

100% Independent

June 2023

# THE CLARK INDEPENDENT

ANDREW WILKIE - YOUR INDEPENDENT FEDERAL MP



## Voice to Parliament



### What is the Voice to Parliament?

Later this year, Australians will vote in a referendum on whether or not to change the Constitution to recognise First Nations People by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.

The Voice will be an independent body that gives advice to the Australian Parliament and Government on issues that affect the lives of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, with members chosen by First Nations People based on the wishes of local communities. It will be an advisory body and won't have veto power over policy and laws.

### Andrew's view on the Voice

"It's impossible to overstate how inherently important First Nations People are. For at least 65,000 years they have lived on this land, nurtured families, taken care of country and developed a rich and deep culture.

"But when the British landed in Australia in 1788 everything changed and, since then, First Nations People have been subjected to a paternalistic system. Yes, countless non-Indigenous Australians have laboured tirelessly to do the right thing by First Nations People. But many haven't, and systemically the whole approach consistently and horridly failed Indigenous communities.

"Eleven of the 15 Closing the Gap targets are not on track, and shamefully some are actually going backwards. First Nations People continue to have lower life expectancies, lower educational outcomes and higher suicide rates than non-Indigenous Australians. They continue to be overwhelmingly overrepresented in the criminal justice system in particular.

"I support a constitutionally-enshrined Voice to Parliament and look forward to voting yes in the Referendum later this year. It's way beyond time for us to listen to First Nations People, and it's way beyond time for them to have an effective say in the thinking, policies and laws that affect them."

### How the Referendum will work

All eligible Australians over the age of 18 must be enrolled to vote with the Australian Electoral Commission and vote in the Referendum. Similar to an election, you can vote in the Referendum at any polling place in Tasmania, which are usually located at schools, church halls and community centres. If you can't get to a polling place you can still vote by pre-poll, postal vote or from interstate or overseas.

For the Referendum to succeed, a double majority must vote 'yes' to the question. A double majority is a national majority and a majority of voters in at least four out of six states. The question voters will be asked to vote for on the ballot paper will be:

*"A Proposed Law: to alter the Constitution to recognise the First Peoples of Australia by establishing an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Voice.*

*Do you approve this proposed alteration?"*

# The fight for Julian Assange continues

Andrew recently stood beside Stella Assange in Parliament House to call for the Australian Government to ramp up its support for Julian Assange. Julian continues to be held in Belmarsh Prison in London and, as this newsletter was going to print, the news was breaking that he had just lost his application to appeal to the British High Court to stop his extradition to the United States. Julian is facing a lifetime in prison for exposing US war crimes in Iraq and Afghanistan.



Andrew at Parliament House with Stella Assange. They were joined by Julian's lawyer, Jennifer Robinson

Media freedom is a fundamental building block of any healthy democracy, with a free media facilitating the unrestrained flow of information within society. The political persecution of Walkley Award winning journalist Julian Assange strikes at the very heart of media freedom, as his extradition would set a frightening precedent for all journalists that they too are at risk of being locked up just for doing their job. And that should concern all of us.

In Question Time, Andrew asked Prime Minister Anthony Albanese whether he was going to meet with Stella Assange. Despite it being disappointing that the Prime Minister didn't agree to a meeting, it was heartening to hear him once again express his concern that Julian's incarceration had gone on long enough.

## Housing is a human right

Access to safe, secure and affordable housing is a fundamental human right. But right now, the undeniable reality is that there is a housing crisis in Tasmania and this right is denied to many in our state.

Homelessness in Tasmania has increased 44 per cent over the last five years, more than 4,500 people languish on the housing waiting list, 40,000 households confront the stress of high rents in the tight and competitive private rental market, and many homeowners are feeling the pinch as the Reserve Bank of Australia increases interest rates.

Demand for tourist accommodation, and in particular the use of whole dwellings for Airbnb, adds to the problem. And while there are record numbers of people sleeping rough, some homes are sitting empty. Indeed TasWater confirmed there were approximately 1,500 empty homes in the municipalities of Hobart and Glenorchy City Councils in 2021.

