



January 2009

West Coast Economic Development Group

The WCEDG has been established by the State Government as a result of the Global Financial Crisis and the effects of this on the mining industry and general community on the West Coast.

The aim of the group is to provide an opportunity for Council, key stakeholders and State and Commonwealth governments to identify activities and priorities that will assist in maximising the economic development outcomes and stability for the municipality in this time of economic uncertainty.

The Department of Economic Development and Tourism is chairing the group which includes the West Coast Mayor, Darryl Gerrity, Minerals Council of Tasmania head Terry Long, Ian Wakefield of the Australian Workers Union, Sid Sidebottom as our Federal Government representative and senior officers from the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources.

Progress has now been made to identify opportunities through joint avenues so that we can find solutions that will provide economic stimulus and sustainability for the region, not only during this trying time but into the future.

The West Coast community has contributed much to Tasmania's economic prosperity and has much potential despite the world economic downturn.

We need to make sure the community is well positioned to take up opportunities presented to it.

Focus on Jobs and Economic Management

Premier David Bartlett has said recently that protecting jobs and demonstrating good economic management were at the top of the Tasmanian Government's 2009 agenda.

Mr Bartlett said he was determined to respond to the challenges posed by the global financial crisis in a way that shielded Tasmania as best as possible.

He said the Government would:

- Take responsible steps to protect and maintain existing jobs;
- Develop opportunities for job creation;
- Continue the diversification of Tasmania's economic base with strong support for innovation and value-adding; and

· Apply public sector belt-tightening to sustain the largest-ever state infrastructure plan in the coming years.

“Tasmania needs strong economic leadership and I am ready to embrace the challenges of global financial uncertainty with renewed energy, fresh ideas and real optimism about the future of Tasmania,” Mr Bartlett said.

Protecting jobs, maintaining our hard-won economic progress and keeping the economy moving are critical for all Tasmanians.

This year, the Government will focus on steering our economy through difficult times and maintaining the economy to the greatest extent possible so that when global conditions improve, Tasmania is ready to take full advantage.

We will provide the economic leadership Tasmania needs and demonstrate once again that only Labor has the new plans and ideas to underpin Tasmania’s long-term future.

We will continue to focus on ensuring Tasmania can emerge from these difficult economic times in the strongest possible position.

Tasmania is in such a good position because of Labor’s strong record of economic management over the past decade.

What I am doing now is taking action to ensure Tasmania is well-placed for the next decade.

Late last year, the Government announced measures to combat the expected impact on Tasmania of the global financial crisis, including:

- Belt-tightening in the public sector;
- Preserving the largest infrastructure budget in history;
- The \$100 million Tasmanian Industry Support Scheme;
- Bringing forward selected infrastructure projects; and
- Creating the West Coast Economic Development Group

“I accept there is more to be done and I look forward to meeting the new challenges facing Tasmania and delivering,” Mr Bartlett said.

“This Government has a clear economic plan based around innovation, skills and infrastructure which we will continue to roll out.

“We are yet to see any comprehensive response or strategy from either of the Opposition parties and as 2009 unfolds, it will become increasingly apparent that, even when combined, they lack the ideas and energy to steer Tasmania through these economic times.

“I have been very forthright in outlining the Bartlett Government’s plan for the future. I am disappointed that there still appears to be no clear alternatives coming from the Opposition parties.”

More Elective Surgery Provided in 2008

The Royal Hobart, Launceston General, North West Regional and Mersey Community hospitals had significantly exceeded elective surgery targets laid down in the Commonwealth Elective Surgery Initiative.

The Commonwealth asked for an additional 895 elective procedures in return for its \$8.1 million funding, which complemented the State Government's own \$8.4 million Elective Surgery Improvement Plan.

In fact, our hospitals delivered by a factor of more than two to one, with preliminary figures showing they achieved a total of 2,076 extra admissions from the elective surgery waiting list in 2008.

That lifted the total number of elective surgery cases to 15,872 - an increase of 15%. The increase has occurred across the board, from orthopaedic and ear, nose & throat surgery to gynaecology and ophthalmology.

That's a tremendous achievement considering elective surgery needs to be accommodated around the over-riding priority of providing emergency care.

Preliminary figures show the RHH completed an additional 630 cases in the 12 months to December, taking total elective surgery admissions to 6,534 for the year.

The LGH lifted elective surgery admissions by 721 to 5,221.

The NWRH increased elective admissions by 473 to 2,283, and Mersey by 252 to 1,824.

We know we have a long way still to go. Realistically we will always have waiting lists and our hospitals will continue to balance competing priorities to care for as many people as possible.

