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TANIA MAXWELL MP

Member for Northern Victoria | Derryn Hinch's Justice Party

NEWSLETTER # 36



IMAGE: *Viburnum* flowering near Beechworth last week.

October 22, 2021

Hello!

Brighter days are coming, when our communities will more or less get back to daily life and business after almost 20 months of COVID-19 restrictions. It's been tough for so many in Northern Victoria's places large and small.

I've received thousands of emails, calls and comments on social media about the pressures on family, business and community that I've taken up in Parliament. For everyone – kids, young people trying to keep up with school and university, parents working hard to carry on family routines, and staying in touch with grandparents and friends to maintain some sort of normal – we can now take a breath. Like you, I so look forward to celebrating and enjoying again the things we've all missed.

For me – in my job as a parliamentarian – there are some key things that I want to address and, I hope, work to resolve.

The negative impact of the vaccine mandate on lives, jobs and business is one. The surge in family violence during lockdown is another (I was shocked to see the latest data reported in this newsletter).

The Labor government's likely push before the end of the year for some ongoing form of state-of-emergency powers to deal with future COVID outbreaks is yet another. I opposed these powers when the bill was first brought to Parliament in March, last year, and afterwards when the government moved to extend them. Strengthening laws to protect older Victorians in care and those with disabilities from sexual, psychological and financial abuse is yet another.

This newsletter covers some of these and other work I've been doing before I return to Parliament on October 26.

You can follow what I'm up to in Northern Victoria and in Parliament at taniamaxwell.com.au. In the meantime, please share your issues, ideas and comments with me by...

- Email tania.maxwell@parliament.vic.gov.au
- Direct message on [Facebook](#)
- Telephone 03 4700 1787 between 9:00am and 5:00pm weekdays

You're also welcome to forward this newsletter to family and friends, too, and share it on social media.

Smile.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tania". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the left.

IN OUR COMMUNITIES

Alpine Health steps towards redevelopment goal

Alpine Health will use a \$934,000 grant to upgrade vital services at Bright, Myrtleford and Mount Beauty hospitals and fund a feasibility and business case to redevelop Bright Aged Care.

I appealed to the Victorian government in March to support redevelopment work at Bright hospital, starting with a master plan update to ensure designs for the service are fit-for-purpose to meet Alpine communities' future needs.

Alpine communities have grown strongly, with Myrtleford, Bright, Mount Beauty, Harrietville, Wandiligong, Porepunkah and local villages now home to almost 13,000 people plus a much bigger seasonal visitor population.

I co-ordinated a meeting between senior government minister and Northern Victoria colleague Jaclyn Symes MP and Alpine Health after the Legislative Council met in Bright late in April.

Alpine Health's board, chief executive officer Nick Shaw and staff have worked hard to get this money delivered, and I'll be advocating with the community for government investment so redevelopment works can get underway when the planning funded by this grant is complete.



Alpine Health steps towards goal
Bright, Mount Beauty, Myrtleford

**\$934,000
GRANT**

TANIA MAXWELL MP

[Read my statement](#)

Give Northern Victoria tourism a head start

Yesterday I encouraged the state government to give regional tourism a head start by allowing Melbourne residents to book accommodation and to travel to the North East, Central Victoria, Murray, Mallee and Sunraysia from October 29.

I put the request in a letter to Health Minister Martin Foley following representation from hospitality businesses hit hard by bushfire and COVID-19 lockdowns since January, last year.

As a snapshot, the cumulative impact of the 2020 bushfires and pandemic restrictions that followed shortly afterwards is estimated by Tourism North East to have cost Wangaratta, Benalla, Indigo, Alpine, Towong, Mansfield, Murrindindi, alpine resorts and local communities at least \$1.5 billion in the 16 months to June, this year, let alone the on-going cost of COVID restrictions since July.

Allowing Melbourne residents to travel and stay in our regions from October 29 – the Friday before what many enjoy as an extended weekend ahead of the Melbourne Cup – would give our tourism sector and many small hospitality and retail businesses a great head-start towards recovery.



KING VALLEY: Opening accommodation to the Melbourne market from October 29 would give hospitality and tourism a boost.

[Read my statement](#)

MY WORK IN PARLIAMENT

Seymour petitions for on-call ambulance comeback

Almost 1100 people have signed a petition to Parliament for on-call ambulance services to be restored in Seymour.

In a two-stage process, I presented a small electronic petition in February followed by a paper version on October 7, two years to the day after Seymour resident Tony Hubbard lost his wife, Gayl, while waiting 43 minutes for an ambulance to attend their home.

Seymour ambulance station and hospital can be seen from the back verandah of the Hubbard home, giving the couple comfort that help was close by.

Tony initiated the petition in February 2020 and gathered 999 signatures before COVID-19 public health orders restricted his efforts to promote it.

