

NEWS

Barnett Tarkine fears

Minister warns on future mining

BY SEAN FORD

FUTURE Tarkine mining will be at risk if Labor gets a shot at sharing power with the Greens, state Resources Minister Guy Barnett says.

"We went to the election committing to no further lock-ups in Tasmania and we remain totally opposed to the proposal for a Tarkine national park, which would have huge detrimental implications for the North-West Coast," Mr Barnett said.

He said there was a renewed push by green groups including the Bob Brown Foundation to create a Tarkine national park, and suggested there would be a risk of that if Labor had the chance to govern with Greens help.

"Don't trust federal or state Labor because they will do a deal with the Greens to gain power or stay in power," he said.

"It's happened before and it will happen again."

Federal Labor could have scuttled future mining developments in the Tarkine in 2013.

However, then-environment minister Tony Burke enraged environmentalists by adopting a minimalist National Heritage listing plan taking in coastal strips of the Tarkine to protect Aboriginal heritage and leaving most of the Tarkine unaffected.

As recently as the weekend, the Bob Brown Foun-



MINING SUPPORT: A pro-mining rally at Smithton in 2013. Resources Minister Guy Barnett suggests the Tarkine could be locked up from further mining if Labor has a chance to regain power.

dation reiterated its push for a Tarkine national park and World Heritage listing.

State Labor Leader Bryan Green said Mr Barnett's "scare campaign" was baseless and there was no bigger supporter of the mining sector than Labor.

Mr Green said Labor was determined to reinvigorate the mining sector after nearly three years of inaction from the current government.

"The revolving door of Liberal mining ministers has meant the government has dropped the ball when it comes to supporting the sector," Mr Green said.

"Nearly two years ago, Labor proposed a special mining zone for the Mt Lyell mine lease which would streamline approvals and offer royalty relief to reopen the mine.

"We have put forward an innovative plan to provide incentives for proposals that

involve rehabilitating old mines and extracting minerals from old mining waste."

MINING'S ROLE

Mr Barnett, who was speaking in Burnie before the Tasmanian Minerals and Energy Council's annual meeting on Friday, said mining and mineral processing provided half of Tasmania's export income.

"We are very proud of that contribution," he said.

He said the industry provided more than 2000 jobs and its 2015-16 exports were valued at \$2.85 billion.

He said the government during its term would spend an extra \$5 million to support the industry.

That included moving much of Mineral Resources Tasmania from Hobart to Burnie, with the first two stages of that complete and the next two under way.

He said the government was investing \$1.4 million in

a new, four-year geoscience initiative to provide research and data to help companies interested in mineral exploration and mine development.

"We've also got support for Geoscience Australia, working with them to provide incentives for exploration and, also, we have a mineral exploration investment attraction plan which promotes exploration and mining opportunities in Tasmania, locally, nationally and internationally," Mr Barnett said.

He said that marketing campaign had included recent participation in mining conferences in China, Japan, Melbourne and Adelaide.

SPECIFIC MINES

Mr Barnett said he remained hopeful a plan to buy and re-start the Avebury Nickel Mine would proceed.

Privately owned Dundas Mining is looking to buy the

mine from international miner and Rosebery Mine owner MMG Limited in a \$25 million deal.

The government has been in talks with Dundas about potential royalties and payroll tax breaks if and when it buys the mine and resumes production, and it is understood those talks are continuing.

"I remain hopeful the purchase will proceed and the development may be able to go ahead, with positive outcomes for the West Coast, and Zeehan in particular," Mr Barnett said.

"The mining and mineral processing sector is subject to world commodity prices and the price of nickel has been increasing and is forecast to continue increasing, and the prospects for further nickel mining in Tasmania are very encouraging."

Avebury has been on care and maintenance since 2009.

The Mt Lyell copper mine at Queenstown is also on care and maintenance, with owner Vedanta Resources looking for a run of stronger copper prices.

"It's been on care and maintenance for some time; it's a very difficult and challenging position for Vedanta," Mr Barnett said.

"We remain in close contact with (Vedanta subsidiary) Copper Mines of Tasmania to assist and support wherever possible.

"We have in place a very substantial support package (\$25 million) to encourage its reopening."

Progress is much more substantial at the Henty Gold Mine under new owner Diversified Minerals.

"Henty is very positive," Mr Barnett said.

"The latest news is that it was employing 85 people at the end of October and another 15 in the very near future, with plans for production and mining next year."

MRT

Mr Barnett said he was disappointed with "Labor's plans to rip \$1 million out of the Mineral Resources Tasmania budget," arguing he could not see any fit in the organisation.

"From what I've seen, taxpayers are getting a good return on funds invested," he said.

Mr Green said Labor was not proposing to remove any funding from MRT.

"On the contrary, we want to spend existing funds more effectively to stimulate the mining sector," he said.

"A Labor government would provide targeted assistance to the drilling industry in order to kick start mineral exploration, which has stalled under the current government."

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WEDNESDAY 10:30am