



## Jeff Finds A Shed to Call His Own

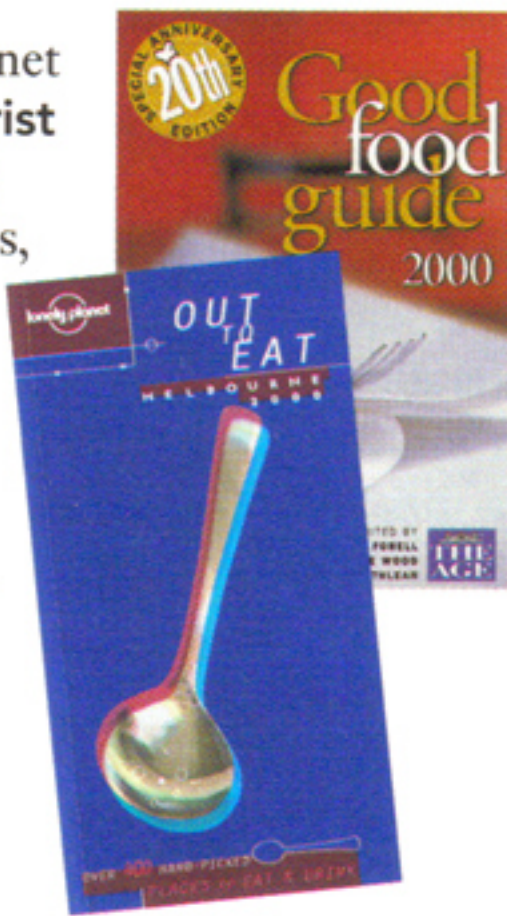
Ex-premier builds shed, expects Victoria to grind to a halt

After priding himself on building taxpayer-funded monuments, ex-premier **Jeff Kennett** has spent a few days and some of his \$1.3 million superannuation payout building a new shed in his Surrey Hills backyard. A builder friend of Bitch's bumped into Jeff in a Box Hill timber supply yard a couple of weeks back and it's good to see he remains friendly and chatty. "Are you a registered builder?" the friend asked. "Don't tell anyone," the budding shed builder replied as he picked up his pine and particle board and loaded it into a silver Landcruiser bearing P plates. Picking up a hammer doesn't mean Jeff's lost an interest in politics since quitting parliament. He told the friend Victoria would grind to a standstill once all the state-funded city projects stop. And he predicted "a lot more unrest" industrially.

## Great Southern Food Fight

FOOD 1: It's critic eat critic

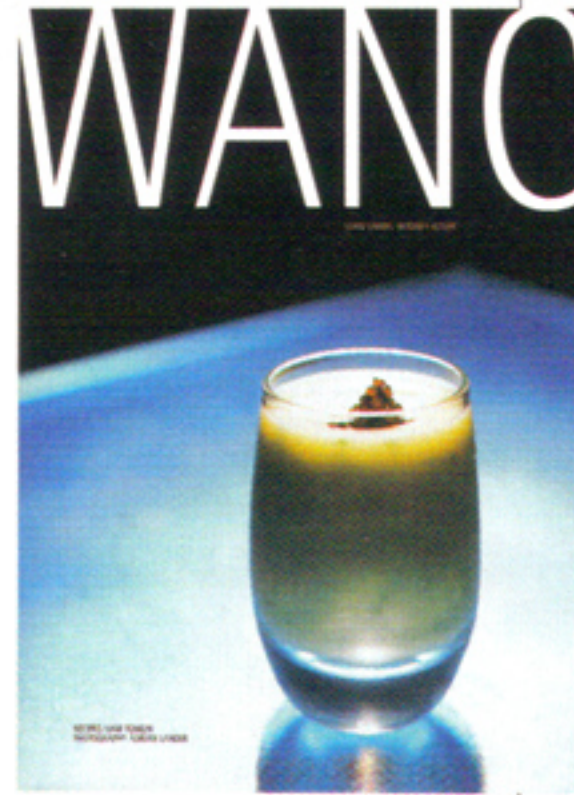
It might seem like just another food guide to you, but the launch of the Lonely Planet's *Out to Eat Melbourne 2000* has started a bona fide food fight. Admittedly, Lonely Planet publisher **Richard Everist** threw the first punch at Melbourne's food critics, calling them an incestuous bunch of self-appointed experts. "Frankly, I don't think you need to be a brain surgeon to tell whether or not a bowl of pasta tastes good." **Bradley Hall** from the food and wine magazine *MP* (Melbourne Palate) found time to take his own swipe at his better-known peers. "They're all pissing in each others pockets," he says, although he doesn't think food charlatans should step on his terrain (or should that be terrine?). "If you're a fork-lift driver, do you run off and try and become an engineer in your spare time?" Co-editor of *The Age's Good Food Guide 2000* **Stephanie Woods** isn't too happy with Everist. "Everyone knows the cheap shots taken in the name of publicity," she told *The Eye*. She took her own parting shot at Everist's guide. "To me it's an impenetrable mass of information," she says. "It's about as useful as the *Yellow Pages*."



