

# Aldermen reject 'blame'

**LORETTA LOHBERGER**

SIX suspended Glenorchy City Council aldermen say it is wrong for Glenorchy Commissioner Sue Smith to "blame" them for problems at the council.

Steve King, Jenny Branch-Allen, Christine Lucas, David Pearce, Stuart Slade and Haydyn Nielsen – who all tried to resign from the council last week under Local Government Minister Peter Gutwein's move to introduce legislation to sack

the council and hold elections on January 16 – issued a joint statement yesterday.

Harry Quick also attempted to resign but was not a signatory to the statement.

Ms Branch-Allen said it was wrong that the council was forced to seek legal advice about the resignations.

"It is doubly wrong that the council did not do this straight away and that Commissioner Sue Smith blamed the aldermen rather than the minister," she said.

"I can only guess at the reasons Commissioner Smith had for taking the action she did and then saying her actions were our fault."

Mrs Smith said multiple resignations at once was unusual.

"We have not denied them the right to resign. We have said that we had to get independent legal advice," she said.

Mrs Smith said that in the event of the resignation of a single alderman, a countback – involving candidates who contested the election but were

not elected – would be held to fill the vacancy.

In the case of multiple resignations, Mrs Smith said it was not clear if that would trigger a by-election, which is why she has sought further advice.

Mrs Smith said a solicitor acting for the six aldermen wrote to her at 12.44pm on Friday telling that her unless the process to deal with the resignations was confirmed by 4pm that day, the legal firm had been instructed to start Supreme Court proceedings.

"This comes from [someone] who went to court last year, quite within their rights, on the basis of natural justice," Mrs Smith said, referring to the action Ms Branch-Allen took against the board of inquiry investigating the council.

"If our advice is the Electoral Commissioner be informed then that is exactly what will happen," Mrs Smith said.

"I am disappointed they [the six aldermen] didn't pick up the phone... this is all self-interest at the moment."

The aldermen also criticised the State Government.

Mr King said that the Government's "poor handling" of the board of inquiry had cost the ratepayers more than \$1 million.

Mr Gutwein said there were significant issues regarding the council that could not be ignored.

The board of inquiry investigating dysfunction and infighting at the council is continuing, more than two years after it was established.



## Girls on the bandanna wagon

HEAD ALERT: Year 12 St Mary's collegE students Janie Symons, 18, Emma Wing, 18 and Taya Hill, 18.

PICTURE: RICHARD JUPE

**LORETTA LOHBERGER**

HOBART'S St Mary's College will be awash with colour on Wednesday as students take part in National Bandanna Day to raise awareness and funds for young people living with cancer.

It is a cause close to the hearts of many students at the school.

"I've known friends and families that have battled with cancer," Year 12 student Emma Wing said.

"[Bandanna Day] is a fun and colourful way for people to get involved and show their support for

others." Bandanna Day is run by Canteen, a charity that helps 12-25 year olds cope with cancer.

St Mary's school captain Holly Andree said the day would also include a sausage sizzle for the senior school students.

"As well as raising funds for

Canteen, it's a great opportunity to get all the school together... and acknowledge the organisation," Holly said.

In the lead-up to this year's even, the prefect group has been collecting preloved bandannas to create a bandanna mural.

## Welfare reviews easing burden

**TOM MINEAR**

TAXPAYERS are coughing up \$300,000 a minute to pay a welfare bill that has soared \$40 billion in a decade.

Australia is on the hook for \$21 trillion in welfare payments to people receiving government benefits.

Two reports reveal the challenge facing the Federal Government to rein in welfare spending while paying off more than \$500 billion in debt.

Figures show the Government has managed to tighten family tax benefits, pensions and student payments in the past two years.

Two-thirds of people on the dole managed to get off it within a year, while 80 per cent of students were no longer receiving benefits 12 months after they stopped receiving the Youth Allowance.

But taxpayers are set to shell out \$2.1 trillion in welfare payments.

Social Services Minister Christian Porter said the Government had made \$30 billion in savings on welfare, which makes up almost a third of the federal Budget.

"My job is to ensure taxpayer funds are spent on helping those who actually need it, and that we aren't borrowing money to fund the welfare system of our time as this just forces our children to pay it off through higher taxes in the future," Mr Porter said.

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare found the nation's \$157 billion welfare bill accounted for 9.5 per cent of gross domestic product, up from 8.6 per cent a decade ago.

It means the Government is handing out benefits worth \$430 million every day.

The Department of Social Services' annual report showed the Government had made headway, with family tax benefit payments falling \$1.4 billion in the past year.

## Federal court to hear Abbott headbutt case

THE Hobart man who allegedly assaulted Tony Abbott on his visit to the city last month will face the Magistrates Court this morning.

Astro Labe, 38, of North Hobart, is accused of headbut-

ting the former primer minister on Morrison St in Hobart on September 21.

Mr Abbott had alleged Mr Labe, who was wearing a pro same sex marriage sticker, was motivated by the divisive issue.

The accused said it was a coincidence he was wearing a same-sex marriage sticker on his jacket.

Mr Labe was arrested and charged with one count of common assault by police and

granted conditional bail to appear in the Magistrates Court today.

However, the court list shows Mr Labe will enter a plea to the charge of "causing harm to a Common-

wealth public official."

As a federal offence, under the Criminal Code Act, causing harm to a Commonwealth public official carries a maximum penalty of 10 years imprisonment.