



# FEATHERS TO FLY IN SEASON OPENER

P62



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## STATE SELL-OFF LOOKS DOOMED

David Killick

The state government's privatisation push is set to fail with a majority of lower house MPs opposing the sale of public assets.

Premier Jeremy Rockliff unveiled the plan during his State of the state address on Tuesday, saying the measure would allow him to create a future fund to offset soaring government debt.

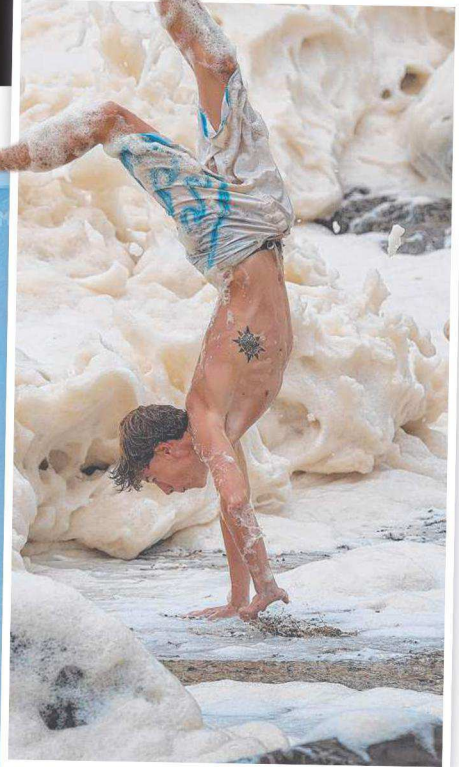


Jeremy Rockliff

He nominated the MAIB and Metro Tasmania as potential sale targets. On Wednesday he said that all government business enterprises bar Hydro Tasmania were potential targets.

But the government faces an uphill battle to get the support of parliament with Labor and the Greens bitterly opposed and crossbench MPs so far unconvinced.

REPORT, PAGE 7



A swimmer in the surf at Snapper Rocks and big waves hit Mermaid Beach on the Gold Coast. Pictures: Nigel Hallett, Adam Head

## SET FOR A DEVASTATING BLOW

Thousands of homes have been given hours to evacuate as cyclone Alfred closes in on heavily populated areas of NSW and Queensland **REPORTS, P15**

# FULL GAS FOR HYDROGEN



## New dawn for state's renewable energy

Tasmania's first ever green hydrogen production facility will be launched in Hobart on Friday, in what's been described as a major milestone in the state's clean energy journey. **EXCLUSIVE REPORT BY ROB INGLIS, PAGE 4**



# MAJOR MILESTONE FOR CLEAN ENERGY



Blue Economy CRC's Hydrogen Production and Research Facility at BOC Australia, Lutana. Picture: Supplied

# Hydrogen production facility arrival lauded

Rob Inglis

Tasmania's first ever green hydrogen production facility will be launched on Friday, in what's been described as a major milestone in the state's clean energy journey.

The opening of the Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre's Hydrogen Production and Research Facility, located at the BOC Australia facility at Lutana, is touted as a pivotal moment in the ongoing mission to establish a green hydrogen industry in Tasmania.

It has the capacity to produce up to 262kg of commercial-scale hydrogen per day, which is enough to power two 22m hydrogen fuel cell-powered passenger ferries for 24 hours.

Green hydrogen is a clean energy source produced by splitting water with renewable electricity. It's viewed as a potentially game-changing alter-



Blue Economy CRC chief executive Dr John Whittington

native to fossil fuels and diesel.

Blue Economy CRC chief executive Dr John Whittington said the launch of the facility represented "the beginning of Tasmania's hydrogen production journey of discovery".

"The production of green hydrogen begins at commercial scale, but what we're really looking to produce is answers to some of our most important questions around hydrogen and its uses," he said.

"This is a research facility and as we ramp up commer-

cial production, we will also better understand the role hydrogen can play in our system and how it can support Australia's blue economy."

Funded by the federal government, the Blue Economy CRC was established in 2021 to explore ways of supporting and decarbonising marine industries, as well as potential commercial opportunities to power local industries both onshore and offshore.

The Lutana facility will provide hydrogen for industry and transport applications and boasts one of the largest electrolyzers in the country, which controls a DC hydrogen microgrid capable of generating 100 per cent renewable hydrogen.

