

We're very independent

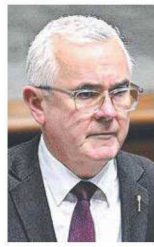
Survey reveals Tasmanians not keen on voting for two main parties

David Killick

A large proportion of the electorate remains undecided about who to support in the upcoming federal election, the Mercury's Big Issues Survey has revealed.

The survey has also revealed the most popular politician, who led the field by a country mile.

A question on party preferences revealed 29 per cent of 3008 respondents were undecided and another 15 per cent were leaning towards independent candidates.



Federal Independent MP Andrew Wilkie.

Among the established parties, 25 per cent of respondents nominated the Liberals as their first choice, 20 per cent Labor and 10 per cent the Greens.

At the 2022 federal election around 33 per cent of Tasmanians voted for Liberal candi-

dates, 27 per cent for Labor candidates, 12 per cent for Greens and 11.5 per cent for independents.

The preference for independents made itself felt in the response to a question about which Tasmanian politician respondents admired the most.

Independent federal member for Clark Andrew Wilkie easily topped the poll with 438 nominations from 2400 responses.

Premier Jeremy Rockliff came in second with 282 nominations, followed by "none" with 265.

Opposition Leader Dean Winter tied with independent member for Franklin David O'Byrne on 64. Greens leader Rosalie Woodruff received 46 nominations.

Anthony Albanese was the pick of the federal politicians with 211 respondents nominating him. Federal opposition leader Peter Dutton was most admired by 29 respondents.

Minister for Transport Eric Abetz proved popular too with 95 nominations, ahead of Jacqui Lambie with 92, Bridget Archer with 70, Labor MP Rebecca White on 60, indepen-



dent MLC Ruth Forrest with 58 and Meg Webb, who received 56.

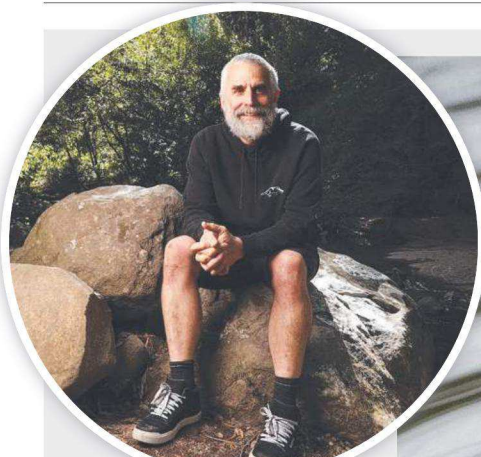
Among others mentioned

were David Pocock, Foreign Minister Penny Wong, former premiers Jim Bacon and David Bartlett, federal Treasurer Jim Chalmers, Greens senator Max Chandler-Mather and former Greens leader Bob Brown

The same question was not asked in the 2023 survey, but 42 per cent of respondents indicated they were planning to vote for an independent at the next state election.

About 31 per cent of voters at the 2024 election chose candidates who were Labor, Liberal or the Greens candidates.

david.killick@news.com.au



Platypus guardian Pete Walsh. Picture: Nikki Davis-Jones

Special guest shows up for rivulet walk

Elise Kaine

Platypus are "amazing creatures" with plenty of hidden talents and "gadgets" according to the "platypus guardian" Pete Walsh, who is hosting informative walks through the rivulet over the summer.

Mr Walsh will teach participants about platypus

habitats, behaviours, challenges, his best platypus-spotting strategies and his favourite fun facts.

"The females, just for a few days a year, their tails turn into another hand and they use that when they are collecting their nesting materials with their bill and they tuck it in their curled up tail. They will do it non-stop

for 12 hours just collecting stuff and taking it back to the nesting burrow.

"When you see that happening in front of you it is just amazing," Mr Walsh said ahead of the first platypus walk summer field trip in partnership with Beaker Street.

Mr Walsh has hosted walks during the Beaker Street

Festival with a 100 per cent platypus spotting success rate for each tour.

He will host a regular walk and a family-friendly mini-walk over four dates in January and February.

Mr Walsh said platypus spurs and venom were some of his favourite "gadgets" as well as heat exchanging blood vessels that allow the

monotreme to be in freezing waters all day.

