

SunRRA's Top 10 Discussion Forum Topics

Wednesday, 04 February 2009

SunRRA's website has been in operation for almost 4 years and we regularly attract more than 1000 daily visits. One of the most popular features of our website is the SunRRA Forum, which enables people to discuss and debate any topic that concerns them. It's not uncommon for breaking news to appear first on the forum and perhaps that's why councillors, politicians and journalists log in for a read on a regular basis.

We've compiled another list of Top 10 topics that have generated the most interest, based on the most views.

10. The Great Brimbank Land Sale Scandal by Democracy at Work had 17,829 visits.

This forum topic followed a SunRRA article in May 2007 which reported that the Brimbank Council had developed secret plans to sell off much of the municipality's public land. According to MP George Seitz, the Council was insolvent and needed to sell off the land in order to balance the books. This topic struck a chord with many of our visitors, many of whom claimed that the Council had a history of selling off public land for dubious reasons.

After going dormant for a while, the forum discussion flared up again recently after the Advocate (in September of 2008) reported that "a number of Brimbank planning permits were issued to a company that had a close association with former council planning manager Andrew Gray while he was in the top job." Of course, Brimbank's City Development General Manager, Peter Collina, had the gall to say there was no 'conflict of interest'. But then again, SunRRA worked out a long time ago that the Brimbank Council doesn't understand the concept of a conflict of interest. Anything goes.

9. Airport issues by Sky Pilot had 18,832 visits.

This topic commenced more than 3 years ago and it represents one of the significant issues we are dealing with in Sunshine, Aircraft Noise. The topic commenced with the suggestion that pilots were using Duke Street as a flight path reference point when coming in to land at Tullamarine airport. Why not, it's only Sunshine.

Exasperated residents have used this forum topic to express their concerns about aircraft noise over the last 3 years. Some of them have posted comments when they should have been sleeping, but they have been woken, or kept awake, by aircraft noise.

8. who is bill shorten? by Kiss and Tell had 22,018 visits.

This topic was prompted by an article that appeared in the Age 2 years ago, which outlined little Bill's background. He's an ambitious bugger, Shorten; the Age reported that he could be a future leader of the country. But in Sunshine we all know this man's short on substance. He gave the Sunshine community his commitment to help with getting the pool redeveloped, but he delivered nothing. The Sunshine community has got Shorty's measure, and their dissatisfaction with this little man is reflected in the discussion on this topic.

7. 2008 Brimbank elections by And They're Off had 23,135 visits.

This topic commenced 6 months before the Council elections, with speculation about what this new election would deliver to the Brimbank Community. There was lots of discussion about the regular political interference by State and Federal politicians in Brimbank's elections. Visitors seemed to be engrossed in what has become a favourite pastime in Brimbank in the lead up to a Council election, guessing which candidates are puppets for which politicians.

But then something strange happened, amidst a factional war being waged—with George Seitz in one corner and Hakki Suleyman in the other—and an Ombudsman's investigation into corruption in Brimbank, Councillors from the dominant faction started dropping out of the election race like flies. It seemed too good to be true. A council without Suleyman, Capar, Abate, Zukalski. Some of our atheist visitors started to believe there really was a god after all.

6. Kororoit byelection by Kororoit Charter had 23,442 visits.

In the lead up to the Kororoit by-election, this topic started with a suggested charter, which outlines a commitment to stop the entrenched neglect in the western suburbs, for candidates to sign up to. This is an interesting topic because it highlights the changing political landscape in this area, as people slowly come to understand that they don't have to put up with the entrenched neglect. And of course, this was the by-election that showed that Suleyman's Unity faction was not strong enough for her to win pre-selection for Labor. She's been in a tail spin ever since.

This topic also covers the the Stateline story on branch stacking and the Kororoit Election, as well as the battle and dirty tactics that Les Twentyman faced as an independent throughout his election campaign.

5. Brimbank's worst health status was commenced by 'doctor' just over 2 years ago and has had 24,233 visits.

This topic commenced with the announcement that "the word is finally getting out there. A safe Labor seat has the worst health status in all of Victoria". This was followed by a number of posts commenting on research which had

shown that Brimbank was experiencing a diabetes epidemic and that being overweight was the major risk factor.

As the debate unfolded, some people felt that overweight people only had themselves to blame, but others identified the lack of recreational facilities and opportunities to exercise as a major contributing factor.

