

# 1994 Cabinet Minutes background report

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The year 1994 saw the Labor government of Wayne Goss at the height of its powers. After three decades in opposition, Goss had led the party to office in 1989, and during his first term of office had overseen the implementation of most of the recommendations of the Fitzgerald Inquiry into Police Corruption. Ahead of the 1989 election, Nationals Premier Mike Ahern had promised to implement Fitzgerald's recommendations "lock, stock and barrel," effectively requiring Labor to match this promise.

In the 1992 general election Labor breezed past the opposition. This second term was, in many ways, the first real term of the Goss government, when the party was able to begin implementing a Labor agenda rather than a Fitzgerald agenda.

Stylistically, however, the Goss government that emerged from under the shadow of Fitzgerald was administrative and professional, rather than radical and reformist. Goss was much more comfortable with incremental improvements. Supporting him in this approach were two other key figures: his Treasurer Keith DeLacy who appeared determined to ensure that the traditional criticism of Labor governments as economic mis-managers would not apply in this instance; and Cabinet Secretary Kevin Rudd, later to be the 26<sup>th</sup> Prime Minister of Australia, who increased the reach of Cabinet as an overseer of the entire public service.

In 1994 we see a Goss government working hard to keep the ship steady; to implement a Labor agenda without severe conflict with Queensland's still-conservative political culture. Conflict, however, was unavoidable: 1994 was a year of strikes, largely against federal Labor policy, but with an impact on the state scene; and by 1994 the scrutiny of the Criminal Justice Commission (CJC), a Fitzgerald-era institution, was now focused on the Goss government.

By late 1994, there were no urgent crises apparent, and yet, with the benefit of retrospect, we know that there was a massive swing against Goss in 1995, leaving him with a bare majority of 45 seats in an 89 seat chamber. We know that the result in the Townsville-based electorate of Mundingburra was then successfully challenged in court by the Liberal Party. We know that in the by-election which followed, the Goss government fell and the Borbidge government rose to power.

The Goss government in Queensland was not governing in a vacuum in 1994. Like all governments, it influenced but was also influenced by the world outside the parliamentary precinct. In order to give broader context to the cabinet decisions of 1994, it is worth looking at some of the notable events of the year. This paper commences with Queensland, then broadens its horizons to consider events in Australia and events in the broader world.

## 1994 in Queensland

### *January: Stalking*

The criminal offence of stalking was introduced to Parliament in 1993, and the provisions commenced in November of that year.<sup>1</sup> In January of 1994, the first stalking charges were laid in Queensland.<sup>2</sup>

### *January-February: Floods in North Queensland*

At the start of 1994 most of Queensland remained affected by a severe drought<sup>3</sup> which had commenced in 1991.<sup>4</sup> One possible way to break the drought was if a substantial cyclone season occurred, dumping heavy rain into river

<sup>1</sup> Criminal Law Amendment Bill 1993

<sup>2</sup> "Bail for First Man to Face Stalking Case" *Courier Mail* 12 Jan 1994, p. 1

<sup>3</sup> For Cabinet consideration of the drought, see Cabinet decisions 03521 (21 Feb 94), 03544 (28 Feb 94), 03865 (18 Jul 94), 04004 (29 Aug 94), 04070-04073 (20 Sep 94), 04240 (21 Nov 94), 04247 (21 Nov 94).

<sup>4</sup> Gow J (1996) *A Review of Drought Policy in Australia, 1989-1995*, UNE Working Papers in Economics no. 21.

systems throughout the state. At the end of January 1994, there were high hopes for Tropical Cyclone Rewa<sup>5</sup> off the coast of Rockhampton, and Tropical Cyclone Sadie<sup>6</sup> which was in the Gulf of Carpentaria and heading south. Sadly, the cyclones were not to be drought-ending. They were, however, strong enough to cause widespread flooding (Rewa in Brisbane,<sup>7</sup> and Sadie in the Johnston, Tully, and Herbert Rivers, briefly cutting off the town of Ingham on the Bruce Highway north of Townsville<sup>8</sup>). Drought affected areas of the state, however, largely remained dry.

### *March: McDonnell and East goes into administration*

McDonnell and East – Mac and East – was a genuinely beloved retail institution in Queensland. It occupied a particular niche in the Queensland market: it was grander, higher quality and more expensive than stores like Kmart and Target but was not as grand or as expensive as Myer or David Jones. They were also one of the few retail stockists of a wide variety of school uniforms for Brisbane-area schools. Mac and East occupied a beautiful building on the corner of George Street and Tank Street, progressively built over decades and therefore reflecting variations in architectural style.<sup>9</sup>

By 1994, however, the brand was in the hands of an investment group and was struggling to compete with gigantic department stores and suburban shopping centres. The axe fell in March 1994 and Mac and East – once as much as part of Queensland as jacaranda flowers in October – passed into history.<sup>10</sup> The building still stands, as retail and office space, but one must look closely to see the name of the original store on the building's exterior.

### *March: Sale of Gladstone Power Station*

The Gladstone Power Station was first proposed in the late 1960s and opened in 1976.<sup>11</sup> It had been upgraded several times following 1976, and by 1988 the power station was a key factor in the decision by Comalco to expand the Boyne Island aluminium smelter (Boyne Island being very close to Gladstone).

