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ADVERTISING DEADLINES

Display advertisements: ROP bookings. Tuesday's paper: Thursday 5pm. Thursday's paper: Monday noon. ROP copy. Tuesday's: Friday 4pm. Thursday's: Monday 5pm. Classifieds: Display ads - 5pm two days before publication. Lineage ads - 11am day before publication.

SUBSCRIPTIONS

Telephone (08) 9892 8300 for information on subscriptions and home delivery agents for your area.

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Forecast

Today: Partly cloudy. Min 17 Max: 29
 Friday: Possible late thundery shower. Min 18 Max: 30
 Saturday: Thundery shower. Min 17 Max: 24

Rainfall

	Town	Airport
This month	10.6	15.6
This year	27.8	30.8
Av for Feb	23	23.2
Av to end of Feb	46.6	46.5

Boating

Today: E/SE winds 15/20 knots. Seas 1.0m to 1.5m. Swell to 2.0m.
 Friday: W/SW winds 10/15 knots.

Tides

Today: 6.15am 0.40, 12.47am 0.83
 Friday: 6.10am 0.40, 1.07pm 0.87
 Saturday: 5.46am 0.40, 1.29pm 0.89
 Sunday: 5.32am 0.37, 2pm 0.90
 Monday: 5.07am 0.33, 3.24pm 0.89
 Department for Planning and Infrastructure

Sun times

Today: Sunrise 5.45am, sunset 7pm
 Friday: Sunrise 5.46am, sunset 6.59pm
 Saturday: Sunrise 5.47am, sunset 6.58pm
 Sunday: Sunrise 5.58am, sunset 6.56pm
 Monday: Sunrise 5.49am, sunset 6.55pm

Shipping

February 20 Gloriosa 1, Oats, February 25 Forest Wave, woodchips.

WIN A YEAR'S FREE FUEL

MCKAIL'S GENERAL STORE

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Address: _____

Entries can be lodged at the Albany Advertiser at 165 York Street, Albany or McKails General Store, 557 Albany Highway. The competition closes at 5pm on Friday 26 February 2010.

YARNS ON YORK STREET



Have you spotted or heard anything worthy of a Yarn on York Street? If so, phone 9892 8371 or email nick.sas@albanyadvertiser.com

Protesters sock it to the Esplanade

THE "sock-bombing" of the former Esplanade Hotel site's perimeter fence has had many heads turning in recent weeks.

Despite an earlier incident where the socks were cut off, possibly (YOYS suspects) by spies sent from the owner's Singaporean offices, they have found their way to the northern end of the fence.

Bay Merchants café co-owner Ralph Flowers, or the "sock-man" as he is now

known, has been keeping a close eye on the proceedings.

He told YOYS some strange things have been going on down Adelaide Crescent way.

"I was down there the other night and some bloke pulled up in an ominous looking black car," the sock-man said.

"He got out, took his shoes off, grabbed his socks, tied them to the fence and drove off within 10 seconds."

That's what YOYS calls socking it to the man. Yet the sock-man had more for us.

"Busloads have been stopping off and taking photos," he said.

"An older lady came into the shop the other day and donated all her late husband's odd socks.

"And some of our regulars have been down to the Good Sammy's to pick up a whole lot.

"So we've set up a little bowl near the counter for anyone who wants to tie up a sock or two.

"And it's like a Mexican wave down here now... with socks."

The sock-man assured YOYS that all the socks were washed and adhered to all regulatory standards and codes.



The non-invasive protests at the site of Albany's Esplanade Hotel in Middleton Beach continue to flourish.

Edited by Nick Sas

Canola sabotage claimed

JOSH NYMAN

THE Department of Agriculture has launched an investigation into a former employee's claims that the department's canola research was sabotaged by its senior staff.

Patrick Fels worked as a technical officer at the department's Wongan Hills Research Station from 2000 to 2009, managing a crop breeding database and helping to breed oilseed agricultural crop varieties owned by the department.

He now claims he was victimised after he challenged senior department staff over their termination of canola research and was eventually fired last November.

A department spokeswoman said the investigation would focus on Mr Fels' allegations the department mismanaged intellectual property of its brassica/canola breeding and selection activities.

"The investigation is in line with due process for claims of this nature," the spokeswoman said.

"It is inappropriate for the department to further comment publicly on employment details of an individual."

Mr Fels sent an email to Agriculture Minister Terry Redman on December 7 outlining his concerns and received a response from the department last Thursday in which it revealed it had appointed security firm Gold

Security Group to investigate the allegations.

"I believe the conduct of my senior managers and Minister Terry Redman should be thoroughly and impartially investigated," Mr Fels said.

"A 'boys club' of senior agricultural bureaucrats is acting against the wishes of West Australians by ending crop breeding programs, divesting public-owned genetic assets to the private sector and handing market power over to GM corporations." Mr Fels was also an authorised State Government inspector of farmland contaminated with GM canola seed following the running of experiments by private companies.

Mr Fels first made a complaint of improper conduct in

December 2007, claiming the department was attempting to conceal the commercial value of its canola breeding program. He said he became aware of the commercial value of the work in October 2007 when Eastern States company Pacific Seeds became interested in commercialising the publicly owned canola he had helped develop.

It was then that Mr Fels claimed management "started behaving very strangely".

He claimed to have been pressured by senior managers, who began refusing to acknowledge public breeding work existed, to hand over data and seed samples from the "officially non-existent" crop breeding program.

josh.nyman@albanyadvertiser.com

'Nosy' journalist relishes her return to features

POPULAR columnist and author Michele Phillips has joined the *Albany Advertiser* as a feature writer for the *Albany Magazine*.

Ms Phillips, 57 this week, is renowned for being one of the most humorous columnists in the *West Australian's* history.

The mother-of-two closed the curtain on her 23-year career as a columnist in March last year after moving to Albany with her husband, former *Albany Advertiser* editor Leith Phillips, in 2007.

"It's great to get back to feature writing again," Ms Phillips said.

"I'd forgotten how enjoyable it is to sit down with someone and basically have a licence to be really, really nosy."

A self-confessed slow starter when it came to journalism, Ms Phillips started her career in her early 30s – and with no journalism training – as a real estate writer for the *Western Mail*.

She managed to continue the "con" at the *West Australian* when Robert Holmes' Bell Group bought the newspaper in 1987.

With a children's book already published, she was soon asked to write her first column "on spec" about the gut-wrenching misery of trying on bathers.

"It was printed and got such a huge response from female readers I was asked to write one a week for the You lift-out, then a second one per week which appeared on page three of the main book," Ms Phillips said.

It was at that moment that her career as a humour columnist was born, culminating in two books of columns being published in 1992 and 1994.

Ms Phillips wrote about everything from chocolate testicles to Bindi Irwin. She also did a year-long stint on Perth radio station Mix 94.5 as a breakfast presenter.



Feature writer Michele Phillips is looking forward to being "really nosy".