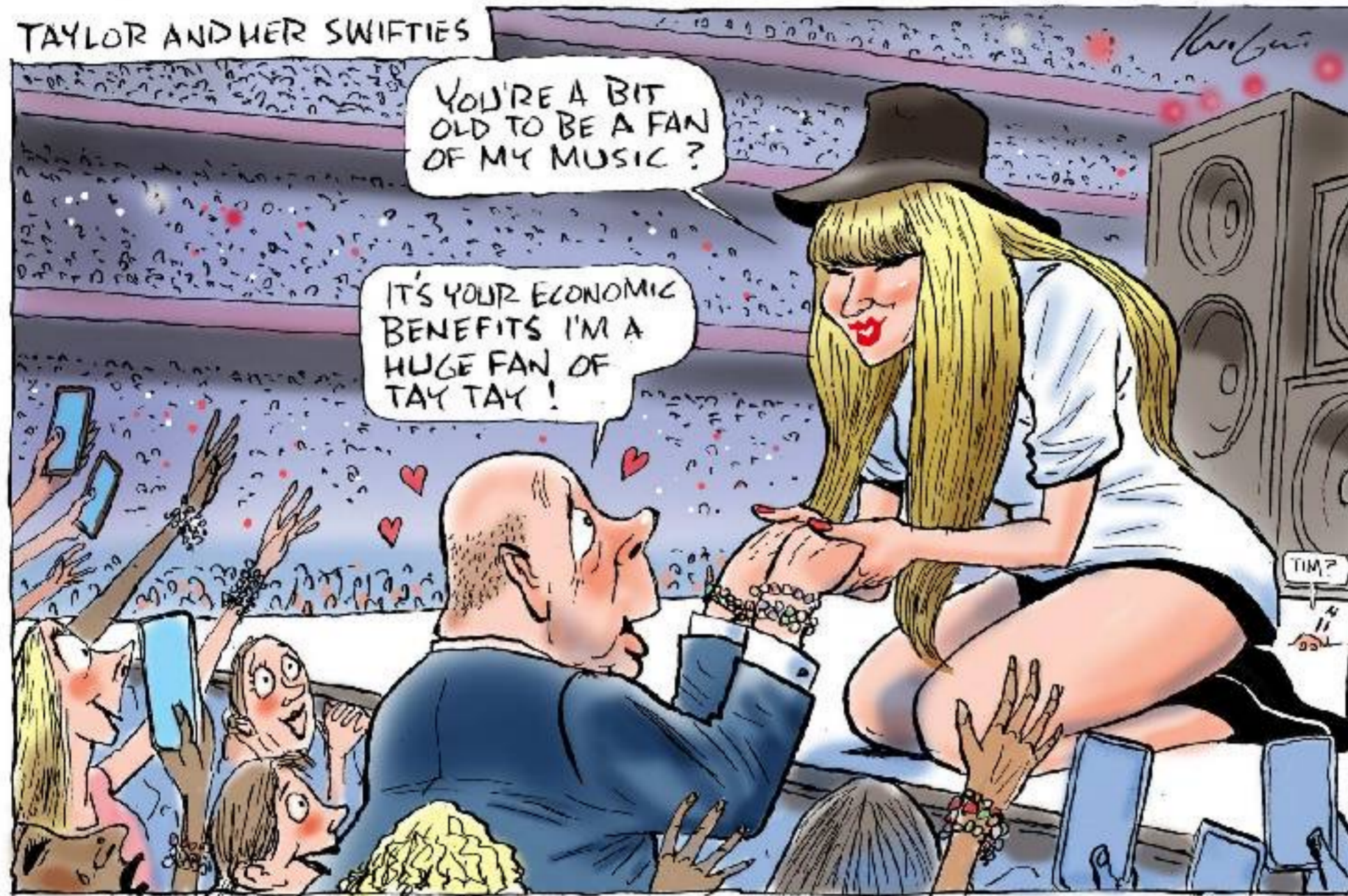


Mark Knight

TAYLOR AND HER SWIFTIES



A Swift reminder of our luck

Rion Ahl



Let's celebrate Melbourne this weekend. Taylor Swift is the first musician in history to become TIME's Person of the Year – beating political figures and global leaders. Her romance with NFL's Travis Kelce culminated in a dream-like Super Bowl victory. Her net worth is in the billions, and her Eras Tour has gripped the world.

And now it's our turn. Swift is dazzling Melbourne audiences and in the heart of our city. Flinders Street Station has been illuminated with her face.