To ensure security of supply, and to minimise Comalco's exposure to changing electricity prices, Comalco's preference was to purchase the power station. They negotiated the sale with the Goss government<sup>12</sup> and the power station was ultimately sold for \$750 million as part of a \$1.7 billion overall deal in which Comalco agreed to make upgrades to the power station and also to make a range of other infrastructure investments.<sup>13</sup>

A number of the upgrades to the power station were environmental upgrades which, it turned out, were sorely required: later in the year, the *Courier Mail* reported that the power station had been exceeding its environmental limits for more than 18 years.<sup>14</sup> In 2024, the power station and the Boyne Island smelter continue to operate.

### *May: Allan Border retires as captain*

Although born in NSW, Alan Robert Border was one of Queensland's favourite cricketing sons, and one of the greatest Queensland cricketers.

Border took over the Australian captaincy in 1984 upon the unexpected resignation of his predecessor, Kim Hughes. He led Australia during some of the darker days of its cricketing history, including the unsuccessful Ashes tour of 1985. He was tenacious and stubborn, but also supremely skilled, and he eventually had his reward, claiming the Urn on English soil in 1989, defending it at home in 1990-91, and defending it again in England in 1993.

<sup>5</sup> An account of this cyclone is given by the Bureau of Meteorology, "Tropical Cyclone Rewa", at <http://www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/history/rewa.shtml>

<sup>6</sup> An account of this cyclone is given by the Bureau of Meteorology, "Tropical Cyclone Sadie", at <http://www.bom.gov.au/cyclone/history/sadie.shtml>

<sup>7</sup> "Peak Hour Chaos for Motorists" *Courier Mail* 20 Jan 1994, p. 2

<sup>8</sup> "Chaos in the North: Floods Hit Schools, Transport" *Courier Mail* 1 Feb 1993, p. 1

<sup>9</sup> The building's entry on the Heritage Register can be found at <https://apps.des.qld.gov.au/heritage-register/detail/?id=600120>

<sup>10</sup> "Doors Shut on Store's Grand History" *Courier Mail* 3 March 1994, p. 6

<sup>11</sup> Further background can be found at the NRG Gladstone Power Station homepage at <https://www.nrggos.com.au/>

<sup>12</sup> See also Cabinet Decision 04313, 12 Dec 94.

<sup>13</sup> "Comalco, Govt Set to Tie Up Deal" *Courier Mail* 30 March 1994, p. 33

<sup>14</sup> "Pollution Cover-up: Power Station Escaped Law" *Courier Mail*, 29 October 1994, p.1.

In 1994, approaching 39 years of age, he retired as the batsman with the most runs in test history, and immediately announced his intention to play the full Sheffield Shield series in 1994-95. In that series, after nearly a century of trying, Queensland finally won the Sheffield Shield for the first time, thanks in no small part to Border's contribution.

### August: The Moura Mine Disaster

Just before midnight on 7 August 1994 a shift of 21 miners had just entered the Moura #2 mine, inland from Gladstone in Central Queensland. A panel of coal in the mine was known to be overheating, and steps had been taken to seal off that area of the mine, to allow continued operations. Later inquiries found that inadequate safety steps had been taken to ensure the safety of the mine after the overheating was detected.<sup>15</sup> Methane built up and was ignited by the overheating coal, and an explosion ripped through the mine at 11:35pm.

Ten miners managed to escape the mine, but another 11 were trapped inside.<sup>16</sup> While it was understood that they were almost certainly lost in the explosion, efforts were still made to search for those miners until a second, much larger explosion occurred a few days later. There was no option but to seal the mine.<sup>17</sup>

This was the third major mining disaster at Moura, following an explosion in 1975 which took 13 lives, and another explosion in 1986 which took 12 lives. The impact of the loss was obviously felt most keenly in Queensland mining communities, but the sense of tragedy in the broader Queensland community was reflected in saturation media coverage.<sup>18</sup>

One positive to emerge from this disaster related to the compensation which was to be paid to the miners' widows. Initially, it appeared that the women who were in de facto relationships rather than marital relationships would not receive government support. The obvious injustice of this position led to changes in policy, which was part of the broader policy to ensure that de facto partnerships continued to move towards having the same legal status, or nearly the same legal status, as married relationships.<sup>19</sup>

### September: Hendra Virus

On 23 September 1994 the *Courier Mail* reported an outbreak of a mystery horse disease in the suburb of Hendra.<sup>20</sup> Hendra, which is close to the twin Brisbane race tracks of Doomben and Eagle Farm, was home to a number of racing stables, including that of Vic Rail, perhaps best known in racing circles as the trainer of the great frontrunner Vo Rogue. One of Rail's horses, Drama Series, became unwell, and her ailment spread quickly to the other horses in the stable. Rail, nursing the horses, also became unwell. Thirteen of the horses died from the virus; another six were euthanised; Rail and a stable hand both became desperately unwell and sadly, Vic Rail died as a result of caring for the horses under his charge.<sup>21</sup>

It ultimately emerged<sup>22</sup> that the virus, Hendra virus, is common in fruit bats and can be transmitted to horses via the bodily fluids of the bats, either through the contamination of food, or from residue left by bats on half eaten fruit. It can be transmitted to humans via the bodily fluids of infected horses. The outbreak led to widespread quarantines within the Queensland racing industry, and the brief suspension of Brisbane racing.<sup>23</sup> There have been several

