

100% Independent

MARCH 2023

THE CLARK INDEPENDENT

ANDREW WILKIE - YOUR INDEPENDENT FEDERAL MP



Traffic congestion a disgrace

Cars backed up for kilometres, numerous bus services cancelled and the community crying out for solutions. Hobart's traffic woes are increasing by the day and will only get worse unless something is done about it.

There is no spare capacity on our roads, and all it takes is a truck to fall on its side on the Tasman Bridge to cause widespread chaos. We saw this very thing in January when traffic was at a standstill in all directions. And we see it again every time school holidays end and the traffic grinds to a halt. Clearly there needs to be a better approach to the traffic congestion problem, with all options on the table.

A good start would be fixing Metro where daily cancellations of services are commonplace and drivers are leaving in droves. Clearly Hobart's main mode of public transport needs to be radically overhauled without delay, including

measures to better protect drivers and passengers from anti-social behavior, for instance by the introduction of safety barriers and transit officers, as well as better pay for staff and cheaper fares for the community. Seniors should travel for free.

Moreover Hobart's northern suburbs are set for an increase in dwellings and population, which will only see more cars on the road. The State Government needs to urgently activate the transit corridor, for example by building the light rail infrastructure it promised years ago. This would obviously provide welcome relief to those commuters who travel from the northern suburbs into the CBD.

Another solution would be for the State Government to invest in our bicycle network. It is self-evident that a series of interconnected cycling pathways around Hobart would help get cars off the road, lower the cost of living and improve the health of Tasmanians. One good thing to see already, though, is the expansion of the River

Derwent ferry service which seems to have been a great success. After all, it makes sense to effectively utilise the River Derwent as a transport link.

All of this will take pressure off the roads. But the reality is that some people will always rely on their car because of where they live, their health, when they need to travel and the complicated nature of their lives. So the State Government really needs to think big and come up with a credible plan for improving traffic flow, in particular on the Southern Outlet, Macquarie and Davey Streets, Brooker Highway and Tasman Bridge. The alternative is increasing deadlock, declining quality of living and a big hit to our economy.



Community upgrades

The community spirit is alive and well in Clark, with a number of important projects completed or well underway.



The Chigwell Community Garden was revamped after it suffered extensive water damage. Andrew secured \$15,000 for the upgrades through the Federal Government's Stronger Communities Partnership which went towards new fences, accessible garden beds, a veranda, a mural, new soil and gravel, and power to the site. The garden is an important asset for the community through its various programs and workshops, including its roadside food stall which provides produce from the garden to the community.



A makeover to Swan Street Park on the busy North Hobart strip has transformed the area into a vibrant space for all. The upgrade includes an amphitheatre-style urban street park, a children's maze, ample seating and new trees to provide shade for visitors. The Federal Government provided \$551,303 through the Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program.



Works to make the New Town shopping precinct safer have commenced after a three-year delay due to COVID-19. The works are largely funded by the Federal Government's Local Roads and Community Infrastructure Program and will include new pedestrian crossings, garden beds, benches and bike racks. This will make the area safer for pedestrians and provide opportunities for businesses to grow. A case of taxpayers' money well spent.

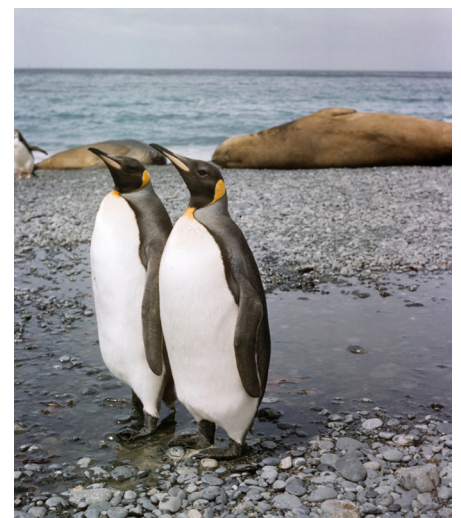
Environment update

Andrew was pleased to see the Federal Government commit to a raft of changes to the *Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act* (EPBC) in the wake of Professor Graeme Samuel's 2020 review. This includes strengthening environmental standards and establishing an independent environment protection agency, which will have the power to decide whether or not developments proceed and implement a system for identifying areas that should be fully protected from development.

