

CAROLS ADD TO CHEER

GRANT MCARTHUR

IT'S beginning to look a lot like Christmas at the Children First Foundation farm in Kilmore East — and soon it will sound very festive as well.

The charity is throwing open its doors for Carols by Candlelight at the Farm for the first time on Sunday, with an Australian-themed Christmas wonderland taking over the home.

Tanzanians Rongino, 5, and Sevelina, 7, are practising their carolling along with the other children from around the world, who have been brought to Melbourne for life-changing treatment.

Music from the Mitchell Shire Band, the Mae Collard Trio and vocalist Jacqui Walker will lead the festivities from 5pm, in preparation for Santa's arrival at 6.30pm.

www.childrenfirstfoundation.org.au



Rongino, 5, and Sevelina, 7, at the Children First Foundation, will be among those singing carols at the charity's Kilmore East farm on Sunday. Picture: ROB LEESON

Thomson 50 charges

OUSTED MP Craig Thomson is expected to face about 50 new charges when he finally fronts a contested hearing on fraud counts next week.

The new charges bring to 224 the number faced by Mr Thomson, fighting allegations he used a union credit card to pay for porn and prostitutes.

Prosecutors have not alleged any further criminality but say the extra counts will be added to clarify details.

Mr Thomson, who failed to win his NSW seat of Dobell in September, was at Melbourne Magistrates' Court for yesterday's hearing.

DIG IN FOR FIT OLD AGE

IT might be pottering in the garden or cleaning the car, but exercise a few times a week in old age can drastically improve health.

Pensioners who take moderate exercise — including walking or dancing — are 2½ times less likely to suffer serious long-term health problems such as cancer, heart disease, lung problems or Alzheimer's or Parkinson's diseases.

The researchers, who examined 3500 men and women over 65, say it is never too late to start being active.

Sell it off, fix it up

SURPLUS public land worth billions of dollars should be sold to fix level crossings and fund other projects catering for the state's growing population, says the property industry.

The state Property Council has identified 20 sites ripe for residential and commercial development.

They include big areas such as the Maribyrnong defence site, e-Gate in West Melbourne and precincts in Coburg and Dandenong.

Also on the list is land reserved for the defunct Healesville freeway and several sites around railway stations.

Property Council state

JOHN MASANAUSKAS
CITY REPORTER

executive director Jennifer Cunich said her organisation had identified \$4.6 billion of surplus public land that could be immediately activated to stimulate investment, create jobs and boost infrastructure revenue.

"Our report identifies sites ranging from smaller holdings around stations like Essendon, Ringwood and Frankston, to larger precincts such as the Maribyrnong defence site and e-Gate, which are all ripe for development," she said.

"These sites are highly de-

sired by the private sector and could all be shovel-ready within five years, and the revenue raised could be used to upgrade local community infrastructure and amenity so that local residents would wholly benefit from their activation."

The proposed \$500 million-plus Maribyrnong site would yield up to 6000 dwellings with high-rise towers.

Ms Cunich said governments needed to act quickly.

"The days of increasing property taxes to fund infrastructure are over. It is time to start recycling surplus property assets," she said.

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NO LONGER AN EX-PYTHON

MONTY Python — John Cleese, Michael Palin, Terry Gilliam, Terry Jones and Eric Idle — are remaining coy about a possible world tour after tickets to a "one-off" London show sold out in 43 seconds.

That led to an additional four dates, at the O2 Arena in

mid-2014, also selling out within 55 minutes.

"It's totally amazing," said Idle (left).

"I don't think we realised quite how much Python is loved around the world.

"We look forward to paying off Terry Jones's mortgage soon."



IMPORTANT COMMUNITY SAFETY INFORMATION

What to do if the power goes out



BEFORE A POWER OUTAGE:

PREPARE A CHECKLIST

- Torch with batteries
- Mobile phone/phone with cord
- Battery powered radio
- Internet access (if possible)
- Update mitigation plans (for business customers)

SIGN UP

Jemena customers* can be notified by email and/or SMS for power outage notification.



Simply register via our portal, Electricity Outlook. electricityoutlook.jemena.com.au

DURING A POWER OUTAGE:

- Check to see if your safety switch (in your meter box) has been tripped. If you're not confident in doing this, contact us on 131 626 or get help from a neighbour or friend.
- After ensuring all lights/appliances are switched off, leave one light switched on so you know when the power comes back.
- Open the fridge and freezer only when absolutely necessary.

AFTER A POWER OUTAGE:

- If you have any elderly or sick neighbours, check to see if they need help.

! ARE YOU A CRITICAL CARE CUSTOMER?

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⚡ Keep clear of fallen powerlines. Fallen powerlines should always be treated as live and dangerous so if you see any, please contact us as soon as possible.

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