

NATION WATCH

REPORTING GOVERNMENT, BUSINESS AND POLITICS ACROSS AUSTRALIA | October 2009 QUARTERLY EDITION

Hawker Britton

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Bruce Hawker

Welcome to NationWatch

It's very evident from this issue of NationWatch that governments across Australia continue to work intensively with the business sector to promote economic growth and to provide jobs for Australians.

The massive \$50 billion Gorgon LNG project has received the go-ahead, following the offer of production licences by the Federal and WA governments. This will be Australia's largest-ever resources development and is expected to generate \$300 billion in Australian export earnings. The Federal government is now establishing a National Resource Sector Employment Taskforce to help provide up to 70,000 workers for these types of major resource projects.

In NSW the government is calling for Registrations of Interest for the redevelopment of the \$300 million Homebush Bay Maritime Precinct, creating 500 jobs. In Queensland extensive rail projects are being undertaken to assist the coal industry in transporting coal for export.

Taxation reforms are under discussion to cut red tape for business and to reward research and development. Funding is being provided by governments for worthy industrial and medical research and to assist companies to develop and expand. Governments are also busy helping companies to export by leading trade missions and facilitating grants.

These and many other projects and opportunities are included in this issue of NationWatch. Please contact Hawker Britton if we can be of assistance.

Bruce Hawker

Head Office: Level 1 71 York Street Sydney NSW 2000 | Website: www.hawkerbritton.com
Email: jdilollo@hawkerbritton.com | Telephone: +61 2 9279 0200 | Fax: +61 2 9279 0211

State and International Offices: Contact details available on last page of NationWatch

**Simon Banks**

Office: +61 2 6295 8300

Mobile: +61 419 638 587

E: sbanks@hawkerbritton.com**INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY****Reforms to telecommunications regulation**

The Minister for Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, Senator Stephen Conroy has announced fundamental reforms to telecommunications regulations. The Government says these reforms will drive future growth, productivity and innovation across all sectors of the economy by:

- addressing Telstra's high level of integration to promote greater competition and consumer benefits;
- streamlining and simplifying the competition regime to provide more certain and faster outcomes for telecommunications companies;
- strengthening consumer safeguards to ensure services standards are maintained at a high level; and
- removing redundant and inefficient regulatory red-tape.

The reforms are supported by the overwhelming majority of the submissions received in response to the National Broadband Network: Regulatory Reform for 21st Century Broadband Discussion Paper released by the Government on 7 April 2009. The legislative package is available online: www.dbcde.gov.au

MINING AND RESOURCES**Government clears \$50 billion Gorgon go-ahead**

The Joint Authority has offered a total of five production licences to the Gorgon Joint Venture Partners for the Gorgon and Io/Jansz gas fields. The Joint Authority – Federal Minister for Resources, Energy and Tourism, Martin Ferguson, and Western Australian Minister for Mines and Petroleum, Norman Moore – has also offered to renew seven retention leases over other gas fields in the Greater Gorgon area. These titles provide security of tenure over Greater Gorgon gas resources to provide the property rights Chevron, ExxonMobil and Shell need to sign off on Australia's biggest single investment – the \$50 billion Gorgon LNG project. The project is predicted to generate enormous wealth for Australia through LNG exports worth around \$300 billion over the next 20 years.

National Taskforce helps secure 70,000 workers

The Australian Government will establish a National Resource Sector Employment Taskforce to help secure up to 70,000 skilled workers to build and operate major resource sector projects over the next decade. A Major Project Employment Coordinator will also be appointed to work with the Gorgon joint venture partners and the Western Australian Government to help match demand for skilled labour with a supply of workers for the Gorgon LNG Project.

Industry Council boost for Aussie steel

A new Steel Industry Innovation Council will maximise opportunities for the Australian steel industry to participate in major projects in Australia and overseas. Innovation, Industry, Science and Research Minister Senator Kim Carr said the Council is made up of the most senior members of the Australian steel industry. The Council will be chaired by Mark Paterson AO, Secretary of the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

ENERGY

Australian Solar Institute formalised

The Minister for Resources and Energy, Martin Ferguson has announced the registration of the Australian Solar Institute Company (ASI) as a public company controlled by the Commonwealth. The ASI Board has formally opened the first round of its solar energy grants program - an important part of the Australian Government's renewable energy strategy. As part of the initial funding for the Australian Solar Institute, \$15 million is also being provided for three allocated foundation projects. The ASI is a \$100 million commitment by the Australian Government to support solar thermal and solar photovoltaic research and development. Visit

www.australiansolarinstitute.com.au

AUTOMOTIVE INDUSTRY

Legislation strengthens automotive industry

The Rudd Government has welcomed the passage through Parliament of a key component of its \$6.2 billion New Car Plan for a Greener Future – the Automotive Transformation Scheme Bill 2009. Innovation Minister Senator Kim Carr said the legislation establishes the \$3.4 billion Automotive Transformation Scheme (ATS) – a co-investment scheme that will help ensure the economic sustainability of the Australian automotive industry by stimulating investment and innovation.

FINANCE

Government welcomes Productivity Review

Minister for Finance and Deregulation, Lindsay Tanner has welcomed the release of the [Productivity Commission's Annual Review of Regulatory Burdens on business: Social and Economic Infrastructure](#). Lindsay Tanner said the review is part of an annual series of studies that the Productivity Commission undertakes to assess the impact of the current stock of regulation on business. The Rudd Government will now consider the Productivity Commission's findings and report.

New R&D tax credit

The Government has started consultation with key stakeholders on the detailed design features of the new R&D Tax Credit. Releasing the Research and Development Tax Incentive Consultation Paper, Treasurer Wayne Swan and Innovation Minister Kim Carr urged business and other stakeholders to make their voices heard on reforms to the scheme. Senator Carr said the aim of the new Tax Credit is to provide more predictable, less complex support to business. Submissions are requested by Monday, 26 October 2009. Visit www.treasury.gov.au.

Simpler reporting for business

Simpler reporting for Australian businesses has moved one step closer with the latest release of new Standard Business Reporting (SBR) taxonomy and tools for software developers. The release is a significant milestone for the SBR program which is part of the Council of Australian Governments seamless national economy reform agenda, established to cut red tape for businesses and increase Australia's productivity. The September SBR release included the ATO Pay as you go (PAYG) withholding payment summaries, ATO Tax File Number Declaration, ATO Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) Return forms and the WA Payroll tax monthly return. Detailed information on the coming releases is available on www.sbr.gov.au

Reforms of Australia's financial markets

The Treasurer, Wayne Swan and Financial Services, Superannuation and Corporate Law Minister Chris Bowen, have announced changes to the supervision of Australia's financial markets that will enhance the integrity of Australia's financial markets and take another step towards establishing Australia as a financial services hub in the region. The Government has decided to provide for the Australian Securities and Investments Commission to perform supervision of real-time trading on all of Australia's domestic licensed markets.

CONSTRUCTION

Building world-class cancer care system

The Prime Minister and the Health Minister signed a funding agreement to deliver \$150 million for Lifehouse at RPA: The Chris O'Brien Cancer Centre in Sydney, which will help turn Professor Chris O'Brien's vision of a world class holistic cancer treatment, research and education facility into reality. Also essential to that system is a second major integrated cancer centre located at Parkville in Melbourne and an Australia-wide network of regional cancer centres. The principles, available at www.health.gov.au/hhf, will help ensure that the centres are located, designed and operated to help close the gap in cancer outcomes between the city and the country.

ENVIRONMENT

Global Carbon Storage Institute launched

The Global Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) Institute was launched internationally by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd in July at an event jointly hosted by the President of the United States, Barack Obama and Italy's Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi in L'Aquila, Italy. The Institute will play a significant role in delivering the G8's goal of developing at least 20 fully integrated industrial-scale CCS demonstration projects around the world by 2020. The Australian-led initiative will drive the deployment of CCS projects and is a practical demonstration of what can be achieved when global objectives are aligned. The Australian Government has committed \$100 million a year to support this work and a further \$2 billion to support the construction of CCS demonstration projects in Australia.

WATER

\$30 million scheme to cut Murray salinity

Climate Change and Water Minister Senator Penny Wong, and South Australian River Murray Minister Karlene Maywald, have launched the construction of a \$30 million scheme to keep salt out of the Murray in SA's Riverland region. The salt interception scheme, which involves large-scale groundwater pumping and drainage projects, will be built at Murtho near Renmark, and will stop an estimated 99.4 tonnes of salt a day from entering the river.

AGRICULTURE

Efficient export certification

A \$40 million package of Rudd Government funding will help to make the export certification process more efficient, cut red tape and improve market access. The Government has also established six industry taskforces covering the red meat, grain, horticulture, live exports, fish and dairy sectors. These taskforces have been working to determine how the reform funds could best be spent to achieve maximum benefits for each separate industry.

Green tea to Japan

Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke has released a report by the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation identifying green tea as a potential export industry to expand. The report found several regions in Australia have an ideal climate and environment to provide high-quality green tea, including around Gosford on the NSW Central Coast.

Report shows pests cost our industries

Pests continue to have a major economic impact on our agricultural industries, with the cost of rabbits alone almost doubling in five years to an estimated \$206 million annually. Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke has launched a report called, "The economic impacts of vertebrate pests in Australia" produced by the Invasive Animals Cooperative Research Centre. The report found six pest species – rabbits, wild dogs, mice, foxes, feral pigs and pest birds cost agriculture an estimated \$620.8 million in losses per year.

Helping the grains industry increase productivity

Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Minister Tony Burke said the \$1.9 million Harvesting Productivity initiative, to be undertaken by the Grains Research and Development Corporation and the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics will identify opportunities for productivity improvements.

FOOD & WINE

Australian wine: competing on the world stage

The Federal Government has joined some of the leading Australian wine-making families to launch a campaign aiming to place more high-quality local wine on tables overseas. Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry Tony Burke said Australia exported high volumes of wine, but it was increasingly seen as a cheaper option, compared to wines from other countries. Mr Burke launched Australian First Families of Wine – an initiative to prove to the world that our wines can compete with the best. The Government has also reached formal agreements with the Government of China and the Administration of Hong Kong to secure better access for Australian wine into China.

