

Fun police ban this thrill slide



Game's over: the Point Cook slide was a winner but children are being turned away. Picture: DARRYL GREGORY

CBA is raising its fees

THE Commonwealth Bank has defied the Federal Government's plea to tread carefully and jacked up fees for new homeowners by a staggering 50 per cent.

As the Government urged banks to consider their struggling mortgage holders, the Commonwealth also raised its fee for people selling their home by 17 per cent.

It means families forced by the economic downturn to sell their homes — potentially at a loss given the falling market — now have to pay the bank \$350 on their way out, up from \$300.

That same "settlement/discharge" fee hike also hits customers planning to take their mortgage elsewhere for a better deal — a tactic championed by the Rudd Government.

New property owners lured by the doubled first home-owners grant now have to shell out \$150 to sign up with Australia's biggest lender, up from \$100.

That puts the Commonwealth — which made \$4.7 billion in profit last year, including \$1 billion in lending fees — in line for an even bigger slice of the \$14,000 Government lifeline for new homeowners.

It will be no surprise to long-suffering homeowners who watched as all big lenders raised interest rates independently of the Reserve Bank last year then, when official rates came down, refused to pass on the cuts in full.

But none except the Commonwealth was planning the latest round of hikes, revealed to mortgage holders in a letter.

Matt Johnston

ONE of Melbourne's favourite slides is to be demolished because it is too dangerous.

The Point Cook slide, which was approved by Wyndham Council and met Australian standards, has a 45 deg. slope.

It has been restricted to children taller than 1.28m since October, when several youngsters suffered injuries, including one with a suspected broken arm.

Developer Villawood Properties has since shelled out \$25,000 on security guards to stop under-sized children using the slide at Alamanda Estate park.

Now it has decided to pull the slide down.

Children and some parents expressed dismay at the decision to tear down the slide and said we were living in a nanny state gone mad.

Parent Angie Grech said the decision was crazy and would disappoint children.

But other parents were glad it will be demolished.

Anthony Neeson said he worried about his children, aged three and six, setting off from the top of the 20m-high slide.

"Does it really look safe? I wouldn't even go on it," he said.

Monash University mathematics expert Dr Burkard Polster said in perfect conditions children could reach up to 30km/h on slides with steep gradients, but it was not speed alone that determined safety.

He said there were slides in Victoria, including one at Phillip Island, that had almost vertical drops but were deemed safe because they flattened sufficiently and had other safety features.

Brianna, 12, said the slide was safe if you took care.

"I think it's scary, but you get used to it and it turns out to be

But the kids love it

Children who came to the Alamanda Estate park in Point Cook to find their favourite slide shut down told the *Herald Sun* they were upset.



"I think it's cool that they make them like this — Shannon, 10

"I can't go on it any more because it's closed. I like going on slides — Iszabella, 7

"It was my favourite thing in the whole wide world, it was like a rollercoaster — Kenya, 9

"It's fun. It was so long and the turns were big. I went really fast and that was the best part — Chloe, 5

fun," she said. Villawood Properties executive director Rory Costelloe said the slide was supposed to be fun, but the company was forced to act after children were injured.

"We have encouraged everyone — including parents — to respect the safety rules," he said.

The slide was temporarily closed in October, for rubber lining to be installed, to slow children down. Mr Costelloe said there were no reports of injuries since the security guards were employed, but the slide would be removed as soon as possible.

Wyndham Council chief execu-

tive Peter Marshall said the council approved the playground design because it complied with Australian standards. But the council had been concerned at the speed children gained at the slide's top section.

The *Herald Sun* witnessed a confrontation between Mr Neeson and a security guard who had told him to keep his children away from the base of the slide after it was officially closed yesterday.

Mr Neeson said there were no barricades at the bottom of the slide and families should be left to enjoy the park in peace.

Surprise baby makes it octuplets

A WOMAN has given birth to eight babies in California, the world's second live-born set of octuplets.

The mother, who was not identified, gave birth on Monday to six boys and two girls weighing between 680 grams and 1.474kg, doctors at Kaiser Permanente Bellflower Medical Centre said.

The hospital, 27km southeast of Los Angeles, scheduled a caesarean

section for seven babies, but doctors were surprised by the eighth.

Doctors said the babies were born nine weeks premature but were in a stable condition. Two newborns were placed on ventilators and a third needed oxygen.

Four delivery rooms and 46 hospital staff were used for the births as staff rushed each baby to another room and waited for the next.

"It is quite easy to miss a baby when you're anticipating seven babies," said Dr Harold Henry, the hospital's chief of maternal and fetal medicine.

Kaiser spokeswoman Myra Suarez said she could not release any details about the mother, including whether fertility drugs were used.

However, doctors said the mum planned to breastfeed all eight.

Take yourself for \$65*

DOUBLE TAKE DEAL

Take your car from \$65*

spiritoftasmania.com.au 1800 136 082

SPIRIT OF TASMANIA

ONE OF AUSTRALIA'S GREAT JOURNEYS

*\$65 fare valid for travel on selected day sailings until 19/04/09 when booked by 14/02/09, subject to availability. 100% cancellation fee applies. Conditions and vehicle restrictions apply. For full details and availability call 1800 136 082. TTL1544/MHS/65