

BUDGET REPLY SPEECH – Greens Leader Nick McKim MP

Delivered on Tuesday 22 May 2012

(Please check against delivery)

Mr Speaker, imagine Tasmania just ten short years from now.

Imagine an island state which has completed the economic transition that is currently underway, leaving us with a stronger, diversified and more resilient economy.

A Tasmania which is rightly proud of what it produces here on this beautiful island, and aggressively promotes its products, and skills into global markets.

Markets that know that when they buy Tasmanian, they are buying products that are 100% top quality, embedded with 100% renewable energy, and underpinned by, and marketed using, our globally unique clean, green brand.

A Tasmania which is 100% renewable energy powered, with a smart electricity grid enabling households and small businesses to take control over powering their own renewable future.

A Tasmania which is one of the world's foremost cultural hubs, building on the magnificent gift to the state that is MONA with investment into TMAG, and more government support for the creative economy, one of the world's fastest growing sectors.

A Tasmania with a thriving tourism sector, built on protecting the things which make Tasmania special, and that people from around the world pay good money to experience.

A Tasmania which is a world leader in environmental remediation, tapping into a boom market already developing as the world addresses serious environmental legacy issues. A market that will continue to grow as we begin to seriously grapple with the urgent need to be sustainable in all that we do.

A Tasmania with its magnificent forests still standing proud, with their immense carbon value and their priceless intrinsic value.

A Tasmania where every one of its citizens feels that its government, whatever its political stripe, has their wellbeing at heart.

Mr Speaker, Tasmania has got what the world is beginning to want. And within just ten short years the world will want it even more. Mapping out a pathway to this future will necessarily start with a conversation with all Tasmanians, but today I will talk about some of the early actions we could take to set us on the way to this future of optimism and hope.

Introducing a Tasmanian Wellbeing Index

Mr Speaker, the Greens are proposing that Tasmania develop a Wellbeing Index. I wish to read to the House the following quotation:

“The Gross National Product [cousin of GDP] includes air pollution and advertising for cigarettes, and ambulances to clear our highways of carnage. It counts special locks for our doors, and jails for the people who break them. GNP includes the destruction of the redwoods and the death of Lake Superior... [and I pause here to state that in the Tasmanian context we could say the destruction of our oldgrowth forests and Lake Pedder...] And if GNP includes all this, there is much that it does not comprehend. It does not allow for the health of our families, the quality of their education, or the joy of their play. It is indifferent to the decency of our factories and the safety of our streets alike. It does not include the beauty of our poetry or the strength of our marriages, or the intelligence of our public debate or the integrity of our public officials... GNP measures neither our wit nor our courage, neither our wisdom nor our learning, neither our compassion nor our devotion to our country. It measures everything, in short, except that which makes life worthwhile.”

That assessment was delivered by Senator Robert F. Kennedy, in an address to the University of Kansas, in 1968.

It is an eloquent appeal for recognition that human lives cannot be reduced to, or evaluated only by economic indicators.

Budget's are also assessed on whether they 'drive progress', which is in itself based on an assumption that it means life is improving. Usually the only tool we have to assess whether progress has been achieved, is a form of economic indicator – such as the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). But indicators such as GDP do not tell the whole story, and therefore cannot provide sufficient direction as to a way forward. They may reveal how the economy is changing, but they do not shed light on a community's health and more and more people are realising that economic progress does not necessarily guarantee progress in other areas.

Mr Speaker, there is a growing disconnect between politicians of all stripes, and the people we seek to represent, especially when it comes to whether people believe we are progressing in the areas that matter to them.

And for too long we have relied exclusively on very limited economic indicators as a way to judge the wellbeing of our people.

We need a different, inclusive and more holistic set of indicators.

Mr Speaker, to address these issues, the Greens are proposing that Tasmania develop a Wellbeing Index.

Tasmania should develop its own Wellbeing Index, using experience from around the world to inform a truly Tasmanian approach. Mr Speaker, far from being a fringe concept, a Well-Being Index already exists in other places around the world.

