

# Construction jobs abound thanks to us

EARLIER this decade we experienced the sad phenomenon of skilled Tasmanians leaving the state in droves to find work in the building and construction industry.

Just a few years down the track, the turnaround is increasingly evident with more and more Tasmanians employed in the sector.

We are seeing those tradies who left the state to find work now returning because there is work here for them under the Hodgman Liberal Government.

Recently released Australian Bureau of Statistics labour force figures for May 2017 show 22,800 people are employed in the building and construction sector, compared to just 16,000 in June 2013.

This type of turnaround does not happen by accident. The Hodgman Liberal Government's investment of more than \$2 billion in major works and capital upgrades has created new confidence in the building and construction sector in Tasmania.

While cranes in the Hobart skyline has become a familiar sight in recent years and that is very pleasing, we know that the recovery has been slower across the North and so have invested in important infrastructure projects in the North and North-West, such as the University of Tasmania developments in Launceston and Burnie, which will help to grow employment in those regions.

Our economy is going from strength to strength, and that is assisting growth in the residential building sector.

Tasmania's dwelling unit approvals in May 2017 were estimated to be 13 per cent higher than the same time last year, compared to a national drop of 18.1 per cent for the same period.

The Housing Industry Association — Tasmania, is forecasting a 7.5 per cent rise in renovations over the next three years and predicts the value of renovation activity in Tasmania will grow from \$618 million this year to \$666 million in 2020.

The residential construction sector has received a huge boost from the Hodgman Liberal Government's nation-leading building reforms, which are encouraging development and helping to create jobs by ensuring that gaining approval to build in Tasmania is fairer, faster, simpler and cheaper.

Under our reforms if you want to undertake low-risk building work such as general maintenance and repairs on

## The industry is booming, says Guy Barnett

your home, or build structures such as sheds or decks up to a certain size (details at [www.justice.tas.gov.au/building](http://www.justice.tas.gov.au/building)), there are no more building permits required.

This red-tape reduction for low-risk building gives home owners the encouragement to get on and build, which creates more work for local builders.

With the kind of employment growth and confidence we are seeing, now is the perfect time for the Government to be incentivising the employment of new apprentices in the industry.

## Employment in Tasmania is now the highest it's ever been.

This year's State Budget contained \$25 million for a Youth Employment Strategy that came into effect on July 1, which includes payroll tax relief and \$4000 grants for employing young people. This is a game changer for both businesses and young people looking for work.

In the coming months we expect to see many businesses in the construction industry taking on new apprentices as a result of these incentives. Not only does this give young Tasmanians a start to their career, but it helps us to set up a skilled, job-ready workforce for major projects into the future.

There has never been a better time to employ an apprentice or a young trainee with construction running hot and according to Sensis, in March 2017 Tasmania recorded the second highest level of regional business confidence of all jurisdictions.

The Hodgman Liberal Government's plan to create jobs is working. Employment in Tasmania is now the highest it's ever been, with 243,400 people in work in May 2017.

This is an increase of nearly 8400 since the election, and the building and construction sector is playing a significant part in this rise.

**Guy Barnett is the Tasmanian government Minister for Building and Construction.**