



# Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck

Liberal Senator for Tasmania

## MEDIA RELEASE

20 April 2018

### \*\*\*\* Europeans attempt to undermine Brand Tasmania \*\*\*\*

- Europeans threaten cheese producers by trying to ban Tasmanian companies' use of terms like "feta" and "parmesan"
- EU/Australia FTA negotiations cannot sacrifice Brand Tasmania for the sake of European protectionism
- European Geographical Indicators (GIs) on products a major stumbling block to free trade

Ahead of early negotiations of a Free Trade Agreement (FTA) between the European Union and Australia, the Europeans have made ambit claims over a number of generic product names that are widely used in the rest of the world.

Senator Richard Colbeck said that Tasmanian producers of feta, parmesan and many other goods would be harmed by European insistence that only producers from particular continental regions can use such terms on their labelling.

"Australia is a trading nation and we cannot allow European protectionism to inhibit free trade by stealth."

"The EU has a track record of using Geographical Indicators as a battering ram in negotiations. We have to stand firm in the face of this attempted commercial clawback because either we are serious about free trade or we are not."

"In fact, we should question whether the EU are serious about free trade given that they are notoriously protectionist – perhaps even worse than the US," Senator Colbeck said.

During similar trade negotiations for the US/EU FTA the EU attempted to legislate protection for more than 1,200 food labelling terms.

It is worth acknowledging that this fight over GIs comes at the same time that New Zealand is attempting to create similar restrictions of Tasmanian producers of manuka honey.

Senator Colbeck noted that while GIs were extremely politically sensitive in the EU, Australia must not let foreign political expediency trump the right of Tasmanian producers to compete in global markets.

"Tasmanian producers like Ashgrove, South Cape, and others should not be penalized simply because we produce many European products better than the Europeans."

"We are world beaters in many of the 1,200 products the Europeans have sensitivities about. A Free Trade Agreement that attempts to entrench arbitrary statutory protectionism is not "free" at all."

ENDS

Media Contact: Felix Ellis 0457 517 734

Authorised by Senator Richard Colbeck, 5-7 Best St, Devonport, TAS