

Packaging road map for Tassie jobs boom

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TASMANIA could become a sustainable packaging giant as part of a plan to transform Australia's manufacturing industries and create almost half a million new jobs within five years.

Andrew Liveris, a key adviser to Scott Morrison's COVID-19 recovery commission who previously advised both US President Barack Obama and Donald Trump on manufacturing, said transforming the nation's manufacturing base could inject billions of dollars into the economy and help the nation bounce back from COVID-19.

The former Dow Chemical boss has recommended a national industrial strategy be launched where each state would take ownership of a key manufacturing sector to reduce duplication and competition across the country, and to fast-track growth.

It's understood the plan, which could position Tasmania as a packaging giant, is being considered ahead of the federal government's October Budget.

Mr Liveris said the Gutwein government had outlined its plan to become a major player in renewable energy to his task force, but he believed the state needed to invest in its competitive advantages. "They obviously have a massive amount of forestry and capability in advanced packaging," Mr Liveris said.

"In the modern world, if you think about what's happening to food and value-add to food, you need to get packaging that actually is sustainable, recyclable and obviously does what it does in keeping food fresh.

"These are the sorts of areas that you should look at; how do you marry your natural advantages and in [Tasmania's] case forests and ... understanding of the forest industry, and then agribusiness."

The Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry said the plan was worth exploring.

"I think that we still haven't really grasped the benefit that we have with clean, green energy in Tasmania," TCCI chief executive Michael Bailey said.

"We really haven't started to scratch the surface on what sorts of products we should be manufacturing out of Tasmania."

Trade Minister Jeremy Rockliff said Tasmania's agricultural strengths provided opportunities in food and beverage manufacturing and "downstream processing".

"Considerable potential exists in the areas of high-value product lines such as fabrication fit-out, plastics and electronics," he said.

Mr Liveris said the manufacturing industry was currently "too small", "too diluted" and "too fragmented" and in some cases states competed against other states.

His manufacturing task force analysed several hi-tech sectors that Australia could compete in globally that could be split across the states and territories.

It's understood the sectors include mining technology, defence and space, medical technology, food and agricultural technology, recycling and packaging and renewable energy technology.