

[11.58 a.m.]

Mrs BUTLER (Lyons) - It is my pleasure as a member of the State Government for the seat of Lyons to respond to the Budget for 2007-08. It is clear to me that this Budget contains reform items and strategies that set the agenda into the future for the benefit of all Tasmanian citizens. As the Budget for the last financial year honoured election promises, this Budget has set the directions for building for our future sustainability and growth. This Budget takes a life-cycle approach to work and education, and to living in the State with the best lifestyle of any Australian State and in the most beautiful surroundings of any State.

I congratulate the Treasurer for his vision in seeing Tasmania as a State with transitional labour markets, as described by Gunter Schmidt, Director of the Research Unit on Labour Market Policy and Employment at the Social Science Research Centre in Berlin. There is regard for the transitional flows between different times in the life cycle and different stages of work. An increasing percentage of our citizens have and will move between full-time and part-time work, dependent and self-employment, fixed-term and permanent employment, and other activities such as education and training, child care, sports and community interests. I have certainly seen that in my own working career.

Our old economic system grew up after World War II and centred on a gender-based notion of full employment where the men did the paid work and the women did the unpaid caring work. Tinkering has occurred by various governments, but education was focused on the early stages of the life course. The internationalisation of the Australian economy has seen changes on many levels, with the old model now obsolete. The neo-liberal Government we have federally has failed to ensure that social reform has kept up with economic reforms, to the point where Australians are now at risk of global uncertainty during the transition phases of their lives.

Tasmania, under Premier Paul Lennon, is actively transforming these transition phases into opportunities so that people can live more productive and satisfying lives. We are becoming more export-competitive as our economy becomes more complex. Initiatives such as the investigation of new geographic and segmented markets; expanding on activities previously undertaken in the United States of America, the United Arab Emirates and in Asian markets; seeking assistance to invest in downstream value-adding of wood and timber products; and assistance to the State's research sector, are ways in which the economy of the State of Tasmania is becoming increasingly diversified.

In my own seat of Lyons, steps being taken by the Department of Economic Development as part of this reformist Budget include facilitating new mineral and mining investment projects, working with the Department of Primary Industries and Water towards strategic outcomes for the SMART Farming initiatives, and facilitating tourism infrastructure development.

Key strategic areas including wine, dairy, vegetables, functional foods and controlled-environment agriculture are being concentrated on with opportunities being pursued. Industry and government agencies

being worked with include the Food Industry Council of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Agricultural Productivity Advisory Council, the Vegetable Taskforce Implementation Group and the Ministerial Organics Advisory Group. Development opportunities for natural gas are being sought.

I was proud to represent the Premier recently at the LAMP workshop and presentations, which featured three out of eight teams from Tasmania. We are well represented in this rapidly developing field of digital imaging where we punch above our weight in terms of population size. Some of the most successful Tasmanian companies in this field were not represented as they were too busy. One Hobart-based company is in digital imaging exports to more than 100 countries, and that has not been going very long. This is a terrific example of newer and more diversified industries which will provide opportunities for work and enhance lifestyle choices for future generations. Our creative citizens have increased the literacy levels in developing games and on-line entertainment styles that will supersede television - which has been such a successful medium of entertainment for five decades.

Tasmania is showing a lead through Screen Tasmania and the very good work of Karina Slaninka. This Budget plans to strengthen Screen Tasmania's function by providing network opportunities to increase market penetration and by raising national and international awareness. I certainly support increasing professional development opportunities for relevant industry participants.

Small businesses are also being supported through a range of initiatives, such as referral services, mentoring, networking, finance facilitation, and removing impediments to business growth. Enterprise centres across the State are funded to support local initiatives and start-up and micro-businesses. The small business area is a huge driver for our State.

Given that we have mineral resources and other commodities which may ebb and flow according to international factors, the risks associated with these transitional labour markets have to be managed responsibly. I believe that the second Aird Budget does facilitate people's ability and desire to retrain should that be necessary. Patterns of life no longer follow a linear model with successive phases of education, marriage, work and retirement. Structural changes such as those we have seen recently in the manufacturing industry, in the call centre industry and in the increased demand for skills have resulted in the old patterns of labour force participation being eroded.