HEALTH

Building a 21st century health care system

The Rudd Government has released the draft of Australia's first National Primary Health Care Strategy. The Primary Care Strategy focuses on what Government can do to improve the frontline health care that Australians depend on, including the care delivered by GPs and other frontline health professionals like physiotherapists, psychologists and pharmacists. Stakeholder input has been crucial in developing the draft strategy, with more than 260 submissions received in response to the discussion paper.

TOURISM

Australia performing better than competitors

The Minister for Tourism, Martin Ferguson, says the Tourism Forecasting Committee's latest forecast for 2009 show Government policy is sustaining Australia's tourism industry in a very difficult international environment, and that Australia is out-performing many competing destinations. Australia's inbound tourist forecast predicts a 4% decline for 2009, while markets such as Japan (-27%) the UK (-12%), and the USA (-10%) have recorded big declines in visitor numbers throughout 2009.

TRADE

Extra support for small exporters

Trade Minister Simon Crean has announced that the Federal Government will make it easier for Australian exporters and overseas investors to obtain financial assistance. The Government will simplify and expand the powers of the Export Finance and Insurance Corporation to enable it to more effectively provide financial support. Under the changes, a new broader eligibility test for small-to-medium-sized enterprises will be introduced.

Record trade surplus of \$5.8 billion for the year

Trade Minister Simon Crean has welcomed the release of trade figures by the Australian Bureau of Statistics showing Australia produced record exports of \$285.7 billion in 2008-09 and a record trade surplus of \$5.8 billion. Mr Crean said it was a great achievement in the middle of the worst recession in more than 75 years. "The growth in exports to China in recent months has been remarkable," Mr Crean said. "For the first time since 1988-89 Australia recorded a surplus in merchandise trade with China in 2008-09."



Justin Di Lollo

Office: +61 2 9279 0200

Mobile: 0413 152 515

E: jdilollo@hawkerbritton.com

FINANCE

AAA reaffirmed in NSW

NSW Treasurer Eric Roozendaal recently welcomed the annual report of the State's finances by credit agency Standard & Poor's – which found NSW has a "strong balance sheet" and "demonstrated fiscal discipline". The New-York based credit rating agency has released its latest report into the State's finances – which reaffirms the AAA credit rating, with a stable outlook.

CONSTRUCTION

\$300 million upgrade of Maritime Precinct

Premier Nathan Rees has announced the next step in developing one of the largest maritime industry precincts ever to be built in NSW. Mr Rees said the Government was calling for Registrations of Interest to kick start the redevelopment of the Homebush Bay Maritime Precinct. The world class precinct is expected to cost up to \$300 million to establish and to create more than 500 jobs in construction.

TECHNOLOGY

NSW bid for broadband headquarters

Premier Nathan Rees has revealed a bid team of distinguished experts to lead Sydney's campaign to win the Headquarters for the \$43 billion National Broadband Network (NBN). The Premier also declared a 'call to arms' to NSW business to support the bid during an address to the Sydney Chamber of Commerce. "Our bid against strong contenders including Brisbane and Melbourne needs a relentless and united front from business and government to get us over the line," Mr Rees said.

New laws target billion dollar ID crime industry

Attorney General John Hatzistergos has announced the NSW Government proposes to introduce tough identity crime laws to crack down on the billion dollar personal fraud industry, built on new cyber technologies. Mr Hatzistergos said the laws would create new identity offences, which would carry up to five years imprisonment, and allow police to target criminals who possess or trade in personal information for the purpose of committing fraud. The new offences will make it a crime to use or trade any information that identifies a person, such as their name or address, driver licence, PIN or password, for the purpose of committing a secondary offence.

MINING

Hunter coal producers agree to export plan

The NSW Government has reached an agreement which will support \$5 billion worth of investment in new port and rail infrastructure over the next four years. Premier Nathan Rees said that NSW is set to reap an investment and jobs bonanza with the Hunter Valley's fourteen coal producers agreeing to the Government's long term coal export plan. He said the plan cements Newcastle's position as the world's biggest coal port with export capacity expected to double to 180 million tonnes over the next six years.

ROADS & TRANSPORT

Three consortia shortlisted for Sydney Metro infrastructure project

Three short-listed construction consortia have been asked to bid for the Permanent Route Infrastructure (PRI) contract to build Sydney Metro stage one. NSW Transport Minister David Campbell said the consortia are made up of leading national and international companies: McConnell Dowell Corporation/Abigroup/Obayashi Corporation; Leighton Contractors/S.E.L.I. Spa; and Thiess/John Holland JV.

Two consortia shortlisted for Sydney Metro operations

Two short-listed operations consortia have been asked to bid for the Integrated Metro Operations (IMO) contract to supply rolling stock and systems and operate and maintain the Sydney Metro. The two consortia were shortlisted from a field of seven. The Met One consortium (led by Serco Australia, Bombardier Transportation Australia, Laing O'Rourke and Hastings Management) and the Kujika consortium (led by Keolis Downer EDI Rail, Thales Australia, Bovis Lend Lease and McConnell Dowell Constructors) were short listed.

Kempsey Bypass short-listed

Work on the Kempsey Bypass, which is part of the Pacific Highway upgrade, has progressed to the next stage with the short-listing of two alliance partners: Thiess, Parsons Brinckerhoff; and Leightons, Aecom, Coffeys. The Pacific Highway upgrade is one of the largest infrastructure projects ever undertaken in Australia.

ENERGY

Rees launches international search for clean energy

NSW Premier Nathan Rees has announced a new \$5 million international prize to keep the State at the forefront of clean energy. "This prize signals to the rest of the world that we are serious about research and innovation and serious about a clean energy solution for NSW," Mr Rees said. "It will focus the best minds from our State, the nation and the globe on clean energy alternatives for NSW."

One-stop-shop for gas industry

Consumers concerned about gas appliances and unsure about the safety and standard of their fittings will now be looked after by the Office of Fair Trading thanks to a Better Regulation office review. Regulatory Reform Minister Joe Tripodi said a simpler approach to the regulation of gasfitting, gas installations and gas appliances in NSW will give consumers access to one regulator instead of being spread out across four different departments. Visit www.betterregulation.nsw.gov.au.

BIO TECHNOLOGY

NSW-China research partnership

Minister for Science and Medical Research Jodi McKay has announced more than \$600,000 in NSW Government funding to support three collaborative medical research projects being undertaken by Chinese and New South Wales researchers. New South Wales and China will contribute more than \$1 million for the program. Ms McKay said the first round of grants will be awarded to successful applicants under the NSW Government's China-NSW Collaborative Research Program, a joint initiative to support research that combines traditional Chinese medicine and modern approaches to treat medical conditions such as cancer, heart disease and brain injuries.

\$17 million Knowledge Fund to boost research

Minister for Science and Medical Research Jodi McKay has unveiled an innovative funding plan to invest in the future of science and research in universities in NSW. Ms McKay said the \$17 million NSW Knowledge Fund will keep NSW at the forefront of science and research. The Knowledge Fund will also help universities leverage greater funding through the Commonwealth's Federal Health and Hospital Fund. Other Government research funding programs include the Science Leveraging Fund, which provides \$10 million each year to attract Cooperative Research Centres and Australian Research Council Centres of Excellence funding to NSW, and Medical Research Support Program funding, which provided \$64 million between 2006 and 2009.

WATER

New environmental water rules now in place

New rules to access water in several coastal water systems are now in effect under a plan to protect water for all users and the environment for the next 10 years, according to Water Minister Phil Costa. The plan outlines trigger points for accessing water to ensure no water is taken from natural water supplies when water levels are low. The plan involved extensive consultation with water users, the agriculture industry and the community. Visit www.dwe.nsw.gov.au

HEALTH

NSW Health wins tobacco case

NSW Health Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Chant, said a Supreme Court decision had found Coles Express guilty of breaching tobacco advertising prohibitions within the Public Health Act. When a customer requested a single packet of cigarettes, Coles Express employees were instructed to inform the customer that they could buy a second packet at a reduced rate.

Court upholds NSW Health Smoke Free Act

NSW Chief Health Officer, Dr Kerry Chant, says a landmark court decision that further clarifies the Smoke Free Environment Act will assist in greater compliance by NSW clubs and pubs. Dr Chant said NSW Health had successfully prosecuted Kemp's Creek Sporting and Bowling Club for an alleged breach of Section 8 of the Smoke Free Environment Act, which prohibits occupiers of enclosed public places from allowing their patrons and visitors to smoke in that place.

TRADE

Wine exporters helped to access China market

The NSW Government will launch a major strategy to help NSW wineries increase their share of the lucrative China-Hong Kong market. State Development Minister Ian Macdonald said the Government would invest around \$100,000 plus in-kind support in the strategy. This includes \$25,000 for a pilot project for the wine industry of Orange and surrounding areas to get small and medium size operators to be part of this international project.

Trade mission leads to contract

Taree boat builder Steber International has finalised a multi-million dollar contract, following the company's participation in the Dubai International Boat Show earlier this year. State Development Minister Ian Macdonald said the NSW Government helped Steber and 12 other NSW companies from the marine industry to exhibit at the boat show in March. The Department of State and Regional Development manages a program of trade missions, participation in international exhibitions and independent market visits to help NSW companies win business in overseas markets. Visit: www.export.nsw.gov.au

More export opportunities for NSW companies

The NSW Government's new trade promotion program for 2009-10 is underway, giving NSW exporters vital export opportunities with key international markets, according to Minister for State Development Ian Macdonald. "In 2009-10, we will be offering trade missions and participation in international trade exhibitions in expanding markets like, China, India, Hong Kong, the Middle East, Singapore and New Zealand." In 2008-09, about 300 NSW companies took part in the program and expect total export sales of \$165 million in the next 12 months. Visit www.export.nsw.gov.au

ENVIRONMENT

Chair of carbon trading hub taskforce announced

NSW continues its bid to become the country's carbon trading hub with the NSW Government announcing the Chair of the taskforce to oversee the NSW campaign. Sydney based Martijn Wilder head of Baker & McKenzie's Global Climate Change and Emissions Trading Practice will lead the group that will advise the NSW Government on the best way to secure the opportunity.

SMALL BUSINESS

Formation of Sydney Harbour Business Alliance

The NSW Minister for Small Business Steve Whan has called on the newly formed Sydney Harbour Business Alliance to work with the public and private sector for the betterment of harbour-based businesses. Minister Whan said the alliance would speak as one for its current and potential members who operate small and medium businesses from Manly to Homebush Bay.