Mr Speaker, the Canadians realised that in these economic turbulent times it was necessary to put these quality of life questions to their citizens, and in December last year Canada released its first report generated by the Canadian Index of Wellbeing (CIW). This tool is described as a *“comprehensive composite index built to measure the wellbeing of the real life of our [their] citizenry.”*

The Canadian Index of Wellbeing has the following as its working definition of Wellbeing:

“The presence of the highest possible quality of life in its full breath of expression, focused on but not necessarily exclusive to: good living standards, robust health, a sustainable environment, vital communities, an educated populace, balanced time use, high levels of democratic participation, and access to and participation in leisure and culture.”

The CIW calculates not just economic progress and how the economy is faring, but also how people and their communities are faring. It will now be used to help authorities at all levels *“make evidence-based policies that are responsive to the needs and values of Canadians. And it will empower citizens to hold government accountable for achieving progress.”*

By the way Mr Speaker, it may be worth pointing out here that the CIW has been recognised as a global leader by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), which has also developed an interactive Better Lives Index of its own. And it is also worthwhile noting that both France and the UK are now beginning to design their own wellbeing index initiatives.

We need to link up our social, environmental and economic indicators, through an index that measures our quality of life, not just how well our economy is going.

Mr Speaker, they say that money is not everything, and indeed that is true. But what are the real hopes, fears and dreams of Tasmanians? Well, we just don't know. And we should know, and our people should know that their government cares enough to ask. And also cares enough to use the answers to inform government and community priorities.

Mr Speaker, this is a cost neutral proposal. The Greens would transform the Tasmania Together unit into a team dedicated to developing a truly Tasmanian Wellbeing Index by working with Tasmanians to develop that indice.

Clearly an Index requires indicators – and there are now emerging models both internationally as I have already discussed, as well as nationally. For example in partnership with the Australian Centre on Quality of Life at Deakin University, Australian Unity established a Wellbeing Index in April 2001.

The work already invested in developing and establishing the Tasmania Together benchmarks will be influential in developing a robust and workable set of Tasmanian wellbeing indicators. This in turn will value-add to that work already undertaken, by really injecting it into the decision making and policy setting directions, at both local and State government levels as the Canadian example demonstrates.

Mr Speaker, the Greens will lead a community debate designed to inform the development of a Well-Being Index to measure those things that matter to our people so much more than money.

Doing more to promote Tasmania's Brand & Products

Mr Speaker, Tasmanian businesses are innovative, clever and resourceful, but more needs to be done to use our truly unique brand to promote what we produce.

The Greens would develop a whole-of-government approach to aggressively promote Tasmania and our unique products in exclusive interstate and overseas markets.

This would involve strategic identification of growth markets, and smart marketing using specifically targeted and well defined online and viral approaches.

The Greens would invest into developing a flexible 'Produced in Tasmania' promotional resource that can brand Tasmanian products as underpinned by our unique brand values. Imagine HGP free and cruelty free pork marketed as 'Produced in Tasmania and 100% guaranteed humane and hormone free'. Or Tasmania's eggs, marketed as 'Produced in Tasmania and 100% guaranteed cruelty free eggs'. Mr Speaker, wouldn't they lap them up in the supermarkets of Melbourne and Sydney?

Imagine agricultural products marketed as 'Produced in Tasmania and 100% guaranteed GE free'. Or manufactured products marketed as 'Produced in Tasmania with 100% guaranteed renewable energy'.

‘Produced in Tasmania’ would become a bigger and better version of ‘made in Australia’.

These unique marketing advantages are a huge asset to many of our growing economic sectors, and with smart, targeted marketing they will help drive our ongoing economic transition.

Tasmanian products can and must thrive even more in niche markets where we can leverage our Tasmanian brand image to obtain a price premium above our competitors.

But a word of caution here, our Brand must be genuine.

State Budget Overview

Mr Speaker, Budgets cannot be assessed just by whether they are a good set of numbers, must also be evaluated by their social and environmental impacts.

Of course, if the current state budget was brought down by a Greens Treasurer, it would look different. For example it would prioritise public and active transport above road building simply for more cars. It would invest more into preventative health measures, and less into things like football sponsorship, for example. And it would invest more into keeping Tasmania authentically clean, green, clever and creative.

And there is an overlap between these things and the finances of Tasmania.

