



Bonorong Director Greg Irons rolls out his tricycle for the Wild Ride fundraiser. Picture: Linda Higginson

HOP TO IT FOR YOUR WILD RIDE

Get your wheels spinning to help raise funds for Bonorong



P5

Abetz in, rogues snubbed

Duncan Abey

The political resurrection of former long-time Tasmanian Senator Eric Abetz has been officially signed off, with the Liberal stalwart's preselection ratified by party bosses ahead of the next state election.

But the door has been slammed on a potential return to the Liberal fold by renegade former party members John Tucker and Lara Alexander, with state director Peter Coulson confirming the MPs had not sought preselection, and would definitely not be considered should they apply.

While Mr Abetz's place on the Liberal ticket all but assured after a vote by the party's rank-and-file over the weekend, his preselection still needed to be confirmed by the state executive.

Mr Abetz spent 28 years in the Senate, serving as a senior minister in both the Howard and Abbott governments.

FULL STORY, PAGE 3

HOBART RENT RELIEF



Listings go up as property asking prices go down

Jarrad Bevan

Rental asking prices decreased while listings grew in Hobart last year, a rental report has revealed.

PropTrack's Rental Report December 2023 shows the southern most capital city recorded Australia's largest change in the total number of listings, while most cities recorded a decline. There was a moderate listings lift of 2.2 per cent per cent in Brisbane and 13 per cent in Darwin, but Hobart rental options skyrocketed by 22.2 per cent.

FULL STORY, PAGE 5

FARRELL INQUEST
STORY PAGE 4

'BUCK PASSING'
SEE PAGES 6-7

SINNER'S A GRINNER
STORY, SPORT

FORESTRY GRANT

Residue wood into treated timber items

Resources Minister Felix Ellis has attended the opening of an upgraded timber mill at Gowrie Park in the state's northwest, which received a \$147,000 grant from the government's On Island Processing Program.

Mr Ellis said Bakes Sawmill had installed new wood-treatment equipment to turn 420 cubic metres of chipped residue wood into treated timber for a range of products for construction and industry.

"Bakes Sawmill is one of seven Tasmanian timber processing facilities to share in a \$6m investment through the first round of the On-Island Processing Program to help the forestry sector turn existing wood supplies, as well as wood residues, into higher-value products," Mr Ellis said.

"The program is also helping to improve timber recovery processes," he said.

COVID RESEARCH

Victorians not ones to drown sorrows

Victorian alcohol drinking habits did not change as much as expected during the Covid pandemic in comparison to the rest of Australia, according to Australian experts.

La Trobe University and Curtin University researchers surveyed 775 adults about their drinking habits in six waves over April to December 2020, asking them about how their drinking had changed since 2019 amid the pandemic, and comparing Victorians to residents of other states, given their strict lockdowns.

The researchers say there were no clear ongoing differences between Victoria and other states.



Totally wild for Bonorong fundraiser

Greg Irons hops on his tricycle as part of Wild Ride fundraising initiative. Picture: Linda Higginson

Stephanie Dalton

Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary is calling on Tasmanians to grab their bikes, skateboards, or even pogo sticks to help support the region's native fauna.

The sanctuary is launching an annual fundraising campaign – Wild Ride – to raise cash and awareness for Bonorong's rescue, critical care hospital, and rehabilitation animal care services.

Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary director Greg Irons said maintaining the sanctuary's critical work presented many financial challenges.

"Last year, we had over 17,000 calls for assistance with animal safety, and those figures are not decreasing," Mr Irons said.

"As it stands, the sanctuary's annual costs for conservation-based and wildlife services exceeds \$1.7m."

Mr Irons said anyone can

take part in the fundraiser, and participants can register either as a team or as individuals.

"Wild Rides can range from covering extensive kilometres cycling, to commuting on a kid's bike, to navigating the workplace on a pogo stick for a day; the opportunities are endless," he said.

"It doesn't matter what it is people do, and no matter their fitness or mobility level, everyone can get involved."

Listings up, rents go down

City records biggest shift

Jarrad Bevan

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There was a moderate listings lift of 2.2 per cent in Brisbane and 13 per cent in Darwin. Hobart rental options skyrocketed by 22.2 per cent.

At the same time, the annual change in median weekly advertised rents saw Hobart pull in the opposite direction to the rest of the country. Hobart rents decreased 4.8 per cent to December 2023 while Sydney and Melbourne grew by 16.7 and 18.3 per cent, Brisbane 9.1 per cent and Adelaide 12.5 per cent.

While a decrease of almost 5 per cent is substantial, the latest data shows Hobart remains expensive for many households.

PropTrack figures for all rental homes – houses and units combined – puts the "all dwellings" median at \$500 per week. This was up by 1 per cent over the previous quarter.

Hobart houses sit at \$550 per week, about the same as Adelaide and Melbourne. The

median for units is \$460, down 3.2 per cent annually.

In regional Tasmania, the median house rent is \$450 per week, up 2.3 per cent compared year-on-year. Units were down 1.3 per cent to a median of \$375 per week.

The research from PropTrack director of economic research Cameron Kusher found Hobart's median rental days on realestate.com.au was 22, seven days longer than it was in the previous year.

He found Hobart's rental vacancy rate rose slightly from 0.7 per cent to 1 per cent in December. In regional Tassie areas, the 0.8 per cent vacancy rate was the second lowest in the country. Mr Kusher said investors were still exiting the market.

"Construction remains a challenge, with high build costs, limited labour availability and decade-high financing costs resulting in dwelling approvals and commencements sitting at their lowest level in 10 years."

Real Estate Institute of Tasmania president Michael Walsh said while rental availability had improved, often these properties remained too expensive for people on lower wages. He said there can be a "world of difference" between the price of a new rental and a basic rental budget.