BANKING

Chinese bank chooses Sydney

State Development Minister Ian Macdonald has announced a major Chinese bank has chosen Sydney as the location for its first office in the Southern Hemisphere. The Bank of Communications, the fifth largest bank in China, is opening a representative office in Sydney. "This is the latest endorsement of Sydney as Australia's financial capital and as a leading financial centre in the Asia Pacific," Mr Macdonald said. He said the NSW Government places a high priority on further developing Sydney as a global business and financial centre.

REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Building the Country Package on track

Premier Nathan Rees has announced that the NSW Government is investing around \$1.45 million in three regional cities to help create around 470 new direct and indirect jobs. The funding will build new roads and other infrastructure. Mr Rees said \$85 million is being spent through the Building the Country Package to help rural and regional communities and businesses struggling to make ends meet during tough economic times and the ongoing drought.



Mark Nolan

Office: +61 7 3254 4671

Mobile: 0413 152 516

Email: mnolan@hawkerbritton.com

ROADS

Record \$18 billion roads program sustains 30,000 jobs

A record \$18 billion five-year roads program will protect about 30,000 jobs for Queenslanders over each year of the program, according to Main Roads Minister Craig Wallace. The 2009-10 to 2013-14 Roads Implementation Program – better known as the RIP – has grown to more than \$18 billion over the next five years, an increase of \$1.8 billion on last year’s five-year program of \$16.2 billion. Mr Wallace said the road construction program would also address safety and urban congestion. “Through our Safer Roads Sooner program, we’ll invest \$300 million over five years to target known crash sites and safety programs,” he said.

TRANSPORT

Coal rail projects continue

Transport Minister Rachel Nolan has announced a major boost for Queensland’s coal industry with the completion and opening of a \$49 million rail duplication project in the Central Bowen Basin. To date, the Queensland Government has delivered eight of the 12 planned duplications outlined in QR Network’s COALRail Infrastructure Program, resulting in about 80 percent of the Blackwater System being duplicated. Currently there are also plans to commence another duplication project between Rocklands and Kabra in 2010, west of Rockhampton, which would further support the Gladstone coal supply chain.

MINING

Ambassadors to promote Queensland mining

The State Government has established a team of industry ambassadors to promote Queensland mining and exploration investment opportunities to the world. Mines and Energy Minister Stephen Robertson said the Queensland Resource Industry Ambassadors initiative builds upon the success of existing government programs that support industry. “Grants such as our \$49.1 million Smart Mining – Future Prosperity and Smart Exploration programs have already proven successful in attracting and leveraging exploration in Queensland,” he said. The ambassadors will not be paid for their roles.

ENERGY

\$1.9m funding injection for fantastic plastic solar research

A \$1.9 million Smart Futures Fund grant has been awarded to University of Queensland researchers who are leading an international team developing a cheap solar cell made out of plastic, which could make tapping into solar energy cheaper for householders and industry. The organic solar cells market is estimated to be worth \$300 million internationally by 2012.

Geothermal energy plan to provide clean energy future

Natural Resources Mines and Energy Minister Stephen Robertson has announced an additional 16,000 sq km of land for geothermal exploration and released a consultation paper on the proposed draft legislation for geothermal energy production. “The new legislation being developed will enable explorers to progress to production when a suitable geothermal resource has been identified,” Mr Robertson said.

New blueprint to guide Qld's LNG future

The Queensland Government has unveiled a framework for a new liquefied natural gas industry that could provide a significant boost to Queensland's economy. Premier Anna Bligh said a Blueprint provides industry and the community with a clear understanding of plans to develop the world's first coal seam gas to LNG export industry. "We are talking about eight projects - worth more than \$40 billion - looking to make Queensland home," Ms Bligh said. Visit lng.industry.qld.gov.au

Powering north-west's energy future

Queensland Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development Andrew Fraser has released a high-level report on the future infrastructure for meeting north-west Queensland's energy needs. It maps the options for new power generation to be built in the region, or for a high-voltage transmission line to connect the north-west to the national grid. "The region needs a solution that meets the needs of both consumers and the resources sector at a competitive price, and this will be the prime concern for the State Government," Mr Fraser said.

Multi-billion dollar Gladstone LNG projects – a step closer

The community have been given a chance to comment on two multi-billion dollar Liquefied Natural Gas opportunities in the Gladstone region: the proposal for the Australia Pacific LNG project the Environmental Impact Statement for the Queensland Curtis LNG Curtis Island project. Premier Anna Bligh said the projects could have a potential worth of more than \$40 billion to the Queensland economy.

New chapter for Queensland's energy sector

The Bligh Government is demonstrating that it's serious about tackling the energy sector's greenhouse gas emissions through a suite of actions. Climate Change and Sustainability Minister Kate Jones and Mines and Energy Minister Stephen Robertson said the revised climate change strategy, ClimateQ: toward a greener Queensland included: Energy Conservation and Demand Management Program (\$47.7million); Clean Energy in remote communities (\$5million); Queensland Renewable Energy Plan; and Conditions for new coal-fired power generation. Visit

www.climatechange.qld.gov.au

AGRICULTURE

Dairy Industry saves \$70 million through water savings

A unique water saving program by Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries has saved the dairy industry nearly \$70 million dollars, setting the standard for other farming industries. Minister for Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland Tim Mulherin told the Queensland Dairyfarmer's conference in Toowoomba recently that improvements have been made through the Rural Water Use Efficiency program, which worked with producers on their farms to examine ways of saving water.

Qld agriculture sector tops \$13 billion

Queensland's agricultural sector is continuing to defy worldwide economic trends with the total value of commodities up five per cent on last year. The most recent analysis of the 2009 April to June quarter, compiled by Queensland Primary Industries and Fisheries, shows that Queensland's gross value of production is now worth approximately \$13.02 billion for the 2008/09 financial year, compared to \$12.4 billion last year.

FOOD & WINE

Feed the world – its seafood time!

Aquaculture is an emerging industry that could help secure the world's future food needs, with Australian farmers well placed to take advantage of the opportunities on offer, according to Primary Industries, Fisheries and Rural and Regional Queensland Minister Tim Mulherin. He said the development of a sustainable aquaculture industry was a priority for the Queensland Government and the industry was attracting significant investment. Mr Mulherin said the government's ongoing work with industry, including research and development had increased productivity.

Queensland food and wine on the menu in Japan

North Queensland prawns, antipasto from Gin Gin, Queensland's pork and lamb, accompanied by wine from the Granite Belt have been served up to representatives from Japan's leading culinary industry magazine. As part of a trade mission to Japan, Trade Minister Stephen Robertson hosted a dinner along with importers of Queensland produce to showcase the premium food and wine products Queensland has to offer. "Queensland has secured an international reputation for its quality and reliable food exports," Mr Robertson said. Japan remains Queensland number 1 export destination, accounting for nearly 30 per cent of the State's total merchandise exports for 2008-09.

TECHNOLOGY

Brisbane company gains support for new technology

A Coorparoo electronics design and manufacturing company will receive \$156,500 from the State Government's Business and Industry Transformation Incentives (BITI) Scheme to develop new remote control technology for homes and businesses. Treasurer and Minister for Employment and Economic Development Andrew Fraser said that since the BITI Scheme was introduced in 2007, 17 progressive Queensland companies had been approved for a total grant value of more than \$3.3 million.

TOURISM

Charter flights signal Japanese confidence

Four Japanese charter flights to Tropical North Queensland scheduled in September and October signal an increasing confidence of the Japanese market in Queensland, according to Tourism Minister Peter Lawlor. He said the charter flights, supported by Tourism Australia, Tourism Queensland and Tourism Tropical North Queensland, would bring up to 1300 Japanese visitors to the region.

Tourism Queensland bags top tourism award

Tourism Queensland was named the Best State Tourism Organisation by the Australian Society of Travel Writers for the third year in row. Tourism Queensland recently won a world record number of prestigious Cannes Lions Awards for the *Best Job in the World* campaign, as well as being named the Australian Federation of Travel Agents' Best National Tourism Office last month.

Gold Coast lures lucrative Indian market

A hundred influential Indian travel agents experienced the Gold Coast recently to help increase the visitation from the important emerging market of India. Tourism Queensland CEO Anthony Hayes said as well as getting a taste of what the Gold Coast has to offer, many of the agents also visited other parts of Queensland during their stay.

TRADE

Minister builds key Korean business links

Trade Minister Stephen Robertson met with Korean business executives recently and discussed potential joint projects that may submit for a slice of a \$1 billion Korean Government sustainable energy fund. "The Korean Government has recently announced a \$1.1 billion fund to secure more resources for long term sustainable energy production in Korea," Mr Robertson said. "Korean resource and energy companies are looking for investment opportunities overseas that can help them secure a share of these funds."

Queensland businesses in Middle East exporting

Queensland businesses can look to the Middle East for new export opportunities to increase their bottom lines. Trade Minister Stephen Robertson has addressed Trade Queensland's Middle East and North Africa Export Network Forum in Brisbane to encourage more than more than 60 business and export representatives to take a closer look at opportunities in this emerging export market. In 2008/09 Trade Queensland assisted the State's firms to secure over \$140 million in export deals in the Middle East region, taking advantage of opportunities identified in construction, agribusiness, creative industries, education and training, marine, health products and other areas.

Export cooperation agreement signed

Trade Queensland has signed a new Memorandum of Understanding with the Australian Trade Commission (Austrade) to boost and to support the State's export industry. Minister for Trade Stephen Robertson said the new agreement will see State and Federal trade agencies working even closer together to increase the number of Queensland companies and institutions exporting.

Queensland firms turn up the heat on exports

Queensland's 'tropical' firms trying to win international development business contracts have been given a helping hand by the Bligh Government. Parliamentary Secretary for Employment and Economic Development Jan Jarratt said \$77,000 had been committed to help local companies bid for development-funded jobs in South East Asia and the Pacific. The funding will help more firms develop the skills and contacts to tender on projects.

Visit:

www.australiantropicaexpertise.com.au

\$56 billion record in merchandise exports

Trade Minister Stephen Robertson announced the value of Queensland's merchandise goods exports for the 2008-09 financial year had jumped almost 60 per cent to a record \$56.3 billion. "This represents a major increase of \$21 billion or 59.5 per cent over the previous year and this means jobs for Queenslanders," Mr Robertson said. "Given the current global economic crisis, this is a remarkable result."

