



- **Employment in Tasmania fell by 3.4% over the year**
- **The unemployment rate in Tasmania increased to 5.5%**
- **The participation rate in Tasmania fell to 60.1%**

Note: All Labour Force estimates are from the Australian Bureau of Statistics' *Labour Force Survey* and are *Trend estimates* unless otherwise stated.

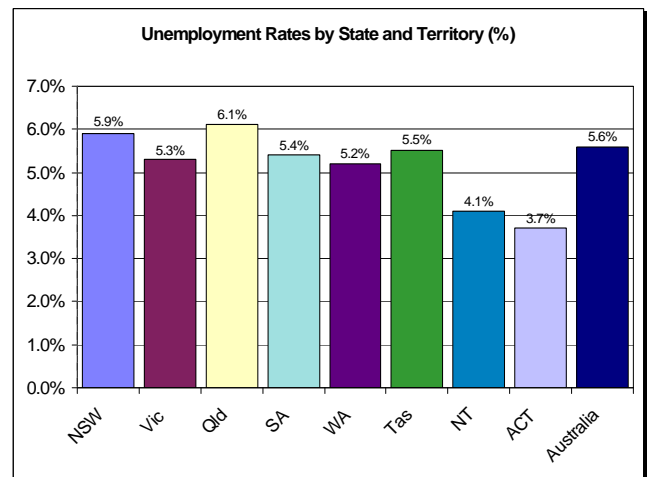
Employment

Total employment in Tasmania fell for the 14th consecutive month in December, and was 3.4 per cent lower than it was in December 2008. This equates to a net loss of approximately 8,100 jobs over the last 12 months. Full-time employment fell by 5.7 per cent over the year, while part-time employment increased by 1.6 per cent for the same period. Total male employment fell by around 8,000 or 6.1 per cent over the year and total female employment fell slightly by 0.02 over the year. Male full-time employment fell by 6.4 per cent and part-time employment fell by 4.2 per cent. Female full-time employment has fallen by 4.2 per cent since December 2008 while part-time employment for females increased by 4.0 per cent over the same period.

Unemployment

The total number of unemployed Tasmanians recorded in December 2009 was estimated at 13,400 which is an increase of 22.5 per cent over the year. All of the increases in unemployment have been among males, with female unemployment falling over the year by 3.9 per cent. The female unemployment rate was

estimated at 4.8 per cent, compared to 6.1 per cent for males. The total unemployment rate for Tasmania was 5.5 per cent in December 2009 compared to 4.4 per cent the previous December. The current national unemployment rate is 5.6 per cent; the following graph shows the unemployment rates for other States and Territories.



Labour Force & Participation Rates

The number of people in the Tasmanian labour force in December 2009 was 3.3 per cent lower than the number recorded in December the previous year. The female labour force increased by 1.4 per cent over the year, while the size of the male labour force declined by 5.0 per cent. Tasmania's participation rate was 60.1 per cent in December 2009 compared to 62.2 per cent in December 2008. The participation rate in Tasmania was below the current national participation rate, which stands at 65.2 per cent.

Feature Article

REGIONAL PROFILES PART TWO – NORTH-WEST TASMANIA

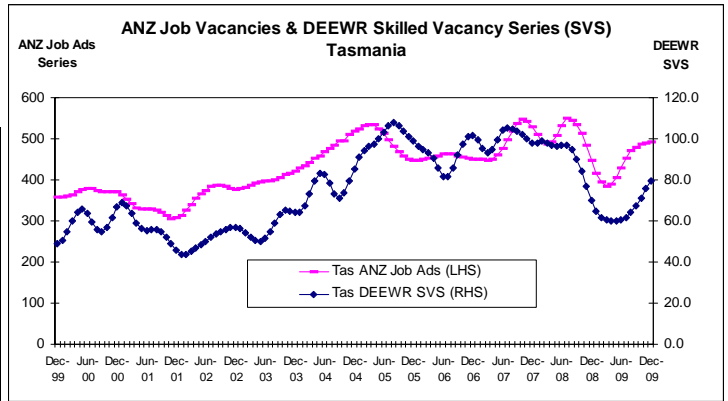
Labour Force Estimates - Tasmania (Trend data)

