

## HEATHER BUTLER MP – HANSARD BUDGET SPEECH 2008

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Mrs **BUTLER** (Lyons) - Mr Deputy Speaker, the 2008-09 Budget for Tasmania has been set with a framework underpinning it that will set the State up for the future, a future of growth and opportunity and with a greater range of choices and options and potential for prosperity. The trilogy of education, health and infrastructure provide the core of the operational framework of this Budget, so that the individual and institutions can benefit from the possibilities that are brought about by development in those crucial areas of our economy.

My contributions to the debate are made from the perspective of my position as a member for the seat of Lyons, a predominantly rural seat. Mining, aquaculture and agriculture are the main economic activities in the electorate, with small towns spotted all over the incredibly beautiful and diverse landscapes. Just over half of Tasmania's total output is produced for the local market, with 30 per cent being exported interstate and 18 per cent exported overseas.

Favourable market conditions have benefited Tasmania's mining sector. Allegiance Mining at Avebury near Zeehan have expanded their nickel mine rapidly in a joint venture with a Chinese company. They have begun production and have subsequently been taken over by Zinifex. A residential village has been built on the edge of the town so that workers can sleep and eat when they do their five days on, five days off rotations. Metals X at Rosebery has also great expectations and is hiring labour. Zinifex at Rosebery has plans for further development and expansion by tunnelling under Mt Black. I believe that they are going to go about two kilometres underground.

Zinc is in strong demand as the Chinese economy builds with huge expansion and requests for more stainless steel. Geothermal rock technology is looking promising in the west and in other parts of the electorate. Many smaller companies have opened up new and previously worked sites in the very rich mineral deposits of the west of the State.

As a relatively small economy, Tasmania does experience more volatility in the export market than other States. In 2006-07, Tasmanian exports grew by 6.8 per cent, the strongest level of growth since 1997-98. The real value of those exports of goods and services was approximately \$3.5 billion, accounting for 18 per cent of the Tasmanian gross State product in that year. That was the year in which Tasmanian exports grew by 28.4 per cent, mainly driven by increases in sales of non-ferrous metals and metallic ores. Over the past year there has remained very strong growth in mineral export sales, more modest growth in manufacturing and little growth in sales of other exports. In the past 12 months to March 2008 the value of mineral exports rose by a whopping 91.6 per cent.

At the same time public sector investment is expected to increase significantly in 2008-09, having doubled since 1998. State government infrastructure spending is forecast to increase by \$81 million, or 28 per cent, in 2008-09. Tasmania will see significant new investment such as spending on hospitals and other health infrastructure, several new road infrastructure projects, school infrastructure upgrades, housing works and the commencement of 12 irrigation projects.

Road systems in the southern part of Lyons are definitely in need of upgrading. The Bartlett Government has recognised the need for improved traffic flow and enhanced safety. It has set aside \$1.5 million for the Pontville bypass, \$10 million for refurbishing the Bridgewater Bridge, \$2.5 million for the Brighton bypass and \$5.5 million for the Brighton transport hub. I understand that the timing component of these projects is subject to

## HEATHER BUTLER MP – HANSARD BUDGET SPEECH 2008

---

negotiation. Long-awaited work on the Midland and Lyell highways intersection upgrade has been costed in this 2008-09 Budget at \$2.3 million. Roads in the north-east, including the George River Bridge on the Tasman Highway, will be improved, as will the Lyell Highway at Bronte. The Tea Tree secondary road will be upgraded by the spending of \$4 million. The Henty River Bridge near Strahan will be completed. The main access route between Deloraine and Meander junction will be upgraded in an \$8 million project which will give improved drivability to the magnificent Central Highlands area, a region that has so much potential for tourism and has exciting, spectacular, natural wilderness. I think it is just great up there, especially in the winter.

As part of the strategic plan for underpinning the development of a modern Tasmania, funding was allocated for upgrading educational infrastructure. These projects will include refurbishing and redeveloping a number of schools and libraries in the electorate of Lyons. St Helens District High School will see \$163 000 spent in continuing the refurbishment of the school, which has increased its student population to over 600 students. The area is developing quickly. I had a look at the works last Sunday and met staff who were really excited at the state of the art facilities being offered in an ergonomically designed set of new IT-friendly classrooms and staff facilities, in addition to revamped teaching areas which have been made more spacious, light-filled and much more modern than the rooms I used to work in 10 years ago.

