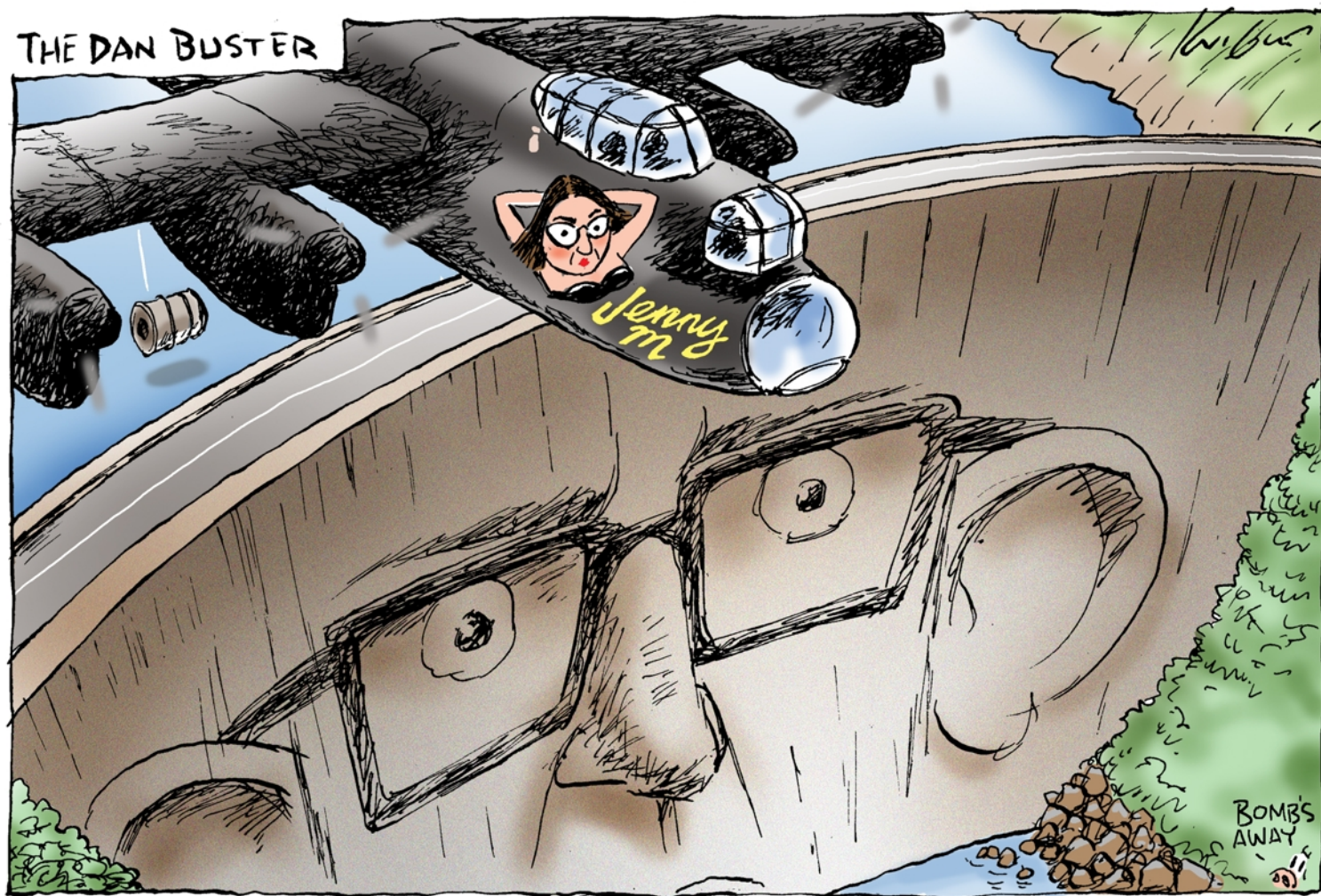


# MARK KNIGHT

Hand-signed Knight cartoons are available for purchase from the Herald Sun shop. Send your request via email to [hsshop@news.com.au](mailto:hsshop@news.com.au)



**FLIP SHELTON**

## Lessons in every room

**W**ITH thousands of children poised to return to the classroom from Monday, perhaps only now has the enormity of 20 weeks of remote learning fully hit home.

Lockdown, however, has been a chance for different sorts of lessons.

When my 11-year old son asked me what we were going to do during the recent school holidays — a poisoned chalice if ever there was one — I said we would be taking a closer look at domestic life.

Confident in a home-ground advantage, it was time I dished out some real homeschooling, having endured weeks of merciless gibes because I couldn't do his way of long division nor create an algorithm for ITC.

First to bed. Harvey was delighted, until he realised I expected tight hospital corners on the sheets and a perfectly fluffed doona. "Why?" he asked.

Because, I explained, according to US navy SEAL Admiral William H. McRaven, who wrote the New York Times bestseller *Make Your Bed*, it can be the first step in changing the world.

Next, to the laundry. Never, I said, never mix fabrics or colours. I provided instructions on how to fill the washing machine so it was balanced; select the appropriate wash cycle and add an economical amount of washing powder. I suggested his father teach him how to dismantle a washing machine and turn the drum into an open-fire structure for the backyard.

