

100% Independent

April/May 2024

THE CLARK INDEPENDENT

ANDREW WILKIE - YOUR INDEPENDENT FEDERAL MP



Soaring cost of living...

Many Australians are under enormous financial pressure right now. From putting a roof overhead, to filling up the car with fuel, shopping for groceries, paying the power bill or going to the doctor, the cost is being felt and felt hard. In Tasmania, about a quarter of the population lives on an income that isn't enough to cover the basics. Andrew constantly hears alarming stories from people who have to choose between heating and eating, or going without healthcare so they can pay the rent and electricity bills. It's time for both the State and Federal Governments to urgently address these issues in the best interests of the Australian community.

...Solutions at hand

There's no shortage of good ideas to address the crippling cost of living. Nor is there any shortage of money for better government initiatives to help struggling members of the community. Indeed this financial year the Federal Government is forecast to spend \$684.1 billion, and the Tasmanian Government almost \$8 billion. It's simply a matter of priorities.

Andrew is always careful to take expert advice and is impressed by the Tasmanian Council of Social Service's state budget cost of living crisis priorities statement. Some of the highlights of the report are listed below.

- Creation of a lived experience advocacy program "to ensure people living on low or inadequate incomes have an avenue for their voices to be heard."
- Limit rent increases, review the *Residential Tenancy Act*, increase funding for homelessness and housing support services, and better regulate the short-stay sector.

- ✓ **120,000 Tasmanians living in poverty**
- ✓ **Record high 4,672 people on the Housing Register wait list**
- ✓ **51 per cent increase in median rent in Tasmania over five years**
- ✓ **One in five households can't afford to heat or cool their home to a comfortable level**
- ✓ **More than 126,000 Tasmanians skipped a meal or went entire days without eating in the past year**
- ✓ **7 per cent of people deferred seeing a GP due to cost**

- Extend the Energy Bill Relief Fund, improve access to energy concessions, upgrade home energy efficiency and facilitate an energy user advocacy program.
- Increase funding for food relief including emergency food relief, neighbourhood houses and the School Lunch Program.
- Genuinely prioritise fixing the health and mental inequity in Tasmania through earlier intervention, easier access and community-led local service delivery.
- Fix the transport mess with increased public transport subsidies, as well as a much more accessible and expanded public transport network.



State election outcome

The early Tasmanian state election resulted in 14 Liberal, 10 Labor, five Green, three Jacqui Lambie Network and three independent MPs voted in to the House of Assembly. Although the Liberals declared victory, no party achieved a majority and it's anyone's guess how well it will work.

What we do know for sure is that the result reflects the wishes of the community and it is incumbent on everyone who has been elected to try their best to make it work. What we also know for sure is that the power of the Liberal and Labor parties continue to wane as more and more voters throw their support behind minor parties and independents.



Stage 3 tax cuts

Andrew welcomed the Federal Government's Stage 3 tax cut changes as they will benefit many more Australians than just the wealthy.

Under the revised scheme, everyone earning under \$150,000 will receive a larger tax cut than previously legislated. Indeed according to Treasury, 87 per cent of taxpayers in Clark will be better off, with the average tax cut now being \$1,441.

However, more is needed to deliver cost-of-living relief to households across the country. Moreover, we're long overdue for genuine tax reform which can improve our progressive taxation system and ensure fairness for all Australians.



