

HON GUY BARNETT MP

ADDRESS IN REPLY

Tuesday 29 June 2021

Mr BARNETT (Lyons - Minister for Primary Industries and Water) - Mr Deputy Speaker, it is an honour to stand here in this place as Minister for Primary Industries and Water, Minister for Energy and Emissions Reduction, Minister for Resources, Minister for Trade, Minister for Veterans' Affairs and, importantly, member for Lyons.

It is an honour to serve and I thank Tasmania's forty-sixth Premier, the Honourable Peter Gutwein, for the ongoing faith and support he has shown in me in all of these portfolios, particularly with the additional portfolios of Trade and Energy and Emissions Reduction.

At the outset, I congratulate the Speaker on his ascension to the Chair. I know Mark Shelton will do an excellent job. He is a good colleague and friend and I congratulate him wholeheartedly on this new position.

I put on the record my sincere thanks and congratulate the former Governor of Tasmania, the Honourable Professor Kate Warner, and Dick Warner, for their service to the people of Tasmania over many years. Professor Warner taught me at law school as I think she did nearly half the legal profession of Tasmania. I hear a comment from the member for Clark in that regard as well.

I would also like to congratulate and welcome to the role the Honourable Barbara Baker and her partner Don Chalmers. Don Chalmers also taught me at law school and was dean of the law school when I was there in the early 1980s for a number of years. I am delighted at that appointed and I know she will do an excellent job with the support of Don and I look forward to working with her. She had so many attributes in so many respects, including as a fine tennis player, and not just a lawn tennis player but a real tennis player. We have a number of things in common and my family has known the Baker family for some time and in fact my late father was very good friends with the late Bob Baker, who also taught me at law school.

Certainly this last year has been a very testing one for all Tasmanians from all walks of life and I could not be prouder of the job that the Gutwein Liberal Government has done, particularly our Premier in such trying circumstances. His leadership has been exemplary under the most difficult circumstances and at a time when we have most needed that leadership. We will need to continue with that leadership in Tasmania in the months and years ahead. Over the last few days and weekend we have seen that the COVID-19 pandemic can have its way and we need to respond accordingly, so I am thankful for the hard work and trojan effort by the Premier and his team in Cabinet and in this Government but across the Health Service, police, Department of Premier and Cabinet.

I thank my department and Biosecurity Tasmania for their efforts at the front line in the past but also in advance under very onerous conditions, often going beyond the call. It is definitely a job across government and I acknowledge that and put it on the record. I thank them for their past efforts and acknowledge their efforts going forward.

As a government we have been disciplined, united and responsible, yet we have had to adapt to the circumstances. We have used that 'p' word in the last 12 months or so, 'pivot', and we have had to pivot to the circumstances. We have had a global crisis and we have had to address it with

compassion and care but also with a key objective to rebuild our economy and keep our jobs on the line and make that a priority.

Tasmania is the best place in the world to live and that is why I am ferociously passionate about getting the best outcomes for Tasmanians. I often talk about Team Tasmania when I meet with stakeholders and constituents. We are all in this together giving it our best shot and we are keeping Tasmanians safe while rebuilding our economy, those key objectives. I thank all Tasmanians for their perseverance and their positivity in coping with the pandemic. It has been a fantastic effort and you can see from the vaccination rates that Tasmanians have responded in different ways and I say thank you to all Tasmanians for their efforts.

We are setting out to prosecute our clear plan to secure Tasmania's future and we are doing that. We have a clear vision for Tasmania. It is a state of opportunity to deliver on jobs, development and opportunity for all. It is underpinned in so many ways, to keep Tasmanians safe, to grow our economy, to protect against future challenges and ensure that we can continue our record investment in essential services, whether it be health, education, police, welfare or housing.

We have made record investments in that regard, including our \$5 billion support for infrastructure in the years ahead. This is record investment and we are doing it for and on behalf of Tasmanians to deliver a stronger economy. You cannot fund essential services like health, education and police without a strong economy, and this is something the Opposition often forget. Something I learned in my Senate days and over many years under the stewardship of the then Prime Minister John Howard was that you need a strong economy to provide that support for health, welfare and the like.

