

Will Hodgman MP
Leader of the State Opposition
Thursday July 17, 2008

Tasmanian Liberals' plan for rural Tasmania

Leader of the State Opposition, Will Hodgman, will today outline parts of the Tasmanian Liberals' plan for rural Tasmania in his address to the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association's Annual Conference.

In his address, Mr Hodgman will highlight that the State Government continues to fail Tasmanian farmers, at a time when the agricultural industry is being hit by drought, high fuel prices, high interest rates and a strong Australian dollar.

"Whether it comes to progressing water development or helping farmers through the drought, this is a Government that has neglected rural Tasmania, demonstrating a frightening lack of appreciation of the importance of the sector to Tasmania's economy," Mr Hodgman said.

"And at a time when the Federal Government has persisted with their razor gang cuts right across rural, regional and agricultural programs, such as FarmBis, the Tasmanian Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn, has conceded that he probably needed to fight harder at Cabinet for primary industries to get a bigger share of the State Budget."

Revenue from appropriation for the Department in this year's Budget is forecast to fall from \$84.062m in 2008/09 to \$82.836m in 2009/10, \$82.782m in 2010/11 and then rise to \$84.550 million in 2011/12.

Mr Hodgman will also discuss the role of governments in removing the many regulatory impediments to farmers that impinge on the performance of the State's agricultural sector.

"For example, the Minister appears to be completely oblivious to the damage that the proposed groundspraying regulations he is pursuing could inflict on the agricultural industry, and we are hearing reports that the compulsory installation of water meters is going to be extremely expensive because farmers will need to pay considerable additional costs over and above the cost of the actual meter," Mr Hodgman said.

"In stark contrast, the Tasmanian Liberals' vision for primary industries is for a sustainable and productive sector, one that is easily identifiable in the national and international marketplace, one that supports our rural communities, and one that makes all Tasmanians feel proud of our farmers' considerable achievements.

"The Tasmanian Liberals have a plan for rural Tasmania; a plan that we will continue to build on as we move forward as the alternative government towards the next election."

To ensure the sustainability of Tasmanian agricultural and farming sectors, the Tasmanian Liberals will show leadership in –

- water development;
- innovation;
- reducing unnecessary red tape and regulation;
- branding Tasmanian produce; and
- biosecurity.

A central part of this plan is the development of a water grid to link water systems across the State to allow the resource to be distributed where it is needed most.

Mr Hodgman will also examine concerns that Tasmania is not ‘on the radar’ as a producer of quality food, and will reiterate the Tasmanian Liberals’ firm commitment to strengthen biosecurity in the State.

“A Food Industry Council report released in July last year revealed that the State is not ‘on the radar’ as a producer of fine foods, even though many mainland consumers are unknowingly consuming premium Tasmanian products,” Mr Hodgman said.

“We must better promote our unique brand internationally, market our major points of differentiation and capitalise on our strengths.”

For further information or comment please call Kristy Mays – 0407 503 910

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