<sup>15</sup> A good retrospective of the incident is provided by the Australasian Mine Safety Journal at <https://www.amsj.com.au/moura-no-2-mine-disaster-written-in-blood/> and the Warden's report is available at: [https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/moura-mining-disaster-inquiry-reports/resource/a8e96409-52a3-4075-b4a6-b1224ecc8e63?inner\\_span=True](https://www.publications.qld.gov.au/dataset/moura-mining-disaster-inquiry-reports/resource/a8e96409-52a3-4075-b4a6-b1224ecc8e63?inner_span=True)

<sup>16</sup> "Tunnel of Death – Mine Explosion Traps 11 Men Deep Under the Earth" *Courier Mail* 9 August 1994, p.1 and many articles in following days.

<sup>17</sup> Cabinet considered the disaster in Cabinet Decision 04098, 10 October 1994

<sup>18</sup> A retrospective of some of the reporting is at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SI9QPIWCbt4>

<sup>19</sup> "Compo Deal for 'Widows' in Mine Blast" *Courier Mail* 17 October 1994 p.2. Cabinet considered this specific issue in Cabinet Decision 04106, 17 Oct 1994.

<sup>20</sup> "Mystery Virus Kills Racehorses" *Courier Mail* 23 September 1994, p. 1

<sup>21</sup> "Hunt for Mutant Killer" *Courier Mail* 28 September 1994, p. 1

<sup>22</sup> Early Queensland Government information on the virus is archived by the Wayback Machine at [https://web.archive.org/web/20091213072920/http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790\\_11112.htm](https://web.archive.org/web/20091213072920/http://www.dpi.qld.gov.au/4790_11112.htm) and an early scientific summary is available at <https://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/epdf/10.5694/j.1326-5377.1995.tb126050.x>

<sup>23</sup> "Race Deaths Chaos" *Courier Mail* 24 September 1994, p. 1. Cabinet considered the issue in Cabinet Decision 04090, 3 October 1994.

outbreaks of Hendra virus since then, but an effective vaccine is now available to prevent transmission of the virus to horses (with the secondary effect that this prevents transmission to humans).

### *October: The Boondall bus crash*

On October 24 about 50 passengers, mostly members of the Civilian Widows Association, were aboard a bus on a shopping trip from Maryborough to the Logan Hyperdome, which had opened in 1989.<sup>24</sup>

On the Gateway Motorway, near Boondall, the bus suffered a mechanical fault which led it to make an uncontrollable right-hand turn, in no way the fault of the driver. The bus struck the median strip, rolled in the face of oncoming traffic, and plunged down an embankment.

Nobody on the bus was left unscathed. Eleven of the ladies died, along with a two-year-old child; everybody else on the bus was injured. Later reporting shows that even the first responders who attended this incident carried their distress for many years.<sup>25</sup> The incident remains one of Queensland worst ever road traffic crashes.<sup>26</sup>

### *November: Schoolies clashes*

Schoolies week, a bacchanal which seems to have become something of a rite of passage in Australia, has been around for decades, but 1994 appeared to be a turning point for the event. On the evening of 22 November young people in Surfers Paradise went on what the *Courier Mail* described as a “rampage” which required police to redeploy reinforcements into the area.<sup>27</sup>

Although it is not clear from the reporting, it seems likely from the context that most of the misbehaviour was actually engaged in by the so-called “toolies”, that is, slightly older people who were not school leavers but who attended schoolies anyway, either to re-live their recent youth or with more malign intentions focused on the availability of alcohol, drugs, and sexually vulnerable young people.

From 1995 we begin to see the greater deployment of police in community policing roles at schoolies to prevent trouble before it began; greater organisation of schoolies week events by the Gold Coast City Council and the Queensland Government,<sup>28</sup> and more extensive involvement of social welfare organisations.<sup>29</sup>

## 1994 in Australia

### *January: David Kang appears to attack Prince Charles*

In January Australia received a royal visit from the Prince of Wales (as His Majesty then was). The Prince was received quite enthusiastically, including by the media, and one of the events he attended was an Australia Day event in Sydney, where he shared a stage with New South Wales Premier John Fahey and newly-appointed Australian of the Year, Ian Kiernan (the founder of the Clean Up Australia campaign).

In the crowd was a young man named David Kang, now a barrister in Sydney. He intended to protest the treatment of Cambodian refugees in Australia, many of whom were in mandatory detention having arrived as boat people, fleeing the Khmer Rouge, which even in 1994 remained a danger across large parts of Cambodia (as other Australians, sadly, were to learn later in the year).<sup>30</sup>

Kang carried a starter pistol, which was visually indistinguishable from an actual firearm. He rushed at the stage and fired two shots. The Prince, cool as a cucumber, looked at Kang almost with curiosity and adjusted his

<sup>24</sup> “Death Everywhere: 12 Die in Bus Crash Horror” *Courier Mail* 25 October 1994, p. 1

<sup>25</sup> ABC News, 8 July 2016: *Boondall bus crash: Firefighters haunted by memories of deadly Gateway Motorway incident*, <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2016-07-08/firefighters-haunted-by-deadly-boondall-bus-crash/7537142>

<sup>26</sup> Commemorations are planned in Maryborough for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the crash: <https://www.frasercoast.qld.gov.au/news/article/2156/boondall-bus-crash-remembered-30-years-on>

<sup>27</sup> “Schoolies Fury Erupts: Police Call for Backup” *Courier Mail* 23 November 1994, p. 1

<sup>28</sup> See the Queensland Government website at <https://www.saferschoolies.qld.gov.au/> In 1994, Cabinet considered state government measures to promote responsible behaviour during schoolies week just before the “rampage” in Cabinet Decision 04199, 7 Nov 94.