There are 25 000 more jobs in Tasmania now compared to when we first came to office in 2014. It was a basket case under the Labor-Greens government with 10 000 jobs lost and the economy in recession. We have turned that around and certainly there are more jobs now than before the pandemic. We have a bold agenda, a clear plan to secure Tasmania's future, and we are on track.

With respect to energy and emissions reduction, we have a natural and competitive advantage in Tasmania. We have renewable energy in spades. We have water and wind resources which are world class and we are using that and grasping those opportunities as a government with both hands to deliver a renewable energy future which will underpin our economy, attract investment, create jobs and support Australia's transition to renewable energy. It will deliver a cleaner world. We are already 100 per cent self-sufficient in renewable energy, since November last year. It was fantastic making that announcement at Granville Harbour with others and I am so proud of Tasmania's leadership, one of the few jurisdictions in the world to reach 100 per cent. We have now got the target of 200 per cent by 2040. We have legislated that, it is a bold commitment and we are delivering on it. Very few jurisdictions, if any, have put that target on their energy use by 2040. I am pleased and proud that we have done that with the support of this parliament. We have got out Renewable Energy Action Plan that is out there for all to see. That is the vision for the future that will take us to 2040 and beyond.

We have the renewable energy target. For the fifth year in a row we have achieved zero net emissions; it is an Australian first. We are leading Australia big time. It is all based on the fact that we have affordable, reliable and clean energy in Tasmania. Yes, it will keep the lights on but prices down. As I said in parliament earlier today, what we are all about is keeping downward pressure on electricity prices. Down, down, down as opposed to the former Labor-Greens government. In just over seven years 65 per cent up, up, up. There is a big contrast there. We have big plans with project Marinus, the Battery of the Nation, renewable hydrogen. They are all massive agendas that we are prosecuting with full force and effect working shoulder to shoulder with the key stakeholders.

Only yesterday I was working with the hydrogen hub group from across government GBEs. All the various agencies of government are focusing on how we can prosecute our renewable hydrogen future, which is fantastic. We have plans for Tarraleah, in my electorate in the Derwent Valley, Central Highlands. It is an older plant but we have plans through Hydro Tasmania to double the capacity from 120 megawatts to 220 megawatts; a \$700 million development that will put 100 new jobs on the ground as early as next year, rising to 250 jobs during peak construction. It does require a further \$65 million from the federal government to back that in as well as an underwriting agreement.

We have plans for pumped hydro with Lake Cethana being identified for the first pumped hydro site multimillion-dollar development delivering not just for Tasmania, in terms of jobs on the ground, particularly civil construction jobs, but also jobs in other places as well. It will help the national electricity market for sure.

I would like to recognise Michael Wallis who is in the Chamber today. He has had a background in the energy space and worked for the Hydro years ago. He knows the Central Highlands really well. He is a colleague and a friend. I acknowledge his presence in the Chamber today and I thank him for being here.

Renewable hydrogen is Tasmania's super power - that is what I call it. It certainly has so much potential that it is based on producing reliable cost-effective large-scale emissions through hydrogen. This is all happening in Tasmania because we have natural assets in water and electricity. You need infrastructure - road, rail, port - and that is what we have, particularly at Bell Bay, which is being targeted as one of those hydrogen hubs. That is very exciting indeed.

There will be more to be said about that. We are not ashamed of the fact that we have the largest support package in all of Australia for a renewable hydrogen industry development to happen here in Tasmania. We have a lot of interest now from Origin, Able Energy, Grange Resources, Woodside Energy and Fortescue Metals. And so many others are interested.

We have provided funding support to the Bell Bay Advanced Manufacturing Zone. This is all backed in with lower prices, which I announced last week: 7 per cent lower for residential customers; and 11 per cent small business customers from 1 July. Again, down, down, down. That is great and it is on the back of the support from the winter relief supplement - \$125 for concession card holders. Some 90 000 Tasmanians will benefit.

We have the TEELS, Tasmanian Energy Efficiency Loans Scheme program, \$30 million over two years. That is going to be a boost with respect to energy efficiency appliances and solar systems and the like. We have doubled the funding for the No Interest Loans (NILS) Energy Saver Loan and Subsidy program. There is a lot that has been done.