Theo Martin, the head of BOC Australia, said BOC had been producing, storing and transporting hydrogen in Australia for more than 80 years and was therefore well placed to lend its expertise and re-

sources to the new facility.

"For BOC, this was a perfect opportunity to bring our knowledge and skills to an important project that will lay the foundation for renewable hydrogen research and its application in this state," he said.

Blue Economy CRC research director Professor Irene Penesis said the production of green hydrogen could potentially eliminate carbon emissions when made using renewable electricity but further research and training was needed to aid development of the technology.

"This world-class research and training facility will advance technologies to produce, store and distribute hydrogen efficiently and cost-effectively," she said.

"This means opportunity for a wider adoption of this clean energy source, while building a skilled workforce capable of implementing and maintaining these new systems across

the hydrogen value chain."

The state Liberal government's Renewable Hydrogen Action Plan, released in 2020, set a goal of making Tasmania a "significant global supplier" of green hydrogen for export and domestic use.

The plan also laid out a target of commencing renewable hydrogen production by 2022-2024 and exporting the fuel by 2025-2027.

The government, which has a target of reaching 200 per cent renewable electricity generation by 2040, has been criticised by the state opposition for delays in getting green hydrogen projects off the ground since the action plan was launched.

Energy and Renewables Minister Nick Duigan said the new facility would provide "an alternative and reliable energy supply that could replace carbon-intensive fossil fuels and diesel across a range of industries".

## Boning up on evolution

Our ancestors were making tools out of bones 1.5 million years ago, winding back the clock for this important moment in human evolution by more than a million years, a study said Wednesday.

Ancient humans – hominins – such as Australopithecus are known to have used fragments of bones to dig up tubers from termite mounds.

Our closest living relative, chimpanzees, use sticks to dig out termites for a tasty treat.

More than two million years ago, hominins were using crude stone tools in Tanzania's Olduvai Gorge, one of the world's most important prehistoric sites. But there were no known examples of anyone systematically making bone tools more than 500,000 years ago – until now.

At Olduvai, a Spanish-led team of researchers found 27 tools made of the leg and arm bones of big mammals, mainly elephants and hippos.

It "sheds new light on the almost unknown world of early hominin bone technology", they wrote in a study in the journal Nature. They are proof of the remarkable cognitive abilities of our distant ancestors, showing they were capable of choosing the appropriate material and fashioning it for their needs.

## Shopping for better deals

Aussies are making changes to their grocery shopping habits to save money.

A Finder survey revealed 80 per cent took steps to cut their grocery bills in the past year.

The research found 45 per cent cut back on non-essential items, while 43 per cent reduced overall spending.

Around 39 per cent switched to cheaper brands, 32 per cent shopped at multiple stores to find the best deals, 32 per cent used coupons, 21 per cent took advantage of monthly discounts by doing one big shop and 16 per cent had cut back their meat consumption.

Grocery spending reached a record high in January – the average household reported spending \$209 a week, up 11 per cent from \$188 a week a year earlier.

## Two face hoon charges

Two young people have been charged over alleged hooning incidents on Thursday, and their respective vehicles seized, police say.

Officers alleged a 22-year-old Granton man was hooning on Lamprill Circle at Herdsmans Cove. Police laid charges and have seized his vehicle for three months.

A 15-year-old Gagebrook teen was also charged and had his petrol-powered bike

seized for 28 days. Police accused the teen of riding at speed without safety gear on Tottenham Rd at Gagebrook.

Inspector Luke Horne said hooning was reckless and dangerous.

"No matter how skilled the driver or rider believes they are, hooning behaviours put lives at risk," he said.

He urged anyone who witnesses dangerous driving to report it to police on 131 444.

## Make mine a pint, OK

**LONDON:** Britain's House of Lords voted Wednesday to ensure pubs can still serve beer in pints – a cherished measure (just over half a litre) that survived the switch to the metric system in 1965.

The Brexit referendum had much debate over a return to imperial measures such as pounds, feet and pints, instead of the

metric system. But after Brexit, the Conservative government stuck with the metric system, while keeping a status quo on beer and other products.

Now, the Labor government backed an amendment by the Liberal Democrats, as a "safeguard", to prohibit any law restricting the use of the pint when selling beer, cider or milk.



