

NEWS

# Retailers join trading ban fight

By MARK PHILLIPS

THREE small retailers yesterday joined forces to argue against the harmful impact of a ban on Sunday trading.

Baker's Delight, Marketplace Tatts & News and Michel's Patisserie said the Sunday trading experience had delivered positive benefits to the small business community.

Their message was small business would be hurt by a ban which forced large stores to close on Sundays.

The managers of the three businesses said they would probably be forced to close if the forthcoming referendum against Sunday trading was successful.

This would cost jobs, they said. Russell Keating of Michel's Patisserie at the Marketplace shopping centre said if Sunday trading was banned, his business would have to let go three part-time employees who were all university students.

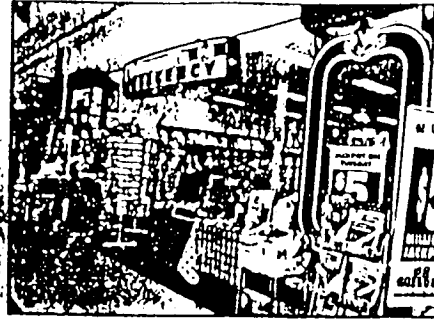
He said his business would be exempt under the Shop Trading Reform Act and allowed to trade on Sundays, but it would not be worthwhile opening without the large stores open.

"There's no denying that the

## WHAT RETAILERS THINK OF THE SUNDAY TRADING ISSUE . . .



There's no denying that the large stores draw the crowds. The evidence can be seen on any Sunday. In our case the proven reality is that we do better business when the large stores are open.  
— Russell Keating, Michel's Patisserie.



If the big stores aren't open, it's not worth opening at all . . . Today's consumers are telling us loudly and clearly they want trading hours which are convenient for them and suit their lifestyle. Why ignore demand?  
— John Winter, Marketplace Tatts and News.



The Sunday trading issue is getting way out of hand. To think that they're going to take into account the number of people employed by a whole franchise in deciding who can trade is ridiculous.  
— Tony McNamara, Baker's Delight.

large stores draw the crowds," Mr Keating said.

"The evidence can be seen on any Sunday. In our case, the proven reality is that we do better business when the large stores are open.

"With the large stores open,

Sunday shopping has become a family outing.

"You see families out enjoying their day, many stopping to have a coffee and a bit to eat at our cafe.

"Everyone benefits from Sunday trading."

Tony McNamara of Baker's Del-

ight said he was concerned about legal advice that small retailers who are members of a franchise may be prevented from trading on Sundays, even though they have less than 20 staff in Bendigo.

"The Sunday trading issue is getting way out of hand," Mr McNamara said.

"To think that they're going to take into account the number of people employed by a whole franchise in deciding who can trade is ridiculous."

Mr McNamara said retailers should be free to open in response to customer demand any day of the week.

"Some small retailers are reluctant to open on weekends or in the evening. That is their choice and will continue to be their choice."

"However, retailing is a service industry and retailers must meet the needs of their customers if they are going to survive.

"Bendigo is going to resemble nothing more than a ghost town on Sundays, if the ban succeeds."

John Winter of Marketplace Tatts & News said if a ban on Sunday trading was to occur, he would have no choice but to close on Sundays even though it was unlikely his store would be exempt.

That could mean the loss of two employees.

"If the big stores aren't open, it's not worth opening at all," Mr Winter said.

He said Sunday was now a busy trading day than Monday or Tuesday at his business.

"Sunday trading is a very profitable day for our business, and to lose this day of trade will no doubt have an economic impact, not only for us but eventually the whole community.

"Today's consumers are telling us loudly and clearly they want trading hours which are convenient for them and suit the lifestyle. Why ignore demand?"

# SOS rejects jobs claim

By ASHOK VERMA

THE Save Our Sundays group has rejected Bendigo mayor Barry Ackerman's claims of massive job losses if Sunday trading was restricted.

Group chairman John Carty said the mayor's claim 1200 jobs were at risk was entirely unsubstantiated.

"We assert the reverse is true.

"Restricting Sunday trading will secure the jobs of the employees of small businesses. Most of the shops the mayor speaks of have already chosen not to open on Sundays," Mr Carty said.

## Franchise threat wrong: Group

Cr Ackerman recently warned the implications of a Sunday ban in the April poll would be worse than expected.

Legal advice given to the council indicated many small retailers which were members of franchise

arrangements would be forced to close even though they had less than 20 staff in Bendigo.

The law would take into account the number of people employed by the whole franchise, not just those in a particular city business.

But Mr Carty said expert advice sought by his group said a privately-owned franchise store would not have to close if Sunday trading was restricted.

"A majority of the franchise businesses in Bendigo are privately owned.

"They face no risks whatsoever with the restriction of Sunday trading.

"Until the mayor has concrete legal evidence, he has no right as the leader of the city to make such statements.

"Any restrictions which may or may not be placed on the shops the mayor is speaking of will not

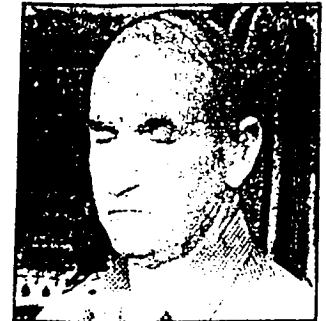
make any difference," Mr Carty said. "The reality is there are no 1200 employees whose jobs are under threat.

"In fact, a restriction on Sunday trading may actually give them (small businesses) a greater advantage.

"It will remove unfair competition by the big businesses who are increasingly monopolising the Bendigo economy to the demise of small businesses," Mr Carty said.

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Marketplace retailers plead their case for Sunday trading — Page 2



John Carty

From — Page 1

Mr Carty also criticised Cr Daryl McClure's assertion last week a vote to restrict Sunday trading would "close Bendigo".

