



# Llew O'BRIEN

Federal Member for **Wide Bay**

**Summer Newsletter 2023-24**



## A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE FROM *Llew*

As 2023 draws to a close I wish everyone a safe and joyous festive season with family and friends.

The spirit of Christmas is encapsulated in the expression of peace and goodwill, where we celebrate the birth of Jesus Christ, and remember those less fortunate than ourselves and consider how we can share the Christian message of hope, love and salvation.

While there is still much to be done to address disadvantage on our own shores, the tragedy of conflicts in Europe, the Middle East, and other volatile parts of the globe remind us of how fortunate we are to live in a united, peaceful, and democratic nation.

Next year, we look forward to the opening of the Gympie bypass, which will transform one of the deadliest sections of the national highway into the safest. We now need the Federal Government to deliver the funding committed by the former Coalition Government for the four lane Tiaro bypass and the Queensland State Government to fast track the project.

On a positive note for Wide Bay, a number of funding commitments from the former Coalition Government have been honoured by the Federal Government, including a \$1.5 million expansion of palliative care services at Katie Rose Cottage in Doonan,

enabling them to offer end of life care to an extra 40 people and their families each year.

Other funded projects include a \$1.3 million expansion of the car park at the Noosa Golf Club to improve safety on the Cooroy-Noosa Road, a \$700,000 upgrade to the Maryborough Military and Colonial Museum, and \$1.8 million to create a new Veterans Memorial at Gympie's Memorial Park.

Your safety on the road is always at the forefront of my mind. This holiday season will be particularly busy and a number of roadworks are planned along the Bruce Highway. Please take extra time and drive to the conditions to arrive at your destination safely.

Also, as we move into 2024, please remember that shopping locally and buying Australian-made helps create jobs and boosts our regional economy.

I wish everyone in Wide Bay a safe and happy Christmas and healthy and prosperous New Year.

- Llew O'Brien



*The O'Brien Family*

## SALUTING THEIR SERVICE

Australia owes a great debt to our Veterans and in the lead up to Anzac Day 2023 I had the honour of meeting some of our local Veterans to present them with Certificates of Appreciation and thank them for their service.



*Tewantin Noosa RSL Sub-Branch*



*Gympie RSL Sub-Branch*



*Maryborough RSL Sub-Branch*



*Murgon RSL Sub-Branch*



# STRONGER COMMUNITIES PROGRAM DELIVERS FOR WIDE BAY



*Tinana Football Club*



*Lupton Park Community Garden Maryborough*



*Glenwood Community Centre*



*Kandanga Tennis Club*

A range of community, sporting, and service groups received funding from Round 8 of the Stronger Communities Program to purchase equipment or undertake small capital projects that help strengthen the community.

\$150,000 was shared between eligible groups for a variety of projects across the Wide Bay electorate.



*Maryborough Amateur Athletics*



*Georoy Gymnastics Club*



*Noosa Museum*



*South Burnett PCYC*



*Kin Kin Community House*



*Boonooroo Coast Guard*



*Australian Institute of Country Music Gympie*



# FREE SPEECH AT RISK UNDER LABOR'S MISINFORMATION BILL

Over the last few months I have received many letters and emails expressing concern about the Albanese Labor Government's proposed Communications Legislation Amendment (*Combatting Misinformation and Disinformation*) Bill 2023.

If passed, this legislation would attack one of the cornerstones of our democracy, our freedom of speech and expression, by giving the Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) extraordinary powers to compel Australians to appear to answer allegations of misinformation or disinformation.

If people refuse to appear, they would face hefty fines. Under the proposed legislation, there would be one rule for Government Members of Parliament and a different one for the public who just want to have their say.

If the Bill passes, digital companies could end up censoring comments or legitimately held views to avoid the risk of massive fines.

## Some of the problems with the Bill include:

- The definition of "misinformation" is so broad that it could capture many statements made by Australians in the context of political debate;
- Authorised content by the Albanese Government can't be misinformation, but criticisms of the Albanese Government by Australians can be misinformation;

- Good faith statements made by entertainers cannot be misinformation, but good faith statements made by Australians on political matters can be misinformation;
- Journalists commenting on their personal digital platforms could have their content removed as misinformation.

