

# Breakdown at the office

DAVID HURLEY

## Former car-hire worker claims harassment

A FORMER worker at Hertz is suing the car-hire firm after she claimed she was sexually harassed and called a "slut" by a colleague.

After joining Hertz as a reservations agent in 2010, the woman was based at the company's head office in St Kilda Rd for six years before she moved to the Melbourne Airport branch to work as a customer service representative.

The woman claims she was sexually harassed and groped between April and July 2016. Law firm Arnold Thomas and Becker has launched legal action in the Federal Circuit Court of Australia on behalf of the woman.

A statement of claim filed with the court states the woman's colleague would "frequently stand very close to the applicant when talking to her", invade her personal space and place his hands on her shoulders.

The woman has said she used distracting words to try to diffuse the situation.

"The (colleague) made no attempt to conceal his conduct from other employees," the state of claim states.

"The conduct occurred within the presence of other staff members rostered on at various times and in various branches ... at the Melbourne Airport.

"The applicant tried to gauge the reaction of other employees to the inappropriate conduct, however no other staff commented on it."

In May 2016 the woman was working a night shift at Melbourne Airport and her colleague was also rostered to work the same shift, alone with her.

"During the shift, the second respondent made unwelcome sexual advances to the applicant and sexually assaulted the applicant," the statement of claim states.

The woman says she recoiled and made it clear the sexual advances were not welcome.

She says she reported the man's behaviour to superiors but the behaviour continued.

One of her managers said the man's behaviour was not acceptable and she would "have a word with him".

The man's behaviour towards the woman then became angry, the woman has claimed.

"In July 2016 the second respondent told the applicant to "F--- off" in an aggressive tone," the statement of claim states.

"In March 2017 the second respondent called the applicant a 'slut'."

After that incident the woman took

annual leave and did not return to work. She claims she suffered depression, anxiety and a loss of confidence following the alleged harassment.

Lawyer Maria Cvisic, who is representing the woman, told the *Sunday Herald Sun*: "There has been a rise in concern about sexual harassment driven by the #MeToo movement and the incline of people to say that have been affected."

"My client alleges that the conduct of Hertz was inadequate in the handling and investigation of her complaints – and was made to feel that she was in the wrong."

The woman is suing Hertz for damages and costs.

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## A home to get lost in

AN a-maze-ing regional Victorian tourist attraction is searching for a new owner.

Tracey and Dean Shipley (right) are turning over a new leaf and looking to sell the hedge maze they spent 15 years growing from saplings.

A topiary garden and their family home next door are also part of the package, 15 minutes from Mansfield in Goughs Bay, which has a \$750,000 asking price.

Ms Shipley used her skills as a former hairdresser to shape the gardens and said they grew the labyrinth – now known as the High Country Maze – "from scratch, a bare paddock".

Much like navigating the maze, it was no small task.

"It's a bit of an art, but not one you can't learn," Mrs Shipley said.

Mr Shipley, a real estate agent and director at Harcourts Mansfield, is handling inquiries for the property at 678 Piries Goughs Bay Rd.

Pictures: JAKE NOWAKOWSKI

## Ivory Coast pair freed

FORMER Ivory Coast president Laurent Gbagbo and co-defendant Charles Ble Goude have been freed from detention by the International Criminal Court.

The men were acquitted of atrocities charges on January 15 but had been kept in detention pending an appeal. Mr Gbagbo has spent seven years in custody in The Hague in the Netherlands.



Martin Freeman in *The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey*.

## Door opens into world of Tolkien

ILLUSTRATIONS, maps and other items related to the books *The Hobbit*, *The Silmarillion* and *The Lord of the Rings* are on display in New York until mid-May, part of an event billed as the most extensive exhibition of original material by famed English author and scholar J.R.R. Tolkien.

Besides writing those works, Tolkien (1892-1973) also produced drawings, manuscripts, maps and other designs that

reveal his vision for a world populated by hobbits, elves, orcs, dwarves and other fantastical creatures.

Visitors enter the exhibit through a round door that resembles the front of a dwelling in Hobbiton, the home village of Bilbo and Frodo Baggins — the main protagonists of *The Hobbit*, a children's fantasy novel, and *The Lord of the Rings*, a three-volume epic novel, respectively.

The exhibit contains 117 objects, including letters, draft manuscripts, illustrations and photographs that give a glimpse into the mind behind Middle-earth in all his facets: as father, husband and author.

The exhibit's numerous manuscripts and letters also provide greater insight into Tolkien's craft as a writer, showing the process he underwent in striving to create a British mythology.

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