

Water plea to Canberra

Tasmania could duplicate Victoria's irrigation-based food production by harnessing only a few per cent of the



10 million megalitres of water that flows out to sea each year, according to the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers Association. CEO Bruce Williams is calling for \$120 million to be invested over four years to create the infrastructure needed for broad-acre irrigated food cropping in more areas of the State. At the same time, the Tasmanian Government has expressed its determination to solve rural water-supply problems and to open more land to intensive agriculture by securing a pro rata share of the \$10 billion National Plan for Water Security. Although the plan was devised largely to address the critical situation in the Murray-Darling Basin, Tasmania has received several assurances from Canberra that the state will not be left out.

Mr Williams said: "Tasmania had less than 1 per cent of the total Australian land area but had 12 per cent of all the nation's surface water run-off. Most of the run-off, which equates to 10 million megalitres, goes to sea. We would only need to harness 2 per cent to duplicate three-quarters of Victoria's irrigation."

Mr Williams said the nation's drought, the federal election and the water plan created a unique set of circumstances for an historic decision.

The Tasmanian Government is aiming higher than the TFGA in terms of funding, having defined nine projects it says should be supported:

- A Northern Midlands Irrigation Scheme to pipe water from the Poatina Power Station's tailrace into the Macquarie catchment;
- The Meadstone Dam on the St Pauls River to provide irrigation water for the Fingal Valley and lower South Esk catchment;
- Larger-scale irrigation dams in the upper Macquarie and South Esk catchments;
- Larger-scale dams in several north-east catchments to underpin a conversion from dry-land farming to irrigated dairying;
- Sourcing irrigation water from Hydro Tasmania's infrastructure for irrigation in the Forth catchment;
- Taking water from the Shannon River into weirs or dams for transfer to farms in adjacent catchments, such as the drought-stricken River Clyde catchment;
- Construction of pipelines to take water from the Meander Dam into as many as four adjoining catchments;
- Augmentation of the water supply for the Winnaleah Irrigation Scheme by piping water from the existing Frome Dam and a possible new dam on the Wyniford River; and
- Extension of the Coal Valley waste-water reuse scheme, by piping waste water from Hobart to Tea Tree and Brighton.

If distribution of the National Plan for Water Security funds was based on population state-by-state, Tasmania would be in line to receive 3 per cent or \$330 million.

The Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn, said: "I can see no reason why we should not get at least that proportion ... A fair allocation from the Federal Government would ensure the nine projects were affordable to the farming community and they could all proceed over the next two to five years. Our State is integral to the national drive to improve irrigated production ... we believe that serious consideration must be given to supporting the range of water projects we have developed."

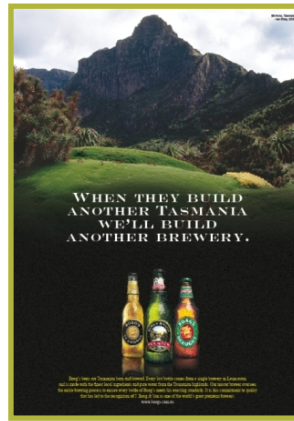
The nine proposed projects could provide up to 300,000 megalitres of additional irrigation water to farmers, while also addressing water quality problems in a number of rural towns. "This water has potential to increase farm production by over \$200 million a year," Mr Llewellyn said. "This would be a tremendous fillip for Australia's food supplies at a time when production in other areas is dropping rapidly due to continuing drought ... enhancing our irrigated production isn't about one single solution, but identifying a range of solutions that provide opportunities to get more from the water that is readily available in Tasmania. The nine projects provide an opportunity to give greater security to our primary industries sector – and in a sustainable way."

Consultants Marsden Jacob Associates were appointed in November to carry out a socio-economic study into the Northern Midlands proposal that could make 50,000 megalitres available to farmers and town water supplies through a 70km pipe from Poatina to Tunbridge via Campbell Town and Ross. An extension south to the Jordan River is also being considered.