This forum topic provides a wonderful, although somewhat depressing, debate about the issues and factors within our community that have contributed to this problem. Government and Council can find some marvellous suggestions about what can be done about this problem by reading this forum topic. But we won't be holding our breath in anticipation that they will do anything meaningful.

4. There are numerous forum topics on the pool, but this particular one, The Pool, was prompted by a Media Release by the Minister for Sport and Recreation in May 2007. With more than 29,626 visits, the media release confirmed an election commitment to install first class swim facilities in Sunshine.

The media release was followed by a number of messages of congratulations to everyone involved in the campaign to save the pool. But this was followed by concern that the Council may not accept the government's "free pool", because of all the additional expenses involved with installing it. But the Minister came to the rescue shortly after these concerns were raised and confirmed that the government would cover the additional expenses.

You can re-visit the relief expressed by visitors as the realisation that the pool would finally be saved started to sink in. But the relief was bitter sweet, after a protracted battle, the community was forced to settle for far less outdoor water space than it had lost more than 10 years ago.

3. The topic Where's the money? commenced by Geoff Baxter in the middle of 2007, has generated more than 30,878 visits.

Another Brimbank tale of woe brought to the residents of Brimbank by none other than former Brimbank Councillor Marilyn Zukalski. This topic started with a parliamentary transcript of MP, Bernie Finn raising the matter of funds missing from the Sydenham Community Centre. The centre is a Brimbank City Council owned facility, which employed the then councillor Marilyn Zukalski as its manager. More than \$50,000 went missing and employee superannuation payments were not made. At the best, the centre was managed atrociously and, as a consequence, it was on the brink of collapse. At worst, funds were stolen by the people who were entrusted to manage the centre on behalf of the community, ensuring the centre's collapse.

The centre was later declared insolvent, Marilyn Zukalski was forced to resign, and the Labor government conducted an investigation into the matter, apparently. But, more than a year and a half later, we are all still waiting to find out, where's the money? Any idea, Zukalski?

2. The topic Eddington report by Mayor and Sunshine consultation began just over 7 months ago and has had more than 37,885 visits.

In this topic, visitors outline their concerns with Eddington's proposed solutions to Melbourne's transport problems, which were outlined in a report prepared for the State Government. The proposal is short on public transport solutions, and big on more traffic congestion for Melbourne, with proposals for more roads. The most controversial of these, on the SunRRA forum, is the proposed road tunnel connecting the West with the East, with a possible exit at West Sunshine. The new road would result in many residents losing their homes, while many others would be effected by the noise of having the road located close to their homes. Unfortunately, our Council was quick to come out and publicly support the Eddington proposal, a move that distressed many of our visitors.

Other visitors expressed concern about the proposed investment in public transport, and wondered whether it would have any positive impact on Sydenham line commuters at all. We're all in favour of more investment in public transport, but our heads are still spinning about what possible benefits the proposed rail tunnel from Footscray to Caulfield will bring. Just solve the sardine can issue for Sydenham line commuters and we'll be happy for the next 50 years. With the abysmal state of the Sydenham line, Footscray to Caulfield is a luxury that's too difficult to contemplate at this stage.

1. Coming in at number 1, is the topic Steve Bracks' Resigning, by Is This for Real, which has had more than 55,523 visitors. The topic was subsequently renamed, "Victoria - State of Corruption". This topic starts with rumours, then confirmation, of Steve Bracks' decision to resign from his position as Premier of Victoria. Our visitors were quick to speculate about the reasons for his decision; some suggested that the heat associated with branch stacking allegations had got too much for him. From there the topic quickly shifted to speculation regarding corruption within the Labor party, a topic that seems to be near and dear to the hearts of many of our visitors. Perhaps it's because corruption seems to be so common in Brimbank and the western suburbs of Melbourne.

Our visitors seem to have a voracious appetite for uncovering the gutter snakes parading as politicians. It seems to have become a favourite pastime of our visitors and perhaps that's why this topic is Numero Uno. There is much debate in this

topic about the current government's resistance to establishing an anti crime commission. It seems to have worked very well in other states, like Queensland. Why not Victoria? And the visitors to this topic didn't seem to be short on examples of why we desperately need an independent crime commission.

Our visitors lay it all bare here, and it demonstrates that the residents of Sunshine and surrounding suburbs really have begun to question what these politicians are all about. Many of us are now wondering if they stand for much more than branch stacking, broken promises, and a whole lot of self interest.