## Big bank cuts tech jobs

Commonwealth Bank is expected to cut more than 100 jobs from its technology division.

About 150 positions are likely to be culled from its Sydney operations, with the remaining roles in Melbourne, Brisbane, Perth, Hobart and Tweed Heads.

Finance Sector Union national secretary Jason Hall said the union would press the bank for "clearer answers"

on the fresh round of redundancies.

"On the one hand, CBA tells its shareholders that it is facing a skills shortage in Australia and it has a commitment to digital talent. And on the other hand, it cuts a further 164 jobs from its technology division," Mr Hall said on Thursday. "The CBA owes its workers an explanation why its actions don't match its words."



DIET

### Cancer: better cut out butter

Ditching butter from your diet and replacing it with plant-based oils could help protect you from dying from cancer or heart disease in the future.

A Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health team looked into the diets of more than 220,000 people and found those who ate a larger amount of butter were more likely to die from cancer compared to those who ate little to none.

People who consumed higher levels of soybean, corn, safflower, canola, and olive oils were less likely to die from cancer and heart disease.

FIRE FIGHT

### Blazes close busy track

The popular Kings Bridge Track at Launceston's Cataract Gorge was closed on Friday afternoon when a series of fires broke out.

Tasmania Fire Service said crews worked to extinguish multiple small fires.

The operation included the assistance of aircraft.

An alert on the incident at West Launceston was first issued just before 3pm.

It's understood the Launceston Council closed the track to keep walkers safe while the operation was under way.

## Facility can produce 262kg of energy source daily

# GREEN HYDROGEN BUSES SET TO ROLL

Bridget Clarke

Hydrogen-fuelled buses could be on Tasmanian roads within a matter of months as the state marks the opening of its first green hydrogen production facility.

The Blue Economy Cooperative Research Centre's (CRC) Hydrogen Production and Research Facility, located at the BOC Australia facility at Lutana, will produce up to 262kg of commercial-scale green hydrogen – a clean energy source produced by splitting water with renewable energy – per day for industry and transport applications.

As reported by the Mercury, the facility was touted as a major milestone in the ongoing mission to establish a green energy hydrogen industry in Tasmania, with its research vital to assessing the feasibility of commercial uses and in meeting the govern-



Blue Economy CRC chief Dr John Whittington (left) at the opening. Picture: Richard Jupe Above: Friday's Mercury front page story.

ment's 200 per cent renewable energy by 2040 target.

At Friday's opening, state Energy and Renewables Minister Nick Duigan said the facility provided "proof positive" that green hydrogen "could be a viable alternative to fossil

fuels", most significantly diesel.

Mr Duigan said Metro's Zero Emission Bus Trial, to start this year till June 2027, was one of a range of "stress tests" the facility would undertake in the testing of green hy-

drogen applications.

The product has also been put forward as an alternative fuel source for cars and passenger ferries, with the facility currently able to generate sufficient green hydrogen to power two 225m ferries, carry-

ing 75 passengers a day.

Blue Economy CRC CEO John Whittington said the state government's Metro agreement was critical to funding the facility's research with the benefits of green hydrogen production becoming clearer at the "point of use".

"One of the big benefits and unique aspects of this project it's targeting the end user applications and the diversity of what can be done," – a critical step in the development of a hydrogen economy, Dr Whittington said.

In a "global context", Blue Economy CRC research director Professor Irene Penesis said along with transportation and mobility, the facility would undertake modelling research in the areas of offshore wind, maritime decarbonisation and gas storage.

Federal Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Minister Julie Collins said the facility's re-

## YOUTH CREWATIVE



## ART EXHIBITION

Do you live in the suburbs of Glenorchy?  
Are you aged 10 - 16 and love to be **creative**?  
We want to showcase your photography, digital art, drawing, painting and other 2D works.