It appears Tasmania has a unique opportunity to become the drying nation's temperate climate food bowl.

Footnote: During the election campaign, Labor promised a \$162.5 million water package for Tasmania, while the Coalition pledged \$100 million: \$50 million under a new Water for Communities scheme; and a further \$50 million to improve water infrastructure.

Tassie brands change hands



Changes of ownership were signalled for three iconic Tasmanian brands on a single tumultuous day in late spring. In related deals subject to regulatory approval, brewer J Boag & Son was acquired by Lion Nathan, while cheese-makers King Island Dairy and Lactos moved under control of Kirin Brewery Company.

Philippines-based San Miguel had been negotiating with related companies to off-load Australian assets for some months. Kirin has a 20 per cent stake in San Miguel, as well as a 46 per cent share of Lion Nathan.

San Miguel has controlled Boag's for seven years, after paying \$92 million for the business in 2000. San Miguel acquired National Foods, owner of the King Island cheese maker, for \$1.78 billion in late 2004. Lactos became part of National Foods in April 2006.

San Miguel's sale of Boag's to Lion Nathan for \$325 million is subject to regulatory approval and the completion of Kirin's \$2.8 billion purchase of National Foods. Kirin said it would discuss with Lion Nathan possible distribution and procurement synergies that could be generated by the National Foods transaction. The deals are expected to be completed next month.

Aside from proven production and marketing networks, the purchasers will acquire some of Australia's most respected food and beverage brands. The James Boag Premium brand accounts for about 7 per cent of this high-growth beer category and will give Lion Nathan a much-needed established nationwide brand. Lion Nathan's existing beers are generally restricted to their state-of-origin markets. Boag's Draught will add a further well-established mainstream offering to Lion Nathan's portfolio.

King Island Dairy is widely accepted as Australia's premier cheese producer and has a raft of national and international awards.

The mystique of a mid-Bass Strait location and the legend of straw mattresses from a shipwreck creating unique island pastures are nearly as valuable in the marketplace as the proven quality of King Island's milk.

Burnie-based Lactos is Australia's biggest producer of European-style soft cheeses and its many awards include a World Champion medal won in the United States for its Signature Camembert. Lactos accounts for 40 per cent of the Australian soft cheese market. National Foods' other key brands are Pura Milk, Yoplait yoghurt and Berri fruit juices.

Commenting on the Boag's deal, Lion Nathan CEO Rob Murray said: "This is an acquisition offering strong strategic value. Boag's is a company with great brands and a reputation for brewing excellence and its market focus is highly complementary to Lion Nathan." J Boag & Sons reported sales revenue totalling \$92 million in 2006-07 on volumes of around 45 million litres, which generated earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation of \$17.9 million.

Mr Murray said his trans-Tasman company planned to grow the Boags business and use its own distribution muscle to make the product more readily available across Australia. He said Lion Nathan would not be taking a heavy-handed approach and intended to consult with J Boag workers and the local community before making changes.

"All J Boag & Son brands are steeped in Tasmanian heritage and their distinct positioning offers further growth opportunities across Australia," Mr Murray said. "Our intention is to invest in the business and to grow it Certainly, there will be no job losses around the brewery and we will keep brewing in Tasmania."

There has also been a significant move in the tourism sector, with entrepreneur Ken Altona selling his two eco-tourism businesses to a private equity joint venture. The Bay of Fires experience is a three-day guided walk in the State's north-east with overnight stays in a remote, luxurious lodge. Cradle Mountain Huts provides five-day guided walks on the Overland Track with overnight stays and catered meals in private huts.

The buyers – a joint venture between investment vehicle Gresham and tourism figure Grant Hunt - told *The Mercury* they intended to acquire "a substantial Tasmanian footprint."

Meanwhile, historic Hadleys Hotel will be rebranded Grand Mercure Hadleys Hotel Hobart and will be operated by the Accor group on behalf of the owners, the Doherty family. The Hobart City Council has approved a \$30 million upgrade and expansion of the hotel, with work expected to commence in February.

