

**BWD:** So would you be prepared to see everything stand on just an economic basis? We'll put global warming to one side because some people would say that you should favour renewables because they do the least damage to the environment. But even putting that to one side, if the new generation of coal fired power stations can't produce electricity as cheaply as solar panels, you wouldn't support them?

JB: Well the market wouldn't support it. See, this is the whole point. So if you want a market approach, that's what the government is talking about in their new NEG. The National Energy Guarantee is all about a level playing field, so they're removing subsidies. The thing that they are still wanting is affordability. There's still a measure around carbon, around emissions, and of course it's got to be about security. So affordability, an emission component and then security, as in making sure that the lights don't go out. I actually think what that does is set up a pretty fair playing field, and then the market will dictate where the investment should be. If it doesn't stack up to have a HELE power station, a high energy, low emission,

### BARILARO THE BRAVE

coal power station, but it does still stack up to see more investment in solar and more investment in wind, well the market will do that.

**BWD:** Okay, let's move onto something else. Why are you taking such a brave stand on Australia's deplorable control of our gas industry?

JB: Because we're getting ripped off, it's the greatest con of all time. That's why I've taken a stand on it, because we are getting conned. We went from being a domestic gas market to an export market in 2014 when the three Gladstone plants were built. The CEO of BHP said in 2014 that there is enough gas coming out of Bass Strait for the east coast indefinitely; that was his line. At that time we were paying \$3 or \$4 a gigajoule.

Then the export market came on and we went from a deregulated price, (an Australian domestic price, disconnected from global prices), to following the international price. That linked us to the Asian oil/gas price which was then \$110 a barrel and at that price it meant that we had to pay \$6 or \$7 a gigajoule. In hindsight that sounds okay, but at the time, if you think

about it, it was nearly a 100% increase. And we just copped that. Nowadays, out of the 1900 petajoules of gas coming out of Bass Strait, 1300 petajoules is for the export market, leaving only 600 petajoules for the domestic market and it's not sufficient to meet our domestic needs.

There are companies here that can't even get a quote on their gas supply, let alone pay the price. We've got as high as \$17 – \$19 a gigajoule — from \$6. Now there's a bit of pressure off, we're down to maybe \$14 or \$15 a gigajoule, but that's still twice as much as we should pay. So it's a con.

So there's no doubt we need a gas regulation policy. We talk about royal commissions in certain industries, the banks at the moment, the super funds and all that — but this is the sector that needs a look at.

**BWD:** This could be Richard Di Natale talking. You see that's why I'm confused because it was when the name changed from Country Party to National Party that there was a shift towards quite overt support of the resource sector.

JB: Yeah.

**BWD:** And this has what it's led to.

### THE MEMBER FOR MONARO

*They've just been able to do what they like. And generally speaking your side of politics supports the freedom of companies to fiddle around in the market to any extent that they like. What you're suggesting is that there's a market failure.*

JB: Absolutely

**BWD:** And that we ought to actually introduce government control which normally comes from the other side of politics. I think it's great that you say it and I support you wholeheartedly, but how do you suppose your side of politics will deal with it?

JB: It's going to be difficult. Firstly, the Liberal/National side of politics often talk about the free market. I'm okay with the free market approach, but there is no such thing as a free market when you look at what happens across the world. If you look at agriculture, we say it's a free market, but everywhere you go across the world there's protection, there are subsidies and tariffs that actually impact on that market. Australia has none of that for our farmers and yet we can still compete.

That's why we've become efficient farmers. We're probably the best farmers in the world. We're the best because we've had to be so efficient to survive and to innovate because we've never had subsidies and tariffs used around that industry.

So therefore, in real terms, you can actually do it without any subsidy or tariff or intervention by government, but there are certain sectors where I think you are right. I absolutely believe that the free market doesn't work when it comes to utilities in many cases and I struggle with it.

This is the problem I have as the leader of the National Party. We're a bit of a protectionist party.

**We've always been protectionist and we've battled the Liberal guys and their ideology.**

The jobs that come out of mining are important for our local regional communities, so we're conflicted here.

The jobs that are coming out of agriculture are important to our regional and local communities and of course our tradition and our grass roots has always been the farmers. So for me it's finding a balance. We need a strong resource sector, we need a balanced



coexistence with agriculture, horse studs, vineyards and everything else around it.

**BWD:** When you speak of finding a balance, there are no fly-in, fly-out farmers. The farming sector is there for generation upon generation and they need the water, and they need the soil.

JB: Absolutely.

**BWD:** The miners come in, undercut the land, do whatever they do, take whichever bit they want, do whatever they like to the water and then they're gone and you never see them again.

JB: That's the battle we have each and every day. I have members in my own party that are completely pro mining, that it's the most important sector in their community. Then there are others who are totally against it. And that's the hardest thing in the Nats. But for me, our resources are important for the nation and that's why we have to find a balance. But I don't want to be ripped off either — and we're getting ripped off right now. When it comes to gas, no one has said to me, and I've met with a whole heap, that I'm actually wrong in what I'm saying.

**BWD:** One of the best things that you ever did was to keep the poles and wires in public ownership, at least in our part of the world. Braidwood might be able to develop a community utility structure similar to the way that Goulburn is going.

*We have the advantage that if we can get the figures to work we could put in a pumped hydro scheme and run the water down from say, Majors Creek to Araluen. Would you support that?*

JB: Absolutely, you can do it anywhere. The idea of pumped storage isn't new. When you go back to the Snowy Hydro days it was designed about 25 or 30 years ago, they had the idea of pumped storage. We've had pumped storage right across the state on small scale, hydro scale, small scale hydro across the state and the nation. This is not new technology.

**BWD:** So with the Braidwood power company, or whatever it might be called, we've got a few people together, and we've had some preliminary discussions with people from the bank. We're just doing a bit of modelling. We're looking at the feasibility study that CE4G, Community Energy for Goulburn have produced that so we don't have to reinvent the wheel.

JB: Why would you?

**BWD:** But if we get to the stage where we can see a way in which the community of Braidwood and environs could invest in their own future by cooperatively owning a power station, would you be prepared to assist in ways government can help, specifically access to the poles and wires.

JB: Yeah, and I think that's coming of its own accord in relation to access to the transmissions. Because we're going down the path you're already seeing, which is what they call peer to peer. Peer to peer energy networks which is small networks using the existing infrastructure. You will be shortly able to generate energy from the solar panels on your roof, you put it in your Tesla battery or some other brand, and for what you don't use you'll be able to sell to your neighbour, or sell down the road to the school or whatever. That's where we'll get to, so the framework and the regulation around the transmission will have to change to deal with that, and there'll be a cost associate but you can do it.

So if you say you want a community based approach or a Braidwood power company approach, absolutely we should be looking at that. I'd be happy to work with you guys. It's exciting, that's where we're heading to.

That concept's a good concept, I'd like to hear more about it. ■



## BEES R US

**“Straight out of the hive and into a bucket and then the jar. Nothing added, not heat treated, just coarse filtered.”**

Scott Williams, apiarist

Established 15 years • Clyde Mountain apiary  
**BEES R US BEE KEEPING SUPPLIES**

Shop 2 Village Tce, Lascelles St Braidwood

**02 4842 2360 0403 324 212**

www.beesrus.com.au youanmi71@bigpond.com