We all appreciate the work of paramedics and the exceptional care they give to patients each and every day. But we know that ambulance resources in regional areas are stretched. It's not just about topography.

I'm in regular contact with Ambulance Victoria and we need to keep working on *all* of the solutions to support our communities.



STRONG CALL: With Tony Hubbard at the launch of his petition seeking the restoration of on-call ambulance services.

[View the petition](#)

Family violence offences jump 18 per cent

Victoria's latest crime statistics show 174,432 family violence offences were reported in the year ending June 30, 2021 - an increase of 18 per cent on the previous year.

I've brought the data to Parliament's attention with a motion that also shows:

- 34,000 incidents of family violence occurred where a child was present
- 7820 affected family members of family violence ranged in age from infants to 17 years old

I want Parliament to recognise that children who witness violence are at greater risk of becoming violent offenders, perpetuating the cycle of offending. I also encourage parliamentarians to understand that the stability of a safe home is important to the development of a child and that victims of family violence are often forced to leave their homes.

The state government committed in August 2020 to fund programs that facilitate the removal of perpetrators of family violence from the family home and their placement in short or long-term accommodation for rehabilitation. I asked Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence Gabrielle Williams MP on October 15 to advise how many offenders in Northern Victoria have been removed from home since the start of these initiatives.



Image: Northeast Health Wangaratta

[View my question in Parliament](#)

Regional media deserves recovery support

On October 8, I asked Minister for Small Business Jaala Pulford MP to broaden eligibility so regional media publishers and broadcasters can apply to Victoria's COVID hardship fund for financial help.

News media organisations incur high weekly costs in wages, printing, distribution and overheads. In my electorate, these businesses have experienced a 60 per cent drop in revenue for months and months, just shy of the 70 per cent threshold that would allow them to apply for financial assistance.

But they're not included in the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification codes that allow eligibility for business costs assistance program grants. Newsagents are, but not the media organisations that produce the publications they distribute.

Regional media have continued to deliver news at a time when timely and quality information is extremely important in keeping residents informed, connected and up to date. I look forward to the Minister's action on this issue.



INELIGIBLE: Northern Victorian newspapers include *Midland Express*, *Border Mail* and my home-town *Wangaratta Chronicle*.

[Read my question](#)

New native timber laws make little sense

Derryn Hinch's Justice Party supports a continuation of sustainable native timber and softwood plantation logging practices, balanced against environmental protections.

So our party was perplexed by the state government recently passing a bill dealing with timber logging before the release of a new code of practice for the industry, due before the end of this year.

The *Forests Legislation Amendment (Compliance and Enforcement) Bill 2019* increases scope for the prosecution of forest workers and contractors in a move the party thinks is unnecessary and excessive.

The native timber industry is incredibly important to Northern Victoria. The Labor government's push to discontinue the industry after 2030 already has people concerned about how they will move away from what has been a sustainable industry. Unknown regulations and greater fines only increase this uncertainty.

Timber Towns Victoria says more than 2500 people are directly employed in the native timber industry along with thousands of indirect jobs, in total adding \$300 million to regional economies.

[Read my statement](#)

BILL PROGRESS

These bills have passed the **Legislative Council** and **Parliament**:

- [Assisted Reproductive Treatment Amendment Bill 2021](#)
- [Essential Services Commission \(Compliance and Enforcement Powers\) Amendment Bill 2021](#)
- [Firearms and Other Acts Amendment Bill 2021](#)
- [Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Amendment Bill 2021](#)

These bills have passed the **Legislative Assembly** and are to be considered by the Council:

- [Children, Youth and Families Amendment \(Child Protection\) Bill 2021](#)
- [Education and Training Reform Amendment \(Senior Secondary Pathways Reforms and Other Matters\) Bill 2021](#)
- [Health Legislation Amendment \(Information Sharing\) Bill 2021](#)
- [Terrorism \(Community Protection\) Amendment Bill 2021](#)

These bills have been released and are before the **Legislative Assembly**:

- [Local Government Amendment \(Rates and Charges\) Bill 2021](#)
- [Planning and Environment Amendment Bill 2021](#)
- [Sex Work Decriminalisation Bill 2021](#)
- [Special Investigator Bill 2021](#)
- [Victorian Collaborative Centre for Mental Health and Wellbeing Bill 2021](#)
- [Windfall Gains Tax and State Taxation and Other Acts Further Amendment Bill 2021](#)

Both houses of Parliament sit again from October 26.



VOICING LOCAL ISSUES

I raised these important local issues and achievements in Parliament in the last sitting:

- [Event recovery taskforce essential](#)
- [Is the Albury-Wodonga Regional Deal on track?](#)
- [Great work by Parliament Prize winners](#)



GOLD STAR: Parliament Prize 2021 years 10-12 winner Lily Ivey, from Central Victoria.



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