Andrew supported the Federal Government's Housing Australia Future Fund and was pleased to see a minimum build guarantee to ensure at least 1,200 affordable homes would be built here in Tasmania. But much more needs to be done.

Federal, state and local governments all have a role to play. For instance, the housing crisis needs a holistic solution including more public, social, supported and crisis accommodation, increased Commonwealth Rent Assistance and tax reform. And new Airbnbs should be limited to the original intent of renting out spare spaces. But so far many of the solutions proposed have not been implemented, which is why Andrew raised this issue in the Parliament and called for a Royal Commission to scrutinise the matter and recommend an authoritative blueprint that all levels of government can get behind.

## Salmon woes

Andrew recently met with the Tasmanian Independent Science Council to discuss their alternative vision for the Tasmanian salmon industry, dubbed PLAN B.

Despite the Tasmanian Government claiming its long-term Salmon Industry Plan will lead to a sustainable industry, healthy ecosystems, prosperous communities and contemporary governance, there are many shortcomings. With production having more than doubled in the last decade, the salmon industry has outgrown the science and regulatory frameworks that underpin it, which the Government plan doesn't address. The industry is having an increasing impact on our marine environment and failing to secure the community's trust.

Andrew urges the Government to look at PLAN B and pause further growth until existing operations are updated to limit biosecurity risks and ensure a clean and healthy environment so the industry is truly sustainable.

Andrew has long argued for a halt to industry expansion, farming to be restricted to deep water and, ultimately, a move to onshore closed loop farming.



Credit: Amy Brown



# AFL stadium divides community

Andrew recently relayed constituents' concerns with the proposed Macquarie Point stadium to AFL CEO Gillon McLachlan. While Andrew was very clear that just about everyone in Tasmania is delighted to get an AFL team, he was equally clear about the level of community opposition to the proposed stadium, not least because we don't need it and can't afford it.

Andrew also discussed with Mr McLachlan the lack of trust in the State Government and widespread skepticism that the Government can build the stadium on time and on budget.



*Andrew speaks at the Stop the Stadium Rally in Hobart*

The weight of community concern is reflected in:

- A poll of 2,541 people by Community Engagement in October 2022, for the ALP, found 67.3 per cent oppose the stadium.
- A poll of 1,099 people by uComms in May 2023, for "Our Place", put opposition at 61.3 per cent, with another 4.6 per cent don't know/not sure.
- A media release quoting the Tourism Industry Council Tasmania, Master Builders Tasmania and the Tasmanian Hospitality Association on 22 May 2023 described polling as showing only "modest" support for the stadium.

Polls are an imperfect tool, but so far they are painting a picture which is consistent with the weight of feedback Andrew is receiving directly from members of the community.

Andrew appreciates and respects the comments he has also received from those in favour of the stadium, but at the same time needs to represent the community's range of concerns to the AFL.

## Celebrating the best of us

Congratulations to all finalists and winners of the Hobart Community Awards:

- **Hobart Citizen of the Year** *Kelly Drummond Cawthon*
- **Hobart Young Citizen of the Year** *Gavin Quek*



The Glenorchy Community and Volunteer Awards recognised those people in the community who are doing great things:

- **Glenorchy Sports Achievement Award** *Arielle Cannell*
- **Glenorchy Business Person of the Year** *Belle Parker*
- **Glenorchy Senior Citizen of the Year** *Corrie Bartle*
- **Glenorchy Citizen of the Year** *Lucy Baker*
- **Glenorchy Local Hero Award** *John Shooobridge*
- **Glenorchy Young Citizen of the Year** *Emily Gamez*

## Health system lurches from bad to worse

Sadly the Tasmanian health system continues to lurch from crisis to crisis, with more than 8,000 people on the elective surgery wait list and countless people struggling to find a GP. The latest shocking episode has been the announcement by HealthScope that they're closing St Helen's Private Hospital in Hobart. St Helen's provides a range of important mental health services and operates Tasmania's only private inpatient mother and baby unit.