The Albanese Government consistently uses the term 'misinformation' to describe opinions that it doesn't like. Now, they want to make Government officials the arbiter of truth through their Misinformation Bill.

Earlier this year people were invited to have their say on these draft laws and more than 23,000 comments were provided, yet the Albanese Government is only going to publish 2,500 of these responses.

The Human Rights Commission, the Law Council, Media Union, and civil liberties groups have spoken out against the Bill and labelled it as a threat to free speech.

You can join the fight against this dangerous piece of legislation by visiting [www.binthebill.au](http://www.binthebill.au) and signing the petition.

**This Bill is fundamentally flawed and threatens free speech, and I strongly oppose it.**

## THE VOICE REJECTED – BUT REAL ACTION NEEDED

The Albanese Labor Government's proposed Voice to Parliament and Executive Government was resoundingly rejected by the Australian people on October 14, with every State saying No. The Australian Capital Territory was the only jurisdiction where support for Yes outweighed the support for No.

Nationally, 60.07% of voters chose No, and here in Wide Bay, 74.82% of voters chose No. It is disappointing that the Prime Minister set our nation on this very expensive \$450 million and potentially divisive course.

I'm confident that every Australian wants to close the gap and help Indigenous Australians in disadvantaged communities, but the Prime Minister failed to explain how enshrining the Voice in our Constitution would actually make a difference on the ground.

Claims that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples do not already have a voice are untrue.

There are 11 Indigenous politicians in the Australian Parliament today. We have a Minister for Indigenous Australians, a Shadow Minister for Indigenous Australians, an Indigenous Ambassador for First Nations People, there are Indigenous advocates, Commissioners, and the Coalition of Peaks – made up of more than 80 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community-controlled organisations, and the National Indigenous Australians Agency.

Indigenous Australians also have a voice through the over

3000 bodies that receive more than \$5.3 billion of Indigenous-specific funding designed to improve the lives of our most marginalised, particularly the nearly 140,000 Indigenous Australians living in remote or very remote areas.

The Albanese Labor Government failed to provide any detail on how its Voice would make a real and practical difference to improve the lives of the most marginalised and disadvantaged, how it would prevent family and domestic violence, end poverty, or help children into school.

These are all matters which require urgent attention and practical action.

The Coalition is calling on the Government to commission an audit into spending on Indigenous programs so we can see what is working and what isn't, so we can target policies, resourcing and funding to where it is needed.

The divisive referendum was rejected and now the Government must focus on delivering real solutions for all disadvantaged Australians who need assistance.

*"If we want to move forward, we must acknowledge that the people who need our help most in this country are not all Indigenous Australians, just as not all Indigenous Australians need our help." – Senator Jacinta Nampijinpa Price*





# SENATE INQUIRY NEEDED INTO IMPACTS OF TRANSMISSION LINES

While renewable energy sources such as roof top solar have their place in supporting our energy needs, the rapid rate of industrial scale renewable energy projects and their associated transmission lines are taking a devastating toll on private property, prime agricultural land, wildlife habitat, and the environment in regional communities.

In August I joined my Federal colleagues David Littleproud, Keith Pitt, Michelle Landry, Colin Boyce, and Senators Bridget McKenzie, Matt Canavan, Gerard Rennick, and State Members Deb Frecklington and Tony Perrett at the Rally Against Reckless Renewables outside Queensland's Parliament House to voice our concerns about the impacts of the Albanese Government's \$80 billion plan to carve up to 28,000 kilometres of new high-voltage transmission lines through regional areas to link industrial sized, land-intensive solar, wind, and pumped hydro to the grid.

Currently, renewables supply about 30 percent of our electricity. To meet the Albanese Government's renewable energy target, this will need to almost triple to supply 82 per cent of our electricity by 2030.

