

SPEECH – STATE OF THE STATE REPLY 2020

The Hon Guy Barnett MP

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Madam Speaker, it is a privilege to stand here as the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Energy, Minister for Resources and Minister for Veterans Affairs. I thank Tasmania's 46th Premier Peter Gutwein for the opportunity to continue serving as a member in his Cabinet. I have known the Premier for a long time. We both hail from the state's mighty north. I have no doubt that he will do a terrific job in this role in the months and years ahead.

First, I put on the record a wonderful tribute to the former premier, Will Hodgman. Will was committed to making Tasmania a better place and was a member in this place for nearly 18 years, leader of the State Liberal Party for 14 years, Leader of the Opposition for eight and Premier for six. He entered parliament in 2002, the same year I entered the Australian Senate. I was in there in February 2002. It was a tough time for Premier Hodgman, particularly early on as premier, and he inherited the worst economy in the country at the time, with people leaving in droves, business confidence down on the back of an economic recession, 10 000 jobs lost, but the confidence rebounded and the economy over time also grew. In fact, he has left the fastest-growing economy in Australia and it is a great credit to him.

ScoMo, the Prime Minister, who I have known for many years and have a very high regard for, called Tasmania the turnaround state under Will Hodgman's stewardship. He led us through that period from deficits back to surpluses and under Will's leadership investing more in health, education, essential services and infrastructure to help Tasmania grow. He will be remembered, in my view, as one of Tasmania's most successful premiers. I am proud to have served as a member of his team during that six-year period with Will. I wish him and his wife, Nicky and the children all the very best, as I said to him privately and I am saying publicly. I am happy to spend some more time with him fishing or doing some other things that he might enjoy doing. I wish him well for his future endeavours.

Before I share some of my thoughts and views on the Premier's Address - and I am very confident about that - I quickly pay a tribute to the late Cameron Goss. It has been referred to already by my shadow, Shane Broad, that we both attended the funeral and thanksgiving service for Cameron Goss yesterday along with Rosalie Woodruff and many hundreds of others, particularly from the west coast town of Queenstown where he was born and raised and loved and lived. He was a wonderful man and some wonderful, generous reflections on Cameron Goss's life were shared yesterday. It was an absolute honour to represent the Premier and the Government at that service.

He left his wife, Christine, and Alysha and Kaleb [OK], his two children. His family and his wife's family and broader family were all there and so many friends. It says so much about the west coast and how resilient, close and caring the community is. It says a lot about the mining and processing industry as well. We know that mining is inherently dangerous work. I make a point of recognising the incredible efforts put in during the initial search and eventual recovery of Cameron Goss from the mine.

Mrs Rylah - Hear, hear.

Mr BARNETT - I visited Henty Gold Mine three times in the last four weeks - and I hear a response from the member for Braddon behind me who was there on two of those three occasions. We visited Henty Gold just last week together for a bit of an update and to show our support and encouragement in any way we could to those at Henty Gold and caught up with Dion Alford, the general manager there who spoke so well straight from his heart yesterday about Cameron Goss. He also thanked those who did so much during that very difficult time to recover Cameron.

I put on record my thanks to not just the mine management and owners but the police search and rescue, mines inspectorate and all the people who worked and assisted in this recovery. They should be given all of our thanks. On behalf of the Government and all of us here I say thank you. The whole mining industry should be included in that. There were mine teams from not just Tassie but all around Australia ready to assist with whatever they could do to support the team. Skilled manufacturers on the north-west coast dropped everything to manufacture specialist equipment required to make the recovery effort a success.

I note that even during this extremely difficult time for the family, Christine, who I caught up a few weeks ago in Queenstown, was supportive of the mine continuing its work. I say thank you as well to her and the family. It means a lot. She wanted the work to go on knowing that there was a tragic accident and an unlikely event but they knew Mr Goss would have wanted that to occur. That was a message we shared. It was upfront and the community really appreciated that. It was great being down at the footy clubrooms yesterday afternoon having a drink with many of the friends, colleagues and family members of Cameron. They were very appreciative of that message of support.

Certainly mining is in the blood of the west coast and it is a critical element in its development and survival over the last 150-plus years and we will continue to stand with the industry in making it a key pillar of the west coast for another 100 years. As Minister for Resources and Minister for Energy, I am absolutely committed to doing so and will continue to support them. We will be standing also with Henty Gold. The Premier visited just a few weeks ago with myself, Joan Rylah and others and we will stand shoulder to shoulder with them as they work their way through these difficult times and do whatever we can to support them continuing. I join with others in this place in sending our condolences to his wife, Christine, and the family at this difficult time.

Over the last six years we have demonstrated that we have been a disciplined and united, responsible Government. We have had sustained strong economic and jobs growth, over 20 000 jobs in fact, which is terrific. We have the commitment, focus and a drive to deliver a better future for Tasmania.

