

LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION



LEGISLATIVE COUNCIL

PARLIAMENT HOUSE

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21 February 2018

Mr Wade Dabinett  
Chairman  
Grain Producers SA  
PO Box 781  
MT BARKER SA 5251

Dear Wade,

Thank you for providing the Marshall Liberal Team with Grain Producers SA's comprehensive 2018 Policy Document. As you know, GPSA and the State Liberals have had a positive, ongoing dialogue on a variety of policy issues and we have greatly valued the input of GPSA in formulating the policies which have been announced thus far.

The South Australian economy was founded on primary production and it remains crucial to our prosperity. While we are lucky to have a climate, topography and natural resources which lend themselves to these industries, we simply cannot afford to take our productivity for granted. As global markets access new farming methods and technology, our capacity to service global food markets is challenged.

It is the State Government's role to do everything reasonable and practicable to build our primary production sector and keep it highly competitive.

I will respond to each of your policy points in order.

Agriculture and the infrastructure that supports it are a big part of the State Liberal team's plan for creating more jobs and greater prosperity in South Australia. It is important that government enables our agriculture sector to grow, taking best advantage of existing export opportunities and unlocking new ones.

The State Liberals will always work with South Australian producers to support business growth, including, if elected, reviewing unnecessary restrictions that may have had unintended or adverse consequences and analysing any available measures to promote increased efficiency.

Under State Labor, investment into research, development and extension has been eroded dramatically. That investment is critical to building the capacity of the sector and having the opportunity to service growing and emerging markets.

I firmly believe that PIRSA needs to evolve from a regulatory to an economic development agency and as you have said, investment into these agencies needs to be reflective of the value of the primary industries sector to the State. PIRSA and SARDI should certainly be maintained as a standalone department and agency.

In the absence of any quantifiable data on the economic benefits of remaining GM free, the State has imposed a GM moratorium as a default policy position. In reiterating its position on GM, the Government has not cited any quantifiable data relating to social/health, environmental or economic consequences. The Minister has repeatedly stated that the ban affords South Australia a competitive advantage in key overseas markets, making it clear that the policy is primarily concerned with marketing and branding.



To that end, the Opposition's policy, if we are elected to Government, is to commission a high-level, expert review of the economic benefits of maintaining the moratorium on GM crops.

The State Liberals are serious about biosecurity and protecting the state's \$20 billion primary industries sector from any threat. We will maintain full funding for current biosecurity programs, unless there is a compelling argument for change. In collaboration with the primary industries sector and the Federal Government, the State Liberals will work to build upon South Australia's biosecurity effort and credentials.

A Marshall Liberal Government will invest \$100 million to create more than 20,000 new places in the Vocational Education and Training (VET) system to provide young South Australians with more opportunities to secure an apprenticeship or traineeship. I certainly agree that State Government and industry need to work together to promote career and job opportunities across the primary industries sector, as that we can leverage the best economic outcomes from our investment into education and training.

The State Liberals understand that land access for new enterprises in regional areas can be contentious and this is especially so for mining projects in high value agricultural land. We are committed to thorough and meaningful consultation with all parties potentially affected by resources development proposals. We value South Australia's environment, existing land and water uses and businesses already operating in regional areas.

The State Liberals have committed additional funding to the Small Business Commissioner so it has the resources required to represent small farming enterprises in conflict with large resources companies wanting to explore or mine on their land. In addition, we have committed to the development of a Code of Conduct to cover exactly these situations so that all players have much greater clarity about not only their rights and responsibilities but also the processes involved.

The review of the Mining Act is a topic which we have had an ongoing dialogue on. As you are aware, the Liberal Party refused to rush through the rewrite of the Mining Act, as we believe that it can go further in balancing agriculture with competing land uses. In consultation with primary industries, we will continue to consult on and finalise that legislative process as soon as practicable.

The State Liberals Royalties for Regions policy commits to a Regional Roads and Infrastructure Fund to provide a dedicated funding stream for our regions for the next 10 years. Each year, 30% of the State Government's revenue from mineral and petroleum royalties will be paid into the fund. Most of the mining and petroleum production which generates this income occurs in regional areas, so it is only fair that the regions get a reasonable share of this benefit.

Thank you again for the opportunity to respond to GPSA's policy agenda – you have considered several critical issues where the State Liberals have presented clear policy directions. We will continue to release policies over the coming weeks, some of which will interest GPSA and its members.

I hope that from March 2018, we will have the opportunity to work with GPSA as a Marshall Liberal Government, in implementing these and other initiatives of benefit to South Australia.

Yours sincerely



**HON DAVID RIDGWAY MLC**

*Leader of the Opposition, Legislative Council  
Shadow Minister for Primary Industries,  
Regional Development and Tourism*