

Response to Premiers State of the State Address 2009 - 10th March 2009

[12.47 p.m.]

Mrs BUTLER (Lyons) - In response to Premier Bartlett's state of the State Address for 2009 I must acknowledge the energy and passion that this Premier has put into his job. His characteristic stride and vigour give an impression of a man on a mission to set Tasmania on a path that makes the most of our potential; a path that will see our future generations having the capacity and ability to work and live in our beautiful State in jobs that will evolve from the foundations that are currently being laid.

We are well situated to provide food for the rest of Australia provided that we can deliver water to the areas where it is grown. We have innovative and committed farmers who, often having farmed their holdings for many generations, have had to be prepared to change, to learn and to adapt. Commodity prices fluctuating, corporate buyers changing their pricing, low rainfall and the changing value of the dollar make this sector incredibly challenging for them and I take my hat off to the wonderful endeavours that I see throughout the electorate of Lyons.

The Bartlett Government is ready and able to stand by our farmers and is supporting infrastructure to the value of \$400 million for irrigation projects. Also, farmers will be able to apply for loans under the provisions of the Farm Water Development Act. These low cost loans will support the construction of on-farm storage and the purchase and establishment of irrigation infrastructure.

One example of the innovative agribusinesses that are doing well in the seat of Lyons, is Tim Read's Redlands property at Plenty, New Norfolk. Tim is a fifth generation farmer who was travelling to Japan frequently during the 1990s trying to increase Tasmania's access to the apple market there.

Mr McKim - I used to pick apples for him actually. I was just telling Mr **Butler** .

Mrs BUTLER - We are learning more.

Mr DEPUTY SPEAKER - Order. I would ask the member to resume his seat and not stand and interject from the Liberal benches.

Mrs BUTLER - Tim Read decided to listen to the people in Japan who were advising him to try growing cherries in the southern hemisphere. He could see the advantages of extending the marketing season and therefore commercial opportunities. He sourced plant stock from Japan and has planted 38 000 trees since 2002. An underground watering system supplies moisture. Beautifully and scientifically managed the property is able to have product to the consumer in Japan less than 24 hours after picking. The Japanese market has extended the Tasmanian cherry season both before and well after Christmas and I believe is the reason for Tim to be harvesting 250 tons within three years. Vision, courage, analysis and commitment have led to success. This is just one example of a Tasmanian family seeing an opportunity, harnessing the natural resources, being assisted by government policies and practices, and being productive for the benefit of other Tasmanian families who work directly and indirectly in fruit selection, packing, driving, putting up the netting, the pipelines, the boxes, driving the delivery trucks, doing the accounts, maintaining the fencing and many other associated activities.

The Midlands Water Scheme and the South Esk pipeline towards Campbell Town and beyond will be extended. Irrigation schemes in the Ouse-Shannon-Clyde catchment will continue to be progressed, as will early work on the new scheme for the Jordan River Valley and the Coal River. We need to maintain livelihoods for the people of Oatlands, Campbell Town, Bothwell, Ouse, Hamilton, Woodsdale and Kempton who have shown remarkable resilience and tenacity. I know that all members for Lyons would agree with me. We visit those areas frequently and stand by those people. Their sense of community and belonging to the land makes them strong. These are manifestations of a clever, kind and connected government.

A very special Tasmanian tells the story of the clever adaptations that can be made when circumstances change. If government sets the correct context, people are encouraged to try other ways. Di and Stuart Wilcox of Fonthill, Andover, have been experiencing drought for many years. They have sold off much of their stock and have diversified their business into accommodation, functions, jam-making and ghost tours. People might remember the story of the Harvey sisters who took Fonthill on again, and Di is the only member of that family who is still involved with it. The Department of Economic Development has been working with the Wilcoxes but Di has now begun tours for the cruise ships that come into Hobart and, with the capable assistance of some WWOOFers, that business is doing well.

Recently Tasmania was voted by the *New York Times* as one of the top 44 places to go in the whole world, especially for our food and wine. This is especially interesting to me as an ex-tourism operator. We have fantastic fresh produce all over the State. The Agrarian Kitchen at Lachlan near New Norfolk is run by ex-Sydneysiders, Rodney Dunn and his wife Séverine Demenet. Recognising our terrific soils and conditions, this young family has started a farm-based cooking school. Heritage plants give extra flavours to the ingredients harvested and then prepared by participants.

Domestic tourism accounts for 75 per cent of Australia's tourism business, so the future for Tasmania looks very bright, and I would encourage people to still have a go. I have been involved in two businesses that we set up in times that other people thought were not good times to start businesses,

and we were warned that we should not be doing what we did, but those ventures were both very successful, and I think if people have money behind them and have the courage to get out there with an idea that they know is different, and stand by their ideals there is a great future in tourism.

Two boutique hotels that I visited recently give testimony to the confidence that investors have in the State. Woodbridge on the Derwent is a small luxury hotel in an 1825 Georgian building with a truly gracious appeal. Eagles Nest 2, at Sheffield, owned by Mr Des Brown and his family, is a stylish, modern example of vision in tourism excellence and commitment to the future. It looks over the magnificent Mount Roland vista. In St Helens two new restaurants, Margot's and La Triste, offer terrific service, fine fresh Tasmanian seafood and game meats. The operators are confident that Tasmania, with more than 965 000 visitors per year and good government, is a State worth investing in for the future of themselves and their children. I am thrilled that the Tasmanian Culinary School of Excellence will be developed so that our agribusiness continues to flourish and reach its potential markets in first class style.