<sup>29</sup> Probably the best known is Red Frogs Australia: <https://redfrogs.com.au/>

<sup>30</sup> “Kang Sent 500 Letters” *Courier Mail* 28 January 1994, p. 1

cufflinks.<sup>31</sup> Kang tripped as he mounted the stage, and in the following moments there were several acts of personal bravery which have never really received the attention they deserved. Most of those who responded and tackled Kang were security personnel just doing their job. John Fahey and Ian Kiernan, however, threw themselves onto the attacker, in the thick of the fight, at a point when it was still not clear that Kang was firing blanks and not actual bullets.<sup>32</sup> It is notable that Prince Charles sent a message to John Fahey's memorial, in which he said "I was as fortunate to have him on my side that day as the people of New South Wales were as fortunate to have him on theirs."<sup>33</sup>

### *March: NCA bombing*

The National Crime Authority was essentially a standing Royal Commission established in 1984 to focus on organised tax evasion schemes and other organised crime.

The idea was that the NCA would be able to avoid jurisdictional issues affecting other law enforcement agencies, even national law enforcement agencies. From the outset, the NCA had a fractious relationship with the Parliamentary committee which oversaw it, and there were doubts cast as to its effectiveness.

By 1994 one investigative focus for the NCA was Italian organised crime, particularly in the drug industry. In South Australia, a police officer named Detective Sergeant Geoffrey Bowen had been investigating the activities of the Perre family, and this drew the ire of a mafia boss named Domenic Perre who sent a parcel bomb addressed to Detective Sergeant Bowen in the NCA headquarters in Adelaide. The bomb exploded, killing the officer and severely wounding a lawyer named Peter Wallis.<sup>34</sup>

Perre was found on the roof of a nearby building, watching the explosion and its aftermath. He was immediately arrested, but there was insufficient evidence for him to be convicted. In 1999 a Coroner pointed the finger of blame at Perre. Investigations continued, and Perre was ultimately charged with murder in 2018, and convicted in 2022.<sup>35</sup> Perre was sentenced to decades in prison but died of a heart attack in 2023.

### *May: Arrest of Ivan Milat*

During 1992 and 1993 the bodies of seven murder victims all backpackers, were located in the Belanglo State Forest in New South Wales. NSW Police established a task force in October 1993 on the presumption that the murders were the work of a serial killer.

Eventually police realised that they had a report on file, made in 1990, by someone who had likely been threatened and shot at by the same serial killer, but who had escaped. This information led to the surveillance of Ivan Milat, a lifelong criminal who had done time for theft and rape among other charges. In late February 1994 police arrested Milat on firearms charges, which were soon upgraded to seven counts of murder.<sup>36</sup> In 1996 Milat was convicted of the murders and sentenced to life imprisonment without parole. He died from cancer while still a prisoner in 2019. Despite repeated opportunities, he never confessed to his crimes.

### *May: The commencement of eight-digit phone numbers*

The period from the mid-1990s to the mid-2000s was the peak period for the use of landline telephone systems in Australia. With the growth of fax machines (and eventually dial-up internet), many households were installing second or even third phone lines. The previous numbering system, based on a two- or three-digit area code and then a seven-digit phone number, was rapidly reaching its point of maximum saturation.

<sup>31</sup> Vision of the incident is still available online at [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9e\\_GoHngOIE](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9e_GoHngOIE)

<sup>32</sup> "Gun Attack on Charles" *Courier Mail* 27 January 1994, p. 1

<sup>33</sup> <https://catholicweekly.com.au/calm-courageous-and-faith-filled-john-fahey-farewelled/>

<sup>34</sup> "Bomb: Police Swoop" *Courier Mail* 3 March 1994, p. 1. See also an extensive photoessay at <https://www.dailytelegraph.com.au/news/the-fatal-1994-nca-bombing-in-adelaide/image-gallery/05d6cd3a3deb43e54dfe67ae7410f53?page=4>

<sup>35</sup> Reporting of the verdict is at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2022-06-30/domenic-perre-found-guilty-of-1994-nca-bombing/101195866>

<sup>36</sup> Contemporary reporting is available via the National Film and Sound Archives' Facebook page, at <https://www.facebook.com/watch/?v=1132272150284827>

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) therefore decided to move to a system of two-digit area codes and eight-digit phone numbers, which would increase the range of available phone numbers by a factor of ten.<sup>37</sup> Mobile phones were to receive their own area code (04).<sup>38</sup>

The first numbers to change over occurred in Sydney in May 1994, and then the numbering system was gradually rolled out until the final areas in North Queensland received the new numbers in 1997. Of course, not even ACMA could have foreseen at the time that the days of the traditional fixed-line telephone were numbered, and that by 2010 mobile phones would be ubiquitous, with VoIP (Voice over Internet Protocol) ever growing.<sup>39</sup>

### *September: New Opposition Leader*

At the start of 1994 John Hewson was the federal parliamentary leader of the Liberal Party, and therefore Leader of the Opposition, having retained that position even after losing the 1993 federal election to Paul Keating. However, the sharks were circling throughout 1994, and in August he was displaced as Opposition Leader by Alexander Downer.

