

## 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**

# Rosa Hillam

## 1. Business Taxes and Financial Support

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

A. I support targeted tax relief for small businesses, including raising the instant asset write-off threshold and reducing red tape to simplify tax reporting. These changes will ease cash flow pressures, help local businesses invest in equipment and staff, and support growth—especially in key sectors like agriculture, tourism, and hospitality. In Barker’s regional towns, small businesses are the backbone of our economy, and fairer tax settings will help them thrive.

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

A. I’ll advocate for a regional small business finance guarantee scheme and stronger partnerships with community banks to improve access to low-interest loans. Too often, Barker’s small businesses miss out on metro-focused funding. We need tailored financial support that recognises regional challenges like drought, supply chain disruptions, and barriers faced by startups. It’s time for financial systems that work with our communities, not against them

## 2. Support for Small Businesses

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

A. I’ll support local training programs, TAFE funding, and apprenticeships tailored to the needs of small businesses in industries like trades, healthcare, and tourism. We need to create incentives to attract skilled workers to regional areas, along with housing and transport solutions to help them stay. Small businesses in Barker can’t grow without the right people, and that starts with practical, place-based support.

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

A. As an independent candidate, I will advocate for initiatives that propel our electorate forward:

Technology Grants: Create a grant program offering up to \$10,000 for small businesses to invest in essential technologies like cloud computing and automation.

**Innovation Hubs:** Establish a dedicated innovation hub in Barker with co-working spaces and prototyping labs for collaboration and experimentation.

**Skill Development Workshops:** Launch workshops with local tech firms and universities on data analytics, digital marketing, and cybersecurity to equip business owners and employees.

**Networking Events:** Organize quarterly events connecting local businesses with technology providers and research institutions to foster innovation partnerships.

These initiatives will empower local businesses to adopt technology and drive economic growth

- 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. To tackle supply chain issues, I'll work to strengthen regional infrastructure and improve access to affordable transportation, making it easier for small businesses to get goods on time and at a fair cost. Additionally, I'll support policies that lower the cost of living for our customers, which will help drive demand for local goods and services.

I understand how hard it is for small businesses to stay afloat, and as an Independent, I will ensure that your voices are heard in Parliament—pushing for the changes that make a real difference to our local economy.

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

A. To support small businesses in Barker, I believe we need to introduce an economic policy that focuses on regional investment and infrastructure development. This includes:

**Incentivizing Local Hiring and Training:** We need policies that encourage businesses to hire locally, such as subsidies or tax breaks for employing residents in regional areas. Coupled with expanded funding for vocational training and apprenticeships, this will help businesses access the skilled workforce they need.

**Support for Regional Energy Solutions:** Rising energy costs are crippling small businesses. I'll advocate for expanding renewable energy options, like solar and wind,

and support community-driven energy projects that reduce costs and give local businesses more control over their energy use.

**Streamlining Access to Finance:** Introducing a regional small business loan scheme with lower interest rates and flexible repayment terms will make it easier for local businesses to invest in growth and weather economic fluctuations.

**Reducing Bureaucracy:** Cutting down on red tape is crucial for small businesses. A more efficient regulatory framework would free up time and money, allowing businesses to focus on what they do best.

**Strengthening Supply Chains:** We need to enhance transport and logistics infrastructure, which will lower supply costs and ensure that businesses in Barker have reliable access to the goods they need without disruption.

These targeted economic changes would reduce costs, improve access to resources, and create more opportunities for small businesses in our region to thrive.

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

A. As an independent candidate for Barker, I will support programs that connect small businesses with skilled employees through the following initiatives:

**Collaboration with Educational Institutions:** Partner with local colleges and training centers to align curricula with industry needs, ensuring graduates have the skills required by small businesses.

**Reskilling Programs:** Advocate for funding and resources to create reskilling initiatives that help current workers transition into in-demand roles, enhancing workforce adaptability.

**Migration Pathways:** Support policies that facilitate skilled migration, attracting qualified individuals to fill labor shortages in our local economy.

**Business Support Networks:** Establish networks that connect small businesses with resources for recruitment, training, and mentorship, fostering a collaborative environment for workforce development.

These efforts will help create a robust talent pipeline, benefiting both small businesses and the community.

### 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. As an independent candidate for Barker, I believe there is a significant opportunity for our government to enhance its approach to managing our natural resources. Given that we are among the largest gas exporters globally, it raises the question of why we are not maximizing our revenue from royalties and taxes. We should look to successful models, such as those implemented by Norway and Qatar, to ensure that our resources are leveraged effectively for the benefit of all Australians.

At the same time, we must do everything in our power to transition towards more sustainable and less harmful energy production. Prioritizing decentralized and community-driven projects can empower local initiatives and foster innovation in renewable energy solutions. It's essential that we balance economic growth with responsible stewardship of our environment, ensuring a sustainable future for generations to come.

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

A. Qatar's approach to taxation, particularly its absence of an income tax, is largely made possible by the substantial revenue it generates from its natural resources, particularly natural gas and oil. This model allows the government to fund public services and infrastructure without imposing income taxes on its citizens. to consider the long-term sustainability of relying heavily on natural resource revenues. This dependence can create vulnerabilities, particularly in times of fluctuating global oil and gas prices. Additionally, the absence of income tax may lead to challenges in diversifying the economy and reducing reliance on fossil fuels.

As Qatar continues to develop, there may be an increasing focus on diversifying its economy, investing in renewable energy, and enhancing other sectors such as tourism, finance, and technology. These steps could help create a more resilient economic framework that is less susceptible to the volatility of global energy markets.

#### 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. To ensure that all industries and businesses in the Electorate of Barker are heard and represented equally, it is important to engage in open communication with stakeholders through regular consultations, forums, and surveys. Additionally, establishing advisory committees that include representatives from various sectors can help address competing needs and promote collaborative solutions. Ensuring transparency in decision-making processes and actively seeking input from diverse groups will also contribute to fair representation

- 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. Government policies can play a crucial role in creating a conducive environment for businesses to thrive by providing infrastructure, regulations, and support systems. However, excessive intervention can sometimes hinder innovation and market efficiency. Balancing regulation with free enterprise is essential for fostering a dynamic economy where businesses can flourish independently.

- 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. Government policies are vital in providing the necessary infrastructure, regulations, and support systems that enable businesses to thrive. However, it is crucial to balance regulation with free enterprise to avoid stifling innovation and market efficiency. A dynamic economy is best fostered when businesses have the freedom to operate independently, supported by well-designed government frameworks.

#### 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. Improving Australia's internet speed requires a multifaceted approach that involves infrastructure investment, regulatory reform, adoption of new technologies, and community engagement. As the independent candidate for Barker, I am

committed to implementing a comprehensive strategy to elevate our internet speed and ensure that Barker and Australia are at the forefront of digital innovation. Together, we can create a digital infrastructure that supports economic growth, enhances quality of life, and positions Australia as a global leader in internet connectivity.