Compulsory schooling no longer provides a sufficient base for a successful working life. Demand for higher skills continues to intensify. The traditional mindset that sees a working life pattern as learning followed by paid work until retirement, needs to be rethought. Older work force participants and young school leavers have been facing the risk of exclusion from the labour market. National figures show high rates of youth unemployment. In May 2005, 14.9 per cent of young people aged 15 to 19 years and 24 per cent of people aged 20 to 24 years were neither in full-time education nor in employment. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, under-utilisation of labour, including the unemployed, underemployed, discouraged workers and those marginally attached to the work force, was 29.6 per cent for people aged 15 to 19 years

and 17.2 per cent for those aged 20 to 24 years, compared to 12.2 per cent for the general population. It is clear that a large number of young people are having difficulty making the transition from school to work or further education. You will not find the Federal Government talking about that too often.

Some people are studying part-time and working part-time. Research shows, however, that time spent outside full-time work or education can set up long-term adverse effects on employment, income and personal life. Such young people are said to face high levels of unemployment, reduced likelihood of returning to the labour force or full-time education, more part-time or casual work, a shorter working life, lower incomes and an increased likelihood of ending up in poor quality jobs with fewer opportunities for career development. Non-employment impacts can include increased levels of depression, which we are all very aware of.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the second Aird Budget shows a number of forward-thinking initiatives to counter this national trend. The shift towards a more open economy has exposed Australia to intense and increasing competition with the Asia-Pacific region, especially China, Japan, South Korea and the United States. Australia increasingly imports manufactured goods from these countries such as clothing and footwear, as well as electronic goods. The pressure to improve economic efficiency coincides with social changes such as less settled families, a lower fertility rate and an ageing population. Increased value-adding has meant that our skills have to be increased. For those willing and able to learn in the knowledge economy there are opportunities. For others, the future could mean facing a cycle of welfare and insecure work.

I am pleased to comment on the exciting ways in which the Tasmanian Government is managing this situation. The Treasurer and his Cabinet colleagues have examined the rapidly changing nature of work and transitions and have come up with a range of solutions that capture the interrelationships between people's personal lives and their lives at work. There are many dimensions to the lives of Tasmanians, including the dimension of community. More flexibility has developed in the work force. People are working harder for longer hours. Many workers are on fixed-term contracts and are not entitled to the leave provisions of standard work contracts. The people with the poorest conditions tend to be those in the retail and service industries, where casualisation has long been typical.

As testimony to the Labor ideals of equity and fairness, this Budget seeks to redress some of the trends that have been occurring because of these changing patterns of work. The strongest means of attack is through Minister Bartlett's Education ministry, where a strong social change agenda has continued from the work of the previous minister. The capital investment program for the Department of Education has increased by 44 per cent from \$18.5 million in 2006-07 to \$26.9 million in 2007-08. These funds will improve the buildings and capital investment in schools and colleges.

Skills Tasmania will not only plan for training at career entry level, it will make learning and relearning part of the lives of every Tasmanian and provide access programs for adults. Industry leaders will be involved so that the skills that industry needs can be identified and developed in shorter time spans than has been

possible before. As the nature of work alters for the people of our State, transitions can be made in a smoother way.

Improving the ability of all young people to reach their potential is a Labor ideal. We are working at closing the gaps between the most disadvantaged people and the general community. I have seen the Student at the Centre approach in action recently at schools in my electorate, including Oatlands District High School, Cressy District High School, Rosebery District High School, the Hagley School Farm, Bagdad Primary School and St Marys District High School. Initiative is alive and well in all the schools I visited. Students are supported to a level that I have not seen before in my professional life, and I have worked since I was 19, so I have spent 40 years in and out of schools in three States.

Mr Deputy Speaker, from 2008 the Youth Participation in Education and Training Act 2005 will require all young Tasmanians completing year 10 to participate in education, training or full-time employment until they have turned 17. The Tasmanian Certificate of Education is a new qualification and year 11 for that certificate will begin in 2008. The conceptual framework involves meeting a set of requirements for successful lifelong learning and employment, a base for transitions through life. Opportunities for district high schools and local skills centres to offer access or academic and vocational courses will be developed. This is the biggest reform of post-grade 10 education in 35 years. Communities that value lifelong learning will be created. Tasmania's future through transitions in jobs depends on information, knowledge and connected communities that embrace learning throughout their lives.

The Community Knowledge Network integrates library services, online access centres, Adult Education and the Archives Office of Tasmania. This network will provide improved access to academic and applied learning pathways for youth and adults in regional and rural Tasmania and will form partnerships with district high schools, local skills centres and other education and training providers. Information will be provided when and where it is needed, whether the person of any age receiving it lives in Rosebery, Deloraine, Sorell or St Helens.