Greedy supermarkets

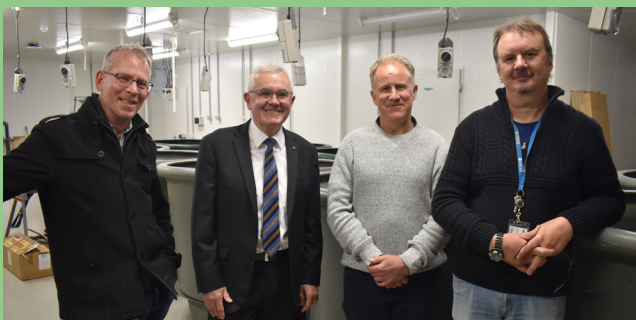
While Australians are struggling with the rising cost of living, Coles and Woolworths continue to make staggering profits. The supermarket giants constitute a whopping 65 per cent of Australia's grocery market, with Coles having reported \$1.1 billion in profits between 2022 and 2023 and Woolworths posting a \$1.62 billion profit on an operating margin twice that of many British supermarkets. While the Federal Government is looking at some reform, like a mandatory code of conduct, this is too little, too late.

Andrew seconded the Member for Kennedy, Bob Katter's, *Reducing Supermarket Dominance Bill 2024*, which would reduce the market share of any supermarket to no more than 20 per cent via enforced and progressive divestiture over five years.



Maugean skate survival at stake

Salmon farming in Macquarie Harbor continues to help drive the Maugean skate to extinction and Andrew believes it should be banned. This has been confirmed by the Federal Department of Environment's expert conservation advice which identified low dissolved oxygen as the primary threat to the skate. To quote from the report, "the most anthropogenic contributor to the oxygen debt in Macquarie Harbour is ongoing salmonid aquaculture". Moreover the report goes on to describe the consequences of current salmon farming on the skate as "catastrophic".



From left, Caleb Gardner, Andrew Wilkie, Jeff Ross and Jayson Semmens

Andrew recently visited the Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies to discuss the groundbreaking work that is being done to save the Maugean skate, including artificially oxygenating the water in Macquarie Harbour and a captive breeding program. The hard-working team is committed to continue its research in finding the best ways for the skate to thrive in the wild.

Andrew will impress upon the Federal Government the importance of continuing to fund these vital programs to ensure the survival of the Maugean skate.

Clark community snapshot

The community is now well into 2024, with sporting clubs preparing for the start of their season, community groups continuing to provide people with a place to come together, new infrastructure being built, and individuals demonstrating their outstanding skills.



Credit: Kelvin Ball

The updated Gibblins Reserve Playspace was recently opened to the public, with Andrew helping secure \$2 million from the Federal Government to bring it to life. The space is a wonderful addition to the Goodwood community and will provide a lot of joy to people of all ages with its all-abilities play equipment, multi sports area and barbecue facilities.

The Defence and Veterans Workshop recently unveiled a wall plaque recognising the official opening of new upgrades. This included the refurbishment and renovation of the amenities and administration area to provide the veteran and service community with a modern, safe and hazard free space. Andrew was delighted to have helped secure \$90,000 from the

Federal Government for the project. The Defence and Veterans Workshop helps current and ex-service personnel improve their mental health and wellbeing while learning new skills.

The North Hobart Football Club has been kicking goals in the lead up to the 2024 season. The Club has had a strong focus on fostering positive relationships with a wellbeing program that is improving the wellness of members and the community. For their outstanding work, the Club was awarded the Mental Health Excellence Award at the 2023 Good Sports Awards.



Andrew with North Hobart Football Club President David Kilpatrick



Members of the Defence and Veterans Workshop

Julian Assange update

As the Clark Independent goes to print, comments by United States President Joe Biden that they're considering dropping the charges against Julian Assange, gives some hope that the matter is coming to an end. Let's hope so because Mr Assange remains incarcerated in Belmarsh Prison in the United Kingdom. He is awaiting extradition to the US to face charges for material published in 2010, which revealed shocking evidence of misconduct by the US. Despite a small reprieve after the High Court of Justice delayed their decision on whether they will grant Mr Assange permission to appeal against his extradition, there is still the very real chance that Mr Assange could spend the rest of his life in a prison in the US. This would be a direct attack on media freedom, as it would set a frightening precedent for all journalists that they too are at risk of being locked up, just for doing their job.