Koch spills some secrets

By Christopher Bantick

After living for several years outside Tasmania, dual Miles Franklin Award winner, Christopher Koch, is back in Richmond. His new novel, *The Memory Room*, begins in Tasmania, with a boy fascinated by secrets and lies. Vincent Austin shares a love of the arcane and espionage with Erika Lange, the daughter of a post-war German immigrant. Later, at university, a third character, Derek Bradley, enters.



Koch says that it was not moving back to Tasmania which prompted him to write Hobart into the book. "I have revisited New Town ... when I was 13 we moved from New Town to Lenah Valley. New Town was a village for the gentry, recalling Hobart at an earlier time. The three main characters and where they live are not important. They are in Tasmania but not of it."

As much as Tasmania may be the inception of the story, Koch's themes embody the development of the "practice of spying," visited in childhood and defining for the characters as they become adults. So what is it about spying and Koch? After all The Cold War is well over.

"Cold War spies were unpopular, largely through KGB propaganda. Now with Islamist terrorists, spies are in the front line. It is, if anything, a desirable occupation."

“The book is obviously not so much a thriller, but what I am interested in *The Memory Room* is [exploring] obsessive secrecy. We see this with Vincent and Erika in the early stages and I’m interested in looking at what sort of person is interested and obsessed with secrets like Vincent. I wanted to see what happens when this fascination moves from childhood to adult life.”

Vincent, like his friend Derek, when at university, has ambitions to enter Foreign Affairs. But Vincent is recruited by ASIS, Australia’s overseas intelligence service. Meanwhile Erika, a journalist, becomes a press officer for Foreign Affairs. Much of the novel has high levels of detail which suggests an insider’s sense of the spying game. So if Koch is no spy himself, and he laughs at the suggestion, how did he research the story?

“I have known a number of ex-spies and they assisted me with the espionage background. I have known people who lived double lives and in one case, it was not revealed until he suddenly disappeared and then a body turned up outside Hobart.”

The central dramatic events of the novel take place in the ‘80s, at the end of the Cold War and in Beijing. So are the dark days of the Cold War instructive on how spies still operate? “I think what has been evident is that countries are going back to first principles. Under Clinton in the US, where the CIA method was not like the Cold War, what was soon found was that they had no-one on the ground who spoke a middle-eastern language. The realisation was that operatives needed to go back to first principles and know the language of the people. In many ways, Vincent becomes the ideal operative. He’s suited to the life. He’s a loner and an idealist. What happens in China, which is a catastrophe, is that he goes beyond the bounds of what is required in his job.”

Koch says that this novel presented him with some new challenges. It is not that the story does not move quickly or that the characters are not involving or satisfyingly drawn. “When I began, I didn’t know what was the right method of narrative. I had three characters that I was juggling. I planned this book carefully, as some characters try to take over. If you are lucky, the characters grow in ways that are surprising.”

Although Koch has a much awarded and enviable track record as a novelist, there is something disarmingly humble about him as *The Memory Room* arrives in bookshops.

“I just hope readers will like it and be absorbed. I can’t predict what readers will like. I write what interests me and hope it will interest readers as well.”

The Memory Room by Christopher Koch, Knopf, hardback, \$49.95, paperback, \$32.95.

Veneer trade under way



Ta Ann Tasmania consigned its first export shipment of rotary-peeled veneer from its \$35 million mill in the Huon

Valley during November. The 12,000cu m load of environmentally certified veneer from regrowth eucalypts took four days to load on to a new, specially built vessel, *MV Matsumae*.

The veneer, valued at \$3.4 million, will be shipped to Japan for use in the manufacture of high-quality flooring. Ta Ann Tasmania (TAT) Director, Dr Simon Kang, said: “The veneer is produced in the Huon from regrowth timber that would otherwise be used for woodchips. We plan to export 80,000 cu m a year from Hobart and our overseas customers want product that is sourced from sustainably managed forests. We have secured Chain of Custody certification for our veneer under the Australian Forestry Standard.”

