

# SPEECH – BUDGET REPLY 2021

## The Hon Guy Barnett MP

Tuesday 31 August 2021.

[6.05 p.m.]

**Mr BARNETT** (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Mr Speaker, I am pleased and proud to stand tonight in support of the 2021 Budget and our crucial plans to maintain a vibrant and growing economy. At the outset, I pay tribute to the Premier and Treasurer for his outstanding efforts and exemplary leadership at a time when we have needed it most. The Budget is outstanding. I also pass on my get well soon wishes and I look forward to the Premier's return.

Thank you to the Acting Premier, Jeremy Rockliff, and to the Acting Treasurer, Michael Ferguson. They have done an excellent job in highlighting the importance of the Budget to the rebuilding of our economy and, of course, keeping Tasmanians safe. We have delivered on those two key priorities, not only in this Budget but over the last 16 to 18 months. The economy is critical to the breadth and quality of services the government delivers for households, families, regional communities and businesses. The Budget is about delivering record health services spending, record spending in education and in other key areas of our community.

The Budget is focused on recovery - building resilience, becoming stronger than ever before. In my view, our response in the face of COVID-19 has been appropriate, responsible and strategic. It has been about protecting Tasmania's best interests and supporting a growing economy - and we have delivered. You have seen it in the numbers in the Budget with economic growth heading to 4 per cent next year and then back to 2 per cent. It is growth. It is not a recession such as occurred, under the Labor-Greens government many years ago.

This past year has been a testing one for all Tasmanians from all walks of life. I could not be prouder of Team Tasmania and the job that this government and our Premier has done in such trying circumstances. Team Tasmania will continue to need this leadership going forward as we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic and look towards a bright and prosperous future.

As a government we are disciplined, united, responsible and adaptable. We have to pivot when needed, and we have done so. This Budget is all about delivering on jobs and building confidence in the community. We are continuing with the largest and most significant infrastructure program in the state's history, because that is what is being delivered over the next four years - \$5.7 billion infrastructure investment to support those 28 000 jobs as well as providing significant opportunities for Tasmanians as we deliver on our commitments. We are delivering on our promises and a range of experts and others have said so. Michael Bailey from the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry said:

*"This is the budget that gets the settings right. It is a budget that manages spending and shows our strong ability to generate revenue."*

I am pleased to acknowledge the Standard & Poor's Agency reflecting on our growing economy and the fact that we will be moving to an operational surplus in 2023-24. It is good news to have that independent tick of approval to the Tasmanian Budget. Disappointingly, Labor has again not delivered an alternative budget - no plans, no policies, no alternative budget and still too close to the Greens.

We know that they are operating in a toxic environment. Bastian Seidel, the Labor member for Huon, made that very clear in his resignation note demonstrating the bitter internal divisions inside the

Labor Party and how the Leader, Ms White, has no control. It is disappointing that there is no alternative Budget, and I am putting it on the record.

With regard to the Government and our support for the critical industries, particularly that I represent in the area of trade, agriculture, forestry, fishing, mining, energy and emissions reduction and veterans' affairs, I share a few remarks.

More trade, more jobs. We have a \$6 million plan in this Budget over the next four years to deliver increased trade opportunities for Tasmanian businesses alike, small, medium and large. We are backing our export businesses and we have the confidence to further invest, employ and seek those global markets. For the final three years of Tasmania's first trade strategy - and I was there for the launch with the former minister Jeremy Rockliff - we have annual trade action plans, we are agile and nimble, we are moving to expand our markets and create more jobs locally. We have the new Air New Zealand direct flights to Auckland, and we have a proposed trade and tourism mission to New Zealand, once health advice and borders allow.

Secure and expanding international business development networks: we have appointed trade advocates in the US, Japan and Singapore, and the plan is working. The latest Australian Bureau of Statistics export data revealed a record. Tasmanian exports hit the \$3.84 billion record in the year to June 2021, exceeding the previous 12-month record. A 5.2 per cent increase on the year to June. The average national growth was 3.5 per cent. This is great news for Tasmania, our exporters and jobs, particularly in those rural and regional areas where we desperately need those jobs. Every job counts.

