

# Theophanous probe over possible contempt

Victoria's Office of Public Prosecutions (OPP) may investigate Victorian MP Theo Theophanous over his outspoken comments about the rape case against him.

The Age newspaper reports that police have asked the OPP to seek a legal opinion about whether Theophanous, the former trade and industry minister, had committed contempt of court in his media comments strenuously denying allegations he raped a woman inside Parliament House in 1998.

Director of Public Prosecutions

Jeremy Rapke, QC, said he was examining the issue after media articles quoting Theophanous in relation to the rape case.

"I am presently considering whether any publications which have occurred already may constitute a contempt of court," Mr Rapke said.

Theophanous, who was charged on Christmas Eve over the alleged 1998 rape, has denied the allegation.

He has questioned the timing of the charges and said police went back on a promise to interview him a second time before he was charged.

Theophanous has also launched a \$10 million criminal damages claim against his accuser, a former Melbourne woman now living in Greece. He will return to the parliament next week for the first time since the allegations were made public in October. In the writ, Theophanous accuses the woman of maliciously attacking his reputation in Australia and Greece by falsely accusing him of rape.

It is illegal in Greece to falsely accuse someone of a crime and, if found guilty, the woman could be jailed for up to five years.



## \$719 million injection into NSW schools

Fresh partnership between the NSW and Federal Governments will see an additional \$719 million injected into the State's education system.

Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard joined NSW Premier Nathan Rees to meet teachers at Rydalmere East Public School on their first day back at school and announce that the NSW

Government has signed up to three National Education Partnerships.

The Partnerships focus on high priority areas for reform in the education system:

- Teacher Quality – providing an additional \$53 million for additional teacher development with a further \$89 million to reward successful reform;

- Literacy and Numeracy -- \$139 million to improve programs that identify early those children having difficulty in this area and tailoring lessons to their individual needs; and

- Low Socio - Economic Status Communities -- \$438 million to radically reform schooling for the State's most disadvantaged communities.

Ms Gillard said the new National Education Agreement will deliver long term benefits for our nation through improved attendance and engagement in school, better literacy and numeracy performance and high quality teachers in our classrooms.

# No turbulence at A380 superjumbo restaurant

*Imagine boarding a plane without security checks or even tickets and more importantly, there's more than just fish or chicken for dinner.*

Set in a dull commercial building in central Taipei, the A380 In-Flight Kitchen looks and functions like an airline in many ways, expect that it serves a regular restaurant menu of Western food, sometimes in plastic trays.

Since November, the restaurant has been packing in wannabe passengers, who sit in soft speckled blue seats with headrests covered in white napkins and under oval-shaped windows. Locked white baggage compartments hang overhead.

Waitresses dressed as flight attendants take meal orders for filet mignon or waffles, as well as the customary fish and chicken. Staff say "welcome



aboard" to customers and issue boarding passes to those who must wait for a table. Of the 84 seats, 20 are "first class" or set aside for groups with advanced bookings, and the place is often overbooked, said business operations manager Emily Lu.

"There are customers who come in and say 'is this real airline food? Airline food doesn't taste good,'" Lu said, adding that they had turned a profit.

The restaurant, in Taipei's university quarter, opened after owner Yang Mao-hui figured that he could ride some of the Airbus A380's recent fame in the aviation industry by offering a simulated experience, Lu said.

The diner decor cost about T\$7 million (A\$310,000), she added.

"The kids like flying, so coming here gives them that experience," said regular customer Wu Shu-hua, 44.

"It looks exactly like an airplane, but the food should be a bit more extensive here," added first-time lunch customer Vivian Mo, 14, who had just ordered a soup and salad. The Airbus A380, billed as the most spacious passenger aircraft in the world, began flying commercially in October 2007. Airbus has no actual stake in the restaurant, Lu said.

Taiwan has a smorgasboard of theme diners, including one modeled after a hospital ward, one that holds puppet shows and two that seat customers on toilet bowls.

## New program brings diversity into focus

The Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services, Laurie Ferguson, will today launch a new program to support communities in their efforts to address cultural, racial and religious intolerance.

Mr Ferguson said the new Diverse Australia Program has an increased focus on addressing issues of intolerance with more funding directed to areas of need. The program will provide funding support to local groups and organisations to tackle issues specific to each community while promoting respect and fairness.

"Last year I asked the Department to take a fresh look at the previous Living in Harmony program which had been operating for ten years. I wanted to ensure we were taking the best possible approach to promoting the benefits of cultural diversity" Mr Ferguson said

### Key elements of the new program include:

- a small grants scheme of up to \$5000 which will extend the reach of activities and help build the capacity of small organi-

sations to address community needs; and

- ongoing year round funding to increase responsiveness to emerging issues of intolerance when communities identify a need.

- "The activities funded are aimed at bringing Australians from all backgrounds together in a positive and productive way,

- A key element of the Diverse Australia Program is that it works with different levels of Government, with local business and community organisations to empower a local response to issues of racism and intolerance" Mr Ferguson said.

Harmony Day which is celebrated on March 21 remains a key event in the new program.

"In 2009, I would like to see schools, community groups, local governments and business all get behind Harmony Day and make it the best day of celebration ever," the Parliamentary Secretary added.

Laurie Ferguson MP

Parliamentary Secretary for Multicultural Affairs and Settlement Services