The Premier laid out yesterday a pathway for a growing economy, one that we can invest in the services that our community needs, whether it be health, education, infrastructure, or safety and security. A principle I have held all my life, including in federal parliament, is that you need a strong economy to reinvest those funds back into health, education and essential services. I have always believed that. John Howard was strong on that. You do need a strong economy. The top priority must be growing our economy and more jobs and opportunity for Tasmanians young and old. It is really great the Premier outlined that plan yesterday and it has helped spread the benefits of that strong economy to even more Tasmanians. We have plans now with the major projects legislation. We are speeding up the approval process for energy, TasNetworks, water and sewerage and TasWater, additional support for tourism, housing investment.

There are many initiatives that I am very proud of but I will focus on some of my portfolio areas, in particular Primary Industries and Water, and Energy, to start with and say how proud I am to be in this space. It is a world-class water resource, a world-class wind resource and agriculture is a priority in this state and we are proud of it. We are making the most of it. I was so proud yesterday, punching the air in fact, when I knew the Premier would be announcing a new renewable energy generation target of 200 per cent of our needs by 2040. It is exciting. This is historic. What was announced yesterday is a watershed event that will see Tasmania double its renewable energy production by 2040.

This is so exciting and, with our water and wind assets, we are making the most of it. We are grasping this opportunity with both hands and we are capitalising on this competitive advantage in the

twenty-first century. There are very few jurisdictions that have any chance of doing this. We are going to do it in Tasmania and we are laying the foundations now as a majority Liberal government for decades to come.

The Premier announced the design option for the Don Irrigation Scheme. I will talk more about that and the fact that water is liquid gold. You have heard me say that before but I will say it again because it is so exciting. That commitment is going forward jointly with the Australian Government.

I want to speak a little bit more about our world-class renewable energy generation and our credentials in that regard because it is all about low-cost, reliable clean energy. Guess what, it is not just about exporting our excess energy to the mainland; importantly, it is also about growing that opportunity here in Tasmania. This will attract investment. This will attract jobs and opportunity in Tasmania - low-cost, reliable, 100 per cent clean renewable energy.

We have what everybody else in Australia wants and needs, in fact what many in the world want and need. We are going to make the most of it, and we are doing that in so many different ways. We have just 2 per cent of Australia's land mass, about 12 per cent of Australia's rainfall, and up to 27 per cent of Australia's water and storage. Tasmania is Australia's leading renewable energy state - just 2 per cent overall in terms of energy production, but 25 per cent of renewable energy production for all of Australia, and we are on the up because we are targeting 100 per cent fully renewable by 2022.

We are on track, and we are now planning for 200 per cent of our current needs by 2040. This target will be detailed in the Renewable Energy Plan, which I will be releasing in April, and that will be setting out our clear objectives and actions to transform Tasmania into a national and global renewable energy powerhouse. As the rest of the world looks for cleaner renewable forms of energy in order to decarbonise their economies, Tasmania is on the cutting edge.

A few days ago, we released our final Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan. Hydrogen is the internet of energy. It is the next big thing. Renewable hydrogen is the internet of energy on steroids. Emerging demand for renewable hydrogen presents a significant opportunity for Tasmania to develop a hydrogen industry powered by Tasmanian renewable energy, creating jobs and further growing our economy and position as a global leader in renewable energy supply. We are on track. Renewable hydrogen offers the answer. We have a \$50 million package over the next 10 years to build that renewable hydrogen industry here. That is the largest package of support in Australia. It is happening here in Tasmania. We are going to make it happen under our Liberal Government.

We have support. All this aligns with the Australian Government's Australian Renewable Energy Agency support of \$70 million. It is consistent with the National Hydrogen Strategy, which was signed off by all the COAG energy ministers and the federal minister last December - a \$370 million package. We are acting in alignment with the Australian Government, our Coalition colleagues in Canberra. We are working shoulder to shoulder with them to create history and opportunity for future Tasmanians, and the future of our country. In Tasmania we can produce renewable hydrogen up to 15 per cent cheaper than from the mainland power grid, and up to 13 per cent lower than from dedicated off-grid renewable resources, thanks to our natural and established advantages, including our transmission infrastructure, significant water availability, access to deep-water ports, and of course pumped hydro, hydro itself and wind.

We are track. Our Tasmanian Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan maps out our vision for Tasmania to be generating renewable hydrogen by 2022-24, and to be commercially exporting hydrogen as a global exporter by 2030, and by 2025-27 to be exporting hydrogen to the globe. We have identified

Bell Bay as the hydrogen hub, likewise Burnie as a hydrogen hub, and we know that there is opportunity, jobs galore in the years and decades ahead.