Andrew attended Mr Assange's recent hearing in London as a Co-Chair of the Bring Julian Assange Home Parliamentary Group to convey the belief from the Australian community that the matter must end. Moreover the House of Representatives recently voted overwhelmingly in favour of Andrew's motion calling on the UK and US Governments to allow Mr Assange to return home. The vote, supported by Australian Prime Minister Anthony Albanese and his Cabinet, marked an unprecedented show of political support for Mr Assange by the Australian Parliament.



Community notice board

Anniversary messages

People celebrating a significant birthday or wedding anniversary can receive a personal congratulations from the Prime Minister, the Governor-General and His Majesty The King. You can receive a message from the King for your 60th, 65th and 70th wedding anniversary, as well your 100th and 105th birthday. Other eligible milestones, including 50th wedding anniversaries and 90th birthday, will receive a message from the Prime Minister, Governor-General and Premier.



Please contact my office at andrew.wilkie.mp@aph.gov.au or 6234 5255, or complete a form online at www.pmc.gov.au/government/anniversary-messages

Dress for Success

Dress for Success Tasmania supports women across Tasmania to access the tools and support they need to enter or re-enter the workforce. They provide free interview training, employment clothing styling and career support. The clothing is gifted to clients with no requirement for it to be returned, with the aim of building confidence from the inside out. Career support can help women improve their resume to help them get an interview to find work.

If you want to find out more about their free programs and how you or someone you know can access them, reach out to clients@dressforsuccesstas.org

Dress for Success is powered by a group of dedicated and experienced volunteers. If you'd like to get involved in Hobart, Launceston or Devonport, reach out to find more information at volunteers@dressforsuccesstas.org



St John's Church shines bright

Andrew recently visited St John the Baptist Catholic Church in Glenorchy to view its five Dalles de Verre (slab-glass) windows. The technique of creating slab-glass windows differs from stained glass techniques as it uses thicker glass, resulting in much more vibrant and deeper colours.



The windows were made one by one over the past three decades by local artisan Michael Nunn, who learnt the technique from Dom Charles Norris at Buckfast Abbey in the United Kingdom in 1989.

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

Island defended



Well done to the the Tasmania JackJumpers on their historic win over Melbourne United in the NBL Championship series for the 2023/2024 season.

In its first three seasons in the League, the JackJumpers have reached the championship series twice along with a semi-final playoff series. In winning the most recent championship series, they have become the most successful expansion team in any sporting code in Australia.

This is a testament to the hard work the players, coaches and staff have put into building the team and organisation, as well as uniting the community.

Be prepared this flu season

With winter right around the corner, now is the time to consider getting your flu shot to protect yourself and those around you. The peak of influenza season is typically June through to September.

If you choose to get a flu vaccine, you can talk to your local GP or pharmacist to understand which is the right vaccine for you.

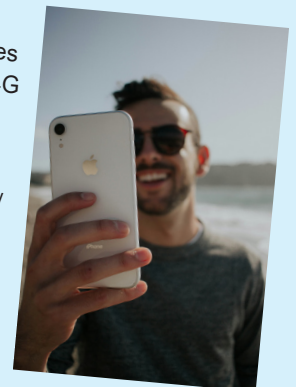


3G shutdown

Australia's three mobile network operators – TPG Telecom (Vodafone), Telstra and Optus – have announced the closure of their 3G networks. TPG Telecom has already commenced its switch-off from 15 December 2023, Telstra will switch-off its 3G network on 30 June 2024, and Optus will switch-off its 3G network in September 2024.

The Australian Mobile Telecommunications Association is urging all Australians to prepare by upgrading their affected devices to ensure they have connection to faster 4G and 5G mobile services.

More information for the Telstra switch-off can be found at <https://www.telstra.com.au/support/mobiles-devices/3g-closure#3g-closure> or by phoning Telstra on 13 22 00. For more information on the Optus switch-off, visit one of the stores in Clark or phone 1300 219 070.



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