I have mentioned that there is a lot more opportunity in emissions reduction space. The latest greenhouse gas emissions data shows that in the financial year ending June 2019 Tasmania emitted negative 1.65 megatons of carbon dioxide equivalents, 108.6 per cent lower than the 1990 baseline. Much has been achieved with a big plan ahead to secure Tasmania's future.

With respect to agriculture and water, the last statistics from the ABS really say it all. Across Australia: 0.4 per cent increase in agricultural production: in Tasmania, a 14.7 per cent increase. How good is that? Thank you all those involved in agriculture in Tasmania. It is outstanding. Of course, it is based on the fact that you have that liquid gold: water. Liquid gold delivering reliable access to water. You have the cool climate, fertile soil and importantly those enterprising farmers and agribusiness.

They are the key ingredient for success in Tasmania. They are delivering in spades backed by our Government in so many different ways and I would like to outline some of those ways.

We deliver the most comprehensive and visionary agricultural policy in Tasmanian history with a \$50 million support package prior to the election to accelerate agriculture with \$30 million for water; \$23.7 million of that over the next four years to deliver on tranche three - the Don, the Tamar, Sassafras, Wesley Vale, Northern Midlands, Fingal. These are areas that have been targeted and we will meet that demand, subject to federal government funding support of another \$100 million. I have been in communication with the federal government in recent days in that regard.

We have just secured \$4.7 million from the federal government for the south east extension scheme. If and when that comes through, and I am very hopeful and positive about it, it will be the largest irrigation scheme in Tasmania down there in the south east, southern midlands and of course, Gretna.

We have funding for the Rural Water Use Strategy. Last week I was pleased and proud to release details on the roundtable with respect to rural water. Thank you to Sam Hogg, Tas Irrigation, Rosanna Coombes from NRM North, John McKew from TFGA. They referred to them as the Knights of the Roundtable. We are very keen to ensure efficient and wise use of water. We have a lot more to do there.

We have funding support for new agricultural protection package. Biosecurity could not be more important. When I talk to fruit growers, farmers and the like, they know how important biosecurity is. They are backing in our plans to ensure that we keep out pests and disease and keep the Tasmanian brand pure, fresh, clean, natural wherever possible. We will do everything we can to do that. There is always more to do.

We have the Community Farming Partnership Program of \$5.6 million, improving farm safety and the like to address the impact of drought, assist on business resilience, financial counselling and support.

On Sunday I was there with Elizabeth Skirving from Rural Business Tasmania and John McKew CEO of Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association backing in a federal and state government initiative to future proof against drought in Tasmania. It was interesting in a wet and soggy paddock in the northern midlands. Droughts will come again and we need to be prepared and that is what we are doing. We are planning for the future.

The \$3 million we have for the Agricultural Development Fund Supporting Research and Development. We are backing in again the importance of research and development for the future. We have \$7 million over three years for our farm research.

Our farms at Elliot and Forsyth on the north-west coast. Of course, with Elliot we have leveraged that with \$7 million from Dairy Australia. Thank you, Dairy Australia. They recognise the importance of dairy industry in Australia.

If you talk to anyone involved in the dairy industry they acknowledge the very good environment we have for the dairy industry. They acknowledge the importance of the industry and how good Tasmania is in delivering on record dairy production. It is great feedback. They know we are backing them to the hilt and we are supporting them wherever we can, not just with water projects, cows out of the creeks and the like. We have a lot of support packages to support the dairy industry but agriculture across the board.

In terms of our visionary agricultural precinct in Launceston with UTAS, the Tas Institute of Agriculture is moving there. My department moving there out to Newnham. We are going to be working shoulder to shoulder with stakeholders and industry all based in Launceston in Newnham. Very exciting. Big plans.

I have signed the MOU with the Vice-Chancellor some weeks ago. It is all part of delivering on our 100-day commitment. It is happening and we are on track.

The site, 7.5 hectares at Mt Pleasant, will be equivalent, making available 100 building lots. The minister for building things, member for Bass, Mr Ferguson, will be very excited about that opportunity for private, affordable and social housing for Tasmanians.