Another initiative which supports the concept of transitional labour markets occurs with Trades Express, an accelerated trades recognition and training program for mature-aged Tasmanians and new work force entrants in trade areas which are in demand in the Tasmanian economy. This is groundbreaking work that the minister is doing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, following the withdrawal of the Australian Government funding of \$800 000, in 2007-08, \$2.8 million has allocated over four years to meet the costs of fishing, aquaculture and maritime training provided by the Australian Maritime College. Many of the young people I know on the east coast have had terrific benefit from attending this college. It is very important that is maintained for this State.

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School farms have an extra \$300 000 and an additional 10 schools are increasing the use of their school farms. The number of students using school farms has increased by 50 per cent, another aspect of our planning for great diversification of the agricultural sector which is going to be so important in the future.

TAFE has been provided with an extra \$9.7 million over four years to address skills shortages and meet the increase in demand across the State for training in traditional trades. This initiative will attract and skill up 340 apprentices and trainees in key trades to meet to current shortages.

The fantastic commitment by the Lennon Labor Government of \$91.6 million for capital works programs acknowledges the amazing potential that Tasmania has as our small State adjusts to changing patterns of life and work. Just in the Lyons electorate alone, \$1.474 million will be spent at the rapidly expanding St Helens District High School on improved learning areas, \$450 000 for a new hall at Deloraine Primary School and \$100 000 for New Norfolk Primary School. All these initiatives and more will mean that we are better able to meet the challenges ahead.

Mr Deputy Speaker, young people in Lyons need to be able to drive, as there are long distances to be travelled between population centres. I am pleased to note that \$440 000 over four years is available for the introduction of driver training in all public schools in years 9 and 10. The driver education resource will be made available to every school and government consultants will be available to work with schools to assist in professional development and implementation. It is expected that 30 per cent of schools will be participating in this program this year.

Another issue important to the people of Lyons is school buses. An amount of \$1 million will be provided to address the basis of remuneration for contract to bus services. It is expected that compensation payments will be made to bus operators affected by the implementation of the recommendations of the review of core passenger services. I understand that this process is well under way, having recently had calls from some people in Oatlands.

The Brighton transport hub will be funded by the sale of three non-core government-owned businesses, the Southern Cemetery Trust, the Printing Authority of Tasmania and the Hobart International Airport Pty Ltd. Cutting back the transit time for rail between the north and south of the State will make a huge difference to economies of scale for our businesses and enhance economic development for the whole State. Heavy truck safety will be on the agenda with the development, in conjunction with the industry, of a regulated code of practice.

On my constant trips through the Fingal Valley I am pleased to see the ongoing upgrading of the Esk Road between Rostrevor Rivulet and the Tullochgorum Creek. I might warn travellers that there are now two traffic lights in operation and restricted speeds, so extra time should be allowed for travel until December.

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Among road projects to be completed in Lyons this year, I passed by Maclaines Creek bridge at Triabunna and noted the good progress there recently. It will be finished this financial year, as will the replacement of the Little Henty River bridge on the Zeehan Highway and the Supply River bridges on the West Tamar Highway. A more consistent road standard will be provided on the Lyell Highway from Granton to New Norfolk.

The St Helens barway has been a contentious issue over the last year. Shifting sands along the coastlines of southern Australian saw depth reduction which made transiting the barway difficult, as it did in Lakes Entrance in Victoria, in spite of that State spending \$33 million. In addition to the \$360 000 already spent by the State Government on dredging, another \$500 000 over five years has been committed to a long-term strategy to be developed following the bringing together of stakeholders at the completion of the two studies that are currently under way. We look forward to a good scallop season.

The east coast and St Marys area was devastated by fires last December. More than 900 firefighters came from around the State to counteract those destructive forces. I am very pleased to see the initiative of 15 heavy tankers being acquired as part of the ongoing commitment to replacing fire appliances, firefighting equipment and communication equipment. As we have the benefit of over 45 per cent of our State being covered in trees and forests, if global warming continues as predicted then we need to be serious about protecting our citizens and the properties they have worked so hard to maintain and develop. Communication has been identified as one of the first areas we need to address in the follow-up sessions from those fires.

There are many initiatives in the Health and Human Services budget which will help in establishing a new framework for the sustainability and delivery of services as our population ages. The second Aird Budget introduces sustainable ambulance funding through the introduction of an ambulance service fee from 1 July 2008. All moneys raised from the ambulance service fee will be allocated to meet the cost of ambulance and medical transport services, the demands for which are increasingly rapidly. Let me reiterate that no citizen will be refused ambulance assistance on the basis of their financial position. The service fee will be structured so that families or individuals holding private health insurance will be fully covered for the use of the ambulance service. To help those most in need the Government will provide a rebate of 50 per cent of the insurance cost to pensioner concession and health care cardholders.