Significant growth export markets for Queensland merchandise goods in 2008/09 were: Japan (up \$7.5 billion, 83.2 per cent); India (up \$3.7 billion, 128.2 per cent); China (up \$2.8 billion, 114.4 per cent) and Korea (up \$2.7 billion, 71.4 per cent).



David White

Office: +61 3 9663 5111

Mobile: 0411 748 404

Email: dwhite@hawkerbritton.com

TRANSPORT

Legislation to deliver crucial transport projects

The Victorian Government will speed up delivery of vital transport projects and create jobs sooner, under landmark legislation introduced into Parliament. Roads and Ports Minister Tim Pallas said the Major Transport Projects Facilitation Bill will significantly reduce the time required to plan, approve and deliver specific major transport projects. He said projects could get underway more than 12 months earlier with the establishment of a streamlined “one-stop shop” planning and approvals process. The legislation is expected to help with delivery of the Labor Governments \$38 billion Victorian Transport Plan.

Next generation trial to keep freight moving

Roads and Ports Minister Tim Pallas has released guidelines for the cutting-edge trial of longer B-double trucks to significantly improve the way goods are moved around the State. Mr Pallas said the Next Generation High Productivity Freight Vehicle Trial would keep the trucks on selected key routes in a move that will considerably reduce the number of freight vehicles on Victorian roads. He said it will be conducted under strict safety guidelines that the industry will need to sign up to. Visit www.vicroads.vic.gov.au

ROADS

M80 Ring Road alliance partners selected

The \$2.25 billion M80 Ring Road upgrade is one step closer with the announcement of VicRoads alliance partners for the first major works between Tullamarine Freeway and Sydney Road. Thiess, PB and Hyder will join VicRoads on the Tulla-Sydney Alliance.

CONSTRUCTION

Victoria leads nation in construction activity

Victoria’s investment in major infrastructure projects has reached an all time high with construction activity up 3.4 per cent for the June quarter, while the national average declined. Engineering construction work in Victoria increased by 9.5 per cent during the June quarter, while the residential building market increased by 3.7 per cent.

Grocon’s pixel building an Australian first

The State Government has welcomed the construction of what is to be Australia’s first carbon neutral building at the former Carlton United Brewery site in the heart of Melbourne. Planning Minister Justin Madden said the cutting-edge “pixel” building to be built by Grocon was the next stage of the precinct renewal program. “This has been a truly collaborative planning process with the Brumby Labor Government, the City of Melbourne and the local community and I commend Grocon on their commitment to design excellence,” he said. Mr Madden also congratulated Studio505, the architects of the project.

Government projects win Master Builder Awards

Three Victorian government major projects have received top honours at the Master Builders Excellence in Construction Awards. Major Projects Minister Tim Pallas said awards for the Melbourne Recital Centre and Melbourne Theatre Company theatre project and the Hepburn Springs Bathhouse redevelopment recognised the State Government’s excellent record in delivering major projects.

ENERGY

\$16 million for clean coal research announced

The State Government has announced \$16 million in funding for new clean coal research and the establishment of a new organisation, Brown Coal Innovation Australia (BCIA), to ensure Victoria has the skills to deliver new technologies to cut greenhouse gas emissions. Energy and Resources Minister Peter Batchelor said the new funding and organisation would provide further opportunities for the Brumby Labor Government to partner with industry to develop low emissions brown coal technology for the future.

Japan and Victoria collaborate on clean energy

The Victorian Government has signed two ground-breaking agreements with Japan that strengthen global efforts to reduce future greenhouse gas emissions from coal-fired power generation. The Victorian Government and Japan Coal Energy Centre will collaborate on clean coal technologies. Australia and Japan are also currently negotiating a Free Trade Agreement.

WATER

10 per cent limit on water trades lifted

The 10 per cent limit on the volume of Victorian water entitlements that can be owned without being associated with land has been lifted. Water Minister Tim Holding said Goulburn-Murray Water will begin processing more than 400 water trades from tomorrow that were put on hold until the Water Amendment (Non Water User Limit) Bill 2009 came into effect. "Removing the 10 per cent non-water user limit will provide more choice for irrigators who want to buy more water or those who want to sell their water entitlements," Mr Holding said.

Innovative stormwater project opens in Emerald

Water Minister Tim Holding has officially opened a new water project at Emerald which improves the quality of stormwater before it enters rivers and waterways. Mr Holding said the \$500,000 project at Nobelius Heritage Park was a partnership between Melbourne Water and Cardinia Shire Council. Melbourne Water wants to identify further opportunities for similar projects.

1000 jobs secured from desalination contract

Victorian-based company Tyco Water has been awarded a \$150 million contract to build 84 kilometres of pipe for Victoria's Desalination Project. Tyco Water will build the pipe at its Somerton factory creating 50 new jobs and securing 50 existing jobs, while BlueScope Steel will provide the majority of steel for the pipes protecting around 900 jobs at its Hastings facility. Water Minister Tim Holding he expected this project and other water projects like the Sugarloaf Pipeline will see water storages begin to recover in 2012 and restrictions progressively eased.

AGRICULTURE

New \$128 million Dairy Research Centre

Victoria will become a world leader in dairy research with the start of works on a \$128 million Dairy Futures Cooperative Research Centre (CRC), according to Premier John Brumby. The Victorian Government will invest \$40 million towards the new centre, which would drive future growth and create 30 new jobs. The CRC will ultimately form part of the \$230 million Biosciences Research Centre, which itself will generate 390 jobs during construction

BIOTECHNOLOGY

New grant program to assist biotechnology

A new \$500,000 Biotechnology International Partnering Program (BIPP) will help Victoria's small-to-medium-sized biotechnology companies compete in global markets. It will provide grant assistance for eligible Victorian companies to attend recognised overseas biotechnology conferences and trade events.

TECHNOLOGY

New fund focuses on next-generation innovation

Research into health, sustainability and productivity issues will be the focus of a new \$25 million Government science and technology fund. Innovation Minister Gavin Jennings said Victoria's Science Agenda Strategic Project Fund would support the acquisition of world class research facilities and equipment, the advancement of high level skills and the development of next-generation technologies. Visit www.business.vic.gov.au/vsa

Victoria signs on for electric vehicle technology

Victoria has become the first Australian State to commit to working with car maker Nissan to promote electric vehicle technology, according to Environment, Climate Change and Innovation Minister Gavin Jennings. Mr Jennings has signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Renault-Nissan Alliance following the launch in Japan of Nissan's new battery-powered electric car, the LEAF.

HEALTH

Outstanding healthcare leaders honoured

The 2009 Victorian Public Healthcare Awards have honoured the State's healthcare leaders for delivering a world-class public health system and for their response to the devastating Black Saturday bushfires. Premier John Brumby and Health Minister Daniel Andrews presented awards in 17 categories. The Victorian Public Healthcare Awards were established in 2005 to celebrate the diverse ways in which excellent public healthcare is achieved and recognise the individuals, teams and services committed to finding better ways of providing care.

TOURISM

Victoria records bumper visitor numbers

For the first time on record more Australians chose to visit Victoria for their holidays than Queensland. Figures released by Tourism Research Australia also show Victoria was the only State that experienced growth in interstate overnight visitors with 5.4 million for the year ending June 2009. Tourism and Major Events Minister Tim Holding said Victoria's major events, an increased focus on theatre and arts and low cost airfares have contributed to Victoria's strong performance.

ENVIRONMENT

Victoria takes lead on climate change adaptation

Finding solutions to the impacts of climate change and helping Victorians adapt to its challenges will be the focus of a new \$5 million Victorian Government climate change research centre. Environment and Climate Change Minister Gavin Jennings said the Climate Change Adaptation Research Centre will be coordinated by Melbourne University, with initial member universities Monash University, La Trobe University and RMIT University.

TRADE

Opportunities for Japan-Victoria relationship

A Japanese trade mission visited Victoria to pave the way for new infrastructure joint ventures in Japan, Australia and other markets. Industry and Trade Minister Martin Pakula welcomed the delegation from Victoria's third largest trading partner, saying this was a great opportunity to strengthen the relationship and help attract additional investment and jobs to the State. The 35-member Japanese mission included constructors, banks, institutional investors, design professionals, technology providers and government officials and is led by the Australia-Japan Business Co-operation Committee.

FINANCE

Inquiry to drive jobs in financial services

A new inquiry to further improve the future of Victoria's financial services sector will help to remove barriers to investment and create Victorian jobs despite the impact of the global financial crisis. Treasurer John Lenders said he had requested the Victorian Competition and Efficiency Commission to conduct the inquiry as part of the Government's commitment to removing unnecessary red tape and creating jobs in Victoria's financial services sector. Visit www.vcec.vic.gov.au

Victoria's triple-A credit rating confirmed

Standard & Poor's affirmed Victoria's triple-A credit rating, reflecting the Brumby Labor Government's strong financial management record. Treasurer John Lenders said the triple-A rating was maintained through sound budget management including prudent borrowing in the face of difficult global economic conditions.



Stephen Halliday

Office: +61 8 8407 3519

Mobile: 0418 808 799

Email: shalliday@hawkerbritton.com

TRANSPORT

Rail upgrades begin at the Port

The next stage of the Rann Government's \$2 billion investment in metropolitan public transport infrastructure is set to get underway with almost \$35 million worth of works at Port Adelaide. A \$20 million refit of the historic Port Adelaide viaduct and the first stage of a \$12 million upgrade of Port Adelaide railway station is scheduled to begin this year. Baulderstone and Transfield Services Joint Venture have won the bid as the successful consortium for the project.

CONSTRUCTION

Rann wants Techport Australia as naval capital

Premier Mike Rann and the head of Defence SA Andrew Fletcher were in Washington DC in August for discussions with US Government defence officials to drum up work for the State's brand new Techport Australia shipbuilding facilities at Outer Harbor. Mr Rann says he wants Techport to be used by the US Navy to repair, service and maintain various of its naval vessels deployed into this region of the world.