There is more to say about our strategic industry partnership program but the bottom line is we are working shoulder to shoulder with industry. One of the great things about COVID-19 the last 12 months or so, is that we work shoulder to shoulder with industry to get the job done, to respond to the opportunities and the challenges before us. There is a lot of work to do and we are getting on with the job.

Concerning border controls and Biosecurity Tasmania, they have done a fantastic job under great pressure and many challenges. I acknowledge their wonderful work again.

With regard to the seafood sector, there is no stronger supporter of our iconic seafood industry than the majority Tasmanian Liberal Government. It is worth \$187 million annually to our economy. It is across our community, in the rural and regional areas, in our ports and towns, our processors, the freight sector, the retail and hospitality sector. I wear that T-shirt, 'Eat more seafood'.

I was at a meeting with the Tasmanian Seafood Industry Council last week and thank them for their work and efforts, including the funding support we have for them with Rural Alive and Well regarding mental health in that industry. It is important and I thank them for that. A couple of weeks ago I was at a conference with the Tasmanian Rock Lobster Association and the positivity in the room was very encouraging. I am advised it was one of the largest attended conferences in recent history. We are backing them with \$3 million in our Wild Fisheries Action Plan. We have much to offer there, including our seafood trails, website and other initiatives.

My department is working on recruiting specialist officers to support emerging marine industries. We will soon be commencing discussions with the Tasmanian Aboriginal communities on the development of Aboriginal cultural fisheries. Last week I approved the necessary instrument under the Living Marine Resources Management Act 1995 to provide \$350 000 levy relief for the shellfish market access program. The department is progressing plans for the development of a new east coast rock lobster rebuilding strategy and has commenced work to review rules to allow catch sharing on waters between fishers.

In each of those areas, we will keep working closely with the industry and the peak groups to ensure the programs are delivered according to business, industry and community benefit.

I note growing sophisticated and persistent efforts by opponents of marine farming to shut the finfish marine farming industry down. I will have more to say about this in the days and weeks ahead. This campaign is undermining Tasmanian jobs. Its objective is to shut down future opportunities for our kids and is designed to kill off our regional communities, based on fear and misinformation rather than facts and science.

There is a deliberate, well-funded industrial campaign to attack marine farming in Tasmania. It is being led by the radical, anti-jobs and anti-science green ideology. It is being led by actors, mainland fly-ins and career keyboard warriors who are now seeking to mobilise sensible Tasmanians by misinformation and half-information.

I speak, of course, of the radical Bob Brown Foundation and their allies, and radical anarchist organisations that actively promote breaking the law and conflict with workers, denying people the right to work to support their families. That is what their objectives are all about.

This organisation, which masquerades as a charity - and I have had communication with the Federal Government about that anomaly - has even advertised for a full-time role specifically to shut-down the salmon industry. It is bizarre. It is so wrong, it undermines jobs, families and opportunities in Tasmania.

Once upon a time, a charity was there to support people in need. It seems this is not the case anymore. Thankfully, there are changes underway at the national level to ensure the regulator has greater ability to intervene when an organisation is encouraging law-breaking, as the Bob Brown Foundation does day in, day out.

We have the parliamentary Greens who are the parliamentary arm of the radical Bob Brown Foundation. That is what they are doing and they are their mouthpiece in this place. In terms of recreational fishing, there is no stronger supporter of course than our Government. I love recreational fishing, whether it be inland or sea fishing. The opportunity for hunting is terrific in Tasmania. This is part of the Tasmanian way of life and that is why we are working through our draft deer management plan and we are looking forward to further consultation in that regard. As to recreational fishing, I release that draft 10-year strategy, the first ever in Tasmania. We are backing it in and getting feedback on that right now and in the weeks ahead. I thank TARFish for their support and advocacy as well and look forward to further work with them. As minister I want to see more opportunities to go fishing, particularly for young people, women and people with disabilities to ensure fishing is an opportunity for all future generations.

We are backing them with funding support of \$3 million dollars, with \$2 million for sea fishing, whether it be boat ramps, jetties and the like, sea fishing organisations and clubs, and \$1 million for new and upgraded facilities for inland fishing and improved access. We are backing them in. They are right for the Tasmanian wildlife and we can enjoy that opportunity for recreational activities. We have offered free licences for the next four years for those younger Tasmanians, the next generation of inland fishers. We have the tagged trout promotions coming up which are very exciting indeed, and I will have more to say about that.