TAT is building a second rotary veneer mill at Smithton and hopes to have it in production in the second half of 2008. The company says the second mill is required to take full advantage of demand for Tasmanian eucalypt veneer. Both mills are designed to peel short logs, known as billets, in a process that is often compared to unfurling a roll of kitchen paper.

Forestry Tasmania’s Managing Director, Bob Gordon, said: “A Forestry Growth Plan announced a decade ago said our state needed two in-field, forest-processing centres incorporating modern sawmilling and rotary veneer milling to process regrowth eucalyptus in the south and north-west ... the first processing centre is now producing export product from the Huon and the second will begin operating in 2008 at Smithton.

So we're well on the way to achieving the value-adding goals that were set when 90 per cent of Tasmania's product was being exported in semi-raw form as woodchips. Instead of the value of each tonne of exported product being \$70 (the woodchip price), it will be around \$800 for veneer."

The Huon and Smithton wood centres are both designed to be self-contained processing facilities, where newly harvested pulpwood logs are brought from logging sites to be electronically scanned and measured, to determine their sale price, and sorted to ensure they are directed to the process that best suits their quality and maximises their value. The Huon centre has attracted a private sawmiller employing 19 people, a small catering business and even a micro-business that sharpens saws on-site. FT is investigating the feasibility of using wood waste from on-site activities to generate electricity.

FT recently achieved Standards Australia endorsement – following a three-year investigation – for the Australian Forestry Standard (ASF) it uses in managing native forests. It expects all products from AFS-certified native forests to ultimately be recognised as "eco-premium" products in international markets.

Mr Gordon said the veneer project had created employment in regional Tasmania and would bring other benefits to the wider community. "Already, there has been substantial reduction in log-truck traffic through Hobart because the new mill ... is processing logs that would previously have gone on trucks to the woodchip mill at Triabunna."

A wood-supply agreement between TAT and FT guarantees the supply of 150,000 tonnes of eucalyptus regrowth pulpwood annually from state forests to the Huon mill for at least 10 years. Under the Circular Head wood supply agreement, 115,000 tonnes a year of regrowth pulpwood will be supplied to the new Smithton veneer mill.

Our food hits new highs

By Graeme Phillips



Two of Tasmania's top restaurants have recently been judged the best of their kind in Australia. Stillwater River Restaurant, Mill Providore and Gallery in Launceston have won *The Australian Travel and Tourism Award* for the best food experience in 2007, while Hobart's Marque 1V topped this year's *Savour Australian Restaurant and Catering Awards for Excellence* as the country's best modern Australian restaurant.

Sarah Black of the Mill Providore said: "Working as part of a wider food community within a dynamic region producing exceptional wines, unique food products, abundant wild and farmed seafood and game is truly an honour".

Stillwater and the Mill are integrated operations housed in a very elegant, contemporary make-over of an historic waterfront flour mill. The restaurant provides exciting and beautifully crafted food from a produce-driven menu sparkling with Asian-accented flavours, while the Mill Providore is an Alladin's cave of foods, wines and ingredients from around the world, a real treasure trove for those who love eating and living.

Opened in 2000, Stillwater was envisioned as a showcase for Tasmania's wine and food produce. An instant hit with locals and visitors alike, this is but the latest award in a long list chef Don Cameron's cooking and excellent front-of-house-service have brought Stillwater's way.

Marque 1V is a more recent arrival, introducing starched linen and stylish fine dining to Hobart's crowded waterfront café scene only two years ago. Here, chef Paul Foreman sources the best of Tasmania's produce and gives them a modern, cutting-edge, very 21st century tweak in combinations that are visually brilliant, balanced, exciting and palate-popping good.

