



POLITICS

Collins' plea on housing

FEDERAL Housing Minister Julie Collins has issued a plea to senators sceptical about the government's housing package, saying the funds are urgently needed.

The Albanese government is staring down a crossbench revolt threatening to derail its proposed \$10bn Housing Australia Future Fund, with those opposed arguing the fund does not go far enough.

Ms Collins, (pictured), said the fund would use about \$500m of annual returns to support the construction of 30,000 new affordable homes.

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TECHNOLOGY

Tassie gets TikTok ban

The Tasmanian government will ban TikTok on government-issued devices "following national security advice" in a move bringing us in line with almost all other states.

Tasmanian politicians had already begun deactivating their TikTok accounts ahead of the move, including Premier Jeremy Rockliff, (pictured), and Senator Jacqui Lambie.

Western Australia is the only state yet to follow the federal government's move to ban TikTok on government-issued staff phones.

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MONEY TRAIL

Marley Wynter, owner of Marleys House of Sport, is being pursued for millions by frustrated clients. Picture: Facebook

Claims Tassie syndicate owes its clients millions

SPORTS BETS PROBE

The Tasmanian businessman behind an online sports betting syndicate that has reportedly raked in more than \$32m in profits is being investigated by police over

allegations of fraud.

But a spokesman for Marleys House of Sport owner Marley John Wynter strictly denied the claims, describing them as a "witch hunt".

MHS is being alleged by members to be holding out on paying back more than \$3m to a growing band of frustrated clients.

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Bid for missing millions



Marley Wynter, owner of Marleys House of Sport, in an image posted to his Facebook page.

Investors claim Tassie boss of sports betting syndicate won't pay up

Katie Hall

The Tasmanian businessman behind an online sports betting syndicate that has reportedly raked in more than \$32m in profits is being investigated by police over allegations of fraud.

But a spokesman for Marleys House of Sport (MHS) owner Marley John Wynter, strictly denied the claims, describing them as a “witch hunt”.

Members of MHS allege the business is holding out on paying back more than \$3m to frustrated clients.

On January 23 this year, Mr Wynter announced via email MHS would close its doors “for good”, but that it would pay its clients their initial deposits, plus 5 per cent.

The Mercury understands that some clients have been trying, unsuccessfully, to withdraw funds from the platform since September 2022.

Poker Media Australia, who first reported the claims, wrote that Mr Wynter had said his bank accounts had been frozen, hindering the payment of the funds to MHS clients.

It also reported Mr Wynter had previously denied MHS was a scam.

And while some clients have

“**Marley’s only intention is to pay everyone back, but he can’t because he can’t access his money, that is the dog honest truth**”

Andrew Dyce
MHS spokesman

reportedly received their deposits – many more are claiming they are yet to see a cent, two months on from its closure.

Social media pages for MHS including Facebook, Instagram, YouTube and Twitch appear to have had their content wiped or hidden, and were unable to be viewed.

ASIC records show both MHS and a second business, Marleys House of Investment, operate out of a Bathurst St, Launceston address.

The Mercury understands Mr Wynter also has links to Queensland.

For IT engineer and founder of Australian Poker Schedule, Craig Abernethy, red flags started waving when he began questioning MHS’s business model in early 2022.

“My first question to (clients) was ‘OK, but where is your money?’, and they said it’s there (on the account balance shown on the site), and I said, ‘no, where is the money?’, Mr Abernethy said.

Mr Abernethy created the Facebook group ‘Marleys House of Sport (formally Don’t F*** With Poker Players)’ in an effort to highlight his concerns about the syndicate.

“I said to them you invested \$5k and now you’ve got \$20k, how did he do that? And they said ‘he bets on horses and stuff.’”

“I emailed Marley about these concerns, and listed them all out, and his response was, ‘I’m not explaining anything to you because you’re not a member’,” he said.

Mr Abernethy’s page gained traction in January this year, jumping from just 35 members to 250 – as concerns over the difficulty of withdrawing funds continued to grow.

The page now has more than 360 members, and Mr Abernethy says he has compiled a database of about 500 MHS clients across the country.

Mr Abernethy said by his calculations, the amount of money given to Mr Wynter was more than \$3m.