Following in the wake of the disastrous school fire, Bridgewater and Southern Midlands education renewal will be addressed by spending \$30 million, investing in the future of that rapidly developing area which has a population growth of 12 per cent. During the 1980s I taught at Bridgewater and, with the then Education Minister Bartlett, attended the opening of the refurbished grade 10 area at Bridgewater High School, with its murals and art work featuring portraits of students in various settings from the landscapes that surround the school. That was only months before the fire. I really enjoyed meeting the charming daughter of one of the students I had taught, Sam Tinker.

Improved access for disabled students will be provided at several schools, including lift installations at New Norfolk and Ogilvie high schools. Between 2008-10 Roseberry District High School will receive almost \$4 million in much-needed refurbishment of the science and other areas of the school. Deloraine High School will also receive ongoing funding for upgrading, in a budget that looks forward to a bright future for our youth and that values education.

There are problems associated with housing our growing population owing to the boom in real estate prices. Many people have not been able to keep up with the rapid price hikes and now find it impossible to buy their own home. Many others have been forced to sell. The rental market also has seen record rents being obtained so that housing stress is apparent in our communities. The Bartlett Government is investing \$19.5 million in the housing program, an increase of \$4.9 million on the 2007-08 Budget.

Constituents have regularly been in touch with me about shared equity programs for housing, so I am very pleased that funds generated through this program, in addition to sales of vacant land, will allow a greater proportion of existing low-income tenants to purchase their current public home, with the Government retaining an initial equity share of 25 per cent. Some \$60 million is being invested in assisting in developing affordable housing and new strategies to address homelessness in Tasmania. I am well aware of the need for

## HEATHER BUTLER MP – HANSARD BUDGET SPEECH 2008

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improvements to be made with great haste as two couples in my own town who are not able to find rental accommodation have sadly been temporarily housed in tents.

A total of \$1.9 million has been provided for the purchase of existing dwellings, including \$696 000 for the Aboriginal Rental Housing Program, enabling the purchase of three new properties. An amount of \$6.6 million has been allocated for redevelopment and upgrading activities, including the community housing program for people with specific needs; \$1 million for the crisis accommodation program; and measures that ensure that public housing is safer and more energy efficient.

Mr Deputy Speaker, in answer to the needs of our growing population, and as promised in the 2006 election campaign, the 2008-09 Budget provides \$10.7 million for the purchase of 100 new ambulances over the next four years to replace some ageing vehicles in our fleet. I know many volunteer ambos in the electorate of Lyons, who give willingly so much of their time and dedication in helping their fellow citizens. This includes personnel in St Marys, the west coast, Swansea, Bicheno, the 'Avoca Angels', Westbury, Sorell, the West Tamar and St Helens. All of those fantastic people, and I am sure ambos statewide, will welcome the new vehicles with their upgraded fit-outs.

In carrying out the 2006 election promises, upgrading the jetty infrastructure at Nubeena will be carried out. The fire station rebuild program has major works for 2008-09, which includes the St Marys fire and emergency services facility, and substantial upgrading for the Gravelly Beach fire station. Other projects to be undertaken include the construction of new fire stations at Parattah and Welborough, upgrading of the Beaconsfield fire station, and station amenities at Ellendale, Broadmarsh and Jericho. Many constituents who are volunteers would be very pleased about the exemptions in the payroll tax bill, too, for wages paid to volunteer firefighters and emergency workers.

The \$2 million upgrading of the Longford-Westbury Health Centre over the next two years is provided to relocate Longford's child health, community nursing and oral health facility services into one centre, and to increase access for clients in the Westbury-Longford area, so close to Mr Polley's home and heart. I know that many members of the surrounding communities strongly support this centre and feel their lives are enriched by the variety of programs available there.

In terms of infrastructure spending, the Port of St Helens is to receive funding of \$1.3 million in order to redress the problem of maintaining access to Georges Bay for fishing and recreational vessels. There is erosion on the north bank of the estuary between Dora Point and Granite Rock Point, and the southern bank to the west of Blanche Point. Some of this eroded sand might have moved onto the new beach contained by the training wall, but there is insufficient sand eroded from these two locations to account for the growth of the beach.

It is estimated that the volume of sand contained at the training wall is about 350 000 cubic metres. The volume of sand eroded from the two dune systems is 50 000 cubic metres, so this reinforces the view that the barway and Georges Bay are not a closed system, which is what some opponents of the scheme are promulgating. Sand is being added to the system at a rate of 5 000-10 000 cubic metres annually. Since 1972 and the construction of the training wall, the barway has moved seaward by about 200 metres, so those who want to extend the training wall should keep that in mind.

