

STREAMING
HITS & MISSES

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HOW MUCH YOUR WATER
BILLS WILL RISE

FIND OUT, PAGE 10

NEIGHBOURS
FINAL FAREWELL

P3, 21



THURSDAY, JUNE 30, 2022

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Herald Sun

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City CEO pay anger

EXCLUSIVE JOHN MASANAUSKAS

RATEPAYERS have reacted with outrage that City of Melbourne chief executive Justin Hanney has pocketed another pay rise, meaning he now rakes in almost as much as Prime Minister Anthony Albanese. **FULL REPORT, PAGE 3**

Jaunt for jetset Tim

MITCH CLARKE

VICTORIAN Treasurer Tim Pallas will jet off on a multi-continent jaunt to Europe and the United States – dubbed as his “farewell tour” – that is set to cost taxpayers tens of thousands of dollars. **FULL REPORT, PAGE 7**



Kaitlyn Ashmore and Jasmine Fleming.

HAWKS SWOOP ON FLEMING

A new breed of stars took centre stage last night at the AFLW draft with Jasmine Fleming, daughter of ex-Test cricketer Damien, going to the Hawks with pick No.2. Top selection Montana Ham is heading to the Sydney Swans

DRAFT SPECIAL, SPORT

VIC'S SICK
HEALTH SYSTEM

Fears 70 lives lost due to critical ambo ramping delays

FATAL WAIT

SARAH BOOTH AND MITCH CLARKE

AMBULANCE ramping times were blowing out years before Covid-19 and are associated with a “significant” increase in patients’ risk of dying, shocking new Victorian research

has revealed. The alarming study, released yesterday, estimates that ramping in hospitals carparks due to bed shortages may have been associated with 70 preventable deaths in chest-pain patients during 2018 alone. **FULL REPORT, PAGE 4**

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WEATHER
INSIDE SMARTDAILY

TODAY
MIN 5
MAX 13

Partly cloudy, slight chance of a shower, more likely about the northern ranges

TOMORROW
MAX 14

Possible shower

SATURDAY
MAX 13

Possible shower

SUNDAY
MAX 14

Partly cloudy

Tatts

WEDNESDAY LOTTO:
Draw 4195: 17, 32, 30, 41, 45, 1. Supps: 38, 43. Prov prize pool: \$1,873,539.16. Div 1 prize: \$1 million.

OZ LOTTO:
Draw 1480: 23, 28, 38, 42, 47, 44, 43 Supps: 41, 24, 39
Div 1: \$30 million jackpot;
Div 2: \$33,227.15; Div 3: \$5149.95; Div 4: \$420.25; Div 5: \$65.30; Div 6: \$30.40; Div 7: \$18.85
For full results: thelott.com

WORD PUZZLE

S O A
H R A
Z U D

In making a word each letter may be used only once, and the centre letter must be included. No slang, hyphens, apostrophes or plurals ending in 's'. Minimum four letters. Good 14, Very good 18, Excellent 22

amino amnion among atom gamin imago LAMINGTON lima limo loam loaming magi mail main malin malt malling mango mantling mating mignon mill mint moan moaning moat moating moi moaning noma nominal omit taming

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Ramping crisis predates Covid

SARAH BOOTH
MITCH CLARKE

Experts debunk state's ambulance defence amid fears 70 lives may have been lost

AMBULANCE ramping times were blowing out years before Covid and are associated with a "significant" increase in patients' risk of dying, shocking new Victorian research has revealed.

The alarming study shows that ramping – when paramedics are forced to keep caring for patients while stuck in hospital carparks due to bed shortages – may have been associated with 70 preventable deaths in chest-pain patients during 2018 alone.

The damning research, published yesterday in the Medical Journal of Australia, analysed more than 200,000 people taken to Victorian hospitals via ambulance for non-traumatic chest pain from January 2015 to June 30 2019. It debunks the government's claim that much of the crisis is related to Covid sickness and absenteeism.

Despite the findings, in a statement on Wednesday night the government again tried to blame "an unprecedented amount of pressure" due to Covid and influenza.

The research found that once patients were ramped for 17 or more minutes, their chance of dying within the next 30 days increased.

They were also more likely to need an ambulance again within this short time frame.

It comes as senior minister Ben Carroll attempted to partially blame Victorians for the

ambulance crisis, saying it was up to them to call triple-0 only in emergency situations. His comments came just a day after Melbourne's health system hit crisis point with an ambulance Code Red called due to a major shortage.

The Herald Sun reported yesterday that not a single ambulance was available in Melbourne in the early hours of Tuesday morning.

Mr Carroll said: "We've always got to do more but we're asking Victorians to be on the journey with us. We're putting more paramedics on the beat but we also need Victorians to ensure they only call triple-0 for those emergencies."

Ambulance Victoria didn't alert the public to the Code Red, saying it was resolved quickly. But they've denied this was a deliberate attempt to keep the community in the dark and said they'll consider issuing alerts in all future cases.

