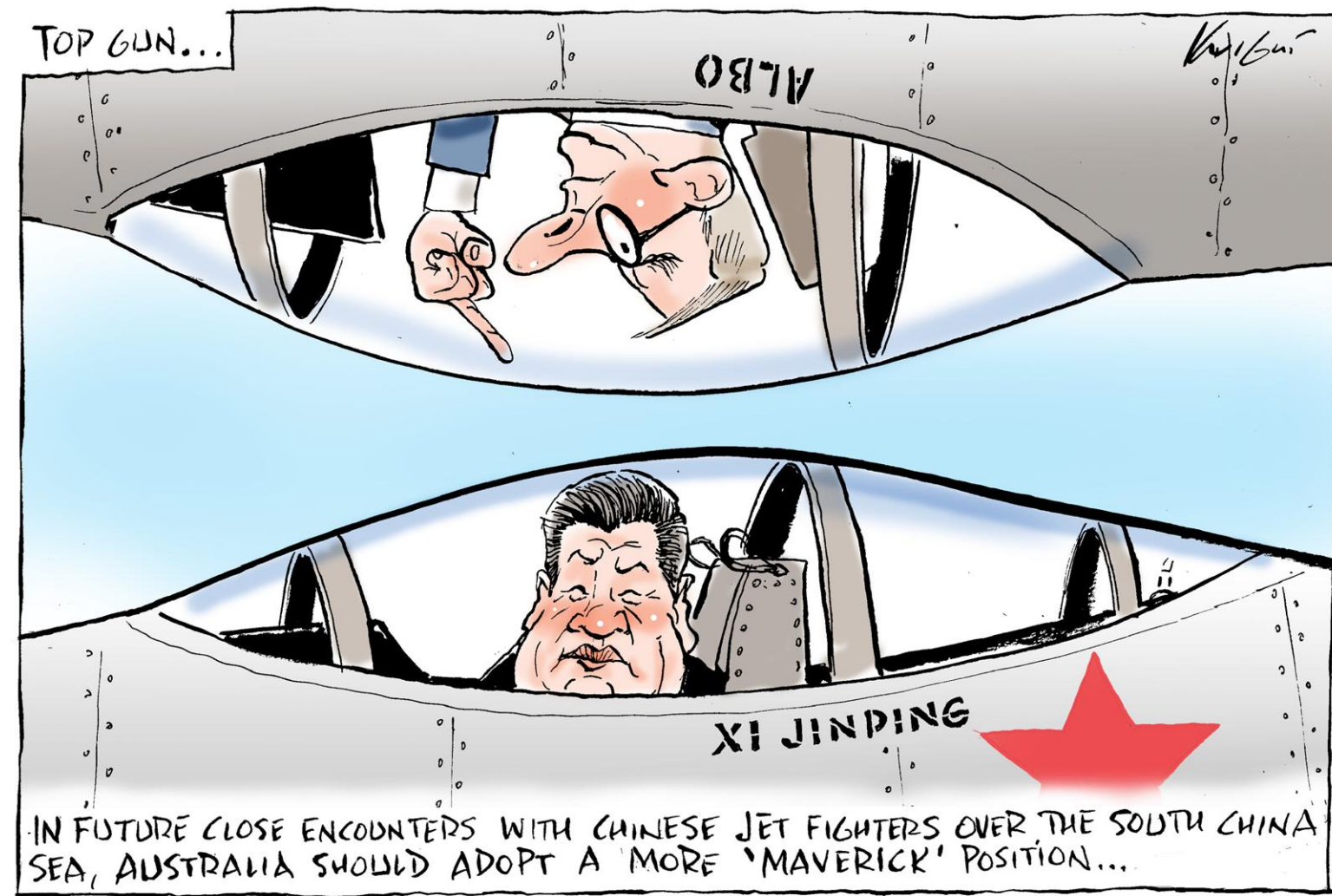


MARK KNIGHT

Hand-signed Knight cartoons are available for purchase from knightcartoons.com.au



BRAD BATTIN

Divvy van is not an ambulance

HAVING a mental health illness is not a crime, and it should not be treated as one.

People with mental illness in Victoria who call for help will not know if a police divisional van or an ambulance will turn up because of the Andrews government's failings.

In the past few decades mental health education has seen positive attitude changes and improved treatment options. We encourage people to ask for help through campaigns like RU OK? day.

Reports that police are being called out as a primary response to people requiring an ambulance is a step backwards in removing negative perceptions around mental illness. Such patients should not be made to feel like criminals with the only transport option the back of a police divvy van.

Police Association Victoria secretary Wayne Gatt told radio last week that although police may "from time to time" be called to assist if people have become violent, "increasingly, what our members are telling us is, owing to the absence of adequate numbers of ambulances (they are transporting patients to hospitals)."

A person in a state of heightened anxiety and stress could be triggered further by the arrival of police instead of paramedics, potentially in front of family, friends, or neighbours. They need care and to be transported in a controlled environment.

There are people who, before arriving in Australia, experienced violent treatment at the hands of police or other forces. The sight of a police car could trigger an adverse response. This is not acceptable in Victoria and never will be.