And I speak here of the Carbon windfall.

Already \$37m will be used this year to avoid much of what would otherwise have been a punitively expensive power price rise. This means lower power prices for domestic consumers, and small businesses.

This is truly a great Green dividend. It would not be possible without the Greens in the Federal Parliament.

Lets be clear about this. It is the Greens who have delivered this funding, and are responsible for decrease in pressure on power prices it will deliver.

The Greens believe there can be, and must be a synergy between looking after Tasmanians, and being fiscally responsible. This is demonstrated in this State Budget with the shift in fiscal strategy to accommodate a short-term managed debt.

The Greens have consistently argued that we can exercise both compassion and responsibility whilst putting the state’s finances back on track, given the significant in GST shortfall post the GFC era. We cannot afford to relegate community well-being into the false-economy category as a ‘discretionary luxury’ (as some hard-line economic rationalists still try to push).

This injection of flexibility into the State Budget's fiscal strategy, will allow Health, Education and the Department of Police and Emergency Services to be quarantined from further budget cuts, and will see \$120 million returned to Health through reduced savings targets.

The Greens acknowledge this decision in the Budget and we support this move.

Cannot Afford to short-change Compassion:

We talk a lot about compassion in this place, and the Greens truly believe that all Members in this Parliament are genuinely compassionate.

Compassionate and community-strengthening policies do not have to cost money. But they can make our lives all the more richer for current and future generations. I wish to highlight a few examples here.

The Greens are committed to delivering a State Apology to those affected by Forced Adoption policy in line with a recent Senate Committee recommendation. From the 1950s to 1980 thousands of children were forcibly removed from their mothers and put up for adoption.

Following the Senate report recommending all states and territories make official apologies, South Australia has committed to making that apology on the 18 July this year.

Tasmania should also do so.

The Greens are also committed to pursuing marriage equality for Tasmanians. It is currently before the Federal Parliament, but again I reiterate that should that Place fail to remove this current enshrined discrimination, the Greens will move for state based marriage equality.

Because this is the right thing to do.

It is also the right thing to do for small businesses. It will inject approximately \$100 million in the first year, it will generate a boom in tourism and other marriage associated businesses.

This is a cost-neutral policy commitment, and is an investment in our community's wellbeing.

Cost of Living Prioritised

The Greens campaigned strongly during the 2010 state election on the need to reduce cost of living pressures on Tasmanians. And we have followed through on that commitment. We delivered the nation's first Cost of Living Strategy undertaken by the Social Inclusion Commissioner, David Adams. Continuing

that work, this Budget we have secured a boost in investment for energy efficiencies for low income households, as well as passenger transport as part of our ongoing commitment to addressing cost of living.

We have also secured additional funding of \$125, 000 per annum for the next four years to the Council on the Ageing (COTA) Tasmania, to boost policy that benefits the health, wellbeing and quality of life for older Tasmanians.

Battery Hen Ban Commitment Announced

The Greens took into the Budget negotiations a proposal to announce Tasmania's intention to become Battery Hen-Free, and provide a transition package to help the free-range and non-cage egg production industry to grow.

There will be an immediate ban on any new battery farms or cages, and a cap on the current hen stock introduced, while the transition plan is finalised.

This shifts Tasmania in the eyes of the nation and the world. We will be amongst the national and global leaders in banning battery hens, and producing market-friendly eggs.

Part of the animal welfare package is also bringing forward the state sow stall ban, which the additional funding will now see happen by mid 2013, instead of the original 2017 timeframe.

Plastic Bag Ban Funded

Funding to implement the tripartite supported ban on non-biodegradable plastic bags has also been delivered in this Budget. We have secured \$780, 000 over three years to go into overseeing the ban's implementation as well as produce education and information materials.

This moves a tripartite vote of support for a Greens' policy initiative into a 3-D reality.

Coastal Protection Boost

There has been growing frustration over the lack of an effective Coastal Policy, so in a positive step forward, the Greens have secured \$240, 000 to provide dedicated resources to prioritise the delivery of a Coastal protection framework with teeth.

