

Mafioso bashed in jail

Murmurs link man's 'hiding' to decade old contract hit

Mark Buttler

A feared Mafia figure has been bashed in a Victorian prison in the latest episode of high-level instability in Italian organised crime.

The criminal, linked to international drug smuggling and crimes of violence for decades, was set upon recently in what is believed to have been a pre-planned ambush.

The Herald Sun has been told the victim has been moved to another jail as a result of the onslaught, de-

scribed by one source as a "hiding".

There are underworld rumblings that the assault may have had some connection to a Melbourne contract hit that came unstuck more than a decade ago.

The intended victim in that case was another formidable figure in the Italian organised crime sphere who is well-connected within and outside of the 'Ndrangheta.

It is believed he did not carry out the attack and that it was the work of "third parties"

with a history of violent off-fending.

The onslaught would not have been dished out lightly as the victim has in the past been regarded as a highly influential Mafia man.

It has been a period of major turbulence in the "Honoured Society".

In April, the Herald Sun revealed that a new godfather had taken over the organisation, replacing the previous top man who had been in charge for decades.

That transition took place

without the bloodshed which marred previous takeovers.

The Australian Mafia was hit two years ago by the Australian Federal Police's sprawling Operation Ironside.

Senior figures and allied outlaw motorcycle gang powerbrokers were left exposed by their use of the Anom app – what they thought was a surveillance-proof communications platform which was actually being monitored by law enforcement.

The fallout from the Operation Ironside episode is ex-

pected to run for years.

There is also ongoing intrigue surrounding last year's arrest of fugitive Melbourne man Graham Gene Potter, who was detained in North Queensland after more than a decade on the run.

Potter was allegedly plugged into the highest echelons of Italian organised crime before going on the run while on bail in February, 2010.

He was at the time facing charges of taking a contract to kill an underworld figure at a wedding.

Alarm at union powers in homes

Jade Gailberger

There are growing fears unions could be given the power to enter family homes where small businesses operate, with two more employer groups sounding the alarm.

But Workplace Relations Minister Tony Burke has blasted the claims as "increasingly ridiculous", saying the legislation has not been written yet.

The concerns come as the federal government continues talks about proposed industrial relations changes, including giving union officials greater rights to conduct payroll inspections without notice.

Master Builders Australia chief executive Denita Wawn said small businesses, including more than 400,000 in building and construction, were rightly concerned at the prospect of union officials getting the power to enter their homes and demand access to sensitive information.

"It would be very disappointing if the government was seriously considering giving big unions the keys to the front doors of small business and private homes," Ms Wawn said.

"As we've already seen in the building and construction industry, unions will not hesitate to do whatever they want to make sure family-run businesses and subcontractors do what they say."

Minerals Council of Australia chief executive Tania Constable said the changes aimed to extend the arm of unions beyond unionised workplaces.

"This is not about ensuring workers receive their proper pay, it's about extending the reach of unions from big business to small business, and even the family home," Ms Constable said.

But Mr Burke, who reaffirmed that he was supportive of actions to uncover wage theft sooner, said the government was yet to form a final position.

"There's a few people out there who are inventing claims about legislation that hasn't even been written yet," he said.

"But I'm acutely aware that too many of the wage theft stories involve underpayments that have gone on for years."

Several employer groups raised their concerns in an open letter to Prime Minister Anthony Albanese last week.



Sofa, so good in reliving our favourite show. Fans (from left) Renata Kopinski, Rebecca Frepp, Zac Taylor, Will Atkinson, Athan Tran and Ivy Pham channel the originals (inset). Picture: Ian Currie

This makes our day ... or even our year

Sam McNeill

Friends will be there for you in this real-life rerun of the classic TV sitcom.

The interactive Friends Experience is coming Down Under this September following its success in the

US and Europe. Nostalgia awaits for fans of the show at a recreated set in Melbourne's Docklands.

You can knock on Rachel and Monica's purple door or complete the classic sofa pivot.

And no Friends experience

will be complete without the familiar orange sofa with too many people crammed onto it. While the coffee might only be a stage prop, the Central Perk coffee house will be the perfect chance to recreate your favourite scenes.

TEG Sport and Experiences managing director Rachael Carroll, said the popularity of Friends had only grown since its debut in 1994. "Fans will have the opportunity to experience the show like their favourite characters did, from iconic

scenes to settings that played host to some of the greatest moments on the show," she said.

The FRIENDS Experience runs from September 1 to November 26. Tickets are on sale through Ticketek from July 27.



Alexander Lew

Facebook rant ex-councillor fights misconduct ruling

Lucy Callander

A Melbourne solicitor slapped with a social media ban after making abusive comments online during his time as an inner city councillor is fighting to have his name cleared.

Former Stonnington councillor Alexander Lew is taking local government arbiter Yehudi Blacher to the Supreme Court for a judicial review of an April, 2022 misconduct ruling.

Mr Bacher ordered Mr Lew to undergo social media training and repeat his councillor induction following the internal hearing.

The investigation came after Mr Lew referred to a ratepayer's "co-morbidly riddled body ... being wheeled out of your mansion".

Mr Lew's lawyer on Tuesday argued that Mr Blacher did not have the power to find her client breached the council's code

of conduct because he wasn't "performing the role of a councillor" when he traded insults online with ratepayer activist Brendan Corr.

Ms Rachel Walsh said Mr Lew made the remarks on a private Facebook page and the exchange had only a "glancing relationship" to council matters. "In a nutshell, when that Facebook post was made, Mr Lew was not performing the role of a councillor ... which is

required for the misconduct regimen to apply to him," Ms Walsh said.

The court was told that under the Local Government Act 2020, Mr Lew could only be considered to be performing as a councillor when participating in decision-making of the council, representing the interests of the municipal community in decision-making or contributing to the strategic direction of the council.

"He wasn't doing any of those three things, therefore that conduct falls beyond the scope of misconduct scheme," Ms Walsh said.

Mr Bacher's barrister Alex Solomon-Bridge argued that Mr Lew's Facebook interactions with Mr Corr had "sufficient connection" to council, even if the conduct was outside the council chamber.

A decision will be handed down at a later date.