This level of renewable reliance is not achieved by any comparable country, with Iceland only achieving 80 per cent because of its huge capacity for hydro - and Australia is the driest inhabited continent in the world. This weighting of renewables is not something that should be rushed into, and these are not projects that should be given the green light just because they claim to be renewable.

Indeed, so called green energy does not come free from environmental consequences. We need to pause and plan and ensure these projects have a social licence first.

Wide Bay is currently a major battleground where local property owners are standing up for their rights over two renewable projects.

The Borumba Pumped Hydro project in the pristine Mary Valley will dramatically impact the local habitat of endangered and critically endangered fauna and flora, including the northern quoll, koala, and native guava.

Transmission lines from the Borumba Pumped Hydro proposal would impact freehold properties from Borumba through the South Burnett and Kilkivan to Woolooga and destroy kilometres of native forest. A corridor would be bulldozed through these properties and 70 metre high, 500 kilovolt power pylons made of 75 tonnes of steel with 20 metres of concrete foundations, will cobweb the rural landscape.

The Forest Wind project is a proposed 226 mega turbine wind farm located in the pine forestry between Maryborough and Gympie, with high voltage transmission lines connecting through Anderleigh and Curra to the sub-station at Woolooga.

Residents in these areas have received notification that a 60 metre wide transmission line corridor could run through their rural properties, and transmission towers built in proximity to their homes.

SHOW  
YOUR  
SUPPORT



These projects have exposed a clear power imbalance between property owners, and the Queensland Government and big energy companies that are threatening to compulsorily acquire and access private land.

If they proceed, these projects and their transmission lines would take a permanent toll on the amenity of regional communities, the landscape, natural habitats, and heighten bushfire risks.

The Queensland and Federal Labor Governments seem to think if we build lots of wind, solar, and pumped hydro, energy will be cheaper, but that's not the current lived experience. We have never had more renewable energy in the grid, yet our power bills have never been more expensive.

Australians are now amongst those paying the highest power prices in the world for electricity.

It's time Australia started a sensible national discussion about reliable next generation zero emission nuclear power and examine other countries that are making decarbonisation work by having nuclear in their mix, and cheaper power bills as a result.

There's a reason so many countries are embracing next generation zero emission nuclear energy. It gets power prices down, and it decarbonises economies without weakening those economies. And it can be done using existing transmission networks.

Our country has an abundance of natural resources and the cheapest, most reliable, emission free, and lowest community impact sources of electricity should be available to us.

There have been seven recent attempts by the National and Liberal Parties to initiate a Senate Inquiry into the impacts of high-voltage electricity transmission infrastructure, and each of these attempts have been blocked by Labor and The Greens political parties and the Independent Senator David Pocock.

**I encourage you to show your support for a Senate Inquiry into the impacts of transmission lines in regional Australia by signing the petition which is available on my website:**

<https://llewobrien.com.au/respecting-and-protecting-your-property-rights> or you can use this QR Code.





# Aren't Volunteers Wonderful!

Our volunteers are our greatest resource, and not for profit community, sporting, and service groups across Wide Bay have received funding from the 2022-23 Volunteer Grant Program to support the work they do for their communities.

Every volunteer's contribution, no matter how big or small, is extraordinary because that person cares enough to serve their community and give of their time, expertise, and resources freely to improve the lives of others. Wide Bay communities would not be the same without them.

If you're involved in a community organisation and would like information on funding opportunities please join my grants list by emailing me at [llew.obrien.mp@aph.gov.au](mailto:llew.obrien.mp@aph.gov.au)



*Rainbow Beach Community Info & Resource Assoc.*



*Gympie Medical Transport*



*Kandanga Country Club*



*Noosa Rugby Union*



*Graham House Community Centre Murgon*



*Gooroy Pomona Lions Club*



*Riding for the Disabled Maryborough*



*Noosa Heads Surf Lifesaving Club*



*Gooroy Horse & Pony Club*



*Pomona Meats on Wheels*



*Noosa Church*



*Albert Bowls Club Gympie*



## FOUR LANE BRUCE HIGHWAY FAST TRACK NEEDED

The Bruce Highway through Wide Bay connects Cooroy, Gympie, Gunalda, Glenwood, Bauple, Tiaro, Maryborough, and all communities in between. It's a vital transport corridor linking families and friends, commerce, freight, and tourism.