All this is complementary to Marinus Link and Battery of the Nation, and our plans for each of that. We are working shoulder to shoulder with the federal government in terms of Marinus Link, and we know that will deliver 1400 jobs directly and indirectly. Together, Marinus Link and the associated pumped hydro and wind projects will deliver thousands of jobs, over \$7 billion into the economy during that period of construction, and it is an exciting time. It is all because we are backing our natural assets - a world-class wind, a world-class water resource - and we are making the most of it. We have three renewable energy zones - north-west coast, the north-east and the Central Highlands - and we will be seeing quite a bit of development in that space. We have had the top three sites in terms of pumped hydro sites being assessed - Lake Cethana, Lake Rowallan and Tribute - and up to \$30 million invested to make those assessments. They are progressing positively. We will have more to say about those and the assessments, and the feedback on that assessment, in the not too distant future.

We have a 'Tasmania first' energy policy, which we announced at the previous election, and we are implementing that. We still have one of the most generous electricity concession schemes in Australia, and we have been capping our regulated electricity prices to keep them down as low as possible, and we will continue to do that. We know that the cost of business, the cost of living, is critically important to all Tasmanians and that is why we stay focused. I am convinced that our best days are ahead of us as a state, and a new chapter of opportunity presents itself right here. We are creating history and creating those new opportunities.

In terms of Primary Industries and Water, I know I will need a little bit of time tomorrow to wrap up, but I do want to say that it is one of the most exciting opportunities and a great honour, because we have a long-term plan to build the farm gate value of agriculture at \$10 billion by 2050, and we are on track, with a 9 per cent increase at the last assessment. We are a state of two halves, and I want to acknowledge those drought-affected areas - particularly on the east coast, the south-east and the southern midlands. They have been doing it tough, it has been really hard, but we have responded earlier last year with a \$400 000 drought package, and we will continue to provide support to those areas in need.

I did want to say that we are very keen to develop younger people in agriculture. We have an Extension Accelerator pilot to help fast-track the development of young agricultural professionals. We also have a new charter for working on private farmland, and that is enhancing relations between our farmers and state utilities, and are complementing the TFGA's Living Next Door to a Farmer program, which we helped fund and support.

I am excited about the whole-of-government white paper Competitiveness of Tasmanian Agriculture for 2050, which is out for consultation at the moment, and will help ensure our agricultural industries remain globally competitive. I encourage feedback on that discussion paper, and look forward to finalising it later this year.

All of this is, of course, consistent with the Tasmanian brand. Pure, fresh, clean, natural - all those ingredients are part of our success. It is across not just my portfolios in terms of agriculture, seafood, fishing and renewable energy, but across so many parts of Tasmania. Yes, I am pleased and proud to be a minister for gourmet food, wine and beer and such things, but the Tasmanian brand is growing. On a trade mission last year, I had the opportunity to talk about those aspects of Tasmania, and they really appeal. People are loving it. They are getting on board, and that is another reason you are seeing population growth in Tasmania, and another reason you are seeing the economy growing.

I see the Deputy Premier and Minister for Trade in the Chamber with me, and our trade strategy is all part of building on the Tassie brand and growing those opportunities, and that investment is really important. That trade strategy has been launched and is now being implemented. I wish the Deputy Premier all the best on his trade mission to North America in April.

In agriculture, we have so many good things to talk about in terms of dairy and red meat. In the few minutes available, I would just touch on this and finish off tomorrow. The dairy industry is the largest contributor to farm gate value, with over \$400 million per annum. We have done a lot to support that, but it is near production records, and is now at 11 per cent and going up in terms of milk production across the country, on behalf of the nation. So, the Tassie dairy industry is going well and I look forward to being at the Dairy Tasmania event next week. We have done work in supporting them with a stock underpass program, the farm energy audit and capital grants program, and we continue to work shoulder to shoulder with the dairy sector. Likewise with red meat, they have had some tough times but the red meat industry is fundamentally in good shape again, worth over \$400 million to the economy, and thank you Leonie Hiscutt MLC for chairing the red meat working group and developing a long term strategy for the future. We are investing \$1 million to drive development of that red meat sector and providing another \$800 000 to help those small processors increase that Tasmanian base capacity. We know there is more work happening in that space. There has been a mention of Scottsdale Pork and the abattoir there that is on track in terms of that development.

Thursday 5 March [11.53 a.m.]

Madam Deputy Speaker, I will continue my contribution. I am excited as minister for a range of portfolios and supportive of the Premier's state of the state address. What a terrific plan this is for Tasmania and all Tasmanians, not just for this year but this decade and the decades ahead.

We have done so much. One of the messages I was sharing was the importance of agriculture. I will come to fishing and salmon and seafood shortly. The Tasmania brand is clean, fresh, pure, natural. That is what is important. We have done so much. We have delivered so much. The GMO-free moratorium for 10 years is just part of that. It is protecting the Tasmania brand. It has been an extension for five years and we have now locked in a 10-year moratorium. I am pleased to have the support of those in this chamber and elsewhere around the community.