Agriculture is the life blood of our rural and regional communities, and our primary producers are the backbone of this state. They are delivering in spades. It puts food on the table, not just for us here in Tasmania but across mainland states and territories, and overseas. I say thank you to our farmers and fishers. They work hard every day to produce premium goods, sought across the country and the world over.

We are getting on with the job with a visionary and comprehensive plan for the state's agricultural sector, investing \$50 million to accelerate agriculture to that target of \$10 billion farmgate value by 2050. We are on track. It is very good news to be on track and to acknowledge the 7 per cent increase in the previous 12-month period.

Confidence among our agricultural sector and farming communities is at a near record high. It is delivering strong growth across all our productive industries but particularly in agriculture. Today is the day to celebrate. I toasted with the member for Braddon, Felix Ellis, with a glass of milk at lunchtime, to say that we now have a record dairy industry production of 960 million litres of milk, a 1.2 per cent increase from the previous year, which was also a record. Congratulations to the Tasmanian dairy industry. We are proud of you and what you are doing.

We are backing it in in so many different ways. Water is liquid gold and that is why we are investing \$30 million to provide support for water resources and irrigation and \$23.7 million for the next four years to super-size Tranche 3. Those irrigation projects at the Don, Wesley Vale, Sassafras, Northern Midlands, Fingal, Tamar, are going. It is great to be working with the agricultural sector, agribusinesses. They are a key ingredient to success, as is water and access to reliable water being a key ingredient to success.

We have \$5 million on the table for Tasmanian Irrigation to develop a business case for the South East extension. That will be the largest irrigation scheme in Tasmania's history if that comes to fruition, and I hope it will. There is \$1.5 million on the table over four years for the Rural Water Use Strategy, which provides funding support for river health advisory projects and monitoring, metering and

management. This is important, and be assured, the health of our rivers is taken very seriously. We have recently established a rural water round table. This is the experts in Tasmania on the wise use of water. I am delighted and honoured to have been there at the meeting just a week or so ago, at their first meeting, and there will be several more meetings between now and Christmas.

We have a strategy. It has taken nearly two-and-a-half years to develop the water use strategy - lots of consultation, feedback from the key stakeholders, and we have that train moving in the right direction to protect, promote and support our waterways. Water is liquid gold. We have 1 per cent of Australia's land mass, 12 per cent of Australia's rainfall, 27 per cent of Australia's water in storage. We have it, it is a natural asset, and we want to use it wisely in Tasmania.

We have \$10 million for the new agricultural protection package, supporting a whole range of primary producers and support of the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association, Fruit Growers Tasmania, Tasmanian Natural Resource Management bodies - and I met with NRM South just earlier today, Dairy Tas, Biosecurity Tasmania. What great work they are doing. We have the \$5.6 million for the new community farming partnerships program and \$3 million for the Agricultural Development Fund. That says we have confidence in agriculture. We want to see what you have to offer and we want to help drive that agri-vision to 2050.

We are now creating a nation-leading Tasmanian agricultural precinct in Launceston. We are backing it with \$15 million. We have signed a memorandum of understanding with the university. I thank the Vice Chancellor for his support for that, and for my Department of Primary Industries and Water. The bulk of that department will be heading to Launceston working shoulder to shoulder with the Tas Institute of Agriculture and key stakeholders. I am delighted to be able to advise and provide an update on that. It is the first jurisdiction in Australia to be doing that.

On Saturday, I launched the Strategic Industry Partnership Program with a further \$2 million over four years leveraging the skills and experience of so many key stakeholders. Thanks to those stakeholders who were there at Woolmers on Saturday. Particular thanks to Justin Birchmore, chair of Sprout. He was so positive on behalf of stakeholder colleagues there of the government support. Again, Team Tasmania, working together to get the job done.

There is \$7 million for research, a key ingredient to success in agriculture. We have our research farms on the north-west coast and \$1 million for Fruit Growers Tasmania at Grove, acknowledging the importance of the fruit industry.