After a series of gaffes, Downer's tenure lasted only eight months, and he was replaced as Opposition Leader by John Howard.

### *September: Rediscovery of the Wollemi Pine*

The Wollemi Pine, *Wollemia Nobilis*, was abundant millions of years ago, but was thought to have become extinct some two million years ago. In September of 1994 an off-duty ranger named David Noble, hiking with friends, identified a small grove of the trees in the Blue Mountains west of Sydney. It is unclear whether he realised what the trees were, but he was sufficiently intrigued to take a sample back for analysis. The Wollemi Pine, it seems, was not extinct after all.<sup>40</sup>

The location of those original plants remains a closely guarded secret, but propagation of the species is well underway, both by cloning and from seed.<sup>41</sup> The plant is slow growing, but can live for 1,000 years or more, and some of the trees in the grove discovered by Noble are of that age. Truly a remarkable discovery.

### *December: Spain refuses to extradite Christopher Skase*

Failed businessman Christopher Skase embodied all of the worst of corporate excess in Australia in the late 1980s. He took a small Tasmanian company called Quintex, and using the availability of cheap debt capital, acquired a number of other corporations such as resorts and the Seven Network, all of which became part of the Quintex group. As interest rates began to rise, the entire house of cards threatened to fall. Skase began doing all he could to move assets out of the corporate structure and into safe harbours, to ensure that when the end came, his investors would bear the brunt rather than he. When the inevitable happened, unlike his contemporary Alan Bond, who at least stayed to face the music, Skase ran.

In 1990 he was held overnight in a watchhouse on corporate law charges, but he was bailed the next day and allowed access to his passport. He didn't need a second opportunity. He fled the country and in 1991 was discovered living on the Spanish luxury island of Majorca – in a mansion no less. The Australian Government sought his extradition, and most of the proceedings relating to that extradition application occurred in 1994, resulting ultimately on 17 December in a final decision by the Spanish courts not to allow his extradition,<sup>42</sup> on the

<sup>37</sup> The first advertisement in the *Courier Mail* ran on 9 May 1994, p. 4.

<sup>38</sup> One of the original TV ads for the change has survived and is on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-YeUukIbXc4> although the advertisement is privately hosted and cannot be verified. It does however appear to be authentic.

<sup>39</sup> The trend is observable at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/501927/mobile-cellular-subscriptions-per-100-inhabitants-in-australia/>

<sup>40</sup> ABC reporting on the rediscovery and events since can be found at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-06/the-wollemi-pine-dinosaur-tree-was-long-thought-extinct/103292808>

<sup>41</sup> See the NSW Parks and Wildlife page on the pine: <https://www.nationalparks.nsw.gov.au/plants-and-animals/wollemi-pine>

<sup>42</sup> "Decision Dumbfounds Skase" *Sunday Mail* 18 December 1994, p. 4.

basis of his health.<sup>43</sup> Skase had attended court hearings in a wheelchair, using a respirator – neither of which he seemed to need while not in court.

The decision not to extradite Skase caused outrage within Australia, including a tongue-in-cheek proposal by ABC TV presenter Andrew Denton to raise money for the “Chase for Skase,” by hiring an international bounty hunter. Such was the enthusiasm for the idea that \$250,000 was raised almost immediately, and the Attorney General had to go on the next show to explain why a kidnapping would not result in Skase being brought to trial. It turned out that Skase did have cancer, from which he died in 2001, but it is not at all clear that his medical condition in 1994 was such that he could not have returned to Australia to face trial.

### *The movies Australia loved*

Australians needing a break from day-to-day reality had some wonderful movies to choose from at the cinemas in 1994. Two iconic Australian movies, *The Adventures of Priscilla: Queen of the Desert*, and *Muriel’s Wedding*, were both released in that year.

*Priscilla* took in over \$18 million at the Australian box office, won an Academy award, and stage show versions of the movie have played in the West End of London and on Broadway. The movie has become such a part of Australian cultural heritage that the word *Priscilla*, in Australia, can only mean *Presley* or a lavender bus. *Priscilla* headlined what was a groundbreaking year for LGBTQI+ cinema, with the more challenging *Brokeback Mountain* and *The Sum of Us* also finding widespread success.

*Muriel’s Wedding* took in nearly \$16 million in Australia, and another US\$15 million overseas. Like *Priscilla*, *Muriel* was outrageously camp, affectionately taking the mick out of a range of Australian stereotypes and communities. Together with 1992’s *Strictly Ballroom*, they set the scene for later quality Australian comedies such as *The Castle* (1997) and *The Dish* (2000).

In 1994 Hollywood gave us Tom Hanks as *Forrest Gump*, perhaps the role which will ultimately define his spectacular career. Also in 1994, Disney released *The Lion King*. Both movies took in more than \$300 million at the box office, despite the fact that they were in the cinemas at the same time.