	Dec-2008	Nov-2009	Dec-2009
	000's	000's	000's
Employment			
Male	131.1	123.2	123.1
Female	108.7	108.9	108.5
Full-time	164.1	155.3	154.8
Part-time	75.6	76.7	76.8
Persons	239.7	232.0	231.6
Unemployment			
Male	5.3	7.7	8.0
Female	5.7	5.4	5.5
Persons	11.0	13.2	13.4
Labour Force			
Male	136.3	130.9	131.1
Female	114.4	114.3	114.0
Persons	250.7	245.2	245.1
Unemployment Rate %			
Male	3.9	5.9	6.1
Female	5.0	4.7	4.8
Persons	4.4	5.4	5.5
Full-time Teenage*	28.0	22.2	30.2
Participation Rate %			
Male	69.3	65.8	65.9
Female	55.4	54.8	54.7
Persons	62.2	60.2	60.1
*unadjusted data			

Job Vacancies

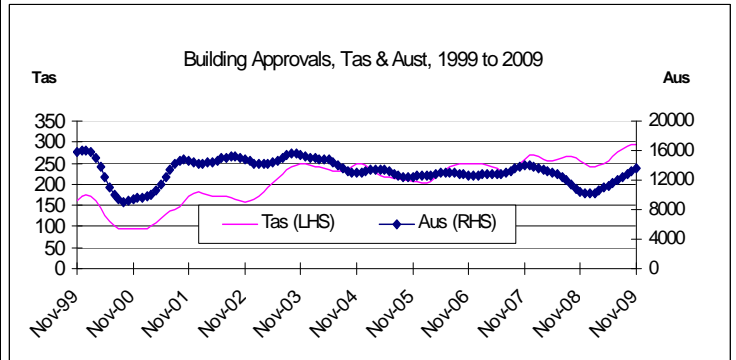
The ANZ Bank Job Advertisement series (trend) in Tasmania increased slightly in December and was 9.8% above what it was in December 2008. Nationally, the series increased by 3.7% over the month, but was 9.7% below what it was in December 2008.

DEEWR's Skilled Vacancy Survey Index (trend) rose in the month of December by 5.1% and was 13.8% above what it was in December 2008. Nationally, the series increased by 1.9% over the month but was 25.4% lower than it was in December 2008.



Other Indicators

Building approvals in Tasmania remained stable in November 2009 neither increasing nor decreasing over the previous month's figure; however they were 15.7% higher than for the same time in November 2008. Nationally, building approvals increased by 2.7% over the month, and increased by 30.7% over the year.



Newstart Recipients & Youth Allowees

Benefit recipients (Newstart & Youth Allowances) Tasmania				
	<12 months	>12 months	Total	% > 12 months
Nov-2008	4,299	5,705	10,004	57.0%
Nov-2009	5,721	6,204	11,925	52.0%
Number difference	1,422	499	1,921	
% difference	33.1%	8.7%	19.2%	

**REGIONAL PROFILES PART TWO
NORTH-WEST TASMANIA (MERSEY-LYELL)**

Introduction

The following article is the second of three that will be focussing on the labour market in each of the three Tasmanian regions. The data discussed will be primarily from the ABS monthly labour force survey, and rolling three month averages will be used in an attempt to reduce the volatility of the data. In general, the approach will be to compare each region to the State average, and the last five years will be the focus. Each report will focus on the five years to October 2009, to allow direct comparisons of regions.

Employment

Total employment in north-west Tasmania grew by 4.6 per cent over the five years to October 2009, compared to growth of 8.9 per cent for the whole State over the same period. Virtually all of the growth in employment in the north-west over this period was in part-time work, which grew by 20.5 per cent, while full-time employment fell by 2.1 per cent. This contrasts with growth in full-time employment of 6.6 per cent for the whole State, and growth of 14.1 per cent in part-time work. The vast majority of employment growth in the north-west over the last five years occurred in the female labour force. Total female employment grew by 10.5 per cent since 2004, while male employment grew by 0.4 per cent. It is also worth noting that while there has been long-term employment growth in the north-west, total employment has fallen by 7.8 per cent between October 2008 and October 2009, compared to a fall of 4.8 per cent for the State as a whole.

