



NEW NATIONALS PARTY LEADERSHIP

As Leader of The Nationals in the Senate, I congratulate Barnaby Joyce on his election as Leader of The National Party.

The Nationals have and will always stand up for the regions. Barnaby Joyce, as an experienced and strong leader, will no doubt represent the interests of regional Australians as they continue to face new challenges.

I sincerely thank outgoing Nationals Leader and Deputy Prime Minister, Michael McCormack MP, for his service to the country and our Party. I also acknowledge the dignified manner in which he has dealt with the party room decision.

He is a decent and honourable man who has led our Party for three years through bushfires, floods and the COVID-19 pandemic. He has represented regional Australians and will continue to do so as the Member for Riverina.

I wish Michael and his wife Catherine all the best.



NATIONALS BACK BASIN COMMUNITIES

The Nationals this week moved amendments to the Water Act and Basin Act to address concerns in basin communities about water availability and to give certainty to farm with confidence.

What does it mean?

- Removing the 450 gigalitres as it will cause regional economic harm
- Legislating to stop buybacks
- Enabling new projects and flexibility to offset water
- Ensuring no further water recovery is proposed as part of the Basin Plan review

Basin communities have been crying out for reform to the Basin Plan. Victorian farmers, their New South Wales neighbours and communities right along the Murray have paid the price for nearly a decade because of Labor Party factionalism, and it is the state of Victoria that has done the heavy lifting for the entire Plan.

Enough is enough - it is clear we need to renew the science of the plan. We can do more with less for regional communities and achieve good environmental outcomes. And the Nationals have listened with these critical amendments to the Basin Plan which are now National Party policy.

While our amendments were not supported in the Senate, it is not the end of this debate; the Nationals are not giving up. We will not stop fighting for these changes to give basin communities, which feed our nation, certainty and confidence in their future.



Senator BRIDGET MCKENZIE

NATIONALS SENATOR FOR VICTORIA
LEADER OF THE NATIONALS IN THE SENATE

OUR PLAN TO SECURE THE FUTURE OF REGIONAL COMMUNITIES

A MESSAGE FROM *Bridget*

The saying 'a week is a long time in politics' rings true for the sitting that's just passed.

Kicking it off by standing our ground on a push for a zero net emissions target by 2050, to passing controversial but much needed amendments to the Water Act and Basin Act have seen the Nationals dominate the headlines.

Putting the change of leadership aside, the feedback from regional constituents my office, alone, has been getting, to say thank you for standing up for them, demonstrates we are on the right path.

They are thanking the Nationals. And we must continue that momentum.

In Victoria, your Nationals team have been hard at work fighting for fairness for basin communities for several months, coming to a head in parliament this week. You can read more about it here in the newsletter.

I've also been working hard to give certainty to the native forestry industry especially here in Victoria through a Private Senator's Bill, and fighting for the future of licenced post offices (LPOs) and services in the regions with the senate inquiry into Australia Post. You can find out more in this newsletter.

We're kicking goals and have lots more to do, especially as we head into an election.

And we're looking forward to it with Barnaby Joyce as the new federal leader, and you as part of the Victorian team.

Take care and stay warm!

Senator Bridget McKenzie
Nationals Senator For Victoria
Leader of The Nationals in the Senate



STEERING OUR ECONOMIC RECOVERY

By now you would be familiar with aspects of the federal Budget, and importantly its emphasis on steering our economic recovery.

For your Nationals team, our job is ensuring it happens in the regions which are playing a key part in the national recovery with our innovative farmers, businesses and industry.

A recovery plan that creates more jobs, rebuilds our economy and sets the country up for the future.

And we're on our way with the latest National Accounts confirming a strong recovery from the biggest economic shock since the Great Depression.

According to the Treasurer, in the March quarter:

- Employment surpassed pre-pandemic levels - a feat no major advanced economy has yet achieved
- The Australian economy is even bigger than what it was going into the pandemic - a feat achieved by no major advanced economy around the world.
- We have maintained our aaa credit rating from all three major rating agencies.
- The labour market is resilient with the unemployment rate falling for a sixth consecutive month to 5.5 per cent.



For more information go to: www.bridgetmckenzie.com.au

Senator BRIDGET McKENZIE

NATIONALS SENATOR FOR VICTORIA • LEADER OF THE NATIONALS IN THE SENATE

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MCKENZIE DRIVES OUTCOMES FOR AUSTRALIA'S NATIVE FOREST INDUSTRY

It was a great day for Australian foresters when a government report recently tabled in the Senate recommended changes to the Regional Forest Agreements framework to give operational certainty that the native forest industry has been crying out for. This follows a controversial ruling of Justice Mortimer which undermined two decades of environmental oversight of forestry operations through Regional Forest Agreements.

The Senate Environment and Communications Legislation Committee report follows the committee's inquiry on my private Senator's bill – its recommendations vindicate the reasons for my bill and the need for urgent action following the ambiguity created by Justice Mortimer's ruling in the original case against VicForests by Friends of Leadbeater's Possum.

Australia's forestry industries abide by the most stringent environmental standards, set by the Commonwealth and agreed to with the states that have Regional Forest



I have received my first shot of the AstraZeneca covid-19 vaccine. Vaccination plays a critical role in protecting our loved ones and life returning to normal.