"The assertion is that life in the city will change dramatically.

"We believe this to be incorrect.

"The reality is that initially things will change very little from the way they operate now, apart from the fact the big stores such as Safeway and Coles and Myer will no longer be allowed to open.

"This will actually allow a boom for many small businesses."

He said Cr McClure had been elected to serve the best interests of the Bendigo community.

"What he should be telling the public is that the trend to commercialise Sunday with big business will make outside investors richer and the people of Bendigo poorer."

Mr Carty also criticised a TAFE student union publication Riot, which said in an article corner stores would have to close with the restriction of Sunday trading.

"This is another example of the scare tactics used by our opponents."

# New trade poll force

## Group forms to stop ban

TWELVE Bendigo tourism and business organisations have combined forces to fight a proposed ban on Sunday trading.

They have set up a group called Keep Bendigo Open Alliance.

Its members are the Bendigo Trust, Tourism Bendigo, Bendigo Chinese Association, Bendigo and District Caravan Park Group, Greater Bendigo Retail Network, La Trobe University Student Association, Bendigo Heritage Tours, Victorian Employers Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Business and Professional Women's Association, Discovery Science and Technology Centre, Bendigo Art Gallery and Australian Institute of Management.

Alliance member Maxine Crouch said yesterday the group was formed because of growing concerns about the impact the Sunday trading ban would have on the Greater Bendigo economy.

Ms Crouch, a former city commissioner, said more and more small retailers were opposing the ban.

She said she agreed to support the group because of the growing anger over the way the (John) Carty group (Save Our Sundays which has forced the April referendum) was misleading the public and downplaying the ramifications of the ban.

"People have to ask themselves — if this ban is so good for Bendigo, why are the region's leading organisations mobilising (public support for) opposing it.

By ASHOK VERMA

"These are organisations known and respected in the community.

"I believe the community is too smart to swallow what Mr Carty (SOS group president) is peddling," Ms Crouch said.

She described as misguided an attempt to force the closure of some of Bendigo's biggest employers.

She said it would hit hundreds of businesses — small and large, in both retail and non-retail sectors.

"It is not a crusade for the family.

"It is an attempt to pitch the odds against the retailers who employ more than 70 per cent of retail employees.

"Our alarm grows as we investigate the full impact of this ban.

"This is not just about a few retailers — the damage will spread like a virus across the whole community.

"It will wipe out hundreds of jobs and the impact will flow to tourism."

Ms Crouch said the ban on Sunday trading would hit tourism, hospitality, accommodation and service industries and finance and banking and media sectors.

"Bendigo is now regarded as a state leader in development and tourism.

"If this ban goes ahead, we will turn the clock back 20 years and become the laughing stock of the state.

"If we shut Bendigo down on Sundays, it will devastate all that's been achieved to date. I urge the Greater Bendigo community to vote 'no' to the ban," Ms Crouch said.

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# SOS plea goes out again

THE Save Our Sundays group yesterday again called on the State Government to change the Shop Trading Reform Act.

Spokesman the Rev. Kerrie Graham said the Act should be changed to allow tourist attractions such as the Central Deborah Gold Mine to operate on Sundays even if Bendigonians restricted Sunday trading in the April referendum.

The Rev. Graham said: "We have never advocated the closing of tourist attractions and have actually made that plain to the Minister (for Industry Mark Birrell)".

But the call was rejected by the Bendigo Trust and pro-Sunday trading group Keep Bendigo Open Alliance.

Mr Birrell had last year rejected the SOS' first call when it wanted the legislation changed to allow fast food chains to trade even if Sunday trading is restricted.

Trust general manager Jim Thompson said the trust supported Sunday trading as it felt a restriction would impact the economy.

However changing the legislation

By ASHOK VERMA

was not the issue. The issue is restrictions on Sunday trading, he said.

"The trust is concerned a restriction on Sunday trading would reduce economic activity which, in turn, will have a negative impact on the Central Deborah Gold Mine.

"Our second concern is we would be forced to close on Sundays if people voted to restrict Sunday trading as we employ more than 47 people in peak periods and under the law, we would not be allowed to open."

The trust made its fears about its Sunday closure public last week.

Keep Bendigo Open Alliance spokesman Maxine Crouch said people of Bendigo should vote "no" to a restrictions on Sunday trading.

"They cannot afford to leave this situation open to interpretation in court. They cannot assume the Government will change (the legislation) to allow for businesses the SOS suddenly feels should be allowed to trade.

"It seems the SOS people did not really look fully into what they were doing when they initiated this referendum," Ms Crouch said.

# Melleuish warns of job losses

THE owner of Bendigo fast food giant McDonald's yesterday warned of major job losses if the city's outlets were forced to close on Sundays.

In his first public comment about the Sunday trade row Bill Melleuish said many of the 100 people who worked on Sundays at his two stores would lose their jobs if Bendigo voters opted to restrict Sunday trading in next month's April referendum.

He said the Bendigo McDonald's would have the dubious distinction of being the first of the chain stores in the world forced to close on Sundays.

"Bendigo will be making history for all the wrong reasons," Mr Melleuish said.

"That would be a very bad day for Bendigo.

"It will be bad for young people whom we employ on Sundays and for locals and visitors who want to have a quick, good bite at our stores."

Under the Shop Trading Reform Act, the stores employing more than 20 equivalent full-time staff will not be allowed to operate on Sundays if Sunday trading restrictions are imposed.

The Save Our Sundays group, which has forced the referendum,

By ASHOK VERMA

is reported to have deferred presenting its petition to Greater Bendigo council last year after it found fast food chains would have to close with Sunday restrictions.