Swansea, on the East Coast of Tasmania, is an historic town with beautiful stone heritage buildings such as Schouten House, Meredith House, Morris's Store, Spiky Bridge, the remains of the Saltworks and Rocky Hills Station. These magnificent structures show us clearly the way life was in the nineteenth century in the area. George Meredith, for example, bought his land when in the United Kingdom, and was so surprised by the dry aspect of the land once he arrived in Van Diemen's Land, that he tried to renegotiate the sale. If I remember correctly it was through Lloyd George and he tried to swap it for the Talbot property, Malahide, in the Fingal Valley. Of course, there has just been the death of Ms Talbot and that is going to be changing management but it will still be through the family.

An amount of \$340 000 has been committed to two projects identified by the Glamorgan-Spring Bay Council at the community forum there, comprising \$90 000 to extend the Great Swansea shore walk and a further \$250 000 to redevelop the town's heritage museum. I remember lobbying for the extensions to the walk with Subi Mead and Helen Bain in 2004 when living in Swansea. At that stage we were trying to lobby Federal politicians. The local people take great pride in the appearance of their town and the amenity that is offered, not only for themselves but also for visitors. I think everybody who visits Swansea must be impressed with the terrific foreshore that has been developed by such caring local people. They recognise the importance of tourism; indeed, it is the strongest sector of the economy with the worsening drought in that area.

The Swansea heritage museum situated in the old schoolhouse will involve a visitor information centre, disability access, climate control and new meeting rooms. Curator Maureen Martin-Ferris is an enthusiastic, knowledgeable woman who will energetically and professionally make the needed improvements in this heritage-registered building which also serves as a war memorial.

This Government believes in the tourism potential of our jewel of an island. As a member for the seat of Lyons, I visit the Oatlands area regularly. The main feature which is obvious from the Midland

Highway is Callington Mill. The Government has pledged \$2 million to develop Oatlands into a heritage destination on a par with Port Arthur and Richmond. Currently there are wide streets, Georgian-style streetscapes and fine buildings set on the high, dry plains of the southern midlands.

People of the area have shown remarkable resilience through the ongoing drought, as I have said before. There is terrific potential in that town with this bank of authentic heritage buildings. A total of \$270 000 will be spent on removing overhead powerlines to place them underground and \$1.2 million will convert Callington Mill into a working flour mill. I enjoyed inspecting the site with Minister O'Byrne last year when we were enthusiastically told about the plans for the grinding of a variety of flours in the mill with direct sales to the public. The mill has been well maintained since its demise.

A few streets away, the Oatlands penitentiary building stands bleakly adjacent to a twentieth-century swimming pool, a strange contradiction when you are standing there looking at that scene.

Mr Hidding - They could sentence them to death by drowning.

Mrs BUTLER - Yes. The worn-down front step is testimony to the number of people who over 100 years visited this fine old stone building for various reasons. The stories that this building can tell will provide jobs into the future for both local people and tourists who want to explore what happened there. I have visited similar buildings in Scotland where they have tapes and re-enactments and various configurations and different sorts of IT procedures that have wonderful reconstructions of cases and it is fascinating to see, so I think that the potential is just terrific there. I am sure that these projects will provide great stimulus to the Oatlands township and the southern midlands region.

For the past few years in my home town of St Helens and surrounds there has been much discussion over drinks, barbecues, meetings, the RSL and the pubs about the Bay of Fires area. Local people have valued this iconic area for its magnificent and stunning scenic beauty, its links to Aboriginal history and as a natural habitat for a range of flora and fauna. In fact, I would go so far as saying that the Bay of Fires is revered. The natural spread of stories of its beauty have meant that the region now has international fame.

Unfortunately, there are increasing numbers of people coming to the area who do not show the reverence or respect for this area that has traditionally been shown by local people. They are chopping or hacking at trees and saplings and have left at least two fires burning this last summer. I commend the Department of Parks and Wildlife for the very worthwhile effort they have made to contain and better manage holiday-makers. I believe it is important to maintain public access to the Bay of Fires but with access should come responsibility. I welcome the Premier's announcement in the state of the State address that a national park is to be established following my consultations with stakeholders for the Bay of Fires.

Sitting suspended from 1 p.m. to 2.30 p.m.

Mrs BUTLER - Before the lunchbreak I was talking about the proposed Bay of Fires national park. This is the important first step in progressing the protection of this precious area. I do not understand the anger portrayed by the Greens members in Parliament last week when the announcement was made. It is a first step, so not to have the recurrent funding worked out yet is understandable but we have to make this first step to look at that area. This is an area that needs to be protected. The ecosystems it contains, including the swift parrot nesting sites, need to be carefully protected.

Together with the Rudd stimulus package, a 34 per cent increase in funding for roads, exciting realignments and smarter thinking for education and skills training, increases in social housing, improvements in the delivery of health services, our State is truly being transformed. I commend Premier Bartlett's vision in his address.