NATIONAL SCIENCE WEEK

[6.11 p.m.]

Mrs BUTLER (Lyons) - I rise to speak on National Science Week. I had the pleasure of launching National Science Week last Friday with Dr Karl Kruszelnicki from the University of Sydney, who was absolutely astounding. He motivated the 200 young people who were there and they were thrilled with what he had to say. He was talking about the tucan and its big beak and you might be pleased to know, Mr Gutwein, that 60 per cent of its sweat can come out of a tucan's beak. That is the only way it can regulate its temperature.

Mr Gutwein - I've always wondered about that.

Mrs BUTLER - He also said that in 30 years genetics will be at a stage where people will be able to live for 500 years. That was just astounding to hear. I have e-mailed him since and asked for further information on that but I have not had a response. The young people were flocking around him, hundreds of kids sitting around him, and getting lots of information from him.

I think Tasmania has so many opportunities in the sciences that we need to really concentrate on science teaching in schools. When you think about developments in astronomy, agriculture - we have the 10-year Fox Eradication Program - medical science, forestry, geology, aquaculture, Antarctic studies and the brilliant new medical research centre that we are to have, there will be so many opportunities that it is exciting.

In order to build this clever Tasmania and its strong economy, we need people who are innovative, enterprising and have the ability to question and inquire. Science gives people these skills. It is very different from when I was in science classes and the main thing the boys concentrated on at that time was making paper stick to the ceiling.

The teaching of science is highly valued in Tasmania and an important part of the Tasmanian curriculum. We want our students to be scientifically-literate members of the community and able to contribute to the debate on issues and to make informed decisions. Our curriculum aims to provide relevant real-life learning experiences for students.

The State Government is also acting to ensure that more university graduates choose science teaching as a career by offering incentives such as the maths/science graduate recruitment program and maths/science Higher Education Loan Program scholarships. They aim to get our best and brightest graduates choosing careers as science teachers in our government schools. To give our students quality science education, we need to ensure that our classrooms meet the needs of students and modern science-teaching methods. Our students deserve facilities where learning can thrive. The State Government has provided funding to upgrade science laboratories in schools throughout this State, and I am especially pleased that that is happening at Rosebery, having seen first hand with the Premier the dilapidated state of that facility a couple of years ago.

The Australian Government also is investing $43 million for 30 new science and language centres in Tasmania through the multi-billion dollar Building the Education Revolution program. Government, Catholic and independent schools in Tasmania have received funding through the science and language centres for the twenty-first century secondary schools program.

I would like to congratulate all schools that have been involved in the program. I have noticed through the different schools' newsletters that all sorts of activities have taken place. I think Gagebrook was involved with nutritious morning teas. There have been all sorts of chemical activities and terrific adventures around the State. I would encourage every young person to get into science, ask questions, think about things, see if you can solve problems and lead the way in the future.