

17.04.2024 Media release - Dr Sophie Scamps, Independent MP for Mackellar

Dr Scamps calls for more help on cost of living in the May Budget

Cost of living pressures are affecting everyone in our community, with the pain at the check-out adding to the pressures from the rental crisis in Mackellar and stubbornly high interest rates.

That's why the independent Member for Mackellar, Dr Sophie Scamps, has put this issue at the forefront of her advocacy in Canberra.

In late January, she put in [a detailed budget submission](#) to the Treasurer's office. Since then she's had meetings with several ministers to urge action in areas she thinks will help families in Mackellar.

That began with her support of the changes to the stage 3 tax cuts which take effect from July 1.

But she has also been urging the Government to deliver targeted help for households including tougher laws and funding to investigate allegations of price gouging by supermarkets, more help for households with power bills, and a lift in the Medicare rebate, beginning with long consultations.

"It's good to see that the Prime Minister Anthony Albanese [is now considering a mandatory code](#) of conduct for supermarkets to ensure fairer pricing, Dr Scamps said.

"But we also need to toughen our competition laws to deal with duopolies and mergers that harm competition. It's not acceptable that airlines and energy companies can use their market power to deliver poor service and high prices," she said.

"On energy, I've been pushing for an extension of the energy bill relief payments delivered in the last budget and subsidies for solar panels and batteries, which will help more families enjoy substantial cuts to their power bills more permanently," she said.

There are signs the Albanese government has listened.

There are hints the government will extend its energy price relief for small business and households in receipt of government payments or who hold concession cards beyond June 2024.

More incentives for installation of solar appear to be on the cards too.

"Medical costs are also a big issue for families and older residents," Dr Scamps said.

“The government took steps last budget to extend the availability of bulk billing. I am hopeful that in May the government will begin addressing Medicare rebates, so that patients are not faced with a big co-payment,” she said..

“I’ve suggested the government focus on long consultations with GPs and mental health appointments,” she said.

While Labor has made it clear it will only be using its federal infrastructure fund for nationally significant projects, Dr Scamps is still pushing for support of the major arterial roads in Mackellar, particularly the dangerous stretches of the Wakehurst Parkway and Mona Vale road.

“While these are state roads, I have suggested the Commonwealth help the NSW government to speed improvements. I have also joined the independent member for Warringah, Zali Steggall in advocating for design work to be funded for a major new intersection where Warringah Road meets Pittwater Road,” she said.

“I have also urged a further lift to rental assistance to help the most vulnerable deal with the current housing crisis,” she said.

Housing costs in Mackellar remain one of the most pressing for our community.

“On 15 June, I will be holding a people’s jury to discuss the housing crisis in Mackellar and solutions I could take to Canberra,” Dr Scamps said.

The 30 participants will be chosen to represent the demographics of Mackellar. Around 5000 invitations have been sent out at random and demographers will choose the participants to ensure we have a representative sample.

“Deliberative democracy forums like this are used in some European countries to tackle complex issues. It gives people a chance to discuss a problem in detail and hear from others outside their usual circle.

“I am inviting submissions from the public and I will be holding a livestream of the expert panel on the day, as well as reporting back to the community on the group’s findings.” Dr Scamps said.

[Mackellar People's Jury on Housing - Live Stream \(sophiescamps.com.au\)](https://sophiescamps.com.au)

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Background on federal infrastructure funding

In May 2023, Infrastructure and Transport Minister Catherine King conducted a 90-day review of the federal infrastructure investment program. She accused the Coalition of using the federal infrastructure investment program as “a massive electoral pork barrel fund” and said the government will now focus the fund on nationally significant projects. [No infrastructure project safe from the axe: Coalition | The Australian](#)

State-owned roads, such as the Wakehurst Parkway are now unlikely to qualify for the Commonwealth Infrastructure fund. The NSW government has allocated funds for safety upgrades to the Wakehurst Parkway and is working with Northern Beaches council to coordinate works. The council is responsible for the drainage works. Design work is underway.

Dr Scamps is looking at other federal funding mechanisms that might be available to assist on important projects in Mackellar. She has also made direct representations to the NSW Roads Minister about the importance of upgrading major arterial roads in the electorate.