The current EPBC Act is weak, outdated and fails to deliver positive environmental outcomes. But these reforms will go a significant way towards protecting threatened species and the ecosystem, as well as helping reverse the damage to the environment after years of neglect. But while these changes are good, a number of conservation groups have noted there are still shortcomings. Most notably, there is too little consideration of climate change on the environment, a lack of urgency in implementation and uncertainty over funding.

The plan to triple the size of the Macquarie Island Marine Park by the Federal Government is also a welcome move. The island and surrounding ocean is home to many species of seals, penguins, whales and birds, including the endangered Grey-headed Albatross, so it's vital that the area is protected. For fishing to be banned in most areas in the park is a step in the right direction to establishing Australia as a global environmental leader.

However, against this backdrop much controversy remains. For example, the Federal Government recently approved a big Santos gas project in Queensland. And the so-called Safeguard Mechanism – designed to keep Australia's biggest greenhouse emitters below a limit – is highly controversial and at risk of being blocked in the Senate.



New Parliament, same dodgy donations

Federal Parliament returned for 2023 and Andrew was quick to introduce his *Commonwealth Electoral Amendment (Cleaning up Political Donations) Bill*, which would help strengthen the transparency and accountability of political donations in Australia. The Australian Electoral Commission annual returns that were released in February once again highlighted how fundamentally broken Australia's political donations laws are. They showed that an absurd amount of money continued to be given to political parties, quite often by big corporate donors. Much of this was dark money, donations with no identifiable source, and that is because the current disclosure threshold for political donations of \$15,200 is far too high.

Certain sectors continue to unduly influence policy and decision-making in this country by handing over thousands or millions of dollars in donations and expecting a return on that investment. The gambling, fossil-fuel, liquor and tobacco industries all donated to politicians or a political party. No wonder trust in politicians is at an all-time low when parties are accepting what is akin to wads of cash in brown paper bags.

The creation of the National Anti-Corruption Commission is a start to restoring trust in politicians, and Andrew's Political Donations Bill would also help clean up corruption in Canberra. But there is a way to go and Andrew believes Australia must also legislate truth in political advertising, enhance media freedom and completely overhaul the country's whistleblower protection laws.

The community can be confident Andrew will continue to campaign on restoring integrity to politics. For example, last month he led the charge to hold the Communications Minister to account for accepting donations and hospitality from online gambling companies she now oversees.

Andrew's Cleaning up Political Donations Bill

- ✓ Requires real-time disclosure
- ✓ Lowers the donation disclosure threshold to \$1,000 aggregated
- ✓ Implements caps on donations and electoral expenditure
- ✓ Expands the definition of donation
- ✓ Prohibits political donations from sectors whose businesses cause direct harm to Australians, including the gambling, fossil-fuel, liquor and tobacco industries



Robodebt Royal Commission

Hearings for the Robodebt Royal Commission have come to a close after many brave Centrelink recipients took to the stand to testify how the illegal data-matching scheme destroyed their lives. They gave voice to the hundreds of thousands of people who received threatening letters demanding they repay a Centrelink debt or face prosecution. The Commission has also heard how the former Federal Government dodged multiple warnings that the scheme could be illegal.

Andrew played a central role in exposing Robodebt after many scared and confused people contacted his office. Indeed he was one of the first people to raise the issue publicly, and referred the matter repeatedly to the Ombudsman who instigated inquiries into the program. Andrew's work has been cited in the Royal Commission and by the Government in the new Parliament.

