

Response to 2006 Budget

Mr Speaker,

It is with some pride that I rise to respond to the Budget for 2006-7 prepared by Treasurer, Michael Aird. There are many aspects of this fiscal plan for the next four years, which I would like to comment on. My comments come from a year's experience as a member of the Lennon government, and as an ex businessperson involved in the tourism industry of this state and as a former social worker.

As an elected Member for the seat of Lyons, I have the pleasure of travelling through some of the most spectacular scenery on the planet. The magnificent and rugged chocolate brown slopes of Ben Lomond, the soft greens of the myrtle forests of Rosebery, the subtle colours of the Owen Conglomerate, the shining, clean, white beaches of Binalong Bay, the contrasting English style of Port Arthur and the autumn beauty of the Derwent Valley are all areas within the seat of Lyons. This primarily rural electorate has a multiplicity of needs for Government to address, as does the state.

I acknowledge the desire of the Treasurer, Michael Aird to meet the promises made during the election campaign. He has shown to the electors of the state of Tasmania that this is a government of its word. Expenditure and budgetary planning by this government is open to many levels of public scrutiny. In addition to multiple media outlets, estimates, government business enterprise hearings, public accounts

committees and if required the auditor general are all, able to play a scrutineering role. State owned companies are subject to the rules governing the Australian Company Directors Codes of Ethics and Rules of Practice.

Business investment is apparent all over the electorate and I will outline some of the developments that I have been involved with. In the first half of 2005-6 business investment was 20 per cent higher than during the corresponding period in the preceding year. International markets for our products have seen the nominal value of our exports rise by 7.9 per cent in the 9 months to March 2006, a fantastic result. Employment is expected to grow by 3 and ¼ per cent.

Mr Speaker, providing a four year financial plan shows forward thinking. By doing so, business can be confident in investing. New businesses on the west coast have invested with confidence. Entrepreneurs from interstate and Tasmania have spent thousands of dollars in a range of new ventures. The exciting prospects and consequent developments associated with the Allegiance Mining Co at Zeehan have added to the positive announcements of Zinifex at Rosebery. It is good to see houses and public buildings being freshly painted with optimism. The Little Henty River Bridge will be replaced on the Zeehan Highway under the Capital Investment Program.

The injection of \$4.1 million over four years to update data in the Tasmanian Information on Geosciences and Exploration Resources system and updating the very impressive three dimensional modelling for a wider area of the state, will assist parties who may be interested in mining in our state. Further promotion in this area will ensure that companies recognise that the state of Tasmania under the Lennon Labor government is open for business.

I would anticipate that many of the 340 additional apprenticeships that will be produced over the next four years in trades such as building and construction, metal and allied trades will be developed in the west coast and the north-west areas which frequently have a synergy in their supply chains and product development.

Mr Speaker, a new acute and aged care building at the West Coast District Hospital at Queenstown is due to be completed by December of this year. Local people have been involved in its design and décor. A design featuring balconies and colours chosen by groups of community members has meant that there is strong interest in the facility which is being purpose built to meet the needs of the west coasters. I had a look at it a few weeks ago and it appears to be proceeding at a good pace. Contractors reported being on schedule with their sections of the job. This facility will add to the modern Strahan Medical Centre, for state of the art medical treatment centres which the Lennon government has added to the west coast scene. Further upgrading of the Pioneer Museum at Zeehan will add to the flexibility of that gracious old building.

Under this budget the town of Sheffield is to have a new ambulance facility. The Kentish municipality continues to grow with new housing under construction. The Youth Action Plan that was launched last Friday exemplifies the way in which the community has identified needs of the young people. Young people themselves drive the project, which features a centre provided, by Council, a graffiti wall and a skate park. Youth from Sheffield, Railton and Wilmot have come together to plan to address their transport needs and a way of meeting those needs. A result of those discussions is that a bus service will take people into Devonport on Saturdays every three weeks on a trial, "use it or lose" basis. The group of impressive young people

has also come up with a slogan "leave your keys in the bin" and has developed a mechanism of addressing drink driving.

This group is typical of the building of social capital, which I have seen all over the electorate. They are supported by a committee of adults and council and state-run organisations in a co-operative model that builds community. Building community was very important to the late Jim Bacon, the anniversary of whose death was Tuesday last. Premier Lennon has continued to uphold this important principle in the current government and this budget is proof of the commitments made to communities to ensure that their local needs are being listened to and addressed. The new partnership agreement between the Kentish Council and the State government is in the final stages of ratification.

Mr Speaker, on a lighter note, I am thrilled that the Inland Fisheries Service popular waters program has been stocking the beautiful dark waters of Lake Barrington. I am told that six, six pound salmon were caught on the Sunday morning before last, much to the delight of locals. The popular waters program has seen good increases in licences numbers as a result of being close to population centres. It is also encouraging to see the number of young anglers who are following in the traditions of their grandfathers. The terrific storyteller, Mr Ned Terry should be very proud of the continuation of the great Tasmanian cultures of lake and recreational fishing.

At Deloraine, the Meander dam project has lifted the hopes of most townspeople, some of whom tell stories of the millions of dollars that have been lost through lengthy processes. The Lennon government has been working with the Rivers and Water Supply Commission to facilitate the construction and operation of the Meander Dam. Many people are anxious to buy land around the proposed perimeter

of the new dam to ensure that they will have a view over the proposed lake in the future. The Lennon Government has had the courage to make the dam happen and I know that further economic development is occurring in and planned for the area, as evidenced by the businesses at the old butter factory and the proliferation of housing under construction.