But it's also a corridor of tragedy, the site of ten fatalities this year alone, and numerous crashes causing serious injuries and loss of productivity.

The Gympie bypass is expected to open later next year, extending the four lane divided highway to Curra. But there are no commitments to extend the four lanes further from Curra to Maryborough.

With over 11,000 vehicle movements every day along our stretch of the national highway, if our section of highway was in New South Wales or Victoria it would already be four lanes.

The time for four lanes through Wide Bay is long overdue.

In 2021, the former Coalition Government committed \$268 million to build a four lane Tiaro bypass and the State Government indicated that construction would begin in 2024.

Before the last election I warned that the greatest risk to the Tiaro bypass would be the Albanese Government, and their

decision to subject the project to the 90 Day Infrastructure Review in May 2023 has left the bypass in limbo.

The 90 days were up in July 2023. The review is complete, but the government is keeping us in the dark about which projects it will fund, and which it will axe.

Tragically, there have been three deaths so far in 2023 on just the small section of the Bruce Highway that is to be bypassed. Every day the Government delays in building the bypass puts motorists at risk.

Results from the Wide Bay survey indicate that 75 percent of residents who completed the survey are concerned about safety on the Bruce Highway, the same amount want the highway to be upgraded to four lanes between Curra and Maryborough and the Tiaro bypass to be fast tracked.

**I'm encouraging everyone to sign the petition to the Queensland and Australian Governments calling to fast track and prioritise the Tiaro bypass and commit to extending the four lane section from Curra to Maryborough.**

**[Sign the Bruce Highway petition here](#)**



## MARYBOROUGH MILITARY AVIATION MUSEUM

Maryborough's rich aviation history has been unearthed and acknowledged thanks to the efforts of the volunteers at the Maryborough Military Aviation Museum Association.

The Association was founded in 2016 with the aim of developing a precinct to preserve and display the airport's wartime heritage and highlight the important role the facility and the service men and women who were stationed there played during World War II.

The Museum Association recently received \$20,000 from the Australian Government's Stronger Communities Program to build a shed to store their extensive collection of over 300 items showcasing the airport's history as a bustling Royal Australian Airforce Air Station.

The Museum is intended to be built in stages to house their growing collection which includes Wackett and Tiger Moth aircraft that are being restored to serve as static displays.

Between 1941 and 1944, thousands of wireless air gunners, navigators, and members of the Women's Auxiliary Air Force were stationed in Maryborough where they undertook their training before being deployed in the fight against the Axis powers.

At the completion of their training, many of the Wireless Air Gunners became crew members for Bomber Command, sending and receiving morse code messages or operating as a gunner in a wide variety of aircraft, in numerous operations, conducted in all theatres of the Second World War.

The Association's volunteers have devoted hundreds of hours of research to identify 569 men who trained at the RAAF Station Maryborough and were killed in action, losing their lives in the service of their country during World War II.

A \$22,500 grant from the Australian Government's Saluting Their Service Commemorative Grant Program enabled the Association to commission twenty-four memorial panels that commemorate the legacy of these brave men, and the significant contribution the Maryborough Airport made to Australia's World War II efforts.

At the recent unveiling of the memorial panels, we heard stories of life in Maryborough during the war years, the skies abuzz with aircraft, and the local ladies who rushed out with tea and cake for the crews who crashed into back yards during training flights.

The RAAF station was closed after the war and control transferred to the Department of Civil Aviation in July 1946. Many of the structures on the site were disposed of in the immediate post-war years. The airport is now owned and operated by Fraser Coast Regional Council. Some of the original buildings remain and there are plans to reconstruct new buildings in their original style to house museum artifacts.

