

Premier unveils brand identity



A new Tasmanian brand identity - a blue-green contemporary take on the State's widely recognised geographical outline - was launched by the Premier, David Bartlett, in December

after a nine-month development project overseen by the Brand Tasmania Council. "This new brand identity will help link together many of the positive messages Tasmania sends to the world," Mr Bartlett told a launch gathering at the Design Centre - Tasmania in Launceston. "It will further strengthen our position in external markets, helping us to manage our economy through the present global uncertainty. It will help our businesses ride the wave when the recessionary fears begin to fade."

The new brand identity is protected by copyright and will be available to any business that is a current financial member of Brand Tasmania. It will also be available for non-commercial organisations in specific circumstances.



Guidelines for the logo's use were described by Mr Bartlett as "flexible" and designed to complement the diverse branding that already exists in the State.

Following feedback from focus groups in key markets, it was decided not to add a slogan to the logo. "Our researchers received a clear message that there were already too many slogans creating 'clutter' in the marketplace," Mr Bartlett told the launch audience. "We decided to go with that simple, potent word: 'Tasmania'."

Mr Barlett said the State's brand already had significant global traction and research showed that the word 'Tasmania' conveyed positive messages to many people. "Italians use our wool to produce their costliest suits," Mr Bartlett said.

"European judges have recently given our Sauvignon Blanc a world's best award. And popular travel guide publisher, *Lonely Planet*, has deemed the Bay of Fires the best destination on Earth. Seafood, cheese, fine furniture, beer, ships and marine evacuation systems are among the products constantly adding to this positive story. Have no doubt that the word *Tasmania* is loaded."

Recent research in target markets had shown the word evoked such positive concepts as *natural*; *confident*; and *surprising*.



"A logo is a relatively simple thing," Mr Bartlett said. "Making sure it aligns with existing perceptions of Tasmania and with the aspirations of many enterprises and their widely varying communication styles is far from simple." He said he expected the logo to be around for a long time and to deliver bottom-line value to businesses across all Tasmanian industries. "The long-term effectiveness of this identity will depend on its uptake by the enterprises you control, as well as by many other businesses across Tasmania," Mr Bartlett told the attendees. "Please spread the word."

Ta Ann wins national Export Award



Eucalypt veneer producer Ta Ann Tasmania Pty Ltd was named Australia's Emerging Exporter of the Year at the annual Australian Export Awards in

Melbourne. Ta Ann commissioned its first Tasmanian rotary veneer mill in the Huon Valley in 2007 and recently began exports from a second mill in the north-west.

A subsidiary of one of Malaysia's biggest forest-product businesses, Ta Ann Tasmania has invested \$70 million in the two mills, generating employment for 138 Tasmanians and other flow-on economic benefits to the Geeveston and Smithton districts. The mills use rotary-peeling technology to add value to short logs - known as billets - that would otherwise be chipped for export. The peeling process is often compared to unfurling a roll of kitchen paper. Tasmanian eucalypt veneer fetches around \$800 a tonne, compared with less than \$70 a tonne for woodchips.

When the Smithton mill reaches full production, Ta Ann will be generating 145,000 cu m of dried veneer a year, worth about \$35 million. The veneer is shipped on the company's own specially built vessel, the *MV Matsumae*. Ten-year wood-supply agreements with Forestry Tasmania guarantee 150,000 tonnes of eucalyptus regrowth pulpwood a year to the Huon mill and 115,000 tonnes a year to the Smithton mill.

Ta Ann provides Chain of Custody certification for its Tasmanian eucalypt veneer under the Australian Forestry Standard to assure its overseas customers that the product is sourced from sustainably managed forests.

"This is truly a value adding and exporting success story where regrowth and plantation timber is peeled and exported to Malaysia as veneer," the Treasurer and Minister for Economic Development, Michael Aird, said. "Ta Ann's management and staff are to be congratulated on winning this prestigious award within their first two years of operating in Tasmania."

The 2008 Prime Minister's Australian Exporter of the Year Award was won by Appen, a Sydney-based ICT business that provides services in 80 languages and exports 98 per cent of its products and services for use in call centres and other voice-activated applications.