The group had called on Industry Minister Mark Birrell to change the law in favor of the fast food chains. The Minister had rejected the request.

Mr Melleuish, who owns the two McDonald's outlets, said with a workforce of 250, he was one of the biggest employers in the city.

"My employee numbers will rise to 350 with the opening of McDonald's at Strath Village.

"Sunday has always been our most consistent, busiest day of the week.

"If we are forced to close on Sundays, we lose our best sales and that will flow on to my staff.

"My employees will be hit with a double whammy when I will first have to decrease some of my staff and then cut others' shifts.

"We have heard a lot of talks of people losing their jobs in Bendigo and elsewhere.

"Here are people like me employing real people and giving them real jobs, and somebody is trying to force them out of their jobs."

# Religious leaders speak out on poll

FOUR Bendigo church leaders yesterday spoke out against Sunday trading in the lead-up to the Sunday trading poll which opens tomorrow.

One was Anglican Bishop David Bowden who has always supported a poll, but in the past has spoken of the benefits of Sunday trading.

The crucial church involvement at a key stage in the four-year debate appeared to have taken the pro-Sunday trading campaign by surprise.

Campaign spokesman Maxine Crouch said previous indications from within the

Anglican Church was that it was not directly opposed to Sunday trading.

In a statement to the Advertiser, Rt Rev. Bowden, Rev. Geoff Barker, United Church, Rev. Andrew Clarke, Presbyterian Church and President of Ministers fellowship Rev. Phil Baker asked that their views be printed "unedited and in full".

It read: "The undersigned Heads of Churches in Bendigo would seek to draw the atten-

tion of their parishioners and all members of the community to the following concerns regarding Sunday trading.

"We are concerned about the increasing loss of a common day in our parish and community lives for worship, for rest, and for family time.

"We believe it to be Biblical and essential to preserve Sunday as a day when people are free from the responsibilities and distractions of the working week to give themselves to cultivating successful and rewarding relation-

ships with God and one another.

"We are concerned about the complete commercialism of Sunday and the significant cultural change that this represents in the context of our Western tradition.

"We believe that our lives and our weeks need to be structured in such a way so that they are not dominated entirely by work, by consumerism and by material interests. We are concerned about the impact of deregulated trading on the Bendigo economy and the resultant

possible loss of small business and full-time employment.

"We believe that the long-term interests and prosperity of the community are best served by furthering small business and full-time employment.

"We are concerned about the inconvenience created by the closure of small shops as the big businesses gain market share through Sunday trading.

"We believe it is essential to preserve the local shops in our neighborhoods for the benefit of the elderly and those with

transport limitations and for the furthering of contact and goodwill between neighbors in general.

"For these reasons, we urge our parishioners and all members of the community to carefully consider the possible implications of unrestricted trading and the comparable advantages of restricted trading as they vote in the 1998 City of Greater Bendigo poll on Sunday trading."

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## Churches speak out

From — Page 1

Meanwhile, Keep Bendigo Open Alliance spokesman, Ms Maxine Crouch, said she was disappointed the group had not sought all sides of the argument before adopting its position.

She said she was particularly surprised because on May 1, last year, Rt Rev. Bowden had said if sufficient people voted for a poll, he would be able to "live with it very happily".

Last night he said he wanted people to think about "the value of family and the eradication of small business by large multinational chains".

"I want them to think too about values along the lines of whether there are other things in life besides the dollar.

"In any case, I reserve the right to change my mind."

Rt Rev. Bowden said he was not arguing that Sunday should be set aside as the Sabbath on religious grounds.

However, he said it was important to keep one day apart from the rest of the week for families and worship.

He laughed at reports that a Dutch group had posted a \$A72,000 reward to anyone who could prove to an independent jury the Bible supported Sunday being the "day of the Lord".

# War of words escalates

THE war of words over Sunday trading escalated yesterday, with claims from both sides alleging the use of misleading statistics.

Save Our Sundays has accused the council of deceiving voters in an advertisement in the Advertiser last week which urged residents to vote for Sunday trading.

Meanwhile the Keep Bendigo Open Alliance has attacked material provided by SOS in their mail-out to voters blaming Sunday trading for job losses in NSW.

SOS Chairman John Carty said claims in the council advertisement that "studies in other states confirm that employment in the retail sector increases after deregulation of shopping hours" was based on out-dated studies commissioned by retailers such as Coles-Myer and Woolworths.

Mr Carty said findings of a more recent study showed although some part-time employment is created by seven day a week trading, any employment gains were wiped out by full-time job losses.

"Save Our Sundays can accept that in the short term employment may increase.

By ALISTAIR PATON

"That evidently as what early, but now dated studies... showed elsewhere," Mr Carty said.

"However, in NSW there has been open slather trading in many places since 1992.

"Studies over this period show that in the longer term open slather trading causes the closure of small independent businesses, a growth in empty shops and a decline in real estate values and a deterioration in employment.

"We call upon the Council to withdraw their misleading advertisement and advise the voters of their error."

Keep Bendigo Open Alliance Spokesman Maxine Crouch said yesterday Australian Bureau of Statistics reveal more than 65,000 jobs have been created in the retail sector since Sunday trading was introduced in NSW.

"(And) Victorian figures produced by the ABS show that small retail employment has enjoyed significant growth since deregulation," she said.

"It is little wonder that many voters are feeling confused about this poll when they have to deal with misleading information such as this."



# People vote for city growth: group

By ASHOK VERMA

PEOPLE of Bendigo had made it clear they did not want to take a backwards step and become the only city in Victoria to ban Sunday trading. Keep Bendigo Open Alliance spokesman Maxine Crouch said.

