

## Federal Election Q&A with the Barker Candidates – Summary of Results

The Federal Election Online Q&A session for the Barker electorate was organised by the Mount Gambier Chamber of Commerce to gather insights into how the upcoming election could benefit our local business community. All ten Barker candidates were invited to participate, with a strong focus on business-related questions submitted by our members. While questions were categorised into a range of topics, the primary emphasis remained on issues directly impacting local businesses.

The aim of the session was to keep our members informed about the candidates' positions and the election process, strengthening our community's understanding of the election's potential impact on the local economy.



# MEET THE BARKER CANDIDATES

 Tony PASIN	 Rosa HILLAM	 Jonathan PIETZSCH	 James ROTHE	 Jennifer TROETH
 Michael BROHIER	 Ian PENNO	 Robert JAMESON	 Major Moogy SUMNER	 Cody SCHOLLES

**2025 Federal Election****Saturday 3rd May 2025**

# Ian Penno

## 1. Business Taxes and Financial Support

- Q. What changes to business taxes do you propose, and how will they benefit small business?

A. Small businesses currently face 10 or more taxes, with payroll tax demanding significant attention. It is inherently anti-business, hindering growth, development, employment, and consuming a business owner's time, which equates to money. Other taxes require adjustment, with employer and employee income taxes needing reduction and modification to prevent bracket creep. Employee taxes should be decreased during periods of economic strain instead of implementing wage increases. This approach avoids adding to the cost of living, inflationary drivers, while providing employees with more disposable income.

- Q. How will you ensure small businesses have better access to loans and financial support?

A. Numerous minor issues hinder the viability of small businesses, and these must be addressed. Greater focus on business assistance and training programs initiated through cost-neutral government incentives is essential. Additionally, enhanced support is needed to enable small businesses to present well-defined, professionally structured documents to loan authorities.

## 2. Support for Small Businesses

- Q. How will you support programs to help small businesses find skilled employees?

A. Training for trades should commence in secondary school as early as Year 10. Onsite training should include reimbursements for both the trainee and the trainer. This approach provides students with insight into trade careers and prepares them to be job-ready upon completing Year 12. Incentives should also be to encourage further skill development. Additionally, this prevents individuals from entering a trade after school to discover it is not suitable for them.

- Q. What initiatives will you introduce to help businesses adopt new technologies and innovate?

A. New technologies should be incentivised and industry funded through development, implementation, and commercialization. Funding and support should be readily accessible. Joint funding between the industry and government, managed by industry, similar to the Multi-Peril Insurance scheme for farmers. Barker as a

region with such diverse industries and businesses leaves itself open to be a major player in technology development.

- Q. If elected, what will you and your party do to help ease the pressures on small business? With rising costs of power, wages, rent, supply chain issues, cost of living pressures for our customers, how will you look to easing these? Many businesses are finding it increasingly hard to stay afloat and the flow-on effect is killing small business.

A. Red and green tape significantly impact businesses, necessitating substantial overhaul. Power cost increases have resulted from the government's-agenda approach. Without significant changes, the regulatory nature of the industry will continue to drive energy costs higher. Developing alternative approaches to energy generation can help stabilise energy costs. Claims of reducing energy costs are misleading.

- Q. What economic policy do you think needs to be introduced or changed to help the small business of Barker?

A. It is not about me developing policy. It is about me creating opportunity for all commerce within the Barker electorate to develop a policy that best suits the future of the regions businesses. You know your businesses, you know what is holding you back and what needs to change to allow you to do your business sustainably and profitably and most important enjoyable to you and your patrons.

- Q. How will you support programs to help small businesses find skilled employees, including through migration and reskilling initiatives?

A. I think that was answered in the previous similar question. Migration will always occur through businesses and generally those migrating and reskilling will have a knowledge of what they are moving to and have some skill in that new occupation. This does not detract from the fact that Australia has lost focus on skills training unless it is within the submarine ore space field and we cannot all go there. Mature age training is an industry in itself. Guidance and facilities need developing.

### 3. Natural Resources and Economic Policy

- Q. Does the government need to do a better job at capitalizing on our natural resources? And why don't we take more revenue in royalties and taxes when we are one of the largest gas exporters in the world, for example? We should be doing what Norway and Qatar do.

A. Government is owned by big business and therein lies the issue. I held several forums prior to the election and at each one the concern of the big business impact was raised. The land and resources belong to Australia, and we are being deprived of our fair share of the revenue being raised in this mining. We are one of the most resource rich countries in the world and we are poor in comparison. We have energy resources that countries dream of and yet we pay the highest energy bills.

- Q. Qatar has zero income tax as they profit enough money from their natural resources.

A. Slightly different scenario to Australia but the answer is in the question.

#### 4. Representation and Competition

- Q. The Electorate of Barker is a big area with many different industries and businesses throughout the various regions with sometimes competing needs and wants. How have you or how do you intend to make sure they are all heard and represented equally?

A. This is one of my main concerns. Barker is a very large and diverse electorate. It has its differences but generally faces the same problems. The current member assisted by all forms of government and bureaucracy continues to divide the electorate into regions. This divisiveness detracts from our strengths. As the old adage goes, "divide and ye shall conquer". We have allowed this to happen. Why did I only get only receive single or individual requests such as this. Why was yours not collated from all the Chambers of Commerce within Barker. You all have the same issues, and I would hope similar solutions.

A letter from one mayor, rather than a collective letter from all mayors, highlights this issue. They all contend with similar matters—funding, roads, water, effluent, waste.

Strength and progress will stem from unity. Many producers and farmers have given up and now focus solely on their individual concerns, without success

- Q. Government doesn't have a good record of backing winners. Will you get out of the way and just let business be business?

A. I definitely will not be in the way of any business wanting to achieve. Red and green tape needs to be a method of support for business not a deterrent or detraction There are certain boundaries and rules but government etc play too much of a role in everyday businesses activity.

- Q. Competition is critical to business efficiency. How will you strengthen and entrench competitive practices including, say, competition with arms of government such as councils?

A. There is a delicate balance between competition and collaboration within the small to medium business. Healthy competition can serve as a catalyst for creativity and development; however, I have always refrained from focusing on my competitors, as I believe it detracts from concentrating on own strengths and successes. Moreover, government entity should not engage in competition with businesses.

## 5. Infrastructure

- Q. Australia ranks 58th in the world for internet speed. And we're a rich country! How will you increase our ranking?

A. Technology is not my strong point. But I to get frustrated when I can be standing in my back yard at Winkie knowing that there are 3 towers within a triangulated short distance and I am very light on reception. My NBN even shuts down. Too many no reception areas in the regions. That is something on my list to chase up, but as a simple layperson I do not have many answers at the moment.