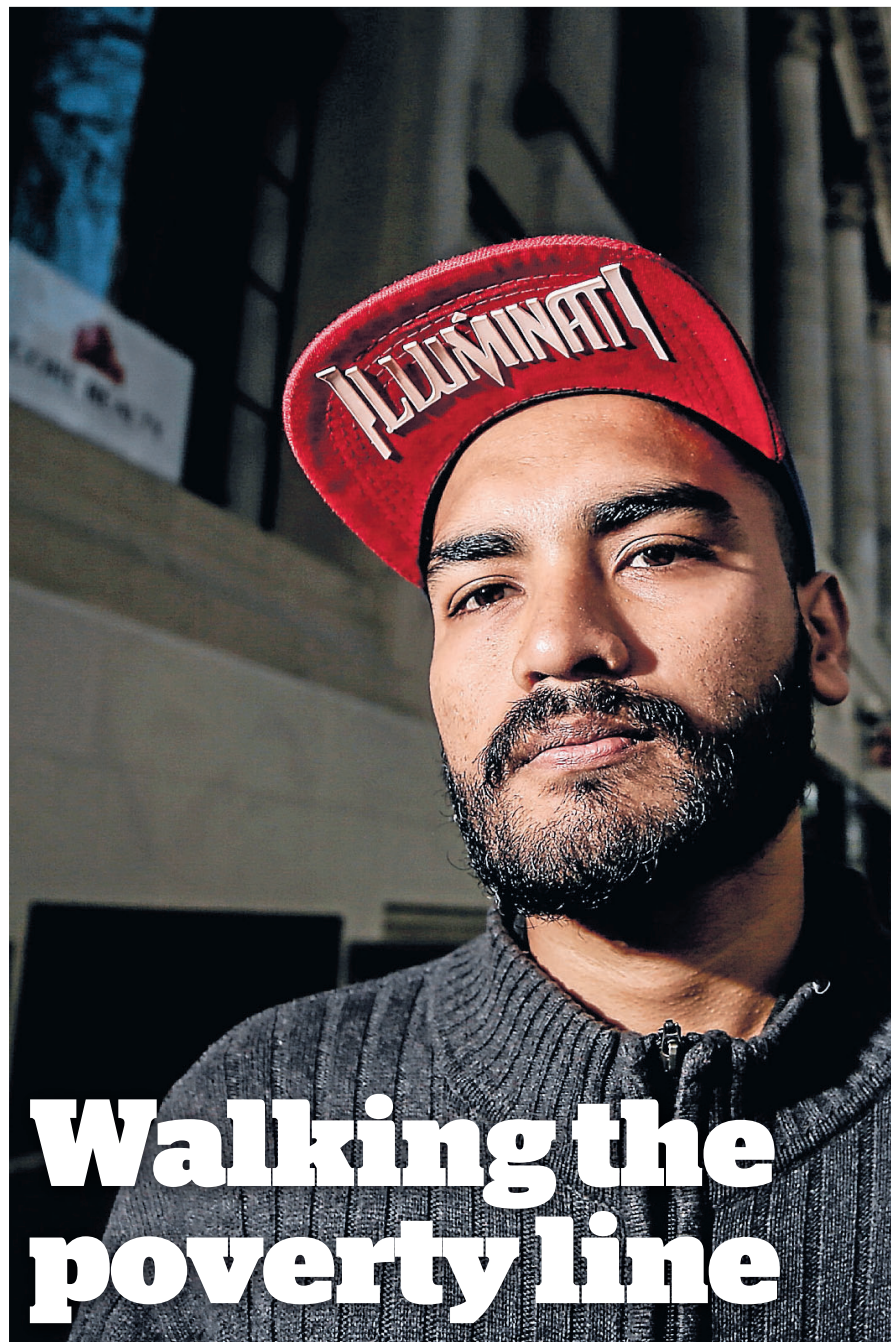
The food conglomerate left open the possibility of putting the whole company up for sale, after a months-long review and pressure from a hedge fund to sell itself outright.