Tasmania's other national finalists at the presentation dinner at the National Gallery of Victoria on December 5, were:

- The Learning Edge International Pty Ltd - ICT winner and Tasmanian Exporter of the Year
- Australian Quality Honey Pty Ltd - Agribusiness

- The Hutchins School - Education and Training
- Incat Holdings Pty Ltd - Large Advance Manufacturer
- Dobsons Vegetable Machinery Pty Ltd - Regional Exporter
- Tasmania Distillery Pty Ltd - Small Business
- Lightning Protection International Pty Ltd - Small to Medium Manufacturer
- Pivot maritime International - Small to Medium Services
- Premier Travel Tasmania Pty Ltd - Sports Events and Tourism

Further information: www.exporttowards.gov.au

Saffire set to sparkle at Coles Bay



Construction has commenced at Saffire, the Federal Group's new boutique retreat facing The Hazards at

Coles Bay. The luxury destination will cater for a maximum of 40 guests at any one time in 20 free-standing suites, offering an experience that the group's Managing Director, Greg Farrell, says will compare with the world's finest exotic five-star destinations.

"Our award-winning architects, Robert Morris-Nunn and Associates, have created a truly unique coastal sanctuary that introduces a new level of luxury to Tasmania - an equivalent standard to any of the world's finest properties," Mr Farrell said. "Saffire will be a world-class experience in every way. From the outset, our intention has been to create a unique and sophisticated destination of the highest quality, featuring the very best that Tasmania has to offer. I am extraordinarily proud that this has been achieved. In a place of unmatched beauty, Saffire will include a world-class day spa and gym, guest lounge, premium meeting facilities and will showcase Tasmania's fresh produce and exceptional wines in the fine dining restaurant."



Saffire will offer three levels of suites: six luxury; 10 deluxe, and four premium. Rates will range from \$1,000 to \$3,000 per suite, per night.

"Each suite will offer magnificent ocean views, designer bathrooms, private decks, king-size beds, separate lounge areas and state-of-the-art audio, visual and communications technology," Mr Farrell said. "Suites range in internal size from a generous 80sq m to 150sq m for the premium suites - which will feature private plunge pools. From my perspective, it was essential that we got this right and that Saffire would provide the discerning guest with a truly five-star experience ... Saffire will be both sensitive to its natural surroundings and sensitive to guests' well-being."



The coastal sanctuary's name is drawn from the notions 'fire' and 'water' and also evokes an association with Tasmania's only deposits of natural sapphires on nearby Freycinet Peninsula. The name also creates an obvious link with the Bay of Fires region to the north, which was branded recently by the Lonely Planet group as the best destination in the world.

Saffire is located 2km from Coles Bay on 12ha of forest-fringed private land sloping gently to the shores of Great Oyster Bay. It offers spectacular views of the imposing Hazards range, arguably Australia's finest coastal landscape. Nearby Wineglass Bay is recognised as one of the world's top 10 beaches and Freycinet National Park is at Saffire's doorstep.

The Federal Group has invested more than \$32 million in the project. Construction commenced in the December quarter and Saffire is scheduled to be open by December 2009.

The property will be internationally promoted under the award-winning Pure Tasmania brand, alongside the group's other iconic assets, including the Henry Jones Art Hotel, Freycinet Lodge, Cradle Mountain Lodge and Strahan Village.

Learn, indulge at Agrarian Kitchen

A schoolhouse built in the Derwent Valley in 1887 has been converted into Tasmania's first farm-based cooking school.



Chef Rodney Dunn and his wife Séverine Demanet will offer full-day classes at The Agrarian Kitchen in Lachlan, giving their guests a paddock-to-plate gastronomic experience. Visitors will learn how ingredients grow, how they are harvested and have an opportunity to learn how to cook them, before rounding out the experience with a convivial feast. Mr Dunn, a contributing food editor to *Australian Gourmet Traveller* magazine, was once an apprentice to Tasmanian Brand Ambassador, Tetsuya Wakuda. Tetsuya travelled from Sydney to Lachlan to attend the launch in late November.

The hosts have spent the past 16 months developing the building and the former school grounds. They have planted an extensive garden, including heirloom vegetable varieties, an orchard of 37 trees and a 500sq m berry patch. There are Barnvelder chooks, geese, Jersey cows and Wessex saddleback pigs.

The Minister for Tourism, Michelle O'Byrne, said: "The Agrarian Kitchen adds a new dimension to Tasmania's highly regarded food and wine experiences. The Agrarian Kitchen will give visitors to Tasmania a chance to embark on a culinary journey and there is a wonderful opportunity to link this with other food, wine and wilderness experiences across the State."