And Bendigo Retail Network Group spokesman Alastair Punshon said the huge vote in favor of Sunday trading was a vote for tourism growth and a stronger economy.

"I am really pleased so many have expressed their views against the proposal to ban Sunday trading," Ms Crouch said.

"The huge 'no' vote is a resounding expression of their satisfaction with the deregulation of trading, and the way Bendigo retail trading is operating at the moment.

"It was important Bendigonians expressed their views firmly.

"Thank you certainly for those who voted 'no', but those who



voted 'yes', please be assured the council and retailers will keep working together to improve retail trading in the city," said Ms Crouch.

A former city commissioner Ms Crouch became the voice of pro-Sunday trading forces during an often heated community debate.

On Saturday she said it was unfortunate the city had to go through the referendum.

"But having done that, let's respect their (voters') opinion, and move on from here.

"Let's end the rancor and let's end the divisions and let's all work in the same direction for the welfare of the city," Ms Crouch said.

Mr Punshon said Bendigonians had delivered a clear message they wanted to move forward.

"It was now an opportunity to move ahead by working together.

"Bendigo Retail Network Group is working hard to provide information to retailers to improve their business.

"We are putting together a seminar to further help retail traders."

Mayor Barry Ackerman, who had strongly favored Sunday trading, said he was pleased with the result and the large voter turn out.

"We do now know what the people of Bendigo really want.

"Now it is time to put the acrimony behind us.

"There's been very sincere feelings on both sides of the argument,

but now we have to accept the democratic majority view, and work together for the prosperity of Bendigo," Cr Ackerman said.

Ratepaying and Accountability Association president Bob Hynes said it was a good result.

Mr Hynes said he hoped the anti-Sunday trading group would accept the verdict and work with all people for the betterment of the city.

Industry Minister Mark Birrell said the overwhelming decision by Bendigo residents to keep its shops open on Sundays was a welcome result for jobs, investment and tourism.

"This is the strongest possible repudiation of those who wanted to ban shopping on Sundays and a vindication of our reforms."

# Sunday trade victory



By ASHOK VERMA

BENDIGO has overwhelmingly voted in favor of Sunday trading.

Seventy-seven per cent of residents who took part in a Sunday trade referendum have sent a clear message they want to keep Bendigo open for business on Sundays.


Just 23 per cent of the 45,677 votes received, backed a move to abolish Sunday trade.

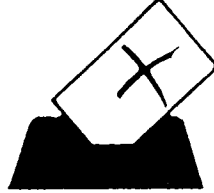
Electoral Commission returning officer Ron Ritchie announced the poll results on Saturday afternoon.

Soon after the declaration of the result, Save Our Sundays chairman John Carty said his group — which had forced council to call a referendum — would decide its future course of action after a meeting tonight.


Asked if his group would again mount a campaign against Sunday trading, Mr Carty said:

**BENDIGO SUNDAY TRADE POLL — THE FINAL RESULT**





- 62,978 eligible voters
- 45,677 or 72.5% voted
- "no" votes — 35,008
- "yes" votes — 10,605
- Informal — 64



"Let's end the rancor and let's end the divisions and let's all work in the same direction for the welfare of the city."  
— Maxine Crouch

"I ask the council, the business leaders and the State Government to seriously look at what's happening in our society."  
— John Carty

"We will be looking at the situation at our meeting on Monday and decide where we go from here.

"We are yet to look at what the ramifications of the poll would be."

About 50 people gathered at the council's Lyttleton Terrace chamber at 3 pm on Saturday to hear Mr Ritchie declare the result.

The Sunday trading issue had deeply divided the community and generated bitter debate among opposing factions for more than two years.

Mr Ritchie said 72.5 per cent of the 62,978 eligible voters had cast their votes.

Of them, 35,008 were "no" votes, 10,605 voted "yes" and 64 votes were informal.

Mr Ritchie said less than one per cent of votes received were declared invalid because they were either not signed or were wrongly signed.

"Considering it was a non-compulsory vote, it was a very good turnout with half of the voters casting their votes in the first week of polling."

Mr Ritchie said voters were asked to vote "yes" or "no" on the proposal "that council make a local law requiring that all shops (other than exempt shops under Schedule 1 of the Shop Trading Reform Act) trading within the municipal district must close and

be kept closed at all times on Sundays".

After declaring the outcome, Mr Ritchie invited Mr Carty to speak.

Conceding defeat, Mr Carty blamed the Government for the poll, and criticised it for "aligning with" council, big business and the local press in the push to defeat his group.

He said many people were confused with the wording of the ballot paper questionnaire.

And he criticised the pro-Sunday trading forces for running a "deceitful" campaign.

Mr Carty challenged council "to disentangle itself from vested interests and look at the seriousness of the problem" of the closure of a growing number of small businesses.