Oral health is an issue that is constantly reported as being problematic, especially for low-income earners. I am pleased to see key initiatives in this area include the establishment of an education and training facility in Hobart, development of a teaching curriculum and the establishment of a new model of service delivery for clients to be treated at dental surgeries at the Burnie campus and the Royal Hobart Hospital. Plans are also under way for a surgery at the Launceston General Hospital. These measures have been made necessary by the Australian Government taking funds out of dentistry in 1996. The steps planned for this year will improve the recruitment and retention environment for public dental services by enabling the training of undergraduate oral health professionals. Significant purchasing of private dental care will also be undertaken in order to provide treatment to people currently on the oral health waiting lists.

The capital investment program has funded projects which have been completed in Lyons, including the West Coast Hospital redevelopment at Queenstown, a beautiful facility; construction of the Sheffield ambulance station; and construction of the general practice facilities at the May Shaw Nursing Centre at Swansea. Capital expenditure by Hydro Tasmania, Transend and Aurora on generation assets, substations, transmission lines and the distribution network will be over \$200 million this financial year, another aspect of a modern economy.

The Government's leadership in developing Tasmania's infrastructure is well established. In order to facilitate strategic investment for Tasmania's future economic growth, the Government has invested \$30 million into its optic-fibre assets. I look forward to announcements following strong responses from telecommunications companies and look forward to the improvements in broadband infrastructure and delivery, which many innovative constituents have been seeking in order to develop new technology businesses and ideas. The Budget includes \$2.7 million to finalise this project.

Mr Speaker, planning is an area that has been a high priority in my office, particularly the many different schemes around the State. All sorts of good concepts have not been able to proceed in various localities and consequently job opportunities have disappeared. This Budget will provide \$1.5 million to renew our regional land use planning system through the development of consistent and contemporary planning schemes across the State. We do need a coherent, consistent approach to planning schemes in order to encourage economic development.

Water and sewerage are big issues, too, in the seat of Lyons and in other parts of the State where small councils struggle to meet the needs of their ratepayers. This fact was brought home to me very sharply when I recently attended a meeting of the Southern Midlands Council in Oatlands. Councillors and officers were discussing the steps that needed to be taken to supply Tunbridge with water should there be no rain in the following two weeks. Swansea and Coles Bay are other areas familiar to me with ongoing water problems.

Supply and quality of our drinking water, public health, our environment and our future development and productivity are affected by the need for reform. The Water and Sewerage Ministerial Taskforce has been consulting with local government in order to establish structural and regulatory reform. With 12 per cent of Australia's water and only 1 per cent of the land, Tasmania has a great competitive advantage over other States, and we are taking leadership on this vital issue.

I am pleased to be part of the Lennon Labor Government. We have a sense of stewardship and long-term responsibility. We can no longer expect that our place will endure with reasonable care beyond our generation's lifetime and that of our children. We regard Tasmania as a land that we have a partnership with. We know that we are more than colonisers imposing ourselves on the landscape. We are taking responsibility for caring for the people into an unknown future, but we are also holding the natural features

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in high regard. We are capable of supplying food for a larger population than we do currently. Many initiatives of this Budget will establish structures that do that, as shown in the water development projects in priority areas, thanks to the earnest endeavours of the Minister for Primary Industries and Water.

Mr Speaker, over the past five years Tasmania has been the third-fastest growing State or Territory in the Commonwealth of Australia. Our population has grown consistently over the past five years and now stands at 492 000 people. We will have robust economic growth of 3.5 per cent in 2007-08 and a record 226 000 people employed in the State. Our unemployment rate is at a record low of 4.8 per cent, below that of New South Wales and South Australia. Over 32 000 jobs have been created under the Lennon Government since 1999.

In addition to building a robust, flexible economy we are building community; we are no longer the nanny State of the nation. We are better able to look after those disadvantaged members of our communities because of economic growth. We live in a place we love, we do things together that we think are important, we have mixture of centralised and decentralised structures and we are able to adapt to changing circumstances quickly.

In conclusion, I would like to quote Dane Waldron from *The Examiner* of Monday 11 June:

the State Labor Government has been viewed as one that has successfully supported our business environment our future prosperity will be dependent on providing an environment that will allow Tasmanian businesses to grow, be innovative and be more competitive. This is the role of the Government.'

Mr Speaker, I commend the bill to the House.