The Government supported the project with a \$185,000 grant through the Tourism Promotion Plan's Product and Experience Development Grant Program.

Ms O'Byrne said: "The program provides funding assistance to projects that are 'market ready', able to improve visitation to regions and deliver a Tasmanian experience that exceeds visitor expectations." The \$16 million Tourism Promotion Plan was established by the State Government to develop programs to promote tourism following the sale of the *Spirit of Tasmania III*.

We're ready, Tasmania tells AFL



Tasmania presented its business case to the AFL Commission in December for a team based at Aurora Stadium in Launceston to compete in the national competition. Premier David Bartlett led a delegation that handed over a detailed document titled

Ready when you are. The State now has an opportunity to conduct a presentation of its arguments to a full meeting of AFL commissioners in 2009.

The Tasmanians met senior AFL executives, including Chief Executive Andrew Demetriou and commissioner Mike Fitzpatrick on 12 December. Mr Demetriou, who has shown little sympathy for the Tasmanian cause in the past, conceded afterwards: "They ticked the boxes in terms of stadium revenue and the corporate support you need to support a football club."

However, Mr Demetriou, also signalled to the media that his own priorities were little changed. "Our priorities going forward are with the Gold Coast and western Sydney," he confirmed. "That doesn't rule Tasmania out at some point in the future. Things change, the world changes."

Mr Bartlett said there were a number of options that could see a licence become available to Tasmania. The global financial crisis was having an effect on the AFL's plans to expand into rugby league strongholds on the Gold Coast and in western Sydney - and was already affecting existing clubs. "The opportunities will come about through an extra licence arriving via a club folding, a Melbourne club relocating, or one of the Gold Coast or western Sydney opportunities not coming to fruition ...

I am extremely pleased that the AFL has agreed to allow us the opportunity to present our business case to the full AFL Commission early next year. I also welcome the AFL's commitment to work with the State Government to further develop our bid, so that when an opportunity arises for Tasmania to be included in the AFL competition we are fully prepared to hit the ground running. The submission we took to the AFL today presents a compelling case for a Tasmanian AFL team, particularly in that it meets all the criteria set down by the AFL for a licence."

Mr Bartlett said a future Tasmania Football Club would:

- Generate a profit of more than \$1 million a year.
- Play AFL football at Aurora Stadium in Launceston, which will rank in the top four nationally for net stadium returns.
- Attract a membership base that will easily exceed the AFL criteria of 20,000-plus.

The Tasmanian proposal has already attracted corporate sponsorship of more than \$1.5 million a year. International confectionary company Mars has signed on as naming-rights sponsor with a \$4 million deal over three years, while two further major sponsorships have been agreed with TOTE Tasmania (\$500,000 over five years) and MyState Financial (\$300,000 over three years).

An important plank in Tasmania's argument to the AFL was a comparison between Aurora Stadium and Skilled Stadium, the home of the highly successful Geelong club. Geelong is the envy of most other Victorian clubs because of the financial yield from its 25,000-capacity home ground. Aurora can accommodate about 21,000 fans. "A boutique stadium, much the same size as [Skilled Stadium], means the net yield from the stadium is very strong and that makes it a very viable bid - much more viable than a club playing in a 100,000-seat arena that they can't fill."

It is believed North Melbourne made less than \$600,000 in 2008 from eight home games at Telstra Dome, a large venue that is expensive to lease. Meanwhile, Geelong made about \$600,000 from each of its eight matches at the smaller, less costly Skilled Stadium.

Mr Bartlett said the business case stated clearly that Tasmania was ready for whatever opportunities eventuate in the AFL landscape. "Effectively ... the ball is now in the AFL's court," he said.

Following its AFL engagement, the bid team met a number of Melbourne-based football identities with Tasmanian connections, including Tim Lane, Max Walker, Robert Shaw, Brendon Gale, John Bingley and Stuart Spencer, to discuss prospective interstate support for a Tasmanian side.

The Minister for Sport and Recreation, Michelle O'Byrne, said: "Names like Hudson, Baldock, Stewart and Hart resonate in Australian football history. But we deserve to be in the AFL because we meet all the criteria for an AFL licence, not simply because we have such proud football heritage. Pride and passion is one thing; sound economic arguments backed by solid numbers is another."