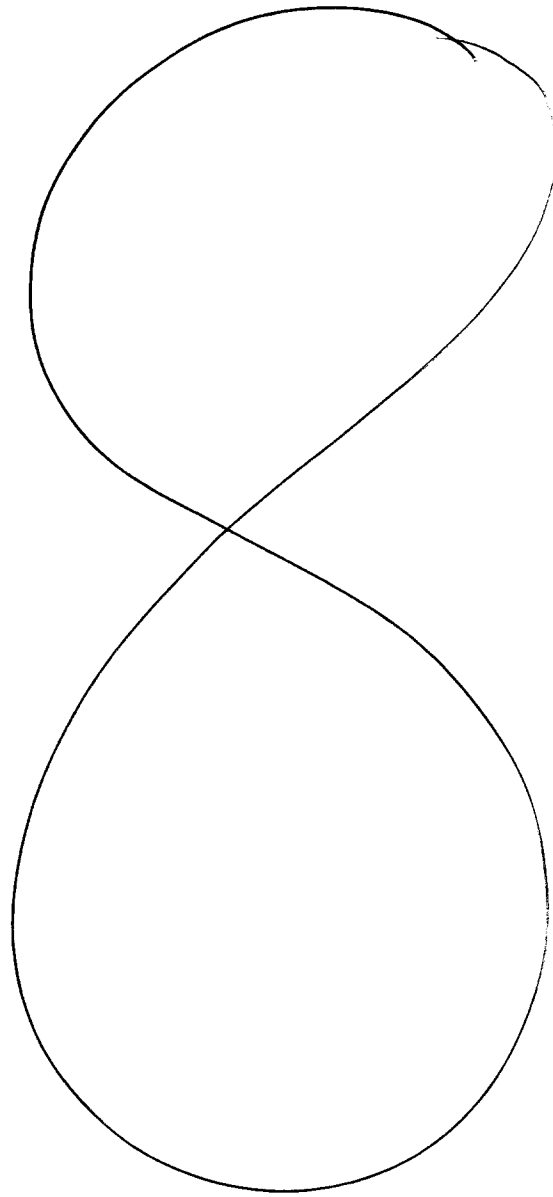
Keep Bendigo Open Alliance spokesman Maxine Crouch congratulated the Bendigo Advertiser for fair comments and balanced reporting.

She said the people of Bendigo had sent a strong message, saying they did not want their right to shop, when they wanted, taken away from them.

She said it was time to end the rancor and divisions, and for all parties to work together to make Bendigo a better place.

Mayor Barry Ackerman said it was unfortunate the vote had divided the community but he was glad people had spoken forcefully.

Mr Ackerman said everyone must accept the majority view and move on.



# CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO

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13 October 1998

Mr. Chris Mara  
Advisor - Government Affairs  
Coles Myer Ltd.  
Fax: 9829 6872

Dear Mr. Mara

**Re: Overview - Impact of the introduction of extended trading hours including  
Sunday trading**

## *Introduction*

The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview of some of the economic impacts of the introduction of Sunday trading on the community of Greater Bendigo.

## *Background*

Extended weekend trading has been part of the Greater Bendigo community since 1995-96 with the introduction first of Saturday afternoon trading hours and then Sunday trading when the Victorian Government deregulated shop trading hours in November 1996.

In April 1998, following a petition from a group calling itself 'Save Our Sundays' the City of Greater Bendigo was obliged (in accordance with state legislation) to conduct a referendum on whether a local law should be passed which would restrict Sunday Trading. 72.5% of the registered voters turned out for the non-compulsory vote and 23% favoured the proposed ban while 77% wished Sunday trading to continue.

The success of Sunday trading in Greater Bendigo, and the strong public endorsement it received at the poll, are seen as important factors in the growing confidence of residents and businesses in the city about its economic future.

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GREATER BENDIGO CITY COUNCIL

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DX 55038

Sunday trading is seen as having a number of impacts:

- Enhanced trading and marketing opportunities for existing and prospective businesses
- Increased levels of inquiry from businesses not represented in Greater Bendigo
- Increased visitor numbers
- Increased shopping opportunities and greater choice for local residents
- Enhanced positioning to:
  - attract new industry or investment and
  - when bidding for major sporting, cultural and social events and conferences
- Retention of major events which were in doubt during the referendum.
- Increased community and business confidence
- Entry of new operators into the retail mix
- Expansion of the municipality's retail floor space
- Reduced number of vacant stores
- Reduced period in which stores remain vacant, and
- Stemming the leakage of escape dollars to Melbourne and other regions

### ***Retailing in Greater Bendigo***

Retailing is a significant employer within the municipality (in 1991 the retail and wholesale sectors accounted for over 20.3% of the male workforce and 22.8% of the female workforce). During the referendum it was estimated that Sunday trading supported some 1200 jobs within Greater Bendigo.

Greater Bendigo's retail floor space is mainly centred on the following areas:

- **Regional**  
Bendigo central business area  
Bendigo Marketplace Centre
- **Sub Regional**  
Lansell Plaza Precinct, Kangaroo Flat
- **Community**  
Eaglehawk
- **Large Neighborhood**  
Strath Village and Strath Hill, Strathdale  
Kangaroo Flat  
Golden Square  
Heathcote

**Growth Area Centres**

Epsom/White Hills

Huntly

Jackass Flat

Maiden Gully

Myers Flat

Marong

Strathfieldsaye

Retailing is an extremely important part of the region's economy. In 1996 the City of Greater Bendigo commissioned a report into the state of retailing in Bendigo. This report found that the municipality had an overall capture of expenditure of \$68.7 million while it had escape expenditure of \$5 million.

Other surveys by the retail sector in 1995-96, have put this escape expenditure at closer to \$30 million to \$40 million per year when no opportunity existed for local weekend shopping.

***Impacts following deregulation***

**Increased Sales and Marketing Opportunities**

Bendigo Marketplace, which has two anchor stores and 42 specialty shops, reports a steady increase in trade, exceeding budget forecasts since the centre opened in October 1995. Centre management attributes part of this continuing growth to the consistent number of people visiting the centre on Sundays.

Lansell Plaza at Kangaroo Flat, which has two anchor stores and ... specialty shops, reports some sales growth since the referendum. Stores are opening on Sunday that haven't in the past.

Strath Village Shopping Centre at Strathdale (two anchor stores and 40 specialty/utility shops) reports that since the poll the centre has experienced stronger support for Sunday trading. The number of people visiting the centre on Sundays has increased by about 1000 to almost double the prepoll figures. For example: on October 4 the door count was up 17% on the previous year. In addition the number of vacant shops has fallen from 10 to four.