Marque 1V is accumulating an impressive list of awards for such a young establishment:

- Winner 2007 Best Modern Australian Restaurant RCA National Awards for Excellence;
- Winner 2006 Best Overall Restaurant AHA/RCA State Awards for Excellence;
- Winner 2006 Best Modern Australian Restaurant AHA/RCA State Awards for Excellence;
- Winner 2005 Best Modern Australian Restaurant AHA/RCA State Awards for Excellence;
- Top 100 Restaurants in Australia 2007 & 2008 *Gourmet Traveller Restaurant Guide*

And, to round out a very successful year for Tasmania, Home Hill's 2005 Pinot Noir from the Huon Valley has just been awarded a trophy and the top gong at the 2007 Tri Nations Wine Challenge, beating the best from Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. The acclaim comes on top of the wine's trophies won in 2006 as the best of the 54 pinot noirs and best estate-grown wine among 1200 entries at the Boutique Wines of Australia Awards. To cap it off, their follow-up vintage, the 2006 pinot, has also just picked up its first gold medal at a mainland wine show.

Visitor spending on rise



Spending by holiday visitors to Tasmania increased by 9 per cent in 2006-07 to \$893.7 million, according to Tourism Tasmania's annual report to Parliament. The average length of stay for holiday visitors increased to 9.5 nights and total nights spent in the state by holiday visitors reached 3.65 million.

Tasmanian Visitor Survey figures [covering all visitors] showed that:

- 827,000 visitors came to Tasmania on scheduled air and sea transport;
- This was a 1.8 per cent increase on the 12 months ending June 2006;
- Visitors stayed 7.27 million nights, up 10 per cent;
- Visitors stayed an average of 8.8 nights;
- Visitors spent \$1.32 billion, up 13 per cent.

The Minister for Tourism, Arts and the Environment, Paula Wriedt, linked the solid figures to enhanced visitor access. "As an island holiday destination, there is probably nothing more important to the on-going growth and sustainability of our tourism industry than the ability to be able to get visitors here," she said. "Even after the collapse of Ansett in September 2001, we were able to get the volume of lost seats back on track through Qantas within a matter of weeks. We have since seen the introduction of low-cost fares to Tasmania from Virgin and Jetstar, as well as the recently announced arrival of Tiger Airways."

The number of airline seats available to and from Tasmania has increased by 48 per cent over the past decade. "There are now over 3.5 million seats in and out of Tasmania annually, a huge leap from the 2.4 million available in 1998," Ms Wriedt said.

Average airline load factors have also improved from 68 per cent to 78 per cent over the 10-year period. "As more choices become available, more people are taking up the opportunity to visit Tasmania," Ms Wriedt said. "We recently saw Launceston pass its one millionth passenger for the year, a figure set to soar when Tiger enters the market."

Ms Wriedt said the changes occurring in both domestic and international tourism markets meant that Tasmania must continue to promote itself creatively and innovatively. "Early this year, for the first time in 15 years, Tourism Tasmania began aggressively marketing the state through a new interstate television campaign on free-to-air and pay TV.

This has been complemented with outdoor billboards, cleverly worded print advertisements and a large number of feature articles. The State Government's \$16 million Tourism Promotion Plan continues to support the marketing of Tasmania as a destination, while also encouraging new cooperative marketing programs with local and regional tourism organisations."

The State Government's contentious five-year sponsorship of the Hawthorn Football Club has been endorsed in a report by economic consultants S-COMM. The arrangement, including a Tasmanian logo on the club's playing strip and four matches a year at Launceston's York Park, cost the Government \$3.28 million a year and returned a net economic gain of more than \$9 million. Among the 13,403 interstate visitors for the games at York Park, more than half stay in Tasmania for four days or more.