Tasmania's AFL campaign began in March 2008 when an initiative by *The Mercury* was supported by the State Government. Its immediate prospects will be revealed when the issuing of future licences is formally discussed at an AFL Commission meeting in February 2009.

Further information:

www.tassiefootyteam.com.au

Dyer's artistic journey distilled

By Penny Thow

The burgeoning career of leading artist Geoff Dyer has been encapsulated in a recently released book *A Tasmanian Perspective: The Art of*



Geoff Dyer, launched on top of a very productive year for the artist. Dyer exhibited in China in May with fellow Tasmanians Ping Chen and Anton Holzner; his works were included at the Melbourne Art Fair in August; he had solo exhibitions in Melbourne in September; in Sydney in October; and at Despard Gallery in Hobart in December.

The 160-page book features large full colour plates of Dyer's paintings of Mt Wellington; his Archibald Prize portraits; Tasmanian landscapes, including West Coast rivers, Ocean Beach, and the south-east coast; as well as a selection of abstract landscapes. It also includes some of Dyer's earlier paintings dating back to 1969, family photographs, critiques of his work by Melbourne-based curator Damian Smith and comments by Dyer himself. The prologue by former professor of Australian literature and Rhodes scholar, Peter Pierce, interweaves details of Dyer's personal life with his artistic influences and professional career. It describes the artist as one of the latest in a long and eccentric line of writers and painters who have created a specifically Tasmanian romanticism.

Dyer sees the book as a visual diary. "From the very first paintings you can remember where you were, the smells, what you had eaten, what car you were driving, the music you were listening to," he said. "The book was also a chance to reflect on earlier Tasmanian artists and their influence on me, as well as influences of overseas artists."

Dyer said he had wanted the book to include earlier works as well as his more recent paintings. "It was important for me to see what thematic development I've made over all those years," he said. "It's clarified for me what I've been about as a painter. You look at the strong points, the weak points and adversities, when you've been in self doubt - and I can see it all in the book. Now it is time to take stock, keep going and hopefully to break new ground. You're only as good as your last painting. I'll paint on with a fair amount of confidence, but I'll still have the self doubts that I've had all my life about my work. I'd like to think that the abstract series in the latter part of the book will be a continuing format for the future, a distillation and synthesising of the earlier pictorial images."

The book was launched at Despard Gallery by Tasmanian author Richard Flanagan who was the subject of Dyer's 2003 Archibald Prize winning painting. Flanagan's speech attested to his insight into the man behind the paintings. Displaying Buckingham and North Hobart football club jumpers - both clubs Dyer played for - Flanagan elicited peals of laughter with his tales of Dyer's early drawing lessons and his love of and involvement in football, including an incident behind play involving Dyer and Flanagan's brother Martin.

Flanagan spoke of meeting Dyer in the 1980s at Knopwoods pub in Salamanca Place, and the first of many long and wide-ranging conversations between the two over beers, or glasses of red. This first occasion involved a malfunctioning ATM, considerable confusion on Dyer's part about the origins of a \$50 note, and his suggestion they should build on their good luck at the casino.

Over the years, Flanagan developed a great admiration for Dyer. "I loved the way he talked about life and I discovered beneath his carnival front, a gentleness and true humility," he said. "I realised art mattered to him profoundly, that he understood art as only a few do and that he had a sense of Tasmania that was both deep and intimate."

Flanagan said the main character in his novel *Gould's Book of Fish* was largely based on Dyer. "I stole his roguishness, his laughter in the face of adversity, his vices and his graces and his belief in the necessity of art and I called it all Billy Gould," he said. "Geoff is a lovely man with ... a largeness of spirit which in spite of many vicissitudes has never been extinguished. In the face of the snobberies and fashions and conformity of the art world he has ever been his own man, steering his own course. He has been an outsider and his work as a consequence has sometimes been ignored and occasionally derided. But this new book ... reveals how singular and how surprisingly focused his vision has remained. It shows about his work a quiet courage and a resolute faith in his own talent and it proves that Geoff Dyer is a major painter that Tasmania is fortunate to call its own."

