



Jeremy Rockliff

Liberal Member for **Braddon**
Premier of **Tasmania**



15 March 2024

Mr Nathan Calman
Chief Executive Officer
TasFarmers
By Email: CEO@tasfarmers.com.au

Dear Mr Calman

Thank you for your correspondence on behalf of TasFarmers and for the important work you and your team do to support Tasmania's agricultural sector. I am pleased to respond on behalf of all Liberal Members and Candidates.

Please note that, at the time of responding, not all our policies under our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future have been released. These responses should be read in conjunction with all policies once they are released.

Tasmania's agricultural sector is the backbone of our economy and way of life. Under our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, a re-elected majority Liberal Government will continue our strong plan to back in the agricultural sector to continue to prosper.

North-West Transmission Development

The North-West Transmission Development will deliver many benefits for Tasmanians, including economic development and thousands of new jobs.

We understand the concerns that the agricultural sector hold about this project– and potentially others in the future - given its need to encroach on private land.

Under our 2030 Strong Plan, a re-elected majority Liberal Government will:

- Develop, in conjunction with TasFarmers and individual landholders, a fair and contemporary compensation framework that recognises the impact of these projects on landowners. This will include the development of a Strategic Benefits Payment.
- Enforce genuine consultation by GBEs that provides clarity on the transmission route and considers property buy-back where more than 30 per cent of a landholder's property is covered by easements.
- Commit to enforcing the removal of the existing easements and assets associated with the 220kV cable single circuit flat spacer line after the commissioning of the proposed development.

Securing the Future of irrigation

The development of irrigation schemes has been a game changer for Tasmanian producers, with sixteen irrigation schemes constructed and planning has commenced on a further five projects.

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Under our 2030 Strong Plan, a re-elected majority Liberal Government will continue its record of strong investment in irrigation projects, supporting our farmers to secure water where it's needed and invest with confidence to grow higher value crops, to enter longer term supply contracts and expand their businesses.

A re-elected majority Liberal Government will:

- Invest \$75 million in the Greater South-East Irrigation Scheme to unlock a further \$150 million of Federal Government support.
- The Scheme will deliver up to 37,200 megalitres of reliable irrigation water each year to more than 300 irrigators in Tasmania's south-east, including Gretna, the Jordan River Valley, Tea Tree, Richmond, Campania, Sorell, Pawleena and Forcett.
- Tasmanian Irrigation, in collaboration with the Australian and Tasmanian Governments will also progress the Northern Midlands, Sassafras Wesley Vale Augmentation and Tamar irrigation projects.
- Continue to implement self-management options through Tasmanian Irrigation.

Tasmania's Rural Water Use Strategy (RWUS) is guiding work to ensure we have a modern water management framework where our water assets and services deliver on community, environmental and industry needs and are sustainable in the face of a changing climate.

We will provide a further \$1 million towards implementation of the RWUS which includes establishing a contemporary Water Information Management System to improve understanding of what water is being taken by which user and when.

Increase on-farm sustainability and productivity

Another important part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future is to back our small businesses, including those in the agricultural sector, so they have the confidence to grow, invest and create jobs. This includes:

- Energy audits for up to \$1000 per small business with interest-free loans for upgrades through the Energy Saver Loan Scheme;
- Single form tendering for small business tenders under \$250,000;
- Small business grants up to \$10,000 for equipment and capital upgrades with a 30 per cent co-contribution from business;
- Up to \$5,000 for multicultural small businesses to build capability and skills; and
- \$65,000 each year to support ongoing work of the Small Business Council.

We are also supporting households and small businesses by supercharging this year's Renewable Energy Dividend to deliver a one-off \$250 dividend to Tasmanian households on their energy bills and a one-off \$300 dividend for small business. This dividend will assist every Tasmanian household, around 254,000, that has a domestic electricity connection; as well as around 35,000 small businesses.

Investing in the Agriculture Workforce

Under our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future, a re-elected majority Liberal Government will further develop our agricultural workforce by promoting agricultural careers, fostering connections

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between industry and the workforce of the future and providing targeted skill development opportunities.