Three bid to build the new RAH

Three consortia have been formed to move on to the next stage to bid for the contract to finance, build and maintain the new Royal Adelaide Hospital as a Public Private Partnership project. Torrens Health Partnership – including Bilfinger Berger, Baulderstone (construction) and Lend Lease (finance); SA Health Partners – including Leighton, Hansen Yuncken (construction) and Macquarie (finance); and Plenary – including Plenary Group (lead agents and finance) and Grocon (construction).

MINING

South Australia's exploration spending up

South Australia has reversed the downturn in mineral exploration spending – rising by 16.1 percent in the June quarter. Minister for Mineral Resources Development Paul Holloway says the latest statistics show the economy is turning the corner with total spending on mineral exploration rising to \$41.8 million, up from \$36 million during the previous three-month period. South Australia is not alone with Australia's total mineral exploration expenditure rising by \$80 million, or 19.8 per cent.

ENERGY

AGL to supply energy for desal plant

Premier Mike Rann announced recently that AGL has been chosen to supply renewable energy for Adelaide's \$1.83 billion desalination plant. AGL will supply renewable energy to meet 100 per cent of the electricity consumed by the Adelaide Desalination Plant over a 20-year contract period. "South Australia is committed to remaining a national leader in renewable energy," Mr Rann said.

Microalgal biodiesel – a renewable future

South Australia is poised to become a national leader in refining a renewable engine fuel – for the vehicle and aviation industries – developed from algae. Premier Mike Rann has held talks in Los Angeles with Neal Blue, Chief Executive Officer of US firm General Atomics, which is interested in developments in microalgal biofuels in SA.

Rann aims for network of green power in SA

Premier Mike Rann has internationally unveiled a plan to establish a green energy hub for Australia's Eastern seaboard based in South Australia. Mr Rann said South Australia currently easily leads the nation in renewable energy investment, but he believes there is massive scope for renewable energy to be the next big industry alongside defence and mining. "We want to create greater capacity in the State's electricity grid to unlock billions of dollars in green energy investment," Mr Rann said. The Premier has announced a \$1 million contribution to a feasibility study that will look at how to increase State's electricity transmission capacity.

Biofuel boost for SA

Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Minister, Paul Caica has welcomed a Federal Government grant of \$2.724 million awarded to the South Australian led Algal Fuels Consortium (AFC). "South Australia is positioned to become a national leader in native microalgal biofuel technology and the grant is indicative of this leadership," Mr Caica said the funds will ensure the largest research biorefinery in Australia is built right on Torrens Island adjacent to the gas fired power station.

Milestone for SA hot rock technology

Premier Mike Rann has travelled to the South Australia's Far North to witness the launch of the proof of concept drilling phase for Petratherm's Paralana world-leading hot-rocks energy project. Mr Rann says a successful trial will allow Petratherm to unlock an emissions-free, renewable source of energy from deep within the Earth to generate base-load power in remote areas of the State. The South Australian Government has supported Petratherm with a total of \$240,000 in grants from the Plan for Accelerating Exploration, or PACE scheme.

WATER

\$30m for preliminary interconnection works

Preliminary works on the \$400 million project to connect Adelaide's northern and southern water supply networks has been approved by the State Government. Following initial investigations, SA Water is now to develop options for upgrading existing water mains and infrastructure – rather than installing a large diameter pipe to connect the systems – to minimise costs and impacts on the community. SA Water is aiming for design completion and financial approvals in mid-2011.

FOOD & WINE

Global demand to grow SA horticulture industry

The South Australian horticulture industry is well placed to take advantage of strong consumer demand globally according to a new report. The South Australian Fruit, Vegetables and Nuts Market Summary, which highlights international trends and consumer preferences in the fruit, vegetable and nut industries was launched in Adelaide by Agriculture, Food and Fisheries Minister, Paul Caica. Visit www.safoodcentre.com.au

New protection for SA's fresh produce industries

South Australia's \$1.5 billion fresh produce industries will now have greater protection, thanks to new Statewide laws. The Plant Health Act 2009 tightens import rules for plant and plant-related products and boosts the State's plant biosecurity measures. On-the-spot fines will now apply for the travelling public carrying unauthorised fruit into the Riverland and increased penalties will apply where uncertified fruit and vegetables are brought into South Australia.

Visit www.pir.sa.gov.au/planthealth/legislation

TECHNOLOGY

SA science and innovation in strong position

A new report released by Science and Information Economy Minister Michael O'Brien shows the Rann Government has invested more than \$200m in research projects and infrastructure since 2004 by providing investment in SA of more than \$1billion. "The ST110 Progress Report details the benefits to the State from the Government's Ten Year Plan for Science, Technology and Innovation at the half way mark, five years after its launch in 2004," Mr O'Brien said. "Some of the positive outcomes listed in the report include the presence of 33 Cooperative Research Centres in SA in 2006-07 out of a national total of 58. Mr O'Brien added venture capital investment in SA is on a strong upward trend, rising by 75 percent in the last year alone. Visit www.innovation.sa.gov.au/publications

HEALTH

New national health HQ brings 100 jobs

Adelaide will be the home of Health Workforce Australia – the new national health workforce body. The new body, which is expected to begin work by the end of this year, could employ about a 100 people and administer a budget of over \$1.5 billion dollars for recruitment, training and workforce redesign. It will plan, coordinate and fund clinical training across all disciplines on behalf of the Commonwealth, States and Territories, coordinating international recruitment, scholarships, rural medical training and the use of overseas graduates.

New CT scanner part of major upgrade

The Lyell McEwin Hospital is at the forefront of medical imaging technology with the installation of a brand new, \$1.6 million CT scanner - the first of its kind to be installed in Australia. Health Minister John Hill said LMH is set to become one of SA's three major tertiary hospitals. The State Government has pledged \$202 million to further redevelop LMH, bringing the total investment \$336 million.

TOURISM

South Australia stars in tourism awards

South Australian holiday experiences have again starred in the annual awards program run by Australia's inbound travel magazine, *Travelling in Australia*. Tourism Minister Jane Lomax-Smith says that, of the 20 awards up for grabs, South Australia won four – second only to Victoria – and was the only State to be honoured for a Government-run event: The Great Australian Outback Cattle Drive. Kangaroo Island was also a star of the awards, winning in three categories.

First Tiger flight from Sydney roars into Adelaide

The South Australian Government has welcomed the launch of Tiger Airways' daily budget flights from Sydney to Adelaide. Tourism Minister Jane Lomax-Smith says the new airline service will boost the State's tourism industry by making it easier for South Australia to grab a bigger share of the millions of dollars Sydneysiders spend on holidays each year.

ENVIRONMENT

Sand pumping pipeline out for tender

The development application for the planned sand transfer pipeline along Adelaide's coast has been approved and tenders for the project have been called. The \$23 million project to construct a 22 km pipeline from Semaphore Park to Kingston Park will replenish sand and protect beaches from erosion. The successful tenderer also will operate and maintain the infrastructure for 20 years.

FINANCE

SA to join new national IR system

Legislation to allow South Australia to formally join the new national industrial relations system has been tabled in State Parliament. In June, the Industrial Relations Minister, Paul Caica announced that SA had reached in-principle agreement with the Federal Government to participate in the new system for the private sector, from January 1 next year. "This single set of general industrial relations laws for the private sector will benefit employers and employees generally," Mr Caica said.

SA unemployment rate lowest on mainland

Employment Minister Michael O'Brien says the latest employment figures show SA has recorded the lowest headline unemployment rate of any mainland State and unemployment remains below the national average. "While SA's headline unemployment rate went up by 0.2 percentage points in July to reach 5.6 per cent, we are still 0.2 percentage points below the national rate, which remained steady at 5.8 per cent," Mr O'Brien said.



Gail Morgan

Office: +61 2 6295 8300

Mobile: + 61 412 926 348

Email: gmorgan@hawkerbritton.com

CONSTRUCTION

\$25 million in capital works

The ACT Government's Local Initiatives Package to support the building and construction industry has injected more than \$12 million into the local economy, according to ACT Treasurer Katy Gallagher. The Package includes \$25 million over two years to fund a range of construction upgrades to the Territory's existing infrastructure. The works are being delivered in addition to the \$43.2 million annual Capital Upgrades Program.

ENERGY

Greenhouse gases saved under Feed-In Tariff

The nation's leading Feed-In Tariff Scheme in the ACT has had a strong start, according to the Minister for Energy, Simon Corbell. He said since March this year there have been 163 new installations, making a total of 731 installations currently feeding back into the grid. The Feed-in Tariff Scheme supports the take-up of renewable energy in the Canberra community by buying back the energy produced by domestic renewable energy installations.

Solar capital on the agenda

The ACT Government's plans to make Canberra Australia's Solar Capital were discussed recently by Minister for Energy, Simon Corbell in a keynote address to the 32nd Annual Appropriate Technology Retailers Association of Australia (ATRAA) Conference and Exhibition. Mr Corbell said the Territory's gross feed-in tariff is the most progressive in Australia, providing financial incentives to residents, community groups and small businesses to install photovoltaic cells on their roofs. The feed-in tariff has seen more than a 20 percent increase in solar panel installations on homes and businesses. He added the ACT is attracting a great level of interest from companies both in the ACT and interstate for the proposed ACT solar facility. Twenty one expressions of interest from nineteen companies have been received.

AGRICULTURE

Fish stocking plan released

Chief Minister and Minister for Territory and Municipal Services Jon Stanhope has announced the release of the Fish Stocking Plan for the Australian Capital Territory 2009-2014. The plan will guide the management of Canberra's freshwater fish resources and provide quality fishing opportunities. Approximately 50,000 fingerlings will be introduced to ACT waterways this year with over 2.2 million having been added since 1981. The ACT Government focuses on stocking native species such as Murray Cod and Golden Perch. For further information refer to the Fishing Stocking Plan <http://www.environment.act.gov.au/water>

FOOD & WINE

ACT - a wine centre

The ACT's reputation as a centre of wine appreciation and production continues to grow says Chief Minister Jon Stanhope. The ACT Government is a sponsor of the Hyatt International Riesling Challenge, which has attracted a record 550 entries from eleven countries, with 32 entries from the Canberra Region.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Technology Cluster backed by Government

ACT Deputy Chief Minister Katy Gallagher has officially launched the Australian e-Government Technology Cluster based at National ICT Australia (NICTA) in Canberra. The Cluster aims to develop technology that will enable governments to deliver better services, reduce costs and open up new opportunities for businesses. The ACT Government is providing \$150,000 to help establish the Cluster with a further \$100,000 per annum through to 2011-12. Ms Gallagher said the ACT Government will work with NICTA to maximise e-government outcomes for all stakeholders in the ACT. "I am sure there will be others who will be keen to join once the Cluster is up and running and commercial opportunities start to flow," Ms Gallagher said.