The following table shows the components of employment growth in north-west Tasmania compared to growth for the whole State.

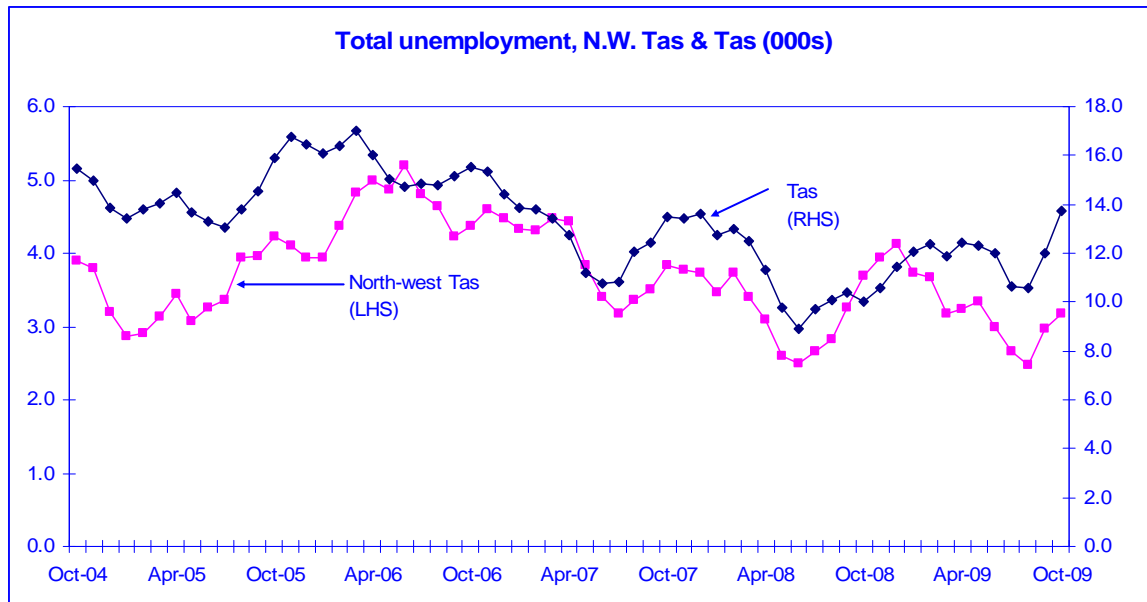
	North-west Tasmania			Tasmania		
	F/time	P/time	Total	F/time	P/time	Total
Males	-64.5%	69.4%	4.8%	16.7%	15.8%	32.5%
Females	32.3%	62.9%	95.2%	33.9%	33.6%	67.5%
Persons	-32.3%	132.3%	100.0%	50.6%	49.4%	100.0%

In October 2004 21.1 per cent of the State's employed people were working in the north-west region. By October 2009, this had fallen to 20.3 per cent.

Unemployment

Between October 2005 and October 2009, the total number of unemployed people in the north-west fell from 3,900 to 3,200, which was a fall of 18.8 per cent. This was above the fall of 11.0 per cent in unemployment for the whole State over the

same period. Male unemployment in the north-west increased over the last five years by 1.7 per cent, but this was off-set by a 39.0 per cent fall in female unemployment. The following graph compares unemployment trends in the north-west to those for the whole State over the last five years. Please note the two statistical series shown in the graph are on two different scales, to allow close comparison. LHS means left hand scale and RHS means right hand scale.



It is clear from the above graph that unemployment has generally been trending downward for the last three years or so, with the exception of the second half of 2009, which has seen unemployment increase in both the north-west and the State as a whole. The unemployment rate in the north-west fell from 8.0 per cent in 2004 to 6.3 per cent in October this year. Over the same period Tasmania's unemployment rate fell from 6.8 per cent to 5.6 per cent. In October 2009, around 23.1 per cent of Tasmania's unemployed people lived in the north-west, compared to 25.3 per cent in October 2004.

