

were the first to benefit from election promises as the gallop to the ballot began today.

Transport Minister Peter Batchelor promised to slash fares on the NightRider bus service shortly after Premier

march next year the so-called NightRider ticket would be abolished and replaced by Metcard fares costing as little as \$1.90 for a zone one passenger.

With the Bracks Government's promise to abolish zone

a valid daily, weekly, monthly or yearly Metcard ticket will be able to take a NightRider bus at no extra cost, Batchelor said. "Cheaper NightRider fares also make it much cheaper to avoid drink-driving."

bracks this morning as he passed through the gates of Government House to request the election writs.

"We had a red and white duck there because we're encouraging politicians to stop

ians would focus on the long-term challenges for the state.

"It is closer than the bookies say and I reckon it is going to be a hard-run campaign over the next four weeks," he told Southern Cross Radio.

• MURDER CHARGE

Drown dad faces court

The father accused of murdering his three sons by driving into a dam faced the Supreme Court today.

Appearing via video link for a directions hearing, Robert Farquharson, 37, heard the court agree to meet again on Tuesday, December 5.

Farquharson was charged in December 2005 with murdering his sons Jai, 10, Tyler, 7, and Bailey, 2.

The three boys drowned when Farquharson drove off the Princes Highway into a dam near Winchelsea on a Father's Day access visit last year.

• LABOR PAINS

Intelligence out of date

Australia's top intelligence agency has not assessed Iraq for more than 12 months because the Government does not want to know the truth about the country's security situation, the Opposition said today.

Labor's foreign affairs spokesman Kevin Rudd said Senate estimates hearings have revealed the Office of National Assessments had not investigated Iraq for more than a year.

He said the office collates intelligence agencies findings to give the Government an overall picture of a country.



Laneway project leads storytellers down some interesting alleys

Artist Astra Howard has been busy capturing Melburnians' tales of love, travel and homelessness in her mobile conversation booth. The booth – the last artwork featured in the City of Melbourne's 2006 Laneway Commissions program – invites passers-by to step inside and share their stories until Sunday. **Picture: NICOLE CLEARY**

• COURT THREAT

MySpace copyright blocker music to labels' ears

MySpace.com will use "audio fingerprinting" technology to block users from uploading copyright music to the networking site, the company said.

MySpace said today it would review all music files uploaded

by community members to their online profiles. The files would be run through a music database from Gracenote Inc.

"MySpace is staunchly committed to protecting artists' rights, whether those artists

are on major labels or are independent acts," said Chris DeWolfe, MySpace chief executive and co-founder.

The company said users who repeatedly attempt to upload copyright music files

will be permanently barred from the site.

Sites such as MySpace and YouTube have come under fire from major record labels for their music being included on user-generated content.

archive.

• NURSE TRAINING

Cash to aid baby sleep

Sleep-deprived mums and dads will be given a helping hand by the Bracks Government, who today promised to help reduce the incidence of post natal depression caused by baby sleep disorders.

Minister for Children Sherryl Garbutt pledged \$12,000 to train 200 maternal and child health nurses across Victoria to implement the Sleep Intervention training program based on findings of a Royal Children's Hospital Infant Sleep Study (ISS).

Out of 300 families involved in the ISS, half were helped by a specially trained baby nurse and the other half were not.

The results found mothers with help were 42 per cent less likely to report an infant sleep problem, and 41 per cent were less likely to be depressed.

Post natal depression affects one in seven mothers in Australia, Garbutt said.

— DINA ROSENDORFF



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