

Barnaby Joyce: treatment of Gina Rinehart “disgusting”

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BARNABY Joyce says it’s “disgusting” the way Australians like Gina Rinehart, who make big tax donations, are treated and the nation needs 20 more of them.

Mr Joyce led a stirring defence of Australia’s richest woman - who in May was estimated to have a \$10.4 billion empire - during an emotion-charged speech at the National Agriculture Day gala dinner in Canberra last night, held at the Australian War Memorial.

In his presentation, the Nationals leader - who is currently facing a by-election after being disqualified from parliament over his dual NZ citizenship - described himself and Ms Rinehart as having been “mates for a while”.

He also said without farmers and miners – in reference to Ms Rinehart’s core business assets like the Kidman and Co cattle empire that she part-owns with Chinese connections - other Australians wouldn’t enjoy a standard of living that they regard as their “birthright.”

The former Deputy Prime Minister and one-time Agriculture and Water Resources Minister was also presented with a \$40,000 award by Ms Rinehart on the night, to cap-off the inaugural farm industry day celebrations, to underscore his industry leadership credentials, but which he’s now pledged to return.

“To Kidman beef and Ms Gina Rinehart – I’ve been mates with Gina for a while and both of us have copped a bit of a probing about that,” Mr Joyce said.

“But I just want to say this, when an individual, who is on the public record, pays half a billion (dollars) in tax donation, to pay for the hospitals, to pay for the schools, to pay for the defence force – then what our nation needs is 20 of them.

“What our nation has a very bad habit of is finding the one they’ve got and trying to tear them to pieces.

“I find that disgusting.

“What I like about our nation is strong people who make our nation stronger and make our nation better.

“And now that Gina’s involved in the cattle industry – and we can see our good friends and colleagues here from China doing business tonight – that brings wealth into our nation.

“It defends our nation, not to the extent, but in a similar vein, as what other people have done in our defence force.

“We have to be a strong nation; we have to be a prosperous nation.”

Mr Joyce said agriculture was the fastest growing section of the nation’s economy and deserved greater political recognition.

“When we came to government agriculture actually went backwards (half) a per cent,” he said.

“Now you can see things, the incredible growth, such as the 1600pc growth in the live cattle trade over our term, into places like Vietnam (and) the almost 1000pc increase of live cattle trade into China.

“The fact is now, the biggest cattle exporter in the world is not Brazil – it’s not India, although a lot of you may have thought it was India – or Argentina or the United States.

“The biggest beef exporter in the world is Australia.”

Mr Joyce said Australia was also the world’s biggest exporter of goats which was the most eaten meat in the world.

“Then it’s daylight, then daylight, then more daylight, then daylight, then daylight and then some other country that’s so much smaller than us it doesn’t really matter,” he said.

“We are the second biggest sheepmeat exporters in the world.

“We have seen through our term of government a 30pc increase in the total gross value of Australian exports in agriculture.

“We are turning the show around.”

“Terrible animal cruelty and all that garbage”

Mr Joyce said he also referenced the income generating capacity of the farm and mining sectors, to the national economy, when talking to Treasurer Scott Morrison and Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull, “when I used to work down there”, in reference to his citizenship disqualification and current by-election in New England.

He said he told cabinet ministers ‘All you guys, social security, where ever you are, defence, health – good luck to you and God bless you – but you all take money off the table’.

“(But) you’ve got to look around to who puts money on the table – agriculture, mining, we’re the people who put money on the table,” he said.

In making an example of his economic point, Mr Joyce singled out Australian War Memorial director and former Liberal MP and leader Dr Brendan Nelson who was one of the 360 assembled guests.

Starting with Mr Nelson's suit, he said it came from Spain, while his shirt was from Italy, his wrist watch was Swiss because they're not made here anymore, if his shoes were RM Williams they're Louis Vuitton which is French, his car being an Audi was European containing fuel from the Middle East via Singapore, his television was Japanese, the stove he cooked on was Bosch from Germany and his fridge was a Fisher Paykel brand which also came from overseas.

"And even the movie he watched probably came from America," Mr Joyce said.

"Everything in Brendan's life and yours ladies and gentleman came in on a boat from somewhere else.

"And somebody somewhere must be doing something to put something on the boat and send it in the other direction, otherwise you don't have the standard of living that you take for granted.

"And guess who those people are?

"Well it's those 'terrible' people in the live cattle trade.

"Those 'terrible' irrigators taking all our water, growing that cotton.

"What about those 'terrible' coal miners – how evil are they?

"Or maybe the 'terrible' iron ore miners or the 'terrible' rice farmers?

"What about those people trying to make a buck out of growing grain or what about those people shearing sheep – you know the 'terrible' animal cruelty and all that garbage.

"I tell you what.

"If it wasn't for people on the land, if it wasn't for people on the mines, we would not have the standard of living that this nation takes as almost its birthright.

"And this is what we are celebrating tonight – so we have got to push our barrow."