## It's Banc, But Say 'Bonk'

FOOD 2: For the book of the restaurant you can spell it Wanc (no accent)

What's rape got to do with Banc, the hopelessly fashionable Sydney nosherie founded by the very rich **Rodney Adler** and the very successful **Stan Sarris**? Nothing, we would have said. Until we picked up *Banc* the book, a 216-page testimony to the glories of vanity publishing. Amid the recipes for oysters vichyssoise and truffled polenta, we spotted a 24-hour diary of "a typical day at the pinnacle of dining". And this is what we saw: "09.00: Co-owner and operator Stan Sarris elegantly makes his entrance through the back door. He's dressed to simple perfection in his signature Armani, Guccis rest on his nose, and his spiky black hair is gelled perfectly in place. 'Now I know what it's like to be raped,' he booms as he makes his way toward the coffee machine. Heads turn as he disappears behind the bar. As he smoothly removes the tails off yabbies, Liam [executive chef **Liam Tomlin**] explains to the whole kitchen that the previous night Stan had made a visit to a new restaurant and that he had been extremely disappointed. 'A hundred and fifty dollars a head, and that didn't include wine,' adds Stan knocking back



his ristretto. 'I think we need to look at our prices,' he jokes.' There's more, much more. But don't let us spoil it. For a bagatelle (\$59.95) you can read it all yourself.

## A Titanic Disappointment, or Foxed Again

Hollywood on the harbour proves a little, well, wet

So Fox has brought a glittering sliver of Stinseltown to lucky old Sydney. But when the imported stars (sic) had swung back to the northern hemisphere and the Dinnigans had been sent to the drycleaners, was it hooray for Hollywood for the mere mortals left behind? Ho hum, if you go by the Backlot self-guided tours where \$40 will get you "behind the scenes for an unforgettable experience". The Backlot itself looks like an unusually tacky amusement park. Bypass Simpsons Down Under — a calculated parent-trap stuffed with Simpsons merchandise — and head for the most anticipated attraction, the "heart-thumping action" of the Titanic Experience. Queue for 20 minutes to even enter the building. Thrill to another 20 minutes of waiting while you're taught to yell "help" convincingly. Finally, be herded into a deck area by crew who seem more petrified than the passengers. (Understandably so — if this venture fails, they're out of a job.) There's a thump, neither loud, nor scary. Iceberg! The wall opens and water gushes forth — funny how the Atlantic's chlorinated. It doesn't touch



Wet: Just when you thought it was scary to get back in the water.

the passengers, disappearing neatly down a drain as panic-stricken crew herd the half-laughing crowd up to the first-deck, where you're rushed through a mildly sloping floor and on to the sinking (yet safely stationary) deck outside. It's women and children first for the boats where you're left shivering in extreme cold for a few minutes, just to get that authentic small-dingy-in-a-big-cold-ocean feeling. Suddenly, a video screen pops up on which you see the hull being submerged. Sinking feelings all around with other passengers, too. **Pamela Burkevitch** from the Gold Coast said: "That's it. You just get a splash. But only if you're in the front row!" **Warren King** from Sydney agreed. King has been to similar parks in Queensland and said this was the worst 'ride' he'd been on. "It was very hyped up. Really, I expected a lot more considering everything. It ended up being pretty lame." Particularly as he'd forked out not just \$80 for two tickets, but a titanic \$20 to park. Yup, as the showbiz adage goes: there's a sucker born every minute.

## Fair Shares for the Fairfax Five Thousand

Yet another Olympic tickets shocker!