While the State Government has announced some extra mother and baby services at the Royal Hobart Hospital, they'll be limited to a handful of beds that will only be accessible for public psychiatry patients, and there will be no services available for private referrals from paediatricians and GPs. Andrew voiced his disapproval with the Government and was appalled by its entirely inadequate response that will restrict desperately needed care to only a small fraction of struggling families. He is now exploring solutions with interstate service providers as well as the Federal Health Minister.

In better news, the Federal Government has decided to keep funding the Heart Health Check and National Breastfeeding Helpline programs. The Federal Budget also contained the pleasing news about the tripling of the bulk billing incentive paid to GPs. While this is particularly good news for Tasmania, which has some of the lowest bulk billing rates in the country, much more needs to be done to lower the cost of healthcare.



# Community notice board

## Medicare Safety Nets

Medicare Safety Nets are to help lower your out of pocket expenses for out of hospital services, including seeing a doctor or specialist, and some tests and scans such as blood tests and CT scans. When you spend over a certain amount a year, you can get a higher amount back.

People are eligible if they're enrolled in Medicare. There is no need to register if you're an individual with no dependents, but you do need to register as a family or couple to combine costs.

Even if families are on the same Medicare card, you'll still have to register as a family for the safety net.

## Goal for Glenorchy Knights

Congratulations to the Glenorchy Knights Football Club who have officially acquired a Football Tasmania building at KGV Football Park.

With building plans finalised, the Knights are looking forward to starting the renovations and are confident that they will be completed by 31 March 2024 as a result of the funding that was secured by Andrew four years ago. The building will be a huge boost for the Club and will act as its new clubrooms for many years to come.



## Commonwealth Societies

The Combined Commonwealth Societies of Tasmania was established in 1945 to discuss Commonwealth matters and facilitate societies working together to plan Commonwealth related events across the State.

There are a number of Commonwealth societies in Tasmania that are self-funded and continue to work to provide a range of activities for their members.

These groups are the Royal Overseas League, the Royal Commonwealth Society, the National Flag Association, the Caledonian Society of Tasmania, the Welsh Society and Australians for Constitutional Monarchy.

To find out more email Stephen Jones at [stephenj1@iprimus.com.au](mailto:stephenj1@iprimus.com.au) or phone 0420 347 997

## 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](mailto:andrew.wilkie.mp@aph.gov.au)
- Ask for a meeting

[www.andrewwilkie.org](http://www.andrewwilkie.org)

## Beaker Street Festival

Beaker Street Festival is an annual celebration of science and culture in lutruwita/Tasmania. With events around nipaluna/Hobart and beyond, the Festival showcases Tasmania's impressive scientific talent and achievements, as well as giving the local community access to experts from around the country. The theme for this year's Festival is 'Unseen', giving participants a behind the scenes look at the science in everyday life.



To view the program of free and ticketed events taking place from August 4 to 13 visit [www.beakerstreet.com.au](http://www.beakerstreet.com.au)

## A Legacy to be remembered

Hobart Legacy have launched their new book, "Look after the Missus and Kids", which celebrates and tells the history of 100 years of Hobart Legacy from 1923 to 2023.

Hobart Legacy was originally unable to apply successfully for a Department of Veterans' Affairs Saluting Their Service grant. However, Andrew lobbied the Federal Minister for Veterans' Affairs to change the regulations and permit the funding of histories written about veterans' families.



Hobart Legacy president Peter Hodge presents Andrew with a copy of "Look after the Missus and Kids: A History of Hobart Legacy 1923 to 2023"

## Battle of Crete anniversary

The Cretan Association of Tasmania commemorated the 82nd anniversary of the Battle of Crete on May 28 with a service that honoured those who fought and died in the historic campaign.

There was an opportunity to lay a wreath at the Domain Cenotaph before a reception held at the Hellenic Hall.



Printed on 100% Australian-made environmentally-responsible paper  
Authorised by Andrew Wilkie MP 188 Collins Street Hobart 7000  
Printed by Mercury Walch 5 Bowen Road Moonah 7009