HEALTH

Federal co-operation in health

ACT Health Minister Katy Gallagher said that two new operating theatres at the Canberra Hospital will assist in meeting a rising demand for surgery and shows what both levels of Government can achieve when they work together to improve health services. Ms Gallagher recently joined the Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, and the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, Nicola Roxon, to officially open the new Canberra Hospital Enhanced Operating Theatre Complex.

TOURISM

Two A-League games for Canberra

Football action is again coming to Canberra, following an agreement between the ACT Government and Football Federation Australia for two Hyundai A-League matches at Canberra Stadium this year. Tourism, Sport and Recreation Minister Andrew Barr said the ACT Government is keen to see Canberra's own A-League team established and has committed up to \$2.5 million to help Canberra establish its own A-League team.

FINANCE

InnovationConnect supporting businesses

ACT Chief Minister and Minister for Business and Economic Development Jon Stanhope has announced funding of over \$115,000 to four successful applicants in the latest round of the ACT Government's InnovationConnect (ICon) grant program. ICon is a program for Canberra-based businesses with annual turnover of less than \$1 million. The program provides matching funds up to \$50,000 to businesses who are in the early stages of developing innovative business ideas and assists them in taking the next step to commercialisation.

Housing finance up in the ACT

The release recently of the latest housing finance commitment figures shows the ACT recorded the largest increase in trend housing finance commitments in May compared to other States and Territories, according to Chief Minister and Acting Treasurer Jon Stanhope. Year-on-year to May 2009, the housing finance commitments in the ACT registered growth of 9.7 per cent compared to a fall of 13 per cent nationally.



John Whitelaw

Office: +61 8 9367 2966

Mobile: +61 417 355 440

Email:

jwhitelaw@hawkerbritton.com

ROADS

\$122.9million for local government roads

The State Government will spend \$122.9 million in 2009-10 to upgrade local government roads in Western Australia, an increase of more than \$6million on last year's allocation. Transport Minister Simon O'Brien said the funding was part of the State Roads Funds to Local Government Agreement. He said \$52.5 million of the total \$122.9 million will be spent on specific local government road programs, including the provision of new roads and major maintenance programs and more than \$31 million will be provided to local governments for road, traffic signals and signage. The remaining \$7.2 million will be directed towards bridge maintenance, Aboriginal community access roads and other projects.

TRANSPORT

Fremantle harbour deepening for bigger ships

Fremantle Ports has embarked on its biggest infrastructure project for decades with the deepening of the Inner Harbour to cater for bigger ships. The deepening and associated works, costing about \$250 million, will enable the port to accommodate the larger generation of freight ships beginning to call and continue the efficient handling of Western Australia's container trade.

Government invests in sustainable transport

Transport Minister Simon O'Brien has officially launched the Centre for Research into Energy for Sustainable Transport (CREST) at Murdoch University. The State Government's \$2.29 million investment will enable Murdoch University to unite the State's leading researchers in transport fuels and technologies. Commerce Minister Troy Buswell, said transport currently accounted for 14 per cent of national Green House Gas emissions, the third largest sector.

CONSTRUCTION

Streamlining of planning process

All major metropolitan infrastructure and development projects valued at more than \$2 million will be assessed and approved by expert panels under plans for a new streamlined approvals process. In regional areas, commercial, retail and infrastructure projects worth more than \$1 million would also be referred to new Development Assessment Panels which will operate throughout the State. Planning Minister John Day has outlined details of the new approach in a discussion paper which is available online at www.planning.wa.gov.au

Submissions are invited from local government, industry and other stakeholders by November 2, 2009.

MINING

Geothermal exploration permits

Perth metropolitan homes and businesses could be powered, cooled and heated by geothermal energy in the future following the recent awarding of the first geothermal exploration permits in the Perth Basin. Mines and Petroleum Minister Norman Moore said there is strong potential to harness geothermal power in the Perth area. Nine of the 36 permits offered by the Department of Mines and Petroleum were accepted by Green Rock Energy and The University of Western Australia, Granite Power and Geothermal Power. The remaining geothermal exploration applicants are still assessing whether they will take up the permits offered to them.

ENERGY

Ground broken on new chapter in gas

Energy Minister Peter Collier helped mark the start of construction of Apache Energy's Devil Creek domestic gas plant during a groundbreaking ceremony near Karratha. The project represents a significant onshore investment by Apache in the State's energy market and will provide the third gas hub for WA. Mr Collier said the construction of Devil Creek was an important chapter in the development of gas supply to the Western Australian domestic market.

Gorgon set to take WA to new heights

A historic agreement has been signed to proceed with the Gorgon oil and gas project on Barrow Island. The project, a joint venture between Chevron, ExxonMobil and Shell, is estimated to cost \$43 billion and will provide jobs for thousands of Western Australians. From the significant revenue generated for the Commonwealth from the project, the Federal Government has committed 25 per cent of expected Petroleum Resource Rent Tax, worth up to \$100 million annually, to be spent on Western Australian infrastructure projects.

With total gas resources of 40 trillion cubic feet, Gorgon will be the largest resources project in Australia's history. Preliminary works on the three-train 15 million tonnes per annum LNG facility and the domestic gas plant will begin this year. Contracts valued at approximately \$2 billion have been let with a further \$10 billion of contracts to be awarded in the next three months. Premier Colin Barnett said in the current economic climate, enabling this project to progress will be a great boon for Western Australia. The first LNG is due in 2014 and domestic gas is planned by the end of 2015.

Government welcomes investment by Samsung

The State Government has welcomed an announcement by Perdaman Chemicals and Fertilisers that the Samsung Corporation have become investors in their \$3.5 billion Coal to Gas Urea project in Collie. Regional Development Minister Brendon Grylls said the announcement sets a precedent as the first major investment in downstream processing by a Korean company since the North West Shelf LNG.

AGRICULTURE

Government forgives industry biosecurity debt

Agriculture and Food Minister Terry Redman has announced he has forgiven the \$1.5million debt owed by the farming industry to the State Government for the footrot and bedstraw eradication programs. Mr Redman said that wiping the debt was a gesture of goodwill and helped make a fresh start for industry.

Grain Innovation Centre to boost trade

A new Centre for Grain Food Innovation will work to address the perception in South East Asian markets that WA wheat supposedly doesn't bake well. Agriculture and Food Minister Terry Redman said that by working with South East Asian flour processors, the Centre will be able to increase demand for our wheat resulting in more export markets for Western Australia grains. A collaboration agreement between the Department of Agriculture and Food, CSIRO and Curtin University will see the new Centre for Grain Food Innovation established in South Perth.

\$1.2 million to prepare for locust plague

With signs pointing towards a locust plague this spring, Agriculture and Food Minister Terry Redman has announced additional funding of \$1.2 million to help control potential swarms in Western Australia's grain growing regions. The Department of Agriculture and Food has assembled a Locust Response Team and will conduct a spraying program in the areas at risk of developing damaging swarms. For more information, visit www.agric.wa.gov.au

\$14 million funding boost to WA lupin research

The future of the Department of Agriculture and Food's internationally renowned lupin breeding program has been assured by new five-year, \$14 million funding. Agriculture and Food Minister Terry Redman said the State Government would contribute \$9 million and the Grains Research and Development Corporation \$5 million.

New resource in the fight against pests

A new electronic publication has been launched to help protect and maintain the State's enviable freedom from many serious pests, diseases and weeds. Common Regional Pests of Western Australia can be downloaded from www.agric.wa.gov.au

FOOD & WINE

Agricultural Society to boost profile of WA food

Agriculture and Food Minister Terry Redman has announced an agreement between the Department of Agriculture and Food and the Royal Agricultural Society WA to boost the profile of agriculture in Western Australia. Under the agreement, WA's rural community had the opportunity to showcase a dynamic agriculture and food sector to a mainly urban audience at the 2009 Perth Royal. Each year, the agriculture and food industries are worth around \$8 billion to the Western Australian economy and are the second biggest export sector after mining.

TECHNOLOGY

New supercomputer to revolutionise research

Commerce Minister Troy Buswell has welcomed the Federal Government's \$80 million investment to build one of the world's top 20 supercomputers at Technology Park in Bentley. The Pawsey High Performance Computing Centre will be instrumental in strengthening Australia and New Zealand's bid to host the Square Kilometre Array (SKA) as well as help to position the State as a high performance computing hub. Mr Buswell said the investment would boost Western Australia's existing capacity in high-speed computing, visualisation, data management and storage into a world-class capability.

HEALTH

Multi-million expansion of Kimberley dialysis

Currently, 100 Kimberley residents are undergoing renal dialysis, including 30 who have had to move to Perth for treatment. They will soon be able to be treated much closer to home following State Government funding of almost \$8 million to expand renal services in the Kimberley. An additional \$4 million in Federal funding through the East Kimberley Development Scheme will be used to build new short-stay accommodation for up to 16 patients in Kununurra.

Investment in health research boosted

Almost \$2 million in research grants have been awarded to Western Australian researchers under a project aimed at increasing efficiencies, cost savings and improving patient outcomes across the State's health system. Health Minister Kim Hames said 16 winners of the 2009 State Health Research Advisory Council's Research Translation Project funding would receive grants varying from \$90,000 to \$195,000. Visit:

<http://www.shrac.health.wa.gov.au/funding/translation.cfm>.

In other health news, five Western Australian researchers have received awards of \$10,000 each to help meet the infrastructure costs of their research. Researchers investigating the anti-cancer properties of green tea and the use of physical exercise to relieve the side-effects of prostate cancer treatment are among the recipients of the 2009 New Independent Researcher Infrastructure Support Awards.

TRADE

Mega Uranium deal with Japanese partners

A joint venture has been signed between Mega Uranium and its Japanese investors. Mines and Petroleum Minister Norman Moore said Mega Uranium expected to have the State's first operational uranium mine up and running by late 2011. Since the uranium mining ban was lifted last year, WA already has three uranium mines planned for the next two to three years with more to come.

