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Weet-Bix site drops Smith

STEVE Smith is no longer visible on the website of breakfast cereal Weet-Bix website as the brand's owner considers the future of its relationship with the Australian cricket captain after he admitted to being part of a ball-tampering plot.

Smith was featured on the cereal's home page until recently and now Weet-Bix owner Sanitarium – a wholly owned subsidiary of the Seventh-day Adventist Church – says it is awaiting the results of the investigation by Cricket Australia.

"We are interested in the detail of their investigation and the actions Cricket Australia will take on this matter," Sanitarium, which counts Smith as a brand ambassador, said in a statement yesterday.

"Like the rest of Australia, we have been incredibly disappointed by the actions taken by the team over the weekend in South Africa."

Smith also fronts a marketing campaign for Fox Sports. A Fox Sports spokesperson said the marketing agreement has not been discussed. Other major sponsors of cricket, including Qantas, have voiced their disappointment.



CRITICISM: Franchising Council of Australia chairman Bruce Billson.

Picture: BAREFOOT MEDIA

Push to revamp franchise council

TONY RAGGATT

FRANCHISING expert Michael Sherlock has called for changes to the board of the Franchising Council of Australia to tackle problems in the scandal-ridden sector.

It comes as the council's chairman, former Liberal minister Bruce Billson, is facing censure from federal Parliament for failing to list his FCA salary on the register of interests while he was still an MP in 2016.

Mr Sherlock, a former Brumby's bakery joint founder, said the council needed strong leadership from experienced franchise operators.

"There are too many consultants and lawyers on the current FCA board who should resign and let experienced franchisor op-

erators steer the ship away from troubled waters," Mr Sherlock said.

Mr Sherlock said he was embarrassed by a recent speech by Mr Billson to the International Franchise Association Convention in Phoenix, Arizona, in which Mr Billson dismissed problems in franchising in Australia as a "media beat-up".

But Mr Billson said Mr Sherlock was taking him out of context and that the FCA board was working hard to address "legitimate areas of concern" in the industry.

A federal parliamentary inquiry is set to delve into brand owners' treatment of franchisees after a string of scandals hit franchisors including Donut King owner Retail Food Group, Domino's Pizza, Caltex and 7-Eleven.

CuString set to power up



Premier Annastacia Palaszczuk and CuString director John O'Brien check a map of North Queensland.

TONY RAGGATT

THE cheap energy which has long been needed to power the North's minerals processing sector is within reach, according to the proponents of a \$600 million transmission line.

CuString Pty Ltd wants to develop a 500km transmission line between Hughenden and Mount Isa and says it is ramping up development plans.

The private company will lodge an application shortly for low-cost loans with the Federal Government's Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility and says support at federal and state level will be critical to its success.

The company had proposed a bigger transmission project a decade ago but it faltered after big customers Xstrata and Ergon opted for gas-fired power generated at Mount Isa rather than electricity delivered via the national grid.

But CuString founder John O'Brien says circumstances have changed as gas shortages have driven up power costs, wholesale grid prices have fallen and renewable energy projects, potentially, are offering some of the nation's cheapest electricity.

Mr O'Brien said that, combined with the State's own North Queensland Clean Energy transmission hub, made CuString Mark II "compelling".

"The economics of CuString's project is compelling because of the stability of the existing Queensland generation fleet and large decreases in the cost of new renewable energy available in the region," Mr O'Brien said.

"If we invest in the right sustainable energy supply infrastructure, we can reap enormous benefits for the Townsville to Mount Isa corridor in the future."

Mining and processing supports thousands of jobs and billions of dollars in economic activity but is at risk because of high costs, particularly for rail and electricity.

It is believed high gas prices have meant processors are paying

up to \$150 per megawatt hour for electricity when new sources such as wind could be delivered for as little as \$55. Meanwhile, State directives to government-owned coal-fired generators have seen Queensland wholesale prices fall from \$175 last year to average \$70 in the March quarter.