Shockingly, people are still receiving incorrect debt notices from Centrelink. But the Royal Commission findings will present an opportunity for the Federal Government to reset the social services system and introduce much-needed systemic reforms to Centrelink. Clearly Australians must have access to an effective income support system, and be treated with respect and dignity when accessing government services.

Community notice board

Recognising our local heroes

Too many people go unrecognised for their remarkable contribution to our community. So please consider nominating someone for an Australian honour or award and recognise their service to Australia.

To nominate an outstanding individual get a nomination form from www.gg.gov.au/australian-honours-and-awards, fill it out with the person's name and contact details, explain why they deserve recognition and list four referees to support the nomination. The selection process takes up to 24 months.

Glenorchy car sensors

Glenorchy City Council has installed 20 parking sensors along the Council chambers side of Main Road from Terry Street to Barry Street. These will help parking inspectors to enforce parking time limits.



Scams

A scam is a way of tricking people into handing over money or personal details. They can be in person, over the phone or online. Check out scamwatch.gov.au to find out about the latest scams.



Consumer advocate Choice has worked with the ACCC and Scamwatch to identify possible signs of an online scam:

- The website address is unusual.
- The price is too good to be true.
- The website content is missing info and full of typos.
- The reviews are bad.
- Payments methods are unusual.
- There's no padlock icon or trust seal.
- There's no Australian Business Number.

Duke of Edinburgh's International Award

The Duke of Edinburgh's International Award is a leading youth development program, empowering all young Australians aged 14-24 to explore their full potential and find their purpose, passion and place in the world. To achieve an Award, each young person must learn a skill, improve their physical well-being, volunteer in their community and experience a team adventure.

Through this challenging journey of self-discovery, Award participants:

- Are equipped and empowered to achieve their personal best.
- Learn to take responsibility for their goals and choices.
- Become connected to and actively engaged within their immediate community.
- Make a real difference to society through their positive contributions and involvement.
- Learn to persevere and overcome barriers to success.
- Learn important life skills.
- Increase their career opportunities.

2022 was the 60th anniversary of the Award operating in Tasmania. Statewide there are 50 schools and organisations licenced to deliver the Award to young Tasmanians and 1,000 take part in Tasmania each year.



Taroom resident Mark Halloran receiving his Silver Award from Andrew.

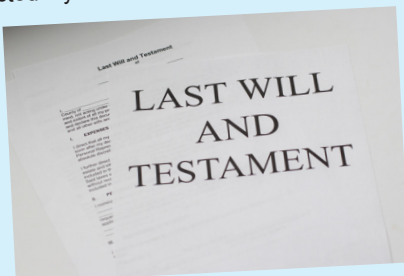
To find out more visit www.dukeofed.com.au/

Do you have a Will?

Approximately half of Australian adults do not have a Will. This is concerning because creating a Will and estate planning documents, such as an Enduring Power of Attorney and an Enduring Guardianship, are important considerations when making sure your assets are protected if you become incapacitated from an accident or illness, or when you pass away.

If you are unsure how to prepare these documents, you can contact a solicitor or the Public Trustee to help you.

To find out more visit www.publictrustee.tas.gov.au/



Want to get in touch with Andrew?

- Drop into the office at 188 Collins Street Hobart or post a letter to GPO Box 32 Hobart 7001
- Phone 6234 5255 or 6234 5861
- Email andrew.wilkie.mp@aph.gov.au
- Ask for a meeting

www.andrewwilkie.org

Migrant Resource Centre

The Migrant Resource Centre Tasmania has put the call out for volunteers to assist with their Learn to Drive Program. Volunteer driving supervisors are needed to help people from migrant and refugee backgrounds obtain their Tasmanian Driver's Licence. For more information visit <https://mrctas.org.au/women-volunteer-learner-driver-mentors-needed/>



Learner Biswash Bardewa with volunteer mentor Peter Flint

Migrant Resource Centre is a not-for-profit organisation that supports and empowers migrants and refugees to settle and live fulfilling lives in Tasmania.

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