Premier welcomes long-term LNG sales to India

Premier Colin Barnett has welcomed the signing of Australia's first long-term sales agreement for LNG with India. Mr Barnett said the agreement between ExxonMobil and Petronet for 1.5 million tonnes of LNG a year from the proposed Gorgon Gas project further secured the venture and the many benefits it will deliver for Western Australians.

China mission to deliver jobs and investment

Premier Colin Barnett visited China in July to reinforce Western Australia's commitment to one of the State's most important trade and investment relationships. During his trip, Mr Barnett witnesses the signing of a number of Memorandums of Understanding between Western Australia and China, met with the Mayor of Shanghai, Chinalco and Sinosteel and attended a number of industry functions. After a week of talks and agreements in China the Premier said he was pleased with the outcome of his mission.

ENVIRONMENT

Nature of WA wins in cyberspace

The nature of Western Australia in cyberspace has been recognised with a prestigious award for the Department of Environment and Conservation's NatureMap website. The site has won the environment and sustainability category in the 2009 WA Spatial Excellence Awards that recognise projects showing exceptional innovation, community or environmental benefits and raise the public profile of information data bases. NatureMap is available on the DEC website at <http://naturemap.dec.wa.gov.au>

FINANCE

Standard and Poor's reconfirms Triple-A

International credit ratings agency Standard and Poor's has reconfirmed Western Australia's Triple-A credit rating after analysing the State's financial strategy. The tick of approval followed the recent confirmation of WA's Triple-A credit rating by fellow ratings agency Moody's.



Zoe Bettison

Office: +61 8 8407 3519

Mobile: 0407 609 445

Email: zbettison@hawkerbritton.com

TRANSPORT

Sale of Devonport Airport

The Tasmanian Treasurer Michael Aird has approved Tasports' request to divest Devonport Airport. Mr Aird said that the divestment would help in improving Tasports' competitive position. He said that the Devonport Airport was a strong business and that he expected there would be considerable buyer interest and it was the Government's intention to finalise the sale within the next six to nine months.

ROADS

\$3.5 million upgrade for West Tamar Highway

The State Government has announced projects worth \$3.5 million to improve safety on the West Tamar Highway. Infrastructure Minister Graeme Sturges said the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources is also developing plans for Waldhorn Drive to north of Brady's Lookout Road, with the estimated cost of this project is more than \$5 million.

CONSTRUCTION

Taylor Bros wins multi-million defence contract

The Minister for Economic Development Michael Aird has congratulated Taylor Bros Slipway and Engineering on winning a five-year \$25 million contract to fit out three new Hobart class Air Warfare Destroyers (AWDs). The fit out will include a range of accommodation products, including cabin and sanitary modules, on board furniture and galley, pantry and scullery equipment.

Construction activity a positive sign

Data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics shows both construction activity and investment in new capital in Tasmania continues to increase, despite the global recession. The Treasurer, Michael Aird, said data shows private new capital expenditure in Tasmania increased by 7.0 per cent in 2008-09.

MINING

\$26.6 million mining investment at Rosebery

Premier David Bartlett has greeted a significant investment by the Minerals and Metals Group (MMG) in their mining operation at Rosebery, as a welcome sign of confidence in the West Coast economy. MMG has decided to re-start a \$25 million raise ore drilling program that was deferred in November last year and also commit to a new \$1.6 million deep exploration drilling program that it is hoped will extend the life of the mine beyond the end of the next decade.

ENERGY

Expanded MRET scheme welcomed

A passage of legislation in the Senate that will see the introduction of an expanded Mandatory Renewable Energy Target (MRET) scheme in Australia has been welcomed by the Premier David Bartlett. Mr Bartlett said Tasmania is the single biggest producer of renewable energy in the nation. He said the introduction of the scheme will enable hundreds of millions of dollars of pent up investment to be unlocked in areas such as wind, wave and geothermal energy.

Tasmania leads the way with micro-LNG plant

Premier David Bartlett today took part in a sod turning ceremony at Westbury for Australia's first Micro-LNG plant. The micro LNG production technology at the plant will provide an alternative fuel to diesel for heavy vehicles – a fuel that releases up to 20 percent less greenhouse gases. The plant will be operated by BOC, a member of the Linde Group, a world leader in the production of Liquefied Natural Gas used for transport.

Renewable energy laboratory at UTAS

A new world-class laboratory for research into renewable energy systems has opened at the University of Tasmania. The facility will drive research and build on the expertise and experience for renewable energy in the State. "Tasmania is the only State in Australia that generates the majority of its power from renewable sources," according to a government spokesperson.

AGRICULTURE

Tasmanian fruit growers market on world stage

The Primary Industries and Water Minister, David Llewellyn has praised the efforts of Fruit Growers Tasmania in its ongoing efforts to increase their presence on the world stage. Fruit Growers Tasmania promoted the quality of the State's apples, cherries and stonefruit to the Asian market at Asia Fruit Logistica in Hong Kong in September. Mr Llewellyn said Fruit Growers Tasmania were a good example of Government and industry working together to access new markets and increase exports of the State's primary produce.

TECHNOLOGY

New joint venture rolling out optic fibre

Premier David Bartlett has launched Abigroup-Apache, a new joint venture that has begun rolling out optic fibre infrastructure in Tasmania. Mr Bartlett said by 2014 Tasmania will be the most connected place on the planet as a result of a partnership between the State and Federal Governments to roll out optic fibre to 200,000 Tasmanian premises.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

First board meeting for NBN company

The Board of Tasmania NBN Company Limited (TNBN Co) which will rollout and operate the National Broadband Network in Tasmania has met for the first time. Premier David Bartlett said he is very pleased with the calibre of the board of TNBN Co, who will now be able to get on with the job of constructing a super fast fibre to the premise network that will ultimately connect 200,000 Tasmanian homes and businesses over the next five years.

Tasmania to lead the world in broadband

Premier David Bartlett has committed to a bold new goal that "by 2014 Tasmania will be the most connected place on the planet". Mr Bartlett said the rapid pace of the telecommunication revolution was one of the global imperatives that will dominate the 21st century. "Effective ultra fast broadband infrastructure will be the dams, poles and wires of this new century," Mr Bartlett said. "The State Government's strategic investment in on-island optic fibre and the roll out of the National Broadband Network means Tasmania has a natural advantage that we must seize for the future."

HEALTH

Major upgrade of medical imaging at the RHH

Health Minister Lara Giddings joined with the Australian Government to announce a major upgrade of the Royal Hobart Hospital's Medical Imaging Department to accommodate Tasmania's first public Positron Emission Tomography (PET) scanner. Ms Giddings said the \$3.7 million project would be funded from the State Government's \$100 million commitment to redevelop the RHH on the existing site over the next five years.

E-Health allows new health vision

Premier David Bartlett has outlined the Government's vision "to make the Tasmanian health system the most technologically advanced, patient-focussed system in the country". Mr Bartlett said the National Broadband Network would allow revolutionary E-Health capabilities, building on high tech initiatives already being developed across Tasmania. "In this year's State Budget we are investing a further \$12.9 million over the next three years for better health IT systems," Mr Bartlett said.

TOURISM

Tasmania's visitor boom continues

Tasmania continues to lead the nation as a domestic travel destination, with the State recording its fourth consecutive period of visitor growth. The Acting Minister for Tourism and the Arts, David Llewellyn, said that the Tasmanian Visitor Survey (TVS) results for the year to June 2009 showed overall visitation to the State had increased by 7 percent compared to the same period last year, with 907,200 visitors arriving on air and sea services. Visit: www.tourismtasmania.com.au

Tas e-Connect delivers for the tourism industry

Tasmanian tourism operators are already beginning to reap the rewards of the State Government's Tas e-Connect online tourism initiative, with an average of around \$100,000 worth of business being booked each month since the initiative was launched only a few months ago. The Minister for Tourism and the Arts, Michelle O'Byrne, said the Tas e-Connect technology gives Tasmanian tourism operators the ability to have their rooms, activities, tours and events seen and bought online by consumers everywhere.

Visit: www.tourismtasmania.com.au/taseconnect

ENVIRONMENT

Forest contracting under review

The State Government is looking at ways to further assist the forest industry through a period of reduced national and international demand for wood products. The Minister for Energy and Resources, David Llewellyn, said that he welcomed recent positive proposals put forward by forestry contractors following several discussions he had held with the sector over the past year.

FINANCE

Business confidence boost welcome

The Sensis Business Index released in September showed that Tasmanian business confidence had jumped 28 index points in the past quarter and was now 10 points above the national average.

Still lowest unemployment rate of any State

Tasmania continues to have the lowest rate of unemployment of any State. The Treasurer, Michael Aird, said ABS data showed that the unemployment rate for Tasmania fell by 0.1 per cent to 4.8 per cent in August. "Tasmania's unemployment rate is one per cent below the national rate of 5.8 per cent," Mr Aird said. "It is also the lowest of any State and the third lowest behind the Northern Territory and the ACT."

Zoe Bettison



Office: +61 8 8407 3519

Mobile: + 61 407 609 445

Email: zbettison@hawkerbritton.com

ROADS

\$11.8 million upgrade part of boost to roads

John Holland has been awarded the \$11.8 million project to deliver upgrades to the Tanami Road and Plenty Highway, which is set to support up to 50 jobs in Central Australia. The Henderson government says improving the condition of Territory roads and national highways is a key priority and it has boosted roads funding by 19 percent - or \$51 million - to \$322 million in Budget 09. The project forms part of this year's \$19 million jointly funded Community, Beef and Mining Roads Program. Tenders have also been called for almost \$2 million worth of projects to improve the Wollgorang Road and Barkly Stock Route in the Tennant Creek region.

CONSTRUCTION

Easing the costs for construction projects

Small and large construction developers will find it cheaper to do business in the Territory after the Government announced a cut to the NT Build levy. Building projects that commence after 1 July 2009 that cost between \$200,000 and \$1 billion will have their levy reduced by 20 per cent - from 0.5 percent to 0.4 percent - for the next two years, which will save \$10,000 on a \$10 million project.

\$5m Alice Springs CBD revitalisation unveiled

The Territory government has announced details of a \$5 million revitalisation of the Alice Springs Central Business District. Visit: www.futurealice.nt.gov.au.