Flanagan said *A Tasmanian Perspective* was testament to a major artist's career. "Geoff's path has not been easy, personally or professionally," he said. "Yet as this book bears testament he has created a significant *body* of enduring passion and singular beauty, the reputation of which I suspect will only grow in successive decades. There is about the best of his work a connection to the passion of our island. There is a largeness and generosity of heart here not so common in Australian art."

A Tasmanian Perspective: The Art of Geoff Dyer, Lygate Press, \$88, is available from the Despard Gallery, Hobart, and selected bookshops.

To market, to market for authors



The publisher of *Tasmania 40° South* magazine, Warren Boyles, noted the emerging worldwide phenomenon of local growers' markets and

wondered whether books could be sold in a similar way. Not being one to die wondering, Boyles launched a unique Writers Market earlier this year to service Tasmania's disproportionately large and flourishing community of writers.

"A problem had emerged for non-established writers," Boyles explained. "Larger publishing houses had fallen under the influence of risk-averse accountants. The chances of new authors being published was diminishing as publishers preferred the safety of established writers and formulaic material, particularly in fiction. Furthermore, for books sold through publishing companies, much of the cover price was being absorbed by the costs of distribution and marketing, along with the inevitable overheads that large organisations carry."

Boyles has an unusual background for a publisher. He's a science graduate, a former submariner and taught physics for many years, numbering the Premier, David Bartlett, and the Greens leader, Nick McKim, among his hordes of former pupils. He became involved with *40° South* during its initial issues in the early 1990s and recently published its 50th quarterly edition, confirming it as a proud and very effective promoter of the Tasmanian brand. Asked to speak on publishing at a Hobart writers' forum early in this decade, Boyles suggested that his literary audience should pool their talents to establish a co-operative that could furnish the micro-publishing services they all needed. When nothing happened Boyles decided to arm the torpedoes.

Improving printing technology encouraged him to apply the editing and design skills assembled at *40° South* to provide book-publishing services. The company has now published 25 books and this activity contributes 50 per cent of total turnover. Designer Kent Whitmore spends around two-thirds of his working time on books.

"I can't contribute much to a magazine issue until the words and photographs have been assembled," Whitmore said. "It's then a relatively short, intense burst of activity to enable us to achieve our deadlines. For the remainder of the quarterly cycle, I work on books."

There's an impressive row of titles on a shelf in the *40° South* offices at Lindisfarne, ranging from a big hard-cover commissioned by Rio Tinto as a keepsake for every employer when it closed its KEM mine in Borneo, through to photographic collections like *An Intense Scutiny* by Stewart Wells and smaller, more specialised historic works like Peter Mercer's history of whaling, *A Most Dangerous Occupation*.

"We tell people with a book project that we can offer them the same quality as they see in our magazine," Boyles said. "If people come to us expecting to make a lot of money out of their books, we generally advise them to lower their expectations. The reality for most of the titles we handle is that the author needs to sell 500 copies to break even. For many writers who are producing for minority audiences that's a satisfactory outcome and sales of 500 are generally achievable if the author is willing to put in the time."

The Writers Market is an innovation to help authors market their books in a cost-effective way. "They pay a flat fee of \$100 to have their book featured in the magazine and on our web site," Boyles said. "The magazine's circulation these days is between 12,000 and 14,000 and we have a very high pass-on rate. A readership figure of 80,000 is a reasonably conservative estimate and these readers all have a strong interest in reading about Tasmania. So it's valuable exposure."

Like most things at *40° South*, the web presentation of the Writers Market is stylish, but not over-complicated. When sales are made, *40° South* handles the cost and time involved in distribution and charges the author 25 per cent of the cover price. This compares with a charge of 60 per cent of the cover price by most book distributors and a return of 10 per cent of the cover price to the author for books sold through a major publisher. When retailers order books and ask for trade pricing, the author is invited to join the negotiation.

"We're proud of the innovation," Boyles said.

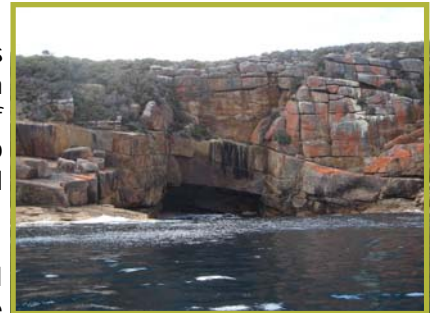
"The Writers Market is a literary analogue of the farmers' market principle and it's the sort of micro-business approach that suits an intimate place like Tasmania. Writers can have a virtual market stall in *40° South*, including a page of their own on our website. The "storefront" is a space in the magazine's Writers' Market pages. Readers can go to the website to shop for Tasmanian literature. It is a place for readers to seek established, as well as emerging writers. They can purchase direct, knowing that when they buy a book, most of their money will flow to the writer. The best way to support creative people is to purchase and enjoy their work."