Monash University's Associate Professor Dion Stub, cardiology adviser to Ambulance Victoria, co-authored the research and called for urgent reform. "Essentially the longer you're ramped, the greater

your risk of mortality and higher risk of readmission (in the following 30 days)," he said. "After 17 minutes, and then for each 10 to 15-minute increment, there was an increase."

He called for new ramping targets below the 40-minute mark. "Our data would suggest that 40 minutes is likely too generous," he said.

"In the United Kingdom, it's 15 minutes. Our targets for what we consider a reasonable offload time should be less than 40 minutes.

"Unfortunately, we have a significant proportion of patients who are having significant delays to offload."

"We need to urgently tackle the issue with ramping, which is a significantly worse problem with the impact of Covid."

In further evidence ramping was increasing pre-pandemic, the study found the median off-load time increased from 21 minutes in 2015 to 24 minutes by the first half of 2019.

"Ramping ... has been escalating even before Covid hit," he said. "Year on year it was getting worse."

The study involved re-

searchers from Ambulance Victoria, Monash University, Royal Melbourne Hospital, Alfred Health and the Baker Heart Research Institute.

A government spokesman said it had invested more than \$12bn to get the health system "back on track" since Covid.

An Ambulance Victoria spokeswoman said they were implementing strategies to relieve pressure in the system.

"(That includes) introducing rapid offload escalation measures, patient offload teams and increasing resources on the road and within our secondary triage service," she said.

Responding to Mr Carroll, prominent Werribee GP Joe Garra said it was unfair to "blame" systemic failures on patients unnecessarily calling.

"They are two completely separate issues that aren't linked," he said.

"If they (the government) had enough people taking emergency calls, it wouldn't be an issue that people are calling for a paramedic. A silly call to Triple Zero will only clog up the call service. None of that causes an ambulance to be ramped at a hospital for hours. That goes to the issue of a stressed hospital system.

"Don't blame the population for shortfalls in the system. We should have enough flexibility to cope with community needs."

Mr Garra said the biggest worry was that people in the community second guess their need for emergency help.

'The system is broken. It's just shocking, it's disgraceful'

No one came to save Robert

EXCLUSIVE
SARAH BOOTH

A GRIEVING sister whose brother died alone after an ambulance took three hours to arrive says "the system is broken".

Robert Spencer, 59, died from ischaemic heart disease complications on February 18 at his Mitcham home after he called triple-zero complaining of weakness and being unable to stand up.

Susan Warren said her brother, a former RSL president and CFA volunteer, took great pride in his fire unit's quick response time but, when he needed help, paramedics didn't arrive in time.

The Herald Sun understands while Mr Spencer's call to triple-zero was answered within seconds, his case was not deemed "lights and sirens" and was, instead, sent to secondary triage.

When Mr Spencer did not answer multiple calls back, authorities sent an ambulance that arrived three hours after he first phoned – but it was too late.

An Ambulance Victoria spokeswoman said a review into the incident was under way and extended their "deepest condolences" to Mr Spencer's loved ones.

The autopsy report also confirmed paramedics, "due to delays, could not attend

the address immediately". "Once they arrived, they found him deceased," the report said.

Ms Warren wants the ambulance delay investigated to determine whether an earlier response could have saved her brother.

"My best friend and beloved brother passed away, alone," she said. "The system is broken. It's just shocking, it's disgraceful."

Ms Warren, who has not spoken publicly about her brother's death until now, said she decided to speak out to ensure that the issue was not forgotten.

"It's there, it's real, it happened," she said.

"Something has to be done."

Ms Warren said her brother cared about helping the community and would want people to know what happened in order to bring about change.

"It has to be fixed," she said.

His death has been referred to the Victorian Coroner for investigation, but the Herald Sun understands it is unlikely to be included in a wider investigation into deaths linked to emergency call delays because Mr Spencer's case was not related to triple-zero.



Robert Spencer, a CFA volunteer, died in February, and (inset) with his sister, Susan Warren.

VIC'S SICK
HEALTH SYSTEM

woman confirmed Mr Spencer's death was referred for investigation but said that no further comments could be made while it was ongoing.

An Ambulance Victoria spokeswoman said they had spoken to Ms Warren.

"Our paramedics are committed to providing the best care for every patient," she said.

A Victorian government

spokeswoman said: "Our thoughts and deepest sympathies are with Mr Spencer's family. Health systems around the world continue to face challenges due to the pandemic.

"That's why we've supported Ambulance Victoria with record funding for an additional 700 paramedics in 2021 – its single largest annual recruitment ever – with a similar number to be recruited this year."

The coronial investigation follows a review by Victoria's emergency services watchdog, released in September, which identified 33 deaths potentially linked to call-taking or ambulance delays between December 2020 and May 2022.

A Coroners Court spokes-