The two businesses put up for sale currently bring in about \$US2.1 billion (\$2.9 billion) in annual sales, about a quarter of Campbell's overall revenue.

Campbell International includes Australian biscuits brand Arnott's and the Kelsen Group, along with the company's manufacturing operations in Indonesia and Malaysia and its businesses in Hong Kong and Japan.

A longtime shareholder of Arnott's, the Campbell Soup Company acquired the biscuit maker in full, making Arnott's Biscuits a wholly owned subsidiary. The company has hired Goldman Sachs Group Inc and Centerview Partners to sell it.

Reuters



Peter Bateman

Amar Nath Barman was the guy who puts the shopping catalogue in your mailbox. Like thousands of others, he walked kilometre after kilometre stuffing the advertising pamphlets he had folded the night before into letterboxes.

In return, these walkers typically get paid a rate per 1000 households. One industry insider says it would take about five hours to complete the round.

For that, a walker could get paid as little as \$20 on a weekday and \$12 on a weekend, when the volume of pamphlets is smaller.

This rate, well below the minimum wage, is defended by the companies using walkers by arguing that they are independent contractors, but the reality for the walkers is that they have usually limited employment options and often end up fighting just to get the pay they are owed.

"I have tried three different companies. All did the same thing. They pay me for the first day or two and then stop, even after many days of work for them," said Mr Barman, a student from Bangladesh.

"One day, I walked 40 kilometres in eight hours and then the guy blocked my phone; I never got any money. I actually don't trust anyone now, and I'm facing a lot of financial problems, I really feel hopeless."

It is big business. Some 10 million Australians read supermarket catalogues every 10 days, according to the biggest catalogue distributor, Salmat.

An Age investigation found that the use of independent contractors was widespread and walkers



complained of feeling exploited.

Desperate for work, they agree to payment at rates far below minimum wage for the hours a contract takes to complete.

The Age can reveal that the Fair Work Ombudsman has launched an investigation into Salmat. Supermarket giants Coles and Woolworths, both of which use Salmat to distribute their material, told The Age they would also probe conditions in their supply chains.

"Most of us workers are from







**Main: Student Amar Nath Barman says he has not been paid for work delivering pamphlets. Below: Video stills from distribution company Salmat. Photo: Jason South**

overseas, we don't want to go to the police because we're afraid they won't help us over an Australian, and legal costs are too much for us," said Mr Barman.

Big distribution companies usually don't strike deals directly with the walkers. Instead, the walkers typically operate as sub-contractors to other businesses that have won contracts from the distribution companies.

One such contractor said she, like most others, did not pay the walkers she used an hourly rate.

This contractor counts Salmat, which also lists Telstra as a client on its website, as a key customer.

"Some people take longer to walk than others," she said.

This contractor pays \$20 to a walker to service 1000 households in the suburb of Malvern.

"[Delivering to] 1000 houses takes around five to six hours," she said, asking not to be named.

"Walkers make about \$12 on weekends and \$20 mid-week to

*'I actually don't trust anyone now ... I really feel hopeless.'*

Amar Nath Barman, former walker

collate and distribute. Most don't speak English."

One former walker for another of Salmat's independent contractors in Perth said it would take her three hours to deliver to 260 households, earning her \$15.

She also had to collate multiple piles of pamphlets before delivery.

"I used to be up to 2-3am folding [pamphlets] and sometimes between walks as well," she said.

The walker did not want to be named because she is still trying to get work with the same contractor, despite the low pay.

"I've been trying to get work back with them; I am dead broke and

every cent, regardless of how small, helps," she said.

Kellie Northwood, chief executive of the Australasian Catalogue Association, said working in the letterbox distribution industry was different from other industries.

"Letterbox distribution is a unique sector in that there is no specific place of work, no tools of trade to complete the task, no fixed work hours, no uniforms or dress code nor other structured conditions," she said.

A Salmat spokesperson said they had not received any complaints about sub-contractor pay rates or lack of pay by anybody with whom they have a contractual relationship.