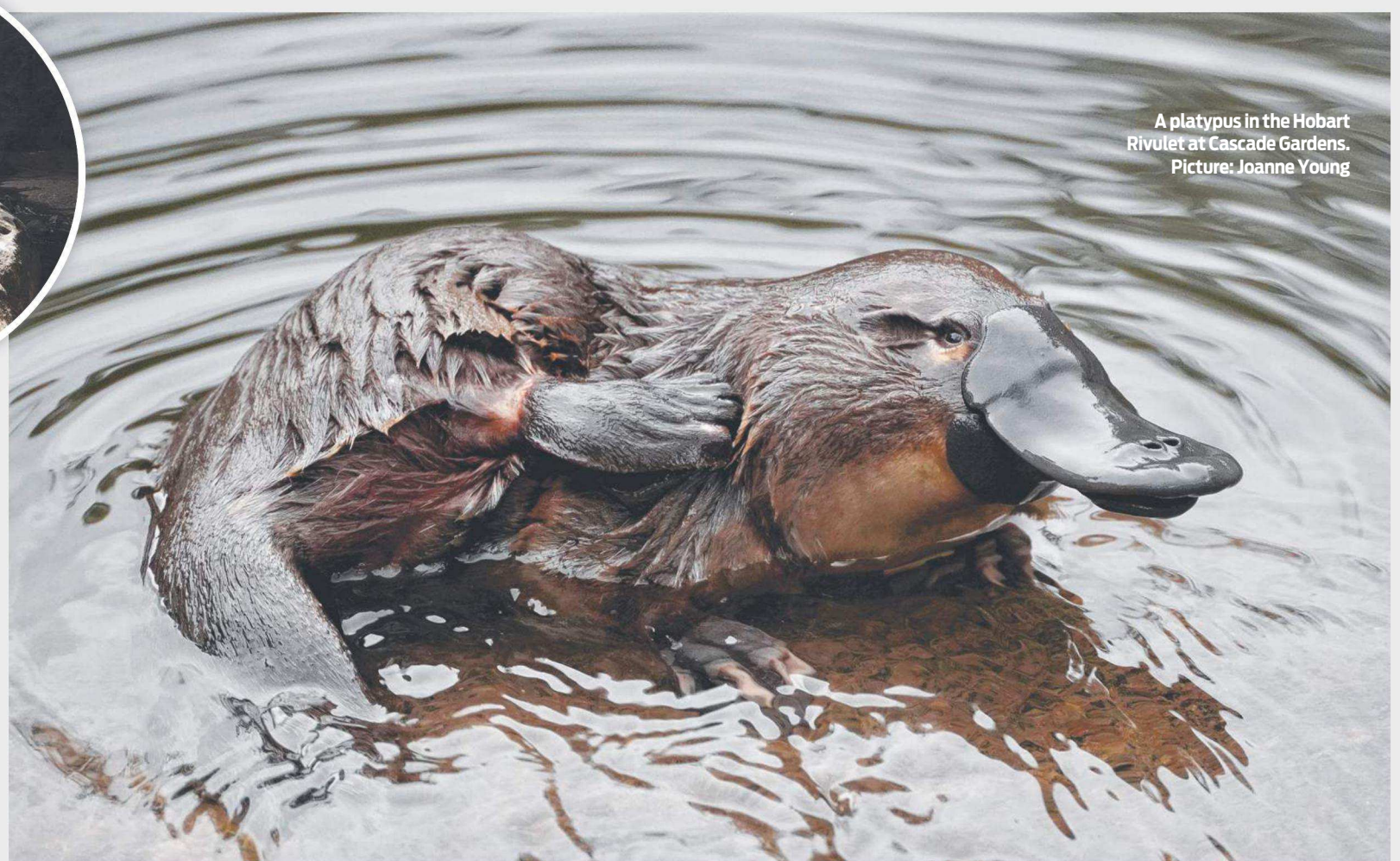
"I could last about five minutes without a wetsuit but they've got a few gadgets inside their body that let them do that," Mr Walsh said.

The South Hobart resident became the face for the plight of the Hobart Rivulet platypus after he started observing them during Covid-

19 lockdowns and came across a platypus that had a plastic band around its bill.

He said in that moment he realised he "had to do something, not just enjoy nature but care for it actively".

Information and tickets for the walks at https://www.beakerstreet.com.au/field_trips/platypus-walks/



A platypus in the Hobart Rivulet at Cascade Gardens. Picture: Joanne Young

Human dies of bird flu

WASHINGTON: The first human death linked to bird flu has been reported in the US, authorities in Louisiana announced, noting the patient had other ailments.

The patient, aged over 65, had been hospitalised for a respiratory ailment, and was the first serious case of human infection of the H5N1 virus to be detected in the US.

The announcement in mid-December of the patient in a

"critical condition" sparked alarm that the US faced a possible bird flu pandemic.

"The patient contracted H5N1 after exposure to a combination of a non-commercial backyard flock and wild birds," the Louisiana Department of Health said.

The public health risk posed by bird flu remained "low," it said, adding that it had detected no human-to-human transmission.

Drunk, no helmet, no licence, no sense

A man is lucky to have not killed or seriously injured himself after allegedly breaking multiple laws while riding a trial bike, officers say.

Police reported the 35-year-old was intercepted by officers in Queenstown on Saturday.

They allege he was riding an unregistered and uninsured trial bike on a public street while under the influence of alcohol and not wearing a helmet and without a licence.

The incident, reportedly around 7.35pm, is believed to have occurred on Peters St.

"At the time he was not wearing a helmet, and he does not have a motorcycle endorsement on his driver's licence," said Acting Inspector Martin Parker.

"The man was transported to Queenstown Police Station for a breath analysis where he returned a positive result."

He warned riding an unreg-

istered trail bike on a public street without a licence, while not wearing a helmet and being under the influence of alcohol could have a devastating outcome.

"This man was lucky to have not killed or seriously injured himself or someone else in a crash.

"If you're riding a motorcycle, always obey all road rules, to help us keep everyone safe."

The 35-year-old man was

charged with multiple road offences.

He was bailed to appear in the Queenstown Magistrates Court on April 14.

Meanwhile, crash involving a truck and a car about 2.45pm at Exeter closed Main Road for more than two hours on Tuesday. Traffic was diverted around the scene. A person was taken by ambulance to the Launceston General Hospital in a serious condition.