## HEATHER BUTLER MP – HANSARD BUDGET SPEECH 2008

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If nothing is done, the barway will become navigable on even fewer occasions than at present. The number of fishing vessels using the port is generally reduced because of the need to transit only when the tides are right. Given climate change factors, it is unclear whether the sea level will continue to rise uniformly over the next 100 years or whether there could be increasing numbers of storms and higher winds, possibly result in more sand entering Georges Bay. Mr Andrew Duke, a PhD student from the University of Tasmania, is researching the contributions and impacts of the recreational boating industry on the St Helens economy, and as an observer, it certainly seems that there are more boats and bigger recreational vessels than ever before, so I look forward to seeing his results.

The barway steering committee, chaired by Councillor John McGiveron, should be congratulated for their commitment and hard work associated with promoting the need for safe and ongoing access to the port of Georges Bay. The committee comprises a cross-section of fishers, business people, councillors and MAST representatives. I understand that the easterly weather we normally would expect in September is of great concern. People using the entrance at present are unsure of whether or not they will run aground, so we need act quickly.

The State Budget for 2008-09 provides \$2 million over four years to undertake sand transfer activities to provide safe access to the port and to support the businesses and people of the community, given the high standard of jetties and unloading facilities available at St Helens. The sand has built up behind the 650-metre-long training wall which was built between 1969 and 1984. Government regulators involved in preparing environmental assessments for the processes involved in removing the sand included the Environment Division, Marine Resources, Parks, and Crown Land Services.

Mr Deputy Speaker, \$4 million has been allowed for the development of tracks, trails and city bikeways. As a cyclist myself, I am very pleased that the Government which I am part of is taking this step towards a healthier lifestyle and improved recreational activities for more Tasmanians and tourists. I know that many people of all ages who live outside the electorate of Lyons travel in order to use the tracks and opportunities that are available in the beautiful protected areas of Lyons such as forests, beaches and coastal areas. In the east coast I note that Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council has developed specific policies and action steps in a bike-friendly approach. There is terrific potential for events like the Wildside mountain and beach race that I attended last January, where people across five generations enjoyed seven stages of events graded from 'cruising' to 'challenging', from Cradle Mountain to Strahan beaches, and great fun was had by all.

I welcome the \$2.8 million funding for neighbourhood houses so that full-time coordinators can be employed. There are many of these terrific bodies in the seat of Lyons and I have visited most of them. They have different emphases and offer a range of programs that do a fantastic job of connecting people and ensuring that a sense of community continues. There is always a warm welcome at Zeehan, a community garden and warm smiles at Rosebery; some delicious well-priced food prepared from their own garden at Tresca; young families at Dunalley; terrific classes at St Helens - I think next week they are talking about getting to know pharmaceuticals for the over-50s - and lots going on at Fingal and Beaconsfield, to name a few. These bodies help marginalised people in communities to maintain their engagement in community life and greatly assist new families to connect. I think that their work is very important to the social fabric of our people and our general sense

## HEATHER BUTLER MP – HANSARD BUDGET SPEECH 2008

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of connectiveness and kindness. Social intelligence helps to build general health and wellbeing.

Mr Deputy Speaker, the huge steps being taken to protect our State from drought through restructuring water and sewerage are most needed and very welcome. In the Southern Midlands, as I am sure other members for Lyons realise, there is a tinge of green on the paddocks, but flocks have been cut by 50 per cent. The restructure in order to give more equitable water quality and quantity across the State is drastically needed.

Major restructuring is also apparent in the education and training sector. We have the biggest increase in tourist numbers in the country. The Bartlett Government has budgeted for a surplus. We have the strongest performing and safest State in the nation. Tasmania is a fantastic place to live, with a great future, and I am proud that my six grandchildren are being raised here. We are putting our people first by planning and providing the structure and services that we need to develop our potential. I commend this compassionate, prudent and fiscally responsible Budget to the House.

Mr **BEST** (Braddon) - I would like to thank very much my colleague from Lyons, Mrs Butler, for her wonderful contribution to the debate. I know the hard work she has undertaken on that barway issue and I know that the community is very proud of all her work. Of course she also has a very proud history with the fire that unfortunately took place on the east coast and all the work she undertook to help a community in need. I thought it was a pretty good speech that the member made. I know that the matters she raised are things she is very involved with and connected to in the community.