A re-elected majority Liberal Government will:

- Partner with the Tasmanian Agricultural Education and Training Partnership, led by the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture, to deliver a high-impact marketing campaign and digital platform to change the image of agricultural careers – AG CAREERS, More Than You Think. \$340,000 will be provided to highlight the extraordinary diversity that exists in this sector and the full range of careers and jobs available;
- Invest a further \$800,000 in farmed-based education programs that inspire and engage students from primary school years through to high school, college and beyond, connecting them to the full range of roles on and off farms, starting the conversation about working in agriculture from the moment young people start school;
- Work with TasFarmers to establish a mentorship program to support next generation farmers and actively engage with those starting out in the industry;
- Position Tasmania as a key location in the national AgCAREERSTART program offering 10-12 month on farm jobs for school leavers or under 25 year olds;
- Work with TasFarmers, National Farming Federation and Commonwealth Government to actively promote and increase take up of this program in Tasmania;
- Ensure young Tasmanians who want to engage in skills and training have access to suitable accommodation and transport by working with our schools, education providers and industry to identify options in each region of the state; and
- Provide Tasmanian Women in Agriculture (TWiA) with \$135,000 over the next three years to continue to pursue women's workforce development in the agricultural sector.

The Tasmanian Liberals understand that a major barrier to farmers having the workforce they need is appropriate on-site housing. This is why under our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future we will:

- Reduce red tape that restricts the ability of primary producers to provide housing options for workers;
- Provide greater flexibility for farmers under the *Residential Tenancy Act 1997* to offer on-farm residence as part of an employment contract;
- Address restrictions that apply to the development of housing on agricultural land, including an option for more than one dwelling on a single title (either temporary or permanent); and
- Make it possible for short-term, modular or transportable housing solutions to be used on farms as agricultural workforce accommodation.

Under our 2030 Strong Plan, a re-elected majority Liberal Government will also back those working in primary production and in our rural and regional communities by investing more into the services that support them and their families.

- \$2.13 million three-year Rural Business Resilience Package (seeking matched Federal funding) to manage the impact of drought on farming communities including the Farm Business Resilience program and the Regional Drought Resilience Planning program;
- \$400,000 over three years for the Rural Financial Counselling Service;
- \$1.6 million to Rural Alive and Well to continue their important Community Engagement and Support Services;
- \$300,000 annually to continue the Safe Farming Tasmania program for a further three years;

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- \$500,000 to extend the Agricultural Shows Small Grants Fund for a further three years; and
- \$500,000 for new cat management facilities including for the communities of the north-west and west coasts.

Safeguarding Tasmania's Primary Industries

A re-elected majority Liberal Government will invest \$5 million in biosecurity to protect our borders against pest and disease incursions, safeguard animal welfare and manage risk to primary industries. This includes:

- \$3 million over four years to strengthen resources and expertise in supporting Tasmania to be disease free and protecting industries through import risk and pest control;
- \$500,000 over four years to support TasFarmers to continue enhancing on-farm biosecurity engagement within the industry and delivery of good biosecurity practices;
- \$1.2 million over three years for additional biosecurity officers to manage risks to animal welfare, market access, livestock traceability and biosecurity;
- \$300,00 over three years to support industry groups such as Fruit Growers Tasmania to maintain community awareness and education around agricultural pests and diseases and to incorporate education material into schools and other community programs;
- Ensure truck wash and effluent dump facilities are adequate to meet the demands of the livestock industry;
- Continued industry support to roll-out mandatory electronic tagging of sheep and goats; and
- Improve operations in our livestock processing sector to ensure better animal welfare outcomes, including introduction of mandatory video surveillance.

We will also stand with farmers to oppose the unfair new Federal Labor Government Biosecurity Tax.

A re-elected majority Liberal Government will continue to support the introduction of mandatory electronic tagging of sheep and goats by 1 January 2025 and will continue it's \$11 million to support farmers to implement this.

The Liberals will also make it easier to undertake essential farm work such as fuel reduction burns by introducing a new, online central portal for producers, to reduce red tape.

In relation to the State Fire Levy, my government has paused the working group tasked with this reform and, if re-elected, we will work with them and key stakeholders to design a model that has their agreement.