But after adding up the account balances supplied by 50 clients through the Facebook page, he claimed to find a total profit of around \$32m – figures Mr Abernethy said he did not believe were possible to achieve through bookmakers.

“That’s just me adding up the screen shots (of account balances) from people saying, I have \$450k, I have \$75k ... I added them all up,” he said.

“The group more or less became a resource to try and get all of this information out.”

Another red flag, Mr Abernethy said, was when Mr Wynter allegedly asked members to “top up” and “upgrade” their memberships and asked for funds so he could purchase an \$80k server.

At one point, the MHS website also displayed the logo for the charity Kids With Cancer, with Mr Wynter claiming to have made a \$50k donation to the organisation.

Kids With Cancer executive

director Peter Bodman told the Mercury that no funds had ever been donated by Mr Wynter.

“This came to our attention and our CEO wrote to the man and said remove our logo from the website, which was done,” Mr Bodman said.

The website, which once displayed information about the syndicate now displays a message similar to that of the email sent to clients informing them of the closure.

“Dear clients and hopeful clients, we inform you with heavy hearts that Marleys House of Sport is now closed for good,” the statement read. “All remaining client account balances are in the process of being paid out. All initial client deposits will be paid out first and foremost for those not already in profit.”

A Tasmania Police spokeswoman said reports had been made through Report Cyber, and she referred the Mercury to Queensland Police.

A Queensland Police spokeswoman said cybercrime reports in relation to “an alleged fraudulent betting investment scheme” involving victims in Queensland had been made.

“For privacy reasons and as

the matter is under investigation, it would be inappropriate to comment further,” the spokeswoman said.

Mr Abernethy said he was relieved an investigation was under way, having first reported MHS to Scamwatch in May 2022.

Calls to Mr Wynter’s lawyer, Noosa-based BJH Law Principal Solicitor Bradford Hill were not returned.

Speaking to the Mercury, Mr Wynter would not deny the claims but referred any questions to his lawyer.

Andrew Dyce, who said he was managing Mr Wynter and assisting him through his legal case, denied the claims, which he described as a “witch hunt”.

“Marley’s only intention is to pay everyone back, but he can’t because he can’t access his money, that is the dog honest truth,” Mr Dyce said.

He added that he had personally seen the “millions” in Mr Wynter’s accounts, which he said had been frozen since September 2022.

Mr Dyce said they were in the process of taking legal action against Poker Media Australia and 2GB – who also ran a radio program airing the claims this week.

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Barty’s baby bump on court

Derrick Krusche

Retired tennis legend Ash Barty stepped out in Newcastle on Thursday – with a noticeable baby bump partially hidden by a hoody – to teach a few tips to our next generation of racquet stars.

The 26-year-old, who revealed she is pregnant with her first child with husband Garry Kissick in January, was in town to launch the National

Indigenous Tennis Carnival.

The event, which will be held in Darwin in August, will provide a platform for young Indigenous players to excel in tennis.

Barty said she was enjoying exploring regional NSW – and mixing with youngsters on the court – as a First Nations ambassador with Tennis Australia.

“I’ve been able to travel the world, but haven’t had the op-

portunity to travel much of Australia, so it’s been very nice to be able to do that in my role,” she said.

“This is one of many regional events leading up to the National Indigenous Tennis Carnival being held in Darwin in August this year – it’s an opportunity for our kids to come together, try new things and be culturally involved.”

Barty made her shock retirement announcement last year.



Ash Barty. Picture: Getty Images

The ancient high life

Ancient human civilisations used hallucinogenic drugs derived from plants, according to international researchers.

After analysing strands of human hair from a burial site in Menorca, Spain, the team says these findings are the first direct evidence of ancient drug use in Europe, which may have been used in ritualistic ceremonies. The researchers examined strands of hair from

the Es Càrritx cave in Menorca, which was first occupied around 3600 years ago and contained a chamber used as a funeral space until around 2800 years ago.

Testing the samples, researchers found traces of atropine, scopolamine, and ephedrine, which are known to be hallucinogens and stimulants, possibly from the ingestion of nightshade plants such as mandrake.