## Around the world in 1994

### *April: Nelson Mandela elected President of South Africa*

In its first multiracial election, South African electors supported the African National Congress (ANC) and its leader, Nelson Mandela, in a landslide victory.<sup>44</sup> Perhaps even more than his release from prison in 1990, his election to the presidency marked the end of the Apartheid policy of racial segregation which had characterised South Africa since 1948.<sup>45</sup>

Mandela had previously spent 27 years in various prisons for his activism against Apartheid and became an international figure of the anti-apartheid movement, with campaigns for his release taking place all over the world.<sup>46</sup> The year 1994 also saw the release of his celebrated biography *Long Walk to Freedom*.<sup>47</sup> Mandela remained President until 1999, and the African National Congress remains in power having not lost government since 1994.

<sup>48</sup>

<sup>43</sup> A legal analysis of the decision is set out in Gorina M (1995) “The Chase for Skase: A Matter of Life and Death or a Nomination for an Oscar?” *UNSW Law Journal* 18(2), p. 502.

<sup>44</sup> A contemporary account of the election by the Inter-Parliamentary Union is archived at [http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2291\\_94.htm](http://archive.ipu.org/parline-e/reports/arc/2291_94.htm)

<sup>45</sup> ‘The Nelson Mandela Presidency – 1994 to 1999’, *South African History Online* <http://www.sahistory.org.za/article/nelson-mandela-presidency-1994-1999>

<sup>46</sup> ‘Free Nelson Mandela!’, *Forward to Freedom* <https://www.aamarchives.org/campaigns/free-mandela.html>

<sup>47</sup> Mandela N (1994) *Long Walk to Freedom*, Little, Brown & Coy, Johannesburg.

<sup>48</sup> Nelson Mandela, ‘Victory Speech’ (Election Night Speech, Johannesburg, 2 May 1994).

### April: Paula Jones makes allegations against US President Clinton

In April of 1994 Paula Jones, an Arkansas bureaucrat, made allegations of sexual harassment against US President Bill Clinton,<sup>49</sup> arising from events in 1991 when Clinton had been Governor of Arkansas.<sup>50</sup>

The matter ultimately settled in 1998 but became the first in a series of dominoes: matters revealed during Jones' proceedings led to investigations into Clinton's real estate dealings with a company named Whitewater, and those investigations led to allegations that he had engaged in sexual activity with Monica Lewinsky.<sup>51</sup>

Allegations that Clinton lied about Lewinsky led to his (failed) impeachment by the US Congress in 1998.<sup>52</sup>

### April: Genocide in Rwanda

After the assassination of the presidents of Rwanda and Burundi on 6 April,<sup>53</sup> negotiations to end a civil war between the Hutu and Tutsi peoples broke down, and a 100-day genocide against the Tutsis began.<sup>54</sup> Up to one million Rwandans, almost entirely Tutsis or moderate Hutus, were killed in this short time. The United Nations (UN) already had a small peacekeeping mission stationed in Rwanda, but countries quickly withdrew their support when the violence escalated.<sup>55</sup>

UN Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) troops reduced from 2,165 down to just 270. While the UN deliberated whether to withdraw support completely or strengthen it, the Tutsi rebel army (the Rwandese Patriotic Front) took power back in July when they defeated the Hutu government, ending the genocide.

Eventually the UN expanded support through UNAMIR II, and the Australian Government decided to provide a medical contingent along with an infantry company to provide security.<sup>56</sup> The first Australian contingent arrived in Rwanda in August. While the primary focus was not to provide humanitarian assistance, the changing situations experienced on the ground saw the Australians provide significant medical and other help to Rwandans. The UN eventually withdrew the mission from Rwanda in April 1996.<sup>57</sup>

The heavy criticism surrounding the inadequate international response helped shape future international relations and policies, by raising awareness of the need for humanitarian intervention and highlighting the international responsibility to protect human rights.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>49</sup> Louis Menand, 'The Political and Media Maelstrom of Paula Jones and President Clinton', *The New Yorker* 15 May 1994 <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/1994/05/23/paula-jones-bill-clinton-indecent-exposure>

<sup>50</sup> "Clinton in Crisis" *Courier Mail* 5 April 1994, p. 2

<sup>51</sup> Olivia B Waxman and Merrill Fabry, 'From Anonymous Tip to an Impeachment: A Timeline of Key Moments in the Clinton-Lewinsky Scandal', (4 May 2018) *Time Magazine* <https://time.com/5120561/bill-clinton-monica-lewinsky-timeline/>

<sup>52</sup> The Arkansas court finding of contempt against Clinton is *Jones v Clinton* 36 F. Supp. 2d 1118 (E.D. Ark. 1999). A wide range of documents regarding the subsequent impeachment trial can be found on the Library of Congress website at <https://guides.loc.gov/federal-impeachment/bill-clinton>

<sup>53</sup> "Rwandan Troops in hunt for Ministers" *Courier Mail* 8 April 1994, p.11

<sup>54</sup> "Why Was This Little Girl Mutilated?" *Courier Mail* 10 June 1994, p. 1

<sup>55</sup> The United Nations history of the events can be found at

<https://www.un.org/en/preventgenocide/rwanda/historical-background.shtml> however a more approachable, and probably more balanced telling is presented by the BBC at <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-africa-26875506>

<sup>56</sup> "Aussie Troops for Rwanda" *Courier Mail* 23 July 1994, p. 2.

