

Extract from Hansard

Thursday 22 June 2006

Consolidated Fund Appropriation Bill 2006 Bill No 13

[5.23 p.m.]

Mr PARKINSON (Wellington - Leader of the Government in the Council) - Mr Deputy President, I think that all members would agree that our standard of living and lifestyle in Tasmania is the best in the nation. I would like to highlight a number of programs and initiatives within the Budget for 2006-07 that are protecting and enhancing our lifestyle.

This Budget builds and consolidates on the past Labor budgets, sets a new fiscal framework for the next term of the Lennon Labor Government and delivers on Labor's State 2006 election promises.

The Labor Government's new fiscal strategy continues a strong approach to financial management and provides a financially responsible framework.

Mr President, since 1998 Labor had developed and implemented two fiscal strategies. These fiscal strategies have been widely acknowledged as turning around the financial position of the Tasmanian Government. The new fiscal strategy will cover a five year period from 2006-07 to 2010-11. The new fiscal strategy is based on the following principles:

- maintaining a sustainable Budget position;
- continuing to reduce the debt and liability burden on the Tasmanian community;
- maintaining a competitive business and taxation environment;
- maintaining investment in core Government infrastructure in real terms to support the delivery of government services and to foster economic and industry development; and
- providing adequate mechanisms and financial provisions to minimise risks to the Tasmanian Government.

Mr Deputy President, like previous Labor fiscal strategies the new fiscal strategy will also include challenging targets. These targets include:

- the net operating result and fiscal balance are to be maintained in surplus over a rolling four-year period;
- the Tasmanian general government sector will remain net debt free;
- the ratio of total state sector net debt to revenue is to fall over a rolling four year period; and
- the State's unfunded superannuation liability is to be extinguished by 2033.

Mr Deputy President, Treasury forecasts that the Tasmanian economy will continue to grow by 3.5 per cent, population growth is expected to continue and around 6 100 new jobs are forecast to be created. Members can be assured that the Government's new fiscal strategy will continue our strategic approach to managing the economy.

Mr Deputy President, I would now like to highlight a number of budget initiatives that will lay the foundations for a stronger economy and stronger communities.

The Lennon Labor Government has made health care one of its major priorities. In the portfolio of Health and Human Services, this budget delivers:

- an additional 450 extra staff for the Royal Hobart Hospital. An extra \$13.2 million for equipment and capital upgrades and \$4.4 million for a linear accelerator;
- provides \$12 million to build new Department of Emergency Medicine at the Launceston General Hospital, \$8 million for more medical procedures, \$6.9 million for a new medical equipment;
- commits \$5 million for emergency medicine and theatre recovery at the Mersey campus of the North West Regional Hospital and \$600 000 for new equipment at the Burnie Hospital.
- 43 clinical nurse educators;
- 100 new ambulances and a new ambulance crew in Launceston and Hobart;
- better dental care - abolition of the \$25 co-payment, 48 000 more general dental treatments in the private sector, seven more dentists, six new dental surgeries, two new dental treatment facilities and an education facility;
- \$6 million on an ongoing basis to support Tasmania's Affordable Housing Organisation target to built 700 new properties over the next four years;
- \$11.7 million for increased staffing for child protection services, including seven new case workers and five psychologists to expand support services;
- other initiatives include newborn baby hearing screening, an improved GP assist service and extension of the Aurora electricity concession.

Mr Deputy President, education is also a key element of strong communities. The State Government will invest a record \$776.65 million in the education of Tasmania's children in 2006-07. The 2006-07 State Budget allows the Lennon Labor Government to meet all the commitments made to the Tasmanian people during the last election campaign. This Budget delivers on Labor's commitments to reduce class sizes throughout the State, provide new learning initiatives and assist all Tasmanian children to receive a world-class education. Key initiatives in the 2006-07 Budget for education include:

- \$22.25 million to recruit 89 extra teachers over the next five years to progressively reduce class sizes in grades 2 to 7. This will ensure that all classes have 25 students or less. This measure includes an additional \$2.25 million of capital funding to be provided to build more

classrooms at a number of schools, including Mount Stuart, Lansdowne Crescent in my electorate. A further 29 teachers will also be hired to reduce class sizes in grade 7.

- \$30 million over four years to build a new high school at Kingston to be built in the Kingborough Sports Centre precinct. The new facility will accommodate up to 750 students and include cutting edge information and communications technology and modern multipurpose classrooms to meet the needs of teaching and learning in the new century. Preliminary site preparation is scheduled to start later this year with construction to begin in 2007 and conclude by 2010.
- \$12.6 million over the next four years for the Launching into Learning program, a new Government initiative to help support young children, particularly those at risk, before they formally start school. Extensive research has shown that patterns of learning in the first three or four years after birth are particularly crucial, and have a lasting impact on children's health, learning and life success. Through this initiative, more schools will be able to take on a greater role in engaging with the community and families before children reach formal school age.

The State Government has also boosted funding to help Tasmanian families on low-incomes buy school uniforms. Since 2002-03 funding for this program has increased from \$18 000 to \$242 000, a boost of \$224 000 in four years. The 2006 - 07 State Budget will provide an extra \$100 000 each year to help parents and students in primary and secondary schools who need assistance to help them purchase school uniforms.