Exhibition submissions open **7th of March**  
Submissions close **2nd of April**  
All works exhibited at "Youth Crewative" with prizes to be won!  
**When:** 9th of April, 3 pm - 5 pm at the Chigwell Barn  
**Where:** 8-10 Bucaan st Chigwell

SCAN THE QR CODE TO SUBMIT YOUR WORKS  
Want more info? [facebook.com/crewativeartsconnect](https://facebook.com/crewativeartsconnect) | 6249 5363



## Have your say on the future of the Hobart CBD

Public Meeting to discuss the proposed Collins Street dual bike lanes

All Welcome

Tuesday 25 March 2025 at 5.30 pm  
City Hall 57- 63 Macquarie St, Hobart

Your chance to have your say about bike lanes, traffic congestion and the direction that Hobart City Council is taking our great city

Places are limited and you **MUST** register to attend.  
Book your tickets **NOW** at



[events.humanitix.com/public-meeting-proposed-bike-lanes-on-collins-street](https://events.humanitix.com/public-meeting-proposed-bike-lanes-on-collins-street)

Authorised by Edwin Johnstone for Confederation of Greater Hobart Business





Blue Economy CRC research director Professor Irene Penesis at the opening of the Lutana green hydrogen production facility. Picture: Richard Jupe

search and innovation capacity was vital in closing in on the government's goal of transforming the agriculture, fisheries and forestry sectors into a \$100bn industry, and in meeting the government's net

zero by 2050 target. "(Green hydrogen) is one of the options for Australia going forward, with the launch of the facility another step to our goal," Ms Collins said. "More broadly, I'm keen to see this

contribution grow and meeting the increased demand that we have here in Australia for energy, but in particular for healthy and sustainable aquaculture and forestry and fisheries around the globe."

“(Green hydrogen) is one of the options for Australia going forward

Federal minister Julie Collins

**MONTHLY RECORD**  
**Beefing up exports**

Australian beef exports have hit a new February record. Exports lifted 25 per cent year-on-year to 117,502 tonnes – 11 per cent above the previous February export volume record set in 2015 of 106,054 tonnes, Meat & Livestock Australia figures show. The US remains Australia's largest market, with exports rising 64 per cent year-on-year to 35,092 tonnes. As Australian production has lifted over the past several years, most of the additional beef has gone into the US.

**TOUGH GIGS**  
**Suicide higher in the arts**

Musicians, actors and entertainers are at a particularly high risk of suicide. In the UK, Goldsmiths University researchers said suicide rates were 20 per cent higher than the population average for men in these fields and 69 per cent higher for women musicians, actors and entertainers. The researchers said aspects of an entertainer's job likely influenced their mental health, such as financial instability, substance use disorders, anxiety and irregular sleep patterns.

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Talking Point

The hot topics that have Tasmanians talking  
Have your say, email [talkingpoints@themercury.com.au](mailto:talkingpoints@themercury.com.au)



Six years ago, Zelensky was a stand-up comedian who is now thrust into the global spotlight. English is his third language after Russian but clearly he doesn't yet speak Trump

flotilla probably has more firepower that our navy could have immediately mustered.

The PLA (we know that acronym) might have an accompanying nuclear submarine and almost certainly nuclear weapons.

But so what? We sold them the coking coal and the iron ore. And we export uranium to China.

But to be fair to the Chinese they have every right to be in international waters around Australia.

We do the same in the South China Sea.

Perhaps in some cases it is too easy to characterise our Prime Minister as weak.

As I unkindly implied a bit earlier.

This time Albo hasn't presented the CCP (another acronym I'm sure we all know) with wine and lobsters but nor has he got on the megaphone to

all Chinese shipping, despite the present pre-election campaign.

The Opposition made much of the PM not having prior warning of the Chinese excursion.

Albo is made to look like a spectator and not even a commentator with that multi-purpose recurring phrase, "I'm not here to provide a running commentary on ..."

But my strategic informer tells me the ADF would have known all about the Chinese exploit even before they passed the acronymal PNG. Through AUKUS and the "Five Eyes" intelligence network our American friends share highly confidential information with our military. Their global eavesdropping technology affords close monitoring of rival fleets. If there is an accompanying submarine it will be known. Likewise,

if there are nuclear weapons.

But in the nature of these matters you never let your military rivals know that you know, otherwise they will work out ways of stopping you knowing.

Such indiscretion would annoy our present allies. The Opposition should've known that.

It is all a dangerous game and an expensive grand folly, given that Australian and Chinese prosperity derives from our mutual trade relationship.

Perhaps in a realigning world we should attempt to get on better. If we cannot, we should at least learn from the terrible indiscretion of Trump and Zelensky.

If you are going to have a barney, have it in private.