Demand for elective surgery will continue to rise as our population ages and chronic disease increases – and historically demand has also gone up as elective surgery capacity expands.

More than 2,000 people were able to have their operation last year thanks to the efforts of the doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and support staff across our public hospitals.

New Rental Board Authority

A new rental bond authority would start in Tasmania on 1 July 2009.

Once the new authority started, tenants would no longer give money to landlords but would instead deposit bonds at Service Tasmania.

This will make it much easier to get bonds back once a tenancy ended and will be much fairer for tenants.

A process to resolve bond disputes with the Residential Tenancy Commissioner has existed in Tasmania since 1998.

If a tenant believes they have been unfairly treated they can ask the Residential Tenancy Commissioner to intervene. Where a bond is unfairly held, the Commissioner will ensure that money is returned to the tenant.

Tenants have significant rights under Tasmanian law and tenants should be aware of their rights.

The establishment of a rental deposit authority will be a positive step towards making things better for tenants.

There would be a significant public awareness campaign in the lead up to the establishment of the rental deposit authority to ensure that tenants and landlords knew what they had to do to lodge a bond and get their money back at the end of a tenancy.

For current disputes about bonds, the Residential Tenancy Commissioner can be contacted on 1300 654 499.

Hawks Sponsorship Kicks Successive Goals for Tasmania

An independent evaluation report of the second year of the State Government's five-year sponsorship of the Hawthorn Football Club has been released showing Tasmania received a net economic benefit of \$15 million in 2008.

The report reaffirms the value of the State Government's investment, providing an important economic boost for the State.

This report shows that the net economic benefits Tasmania has received from its involvement with Hawthorn now far exceeds the original investment after just two years of a five year agreement.

Analysis of the economic benefits and direct expenditure components of the analysis were outsourced to PricewaterhouseCoopers.

Event research showed that on average, 30.7 per cent of all attendees at Hawks matches at Aurora Stadium were from interstate.

This equates to about 24,000 extra tourists coming to Tasmania in 2008 as a direct result of the sponsorship.

The data also detailed that on average, interstate visitors spent \$220 per day on goods and services including accommodation, transport, meals, tours and entertainment, and stayed an average of 3.2 days.

This reflects a net economic benefit of \$15.1 million, more than double the benefit of \$7.2 million in 2007.

Most significantly, the study showed that the sponsorship has created 299 fulltime equivalent jobs across the State, with around two thirds as a direct result of increased tourist visitation.

The equivalent value of the total media exposure generated by Tasmania's sponsorship of the Hawks for the 2008 season - which includes the NAB Cup, the 2008 premiership series and the subsequent finals series - was in excess of \$3.4 million.

Furthermore, television exposure of the Hawks' finals campaign during the month of September alone returned \$1.12 million of media value, representing more than 40 per cent of the total value of television exposure across the entire 2008 season, and clearly demonstrates the media value of the Hawks' successful finals campaign.

A consumer research study conducted as part of the evaluation has also confirmed an increase in the general public's awareness of Tasmania.

The 2008 report also shows an increase in travel to Tasmania among those aware of the Hawks sponsorship.

This shows that those people aware of the sponsorship are significantly more likely to have travelled to Tasmania for a holiday, rather than purely to watch an AFL match.”

This is an extremely positive sign for Tasmania, as it shows the sponsorship is starting the drive visitation for reasons other than AFL viewing.

It also implies that promotional activity undertaken around the sponsorship – such as the ‘SMS to Discover Tasmania’ campaign run at home games at the MCG – is assisting in bringing tourists to Tasmania.

The evidence is conclusive – Tasmania’s sponsorship of the Hawks is an extremely worthwhile investment that is clearly delivering returns to our State.

National Transport Concessions for Tasmanian Seniors Card Holders

From January 1 2009 Tasmanian Seniors will be able to access new transport concessions when they travel interstate as a new national scheme begins to roll out.

The Australian Government has offered more than \$430,000 over four years to the Tasmanian Government so that it can provide concessions to Senior Card holders who are using public transport services outside their home state.

Until now, Tasmanian Seniors Cards have only entitled the holder to public transport concessions in Tasmania.

The new arrangements will mean seniors travelling interstate can now access cheaper fares on local transport in their destination.

A uniform system across Australia will help seniors travel interstate to see family and friends. Making it more affordable for seniors to travel within Australia will also help individuals, communities and businesses that are dependent on tourism.

These arrangements will take effect from January 1 2009 in New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania, ACT and Northern Territory. Discussions with Western Australia and Queensland governments are continuing. In the interim, Queensland will begin offering from January 1 2009 concessions on its urban public transport to interstate concession holders.