Mr O'Brien said they were in discussions with NAIF and preparing to lodge an application for loan funding. He said they needed the co-operation of government to make it work.

With Glencore's copper smelter and refinery slated for closure in 2022, that support, as well as from big customers such as Glencore, will be vital.

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Surprise Apple event set to deliver

APPLE is hosting a surprise event next week where it's expected to unveil some shiny new gadgets.

There's the prospect of a new, cheaper iPad and Apple Pencil that works with more of the company's tablets.

And, if we're really lucky, we may even see a new MacBook Air.

iPads

An education event seems like a good place to announce a cheaper iPad aimed at schoolkids and students.

It also fits in with recent leaks and rumours, which suggest Apple is working on two new tablets.

The current 9.7 inch iPad landed around this time last year, so a new model could well be on the cards.

Analyst Daniel Ives of GBH Insights believes an "entry-level" iPad is the one to look out for.

iOS 11.3

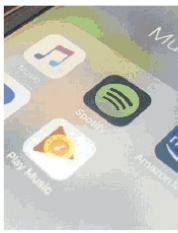
In terms of software, the big launch could well be iOS 11.3.

Apple tends to release software alongside new hardware, and the update is an important one.

That's mainly down to the introduction of a new battery health tool. The feature lets you view how knackered your battery is, and whether the device is being slowed down.

Remember how Apple massively messed up by admitting that it throttles older phones?

Well, this makes up for that.



A new iOS may be in the pipeline. PHOTO: AAP/JENNY KANE



SNAP IT UP. The new Galaxy S9+ camera has the potential to shake up mobile photography.

PHOTO: AP/MANU FERNANDEZ

Shedding light on Samsung Galaxy S9+

JENNIFER DUDLEY-NICHOLSON

STOP me if you've heard this one before.

There's a new flagship smartphone coming out with a face scanner, a dual camera with one lens stacked on top of the other, and animated emojis you can personalise and send to friends.

If you think it sounds like the Apple iPhone X, you'd be right.

And if you think it sounds like the new Samsung Galaxy S9+, you'd also be right.

It would be wrong to assume that Samsung copied these features, however, or even that one of these flagship phones could ever be confused with the other.

Holding the Samsung Galaxy S9+ in your hand, the differences are evident.

Most obviously, Samsung's new top phone is significantly bigger. It dwarfs its Apple rival with a 6.2-inch screen made slightly larger this year by a subtle whittling of its corners.

It also retains the now recog-

nisable Samsung design, with curved glass down either side, and it keeps some of the elements Apple has ditched or disregarded.

This phone does have a standard headphone jack, for example, will support an extra 400GB of storage, and continues to embrace the charging-friendly USB-C connection.

But can Samsung really beat Apple in the features it has in common?

We briefly tested its biggest additions at a Mobile World Congress event to find out.

Better camera

Smartphones live and die by the quality of their cameras, and the Galaxy S9+ photographic upgrades give it the best chance of an extended existence.

Samsung has not only rearranged the two 12-megapixel cameras on the back of this smartphone - they're now stacked on top of one another and no longer within smudging distance of the rear fingerprint sensor - but the company

changed the amount of light the cameras see.

The wide-angle lens now has two light sensitivity settings - one f2.4 aperture and a second f1.9 aperture to capture photographs in incredibly low light.

Samsung says this allows in 28 per cent more light than its Galaxy S8 and, in a side-by-side comparison with the Google Pixel 2 smartphone, was particularly impressive capturing a darkened room.

The Samsung camera's other big addition is Super Slow-Mo that can create a mesmerising six-second video from just 0.2 seconds of fast-moving action.

When in the right mode, the Galaxy S9+ captures and slows down the action automatically, and presents the results in gif form for easy sharing. It can be tricky to capture just the right effect, however, so this is one we want to test further.

AR Emoji

You probably can't justify spending \$1499 on a new smartphone just to get your own emoji but it's certainly one

for the "pro" column.

While the Apple iPhone X offers a host of cartoon heads you can animate, Samsung scans 100 points on your face to create a cartoon likeness, and then lets you personalise it.