Mr Deputy President, other initiatives in this year's Budget include a boost of \$400 000 over four years to extend the Reading Together early learning program to five new locations around Tasmania and the provision of \$10 000 each year for four years to give the parents of children in child care a stronger voice by supporting the establishment of a child care parents and friends group.

Mr Deputy President, we have injected a large amount of funding to support Tasmanian sport. The State Government has allocated \$17.4 million to support Tasmanian hockey, soccer, netball, and gymnastics, the Launceston Aquatic Centre and the Northern Tennis Centre over the next four years. This includes an additional \$15.5 million for sporting infrastructure. This funding package will help encourage more Tasmanians to be active and healthy and assist our athletes to achieve their dreams through the provision of first-rate sporting facilities. Key investments contained in the Budget include:

- \$4.5 million over two years to redevelop the Tasmanian Hockey Centre. This will ensure the Tasmanian Hockey Centre remains one of Tasmania's most impressive and modern sporting facilities and to continue to host national and international hockey matches, which also generate big tourism benefits for the State;
- \$2.9 million to upgrade netball facilities and support the development of the sport in the state, including \$1 million in 2006-07 upgrading Aurora Stadium at Creek Road;
- \$600 000 over the next three years to help the Tasmanian Netball Association administer, develop and promote netball, including the appointment of professional staff and support for a high-performance program linked to the Tasmanian Institute of Sport;

- \$75 000 over three years to assist the Tasmanian Netball Association to host a Commonwealth Bank Trophy each year;
- \$1 million in 2006-07 towards building a new regional tennis centre in Launceston;
- \$800 000 over the next four years to develop Tasmanian soccer and help our young players fulfil their dreams of playing at a high level;
- \$100 000 each year to match funding from the Australian Football Federation for an Institute of Sport soccer program for elite junior development squads;
- \$1 million over the next two years towards building a specialist gymnastics training centre in Kingborough; and
- an additional \$1.3 million in 2008-09 for a hydrotherapy pool in the Launceston Aquatic Centre.

Mr Deputy President, this investment in Tasmanian sport will help keep Tasmania on the map as a competitive sporting State, as a sporting destination and as a producer of elite-level athletes.

Mr Deputy President, I would like to highlight a few issues related to the arts and our Lifestyle. Members may be interested to learn that the Government has allocated in total \$1.56 million in the Budget to fund the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. \$634 000 has been allocated to maintain the status of the TSO following the James Strong Review into Orchestras in 2005. The extra funding is the State Government's contribution to making sure that the TSO remains a symphony orchestra rather than being downgraded to a chamber orchestra.

The Government has also allocated \$30 million for the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in order to create a contemporary precinct that showcases Tasmania's historic and contemporary cultural assets. I might add that \$3 million has been allocated for the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery in order to develop a new gallery for temporary exhibitions. The Theatre Royal in Hobart has also received \$617 000 in additional funding to support its ongoing operations.

Mr Deputy President, the Lennon Labor Government is committed to protecting our communities and making them a safer place in which to live and work. To this end, this Budget allocates an extra \$13.36 million in initiatives to keep Tasmanians safe as part of the 2006-07 State Budget.

The Tasmanian Government will provide an extra \$4.3 million over four years to employ 12 additional police officers to work with children, young people and their families to help break the intergenerational cycle of crime. This is in addition to the extra 48 police officers that recently graduated from the Police Academy and who are now already on the Tasmanian streets.

Other key initiatives contained in this year's Budget include:

- \$2.4 million over four years to extend the U-Turn program beyond 2007. U-Turn is a best practice diversionary program for young people aged 15 to 25 who have been involved in, or who are at risk of becoming involved in motor vehicle theft. This highly effective program has assisted 138 young people break the cycle of motor vehicle theft in Tasmania.

- \$960 000 over four years to fund three positions for 'at risk youth' officers to be located in the north, north-west and south of the State.
- \$200 000 over four years to the Australian Volunteer Coast Guard Association to assist the operation of its eight flotillas.
- \$60 000 over four years to assist Neighbourhood Watch get more Tasmanians involved in community safety by helping the network distribute its education and awareness material throughout the community.
- the Government will also continue to provide appropriate funding for the development of the whole-of-government communications network.

Other initiatives contained in the State Budget to help keep Tasmanians safe include: the provision of \$795 000 over three years as further investment in community road safety partnerships, and investment of \$440 000 over four years to introduce driver training into all public schools in years 9 and 10 and encourage participation by private schools.

Mr Deputy President, this Budget builds on record levels of public and private investment over the past eight years.

Labor's tax cuts will return over one billion to the Tasmanian community over the nine years to 2009-10. The Budget creates the conditions for business to continue to grow and thrive in Tasmania. The 2006-07 Budget supports business through:

- a commitment to abolish mortgage duty and non-real property business conveyance duty, meaning tax cuts of \$80 million over four years;
- \$1 million for the Workplace Development Fund;
- \$480 000 to help establish 30 new exporters in northern Tasmania;
- \$1.8 million to trial enhanced business incubation services at the Technopark; and
- \$115 000 to introduce the Employer of Choice awards to recognise business productivity and employee work-life balances.

Mr Deputy President, this Budget delivers on Labor's 2006 State election promises and sets the scene for continued stability and fiscal responsibility. The Budget also delivers to the people in the key areas of health, education, police and public safety and infrastructure. I congratulate the honourable Treasurer on his first State Budget.