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Swan seaplanes set to fly again



By DAVID HUDLESTON

History will be repeated on the Swan River if the world's biggest commercial seaplane gets approval for take-off.

During World War II, Qantas flew Catalinas from Crawley Bay to Sri Lanka to break the Japanese blockade of Australia.

Former SAS mountaineering and Arctic survival warfare instructor Mack McCormack is waiting for Swan River Trust approval to fly his Grumman Albatross G111 on daily fishing and snorkelling trips from the Swan River to the Abrolhos Islands, off Geraldton.

This week he received the Civil Aviation Safety Authority acceptance certificate needed to move the project forward.

If approved, the 22-seat Albatross would take off from the South Perth side of the river and fly over the western suburbs along the Swan River.

The flight to the Abrolhos would take about 80 minutes.

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Mack McCormack is awaiting Swan River Trust approval for his Grumman Albatross to take off from the river for daily flights to the Abrolhos Islands.

Police in the firing line



REPORT BY:
BRET CHRISTIAN

Someone planted physical evidence to try to make sure Lloyd Rayney was convicted of murder, and police were biased against him, it was alleged in the Court of Appeal this week.

There was a damaging courtroom attack on named WA police officers who had investigated the case.

This was made possible by the state government's appeal against Mr Rayney's not guilty murder verdict.

Mr Rayney, charged with the murder of his wife, Corryn, was acquitted last November after a three-month trial.

Three weeks later, the state lodged an appeal against the decision, saying the judge had made mistakes and Mr Rayney should face a re-trial.

But the prosecution arguments opened the door for Mr Rayney

to present a case that not only should he have won, but that he should have won much better.

The appeal court heard that a senior constable - a forensic exhibits case manager for Operation Dargan, the investigation into Mrs Rayney's death - had a medical certificate specifying he was not fit to give evidence in that case.

Mr Rayney's lawyer said that the Dargan case was specified rather than a specified time for sick leave.

This week, Mr Rayney's lawyers contended that the original trial judge had not given proper weight to disputed evidence about three seedpods said to have accompanied Mrs Rayney's body from her home to her makeshift grave in King's Park.

The pods matched those from a large liquidambar tree growing in the front garden of the Rayney family home in Monash Avenue, South Perth.

The trial judge, Brian Martin

QC, excluded from evidence one pod that police said they had found in Mrs Rayney's body bag nearly four months after her body was exhumed, because of doubts about the forensic evidence chain.

That seedpod was rich in forensic evidence connecting it to the Rayneys' front yard.

"The first two pods, the Crown was lucky to have them included in the Crown case," Bret Walker SC, Mr Rayney's lead lawyer told the three appeal judges on Wednesday.

Mr Walker quoted the trial judge Justice Martin's reason for including the other two pods: "If any officer was minded to fabricate evidence against the respondent [Mr Rayney], it was too early to do so."

But Mr Walker disputed this in an explosive, closely argued 13-page section of his written submissions to the appeal court.

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A Qantas Catalina taking off from Crawley bay during World War II to break the Japanese blockade of Australia.

45 Evandale Street, Floreat

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Beer helps blokes cope with babies

Blokes are expecting a lot to happen when they turn up at the Pure Bar on Tuesday nights.

The bar, in Hay Street, Subiaco, is holding Beer and Bubs classes for men who are about to be first-time fathers.

During a 2½-hour session,

men are taught the skills they will need to help their partners through childbirth, including advice on pain management and what not to say during labour.

"We can take groups of up to 20 men, and most walk away feel-

ing as if they've learnt more than at antenatal classes," program coordinator and childbirth educator Kristin Beckedahl said.

"And it's a great forum for blokes to discuss their fears and concerns openly with others in the same situation."

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Police in the firing line

• From page 1

"[Mr Rayney] contends that somebody planted the seedpods in [Mrs Rayney's] hair between the preliminary examination and their discovery," Mr Walker said.

He told the court Mrs Rayney's body had been dug up from King's Park on the night of August 16, 2007, and had been immediately examined for wounds or trauma by forensic pathologist Dr Gerard Cadden.

Police had taken 275 still photos and 16 minutes of continuous video of this procedure, which had shown Dr Cadden methodically examining Mrs Rayney's scalp through her thick hair.

None of these images, including big enlargements, had show seedpods, and Dr Cadden had not discovered any that night, Mr Walker said.

In what Dr Cadden had described as a bombshell, part of the video showing him examining Mrs Rayney's hair had been missing from a disc that had been sent to him five years later, before Mr Rayney's trial.

"I would find it difficult to accept that I was unaware that these items [seedpods] were in her hair," Dr Cadden had said.

The afternoon after that initial videoed examination, Dr Cadden had extracted the two seedpods after he had "raked" his fingers through Mrs Rayney's hair.

The pods had been described as spiky and smaller than golf balls.

Mr Walker said it had not been too early at that stage to implicate Mr Rayney in the crime, because of evidence given at the trial of police suspicions.

Two days after Mrs Rayney's disappearance and five days before her body had been found, police had hacked her daughter's MySpace account, the appeal court was told.

Mr Walker spoke of early police bias that had been shown by an exchange at the morgue in Nedlands, the incident Dr Cadden had described as a "bombshell".

On the night Mrs Rayney's body had been exhumed, a police inspector had told Dr Cadden of suspicions about Mr Rayney's



Two seedpods said to have been recovered from Mrs Rayney's hair.

alleged involvement.

Mr Walker said that the officer had told investigating police and mortuary staff: "The police knew [Mr Rayney] and his male lover had murdered [Mrs Rayney]."