It is consistent with our biosecurity efforts. It is a top priority for Tasmania because Tasmania's brand reputation is number one. We want to keep out pests and disease from Tasmania. Being an island state is one of our great natural advantages. Biosecurity needs to be rigorous and effective. We are delivering an extra more than \$30 million in funding in this year's Budget and an additional \$2.6 million per year to the frontline. I thank industry for its support - fruit growers, TFGA and industry across the board.

Our landmark Biosecurity Act 2019 did away with seven other pieces of legislation, putting it all into one act. I met with the Biosecurity Advisory Committee, chaired by Felicity Richards, just a few weeks ago. I thank Felicity and all the members for their contribution as key advice to government. The Government is committed to expanding our world-class biosecurity system.

Water is liquid gold. It is raining today and as minister for Water I am delighted, particularly for the east coast, south-east and southern midlands. It is replenishing our water reserves.

Just 8 per cent of our agricultural land is delivering over 50 per cent of our agricultural production. That is fantastic news. That is because we have invested in water infrastructure over the years. Water is a key natural advantage for Tasmania. We are delivering on that through renewable energy, hydro, but also irrigation.

We are investing, with the Australian Government, thanks to the Prime Minister, ScoMo, and his team for that commitment, \$170 million over the years ahead. Nearly 15 schemes by mid this year will be built and delivered. The last one is the Scottsdale Irrigation Scheme. A couple of days ago the Don Irrigation Scheme was announced at a cost of \$28.5 million. Its 5000 mega litres will cover areas like the Don, Barrington and Sheffield. I was at Lower Barrington last Saturday with the poly pedallers, raising awareness and money for diabetes, riding up from the Paloona Dam. It was a very steep ride. We got to Lower Barrington and I looked out across the fields and saw the very productive, fertile soil. You could almost eat it. Brilliant stuff.

The Don Irrigation Scheme is part of our tranche 3 project. Tranche 3 will deliver more than 2500 full-time jobs and an additional \$150 million will be privately invested on farms. We have plans for 10 more, five are under way.

The south-east integration project is really important. We have delivered the interim solution announced a couple of weeks ago. I am pleased and proud to have worked with Tasmanian Irrigation, the Premier and Treasurer and others on behalf of the Government. Thank you for that project. Farmers in the south-east have an expression of interest process going out. More than 600 landowners and farmers will benefit from that.

We have a short-term solution, a long-term solution. We are a government of vision. We are implementing action to achieve that vision. I will soon release the Rural Water Use Strategy. We are aiming for best practise across Tasmania in how we use water. It is liquid gold. We want to use it wisely. We have been and we will continue to do so.

We have a world-class wild catch and farmed seafood sector. We are continuing with strong support for that wild catch and farmed seafood sector with an investment package worth more than \$26 million over five years.

It is worth more than \$1 billion to the Tasmanian economy and community, particularly rural and regional areas. It supports thousands of jobs in those regional communities. We have a sustainable growth plan for the salmon industry. Our \$26 million investment to help build our sustainable seafood sector and \$13.8 million in the Budget is really important.

Some of that funding is for the Blue Economy CRC. This is not only nation-leading, but globally leading. It will be based in Launceston. My former secretary, Dr John Whittington, has been appointed as the initial CEO. It is very exciting. An investment of \$320 million over the next 10 years will focus on marine farming, marine engineering and renewable energy, which is a wonderful trifecta that leans into Tasmania's natural advantages.

We are putting a lot of work into that. I want to pay special recognition to Peter and Una Rockliff for their contribution to Petuna Seafoods over many decades. They are a wonderful couple; I have known them for decades and I just want to say thank you for their positive contribution to not just the north-west coast but the seafood industry and the salmon industry in particular. They are still involved in the wild catch fishery but they have sold their share of Petuna. I visited there with the Premier, Joan Rylah and others a week or two ago in Devonport. They have a wonderful operation and it was great to see so many of the employees doing their bit to deliver that beautiful Tasmanian salmon into the community.

We are really proud of our fishing industry. It has been tough with the coronavirus and that is why we have responded proactively and positively to the rock lobster industry and provided that support, the rollover of the quota into payments by instalment for the licences and other fees and likewise for

the abalone sector. We are working shoulder to shoulder with these industries. I meet with them regularly and I thank them for their leadership and support.

There is a lot to say in terms of natural resource management but we are doing so much to support our environment and our community. We have doubled the funding for Landcare Tasmania over that four-year period. We have the Landcare action program that is well supported by rural communities and in terms of traditional pursuits we are very pleased and proud of the changes to the Game Management Act.