Nice bit of outrage from those Fairfax scribes about the bungling surrounding the Games ticket fiasco. What has not been so loudly revealed is that **Fairfax** employees are luckier than most when it comes to getting Games tickets. Through its Games sponsorship Fairfax is offering a ballot of 5,000 tickets to its staff at face value. And there are some choice premium seats among them. As the blurb distributed to staff notes about their preferential treatment, without apparent irony: "The odds are on your side." It's an offer that goes to the heart of news organisations taking out sponsorships and becoming hostage — or being seen to be hostage — to the organisation they are sponsoring. At the very least it sits oddly with Fairfax's tone of defending battlers who were duded by a reduction of 400,000 tickets to meet the needs of the wealthy for premium ticket sales. And while on the subject of compromised positions, Bitch takes it that we will be seeing many more full and frank disclosures from Fairfax journalists following their company's announcement last month that



Hands full: Flicker and Jeff, Stockers and Dor.

## Two Degrees of Separation

Jeff and Alan, Alan and Dominique, Jeff and Doreen (and Felicity), Alan and Macquarie

Are **Jeff Kennett** and his bushy-eyebrowed former treasurer **Alan Stockdale** still best mates? After Stockdale dumped his wife **Doreen** to set up shop with **Dominique Collins**, it was presumed that the boys would remain rock solid. But just as **Peter Costello** was annoyed with best mate **Michael Kroger**'s handling of the separation with his wife **Helen**, so we hear is Jeff re Alan. Doreen is telling friends that Jeff confided in her that Alan did the wrong thing. Was Jeff getting some heat from **Felicity**, a long-time fan of Doreen's? Meanwhile, Macquarie Bank shares might have taken off since Stockers signed up as head of the asset and infrastructure division, but the lads would have been happier for him to turn up to work next year. Stockers was very keen to get his hands on the reported \$40,000 a week that Macquarie is said to be paying — he turned up for work when the leaders of Australia's biggest millionaire factory would have been happier to see him at a few Christmas drinks before climbing into the money-making trenches.

44 per cent of staff — or 1,800 people — are now enjoying new Fairfax investments through a share-ownership scheme. We look forward to journalists' share ownership disclosures across the mastheads although, sadly, we hear that at least one journalist has been told that no such disclosure is necessary. One final disclosure: combined employee share ownership of \$4.4 million in the new scheme pales in comparison to the 3.5 million options granted to chief executive **Fred Hilmer** at the price of \$2.85. On current Fairfax share prices of about \$4.40, Hilmer is \$2.17 million in the money when the first tranche of 1.4 million can be exercised in December next year. At least *he* can afford to enter Fairfax's Games ticket ballot.

## Still The Ones

Carleton to cut back on class; Martin no longer by candlelight; Munro overworked

Want a cheerful lunch partner these days? Don't bother calling anyone from the Nine network. All the cost-slashing and program-burning going on there is making for a weary and depressed staff. Bitch hears there's a new lot of hand-wringing over two of Nine's biggest stars: **Ray Martin** (right) and **Richard**

**Carleton**. It's contract time and so far neither has re-signed. Carleton's days at *60 Minutes* were definitely more fun before people told food hamper jokes. And it sounds like his contract negotiations have been less than happy. First, the incredible suggestion he do his bit for cost-cutting and trim his first-class travel (as *if!*) and then some chat about replacing him altogether with ex-*60 Min'*er **Ray Martin**. Martin, meanwhile, has his own problems. Jaws dropped all round the network at the announcement that he won't be hosting this



year's carols by candlelight at the Melbourne music bowl; he'll be replaced by Collingwood man and AFL *Footy Show* host **Eddie McGuire**. Ray's other peeve is that network chiefs like **David Leckie** have failed to come up with anything interesting for him next year. Offered **Mike Munro**'s job as presenter for *This is Your Life*, Ray chucked

it back. This has upset Munro who reckons he has a handful hosting *A Current Affair* (Ray's old gig). Stay tuned, if you can bear it.

## THIS FORTNIGHT'S TIMEBOMB

In Canberra they talk of little else but the sad state of affairs facing one of the capital's best known power couples. He's been spending more time out in the bush. She's been spending more time in the city. And now she's been linked with a very rich businessman. The question is, does her husband know and what will he do if ever he finds out?