The clothes line provided the setting for our outdoor classroom. Socks in pairs for easy on-the-spot rolling once dry; hoodies on the front line for greatest exposure to sun and wind; and an economical use of pegs between T-shirts, pulled tight to avoid ironing.

Understanding Melbourne's weather patterns was essential, I said — at the least, to get your washing done in the most efficient time frame; at best it could lead to a job on telly. Dry washing in hand, Harvey got a lesson in folding clothes inspired by the best-selling author organiser Marie Kondo. Knowing how to fold undies made her a millionaire, I told him.

Next, to the fireplace. Learning to set a fire is a vital life skill, I said. You never know when you will be lost on a mountain side separated from your school camp or trying to win a challenge in *Survivor*.

The bathroom. Armed with an old toothbrush (replete with a lesson on up-cycling) and a spray bottle of eucalyptus and water, Harvey was given the task of cleaning the shower grout.

This was a lesson in science and proof that something old can stand the test of time and solve a problem — even if it isn't long division.

**FLIP SHELTON IS A WRITER, PRESENTER AND BROADCASTER**

# What's happened to my beloved Melbourne?

I AM really missing home, especially my mum.

I miss my Melbourne; the way it was before this mess. I even miss my office and all the meetings I used to have. And I sure miss singing and connecting with audiences.

My husband and I came to NSW for a short holiday in June and here we still are, working and Zooming.

Where we are, you'd never know there was a virus. People go about their lives. They go to school, bands and the beach, and have friends over for parties, barbecues and dinner. It reminds me how much I miss sharing happy times with friends and community.

However, Victoria is in a sad state. Every time we have thought about going home, something bizarre happens. We wonder, how long can this go on? When will the dam burst?

First it was the extended lockdowns and closing offices and schools; then the crazy curfew and de facto house arrest, which for many solo people was solitary confinement. Along with the arbitrary 5km rule and shopping for groceries on your own.

We see powerful but disregarded pleas from doctors saying harms and other health issues created by the lockdown and trampling of human rights are significantly worse than harms caused by the virus. Why isn't anybody listening?

So here we still are, in exile.

I speak to family, friends, clients and colleagues daily. I am weighed down by their grief, anger and frustration.



**TANIA DE JONG**

People are becoming more desperate and stir-crazy by the day.

We run a mental health charity and receive multiple calls and emails each day from anxious parents with young children so traumatised they refuse to eat or speak, let alone participate in online learning. Some are being medicated with antidepressants, an inappropriate treatment for children that can cause long-term cognitive impairment and changes.

Other parents confide their teenagers are staying locked in their rooms and have lost their zest for life, confidence and hope for the future. They feel disengaged from friends, teachers and the community.

Then there are parents who have kids in their 20s who are worried sick because their child is suicidal as a result of being locked up for so many hours a day, either with their parents or living on their own, unable to go to work or university.

I know of two women whose husbands attempted suicide over the past weeks, and another whose husband tried to kill her because he'd lost his job and got drunk.

We speak with parents who have taken their children and pets and

left Victoria for good. I know of many more who will be leaving soon. They do not feel that Victoria offers a safe and healthy environment for their family anymore.

Many fellow entrepreneurs who found Melbourne a great place for starting up a business and an innovation hub have left interstate or soon will be. Those states will win, because it's hard to imagine why anyone would want to operate or start a business in Victoria any time soon.

Adding insult to injury was the now infamous COVID-19 Omnibus (Emergency Measures) and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2020, allowing bureaucrats to empower civilians with police-style powers. This week the Andrews government bowed to pressure, including from top QCs and retired judges, to remove the powers of "authorised officers" to detain, but has not yet removed provisions creating these de facto Witchfinders-General.

Who would want to go home to this?

Dean of Law at Swinburne University, Mirko Bagaric, has said: "The rule of law in Victoria is broken".

It appears anyone who even dares question the government's disproportionate pandemic measures risks punishment.

Yet it is the government that botched hotel quarantine causing this deplorable mess. So far, the government's reaction largely has been blunt and brutal, with terrible social and economic results. If you have a sore thumb, cutting off the

hand gets rid of the thumb but damages you for life.

We should start fining politicians and public servants every time they contradict, lie and obfuscate.

Those funds could compensate unnecessary abuse and trauma caused to people like pregnant mother Zoe Buhler, arrested and handcuffed by three police officers in her home in front of her two infant children and charged with incitement, not because she had actually breached any health regulations, but merely because she expressed her view on Facebook about an anti-lockdown protest.

What's happening in Victoria affects the whole nation. Victoria is 23 per cent of Australia's economy (becoming less), and Victorians are 26 per cent of Australia's population.

Every Australian is paying for Victoria's personal, social and economic damage, and will be paying for years to come.

What is to become of our sad and depressed state?

Now the number of COVID cases are so low, we need to re-create our magnificent, vibrant pre-pandemic Melbourne and give people their lives back.

Daniel Andrews' Victoria today certainly is a sad state of affairs. Why is Victoria so different to the other states where lives go on?

I'd really like to return home one day soon, before it's too late.

**TANIA DE JONG AM IS A SOCIAL ENTREPRENEUR AND SOPRANO, AND FOUNDER OF MIND MEDICINE AUSTRALIA (WWW.MINDMEDICINEAUSTRALIA.ORG) AND CREATIVITY AUSTRALIA**