The Smart Farming Election initiative provides incentives for water development, on-farm water planning and efficiencies in usage. Access to subsidies for feasibility and environmental studies and financial incentives to encourage water development to support targeted agricultural growth. More information than ever is available on stream flow data and the availability of ground water. The importance for future generations of the quality of our water systems is paramount. Continuing vigilance is needed and work being done on the Upper South Esk Rivers Water Management Plans provide a good example of careful monitoring by committed local people in co-operation with State government instrumentalities. Farmers I have spoken to report satisfaction with this government's expanded surveillance and monitoring of farm dams.

The Minister for Primary Industries and Water has announced the review of the Aerial Spraying Code of Practice. The implementation of the review of this contentious matter has been announced in the 2006-7 Budget. It is great to see the government prepared to progress this matter forward to resolution, so that clarification for all those involved in the aquaculture, agriculture, and forestry industries in addition to many, many private citizens will result.

All along the east coast, the baby boomers have moved in. Many have started tourism related businesses. Government has been responsive to the needs of these

rapidly growing areas. In Orford, the Solas project is well underway. This project will bring housing and an 18-hole golf course situated in a beautiful area with views across to Maria Island.

Close by, MacLaine's bridge at Triabunna will be replaced with a new structure funded from Special Capital Investment funds. In Swansea, the construction of new general practice facilities at the May Shaw nursing Centre are expected to be completed by December 2006. Marine and Safety Tasmania is build a new jetty at Swansea which will be suitable for pedestrian and small boat access. I know from first hand experience just how quickly the wind and seas can pick up on Great Oyster Bay.

Bicheno is another area that is growing rapidly. The township needs to be able to source increased water supplies for the proposed growth. Under this budget, government will fund a study to consider ways of improving water supply to Bicheno. Government is working closely with the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council to address various aspects of demographic change, which are impacting on that municipality.

Mr Speaker, last Saturday night, I was fortunate to be invited to attend the St Marys Winter Solstice. My task was to launch the St Marys calendar produced by the St Marys Community Development Association. The calendar covers the financial year and features "The Next Generation" of young people form the area whose photos were selected following a competition. Twelve photographs were selected for this financial year and there will be another twelve for the next financial year. As the Minister for Tourism, Heritage and the Arts was saying in the House yesterday, there is a feeling of connectedness that is palpable in Tasmania. Any tourist visiting that event would have to feel the excitement and energy. The spicy delights of the mulled wine, the drums, the dancing by the firelight, the sense of good will and happy faces

helped to dampen the effects of the cold. Again, local people showing initiative, showing compassion and making fun and enjoyment for others in regional areas.

As I travel through various towns, I am constantly surprised by the number of new businesses and initiatives that have developed recently. The township of Avoca is currently undergoing a revitalisation thanks to a twenty five member strong group of townspeople who have positive attitudes. There are three new small businesses that have started in the last few months and others are in the melting pot. Along with these innovative concepts, there are projects on the drawing board that the state government is helping to develop, projects which will enhance the tourism and living experiences for people travelling through the region and locals. Again, these projects will help visitors to feel connected to the place, the people and the history of the area

These developments are a direct response to the confidence that has been instilled in members of the community by the Lennon Government. Further to this point, one has only to travel through Sorrell to Dodges Ferry to see the huge number of new housing, as demographic and economic change brings more people to this rapidly developing area. The Sorrell School will receive \$600,000 from the Capital Investment program for the redevelopment of the primary general learning areas. This step will make it easier for teachers to deliver the modern curriculum. The township itself will receive \$2000,000 for planning for traffic management in Sorell on junctions along the Tasman and Arthur Highways.

As we have heard from the Minister for Infrastructure, Hon Jim Cox, the Esk Main Road is to be further improved under this budget. The road is a very busy thoroughfare for East Coast communities and frequently features single lines of constant traffic, particularly on Friday nights and at long weekends. The

improvement of this road was brought to attention by a cross section of local and business people, councils and tourists. Corners and rises are being taken out in addition to widening the road, so that a smoother route is available which enhances the drive to and from the coast.

Mr Deputy Speaker, community demand has been listened to also, in addressing the state of the Lyell Highway. The section from Granton to New Norfolk will have shoulder widening and sealing, the installation of overtaking lanes and re-alignment carried out during the next financial year. It is good to see that the Supply River Bridges on the West Tamar Highway will be replaced in further upgrades of that roadway.

The status of women in Tasmania has always been a keen interest of mine. Organisations such as the Country Women's Association, and Women in Agriculture are strong groups supporting many programs and initiatives in fund-raising, policy and practical areas. These groups are busy building capacity all over our state with women of all age groups. Young women are being mentored and leadership encouraged and promoted.

I support the work of the previous Attorney General, Judy Jackson in developing the holistic framework for the Safe at Home initiative. Women of Tasmania are safer than they have ever been when a relationship ends, feelings are raw and violence has been present in the past. The careful attention to detail that has been paid is greatly assisting to calm the process of splitting up and to add structure when the environment seems to be in chaos. Women and children are strongly supported by police and the justice system with much improved communication.

Improving communication and information for women throughout the state is a terrific responsibility, whether it be through on-line information and Internet access. As a Company Director, I am particularly pleased that improving women's financial literacy by providing appropriate seminars and developing web-based resources will be available. Similarly Mr Deputy Speaker, I endorse the steps to increase women's participation in vocational education and training and lifelong learning by improving pathways for migrant and refugee women and those from rural and agricultural communities. Access is often a problem for those who come from many rural districts. I am often inspired by the efforts made by women who are determined to achieve goals in spite of difficulties with child care, transport, shift work, disability or parent care. Some of those stories will be told in the 2006 Tasmanian Honour Roll of Women.