"This is not conduct we would support nor condone and we would investigate any such allegation immediately if sufficient detail is provided to allow us to do so," said a Salmat spokesperson.

The Fair Work Ombudsman confirmed it was investigating Salmat. The ombudsman declined to answer further questions about the arrangement or its investigation.

Spokespersons for Woolworths and Coles said they would be conducting their own investigations into the allegations and expressed support for fair and ethical work practices with all business partners.

Woolworths has strict conditions in its supply chain. A Telstra spokeswoman declined to comment and referred *The Age* to Salmat.

Mr Barman said he hoped he could move on and find more stable work.

"I love Australia. Every country has its good and its bad," he said. "I just want justice because a lot of people have been cheated."

# Police charged with assault after expose

Nick McKenzie

Victoria's anti-corruption commission has charged two police officers over allegations of brutality after *The Age* published footage showing them allegedly using excessive force during a welfare check of a disability pensioner.

The Independent Broad Based Anti-corruption Commission (IBAC) said in a statement released late yesterday that it had charged one of the officers, a constable, with assault with a weapon and unlawful assault.

A senior constable has been charged with one count of unlawful assault, while a third policeman is expected to face criminal charges in the near future.

The officers charged were involved in an incident at Preston last September that saw disability pensioner "John" pinned down and allegedly beaten with a baton, doused in capsicum spray and blasted in the face with water from a high-pressure garden hose.

Police had gone to John's Preston home last September after his psychologist called triple zero to say she was worried about his deteriorating mental health. At one point, a police officer appears to record a video on his phone as John is sprayed with the hose.

A total of six officers were involved in the incident, but none of them reported it to the internal affairs unit or IBAC. It was revealed as part of *The Age* investigation in April into problems with the force's internal oversight system, which dismisses most complaints of police misconduct.

*The Age* investigation prompted a public outcry and the suspension of a fourth officer over the arrest of an African-Australian man at a chemist, also in Preston, in February 2016. On that occasion, a police officer appeared to punch the man and stomp on his back.

Another officer involved in an incident in Bendigo, in which a man had his head thrown against a



**The Age article about the incident.**

police cell door, was assigned to other duties.

Police initially resisted standing down the officers involved when CCTV footage of police pinning down John was first revealed.

The scandal prompted legal organisations to call for an overhaul of the way complaints are dealt with by police to ensure more rigour and independence. Under the existing oversight system, only a small number of the most serious complaints are ever investigated by IBAC.

The criminal charges come as a state parliamentary committee prepares to release its report on whether the system needs overhauling. Senior members of the Andrews government have privately supported reforms.

John's lawyer, Jeremy King, said: "I welcome IBAC conducting an independent investigation and prosecution of this matter. John's case demonstrates the need for independent oversight of police issues."

When the vision of John's alleged assault was released, Tamar Hopkins, founding lawyer of the Police Accountability Project at the Flemington and Kensington Community Legal Centre, described it as a "Rodney King moment in Australian policing".

The charged officers will appear at Melbourne Magistrates' Court on 11 October 2018.

## Melbourne Cup to Ten

Karl Quinn

Bruce McAvaney will no longer anchor coverage of the race that stops a nation, with the Seven Network losing rights to the Melbourne Cup Carnival from 2019.

Though the Victoria Racing Club would not confirm the switch yesterday, it is understood that the four-day program at Flemington, the centrepiece of the Spring Racing Carnival, has been picked up by Network Ten.

Ten would not confirm the deal either, but Seven was less circumspect, painting the parting of the ways as one over which the network had been in complete control.

Fairfax Media understands that the Victoria Racing Club, under chairman Amanda Elliott, had decided earlier this year to put the broadcast rights to its premium racing week out to competitive tender.

Seven, which has held the rights to the week as part of its overall racing coverage since 2002, is said to have been furious at the move.

Though the four big races of the Melbourne Cup Carnival – Derby Day, Cup Day, Oaks Day and Stakes Day – are the centrepiece of the deal, Ten is understood to have also picked up the rights to the rest of the VRC's racing calendar.

Rumour has it that the deal is worth around \$10 million a year.

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