Strangely, my spectacles and fringe proved an issue for the initial 3D emoji scan - you have to take everything off your face for it to work - but it created an impressive caricature after I did so.

Should you buy it?

The Samsung Galaxy S9+ shows enough promise to warrant serious investigation if you're in the market for a new smartphone.

Its camera, at least on paper, has the potential to shake up mobile photography, and its AR Emoji is even more useful and personal than Apple's iPhone X effort. If its high price doesn't put you off, the S9+ could be a solid investment.

Jennifer Dudley-Nicholson travelled to Barcelona as a guest of Samsung.



PHOTO: AP/MARCIO JOSE SANCHEZ

Apple: What to expect

Apple Pencil 2

The Apple logo with its flowing lines in the event invite is pretty much a dead giveaway that a new Apple Pencil is imminent.

In its current form, Apple's stylus only works with the Apple iPad Pro, so you can expect the next-gen version to be compatible with more devices.

That could include the new, cheaper iPad too.

MacBook Air

Unfortunately, Apple probably won't unveil a new MacBook Air - even though an education event seems like a fitting occasion for a laptop launch.

"We believe the chances of a new MacBook Air release next week are low," a commentator, Mr Ives, said.

Rather, WWDC will be the launching pad for a whole new product line from iPhones to iPads to new Macs.

WWDC (which stands for Worldwide Developers Conference) is an annual Apple event which takes place on June 4-8 in California.

"Next week we believe Apple will lay some breadcrumbs and hints for the major hardware releases that could be on the horizon in June which will be the focus for customers, and the rest of the Apple ecosystem," Mr Ives said.

So, maybe the company will instead tease a MacBook on March 27.

The rumour mill suggests a cheaper version of the current 13.3-inch MacBook Air is in the pipeline.

Why we never saw Apple's first MacPhone

APPLE revolutionised the phone when it unveiled the iPhone in 2007 - but what you might not know is that it wasn't the company's first attempt at innovating the classic household device.

Steve Jobs had actually dreamt up something called the MacPhone 23 years before the iPhone changed the world, but sadly the groovy-looking device never made it to store shelves.

According to former Apple marketer John Sculley, who Jobs lured from Pepsi, the Apple co-founder was dreaming up the MacPhone in 1984.

In fact, he was tasked with first bringing the idea to life because Jobs struggled to put



The MacPhone never made it to production, sadly. PHOTO: SUPPLIED

the concept onto paper.

"He was not a drawer, he was a great visionary but he couldn't draw," Mr Sculley once

told TechCrunch.

"I could draw, I had studied design."

"So Steve would describe it

to me, I'd draw it out."

Compared to today, Apple was struggling in the 1980s due to the high price tag of its computers and their lack of mainstream appeal. So at the time the company was bringing in new designers to imagine exciting new product concepts.

This is the environment that birthed the part stylus-operated tablet, part landline telephone - and it's kind of beautiful.

The company did make a few prototypes but, just like Apple's clothing range it brought out in the 80s, the MacPhone is little more than a distant memory now.

It's unclear why it never made it to the production line but Jobs left soon after.

Phone-obsessed teens less happy

HAPPINESS for teenagers is not a fully charged smartphone and thousands of Instagram followers.

A new psychology-led study has revealed that kids who are glued to a screen lack the joy found in adolescents who get outdoors, meet friends to laugh and chat or play sports.

The research also highlights that "screen teens" are markedly less happy than young people who read the printed word in magazines and newspapers.

But the findings show that total abstinence in screen time doesn't bring bliss.

The happiest teens use dig-

ital media a little less than an hour per day.

After a daily hour of screen time, unhappiness rises steadily as time passes.

The report has been published in the journal *Emotion*.

The Australian recommendation for screen time in teens is less than two hours daily.

"Aim to spend no more than two hours a day on digital media and try to increase the amount of time you spend seeing friends face-to-face and exercising - two activities reliably linked to greater happiness," professor of psychology Jean M. Twenge warns.