Agreements. Yet despite the fact VicForests successfully appealed the original decision of Justice Mortimer, the Friends of Leadbeater's Possum continue to wage their unfair attack against Victoria's native forestry industry by appealing the recently handed down judgment.

In the meantime, industry is left with its hands tied, unable to supply the nation with timber which is in short supply. This puts the livelihoods of hard-working people at risk. Timber is a sustainable industry that is under an increasing threat from so-called 'environmental groups' who are not willing to examine the facts about its environmental credentials, including forest management.

The Nationals will pursue this Private Senators Bill to give certainty for our native forest industries and those who rely on it. It has the full backing of the CFMEU while Labor has turned its back on the workers it claims to represent.

NEW REPORT BACKS REGIONAL AUSTRALIA POST SERVICES

Certainty of the future of Australia Post and its services has been secured for the licensees, employees and regional communities who rely on vital post services, following the recent tabling of the Australia Post inquiry report in Parliament. Nationals senators are backing changes that will enhance the viability and sustainability of Licensed Post Offices (LPOs). They include:

- Guaranteeing financial stability for 2,500 post offices in the regions.
- No privatisation or divestiture of Australia Post and its services.
- Ensure essential parcels and financial services remain and grow, as core business of Australia Post's community service obligations.

The focus of the inquiry extended beyond the events that led to former CEO Christine Holgate's exit from Australia Post, examining service delivery, temporary regulatory relief, and the Boston Consulting Group's review of the organisation, which canvassed privatisation options.

The Nationals will never support privatisation or divestiture of Australia Post or subsets of the business and all directors of the Australia Post supported this in evidence.

This is why, if necessary, we will move amendments to legislation to make certain that financial services are increased and the parcels service is classified as core business with performance regulations and community service obligations amended to reflect this.

Banking services, and the delivery of perishable foods following Australia Post's announcement they would cease delivering these goods, were explored by The Nationals throughout public hearings. Many agricultural and food businesses rely on Australia Post to deliver their food products so it was important Australia Post improves their consultation and works to address the regulatory challenges rather than cutting this service.

The Bank@Post deal has provided greater access to financial services for regional communities and financial security, opportunity and growth for LPOs who offer these services, but this comes at a cost to licensees. The deal is beneficial for the banks as well, so it is only fair that the costs for this service are paid for by the banks and Australia Post must seize opportunities to expand these offerings.

I have also previously written to the Chair of Australia Post to ensure that the number of LPOs in regional, rural and remote Australia will be maintained or increased, and included recommendations to this effect in the report.



MY STANCE ON ZERO EMISSIONS

There is no agreement with the second party of the Coalition government on any target date for zero emissions. I believe setting a specific date to reach net-zero emissions would fly in the face of the Nationals Party's public policy commitment.

Regional Australia is contributing to lowering emissions by exporting high calorific thermal coal.

Australia is in danger of sleepwalking into an international agreement which favours large, rich industrialised nuclear-powered nations, like members of the G7. We need reliable, secure and cheap power for everyday Aussies, business and industry.



QUEENS BIRTHDAY HONOURS LIST

The Queen's Birthday 2021 Honours List has been unveiled, celebrating Australians who exemplify selflessness, commitment, and dedication.

I would like to congratulate all recipients of the prestigious honours, including National Party of Australia President Kay Hull who is a wonderful role model and tenacious champion for regional Australia.



NATIONALS LEADERSHIP TEAM

Deputy Prime Minister Barnaby Joyce with Leader of The Nationals in the Senate Bridget McKenzie and Deputy Nationals' Leader David Littleproud

AUSTRALIA-UK FREE TRADE DEAL SECURED

Australia and the UK have reached an agreement in principle on core elements of a free trade deal that strengthens, expands and diversifies export opportunities for our producers especially during our COVID recovery and tensions with China.

In what's set to be Australia's most ambitious FTA with any country, other than New Zealand, it will see tariffs on Australian wine (including from our fabulous Victorian wine making regions), and rice eliminated as soon as the agreement enters into force.

Beef tariffs will be eliminated after ten years. During the transition period, Australia will have immediate access to a duty-free quota of 35,000 tonnes, rising in equal instalments to 110,000 tonnes in year 10. In the subsequent five years, a safeguard will apply on beef imports exceeding a further volume threshold rising in equal instalments to 175,000 tonnes, levying a tariff safeguard duty of 20 per cent for the rest of the calendar year. Sheep meat tariffs will be eliminated after ten years. During the transition

period, Australia will have immediate access to a duty-free quota of 25,000 tonnes, rising in equal instalments to 75,000 tonnes in year 10. In the subsequent five years a safeguard will apply on sheep meat imports exceeding a further volume threshold rising in equal instalments to 125,000 tonnes, levying a tariff safeguard duty of 20 per cent for the rest of the calendar year.

Dairy tariffs will be eliminated over five years. During the transition period, Australia will have immediate access to a duty-free quota for cheese of 24,000 tonnes, rising in equal instalments to 48,000 tonnes in year five. Australia will also have immediate access to a duty-free quota for non-cheese dairy of 20,000 tonnes.

UK consumers are set to again benefit from having Australia's high quality and safe agricultural products on their shelves and that is great news, as well as delivering business and job opportunities.