Labour Force and participation rates

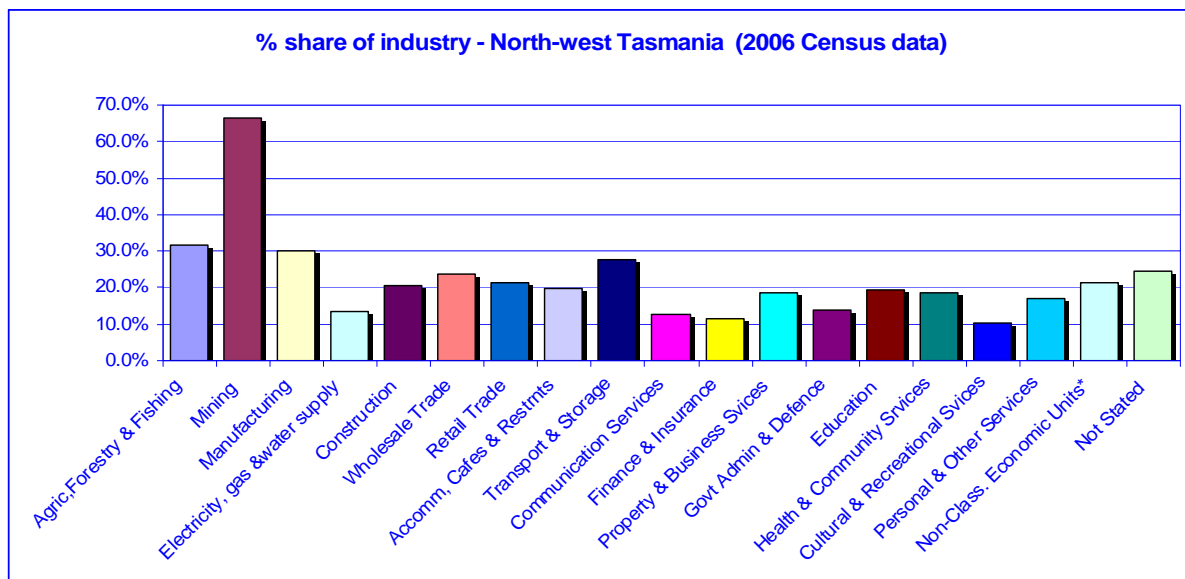
The number of people in the labour force in the north-west region grew by 2.7 per cent over the last five years, compared to growth of 7.6 per cent for the whole of Tasmania. The patterns of growth for the north-west were similar to those for the State, in that the female labour force in the north-west grew by 5.8 per cent, compared to 0.5 per cent growth for the male labour force. The female labour force for Tasmania grew by 12.1 per cent, compared to 3.9 per cent growth for the male labour force. In October 2004, 21.4 per cent of Tasmania's labour force were living in the north-west, but by 2009, this share had fallen to 20.5 per cent.

The much lower rates of growth in the north-west labour force are also reflected in lower participation rates. The overall participation rate for the north-west was actually lower in October 2009, at 55.9 per cent, than it was five years earlier at 56.7 per cent. Over the same period Tasmania's participation rate increased from 59.0 per cent to 60.4 per cent. Male participation in the north-west fell from 66.6 per

cent to 63.9 per cent over the last 5 years, while female participation increased from 47.2 per cent to 48.2 per cent. Male participation rates for the whole State fell from 66.7 per cent, about the same as the north-west at that stage, to 65.9 per cent, while female participation rates grew from 51.7 per cent to 55.1 per cent between October 2004 and October 2009. The male participation rate for north-west Tasmania in October 2009, at 63.9 per cent, was the lowest level recorded since the current series began.

Industry Share

The following graph shows the north-west region's share of the State's industry. As stated above, the north-west's share of Tasmania's labour force in October 2009 was around 20.5 per cent.