Biosecurity: what can be more important in protecting the Tasmania brand, keeping pests and diseases out of Tasmania and ensuring that we have what the rest of the nation wants and needs? Whether it is to do with the livestock sector, managing animal welfare, market access, we have more biosecurity staff on King and Flinders Island, funding support for TFGA for on-farm biosecurity engagement and industry awareness and, also, a new veterinary facility on Flinders Island.

We have confidence that is high. In terms of agricultural production, 14.7 per cent based on the last ABS stats for agricultural production increase. That is fantastic. What is the national average? 1.4 per cent. Tassie, we are gunning it. I am so proud of the sector working together, shoulder to shoulder, to get the job done and producing food on the table for Tasmanians, mainlanders and the rest of the world.

There is no stronger supporter of our iconic seafood industry than the Tasmanian Liberal Government: \$187 million annually, that is what it is worth - regional jobs - and they have done it tough. During COVID-19, we provided a \$5.5 million package of support to the sector, \$660 000-odd

support package to the wild fisheries sector including the rock lobster sector, and the trade situation in China has been very challenging.

We have \$3 million on the table to support the Wild Fisheries Action Plan. My thanks to Julian Harrington of the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council. He said he commends the Liberal Government for funding all commitments announced as part of the 2020-21 Budget Building Our Fisheries policy. He went on to thank the Government for understanding the state of their industry and already implementing a \$700 000 seafood processors grant scheme to support seafood.

We are there to support them, shoulder to shoulder, working together with our stakeholders. I am very pleased to wear that T-shirt, 'Eat more Seafood'. I encourage Tasmanians to do so. It is part of the education and awareness campaign and we are certainly backing that. We have the seafood trails website that we are supporting and we will keep doing that.

Likewise with recreational fishing, it is not just me who supports it, there are more than a 100 000 Tasmanians who love it. They love recreational fishing, whether it be sea fishing or inland fishing and we are backing both. We have a 10-year Recreational Sea Fishing Strategy and that will be Tasmania's first ever. We are backing it in because we know it is a part of the Tasmanian way of life. There is \$100 000 to make fishing easier for young people, women, people with disabilities, support for TARfish to the tune of \$400 000 over three years.

The Budget is full of support: \$2 million grant funding for new and upgraded facilities for recreational sea fishing and \$1 million for new and upgraded facilities for inland fishing and, of course, the tagged trout. The Tagged Trout Promotion is working. I caught up with Len and his brother last week at Craighoume Dam and he showed me Lenny's Special, which was the lure he used to catch one of the \$2000 tagged trout. There are 50 of them out there and we have now had four of them caught; fantastic, congratulations and well done. Get out there and enjoy it - 50 waterways, lakes and rivers, the Derwent as well - and try to catch one. It is great to see the increase in the number of young Tasmanians who have taken up that licence already. I caught up with John Diggie yesterday and had an update on that.

When it comes to renewable energy, Tasmania is gunning it. We are the powerhouse of Australia. We are leading the nation and leading Australia in so many ways. We have already hit 100 per cent fully self-sufficient in renewable energy and it has confirmed our status as a world leader. We have a target to be 150 per cent by 2030 and to be 200 per cent by 2040. I cannot help but quote Michael Bailey, CEO of the TTCL:

"What are we doing in renewables is really revolutionary."

He kindly noted that Guy Barnett is just so passionate about renewables. What else did he say:

*"I've got to say too, I really like the creation of Renewables, Climate and Future Industries Tasmania which is under Minister Barnett who is just so passionate about renewables and I think he really is the best Energy Minister in Australia. He is really driving that for Tasmania. With all seriousness he is doing a great job.. and what we are doing in renewables is really revolutionary."*

Of course, I acknowledge Michael Bailey. I am enthusiastic and I am known as the most energetic energy minister in Australia. It is nice to be known as the best energy minister in Australia; I am absolutely honoured.

This is all because we are backing it in with renewable energy. I have a bit of a response across the Chamber because they have been mute year in, year out, month in, month out but now they are rising.

We have done this all on the back of our Renewable Energy Action Plan. We have consulted widely across the community; we have got our Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan and it is working because we are delivering affordable, reliable, clean electricity.

