



Top Stories

Angela Merkel elected new German chancellor



Angela Merkel has been elected the first female chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany; she succeeds Gerhard Schröder after

his seven years as head of government.

60th anniversary of Nuremberg trials marked



The city of Nuremberg has marked the 60th anniversary of the opening of the trials

against Nazi war criminals.

Featured story

Christmas Island detention centre reopened

Australia's Immigration Detention Centre on Christmas Island in the Indian Ocean has been reopened to detain a group of seven Indonesian asylum seekers.

Wikipedia Current Events

- Israeli troops capture terror suspect Iyad Abu Rob, a senior member of Islamic Jihad, in the Israeli city of Jenin.
- The record-breaking 2005 Atlantic hurricane season continues as Tropical Storm Delta forms from a non-tropical low

Wikipedia Current Events

1000 nautical miles southwest of the Azores.

- The lower house of the Russian parliament passed a bill by 370-18 requiring local branches of foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to reregister as Russian organizations subject to Russian jurisdiction, and thus stricter financial and legal restrictions. The bill gives Russian officials oversight of local finances and activities. The bill has been highly criticized by Human Rights Watch, Memorial rights organization, the nonprofit think tank Indem.
- An explosion at a chemical factory on the Songhua River in northeastern China releases high levels of benzene into the river water. Authorities shut off the water supply for the downstream city of Harbin.
- The new Chancellor of Germany, Angela Merkel, goes to Paris, France for her first foreign trip in office. Some observers see this as a signal that intra-European affairs will be a high priority.
- Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf is officially declared as the winner of the Liberian presidential runoff, after she took 59.4 percent of the vote, making her Africa's first elected female head of state.

IR reform campaign most expensive in Australian history

A senior Australian advertising executive says the Federal Government's campaign to

promote its workplace changes is the most costly in Australian history. Harold Mitchell from Mitchell and Partners says the Howard Government spent \$26 million on TV advertising in October. The figure is more than any other entity including retailing giant Coles Myer.

In October, 11,000 commercials were part of the campaign to sell its industrial relations reforms. Mr Mitchell said he could not recall a larger single monthly spending spree in Australian advertising history.

"There's never been a campaign in history as big as that," he said. "It followed of course the ACTU campaign which was something like, maybe one fifth of that size."

He said the Government was the second biggest advertiser in Australia this year, having spent an estimated \$117 million from January to the end of October. Only the supermarket and department store group Coles Myer has spent more in the same period – \$156 million. Coles Myer spent \$19 million last month.

Of the Government's October advertising bill, \$15 million went on TV ads, a 168 per cent increase on the bill for October 2004. The advertising blitz followed the ACTU campaign against the changes, which Mr Mitchell says came in at about one-fifth of the government's bill.

The Nielsen Media Research spokesman said the figures are estimates of the cost of placing the

advertisements and did not include their production.

On top of the TV spots, the the Federal government spent more than \$20 million on outdoor and print advertising. Plus another \$4 million to \$5 million on a nationwide pamphlet mail-out.

At the current rate spending will overtake the record \$211 million spent selling the GST over four years, and leaves all Australian company spending on advertising in the shade.

The Government has earmarked \$55 million to the industrial relations campaign.

The professor of marketing at Australian Graduate School of Management, John Roberts, said the intensity of the advertising had become counterproductive. He said people who disagreed with the policy simply had their feelings reinforced by the endless advertising, while others had become "habituated" by the deluge and ignored the ads.

"It's hard to believe they have done any research on this," he said. "There is this naive belief you get sometimes in management that if a campaign is not working properly you simply open the spigot a bit more, but it doesn't work that way."

Business groups have launched their own campaign supporting the changes too. Yet despite the spending on advertising, two polls this week attributed a sharp drop in the popularity of the Prime Minister, John Howard, and the Government, to the planned IR (WorkChoice) changes.

Australian Democrats workplace relations spokesman Andrew

Murray "You just shouldn't as a government be advertising prior to legislation before the Senate. It's immoral," Senator Murray said.

Opposition public accountability spokesman Kelvin Thomson said the campaign had cost taxpayers \$1.7 million a day but had flopped, with Australians unconvinced that they would be better off under the changes. "It is an obscene waste of \$55 million of public money used to fund a highly political flop," Mr Thomson said.

Australian man threatens to shoot down chopper with tomato-bazooka

Southport Magistrates' Court was told today that Anthony Douglas Donohue, 34 and living with his mother, was so annoyed by a helicopter hovering over his home that he telephoned Air Services Australia with a threatening message yesterday.

Donohue allegedly threatened to blow the chopper out of the sky using a home-made bazooka loaded with tomatoes.

Police swung into action searching Donohue's Queensland home. "Very seriously" was how the police described the situation. But they found nothing. "Fruit is hardly a weapon of mass terror," Donohue's solicitor Bill Potts said.

Mr Donohue is charged with two counts of threatening to endanger the safety of an aircraft and the case will go to court next month.

Today in History

1639 - Jeremiah Horrocks made the first observation of a transit of Venus from his home near Preston, England.

1642 - Dutch explorer Abel Tasman reached Tasmania. He named the island Anthoonij van Diemenslandt.

1859 - The Origin of Species by British naturalist Charles Darwin (pictured) was first published, and immediately sold out its initial print run.

1963 - On live television, Jack Ruby shot and fatally wounded Lee Harvey Oswald, the alleged assassin of President John F. Kennedy.

1971 - After collecting a ransom payout of US\$200,000, "D. B. Cooper" leaped out of the rear stairway of the airplane he had hijacked and disappeared. November 25 is Thanksgiving in the United States (2005)

Quote of the Day

"There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one; and that, whilst this planet has gone cycling on according to the fixed law of gravity, from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been, and are being, evolved." ~ Charles Darwin

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