Meanwhile, one of the state's tourism leaders, Peter Neilson, was presented with the Minister's Award for Outstanding Contribution to Tourism at the annual Tasmanian Tourism Awards at Wrest Point Hotel Casino. Ms Wriedt, said: "This award recognises the achievement of an individual who is viewed by peers and the industry as having given exceptional service to Tasmanian tourism. Throughout his lengthy [30-year] career, Peter Neilson has been dedicated to growing the Tasmanian tourism industry and driving benefits for the community. Since starting his career with the Department of Tourism, Peter has gone on to own three travel agencies, and to introduce cable hang-gliding to the Tasmanian tourism industry. For over a decade, Peter's dedication and hard work in outdoor adventure tourism generated nationwide media exposure for the State."

Mr Nielson's recent contributions to the Launceston and Tamar Valley Tourism Association were further evidence of his commitment to the industry, Ms Wriedt said.

The Minister's Young Achiever Award went to east coast accommodation manager Ian Reed. "At just 30 years of age, Ian Reed has already achieved considerable business success and made a significant contribution to Tasmania's tourism industry, particularly in the east and west coast regions," Ms Wriedt said. "Known for his professionalism and passion ...Ian has recently orchestrated the redevelopment and growth of Diamond Island Apartments, as well as being an active member of the Freycinet Coast Tourism Association."

Marque IV was acknowledged for winning the Restaurant and Catering national category for Best Modern Australian Restaurant (see Graeme Phillip's report in this newsletter); Tall Timbers Hotel Motel for winning the Australian Hotels Association's national category of Best Mid-Range Accommodation; and Country Club Tasmania for its recognition in the AHA's national category for Best Gaming Venue.

Lobsters bouncing back



There are now twice as many southern rock lobsters of legal catching size in Tasmanian waters as there were in 1994, when the population dropped to a record low. The recovery is attributed to a range of management measures, most notably a quota system introduced in 1998 to limit the annual commercial catch to 1500 tonnes. After abalone, lobsters (or "crays") are the state's most valuable seafood export, earning \$28.93 million in 2006-07.

Announcing the results of a recent survey by the Tasmanian Aquaculture and Fisheries Institute, the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn, said it was important that stocks continued to increase to ensure that the fishery was well placed for current and future challenges. "Increases in stock levels are not evenly distributed around the State, with distinct differences between inshore and offshore stocks, as well as between the northern and southern regions," he said. "This raises a number of complex management issues. Government and industry are exploring options to sustainably take advantage of regional stock differences, while continuing the rebuilding process."

The revival in lobster numbers has delivered benefits to fishermen, who have halved the hours needed to catch their quotas. Improved profitability has lifted the combined market value of quota units to nearly \$500 million, up 210 per cent since their introduction nine years ago.

44.6pc of State protected

Tasmania's public and private reserve system has grown to a combined total of 3.04 million hectares - or 44.6 per cent of the state's land area. The Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn, said the change had been driven by a 15-fold increase over 10 years in private protected land. He said the total area of reserved land now approached half the landmass of Tasmania - far exceeding international standards and well ahead of any other State. The private reserve estate, which includes private sanctuaries and conservation covenants, has increased from just over 5000 hectares in 1997 to more than 82,000 hectares today."

Mr Llewellyn said the increase was testament to the success of programs such as the Private Forest Reserves Program, the Protected Areas on Private Land program, the Non-forest Vegetation Program, the Midlands Biodiversity Hotspot Program and the new integrated Private Land Conservation Program. "We expect to see the private reserve estate grow even more over the coming year with landowners volunteering to covenant forested areas under the Australian Government's Forest Conservation Fund."

Economy rumbles on

The Tasmanian Government achieved a \$15 million surplus in its Net Operating Balance in 2006-07, along with a Fiscal Balance surplus of \$49 million, according to the Treasurer's Annual Financial Report to Parliament. "The better than anticipated results for the 2006-07 financial year reflect a continuation of growth in state-sourced revenue including returns from Government businesses, mineral royalties and property and payroll taxes, and indicates that, overall, the State's economy is strong," the Treasurer, Michael Aird said. "In addition, the Report shows a Cash Surplus of \$168 million and a Consolidated Fund Surplus of \$19 million."