In terms of forestry, there is no greater supporter of the forestry sector and we are backing it in with \$11.7 million over five years. It is amazing how important it is delivering jobs, particularly in those rural and regional areas. We have just had the High Court knock back comprehensively the Bob Brown's Foundation attack on the forest industry and of course within a week they say they are not giving up on forestry, they will still keep attacking the forest industry, but now they want to start attacking the salmon industry.

We have had a comprehensive win that vindicates our position that forestry is managed in a sustainable way. It is a \$1.2 billion industry delivering thousands of jobs, direct and indirect, across

rural and regional Tasmania. We are supporting it with a \$10 million fund over five years for more on-island processing and value-adding, supporting the Tas Timber promotions board, carbon offset initiatives with STT and delivering long-term resource security for smaller and larger sawmills and a whole lot more.

In terms of mining, mining and mineral processing is delivering more than 50 per cent of our exports in Tassie and thousands of jobs, particularly in those regional areas.

Mr Ellis - Hear, hear.

Mr BARNETT - The member for Braddon who has just interjected is such a strong supporter of mining and mineral processing. We were there together, Mr Ellis and myself, on the west coast and we visited the MMG mine supporting the workers and their rights to work, supporting the company and their right to put forward their application, after more than 80 years where they are, to continue mining for years and decades ahead, going through due process, but of course the Greens and the Bob Brown Foundation are opposing it and radical protestors are trying to stop it. We support MMG's right to progress and we will back them in. We backed the industry in with the export drilling grants initiative, the geoscience initiative and the diversity action plan. There is so much to do and say and we are backing them in big time.

We know that the end game for the BBF is another lockup, in this case their reference to the so-called Tarkine of 440 000 hectares of Tasmania and they want a new Tarkine national park or World Heritage Area. This area for the last 150 years has been used for forestry, mining, recreational activities such as fishing, for farming and other recreational activities in this area and it is mixed use, multiple use, and the very good op-ed in the paper today by Ray Mostogl from the Tasmanian Minerals and Energy Council highlighted exactly that point. Well done, Ray Mostogl.

We are backing in and will re-prosecute our workplace protection laws; we said this prior to the election. We will bring it on and I am calling on Labor to support it, to get behind it, they have squibbed it and opposed it for the last four years and in fact the four years before that as well. It is time to stand up for our productive industries and the rights of Tasmanians to earn a living.

In the few moments I have to conclude, I wanted to talk about trade. Trade is about jobs. Exports means jobs in Tasmania. We have just hit a record \$3.8 billion in exports. This is fantastic and congratulations to Tasmanian exporters across our productive industries and manufacturing and the like. Of course this is all based on our Trade Strategy released by the Deputy Premier and former Minister for Trade, Jeremy Rockliff. Thank you, Jeremy, for such good work. So far it is great working with the key stakeholders in the trade space and it was really an honour to meet with the Japanese Ambassador to Australia, Yamagami San, His Excellency, and his wife just a few weeks ago to welcome him to Tasmania and announce the Tasmanian trade advocate in Tokyo. We have big plans to grow our exports and support our trades industry and those involved.

Regarding veterans, everyone in this place knows the strong support of this Government for our veterans, with the biggest support package ever in Tasmanian history of \$1.4 million over the next four years for new and existing programs to support veterans, ex-serving personnel and their families. We are so supportive, we want to back them in and we have done that in so many different ways, including through mental health and wellbeing and the Teddy Sheean VC Memorial grants. It is great that we can celebrate that Teddy Sheean has his Victoria Cross after 78 years since 1 September 1942. We are backing them in in so many different ways and we will continue to do so.

Mr Deputy Speaker, it is great to wrap up and say how proud I am to be part of the Gutwein Majority

Liberal Government and to have the opportunity to prosecute our case for more jobs, more development and supporting our families and communities across Tasmania. We are doing that with purpose, with a plan, being positive, being proactive, being passionate and we will persevere. In the last 12 months we have had to pivot in light of COVID and we will need to do that again to be agile and respond to the circumstances. It is an honour to serve and I look forward to continuing to do so.