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NEWS MEDIA RELEASE

Tasmania GM-free is the way to be

"Gene Ethics congratulates the Tasmanian Government on the state staying GM-free for another decade, till 2029," says Director Bob Phelps.

"With other Australian GM-free regions - South Australia, the ACT and Northern Territory - Tasmanian food, farms and fibre continue to reap the benefits of premium GM-free markets.

"But a dark deregulatory cloud is on the GM-free horizon, challenging all GM-free states.

"We strongly refute Tasmanian Minister Barnett's claim that a proposed federal deregulation: 'in no way impacts on Tasmania's ability to have a moratorium on GMOs.'

"All Genetic Manipulation (GM) processes and products are now required to be notified to the Gene Technology Regulator for assessment, regulation and licensing.

"But the federal government is gutting the GM regulations to allow a whole class of new CRISPR GM techniques (SDN-1) to fly under our regulator's radar.

"New CRISPR GM animals, plants and microbes could be made, grown and sold without any public or official notice or regulation.

"The Greens in the Senate have moved to disallow this deregulation but the ALP and the cross-bench must also support the disallowance for it to pass.

"Deregulation of CRISPR SDN-1 is CropLife's Trojan horse for an end to all GM-free in Australia.

"If states grow and export unregulated or unapproved GM food and commodities, key EU and Asian markets are sure to reject them.

"This will cost the GM-free states and their producers tens of millions of dollars and tarnish their high reputation.

"All GM processes and products must continue to be regulated so the states and their GM-free producers can fully gain the advantage of being GM-free," Mr Phelps concludes.

Further comment: Bob Phelps 0449 769 066

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Please call on South Australian Premier Steven Marshall to keep SA GM-free as the Tasmanians have done in their state: E: <premier@sa.gov.au> or T: 08 8429 3232

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See especially the last para of this Hansard in the Tas parliament:

Mr TUCKER question to MINISTER for PRIMARY INDUSTRIES and WATER, Mr BARNETT

Can you update the House on how the Hodgman majority Liberal Government's policy on genetically modified organisms will continue to support jobs and investment in Tasmania's brand and reputation for premium food and agricultural products?

ANSWER

Madam Speaker, I thank the member for raising a very important matter. Tasmania has a strong reputation for producing premium products that are safe, clean and are reliable. It is a key target for the Hodgman Liberal Government to grow our agricultural sector to \$10 billion by 2050. At a time when our domestic and international markets and our partners are placing an increased value on food providence, a growing number of our food producers and our businesses are capitalising on this reputation.

The Hodgman Liberal Government is delivering on our comprehensive Agri-Food Plan to create jobs. Evidence shows that the plan is working with a 9 per cent increase in agricultural production in the last 12 months. That 9 per cent increase takes us to just over \$1.6 billion, which is very good news. Our GMO-free status is an important part of the Tasmanian brand, offering a marketing advantage for our high-quality, high-value primary industries.

Tasmania has been well served by the moratorium on the commercial release of genetically modified organisms to the environment since it was introduced in 2001. The current moratorium was set to expire in November this year. The recent review conducted by the department received a total of 76 submissions with an overwhelming number of respondents in favour of extending the moratorium. For example, strong support for continuing the moratorium came from submissions from the beef industry and the honey, salmon, fruit, wine and organic sectors. As previous reviews found, the benefits of maintaining the GMO moratorium in Tasmania still greatly outweigh the risks of any benefits from ending the moratorium. **I am pleased to announce today that the Government intends to extend the moratorium in Tasmania for 10 years.** Extending the moratorium for a decade provides certainty -

Ms O'Connor - Are we the only state that hasn't signed up to changes to the regulations?

Madam SPEAKER - Ms O'Connor, if you would like to ask a question through me, you may.

Mr BARNETT - I have announced the 10 years and the 10-year moratorium will provide certainty and confidence for our producers and our businesses that rely on the state's GMO-free status to continue to invest, to grow and to further develop their markets.

A bill to amend the Genetically Modified Organisms Control Act will soon be tabled in the state parliament. The longstanding Tasmanian gene technology policy and associated gene technology guidelines that provide the necessary detail on how the moratorium will be implemented will also be updated. There will continue to be regular reviews of developments in gene technology, markets and consumer sentiment that can trigger a review of the policy earlier, should developments warrant that.

Tasmania regulates our moratorium on GMOs for marketing purposes under the National Gene Technology Scheme. Other aspects of gene technology are regulated by the Australian Government, including human health, safety and environmental impacts. **One of the issues highlighted in submissions were amendments to the federal gene technology regulations that will come into effect later this year.** This followed a review by the federal Gene Technology Regulator to clarify the status of organisms developed using certain new gene editing techniques.

Most notable is a technique known as SDN1 will not be regulated as a GMO on the basis that organisms modified using this technique pose the same risk as, and are indistinguishable from, organisms carrying naturally occurring genetic changes. **We have always strongly advocated for Tasmania's interest in maintaining our brand and our markets. This federal regulation in no way impacts on Tasmania's ability to have a moratorium on GMOs. We will continue to work with our exporters and our stakeholders to address any potential market implications if they arise.** A Hodgman majority Liberal Government believes that a 10-year moratorium is commonsense, it strikes the right balance and it meets the needs of today and sets us up for tomorrow. I commend this decision to the House.