Zero net emissions for the fifth year in a row, six out of the last seven years and the Premier, the Minister for Climate Change, has made this clear. We have a track record and we are proud of it. We have big plans for Project Marinus, Battery of the Nation and renewable hydrogen. We have plans for Tarraleah, a \$700 million development to double the capacity from 110 megawatts to 220 megawatts subject to further discussions and negotiations with the Australian Government.

It is an exciting time to be in Tasmania and to be part of this future. Renewable hydrogen is Tasmania's super-power. I thank those key proponents that are involved; there are many of them including Origin Energy, ABEL Energy, and Grange Resources. They are all involved in that EOI process. Woodside Energy, Fortescue Future Industries thank you for your engagement, consultation and support for our plans for a green hydrogen future in Tasmania. It is all set out in the Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan in the years ahead.

Unfortunately, there are naysayers like the leader the twice defeated and recently rejected Ms White out there trying to find ways to tear this down, to denigrate, to be negative, to knock-knock-knock. Unfortunately, the Leader of the Opposition forgets the Government and the Hydro are working with a range of proponents for renewable energy and for hydrogen proponents and those are commercial-in-confidence discussions. Ms White forgets that this Government has legislated Tasmania's renewable energy target, which is 200 per cent by 2040.

We have big plans, working with the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone. We have amongst the lowest regulated power prices in the nation in 2022 and on 1 July down, down on electricity prices, more than 7 per cent down for residential customers and 11 per cent down for small business regulated power prices. That is a terrific result.

This contrasts with the Labor-Greens - seven years on their watch, what happened? Up, up, up 65 per cent that is what happened over that seven-year period. We have the \$125 winter energy supplement for eligible concession holders. That is about 90 000 Tasmanians, a \$12 million commitment. I am proud of that. That is on top of the \$43 million concession arrangements, the \$30 million we have for the Tasmanian Energy Efficiency Loan Scheme. There is so much in renewable energy and providing support to Tasmanians to deal with the cost of living and the cost of doing business.

I am absolutely proud of mining. There is no greater supporter of the mining and mineral processing sector: 5000 people, more than 50 per cent of our exports, royalties going up and up, more than \$31 million in 2019-20. We are backing it in with a \$3.5 million support package and we are backing it in strongly. This is despite the radical Bob Brown Foundation continuing to protest mining opportunities on the West Coast, together with the support of their parliamentary wing, the Tasmanian Greens.

We will continue to support the productive industries. With respect to the Tarkine I am very pleased that the multiple use of mining, forestry, farming, fishing, conservation measures, recreational measures for the last 150 years have been recognised with the rejection of the BBF's claim for emergency listing.

In forestry, let me make it clear, this is a \$1.2 billion part of our economy; 5700 direct and indirect jobs, incredibly important. Are we backing it in? Too right: \$11.7 million over the next five years. Thanks also to the support of Sustainable Timber Tasmania co-investing we have a \$10 million fund over five years to deliver on-island processing, value-adding, jobs creating in the industry in Tasmania because wood is good. Yes, it is sustainable, recyclable, and renewable. It is the ultimate renewable. Here it is in the Chamber. It is a wood bank but this is a carbon sink. We are surrounded by wood in this Chamber, it is beautiful and I am proud of it, unlike other members in the Chamber from the Greens party.

We have the Tasmanian Timber Promotion Board, \$1.15 million over three years. We want to promote timber. We have the Diversity Action Plan project for both forestry and the mining sector as well. What did the Tasmanian Forest Products Association (TFPA) say about the Budget?

*"Importantly, the budget recognises the need for more on-island processing and value-adding of forestry products that will support and deliver more jobs and the new \$10 million fund over five years will support our growing industry and regional communities by providing support for innovation and excellence in value-adding."*

That is what the association said, and I totally agree with them in that regard. There is much to say but we will not take lectures from the Labor Party when it comes to our support for forestry because it was the Labor-Greens government - Two-thirds of the jobs were lost. Forestry was taken to its knees. It was decimated. We will not take any lectures from the Labor Party when it comes to supporting our productive industries, whether that be from Shane Broad or the Leader, Rebecca White. It is not on. Year-in, year-out, they voted against our workplace protection legislation to support Tasmanian workers and their right to work to support Tasmanian businesses and their right to operate freely and without impediment, intrusion or interference. But, of course, they voted with the Greens and voted it down year-in, year-out.

