



# Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck

Liberal Senator for Tasmania

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### \*\*\* Colbeck Debates European Union Ambassador in Hobart \*\*\*

With negotiations set to heat up around a potential EU/Australia Free Trade Agreement, Senator Richard Colbeck has debated the European Trade Delegation on the issue of Geographic Indicators in Tasmania.

Senator Colbeck, who was previously Minister assisting the Minister for Trade, said that protecting Brand Tasmania was a critical part of the state's future but that Geographic Indicators were not the way to do it.

"Brand Tasmania cannot just be a bargaining chip in these free trade negotiations," Senator Colbeck said.

"The Europeans have made ambit claims that will harm many of our value-add exporters in sectors like dairy, smallgoods, wine and spirits."

"The Coalition Government has worked hard to open markets right around the world, so we must not allow European law to limit the market access many of our producers have worked hard to achieve."

The European Ambassador was keen to sell a narrative that GIs would be good for Tasmania, but Senator Colbeck said it is a case of "be careful what you ask for".

"If you look at what GIs promise versus what they deliver, the reality is that quarantining names like Chablis, Burgundy and Beaujolais has actually diminished the visibility of those regions globally."

"In Tasmania we are strong on provenance but European Union GIs are now devaluing the proposition with a restriction that has simply created a non-tariff trade barrier."

"The 2008 Nuffield Scholarship paper by prominent Tasmanian Jane Bennett found that the power of a local brand diminished with distance."

"Communities that have created these products are the ones that stand to lose most from these restrictions. Who would know of the name of "Gorgonzola" were it not for the cheese?"

"The Europeans should be proud of the global influence they have had through their culture, and trying to legislate this form of protectionism has already been found to be counter-productive."

"Consumers want safe, quality products at the right price. That is the area that Tasmania has always looked to compete in and we have done so at a world-class level."

"Forcing Tasmanian businesses to come up with new names to replace generic terms like "parmesan" and "feta" will only harm our export industries."

"Changing the name of a grape variety like "prosecco" simply to claim a GI reduces the integrity of the entire GI system and reinforces negative perception about EU motives."

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