

# Opinion OURS & YOURS

THE VOICE OF TASMANIA

## MERCURY

HABITAT TOURS

### Guardians of the platypus

The platypus, one of nature's most extraordinary creatures, is a living reminder of the diversity and wonder of Australia's wildlife. With its duck-like bill, webbed feet and beaver-like tail, this semiaquatic mammal defies traditional biological classifications, representing one of just two families of monotremes – egg-laying mammals – on the planet.

Despite its evolutionary marvel, the platypus faces growing threats to its habitat, particularly in regions like the Hobart Rivulet.

This vital watercourse running through the heart of the city is home to a small but significant population of platypuses.

However, these animals are under persistent environmental pressure from pollution, urban development and habitat disruption. Run-off containing chemicals, increased litter and human activity all contribute to degrading their fragile ecosystem.

Public awareness and community engagement are critical to safeguarding these

remarkable creatures. Programs like the Hobart Rivulet Platypus Project play a crucial role in monitoring populations, restoring habitats and educating people about the importance of conservation.

By fostering a connection between residents and the platypus, the project inspires action and empowers individuals to contribute to protecting this unique species.

Project founder Pete Walsh is hosting informative walks through the rivulet over the summer, talking about platypus habitats, behaviours, challenges, his best platypus-spotting strategies and his favourite fun facts.

Learning about the platypus is more than an exercise in appreciating biodiversity; it is a call to stewardship.

We must ensure that future generations have the opportunity to marvel at these animals in the wild. Supporting conservation initiatives and raising awareness are essential steps in preserving both the platypus and the health of our shared environment.

Responsibility for all editorial election comment is taken by the Editor, Craig Herbert, ground floor, 2 Salamanca Square, Hobart, Tas, 7000.

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## Letters

### Signs a distraction from real problem

Beth Rees asks, "Why are we cluttering (our roads) with ugly electronic billboards?" (Mercury, January 6). I think I can answer that question.

It is useful to see the issue from the point of view of our traffic authorities. They can't afford to fix the problem, so they don't, but they want to be seen to be doing something, so they spend what little money they have to erect expensive signs to tell motorists stuck in a traffic jam that they are stuck in a traffic jam.

I think there is a modern management theory that predicts that if motorists become really angry about the signs, they'll become less angry about being stuck in the traffic jam. Although these signs are expensive, they are less expensive than anything that might fix the problem, and they aren't just ugly, they are conspicuously ugly and announce proudly, "Look what we are doing to waste your money". Politically, they are wonderful.

Keith Anderson  
Kingston

#### Bless you Mike

Bless you Mike. Thank you so much for stopping to pick up my husband's phone at the Bunnings traffic lights and delivering it personally to our home. Our world would be a much better place if there were more Mikes around. What a gem!

Lynne King  
Rose Bay

#### Boost policing

Comparing the activities and results of last year's Tasmania Police Operation Safe Arrival operations to



An electronic highway signboard near Hobart Airport. Picture: Supplied

annual 2023-24 statistics, officers conducted nearly 400 per cent more random alcohol and drug tests per day, 1400 compared to 360, resulting in 150 per cent more drink and drug driving offenders and 160 per cent more speeding offenders, 80 compared to 50.

It is interesting to note that the percentage of random alcohol and drug tests resulting in prosecution is 2.5 per cent annually but 1 per cent during Operation Safe Arrival. Perhaps this indicates that the visibility and publicity of such operations has changed driver's behaviour. Surely this high level of traffic policing should be every day and not just several times a year?

Stephen Coombs  
Trevallyn

#### Being pig-headed

Following the release of the Gruen report on the proposed stadium, surely the government must realise

that "we've made up our mind, so don't confuse us with the facts" is an approach that is no longer tenable. Rather than continue to dig itself deeper and deeper into a hole of its own making, it would be better in the longer term if it accepted reality and took on board the recommendations of Mr Gruen.

Continuing down the current path of insisting that Macquarie Point is the only viable location (it isn't), that the stadium can be built for \$775m (it can't) and that it will be economically beneficial to the state (it won't be) is just being pig-headed. Far better to turn back the clock, renegotiate the contract with the AFL, and take a more flexible and consultative approach. That way, we should end up with a stadium that has greater community support and stands a chance of being economically viable.

That, at any rate, is what we should expect from a government that genuinely has the interests of its

## Quick Views

#### Bridge memories

I remember exactly the time when the Tasman Bridge went down. I was working at Government House and had a birds-eye view of everything that was happening.

William McLachlan  
Miandetta

#### Solar solution

Houses built in California after January 1, 2020, must have solar electric systems on their roofs during the construction phase. Why not have similar legislation enacted in Tasmania and Australia? Less electrical energy would have to be

used to meet consumer electrical needs. In Tasmania more electricity could be generated and sold to the mainland. The initial cost of installing solar during construction will be offset by big savings on electrical bills in the long run. In California the savings are estimated to be \$480 US per year on a typical mortgage or \$19,000 US over the course of a 30-year mortgage.

Bob Buell  
Sandford

#### Better growth

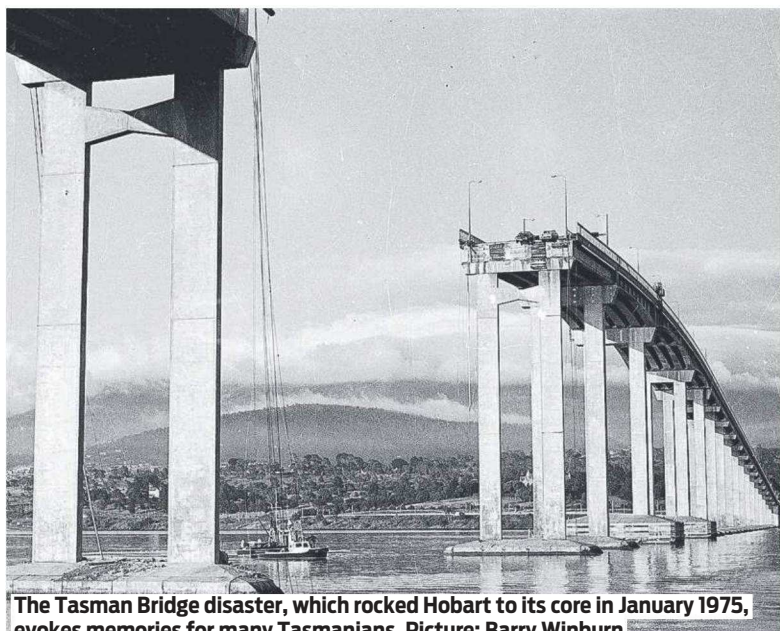
"Jobs and growth!" The slogan often used by our major political parties. But the growth required means more

stuff and more environmental degradation. Can we have growth without destruction? Well yes: growth of each person's mental capacity, knowledge, understanding, social connection. Lifelong education can enrich our lives without the need for too many things. Tip shops should look after those.

Rob Hill  
Howrah

#### Plant a tree

It is obvious that the witches hat planted about two years ago in the centre of Regent St's avenue of trees has not grown one millimetre. If only a lovely young sapling had been



The Tasman Bridge disaster, which rocked Hobart to its core in January 1975, evokes memories for many Tasmanians. Picture: Barry Winburn