They will have another opportunity in the very near future. I encourage them to reconsider. Of course, their position was a late call right before the election to say, 'Let's have timber harvesting safety zones and support workplace protection in that space'. What about the miners? What about the farmers? What about those in aquaculture? Big mistake, Labor. You have an opportunity now to reconsider and support Tasmania.

With respect to the attack on the forest industry and the ridiculous and wrong claim by the Greens calling for the end of deforestation in line with the IPCC report, that is absolutely wrong. Tasmania does not undertake deforestation. It does not happen in Tasmania.

The Greens' effort to say there is deforestation in Tasmania is absolutely wrong. It is incorrect, it is false; it is deceptive. We have a sustainable forest industry. We do not engage in that. Our wood is harvested, and our forests are regrown, making it renewable, the ultimate renewable. Let us be very clear. The IPCC published a view that sustainable management of our forests, including a mixed strategy of conservation and timber production is more likely to be optimal for atmospheric carbon reduction. That is very clear. It has been backed by the Food and Agricultural Organisation and the International Energy Agency. In fact, it is the view shared by just about everyone except the Greens.

In terms of veterans, Tasmania has a very long and distinguished military history. The contribution is outstanding. To have 15 of Australia's 101 Victoria Cross recipients is an astonishing record. Of course, we pay tribute to the late Ordinary Seaman Teddy Sheean of Latrobe who was awarded with the Victoria Cross on 1 December last year. Just on the past weekend I have caught up and had a wonderful conversation with Beryl Leonard who was married for more than 76 years to Ray Leonard,

the last remaining survivor of the *Armidale* and who knew Teddy Sheean and was there when Teddy went down with the ship. Sadly, Ray passed away just a couple of months ago. Beryl was pleased to receive the Gold Card that I had followed up just a few weeks ago through my office, Matthew Hochman, to the federal minister. The Gold Card has come through for Beryl Leonard and we can all be absolutely delighted.

I acknowledge the 'hear, hears' and the support around the Chamber for Beryl having a Gold Card, an acknowledgement of her and, of course, the service of her late husband, Ray Leonard.

We think sadly and reflect on the veterans in Operation Slipper in Afghanistan, a 20-year engagement. Let me say right now, for all of those veterans, the 39 000 Australians who served, the many Tasmanians who served, we honour you, we salute you and we say thank you for your service.

The Tasmanian Government is a strong supporter of Tasmania's veterans and will ensure that their service and sacrifice will not be forgotten. Of course, that is why in the Budget we included a record funding of \$1.4 million over coming years for the RSL as a peak body status, the Teddy Sheean VC Memorial grants, the Veterans Retreat at Lake Sorell, the health and wellbeing vouchers, the Headstone projects, and the like.

In conclusion, it is a tremendous honour to be the member for Lyons; it is more than half the state, rural and regional parts of Tasmania, working with people like John Tucker, Mark Shelton and others in this great electorate of Lyons. I am very proud.

There is a lot happening. I am backing in the good news of the Hobart to Sorell corridor infrastructure upgrade, \$350 million; police stations at Bridgewater, New Norfolk and St Helens and Longford; school and early learning upgrades at Brighton, Sorell, Bothwell and Campbelltown; the \$96 million tourism developments at Cradle Mountain, Freycinet and Maria Island; \$1 million to commence the resurfacing of Weilangta Road and thank you minister, Michael Ferguson, for supporting that effort and, of course, the \$270 million for the northern prison.

Mr Deputy Speaker, I am a proud member of the Gutwein majority Liberal Government. This Budget delivers in so many ways. I am pleased to be part of this Government to deliver a stronger economy, more jobs and opportunities for Tasmanians. It is a great honour and I support the Budget.