Using this figure as a benchmark, it is clear that the north-west has a greater share of some industries than others, but is also under-represented in some. The north-west has over 31 per cent of employment in the agriculture, forestry and fishing industry, over 66 per cent of the mining industry (the west coast is included in the north-west region) and over 27 per cent of the transport and storage industry. The industries that seem to be under-represented in the north-west are electricity, gas and water, communication services, finance and insurance, government administration and defence, and cultural and recreational services. *(N.B. More recent data on industry has not been used in this report as the ABS has updated its industry classification system. Data from the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification System (ANZSIC) 1993 was discontinued in 2007. Data since then is under the new ANZSIC 2006 system so there is a break in the series, and only two years worth of data under the new system).*

Summary

- Employment in the north-west has grown at a lower rate than for the State as a whole over the last five years, and all of the growth that has occurred has been in part-time work;
- Unemployment has fallen more in the north-west on a percentage basis as it has for the whole of Tasmania between October 2004 and October 2009. However, all of these falls have been among the female labour force; and

- Participation rates have historically been lower in the north-west than the State average, and the gap between the State as a whole and the north-west is particularly noticeable for male participation rates.

ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENTS IN DECEMBER 2009

- Dec 1st The Minister for Tourism and the Arts, Michelle O'Byrne, today opened J. Boag & Sons new \$25 million brew house in Launceston in the State's north. Ms O'Byrne said that the investment reflected a vote of confidence in the Tasmanian economy and highlighted the commitment of Lion Nathan, Boag's parent company since 2007, to ongoing production and local employment in Tasmania. (www.media.tas.gov.au)
- Dec 1st The State Government's \$32 million purchase of the Tasmanian rail network from Asciano was finalised early yesterday morning. Rail, Train and Bus Union secretary Samantha Simonetis said the handover was a great relief to the 150 former employees of Pacific National, who had all been transferred to the new entity. (The Mercury)
- Dec 2nd A private entity "quite a way down the track" of investing in the \$200,000-a-year loss-making Tarkine Forest Adventures near Smithton in the State's north-west pulled out of the process last week. Forestry Tasmania, the owner of the tourist attraction, formerly known as Dismal Swamp, says it had "several" expressions of interest to invest in on-site adventure activities and or accommodation but a deal with the "preferred partner" collapsed. Forestry Tasmania managing director Bob Gordon said the preferred proponent "decided for their own reasons" it could not seal a deal. "Unfortunately we have not been able to agree on terms," Mr Gordon said. "This is just part of the process and we will now recommence discussions with other parties" he said. (The Advocate)
- Dec 3rd A \$12 million research project is aiming to make Tasmania's apple and pear industry more profitable and less hungry for water and chemicals. Tasmania's apple and pear industry, worth \$40 million a year, has lost growers over recent years as profits have fallen and environmental pressure has increased. The Horticulture Australia Limited project will be administered by the Tasmanian Institute of Agricultural Research (TIAR) at the University of Tasmania. The Productivity, Irrigation, Pests and Soils (PIPS) project will focus on three areas: pests, tree structure and soil, and water and nutrients. One of the projects main objectives was to develop guidelines to help orchardists grow fruit cheaper and eco-efficiently. (The Mercury)
- Dec 3rd The Tasmanian Farmers and Growers Association (TFGA) will receive \$250,000 funding from the State Government to help maximise awareness, use and innovation of the super-fast National Broadband Network. TFGA chief executive Chris Oldfield said that for farming, the network would be revolutionary. Practical applications of the network could include the ability to operate irrigators and GPS-controllable machinery remotely; farmers being able to maintain machinery under the guidance of trained mechanics that would be able to monitor repairs remotely; constant tracking of livestock through electronic tagging; teleconferenc-

ing of meetings of rural importance; and online banking and other e-commerce. (The Examiner)