<sup>57</sup> Department of Veteran Affairs (DVA) 'Australian Peacekeepers in Rwanda with UNAMIR from 1993 to 1996', *DVA Anzac Portal* (Web Page, 1 September 2023) <https://anzacportal.dva.gov.au/wars-and-missions/peacekeeping/summaries/rwanda-1993-1996>.

<sup>58</sup> See generally Charles Cater and David M Malone, 'The Origins and Evolution of Responsibility to Protect at the UN' (September 2016) 30(3) *International Relations* 278.



### May: Death of Ayrton Senna

Formula 1 champion Ayrton Senna died in a high-speed crash, hitting a wall at the San Marino Grand Prix, held on the Imola Circuit in Italy.<sup>59</sup> The world watched as his on-track medical care was broadcast before he was transported to Maggiore hospital where he passed away.<sup>60</sup>

The day before Senna's death, fellow racer Roland Ratzenberger had also lost his life during qualifying rounds, prompting Senna to argue for the reform of the Grand Prix Drivers' Association (GPDA) and the improvement of safety measures. An Austrian flag was found in Senna's car, and it was later revealed that Senna had intended to honour Ratzenberger at the end of the race. Senna's death led to the reformation of the GPDA and an increase in safety measures. His death has been the subject of dozens of books, movies and documentaries.

### May: "The Scream" stolen then found again

Norway's most famous painting, "The Scream" by Edvard Munch, was recovered on 7 May 1994, after being stolen almost three months earlier. Thieves had broken into a museum in Oslo on the opening day of the 1994 Winter Olympics (held in Lillehammer, Norway) and replaced the painting with a note reading "Thousand thanks for the bad security!"<sup>61</sup> Security had indeed been poor – the thieves had simply placed a ladder against the side of the building and broken a window to get in.

A ransom was demanded and refused, and a sting operation was responsible for the recovery of the artwork – police from Scotland Yard, assisting the Norwegians, posed as buyers from an American gallery. The four men who had stolen the painting were arrested.<sup>62</sup> One of the men was Paal Enger, who had been convicted in 1988 of stealing another Munch painting in Oslo. Enger was sentenced this time to six-and-a-half years in prison (the other three were acquitted on a technicality). Enger then escaped three years into his sentence while on a fieldtrip, only to be recaptured 12 days later in a blonde wig and dark sunglasses trying to buy a train ticket to Copenhagen. He died recently, in July 2024, at age 57.<sup>63</sup>

### June: OJ Simpson

After being accused of the stabbing murder of his ex-wife and a waiter, Ron Goldman, in June, Former NFL star and occasional actor OJ Simpson was required by police to turn himself in. Instead, he hid in the back of a sport-utility vehicle driven by his friend A.C. Cowlings.<sup>64</sup> A slow speed "chase" followed, after law enforcement was told that Simpson had a gun to his own head.<sup>65</sup>

The attempted "escape" was televised live nationally, and hundreds of Simpson's fans lined the streets in support of him.<sup>66</sup> It ended at Simpson's home in California, where he was placed under arrest.

<sup>59</sup> The *Courier Mail* article "Senna Crashes Out", 2 May 1994, p. 36 had Senna "fighting for his life", reflecting the false narrative transmitted by race organisers. By the following day, on page 5, the *Courier Mail* presented a more detailed analysis of the death.

<sup>60</sup> For legal purposes, under Italian law he died immediately upon the crash, in which he sustained unsurvivable brain injuries; however he was evacuated from the track and was subject to treatment for a short time.

<sup>61</sup> History.com Editors, 'Edvard Munch's "The Scream" Recovered after Theft', *HISTORY* (Online Article, 6 May 2024) <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/the-scream-recovered>.

<sup>62</sup> Locally, the *Courier Mail* reprinted a small article from Reuters: "Police Find Masterpiece" *Courier Mail* 9 May 1994, p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> An AP story on Enger's death is at <https://apnews.com/article/pal-enger-art-theft-munch-scream-b4c876e89ad8b7ce4589f429bce2931f> and a sound ABC retelling of the theft and recovery is at <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-02-11/scream-edvard-munch-art-heist/103423910>

<sup>64</sup> "OJ Makes a Run For It" *Sunday Mail* 19 June 1994, p. 1.

<sup>65</sup> Basel Hindeleh, 'The Famous Low-Speed Bronco Car Chase that Came Before OJ Simpson's Arrest', *ABC News* (Online Article, 12 April 2024) <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2024-04-12/bronco-slow-speed-car-chase-that-came-before-oj-simpson-arrest/103698842>.

<sup>66</sup> Much of the CNN coverage of the slow speed chase, as broadcast in 1994, is available at <https://youtu.be/luRD3TQEoeY?si=Ft35ebG6sWuU-ZQR>

The chase and his 16-month trial were televised around the world and became known as "the trial of the century".<sup>67</sup> These events were highly public, and highlighted issues surrounding privilege, the judicial system, media, domestic abuse, and racism. Simpson was eventually acquitted over the murders but was later found to be civilly liable.<sup>68</sup>

### *April -September: Khmer Rouge killings*

The Khmer Rouge were a brutal Maoist organisation which ruled Cambodia in a reign of secrecy and terror from 1975 until 1979, during which fully a third of the nation's six million people were either executed or died of starvation or disease. After neighbouring Vietnam invaded in 1979 and overthrew the Khmer Rouge, and even after the Paris Peace Accords brought a form of democracy to Cambodia in 1993, the Khmer Rouge remained active, with small pockets of the nation remaining under their control.

