



Driver who killed six teenagers in accident back behind bars

A driver who killed six teens in Mildura in a shocking hit-run accident in 2006 is back behind bars after breaching his parole conditions. Thomas Towle, 44, was arrested at 7.20am on Tuesday, after police executed a warrant at a home in Bendigo. The Adult Parole Board has not revealed how Towle breached parole, but again faces scrutiny

over the decision to release him from prison after serving 7.5 years of a maximum 10-year sentence. Under his parole conditions, Towle (pictured) was not permitted to drive, drink alcohol, enter Mildura or make contact with the families of his victims. He was jailed for a maximum 10-year term after ploughing into a group of 13 teenagers, killing six, as they left

a 16th birthday party on the outskirts of Mildura. Steve-Lee Weight, 15, Shane Hirst, 16, his sister Abby Hirst, 17, Cory Dowling, 16, Cassandra Manners, 16, and Josie Calvi, 16, died when Towle's car hit them on February 18, 2006. Towle had been speeding and had his four-year-old child sitting on his lap at the time of the crash. Cameron Houston

Container shipping Capacity limited

Ships may get too big to go under

Adam Carey
Richard Willingham

A shortage of berth space for mega container ships will restrict capacity at Melbourne's port, cruetling Labor's attempts to get maximum value from its privatisation, a leading shipping expert has warned.

Giant "post-Panamax" container ships could even start to skip Melbourne within 20 years because they cannot safely pass beneath the West Gate Bridge, a forum on privatising Melbourne's port heard on Monday.

The bridge has an "air draught" of 50 metres, which is too low for some post-Panamax vessels to pass under, maritime expert Peter van Duyin said.

"Air draught ... hasn't been an issue so far but when you get to those larger vessels it will be," Mr van Duyin, of Victoria University's Institute for Supply Chain and Logistics, said.

New Jersey is raising the Bayonne Bridge, at a cost of \$US1.29 billion (\$1.86 billion), to avoid this problem.

Mr van Duyin repeated the warning before a Senate committee on Tuesday.

He said the Port of Melbourne was never likely to have the capacity to move 6.5 million to 8 million containers a year, a range being touted by the Andrews government as it moves to lease the port to the private sector for 50 years.

It will use the money to pay for the removal of 50 level crossings and create a transport building fund.

Mr van Duyin said limited berth space at Melbourne's port would curb its capacity at from 5 million to 5.5 million containers a year.

Next-generation vessels that carry 8000 to 10,000 containers are so big that Melbourne's three

container docks could cope with no more than two at a time, he said. The mega ships would also be restricted to docking in daylight hours and would require all port cranes to be raised, further reducing capacity, Mr van Duyin said. Melbourne now sees vessels that carry up to 4500 containers.

Rod Nairn, Shipping Australia chief executive, said several major shippers had told him they would like to bring ships capable of carrying 8000 containers into the Port of Melbourne within five years.

Treasurer Tim Pallas told the forum he doubted super-sized vessels would call into Melbourne in the near term.

"It's one thing for sure, we won't be able to raise the West Gate Bridge, so to the extent that there is a height restriction on access to Swanston Dock and Appleton Dock, that will not be something that we can engineer away," Mr Pallas said.

Meanwhile, Victoria's top bureaucrats have played down the prospect of the state having to pay compensation to port operators when a second container port opens at Hastings or Bay West, likening any such payments to a "rehand".

The first day of public hearings into the Andrews' government plan to sell the long-term lease of the Port of Melbourne, an inquiry heard from the Department of Treasury and Finance that there were very "strict criteria" for any compensation payments to be made to the successful tenant.

The heads of the department also rebutted claims from the opposition that the 50-year lease would stop a second major container port being built in Victoria.

Under Labor's plan a second port could be built and used if the port reached capacity.



New express bus lanes washed away within weeks

Adam Carey
Transport Reporter

New express bus lanes put on Victoria Parade as part of a multimillion-dollar project have already washed away just weeks after they were painted on.

The lanes are so fresh that a timetable revamp associated with their creation has not even taken effect yet.

They were installed by CityWide, as part of a project managed by VicRoads. VicRoads staff inspected the lanes on Tuesday, after being alerted to the damage by Fairfax Media.

Brendan Pauwels, the authority's metropolitan projects direct-

or, said engineers were trying to work out why the paint had washed away.

"VicRoads engineers are currently on-site investigating the extent of this issue, including why it has happened and what can be done immediately to ensure no further surfacing washes away, prior to determining the best way to fix the situation," Mr Pauwels said.

The dedicated lanes are designed to give a better run to the 20,000 commuters who travel by bus between the CBD and Melbourne's north-east each weekday.

On-street parking spaces have been removed from the Victoria Parade median to make room for

The lanes were originally planned to go along Victoria Parade and Hoddle Street, and ultimately save commuters up to 10 minutes' travel time between the city and Doncaster, according to the former Napthine government, which started the \$32 million project.

But the Hoddle Street section of the project has been put on hold while the Andrews government investigates "continuous flow" inter-sections as a traffic fix for the congested north-south arterial.

The Doncaster Area Rapid Transit buses service the north-eastern suburbs, which have no rail. They are among the most used buses in Melbourne, with about 3.8 million trips a year.



Workers removing damaged tarmac from the bus lane on Victoria Parade

IMAGE: A008 PA