Another indicator can be seen in the sales figures of local radio station DMG's 3BO and 3CV.

The company reports that retail activity since the poll has been excellent for business. Retail advertising has increased overall and the growing popularity of Sunday trading has provided marketing opportunities for the station and its customers.

Since the poll voted for Sunday trading the City Council has received inquiries from three major retail chains, with national operations, not currently represented in Greater Bendigo, but which are interested in establishing within the municipality.

### Increased Visitor Numbers

In July 1998, Greater Bendigo recorded its best ever month for visitor numbers. Bendigo Tourism which monitors and promotes tourism activity within the municipality says the provision of Sunday trading has been a key factor in the community's success in attracting additional visitor numbers.

One of the city's leading local retailers Greg McRae Fine Furniture reports trading. Sunday is now the company's second busiest day of the week, behind Saturday. According to Mr McRae an important factor in his business growth has been the number of visitors making weekend purchases.

Weekend sales to visitors have reached the point where the company now has a weekly trip to Melbourne and those centres south of Bendigo to deliver goods purchased by visitors.

### Enhanced Opportunities to Attract Conference and Events

According to Bendigo Tourism the availability of Sunday trading has enhanced Bendigo's case when bidding for major events.

For example Bendigo has secured a number of major conferences for 1999 and 2000 including the Rotary District Conferences for Mt Waverley next year and Sunbury the following. Each event will attract more than 1000 visitors to the municipality for several days. In the case of at least one of these events, organisers had their choice of Bendigo under review during the referendum.

Bendigo tourism conducted an information stand at the National Under 18 Basketball Titles held in Bendigo in July. The most asked question by women attending the titles was about where to shop on Sunday.

### Enhanced Strategic Positioning

Greater Bendigo has stepped up its efforts to attract new industry and investment to Bendigo. One of its targets is to become the call centre capital of regional Australia, a project for which it is receiving strong State Government support.

The city recently secured a 400 job Postel Call Centre. It is doubtful Bendigo would have secured the support of Postel management for the selection of Bendigo without the right mix of economic, and social opportunities for staff to be appointed here including the availability of weekend trading.

The extension of shopping to include Sundays is now highlighted in any submission to prospective investors or industry.

### Entry of New Retailers

As previously stated, since the poll endorsing Sunday trading, Greater Bendigo has received a number of inquiries from prospective retailers looking to locate here. One major retailer Bunnings has since made a commitment to Bendigo with plans to establish a major store on land adjoining Lansell Plaza. During the poll, Bunnings made it clear to the local retail industry that it would not invest in a new Bendigo store if Sunday trading was not supported.

### Expansion of Retail Floor space

The total level of retail floor space in Greater Bendigo has increased significantly since Saturday afternoon trading then Sunday trading were introduced.

In August 1994 the municipality had some 164,517 square metres of total retail and goods floor space. Since then the amount of approved or pending space has increased by more than 32,000 square metres through the additional of a number of projects, notably:

- . Bendigo Marketplace,
- . Bunnings (application pending),
- . Dalgetys (service),
- . Primac (service),
- . Mal McGovern Furniture & Spotlight Victoria Hill Complex
- . McDonalds, Strathdale, (restaurant)
- . Harvey Norman, Kangaroo Flat, and
- . Hume & Iser, East Bendigo (service).

Planning activity in the retail core of Bendigo's central business area (including the Bendigo Marketplace) precinct has experienced a significant upturn in the period since 1994.

In 1994 the city issued planning permits valued in excess of \$1.2 million. In 1996 that figure had climbed to in excess of \$1.9 million. In addition approval by planning scheme amendment had been granted for the Bendigo Marketplace Development (approximately \$25 million).

### Reduction in Vacant Stores

During the referendum, the Save Our Sundays Group conducted a survey of retail businesses and reported that urban Bendigo had more than 90 vacant stores. A survey by the City of Greater Bendigo found that this number had fallen to 55 in August.

Sandhurst Trustees which manages 110 properties within the Bendigo central business area reports that occupancy rates have improved considerably since the poll. For the first time in many years it has no empty shops and reports that the vacancy period for those which fall vacant has fallen considerably. The number of vacant stores at Strath Village has fallen from 10 to four during the same period.



*Stemming the leakage of escape dollars*

As stated previously various studies put the leakage of escape dollars away from Bendigo prior to extended weekend trading at between \$5 and \$40 per annum. The loss of Sunday trading would have represented this risk to the local retail industry. In fact the City of Ballarat made it known publicly during the referendum that it would target Bendigo with a campaign to attract Sunday shoppers if the poll had resulted in a ban within Greater Bendigo.

*Summary*

In conclusion it can be seen from the above that the extension of trading hours to include Saturday afternoons and Sundays has had an overall beneficial impact on the City of Greater Bendigo.

There is clear evidence that the introduction of Saturday afternoon and Sunday trading has played its part in the increased sales and marketing opportunities, increased retail activity, new investment, increased visitor numbers, enhanced positioning to attract investment and events, improved occupancy rates and a growing sense of confidence in the region's economic future.