**Charles Wooley is a Tasmanian-based journalist**

# Kickstart to our journey in hydrogen

Blue Economy CRC aims to deliver a future in transport fuel, writes **Dr John Whittington**

Tasmania enjoys a natural abundance of renewable energy resources. Our climate and geography give us access to world-class hydro, wind and wave energy resources. Green hydrogen could be next.

Over the past century, Tasmania has built a world-leading hydro-electric network and, more recently, supplemented this with onshore wind infrastructure.

Sitting in the Roaring Forties, we are surrounded by some of the world's best offshore wind and wave energy resources.

Tapping into our oceans can enable us to be a significant renewable energy exporter, but we need ambition and innovation.

Tasmania isn't just a renewables powerhouse. It has a diverse, world-leading ocean economy.

We have a natural advantage in fisheries and aquaculture, maritime shipping and tourism.

However, the world abounds with places with rich resources that can't capitalise on them due to poor planning, regulation and government support.

Like natural talent, it counts for little without commitment.

My organisation, the Blue Economy CRC is putting in some of that work.

Today, we are launching our commercial-scale hydrogen production and research facility in Lutana, in Hobart.

We aim to answer some of the questions around hydrogen and we will simultaneously be the first in Tasmania to produce it at a commercial scale.

The production of green hydrogen requires access to abundant clean energy and in this, we lead the nation.

At the same time, the need for



**Dr John Whittington is the Blue Economy Co-operative Research Centre CEO**

sustainable offshore energy has never been more critical.

Currently, our maritime industries are overwhelmingly powered by fossil fuels. Offshore wind could follow suit but will need a better sustainability story to tell.

That's why we have built an electrolyser and research microgrid in Lutana.

We will be producing more than hydrogen. Our facility will produce answers.

For major players in the maritime sector, we'll be answering the question, is hydrogen and its derivatives a transportation fuel of the future?

For ocean-based off-grid applications specifically, can hydrogen be made offshore with wind and other renewables and potentially replace diesel for powering their sites? We'll find out.

The facility, at BOC Australia in Lutana will produce commercial-scale hydrogen up to 262kg per day, as an alternative to fossil fuels.

It will serve new customers for this clean-burning fuel of the future.

Meanwhile, the facility will support ongoing research and development with simulation of real industry applications to support Australia's blue economy.

From today, our facility kickstarts the Tasmanian hydrogen journey.

**Dr John Whittington is the chief executive of the Blue Economy Co-operative Research Centre**

# monthly reporting is one important step for Tasmania

salmon corporations are among the secret donors to the Liberal and Labor parties. Together, they are responsible for the effective privatisation and fouling of our rivers, through hatcheries in drinking water catchments, and inshore waters. The Greens confirmed in parliament that after big salmon executives attended a \$4000-a-ticket Liberal Party dinner, this toxic industry was made a promise it could expand around the island.

Given global salmon corporations pay peppercorn lease fees and no

corporate tax, the only conclusion to draw is that there is a quid pro quo expectation on the Liberals in government. Of course, political donations from vested interests are legal, but they do corrupt democracy.

Like mould, ethical corruption grows in the dark. Yet, the old adage remains true – sunlight is the best disinfectant. On political donations, that means transparency for voters about who is donating how much to which political parties, and for that information to be readily available and updated regularly.

Late last year, with Labor and the independents' support, the Greens' Electoral Disclosure and Funding (Amendment) Bill 2024 passed the House of Assembly. It will require all donations over \$1000 be disclosed to the public each month. The Liberals, of course, voted against it.

The current donation disclosure threshold is \$16,900. After legislative amendments in 2022, that will change to \$5000 on July 1 this year. This is still too high, which is why the Greens are pushing for change. Our amendment bill is now before the

Legislative Council, where we know it will get a fair hearing and hope it passes.

Lowering the donations' disclosure threshold and requiring monthly reporting is just one important step to casting more sunlight on our democracy. Of course, we should have caps on expenditure, as well as ban donations from corporations, big tobacco, gambling, salmon companies, and developers. The Greens remain committed to progressing these reforms through parliament too.

We live in strange and unstable times, with right-wing governments, funded by predatory corporations, winning office by fair means or foul, and moving to take power from the people around the globe. In a world where democracy looks increasingly imperilled, let's do everything within our people-powered parliament to strengthen ours.

**Cassy O'Connor MLC is the Greens' member for Hobart, as well as the Tasmanian Greens' integrity spokesperson.**