In April 1994 Australian model Kellie Wilkinson, 24, was abducted by Khmer Rouge fighters along with two British travelling companions.<sup>69</sup> Negotiations for their release continued for some time, but all three were ultimately murdered by Khmer Rouge fighters in early July.<sup>70</sup>

Almost immediately afterwards, in another area of Cambodia controlled by the Khmer Rouge, Australian backpacker David Wilson, together with fellow tourists from America and Britain, was kidnapped by Khmer Rouge fighters.<sup>71</sup> The three backpackers were forced into slavery before being murdered two months later<sup>72</sup> when negotiations for their ransom broke down.<sup>73</sup>

The Australian Government's handling of both cases came under severe criticism. While a 12-year inquiry into the incident cleared the government of fault, an Australian Embassy whistleblower said the finding was an "absolute travesty of justice".<sup>74</sup>

### *August: Ceasefire declared by IRA*

After almost 30 years of conflict, a conditional ceasefire was unilaterally announced by the Irish Republican Army, the IRA. A few weeks later this was met with a similar ceasefire by (largely Protestant) British loyalist paramilitaries.<sup>75</sup> The ceasefire was not a final end to conflict – for instance there were further outbreaks in 1996 – but certainly represented a de-escalation, and an emphasis on the use of non-violent processes to influence the governance of Northern Ireland. This in turn ultimately led to the Belfast Agreement, or the "Good Friday Agreement" in 1998, which led to an enduring end to violent conflict in Northern Ireland.<sup>76</sup>

<sup>67</sup> Jonathan Freedland, 'The OJ Simpson Trial Was Sensational – and a Portent of the Strife-Torn America We See Today', *The Guardian* (Online Article, 13 April 2024) <https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2024/apr/12/oj-simpson-trial-america-race-misogyny-policing-celebrity>.

<sup>68</sup> *Rufo v Simpson*, 86 Cal 2d 573, 573-626 (Cal App, 2001).

<sup>69</sup> "Queenslander Grabbed by Bandits in Cambodia" *Courier Mail* 13 April 1994, p. 1.

<sup>70</sup> There were suggestions they may in fact have been killed immediately after their capture. "Kellie 'Heinous Crime'" *Courier Mail* 18 July 1994, p. 1.

<sup>71</sup> "Aussie Tourists Khmer Target" *Courier Mail* 30 July 1994, p.1.

<sup>72</sup> "Hostage Grave Ends Hopes" *Courier Mail* 2 November p. 3

<sup>73</sup> Inquiry into both deaths by the Senate Standing Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade is available at [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign\\_Affairs\\_Defence\\_and\\_Trade/Completed\\_inquiries/1996-99/consular/report/c07](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/Senate/Foreign_Affairs_Defence_and_Trade/Completed_inquiries/1996-99/consular/report/c07)

<sup>74</sup> Simon Lewis, 'Australian Gov't Found Not at Fault in 1994 KR Killing', *The Cambodia Daily* (Online Article, 20 September 2012) <https://english.cambodiadaily.com/news/australian-govt-found-not-at-fault-in-1994-kr-killing-2552/>

<sup>75</sup> 'Good Friday Agreement: The Early 1990s Back-Channel Between the IRA and British Government that Made Peace Possible', *The Conversation* (6 April 2023) <https://theconversation.com/good-friday-agreement-the-early-1990s-back-channel-between-the-ira-and-british-government-that-made-peace-possible-202986>

<sup>76</sup> A retrospective from the Irish News is at <https://www.irishnews.com/news/northern-ireland/when-the-ira-guns-fell-silent-a-look-back-at-the-provisional-iras-first-ceasefire-30-years-ago-MVONJYKXE5EKNMZUD5ZIVH2CE4/>

### *The year of the web*

While the World Wide Web was invented in 1989 by Tim Berners-Lee, it only gained widespread media attention and increased commercial use in 1994.<sup>77</sup> The first international World Wide Web conference was held, Jeff Bezos launched Amazon from his garage, and Yahoo! was founded.<sup>78</sup>

Perhaps more importantly, Netscape became the first easily accessible browser, opening the web to home-based users who, to this point, had been limited to local area dial-in bulletin boards, or slightly larger proprietary networks such as CompuServe. Netscape itself was only possible because of the release of HTML (Hypertext Mark-Up Language), which enabled web browsers to “see” content on the web and enabled users to link to other content.

The internet at this time was still little more than a curiosity for most people, but the world would never be quite the same.

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<sup>77</sup> 'A Short History of the Web', *CERN* <https://home.cern/science/computing/birth-web/short-history-web>

<sup>78</sup> History.com Editors, 'Amazon is Founded by Jeff Bezos', *HISTORY* <https://www.history.com/this-day-in-history/amazon-is-founded-by-jeff-bezos>; Entry 'Yahoo!' *Britannica* at <https://www.britannica.com/money/Yahoo-Inc>