

NEWS

Mining tax so un-Australian

CRAIG HUNTER

CENTRAL Victoria is a region built on innovation and enterprise — people prepared to invest in ideas and work hard to achieve dreams.

This has been the culture in our communities for hundreds of years.

It produced enormous local wealth and enduring legacies from the gold rush of the 1850s, leaders in enterprise such as the Myer family and visionaries who steered a country building society into a major banking operation based in Bendigo.

There have been the quirky successes too — the Chiko Roll in the 1950s and the internationally acclaimed card game The Art of Conversation in the 21st century.

Helping the ability of our communities to achieve and grow have been government policies to encourage small businesses and effort and allow them to grow into major enterprises — values promoted and advanced by the Liberal Party in Government and opposition.

But the Rudd government's ill-conceived resources super profit tax presents a real risk to continued investment and ingenuity in central Victoria.

The tax scheme does not offer genuine taxation reform.

It is one of only two recommendations cherry-picked from more than 130 in the Henry Review by a big-talking, big-taxing government that promised everything three years ago and has left local people



RISKY BUSINESS: Craig Hunter

disappointed and disgruntled with backflips, backdowns and bungles in scheme after scheme.

The mining tax may not hit local companies now, but they and their 500 local employees are fearful that it will

take a huge bite out of profitability 10 years from now.

And it is not just the miners.

Under the Rudd government's tax scheme, local quarries and extraction businesses — there are more than 50 in central Victoria — will also be hit with the super profit tax.

Again, hundreds of local people are employed in our quarries and at other sites from where the material comes to build homes, build and maintain roads and highways and for use in other construction works.

They are right to be disappointed that the current federal member for Bendigo, Steve Gibbons, has chosen to walk away from local concerns among our small businesses about the impact of the Rudd government's latest attempt at a tax slug on enterprise.

Mr Gibbons has ignored the fact that many local quarries are on private land they already pay rent and royalties to property owners.

Where the land is state owned, they pay royalties to the Brumby government.

And they invest in plant and equipment to sustain businesses and local jobs.

They have expressed a view that the RSPT scheme is a tax on every person in central Victoria.

Therefore, the Rudd government's tax trap will affect on every community in every state and territory, and central Victoria is not immune from the potential effects of a tax grab that has big and small business very angry.

They are concerned that Mr Gibbons has chosen not to take their views to Canberra and to make the Prime Minister acknowledge the errors of his scheme.

Mr Gibbons' empty rhetoric simply does not stack up against the realities our communities will face unless this super tax — one that would make Australia the highest-taxing nation among all major mining countries and have an effect on mines, quarries and other extraction small businesses — is dropped.

He has overlooked, too, that one in three jobs are related to the mining industry in Australia and the Rudd government is unnerving people who can see their retirement savings depleted by this tax.

Central Victorians can be assured that the Coalition will oppose the RSPT in opposition, rescind it in government and we will not revisit a resource tax in government.

We do not want to see billion-dollar mining projects going to Peru and Chile or Canada, Indonesia or Africa, or our local small businesses hit with more taxes and regulations to hinder our renowned enterprise and innovation.

The RSPT is a bad scheme for Australia and for our local communities.

On your behalf, I will continue to fight against an unjust and unfair tax grab on local small businesses.

— Craig Hunter is the federal Liberal candidate for Bendigo