



# The Daily Telegraph

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## Plane sailing as Jarryd walks free



A beaming Jarryd Hayne walks out of Cooma Correctional Centre yesterday after being granted a release. Pictures: NCA NewsWire / Gary Ramage

WITH a small box of belongings and a big smile on his face, former NRL star Jarryd Hayne squeezed through the gates of Cooma Correctional Centre and walked into freedom yesterday.

After a successful appeal in which his conviction for sexual assault was quashed and a new trial ordered, Hayne celebrated his 34th birthday by re-entering society after nine months behind bars. Wearing a grey shirt, prison shorts and thongs, Hayne grinned as he left the prison carrying a cardboard box and an Aldi bag of personal items. He hugged a friend before walking past media and into a waiting SUV.

Any new trial might not begin until next year.

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## Keeping a code check-in system for pubs and clubs despite not using it to trace Covid cases?

# QR KIDDING

JAMES MORROW & JAMES O'DOHERTY

MANDATORY, but seemingly useless, QR code check-ins should be scrapped for pubs, clubs and bars after February 28 because they are pointless in the fight against Covid, health experts say.

Infectious diseases experts say keeping the codes in place could also erode trust in public health authorities in any future emergencies. The Daily Telegraph understands some ministers believe that QR code requirements should "probably" be wound back in all hospitality venues at the

end of the month when a host of other restrictions are due to expire.

Those rules set to ease include indoor mask mandates, density limits and the singing and dancing ban. Requirements to check in at supermarkets, offices and retail shops are also set to expire on February 28.

Infectious diseases physician Professor Peter Collignon questioned why QR code check-ins cannot be eased before that date, given they are not used for tracing, saying: "The only point of doing QR coding is if you're going to do something with it."

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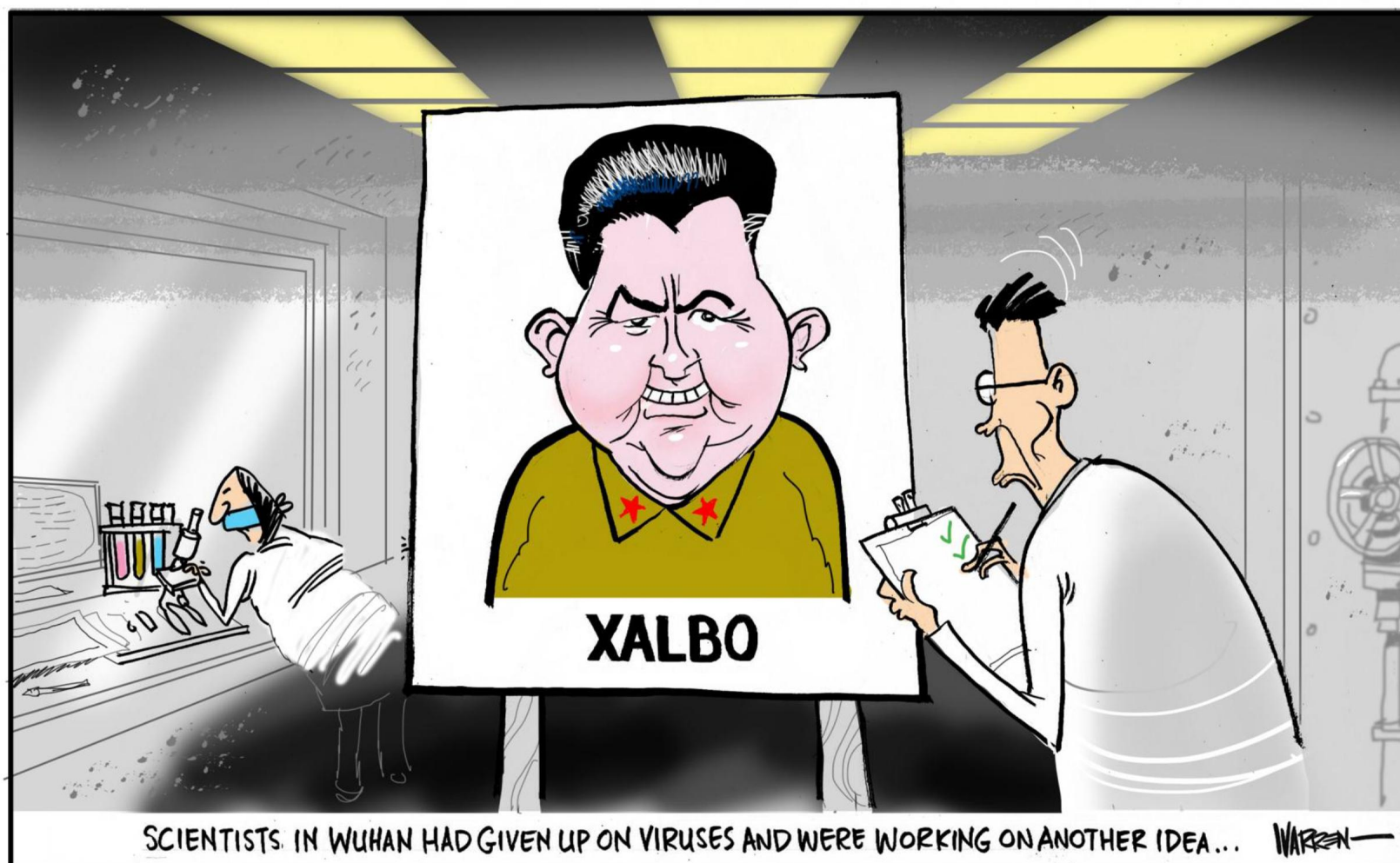
# WHY DID BARNABY TRASH SCOMO? TELL THEM THEY'RE DREAMING