Mr Aird said the Government's Balance Sheet remained strong, with General Government Sector Net Debt a negative \$409 million at 30 June 2007, the third consecutive year of improvement in this measure.

Convention bonanza

Tasmania's convention and meeting sector is booming with 36 national conferences bringing 8600 delegates to the state in the September quarter. They contributed \$18 million to the economy in a traditionally poor time of the year for the tourist industry. In September alone, more than 4,000 delegates visited Tasmania to participate in 16 national conventions. Overall, there was an 8 per cent rise in the number of visitors to Tasmania compared with the same period in 2006, along with a 16 per cent increase in visitor nights. "This has resulted in a 10 per cent increase in the total amount of money spent by visitors ... a fantastic endorsement of Tourism Tasmania's marketing strategies," the Minister for Tourism, Paula Wriedt, told Parliament.

TMAG design team

An expert architectural team has been appointed to develop a masterplan to guide the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery through a \$30 million redevelopment program announced during last year's State election. Following a tender process, award-winning national designers Johnson Pilton Walker will join outstanding Tasmanian architectural firm Terroir to deliver the plan by May next year. The masterplan will integrate the site and its heritage buildings and determine how the museum's collections of more than 800,000 objects should be housed and displayed.

Better planning plan

Councils on the north-west coast and King Island have signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Tasmanian Government to work towards a more standardised approach to development and land-use issues. The Minister for Planning, Steven Kons, said: "A regional perspective has been the missing element in planning schemes throughout Tasmania and this region is leading the way with this new approach." The State Government has committed \$500,000 to the project, which Mr Kons said would assist decision making and provide better outcomes for councils, developers and the community.

Rhodes award to lawyer

Lionel Nichols, 24, a Melbourne-based lawyer who graduated from UTAS with first-class honours in Arts and Law and then completed his Master of International Politics degree, is the state's 2007 Rhodes Scholar. Mr Nichols, who won the Tim Hawkins Memorial Scholarship earlier this year, will spend six months at the International Criminal Tribunal at The Hague next year, before taking up his scholarship at Oxford University in October.

Roar Film deal

Roar Film's award-winning e-learning module *Celebrating Us* is to become available to Tasmanian school pupils. The multi-media module that looks at cultural identity, migration, stereotyping and prejudice is being used by more than a million students in Britain. Tasmania's Education Department has now agreed to introduce the module to secondary classrooms.

Derwent on the mend

The 2007 Derwent Estuary Report Card. Released in November showed there has been a 40-60 per cent reduction in the lead levels in mussels north of the Tasman Bridge and in Ralph's Bay. Zinc levels in oysters north of the bridge have also dropped by nearly 50 per cent, but more improvement is needed before shellfish can be safely eaten.

A full copy of the report card can be found at: www.derwentestuary.org.au/.

Retailers set record

Retail trade in Tasmania increased by 0.5 per cent in September to a record \$426.5 million, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. Hospitality and services recorded the largest increase of any component (up 1.7 per cent in Tasmania and 0.4 per cent nationally).

Judicial appointment

The Director of Tasmania's Legal Aid Commission, Mr Norman Reaburn, has been appointed to the Governing Council of the Australasian Institute of Judicial Administration. Mr Reaburn will join another Tasmanian, Peter Dixon, in helping the commission to promote excellence in the administration of justice throughout Australasia and the surrounding region. The appointment is for three years.

Tassie trainees excel

A Don College teacher's aide, Evan Brett, has won the Australian Trainee of the Year, while carpentry and joinery apprentice Warwick Johnstone, employed by Meadson Constructions, has been declared the Australian School-based Apprentice of the Year.

Investment rises

More than \$7.8 billion in investment was underway in Tasmania in the September quarter, according to Access Economics. Overall investment in the State grew 15.7 per cent in the 12 months to September, according to the group's report.

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