Yours sincerely



HADLEY SIDES  
CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

**APPENDICES**

**Appendix A**

***Vacant Shops Graph Comparison, City of Greater Bendigo***

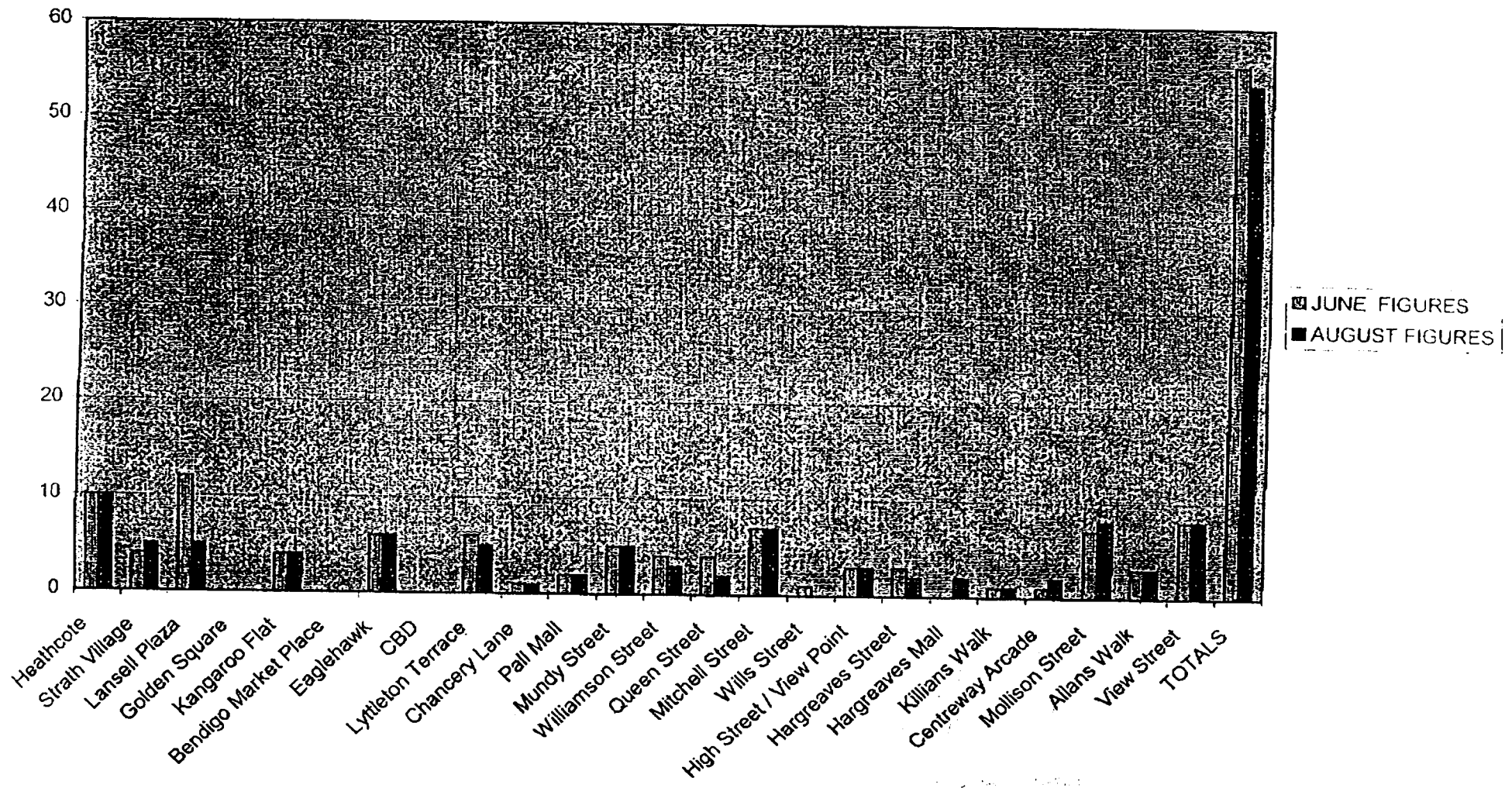
**Appendix B**

***Media Release, City of Greater Bendigo , Thursday February 12, 1998***

**Appendix C**

***Retail Boom Brews, Bendigo Advertiser, Saturday September 26***

### Vacant Shops Graph Comparison



**MEDIA RELEASE  
CITY OF GREATER BENDIGO  
Thursday February 12**

Greater Bendigo Mayor Cr Barry Ackerman warned today that the shock waves of a ban on Sunday trading would be felt across the community and the economy.

Cr Ackerman warned that job losses could exceed 1200 and many small traders would be hit by the ban either directly or indirectly.

"Those who believe that small business will escape unharmed are living in a fool's paradise."

Cr Ackerman revealed recent legal advice to council indicating that many small retailers who are members of franchise arrangements and/or bodies corporate may be prevented from trading.

"In Greater Bendigo there are dozens of franchise stores ranging from bakeries to auto parts to hardware stores to neighbourhood supermarkets. Our advice is that they may not be able to trade even if they have fewer than 20 employees."

Cr Ackerman warned that the exemptions were much more limited than under previous legislation.

"There are some exemptions but they are very precise. The legislation lists those activities that can trade on Sundays but only if they have less than 20 full time equivalent employees.

"However if they are part of a franchise or body corporate they may be prevented from trading."

He warned that if the public voted for a ban on Sunday trading the task of policing the law would fall to the city council.

**INQUIRIES: BARRY ACKERMAN 54346103**



# Retail boom brews

AT LEAST two major retailers have approached the City of Greater Bendigo about setting up in the city after last week's announcement of the new 400-job Postel call centre.

by  
**Allstair  
Paton**



The call centre is expected to generate a retail boom, with about 600 spin-off jobs and growth of about four per cent in retail spending.

City traders claim the move will rejuvenate the city centre, lagging since the closure of Fosseys at the end of July.

City of Greater Bendigo chief executive officer Hadley Sides said the empty site in Hargreaves Mall could be filled by the time the call centre opens on January 1 next year.

"Normally the economic multiplier is one-and-a-half jobs for ever one created, so these 400

could result in a total of 1000 jobs, which is not an unrealistic assumption," Mr Sides said.

"That's something in the order of \$35 million in income for Bendigo, and an extra \$15 million in retail expenditure.

"To give some idea of what that means, \$15 million is about what's needed to establish a major department store.