Speedway set for \$750,000 upgrade

Sports Minister Karl Hampton has announced the Territory Government will contribute \$750,000 towards vital upgrades at Northline Speedway in Darwin, including improvements to the track safety fence and the control tower ahead of next year's Australian Sprintcar Championship. The Territory Government also recently provided more than \$1.3 million to upgrade the electrical system at the Hidden Valley Motor Sports Complex with work completed in time for round five of the V8 Supercar Championship series.

ENERGY

New LNG development to benefit the Territory

Chief Minister Paul Henderson has welcomed a new partnership that will see further development of the LNG industry in the Bonaparte Basin - with the Petrel, Tern and Frigate natural gas fields to be developed. He said the partnership between Santos and GDF SUEZ would result in the development of a floating LNG project - Bonaparte LNG. Mr Henderson said the development will further entrench Darwin's reputation as a regional gas hub - underpinning jobs and economic growth in the Territory.

Minister attends uranium gathering

The Northern Territory Minister for Resources, Kon Vatskalis attended the Australian Uranium Conference in Fremantle in July. He outlined a number of Government initiatives to encourage exploration in the NT. The Minister and the Northern Territory delegation also hosted a NT Uranium Investment Seminar prior to the conference, in conjunction with the Japan Oil Gas and Metals National Corporation.

Darwin oil and gas supply base

Darwin is emerging as a major supply and service centre for the oil and gas industry – and could further benefit from the industry with the LNG project set to proceed in the Bonaparte Basin. Chief Minister Paul Henderson has met with Santos and GDF SUEZ representatives to discuss plans to establish a marine supply base at Darwin Port.

HEALTH

Breathe easier in pubs and clubs

Indoor areas of NT pubs and clubs will be made smoke-free from 2 January 2010, and 50 percent of venue outdoor areas will become smoke free by 2011. To help make these transitions as smooth as possible, the NT Government will work closely with the newly formed Tobacco Action Taskforce. Representatives from the Australian Hotels Association (AHA) and the Good Health Alliance NT have been invited to join the Taskforce.

TOURISM

Chinese compete for top NT tourism prize

Two Chinese women, competing against 36 000 other Chinese contestants, have won 14 days touring the Top End, with a Chinese film crew following their adventure. Tourism Minister Dr Chris Burns said the competition stacks up against the Queensland's Best Job in the World campaign, which attracted 34 000 entrants.

Cowboys to play in Darwin and Alice

Sports Minister Karl Hampton has announced popular NRL team the North Queensland Cowboys will play pre-season games at Darwin and Alice Springs as part of an \$890,000 deal. Mr Hampton said a key feature of the three-year deal would be community engagement by Cowboys players several times a year.

NT bids for slice of World Cup

The Northern Territory could host training or lead-up games if Australia wins a bid to host the World Cup in 2018 or 2022. The Northern Territory Chief Minister Paul Henderson has held discussions with Football Federation Australia's Chief Executive Officer Ben Buckley, who is keen to visit the Top End as a result.

International tennis events for the Territory

The Territory will later this year host the Australian Tennis Pro Tour for the first time with tournaments to be held in Darwin later this year. Minister for Sport and Recreation Karl Hampton has announced the NT Government will support the tournaments with \$180 000 in funding.

TRADE

Trade and retail figures remain strong

Treasurer Delia Lawrie has welcomed new ABS data that highlights the strength of the Northern Territory's economy. "The Territory continues to lead the way when it comes to retail trade and our international trade figures remain at very strong levels," Ms Lawrie said. "Production of alumina, iron-ore, manganese and LNG have contributed greatly once again to very positive international trade figures," she said. Retail trade turnover was up 13 percent on the previous year and more than three times the national growth.

ENVIRONMENT

2009 EnvironmeNT Grants awarded

EnvironmeNT Grants totalling more than \$690,000 have been awarded to a variety of Northern Territory environment organisations. Examples include gamba grass management in the lower Daly and feral animal management in the Roper River Valley. Since the EnvironmeNT Grants program began in 2004, the Northern Territory Government has provided more than \$3 million to fund a diverse range of projects.

Visit www.environmentgrants.nt.gov.au

FINANCE

NT Business the most confident in the Nation

A new survey has found the Northern Territory businesses are among the most confident in the nation. Minister for Business, Dr Chris Burns has welcomed the findings of the latest Sensis Business Index that showed business confidence in the Territory has improved for the third consecutive quarter. "In the August quarter 2009 Territory business confidence jumped 12 percentage points to 60 percent compared to the previous quarter and along with Tasmania is the highest in the nation," Dr Burns said.



John Lacy

Office: +64 4 495 3740

Mobile: +64 21 327 070

Email: jlacy@hawkerbritton.com

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Commitment to Trans-Tasman cooperation

Prime Ministers Kevin Rudd and John Key held their fourth bilateral meeting in Canberra in August, during Prime Minister Key's official visit to Australia. The Prime Ministers agreed on the imperative for continued strong and coordinated international action to restore confidence and global economic growth. They also agreed to a joint statement of intent to give new intensity and a renewed focus to delivering the practical benefits and outcomes from the Single Economic Market. The joint statement lists practical concrete outcomes on economic regulatory matters, including business law and competition policy, that they would like to achieve.

The Prime Ministers also agreed to a joint plan to streamline trans-Tasman travel, with improvements to be seen as early as next year. The plan includes roll out of the automated SmartGate passenger clearance system in New Zealand. They also endorsed a new Development Coordination Partnership, which takes an important first step towards implementing the Cairns Compact for Strengthened Development Coordination in the Pacific, agreed at the Pacific Islands Forum Leaders' Meeting in Cairns.

Recalling the commitment that they had made in March to strengthen economic integration and cooperation, the two Prime Ministers welcomed the progress made in the preceding five months including: substantial progress in concluding a CER Investment Protocol aimed at promoting further cross-Tasman investment, and reaffirmed their commitment to concluding this agreement by the end of 2009, including agreement on the screening thresholds, which will be AUD \$953 million for New Zealand investments in Australia and NZD \$477 million for Australian investments in New Zealand, half of the Australian threshold; an amended Australia-New Zealand Joint Food Standards Treaty; and updated economic agreements to facilitate closer business links including a revised Double Taxation Agreement and the conclusion of a new scheme enabling Australian and New Zealand workers to move pension funds across the Tasman.

TRADE

Building closer trade links with New Zealand

Trade Minister Simon Crea led Australia's delegation to the annual Closer Economic Relations Ministerial Meeting in Wellington recently. Mr Crea was accompanied to the high-level talks by Mr Tony Burke, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries, and Forestry, and Senator Nick Sherry, Assistant Treasurer. The New Zealand delegation was led by New Zealand Trade Minister Tim Groser – with New Zealand Commerce Minister Simon Power and New Zealand Agriculture Minister David Carter also participating in the meeting. Mr Crea welcomed the opportunity to engage with his New Zealand Ministerial colleagues on ways to further advance the trans-Tasman trade and economic relationship. "Australia and New Zealand continue to strengthen their economic links and move towards an integrated trans-Tasman economy under the Closer Economic Relations trade agreement and the Single Economic Market initiative," Mr Crea said.

Australian initiative on protectionism

New Zealand Trade Minister Tim Groser has welcomed an Australian initiative to lobby the G20 leaders to focus more on the domestic sources of pressure for protectionist policies. A recent policy paper by the Sydney-based Lowy Institute, *Message to the G20: Defeating Protectionism Begins at Home*, was circulated to all G20 participants. "Keeping markets open in difficult economic times is essential if we are to recover quickly from the current global economic downturn, and the Lowy Institute paper usefully reminds policy makers of the potential costs of protectionist policies," Mr Groser said. "This is a great example of the collaborative spirit between businesses on both sides of the Tasman that was so evident in Sydney at the recent Australia-New Zealand Leadership forum," he said.

FOOD & WINE

Trans Tasman project for healthier food

Victoria and New Zealand have joined together in a scientific collaboration using the Australian Synchrotron in Melbourne in developing the technology to support production of a future range of nutritionally enhanced vegetables. Victorian Innovation Minister Gavin Jennings joined New Zealand Prime Minister John Key and scientists for a tour of the Australian Synchrotron recently. Mr Jennings said supermarket and green grocer shelves could soon stock enhanced varieties of tomatoes, capsicum, lettuce, carrot, cabbages, cauliflower and sweet corn bred with new technology.

CONTACT



MANAGING DIRECTOR
Bruce Hawker
Office: +61 2 9279 0200
Email: bhawker@hawkerbritton.com
Level 1, 71 York Street
Sydney NSW 2000



NSW
Director: Justin Di Lollo
Office: +61 2 9279 0200
Mobile: 0413 152 515
Email: jdilollo@hawkerbritton.com
Level 1, 71 York Street
Sydney NSW 2000



CANBERRA
Director: Simon Banks
Office: +61 2 6295 8300
Mobile: 0419 638 587
Email: sbanks@hawkerbritton.com
Suite 2, 16 Bougainville St.
Manuka ACT 2603



QUEENSLAND
Director: Mark Nolan
Office: +61 7 3254 4671
Mobile: 0413 152 516
Email: mnolan@hawkerbritton.com
92A Browne Street
New Farm QLD 4005



VICTORIA
Director: David White
Office: +61 3 9663 5111
Mobile: 0411 748 404
Email: dwhite@hawkerbritton.com
Level 2 278 Collins Street
Melbourne VIC 3000



ACT
Director: Gail Morgan
Office: +61 2 6295 8300
Mobile: +61 412 926 348
Email: gmorgan@hawkerbritton.com



SOUTH AUSTRALIA
Director: Stephen Halliday
Office: +61 8 8407 3519
Mobile: 0418 808 799
Email: shalliday@hawkerbritton.com
Level 10 60 Waymouth St
Adelaide SA 5000



NEW ZEALAND
Director: John Lacy
Tel: +64 21 327 070
Email: jlacy@hawkerbritton.com
4th Floor Braemar Building
32 Terrace Wellington NZ



TASMANIA and the NT
Director: Zoe Bettison
Office: +61 8 8407 3519
Mobile: 0407 609 445
Email: zbettison@hawkerbritton.com



WESTERN AUSTRALIA
Director: John Whitelaw
Office: +61 8 9367 2966
Mobile: +61 417 355 440
Email: jwhitelaw@hawkerbritton.com
Suite 9, 100 Mill Point Road
South Perth WA 6151

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