We can never trust the Liberals, Labor or Greens Again! Vote **1** United Australia Party

Authorised by: Clive Palmer, United Australia Party, Level 17, 240 Queen Street, Brisbane 4000



## WARREN'S VIEW



## THEY SAID IT



*There's one country which is not doing it, and that is the Chinese government. This is what makes this all very real.*

PM Scott Morrison notes China's refusal to denounce Russian aggression towards Ukraine

*England, at the point where they find themselves now, probably require that kind of heavy hand.*

Ex-England captain Mike Atherton calls for former Australian cricket coach Justin Langer to take over his national team

# Drug of choice

## Support is growing for greater use of psychedelic-assisted therapy

The painful Covid-era will fade but it will never be forgotten. This unanticipated period will be remembered for many things – death, suffering, economic and social disruptions and words like lockdown, iso, quarantine, social distancing, Zoom, Omicron and more. But beyond changes in the way we live and communicate, it is the devastating toll on our mental health that will continue for generations to come.

Depression, anxiety, trauma, suicide, addiction, loss of livelihoods, domestic violence and broken families are increasing. We have never felt more isolated, alone and uncertain about our futures. Our families and communities are suffering and we urgently need access to preventive and curative medicines and medical care that is safe and effective.

Mental health charity Mind Medicine Australia recently commissioned Essential Research to conduct a representative opinion poll of more than 1000 Australians. It found that only a small minority was aware of the immense promise of psychedelic-assisted therapy, with just 11 per cent of those asked aware of the medicinal properties of these substances and their potential use in controlled settings.

This is despite over 160 studies clearly showing the quantifiably positive impacts that these substances can have. These ground-breaking treatments offer therapeutic access to either psilocybin (the active ingredient in 'magic mushrooms') or MDMA, a synthetic medicine.

These therapies have been scientifically proven to be safe, non-addictive and effective cures for depression, trauma, end-of-life anxiety and addictions after a short treatment program. Remission rates range between 60-80 per cent with no serious adverse effects.

Both medicines have been granted Breakthrough Therapy Status by the

Food and Drug Administration (FDA) in the US to fast-track their approval. This designation is only given to medicines that may prove to be vastly superior to existing treatments.

Although the recent poll showed only one in nine Australians was aware of these impacts, when they were informed about the results of recent studies, their views changed dramatically towards supporting access to these promising medicines that remain illegal under Australian law.

