

# Crackdown recovers nearly \$700,000 from Tasmanians Welfare cheats on notice

ALMOST \$700,000 has been recovered in Tasmania as part of a national crackdown on wealthy welfare cheats, and others abusing the system have been warned they will be caught.

A joint operation run by the Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Australian Transaction Reports Analysis Centre (AUSTRAC) targeted welfare recipients who had large amounts of unexplained



HELEN KEMPTON

wealth pass through their bank accounts — 1000 cheats were identified nationally.

Those unable to explain to DHS where the money had come from or why they had failed to declare it as income were then ordered to repay

their benefits, saving Australian taxpayers \$43.4 million.

The crackdown, which is ongoing, uses the same powers AUSTRAC and law enforcement agencies use to target money launderers, drug dealers and terrorists.

The average amount each welfare recipient was ordered to repay was \$43,000.

While the department could not provide the exact number of Tasmanians caught

in the crackdown, based on the average repayment ordered more than 10 people from this state would likely have been nabbed.

In total, \$672,245 in overpayments were recovered in Tasmania.

The Anti-Money Laundering and Counter-Terrorism Financing Act 2006 requires banks and other financial institutions to automatically report suspicious transactions to

AUSTRAC. Data matching enables those suspicious transactions to be instantly cross-checked against the department's records to determine if an overpayment had occurred.

Human Services Minister Michael Keenan warned those defrauding the welfare system they would be found.

"Protecting the integrity of the welfare system is a key priority for the Turnbull Govern-

ment and no stone would be left unturned to identify those abusing the system," Mr Keenan said.

"Australia has a very generous welfare system and it needs to operate with integrity to ensure those who genuinely need our support receive it.

"But for those that are defrauding the system, you will be caught, you will be forced to repay that money and you will face significant consequences."

## Hinch dead-set on living his life

ROB HARRIS and GENEVIEVE ALISON

SENATOR Derryn Hinch says he will continue to enjoy his red wine a couple of times a week despite Monday night's tumble from an Uber car.

The "Human Headline" said while he was grateful to the family of his liver donor, he "had to live his life".

"Until I'm lying on a slab for the last time, I'm here to live my life to the best I can," Mr Hinch said.

"If I feel like having a glass of wine, yes I will."

Mr Hinch — who swore off the booze for life after receiving a liver transplant in

2011 — was knocked unconscious and taken to hospital after falling from an Uber car on St Kilda Rd.

The former TV and radio journalist said a past knee injury contributed to the fall, not alcohol and he "anticipated the expected boozy scepticism".

Yesterday he said he only had "two glasses of watered down sav blanc" with his dinner. "Was I pissed? No," he said.

The 74-year-old said he had received the all-clear from his doctor and only has a "couple of glasses of wine, a couple of times a week".



Derryn Hinch



## Old school ways with Irish flair

HISTORIC CELEBRATIONS: St Mary's College Year 12 students Sarah Cooper, left, Stella Barnhoorn and Olivia Eade.

Picture: SAM ROSEWARNE

ALEX LUTTRELL

A HOBART school is getting back to its Irish roots, but not just for St Patrick's Day.

St Mary's College will be bathed in a sea of green on St Patrick's Day tomorrow as it celebrates its humble Irish beginnings 150 years ago.

Past and present students,

teachers and parents will take part in the anniversary festivities, which include Irish music and dancing, colonial dress-ups and old-fashioned games.

There will be historic tours of the college, green food and beverages and a fancy dress parade showcasing historic St Mary's uniforms. St Mary's

was founded by Irish Presentation Sisters led by Mother Francis Xavier Murphy. It officially opened its doors on February 3, 1868, as Mount St Mary's.

As part of celebrations, St Mary's archivist Margaret Rootes will publish a book this year on the school's history. The book will feature images

and stories about 150 people who have made significant contributions to the school.

St Mary's principal Helen Spencer said the school prided itself on being at the pillar of hospitality.

"Our 150th anniversary is a wonderful opportunity to reflect on the school's past, as we continue to build powerful

futures for young women," she said.

The celebrations started last month with a staff reunion and the blessing of a sculpture and leadlight window created in the image of Nano Nagle, the foundation leader of the sisters. A gala dinner will be held at the Hotel Grand Chancellor on May 12.



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