There are circumstances when police transport is required – when the safety of paramedics is at risk. Police and paramedics have always worked well together in assessing these situations, and in my time as a police officer it was common for one officer to travel in the back of the ambulance for the safety of the paramedics, and the patient.

Police are spending hours sitting at an emergency department until the overstretched staff can take the patient off their hands when they should be on the road responding to urgent calls or providing patrols.

This is not the fault of the police, they do an amazing job, it is due to a crisis made by Daniel Andrews and his government. Labor has been in power 19 of the past 23 years in Victoria, the Premier 11 of 15 years as health minister and Premier, and all he can say is "It's not my fault".

In six months, it is time to change government in Victoria; our health triple-0, police and ambulance crises must be fixed, and you cannot trust the man who created this mess to fix it.

BRAD BATTIN IS LIBERAL SPOKESMAN FOR POLICE AND EMERGENCY SERVICES

Growth areas demand government attention

THE 2022 federal election result paints a clear picture of the significance of Australia's outer urban growth areas. So much so, Opposition Leader Peter Dutton has announced his dedication to the "forgotten people" of the outer suburbs in an effort to build back the devastated Liberal vote.

Before the election, the National Growth Areas Alliance – the leading voice for the 5.2 million Australians living in fast-growing outer suburbs – told Australia's leaders that these communities could no longer be ignored.

Massive, sustained population growth had made voting results in outer suburban seats increasingly unpredictable.

Ultimately, the outer suburbs were among the game changers of this election.

I applaud Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and the Labor government for recognising this early, and making significant commitments on cities policy, infrastructure and planning that acknowledge the dire need for federal government attention in the outer suburbs.

Additionally, we welcome the eight growth area MPs who are now part of the Albanese ministry, as a positive acknowledgment of the 20 per cent of Australians who live in growth areas, and of the talent and potential of growth area residents.

We strongly support Labor's commitments to renew the independent role of Infrastructure Australia, establish a new Australian Cities and Suburbs unit, deliver a



MATTHEW DEETH

new National Urban Policy framework, reinvigorate City Deals and give local government a voice in a meaningful national cabinet process.

However, these commitments come after wasted years. We are disappointed that there is no dedicated Minister for Growth Areas or Minister for Cities to co-ordinate a national response to growth area inequities. Regardless, we hope that the outer suburbs get the focus they so urgently need.

One in five Australians now call an outer urban growth area home. Since the 2019 federal election, an extra 216,000 new homes have been built in growth areas. Wyndham municipality in Melbourne's southwest, for example, grew almost three times as fast as that of metropolitan Melbourne in 2019-20.

On the outskirts of our nation's capital cities, suburbs continue to grow at double the national rate.

Increased demand for affordable housing and state government releases of land for development, combined with the focus on housing affordability schemes, mean that another outer suburban population boom is imminent.

NGAA members, growth area

councils from across Australia, are responding to the effects of this remarkable population growth. As the population of growth areas continues to grow, federal funding and resources have not kept pace.

Basic infrastructure and services in growth areas are seriously lacking. There is an absence of travel networks, healthcare and other vital social infrastructure. NGAA research shows that these shortcomings are contributing to those living in the outer suburbs experiencing some of the highest levels of mental health and financial stress nationwide.

Covid-19 shone a stark spotlight on the consequences of under-resourcing growth area communities, particularly across Sydney and Melbourne.

Growth areas are home to most essential workers and were consequently at the highest risk of exposure to Covid. Yet despite this being clear from the start, a shortage of local vaccination hubs and GPs catering for culturally diverse communities meant the outer suburbs suffered some of the highest instances of Covid cases and deaths.

The pandemic has shown us that under-resourcing growth area communities leaves them exposed in times of disaster or downturn, and ill equipped to fulfil their potential during times of stability.

The lack of critical growth areas infrastructure and services and the limited local employment opportunities in the outer suburbs have been evident to residents for decades. Growth areas have had

about 30 per cent of Australia's population growth, but only 17 per cent of jobs growth. Before the election, we pinpointed four priorities for growth areas. We want the new government to:

CO-ORDINATE an urgent national response to growth area inequities. Our capital cities need better planning and investment, including revitalised City Deals, that support distributing infrastructure, jobs and housing more evenly across entire metropolitan areas; **PLAN** and invest in transformative infrastructure in outer urban growth areas – not car parks; **SUPPORT** the workforce and industries of the outer suburbs, the manufacturing and labour force heartlands of our cities. Australia's growth areas are a key economic asset, with a 2.2 million-strong workforce, large tracts of land ready to be transformed into industrial, manufacturing and high employment zones and a track record of business growth well above the national average; **INVEST** in community recovery and resilience in the outer suburbs so our communities are never again as unprepared and unsupported in a crisis like Covid-19.

We look forward to working with the Albanese government to ensure outer urban growth areas live up to their potential as safe, sustainable, and liveable places – and so that in three years' time, 20 per cent of Australia's population can't again be described as "forgotten people".

MATTHEW DEETH IS CHAIR OF NATIONAL GROWTH AREAS ALLIANCE