

The Great Freight Debate

** August 30, 2013 **

The State Opposition has taken a swipe at Labor's Tasmanian Freight Package, which would see \$40 million invested in Bass Strait shipping, saying it doesn't support international shipping.

Shadow Minister for Primary Industries and Water Rene Hidding believes Labor has sent a clear message that international shipping will never return to Tasmania if they are elected.

"This is just another Band-Aid, rather than the real fix that Tasmanian exporters want," Hidding says.

In terms of freight and shipping costs, Bass Strait is one of the most expensive bodies of water in the world.

In fact, appearing on local radio station HOFM this morning, Palmer United Party leader Clive Palmer added fuel to the fire, saying it is cheaper to ship goods to Africa than from Tasmania to Melbourne.

This follows calls by a powerful alliance of businesses in the north of the state calling for an urgent solution to Tasmania's Bass Strait freight crisis.

Northern Tasmania Development Chairman and Launceston Mayor Albert van Zetten says businesses, communities and local governments are frustrated by the lack of action on restoring an international shipping service.

"It has been two years since the international service was lost. We well understand the complexities of the issue," van Zetten says, adding that businesses are losing their competitive edge because they now have to export via Melbourne.

He believes the lack of an international port makes Tasmania's attempts to grow new markets in Asia even more difficult.

The Liberals have promised to invest \$33 million to immediately restore international shipping links and deliver long-term, sustainable solutions.