Support for Small Business

We have always said that the small business sector is the engine driver of our economy. So we are delighted to have secured funding to assist in targeted investment to help Tasmanian small businesses leverage the NBN, especially in the area of retail sales.

A challenge facing our local retailers is competing with on-line sales where products are sourced from national or international providers. Many of these items can be sourced locally, but many Tasmanian retailers' on line presence is not competitive.

This initiative will provide one-on-one free coaching by specialists in the digital and e-commerce fields, to help boost their on-line presence and retail sale capacity."

North West Coastal Cycleway Feasibility Study

This is a major step forward for our policy initiative to see a North-west coastal cycleway be established, as a contiguous route where possible.

This funding for a feasibility study will help engage local stakeholders and individuals who have campaigned for many years, for this proposal, which will have positive benefits for tourism, small business, health and recreation."

Mr Speaker, it is important to note that these initiatives and the targeted relaxing of the fiscal constraints, are on top of the important Cost of Living measures that were announced earlier this year and which are already underway.

Ministerial portfolios:

Mr Speaker, I also have the proud and humbling responsibility of driving positive and progressive policies through my ministerial portfolios.

I will now outline some of these important commitments.

Sustainable Transport

The Sustainable Transport portfolio created in 2010 has brought a stronger focus to the movement of people as opposed to a traditional transport ministry often focussed on roads and freight.

This portfolio aims to promote, and facilitate people to choose, all forms of sustainable transport including public transport and active transport such as walking and cycling.

In order to support people to choose an alternative other than private car, we need to see investment in both services as well as infrastructure.

Well designed, frequent public transport services delivered by modern, accessible vehicles offer convenience and comfort which helps to encourage people to choose alternatives to the private car.

High visibility, bus stops with appropriate passenger waiting amenities further supports sustainable transport choices.

Facilities which reduce travel time such as bus priority and transit lanes create real opportunity for public transport to compete with other forms of travel.

To support active transport, provision of designated cycle ways, both on and off road and end of trip facilities is essential. Ideally, it also needs to be accompanied by programs to encourage cycling for transport, engender a culture of road sharing and educate both cyclists and motorists on appropriate road sharing behaviour.

I am pleased to see ongoing provision of funding of \$3.25 million per annum to Metro Tasmania for the purchase of low emission, accessible vehicles.

I am also pleased that annual funding of \$650,000 for passenger transport infrastructure and services is again provided across the forward estimates.

The provision of \$100,000 for a feasibility study into cycling on the North West coast is also very welcome.

While this is all a move in the right direction, the total amount being invested is well short of what it will take to move Tasmania to a sustainable transport culture.

For example, a transport-oriented Principal Urban Cycling Network has now been identified for each of Hobart, Launceston, Devonport and Burnie.

While parts of the network already exist and other parts have been scoped and designed, significant sections are undeveloped and unplanned.

To realise this network will require a substantial funding commitment. This is not something that can be delivered overnight. However, not to commence this endeavour in the present may condemn it for the future.

This would be a loss. When we make sustainable transport choices too difficult, people give up and they often do not return. We will use some of our Passenger Transport monies delivered in this Budget to deliver on improving these network access areas.

Corrections and Consumer Protection

We are continuing the corrections reform process. The additional \$2 million available to the Tasmanian Prison Service in each of the next two years will provide the Prison Service with the necessary time to implement the Change Management process and absence management strategy to deal with the cost of overtime.

The strategy focuses on effective management and reporting systems, personal accountability and proactive supervision.

An additional increase in recruitment has seen 18 new Correctional Officers join the TPS this financial year and it is expected that the next recruit program will commence in July 2012.

Education and Skills

The early years are critical to a child's life and are crucial for instilling learning and, as importantly, a love of learning.

In the 2012-2013 Budget, we continue to build on the great foundations in the early years by investing nearly \$6 million in the 2012-13 Budget to support the continued operation of the successful **Launching into Learning (LiL)** program.

The program has now been expanded to every single primary school following the 2011 results from a longitudinal study measuring the effects of Launching into Learning.

It particularly aims to improve educational outcomes for children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds.

