

Will Hodgman MP
Leader of the State Opposition
Sunday July 13, 2008

Looking to the future

The Leader of the State Opposition, Will Hodgman, has today outlined aspects of how Tasmania would look in 2014, after the first term of a Hodgman Liberal Government.

Addressing the State Liberal Council in Launceston, Mr Hodgman said the State Opposition was focussed firmly on the future and he wanted people to start thinking about much better things could be.

“A Hodgman Liberal Government will base its policies and decisions on principles of responsibility, accountability, fairness and honesty,” Mr Hodgman said.

Two key new areas that Mr Hodgman promised a Liberal Government would tackle were workers compensation and sentencing laws.

“The State Liberals have, as policy objectives, a commitment to ensure that our workers compensation laws are effective, and fair,” Mr Hodgman said.

“We will look to the introduction of a ‘serious injury narrative test’ in our laws to make sure there is fair and equitable access to workers compensation.”

Mr Hodgman said the Liberals also understood the very strong concerns within our community that sentences imposed on those who commit terrible crimes of rape or sexual assault, and especially where perpetrated on children, or the elderly, or especially vulnerable Tasmanian citizens, do not meet with community expectations.

“It seems out of kilter that currently the average sentence imposed for one count of rape is just twenty two and a half months,” Mr Hodgman said.

“We now have the benefit of a comprehensive report recently released that deals with sentencing in Tasmania.

“So against the backdrop of this report, and in order to address this serious public concern, and to keep our communities, and especially our children, safe and protected from harm, we will do something about it.

“A Hodgman Liberal Government will interact with the Tasmanian judiciary to bring about a matrix to ensure that sentences awarded to convicted persons are commensurate with the crime committed and more in line with community expectations.

“We will ascertain what is an appropriate sentencing level for rape and other sexual offences.

“A Hodgman Liberal Government will establish a Sentencing Advisory Council, which will ‘bridge the gap between the community, courts and Government by informing, educating and advising on sentencing matters.

“And a Hodgman Liberal Government will make it compulsory for those people who do commit these terrible crimes to complete a sexual offenders’ treatment program before they can be released from prison. Something this Labor Government opposes.

Mr Hodgman committed that by 2014 a Hodgman Liberal Government will have also, amongst other things,:

- implemented its **Smarter Tasmania** education policy, and have achieved our core objective of enabling every Tasmanian child to be able to read and write in line with the relevant national standards or benchmarks for their age.
- By 2014, our government has made it a priority to support the 35,000 **small businesses** – and the Tasmanians who run them. We have properly returned the interests of small business operators to the front and centre of government policy, and following the Labor Government’s begrudging capitulation to agree with our call for a comprehensive review of our tax system back in 2008, we have undertaken reform that provides for a more efficient and equitable tax system, and a business environment that encourages growth and investment in these key areas, and which builds our export capacity, and which makes Tasmania *the* most competitive State in Australia to do business in, and to invest in. A Tasmanian Future Fund is also investing in the future;
- Policies that we would have advanced under a **sustainability** framework in Tasmania include integrated strategies to increase the use of public transport, expanding commuter transport, better use of our riverways to provide public transport through a network of passenger ferries operating on the Derwent - or, indeed, the Tamar - and a State water strategy that not only drought-proofs Tasmania but also provides clean drinking water to the thousands of Tasmanians who currently have to boil their water before they drink it;
- We have implemented policy commitments dating back to 2008, including our successful incentive scheme to support households that want to get **energy- and water-smart.**;
- To properly harness the precious natural asset water, and develop...we have, by 2014, advanced our vision to develop a **water grid** strategy that will interconnect

water developments to both value-add to existing agricultural enterprises and to truly drought-proof the State;

- The State Liberals have created a **Fairer Tasmania** - a place where we enjoy a strong and vibrant economy combined with a dynamic social platform, where economic and social justice are equal partners and there is opportunity for all;
- We will have implemented a coordinated strategy for **volunteers** as part of our Fairer Tasmania to properly recognise this 'third sector';
- As part of our commitment and pact to the Tasmanian public to provide greater **accountability, transparency and good governance**, by 2014 there will be an appropriately established, structured and adequately resourced authority to investigate and deal with cases of corruption and maladministration in government and indeed the public service and to help avoid the disgraceful situation of Ministers resigning in disgrace that became a hallmark of the previous Labor Government in Tasmania. It will provide independent advice and assistance to members of parliament, public authorities and officials, and indeed members of the public, about corruption, maladministration, issues of ethics, probity, parliamentary standards, conflict-of-interest dilemmas and so on;
- By 2014 we will have also undertaken a total review and appropriate reform of our **freedom of information laws** and whistleblower legislation; We have dusted off the ministerial code of conduct to make sure it is adequate and properly enforced. By 2014 we have introduced right-of-reply provisions similar to those which exist in the Australian Senate, where statements in the House can be challenged by members of the public, and where baseless or contestable statements or claims are made, it will allow recourse to citizens who feel aggrieved to exercise their right of reply in this place. And we have strengthened the Standing Orders of the House of Assembly to ensure questions are answered properly, and in good time and to avoid the disgraceful situation that developed under the former Labor Government where in some cases have remained unanswered for years.

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