Maryborough has a proud military history, and the Aviation Museum joins the Gallipoli to Armistice Memorial and the Maryborough Military and Colonial Museum as part of the Fraser Coast Military Trail, a unique journey that traces Australia's military history from the 1880s to present day and ensures the service, sacrifice, and stories of our veterans are commemorated and preserved for future generations.





At a recent crime prevention forum with Queensland's Shadow Minister for Police Dale Last and Noosa Mayor Clare Stewart, we heard some shocking statistics about the appalling failure of the Palaszczuk Labor Government's handling of the justice system.

There is a growing anger and frustration across Queensland at the revolving door for young offenders that has allowed 480 individuals to be responsible for more than 50 percent of the youth crime in Queensland. (Source: *Serious Repeat Offender Index*)

The watering down of the Youth Justice laws in 2015 by the Palaszczuk Labor Government has enabled a generation of hardcore repeat young offenders to threaten community safety.

According to the Queensland Police Annual Report, assault and robbery offences have almost doubled in the last two years, and property offences have increased by 25 percent.

Since the Palaszczuk Government was elected in 2015, the number of juveniles charged with assault has more than tripled and juveniles charged with stealing a motor vehicle is up by 71 percent. The number charged with robbery has more than doubled, and unlawful entry numbers are up by one third.

The LNP has a clear plan to tackle the problem to ensure that youth offenders face the consequences of their actions.

It will start with removing the policy of detention as a last resort and have a strong focus on early intervention programs to deter criminal behaviour and help young people find a positive direction in their lives.

All levels of government have a role to play in community safety and need to work to address at risk families, child safety, domestic violence, drug and alcohol addiction, poor school attendance, and improve literacy standards.

We must also provide our Police Service with the resources it needs. Queensland has the highest rate of repeat offenders, yet the number of Police Officers in Queensland has fallen by more than 200 in the last financial year. Our Police are under resourced and hamstrung by the current juvenile justice laws. We are losing experienced officers who are fed up with young offenders arrested one day, and then released the next day only to go on to commit further crimes.

Queenslanders deserve better from their Government. We deserve to feel safe in our homes and in the community and we need the policies, programs, and penalties to prevent and deter crime. Judges and Magistrates must be able to impose sentences that reflect community expectations, and the rights of victims must be put above the rights of offenders.

If we want more done to improve community safety, we need to change the Government.

**SINCE  
2015**

- Robbery is up by 95 percent
- Unlawful Use of a Motor Vehicle is up 71 percent
- Assaults have almost doubled

## \$1.5 Million Secured to Extend Palliative Care Services on the Sunshine Coast

Katie Rose Cottage was established in 2016 as a community driven, not for profit palliative care service. Since then, it has provided care to more than 330 terminally ill patients.

Funding of \$1.5 million has been secured from the Australian Government to extend the hospice and create two additional bedrooms that will enable end of life care for an extra 40 people and their families each year.

Due to the generosity of Peter and Mac Williams of the Warm Handshake Foundation who donated the property, and the hard work and dedication of the volunteers and medical staff, Katie Rose Cottage can provide compassionate and peaceful care for patients and their families during their final days.



## The Silky Project

Those involved in the Save the Mary River campaign from the proposed Traveston Crossing dam will remember Silky, a three metre high chainsaw carving from a single silk oak trunk that features an incredible range of 21 life sized Australian native animals, including a kangaroo, emu, and crocodile, as well as a koala and joey, finches, a cockatoo, a ring tailed possum, a goanna and other lizards.

Another possum peeks from a tree hollow and towards the base a dingo is beside a pelican, platypus, echidna, and wombat.

Silky helped stop the dam, travelling between Brisbane and Maryborough, highlighting the need to protect endangered species and their habitat from destruction.

Silky is an amazing creation crafted by champion chainsaw sculptor Keith Gall who is in the process of creating a full size bronze replica for the Brisbane Olympics.

*Tin Can Bay Men's Shed President Paul Boulton, Llew O'Brien, and sculptor Keith Gall inspect progress on the restoration of Silky.*







## WIDE BAY'S BIGGEST SURVEY

Thank you to the more than 2,000 people who participated in Wide Bay's Community Survey 2023.