There are plans for the Writers Market to be expanded to offer music CDs and DVDs.

See for yourself at: www.fortysouth.com.au

Parks vital to our brand, says Eslake

Tasmania's national parks need to be an integral part of efforts to strengthen and promote Tasmania's brand, Saul Eslake, the



Chief Economist of the ANZ group, told the 2008 Annual Conference of the Tasmania Parks & Wildlife Service. He said it would be difficult to 'pin down' a purely economic value for the network of parks and reserves that makes up 44.6 per cent of our land area. "Even if that economic value could be established credibly, it would represent only a part of the *value* more broadly defined that Tasmania's parks provide and generate," he said.

Mr Eslake told the meeting at the Ulverstone Civic Centre that the value of the parks to Tasmania's economy was more than simply the tourist dollars they brought in or the jobs they created. "Parks - particularly those established for 'experiential' motives - can be part of what attracts and retains people with creative skills and aptitudes," Mr Eslake said. "The work of Richard Florida, Professor of Business and Creativity at the University of Toronto, Canada, highlights the importance of *place* as one of the attractors for members of what he terms the 'creative classes'.

Tasmania's parks, which offer such an incredible variety within such a short distance (by interstate or international standards) ... have enormous potential to be part of what identifies Tasmania as an authentic *place* in which creative people will want to live and work."

Ten Days to stage 238 events

Ten Days on the Island 2009 will include more performances in more locations around the State than any previous festival and will feature five world premieres and 17 Australian premieres. The 238-event festival will:

- Be staged in 54 locations from Adventure Bay to Zeehan;
- Showcase work from 30 islands located in 20 countries; and
- Involve 739 artists: 150 from overseas, 179 from interstate and 414 from Tasmania.

There will be 72 free events spread from the opening day on Friday, 27 March, to the festival's close on Sunday, 5 April.

Tasmania will host an international Ideas Festival in 2010 and is planning that it will alternate with *Ten Days on the Island* so the State will be able to offer a world-class festival every year.

GMO ban extended to 2014

Tasmania's ban on the commercial release of genetically modified food crops will continue for at least another five years to the end of November 2014. "Decisions by some other Australian States to relax their GM bans have actually increased the value of Tasmania's GMO-free status and created opportunities for even better access to prime markets across the globe," the Minister for Primary Industries and Water, David Llewellyn, said. "Hard work over recent years has ensured Tasmania is well-placed to take full advantage of its reputation as a reliable supplier of the best and safest food to a range of new markets that will arise out of maintenance of the ban.

The State Government and the Brand Tasmania Council will be developing a more aggressive marketing campaign to maximise business opportunities flowing from extension of the GMO ban." For policy details go to: www.dpiw.tas.gov.au

Cherry exports become easier

Japanese quarantine authorities have agreed to a new protocol allowing Tasmanian cherries to be imported without having to be fumigated for codling moth. Growers expect a rise in demand for their cherries because the shelf life of fruit that has not been fumigated is longer and consumers tend to prefer 'natural' products. The decision by Japan's Ministry for Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries follows a three-year campaign in which growers, with the support of State and Federal authorities, were able to demonstrate that their orchard management systems had eliminated the codling moth risk. Tasmanian cherry production has doubled in the past two years to around 4,000 tonnes and is expected to reach 7,000 tonnes within the next five years. Exports would then be worth an estimated \$34 million a year.

Chain of custody for timber

Fine Timber Tasmania has introduced a chain-of-custody certification program for businesses to reassure consumers about the environmental and social integrity of the State's fine timber products. "This is a world-first, innovative response to contemporary consumer trends, that will help build Tasmania's brand and international reputation," The Minister for Primary Industry and Water, David Llewellyn said. "Nowhere else in the world is there [a program like this] that applies to an entire supply chain. This is both innovative and inspiring ... each step in the supply chain will have to comply with the standards, documentation and audits of the certification scheme. Each and every business will have to commit to the idea and the ideal."