I've certainly bought into the hype. After joining much of the state trying to secure tickets, I'm lucky enough to be seeing her show.

But the Taylor Swift effect holds greater significance than a singalong. Even for those who might not like her music, I'd say Swift still offers Melbourne a reminder of everything that makes our city the world's best.

It's hard to deny the Swift Effect is helping bring our CBD to life. This weekend, more than 300,000 people are expected to enjoy dining and events. Hotels are at occupancy rates of 97 per cent and the energetic atmosphere eviscerates post-lockdown blues, harkening back to pre-pandemic days when the city was our state's jewel.

It reminds us – Swifties or not – that we are in the events capital of the world, also boasting Formula One, the AFL grand final and the Australian Open.

Swift's meteoric rise also offers a more subtle reminder of one of the other hallmarks of our prosperous country: the stability of our political system.

Just last week, Australians have watched a deeply polarised US react to the politics of Taylor Swift. Conspiracy theories suggesting her powers are being deployed by Democrats and that the Super Bowl was rigged to increase her endorsement power are believed by up to one in five Americans.

Meanwhile, our biggest political news was a Prime Minister popping the question – and looking overseas, that's something to be grateful for.

So, this weekend we can all find something to celebrate about the Swift craze.

Maybe it's just a concert. I'll treasure being there to sing along. But equally, we can treasure how lucky we are to live here, where we have the simple pleasure of coming together at the MCG, or the buzzing CBD's restaurants and bars, to celebrate.

At the very least we can appreciate her concert for reminding us of that.

Rion Ahl is a student doctor and director of Australian education company 50Coach

Dutton's IR dilemma as Libs are not happy, Jan

James Campbell



Almost a quarter of a century ago, Yellow Pages released a famous TV advertisement that can be seen to have captured much about how the world of work has changed in the decades since.

It featured a boss, played by Deborah Kennedy, growing increasingly exasperated as it dawned on her that her business had failed to place its ad in that year's directory and an increasingly and equally frightened employee, played by Rhonda Doyle, who realised this was her mistake.

The most anachronistic thing about the ad isn't the Yellow Pages themselves, but the relationship between Jan and her boss.

When Jan flees the office, the only way the boss can get at her is by shouting at her out the window.

Even if she wanted to, it wasn't in her power to pursue her with endless emails, texts, WhatsApp messages, DMs or Zoom calls to express her displeasure about the mistake.

The unstated assumption behind the ad is that Jan will return to the office when Jan reckons it is safe to do so.

There is also, I suspect, an unstated assumption that while Kennedy can rant and shout as much



as she wants in the office, outside work it's different.

So while bosses can't shout at you like they did back in 2000, today – thanks to our mobile phones – there is no escaping a boss who is on the warpath.

It isn't just angry bosses of course, the lines between home and work have become increasingly blurred. That is until now.

Henceforth thanks to the negotiating skills of the Greens we are apparently all to enjoy something called "the right to disconnect".

Actually, as I learnt this week, this already exists for people who work in the public service and some major corporations, including the big banks.

It's not hard to see why Greens would be pushing it.

You can also understand why Peter Dutton's immediate and apparently

instinctive reaction was to say he would repeal if he is elected.

Was this a mistake? His opponents think so.

According to one minister, even though in his view the amendment was "a wank", Dutton would have been better to keep quiet about it: "All he had to do was say 'let's see how it operates'."

Instead he will now face a scare campaign from the federal government on an amendment it wasn't really crazy about.

It's also just a small taste of what the opposition is going to cop if it gets the politics wrong on workplace laws.

The Liberal Party's IR predicament is that hatred of Australia's industrial relations system is almost the only thing every Liberal agrees on, but almost all the m agree that it would be political suicide to meddle with it.

Was this a mistake? Dutton's opponents think so

Tony Burke's IR laws, with their return to pattern bargaining and attempt to force independent contractors to become employees among other things, might almost have been designed specifically for the purpose of waking the Liberal Party from its policy torpor.

How to promise change – which the business community as well as the party's membership will be demanding – without laying himself open to a scare campaign that costs him government is going to be one of if not the trickiest problem Mr Dutton is going to have to solve before the next election.

Recently a senior Labor official observed that the Opposition Leader appeared to be following three rules: "keep the party united by not taking risks in the centre that could cause further fragmentation on the right; oppose everything pursue the outer suburbs and the regions".

Just as with the tax cuts, if he applies rule one and two to IR, it could leave him in a lot of trouble on rule three.

James Campbell is national weekend politics editor