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Road plan faces backlash from shopping-strip traders

Clearway row looms

Claire Heaney

AROUND 20 shopping strips fighting the proposed changes to clearways say they will lose more than \$100 million in sales.

The group, representing trading groups from suburbs from Richmond to Moonee Ponds, Coburg and South Yarra, have called themselves Save Our Shops Melbourne.

The group has prepared a 10-page submission to the Clearways Implementation Reference Group.

The group has been set up by the State Government to advise on the roll out of the Keeping Melbourne

Moving plan, which was unveiled in late April.

The idea is to standardise clearways within 10km of the Melbourne central business district.

This would mean that clearways would operate between 6.30am and 10am in the morning and 3pm and 7pm in the evening.

But traders interest groups have opposed the move, arguing that it will be the death of many unique and vibrant shopping strips.

The submission also threatens that the affect of the clearways could impact on sitting Labor politicians.

"The State Government must recognise the political implications inherent in its decision to put in

jeopardy the livelihoods of small traders and the communities they serve," the submission states.

The submission concentrates on three areas:

THE economic catastrophe that will result from any changes to the current restrictions.

THE unavoidable loss of jobs arising from any extension to clearway times.

THE social dislocation that will be caused to local communities.

In the submission, the SOS group argue that the shopping strips add to Melbourne's shopping experience.

It states that shopping strips offer "a stark contrast to the cold and

glitzy complexes that have emerged in strategic locations".

The submission also claims that the State Government push for people to use public transport is inconsistent with clearways that encourage more road transport.

"If the State Government wants to ensure the diminution of activity in Melbourne's strip shopping precincts and the demise of a significant number of local traders then its decision to extend clearway times is as good a method as any," the SOS group said.

Finally, the submission states that the traders have sought legal advice and believe they have a strong case for compensation.

'THIS DECISION PUTS IN JEOPARDY THE LIVELIHOODS OF SMALL TRADERS AND THE COMMUNITIES THEY SERVE.'



They're the state's early risers,

Young guns

Jamie and Jason Xuereb
Mediapoint
Sunshine West

WHEN Jason and Jamie Xuereb launched their business producing signs their hardworking parents were disappointed.

"I think they would have liked us to get a better job," Jamie said.

Jason, 25, had completed a double degree in accounting and computing at Monash University. Jamie is currently studying for a bachelor of entrepreneurship at RMIT.

Jamie said they launched the business, Mediapoint, around 18 months ago. At the beginning they were making stickers but added banners, wraps and other signage and large format printing.

They had \$500 to launch the business.

"I always wanted to do my own thing," Jamie said.

"Even as kids we used to help out our parents in their business."

He said running a business came naturally to the brothers because their Maltese parents had always worked in their cleaning business.

"Seeing Mum and Dad go off to work, come home and do the books and the admin, we always lived in that family business environment. Small business is in our blood," he said.

He said they were working between 60 and 80 hours per week in the business. Jamie's course requires him to do around 12 contact hours per week.

They now have an apprentice signwriter and have built the business initially via word-of-mouth but the internet had been a valuable tool with the development of a website, search optimisation and Google AdWords.

"Our website is cutting edge for the industry with its online store," he said.

Jamie, who turns 20 tomorrow, said initially would-be clients were a bit hesitant because of his age.

"Now I don't have to go out selling, people come to us," he said.

He said they were able to build the business because they were innovative and doing things differently to their competitors.

They are refining the number of products down from 20 to four.

"In the beginning we were being all things to all people," Jamie said.

Jamie said his parents were now proud of their choices.

"At first they were telling us this is rubbish and go and get a good job," he said.

"But we started making money and they thought it was OK."

□ Net link: www.mediapoint.com.au



Tony Piccolo

Franchise inquiry launched

Frances Stewart

THE Federal Government will hold an inquiry into the Franchising Code of Conduct, following unfavourable findings about the industry by South Australian and Western Australian state government committees.

The Corporations and Financial Services Joint Committee will hold the inquiry and report back to Parliament by December 1.

It will investigate the amended Franchising Code of Conduct which was introduced in March, and identify improvements. In particular, the inquiry's scope will include:

THE nature of the franchising industry, including the rights of franchisors and franchisees.

WHETHER an obligation for franchisors, franchisees and prospective franchisees to act in good faith should be explicitly incorporated into the code.

INTERACTION between the code and the Trade Practices Act.

THE operation of the dispute resolution provisions.

ANY other related matters.

South Australian MP Tony Piccolo, who has campaigned for reforms, welcomed the investigation.

Mr Piccolo said the South Australian inquiry had found evidence of widespread bullying and harassment of franchisees.

Australian Retailers Association executive director and former chief executive of the Franchise Council of Australia Richard Evans said he was bemused by the need for an inquiry only months after the Federal Government passed legislation after the extensive Matthews Inquiry.



Sign language: Jamie and Jason Xuereb have stuck it out with their sign production business, Mediapoint.