The trial judge had failed to take into account the reality of the situation the next day on August 17, when the seedpods had been located by Dr Cadden, Mr Walker said.

"For there to be a case against Mr Rayney, police would have to prove that Mrs Rayney had returned home," he said.

The seedpods had been crucial evidence that the attack had happened at the house, Mr Walker said.

Her alleged return home to a meeting with her husband on the night of her murder had been the "fulcrum" of the state's case.

Justice Martin had found it was "unlikely in the extreme" that Mrs Rayney had been waylaid on the way home from bootsooting, or as she left the dance hall, and had been taken to a location that had the same forensic characteristics as her home.

"The judge did not find that a motive [for Mr Rayney] to kill [Mrs Rayney] existed," Mr Walker said.

The appeal submission for Mr Rayney follows eight police mistakes in forensic procedures in the handling of the pair of seedpods after Dr Cadden extracted them, including transporting them in unsealed bags.

And in what Mr Walker described as "not a happy passage in the trial", Justice Martin had found that police had later put pressure on the pathologists with respect to whether two or three

seedpods had been found.

"It was for the prosecution to prove that these exhibits were not tampered with, contaminated or replaced," Mr Walker said.

A case manager for Operation Dargan, the investigation into Mrs Rayney's death, had not given evidence at the trial though he had been named by a number of other officers, Mr Walker said in court this week.

Senior Constable Ward had reported sick after last year's trial began, and a doctor had declared him unfit for work, Mr Walker said.

"Senior Constable Ward's position as the senior forensic case supervisor was critical to the handling of key exhibits, and the opportunity to cross-examine him was significant to the defence," he said.

"[Justice Martin] did not take into account the many breakdowns of police forensic operating procedures or the significant doubts regarding the reliability of the third seedpod."

The state submitted the judge had not considered together what it said were two crucial pieces of evidence - the fact that Mrs Rayney had returned home and the finding of a dinner place card with Mr Rayney's name on it, about 100m from the burial site.

One of the appeal judges noted: "The state said that if the judge concluded the attack did not take place at the home, that was the end of the case."

Mr Walker said that even if the attack had not taken place at the house, this did not prove that Mr Rayney had done it.

He quoted Justice Martin: "There is no evidence at Como that implicates the accused [Mr Rayney]."

Barnett merger

• From page 5

The councils have been warned that if they challenge the process or go on a spending spree before the 2015 changeover date, they risk being sacked and replaced with government-appointed commissioners.

"The threat of commissioners is quite hollow," Mr Norris said.

"It has to be demonstrated that the councils are failing to deliver their services and performing adequately for them to be appointed."

"There is no evidence that any of the councils are not performing adequately."

"The Minister has no trigger to appoint commissioners."

Mr Norris said the Dadour amendment, which allowed residents to have a referendum on whether they wanted their council to merge with another council, had to be protected at all costs.

Cottesloe mayor Kevin Morgan said he was annoyed the state government had never tried to persuade anyone about mergers.

"They have never presented any empirical evidence, Mr Morgan said."

"It really bugs me Colin Barnett used force but didn't have the guts to tell people before the state election."

Seaplanes set to fly again

• From page 1

Mr McCormack's company, Catalina Adventures, named after the Catalinas based at Crawley, would operate from Perth in summer and Broome in winter.

"It is a wonderful piece of river and a great resource for tourism," Mr McCormack said.

"We will get people from around the world coming here to fly because it is the only commercial Albatross in the world."

Mr McCormack has four other adventure tourism projects in the pipeline, all of which aim to provide financial support to former SAS soldiers and their families.

They are an amphibious army duck tour of the city, seaplane flights in a Cessna 208 Caravan for diving tours on HMAS Swan off Dunsborough, helicopter golf on Rotttnest Island and jet boats.

"We are a major sponsor for

the SAS Resources Trust looking after the guys who get busted up and pensioned off," he said.

"We are trying to utilise their expertise to stop them becoming extensions of the couch and creating family issues."

"People who come to Perth complain it is boring and the distances too great to visit tourist sites such as Margaret River."

"We will be able to open those areas up to daily tourism."

When the plane flew out of Newcastle, in NSW, for its flight across Australia to commemorate the 70th anniversary of the Japanese attacks on Darwin, Roebuck Bay and Pearl Harbour, 2000 people lined the shore to see it take off.

Mr McCormack said he expected similar crowds would line the foreshore to watch the plane take off and land on the Swan River.

Simpson talks up merger opportunities

• From page 3

"We've made the decision and are getting on with the job."

Commissioners would be appointed to run the new councils from June 2015, but Mr Simpson said councils could choose to be taken over earlier.

He said council jobs would be guaranteed for two years from the merger date, but payouts would be capped at 12 months' pay.

Mr Simpson said councils' differing town planning schemes were an issue.

"We'll bring the two together and work out the best model," he said.

"Something has got to be worked out."

Property Council head Joe Lenzo said the business community would support mergers.

"We will do whatever it takes to help the government through this period to get this thing implemented," Mr Lenzo said.

"The councils that talk to us, which is pretty well everybody except the western suburbs, are keen to make this work."

He said councils that were not represented at Tuesday's breakfast were "hiding".

Mr Lenzo echoed Mr Simpson's call for anti-amalgamation candidates to stay away from this year's elections.

"You'd expect those that put their hand up are in favour of merging, because that's their primary role over the next couple of years," Mr Lenzo said.

"Those that are opposed, I hope, will have the good sense not to stand because that would be hypocritical."