On antique firearms, a re-elected majority Liberal Government will make changes to antique firearms laws to ensure that antique gun owners are able to safely store their weapons while respecting the value that these antique pieces offer. Under our 2030 Strong Plan, a re-elected majority Liberal Government will amend the law relating to antique firearms:

- There will be no licensing requirements, and no requirement to do a firearms safety course;
- Antique firearms manufactured prior to 1 January 1900 will only need to be registered with Tasmania Police;
- Owners will simply need to provide contact details, information about the type of firearm and where and how it is stored;
- There will be no requirement for engraving or stamping of the antique weapon;
- The process will be 100 per cent free; and

- If it is to be displayed, there will be display requirements including that the firearm must safely be secured in a rack or in a locked display cabinet that is fitted with glass or other material of sufficient strength to prevent theft.

An important part of our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future is to support law abiding firearms owners and keep Tasmanians safe from firearms crime, and we believe that this change strikes that balance.

In relation to climate change, the Liberals are committed to taking practical action that provides certainty for businesses and industry, maintains our nation-leading emissions profile and continues to invest in renewable energy generation.

In 2023, my Government released the Climate Change Action Plan 2023-25 which commits to delivering 80 actions over the next two years to strengthen our world-leading emissions profile and make Tasmania a successful, clever, low-emissions economy. To progress these actions, we committed \$13 million, and re-elected majority Liberal Government will continue to implement these initiatives.

If re-elected we will update the Charter for Working on Private Farm Land to ensure it meets current needs and expectations involving business coming onto farms, whether for an inspection, meter reading or projects. The updated Charter will also consider inclusion of the mining sector, and work already undertaken, such as TasFarmers Farm Access Code of Conduct.

Other Matters

On the other matters you raised, a re-elected majority Liberal Government will invest \$4.7 million cutting edge surgical robot for urological, gynaecology and other precision procedures. This cutting-edge technology is commonly used to perform radical prostatectomy for prostate cancer or kidney cancer. It can greatly improve clinical outcomes for patients by reducing surgical complication, pain, blood loss and infection, meaning a shorter recovery time and hospital stay.

Many Tasmanians currently travel to Hobart or other States for access to a surgical robot. The surgical robot will also assist in retention of key specialists in Northern Tasmania. It will be installed at the LGH in 2024 and become operational in 2025.

In relation to the Midland Highway, my Government has committed \$565 million over 10 years in the largest ever single investment in the Midland Highway. To date, two-thirds has been completed and the Highway is already much safer and more efficient highway for all users.

Before the 10-Year Action Plan started in 2014, just 13 per cent of the Midland Highway was rated at AusRap 3 stars. In late 2021 successive Liberal Governments had raised that to 67.2 per cent. And we are continuing to transform the Highway.

More than \$450 million has been invested in the Midland Highway since 2015. A total of 123 kilometres of the 153 kilometres of the Midland Highway work is complete, with the remaining sections under construction.

Some sections of the Midland Highway have been duplicated to four lanes (two in each direction) where this is warranted in higher traffic volume areas typically near Hobart and Launceston.

Once completed, the highway from Pontville Roundabout to Breadalbane will be about 35 per cent two-lane, 50 per cent three-lane and 15 per cent four-lane sections.

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The overtaking lanes are strategically located to provide safe overtaking opportunities in both directions of travel.

Importantly, there has been a significant increase in safe overtaking opportunities along the Midland Highway, with the flexible safety barrier preventing head-on collisions.

And finally on cyber security, we know this is a challenge for business and government alike.

A re-elected majority Liberal Government will continue to invest in increasing our capacity to tackle cyber-crime. Business Tasmania has produced helpful information to help small businesses protect themselves against cyber-crime and the Consumer, Building and Occupational Services website also provides assistance and useful information to help people and business protect themselves from scams – please visit https://www.business.tas.gov.au/managing/cyber_security and <https://www.cbos.tas.gov.au/topics/products-services/buying/avoid-scam>.

Our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future will back in our agricultural sector to leverage our strengths in agriculture – rich soil, a favourable climate, water infrastructure, enterprising farmers, and a premium brand – to significantly expand and accelerate our agricultural industries and food manufacturing capacity.

Thank you for writing to me on these important matters and I look forward to continuing to work with you and your team.

For more information on our 2030 Strong Plan for Tasmania's Future please visit www.tas.liberal.org.au/our-plan.

Yours sincerely



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