Forestry defers to swift parrots

Forestry Tasmania will not harvest in the Wielangta State Forest this season because swift parrots are nesting there for the first time since the summer of 2000-01. The endangered migratory parrots nest in Tasmania every summer, choosing areas where blue gums or black gums are in flower. Nest locations vary from year to year because gums in most places usually flower only once in five years. Scientist and planners from Forestry Tasmania and the Department of Primary Industries and Water are preparing separate strategic plans for the Wielangta and Southern Forests to ensure swift parrot breeding is not interrupted by forestry activity. There are estimated to be about 1,000 breeding pairs of swift parrots in the wild.

Businesses remain upbeat

Tasmanian small and medium businesses remain the most confident in Australia, according to the latest quarterly Sensis Business Index. Businesses in the State recorded higher expectations for sales, wages, profitability and capital expenditure for the next quarter than those in any other State or territory. The Sensis survey followed Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) data that showed economic growth of 0.8 per cent in Tasmania in the September quarter - stronger than the national average. ABS also reported that Tasmania's merchandise exports were valued at \$3.68 billion in the year to October, 3 per cent below a record set just over a year ago.

Tassal ramps up capacity

Tassal, the biggest salmon producer in Australia, has invested \$18.5 million to build a state-of-the-art hatchery at Ranelagh in the Huon Valley. Consisting of 34 climate-controlled, closed-circuit, recirculating tanks, the hatchery will produce 4 million smolt a year and enable the company to double production by 2015. Smolt will be ready for transfer to sea cages at Dover, Macquarie Harbour and the Tasman Peninsula between 12 and 18 months after hatching. Tassal produces 15,000 tonnes of salmon a year at present, using smolt sourced from seven hatcheries around Tasmania.

World hockey honours for Ockenden

Tasmanian Eddie Ockenden, 21, is the World Hockey Federation's 2008 Young Player of the Year. He has also been named in a World XI to cap off a year in which he won an Olympic bronze medal and secured a contract to play professionally in Holland. Ockenden, from Hobart club North-West Graduates, has been backed by the Tasmanian Institute of Sport since securing a scholarship in 2005 when he was 17. He was Australia's youngest player at the Beijing Olympics, but led the scoring with six goals.

Private capex reaches \$1.17b

Private new capital expenditure in Tasmania increased by 36.7 per cent to \$1.17 billion in the year to September 2008, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reports. The Tasmanian increase was nearly three times the national average. The bureau also reported that construction work in the State achieved a record total value of \$2.06 billion, 5.3 per cent above figures for the previous year.

East coast option

The 37th Heemskirk Consolidated Melbourne to Hobart Yacht Race will create history this year, with entrants able to opt for the traditional west coast route or a new, alternate course through Bass Strait and down the east coast. A fleet of about 20 yachts is expected to contest the western route, with about 30 choosing the eastern course. The two fleets will be launched together in Port Phillip Bay on Boxing Day.

All-weather track opens

A new \$10 million all-weather racing track - to be known as the Tote Racing Centre - was opened in the Launceston suburb of Mowbray in November. TOTE Tasmania has agreed to invest \$6 million to install lights to enable night racing and make TV coverage by the SKY Channel possible on Friday or Saturday nights.

Now, Tassie to bid for A-League

A Tasmanian consortium has launched a campaign to have a Tasmania United team added to the national A-League football (the round-ball version) competition. Campaign supporters believe the possibility of playing for a State A-League team would be influential when Tasmanian youngsters are choosing a code to play at school.

Further information: www.tasmaniaunited.com

Spring rains help Hydro

Hydro Tasmania's storages received 95 per cent of the rainfall expected for spring and are now 7 per cent fuller than at the end of winter. Storage levels are 29.3 per cent of capacity, almost unchanged over 12 months despite the period between October 2007 and May 2008 being the driest in terms of hydro inflow for 75 years.

Population edges to a record

Tasmania's population rose by 851 or 0.17 per cent in the June quarter, to a record 498,163 persons, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. The half a million mark is expected to be reached before the end of 2008.

National win for apprentice

Matthew McMullen, 32, a technician at Hydro Tasmania's Poatina Power Station, has won the National Electrical Communications Association's Apprentice of the Year award. His prize includes a study tour to Europe.

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