The survey was distributed to all households in Wide Bay and asked people's opinions on a range of community and civic subjects and topics related to Government policy.

The results are still being tallied, but early results indicate that 76.7% of survey respondents don't want the date of Australia Day to change, 81% want to keep the Australian Flag, and 63.8% are opposed to Australia becoming a republic. The survey also indicated only 25% support Queensland adopting Daylight Saving Time.

The survey results show that 83% of respondents are concerned about foreign ownership, and 74.1% believe Australia should not spend more on foreign aid.

Cost of living pressures are front of mind with 86.5% of respondents saying the cost of living is putting more pressure on the family budget, and 42.3% are concerned about housing affordability.

On electricity, 74% don't want to pay more for renewable energy, 45.8% want more affordable electricity, and 67% don't want high voltage transmission lines through private property. Only 28% of respondents said they would support wind farms in their local area.

There is strong support amongst the survey respondents for continued investment in the Bruce Highway through Wide Bay, with 74.6% reporting they are concerned about safety on the Bruce Highway, 75.9% want the four lane Tiaro bypass prioritised and fast tracked and 73.7% want the Bruce Highway four laned between Gympie and Maryborough.

**Once all the results have been tallied, I will publish them on my website [www.llewobrien.com.au](http://www.llewobrien.com.au)**

## Murgon Men's Shed Railway Museum

The Murgon Men's Shed officially opened their Railway Heritage Museum in October, providing a fascinating glimpse into Queensland's history through the railway memorabilia they have collected, restored, and put on public display in their new rail complex.

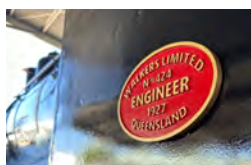
The volunteers at the Men's Shed have done an amazing job restoring a 105-year-old first-and second-class carriage and a steel goods wagon that were rescued from a yard near Rockhampton after being decommissioned in the 1980s.

Their most recent restoration project has been the 37 tonne C17 steam locomotive, Number 763, built at Walkers Limited in Maryborough in 1927. Two hundred and twenty-seven C17's were constructed in a variety of locations throughout Queensland between 1920 and 1953. The C17 was a powerful unit suitable for main line freight duties, as well as suburban and long-distance passenger routes.

Number 763 was in service from May 1927 until June 1969, when it was placed in a park in Brisbane before being put into storage at the Rosewood Railway Museum.

A \$15,000 grant through the Australian Government's Stronger Communities Program made it possible for the Men's Shed to hire a crane to lift the locomotive, wagon, and carriage into place so that the Rail Display Complex could be built around them.

The Australian Government also contributed \$33,000 from the Building Better Regions Fund to build the steel shed and annex that creates a sheltered space for the museum's growing railway display, which also includes a Cobb and Co coach, and other restored railway items.



Railway heritage has become a significant tourist asset across the globe, giving a second life to railways, trains, and railway buildings by making them into tourist attractions that evoke a nostalgia of the past.

The Railway Museum is adjacent to the South Burnett Rail Trail, (Kingaroy to Kilkivan Rail Trail), an eighty-eight kilometre extension to the Brisbane Valley Rail Trail, and has inclusive access, ensuring all visitors are able to see and enjoy the display of Queensland's railway heritage.

### Available FREE from Llew's office

Copies of Llew's rainfall calendar with community contacts, '100 ways to praise a child' and times tables posters, growth charts, and age pension guides are available free from his office.

**For your copy, please call  
1300 301 968 (landlines) or 4121 2936.**



*How I can help?*

- ✓ Supporting community organisations
- ✓ Assisting residents with advocacy on local issues
- ✓ Attending community events

- ✓ Providing assistance with Australian Government departments and agencies
- ✓ Arranging congratulatory messages for significant milestones

**Llew O'BRIEN**  
Federal Member for **Wide Bay**

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Printed by Gympie Graphics 3/38 Reef Street Gympie 4570