"Already two major retailers are seeking discussions with us regarding long-term options for Bendigo, as a result of that growth."

Continued — Page 5

blazing Esso fire. Picture: NEWS LTD.

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on their immediate response in cutting gas use after being requested to do so early

### THE REVOLUTIONARY HIGH TECHNOLOGY 4 STROKE BRUSHCUTTER



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# Retail boom tip

From — Page 1

Mr Sides said the 1000 jobs created by the call centre would wipe out one fifth of Bendigo's unemployment queues.

"The important thing now is the economic spin-offs.

"Already I believe as a result of this one other major telecommunications carrier will establish a presence in town.

"Bendigo is now seen across Australia as a successful city — already we've had invitations to speak at engagements at a number of places about what we've achieved."

Hargreaves Mall Traders Association president Kevin de Vries said the influx of workers would revitalise the city centre.

"I think it's tremendous. In the last two months we've lost two fairly ordinary traders, and it looks like we're going to gain many very good traders in return," he said.

"We view the new call centre as a very positive move for Bendigo, and one which will invigorate central city trading."

Mr Sides said the announcement timing was perfect. With Australia slipping into a slight recession the jobs would keep Bendigo ahead and ready to "ride the wave" of economic growth when the recession ended.



**JOB RISE:** Bendigo CEO Hadley Sides expects Bendigo retail to boom.

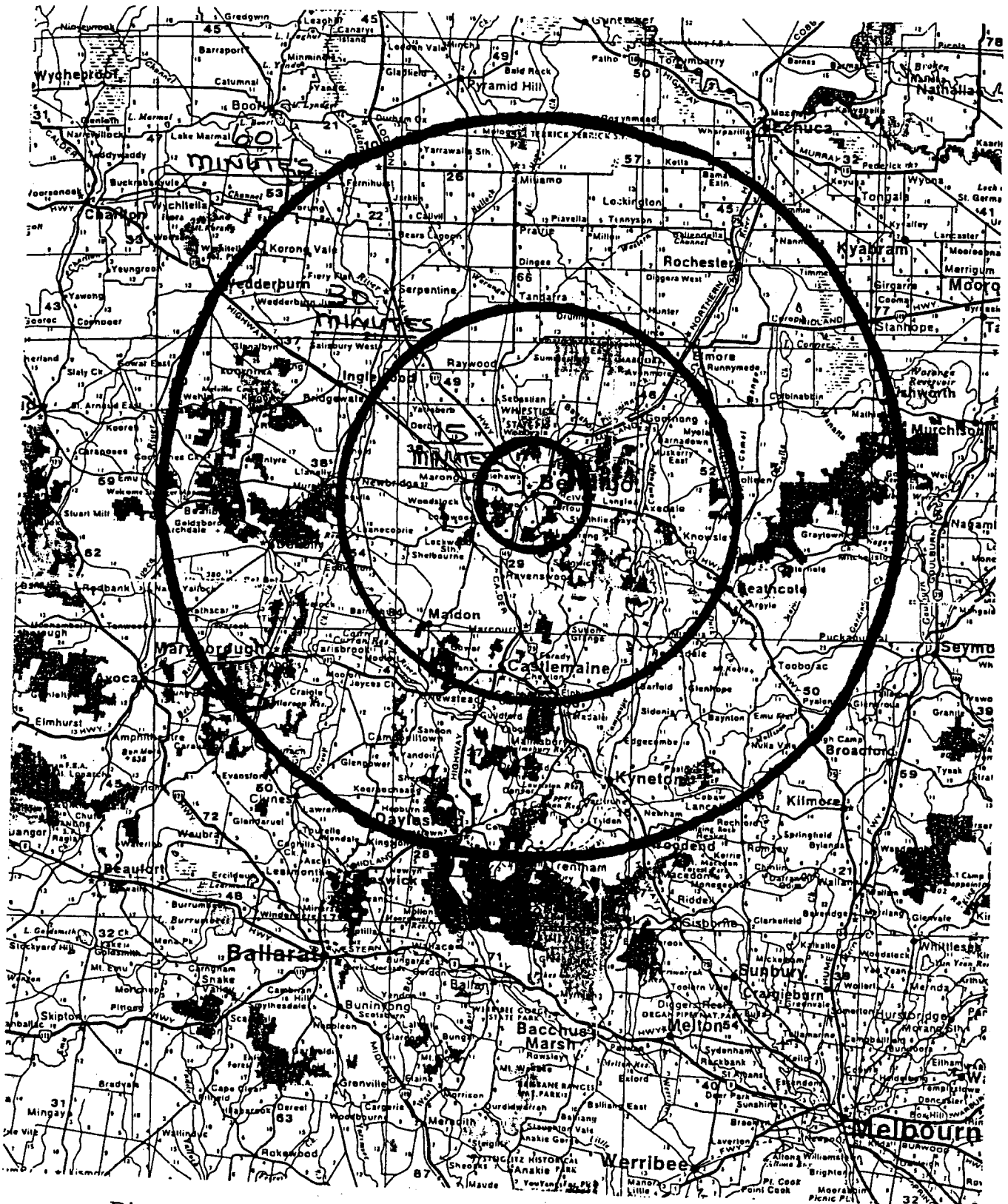
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**WHO WAS  
"PIVOTAL"  
IN SECURING**

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# BENDIGO'S POPULATION CATCHMENT



Distance from Bendigo:

- within 15 minutes drive
- within 30 minutes drive
- within 60 minutes drive

Resident population

75,000  
102,060  
153,247

Labour force

32,816  
43,827  
65,475

Unemployed

4,266  
5,771  
8,065

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, 1996 Census

9



# CPI and Average Weekly Earnings