Some 67 per cent agreed that people experiencing terminal illness should have the choice to use psychedelic-assisted therapy to ease end-of-life distress, 63 per cent agreed people experiencing mental illness should have the choice to access them in medically-controlled environments and as an alternative option for treatment-resistant patients and 60 per cent agreed the difference between medical and recreational use of psychedelic substances should be legislatively recognised.

Trials are under way in Australia and the demand for these therapies is accelerating rapidly. As ever more legal jurisdictions legalise, decriminalise or otherwise tolerate these substances – Oregon, Washington DC, Jamaica, Canada, the Netherlands and elsewhere – support will grow further.

An official decision by the Therapeutic Goods Authority last year refused to reschedule both psilocybin

and MDMA as Controlled Medicines (Schedule 8). This rescheduling would make it easier for doctors to access these therapies in clinical environments for treatment-resistant patients through our Special Access pathways.

If these legislative changes continue to be delayed, many more desperate people will seek the treatments underground. Everyone deserves the chance to get well. A new international campaign on the Right to Universal Access to Safe and Effective Medicine is now under way seeking support for a declaration to this effect.

Arguably, continuing to deny access to these medicines is also a clear human rights violation. Refusing and making illegal the therapeutic access to safe medicines with a proven effect violates a whole range of internationally recognised human rights, including the right to the highest attainable level of physical and mental health, the right to access all forms of safe and effective medicines, the right to access pain medication, the right to dignity of the human person and even the right to be free from inhumane, cruel or degrading treatment or punishment.

The people are ready and support change. It's time for the politicians, political parties and all our governments to follow suit and act with urgency to avoid further suffering and suicide.

Scott Leckie is an international human rights lawyer. Tania de Jong AM is executive director of Mind Medicine Australia.

SCOTT LECKIE & TANIA DE JONG

## Now is the time for more freedom in the workplace

IT IS a feeling to which we are all accustomed. Reaching for our pockets to check for a mask before we scurry out the door.

What started as a novelty some two years ago has become embedded in our mindset, a scenario few predicted in a country with some of the cleanest air on earth.

The wearing of masks indoors has helped reduce Covid transmission. Masks acted as handbrakes on the spread of the virus particularly when vaccination rates were low.

But just as our understanding of the virus has evolved, so too should our policy settings.

For example, when Covid first hit in early 2020 the insurance laws were changed to include a default assumption that any worker who contracted it must have done so in the workplace.

But now we know that workplaces are much less likely to spread Covid than family gatherings and other social events. The government-mandated wearing of masks in offices is no longer fit-for-purpose. It is a blanket requirement that is confusing for some and disheartening for many.

Why is it that we can sit down for a restaurant meal with friends and chat freely, but then returning to the office afterwards requires masks being put on?

The NSW Government continues to emphasise we must "learn to live with the virus". Strapping polyester to our faces during work hours is simply not an example of that. It is a proxy to avoid the office, our colleagues and the CBD for that matter.

With the first case of Covid detected on our shores over two years ago, and vaccination rates



LUKE ACHTERSTRAAT

now at 95 per cent, it is time to return to being a "society of faces" where many wish to spend the majority of their working week in the office. To be clear this does not mean throwing caution to the wind. Employers have invested significantly into making their workspaces Covid-safe not only including spatial distancing but also through improved ventilation systems.

Property Council's latest office market report confirms the underlying fundamentals for office space remain strong – international capital is backing a return to the office with vacancy rates in Sydney remaining at globally envious lows of 9.3 per cent. The rise of work-from-home arrangements is a megatrend being accelerated by Covid.

Hybrid arrangements are being embraced and this simply means office environments must do more to foster connectivity and productivity. Last Friday saw Premier Perrottet bring together a delegation to discuss how to revitalise our CBD. There was no shortage of ideas put forward and most of them had a price tag attached.

The most effective action is for government to encourage workers back into the CBD by scrapping the compulsory wearing of masks in the office. This would provide real action to back up the government's words that we should learn to live with the virus.

Luke Achterstraat is the NSW executive director of Property Council of Australia.