

Climate for litigation

The number of climate change court cases worldwide has more than doubled since 2017.

A report by the UN Environment Program shows that while the US leads with 1522 cases, Australia comes in second with 127 cases.

Australian cases are among the key contests covered in the report, including the UN Human Rights Committee finding in 2022 that the Australian government was violating its human rights obligations to the Indigenous Torres Strait Islanders through climate change inaction.

Climate change cases worldwide have soared from 884 in 2017 to 2180 in 2022.

Air delays a turn-off

More Australians will holiday at home this year in light of flight delays and cancellations and the escalating cost of airfares for overseas travel.

A survey commissioned by travel insurance provider InsureandGo found a big shift in Aussies' holiday preferences.

Almost half (44 per cent) of respondents indicated their preference for domestic trips over international excursions.

Almost a quarter were willing to consider alternative modes of transport over flight-based vacations and nearly three-quarters (69 per cent) preferred shorter, more frequent breaks with at least one additional holiday a year.

Aspirin is more risky

A Monash University-led study has found the risk of brain bleeding outweighs any potential benefit of reducing the risk of stroke in healthy older adults who take daily low-dose aspirin.

Participants, who did not have known cardiovascular disease, were randomly assigned a 100mg daily aspirin or placebo tablet for an average of five years.

Researchers found no significant difference in the incidence of ischaemic stroke – the most common type of stroke, caused by a blockage in vessels carrying blood to the brain – between the aspirin and placebo group.

Inflation's hidden hit

Anthony Keane

Lower-than-expected inflation figures this week are masking big rises in key costs that are hurting households.

Analysis of almost 100 expense items buried in Australian Bureau of Statistics' Consumer Price Index data has found that, despite official inflation rising 6 per cent last financial year, many common costs climbed two or three times as much.

Gas prices surged 26 per cent in the 12 months to June 30, cheese climbed 16 per cent, milk 15 per cent and insurance 14 per cent, the statistics show.

Travel costs were also sharply higher but are expected to moderate in the year ahead, although electricity prices – up 13 per cent in

Costs of basics hurt households

2022-23 – are expected to soar more than 20 per cent this financial year after huge price increases on July 1.

AMP chief economist Shane Oliver said price rises in some areas had been "very hefty".

"Lower-income households tend to spend more on rent and power, so they may be more affected," he said.

"And you still have electricity price rises coming through from July. You are looking at another 20-30 per cent depending on what sort of deal you have with your provider."

However, not every house-

hold cost is climbing. ABS data reveals about 10 per cent of the categories it monitors experienced price falls in the 12-month period, with automotive fuel dropping 3.6 per cent, women's clothing down 2.8 per cent, lamb falling 2.5 per cent and vegetables 2.2 per cent.

Dr Oliver said a variety of factors were behind the big differences in price moves.

"Last year a lot of goods were affected by pandemic-related supply shortages," he said. "Now some of those things are starting to correct and come back down because supply has returned and com-

modity prices have come off their highs."

He said while the lowering rate of inflation was good news and reduced pressure on the Reserve Bank to raise interest rates, people were still experiencing a loss of purchasing power as wages were not keeping up with prices.

"That won't start to correct until wages growth exceeds inflation growth," he said.

This might not happen until mid-2024, but "the gap between wages growth and costs is starting to narrow".

The cost of travel surged in 2022-23, with international travel and accommodation up

23 per cent and domestic holiday prices rising 14 per cent as airlines and hotels played catch-up after Covid.

CommSec chief economist Craig James said supply and demand in holiday travel and accommodation was "moving back into balance".

KPMG chief economist Brendan Rynne said he expected annual inflation to fall to 4.3 per cent by the end of this year, and to 3 per cent by the end of next year. He said some costs had fallen and others had climbed slightly, because "you are seeing a fall in the goods side of the economy".

"But in services markets, like insurance, you are getting a lagging effect, predominantly driven by wages growth," he said.



O-MAI! WHY YOU WILL HAVE TO PAY MORE TO EAT OUT

Anooska Tucker-Evans

Diners can expect to pay more when eating out, with 85 per cent of eateries predicting they will have to put up prices, while others are having to levy surcharges to stay open.

The cost increases, revealed in the latest Restaurant and Catering Benchmarking Report, come as restaurants and cafes face huge price rises in ingredients, electricity, rent, interest rates and wages.

Margaret Nguyen, of Brisbane Vietnamese eatery Cafe O-Mai, said she was forced to join the 50 per cent of hospitality venues now charging a Sunday surcharge, introducing the 10 per cent fee this month to try to keep her hit operation sustainable.

"My mum and I did the numbers and we went, 'We just have to do it now, we can't delay it', because the bottom line wasn't worth it to open on a Sunday, so it was either we close or we have to do this..."

At Brisbane's popular Howard Smith Wharves precinct, Greek taverna Greca and Japanese eatery Yoko are among the 20 per cent of restaurants across Australia, as reported by R&CA, now charging service fees for group bookings. Owner Jonathan Barthelmess said the 7 per cent discretionary surcharge went directly to staff as tips.

More venues are charging credit card and eftpos surcharges to cover bank costs, as well as corkage and cakeage prices.

Restaurant and Catering Association CEO Suresh Manickam said surcharges and increasing menu prices would be the only way hospitality operators would survive.

Criminals 'like' the notoriety

Blair Jackson

A Queensland council wants social media companies to pull down videos of crime quicker because the criminals "revel in the notoriety" of social media.

Townsville councillor Kurt Rehbein will look to get all 77 councils in the state to add their weight to the call when they meet in October.

"There's little doubt that these issues of criminal and

anti-social behaviour come from a small portion of our community, and they seem to revel in the notoriety that is being posted on social media," he said.

Councillor Russ Cook said a "classic" example of the trend came this week when youths armed with a machete filmed themselves ramming and chasing a man's car at 120km/h through Townsville.

The video was posted on

Facebook with the caption "you don't chase us we chase you".

"Crime is the hottest issue and the issue that's affecting everybody in this city," Cr Rehbein said.

Mayor Jenny Hill also put forward reforms such as youth rehabilitation programs, relocation sentencing and a banned-drinkers register, the latter in conjunction with Mount Isa and Cairns.

The cash couch with lazy \$30k

Nathan Schmidt

A retiree who gave away an old leather couch in an attempt to downsize realised he'd made a costly mistake: he'd given away his life savings.

Queensland man George said he donated the couch to an op-shop this year and it wasn't until weeks later that he realised he'd left \$30,000 in cash stuffed inside the couch.

George told 7 News he be-

lieved he had kept the section containing the cash.

"I didn't even think about it for a few weeks. It wasn't on my radar," he said.

"I think the bit that really hurts is that I've done this to myself, and I can't believe how bloody stupid I was, honestly.

"I really did have to stop and say: 'You're human, you made a mistake. If you don't repeat it you've learned a valuable lesson – and an expensive one.'"

George said his efforts to find the couch had been in vain. He called the op-shop but the couch had been resold within days. Worse still, the couch had been picked up and not delivered, making it impossible to track.

Nonetheless, George launched an online campaign to retrieve the cash.

"If I get a portion back, I'll be happy. But I think it's gone," he said.