In September, 2011, the University of Tasmania released its evaluation of the **Raising the Bar Closing the Gap** initiative in primary schools. The Report – *Advancing Literacy in Tasmanian Primary Schools* – found that the additional literacy funding and resourcing enhanced students' level of literacy in the participating schools.

The Government committed \$32 million over 4 years (2008-2011) for the Raising the Bar Closing the Gap program to support schools with the highest concentration of need receiving the greatest level of support.

Thirty-six schools participated in Raising the Bar Closing the Gap program which provided extra literacy teachers, targeted additional professional learning and released the principal to lead the improvement strategies.

The Raising the Bar Closing the Gap initiative has now been implemented in primary and secondary sectors.

As part of this initiative, \$11 million has been allocated in the 2012-13 Budget to go directly to targeted schools to be managed at the local level.

Extra funding of \$3.4 million has been allocated in the Budget for the next two years for the establishment of the **Tasmanian Professional Learning Institute**,

which will deliver high quality professional development for teachers and Departmental staff.

There is \$1.7 million in 2012-13 for the Institute to initially offer programs aimed at school based leadership roles but gradually it will expand its focus to encompass all areas of the department.

Building learning cultures in our schools and system is fundamental to school improvement.

Providing leadership, not just from the principal, is a key to students' success.

At the heart of my vision for Education is to prioritise investing in our people. We need to recruit, develop, support and retain the best teachers and school leaders – this is the key to changing students' lives.

The activities of the Tasmanian Professional Learning Institute will complement the development of our school improvement and accountability framework that will see the growth of networks of schools and colleges across the State.

We need to ensure we continue to maintain and develop our **infrastructure** to ensure our schools and educational facilities are sustainable into the future.

More than \$23 million has been allocated in the department's Capital Investment Program for the 2012-13 financial year which includes:

- \$6.850 million for LINC Tasmania including Infrastructure;
- \$4.5 million for the Port Sorell Primary School; and
- \$7.13 for Trade training Centres.

Furthermore, \$1 million will be available across the two financial years of 2012-14 to further reduce the **carbon footprint** of Tasmanian schools and colleges.

This important funding will enable the Department of Education to play its part in achieving the whole-of-government targets detailed in Tasmania's Action Plan to Reduce Emissions.

Schools and colleges will be able to apply for up to \$20,000 to undertake capital works to improve waste management, energy efficiency or address other climate change concerns.

Improved energy and water efficiencies will result in schools paying less on utility bills which will mean they will have more resources to divert into core areas of teaching and students.

The Education Department's recently released Emissions Reduction Plan (ERP) will provide the strategic framework to underpin funding allocations.

On the 3 April 2012, I announced an historic, long term approach to determine the **viability of Tasmanian government schools**.

State Cabinet has agreed to all eight recommendations contained in the School Viability Reference Group Report.

The Reference Group consulted with more than 300 individuals and organisations across the State during the consultation period before preparing their report.

The effect of Cabinet's decision to adopt the Reference Group's process is that no school could be identified for potential closure before June 2014 and no school would be forced to close until the end of 2015.

In the 2012-2013 Budget, there is additional funding of \$3.5 million over two years for a School Transition Fund to support and encourage school communities to take responsibility for their school's future.

The School Viability Reference Group's Report has challenged us to think of better ways to work with our school communities.

The School Transition Fund will be available to help school communities who may choose to voluntarily close, amalgamate, or co-locate.

This Transition Fund will primarily be used to support transition arrangements as outlined in the School Viability Reference Group Report and may include capital works and improvements at school sites where students from the closing, amalgamating, or co-locating schools will be educated.

Mr Speaker, to conclude, if this State Budget had been delivered by a Green majority government, or even a Green Treasurer it would have looked different. Having said that, there are a number of initiatives put forward by the Greens which have been delivered in this Budget, and on behalf of the Greens I wish to place on the record our thanks to the Treasurer for that.

When involved in government there are often difficult decision to be made and different priorities which need to be balanced. This Budget, whilst as I have already stated would have looked different if it was delivered by a Greens Treasurer, does deliver responsible flexibility in its fiscal strategy and the delivery of key policy initiatives.

We can, and must, afford to enshrine the principle of compassion, while also driving the economic transition underway by investing in building on Tasmania's strengths.