- Dec 8th Tasmania's north-west coast will be given a joint government assistance package to help deal with the impact of big job losses in the region. Hundreds of paper mill jobs will vanish when Paperlinx closes its mill at Wesley Vale and part of its Burnie mill next March. The State and Federal Governments have announced a \$20 million stimulus package to boost investment and jobs in the north-west. The region has already been hit hard this year with job losses at Caterpillar and the McCain vegetable factory. The Premier, David Bartlett, says the assistance will be given to business with ideas to create jobs. More information about this and other initiatives is available from www.ausindustry.gov.au or the Department of Economic Development, Tourist and the Arts www.development.tas.gov.au. (www.abc.net.au/news)
- Dec 8th Vincent Industries textile factory at Wynyard in north-west Tasmania could soon be exporting up to 90 tonnes of used clothing per month, thanks to a \$500,000 upgrade. The new sorting tower, which received both federal and state funding, will boost the company's exports of recycled lightweight clothing to South Africa and India. It will also create up to 15 more jobs at the factory which employs 118 people, of which more than 80 have some level of disability. (The Advocate)
- Dec 10th Huon Aquaculture has announced it will relocate its wet-processing operations from existing facilities in Strahan on Tasmania's west coast and Port Huon in the south to Parramatta Creek near Deloraine in the State's north-west. Tasmanian Treasurer Michael Aird welcomed the announcement and said "The relocation of Huon Aquaculture has the potential to create 120 new jobs in the north-west at a time when they are most needed." Huon Aquaculture co-founder Frances Bender said that all permanent staff had been given the option to relocate to the north-west and that the company was proactively seeking employment opportunities for those who did not want to move. Huon Aquaculture will remain based in the Huon region with more than 200 staff at its hatchery and farming operations. (The Advocate)
- Dec 10th Burnie in the State's north-west has a new \$3.6 million (bowling) greens complex. The new complex which has six indoor rinks and features two eight-rink outdoor greens as well as a bistro and bar received \$435,000 in Federal Government funding and will sustain 15 jobs in the long term. (The Mercury)
- Dec 10th The Tasmanian Minister for Sport and Recreation, Michelle O'Byrne, today officially launched the Tasmanian Mountain Bike Plan and announced funding of \$299,784 to develop the Trevallyn and Kate Reed trail networks in the State's north through Sport and Recreation Tasmania's Trails and Bikeways Grant Program. Ms O'Byrne said the Tasmanian Mountain Bike Plan will guide the future development of mountain biking opportunities in Tasmania. (www.media.tas.gov.au)
- Dec 10th A \$3 million restaurant and visitors centre proposed for The Springs on Hobart's Mt Wellington looks set to begin construction early next year. A new development application has been lodged by Sultan Holdings with the Hobart City Council to build the long-awaited tourism project near the grassy site of the former Springs Hotel. Plans for the 64-seat restau-

rant, with a separate outdoor cafe bar terrace and function floor, went on public display on the internet and at the Hobart City Council chambers yesterday. Mt Wellington, which dominates Hobart's skyline, is Tasmania's fourth most popular tourist attraction, with 300,000 annual visitors. (The Mercury)

- Dec 10th The \$12 million Windsor Park multi-purpose centre in Launceston in the State's north was officially kicked off yesterday, with a ceremonial turning of the first sod at the Riverside site. Work will start straight away, with construction to be finished late next year. The facility will include a 60-place childcare centre, pharmacy, nine new tenancies, gym and cafe as well as an expansion of existing medical and council facilities. (The Examiner)
- Dec 11th Nearly four years after funding was committed, work will soon start on the \$48 million Dilston Bypass on the East Tamar Highway in the State's north after a contract was officially signed by the State and Federal Governments yesterday. Shaw Contracting will start building the bypass next month. It will involve nearly two kilometres of dual carriageway and seven kilometres of three-lane highway with a median wire rope safety barrier, a southbound underpass ramp at the southern junction and fog detection speed reduction signs for the northern junction. The bypass was funded in the 2006 Federal Budget. (The Examiner)
- Dec 13th Tassal's fish processing facility at Huonville south of Hobart has received a major boost which will improve job security and the local economy. Franklin Labor MP Julie Collins, this week announced a \$727,031 innovation investment. The funding, provided under the first round of the Rudd Government's Regional Food Producers Innovation and Productivity Program, will assist Tassal to install automated fillet-trimming equipment. "Food production is a critical industry here and it's wonderful to see Tassal employing local people and producing a world-class product to its diverse markets" Ms Collins said. Tassal's Processing Manager Peter Bennett said the fillet-trimming equipment would improve the plant's productivity, along with employee safety. "Salmon farming is a dynamic and growing addition to the food production sector in Tasmania and this trimming machine, through increased automation, will allow the plant to increase daily production by more than 20 per cent," he said. (The Sunday Tasmanian)
- Dec 13th Students in the Huon Valley in southern Tasmania will have access to world-class education at a new trade training centre at Huonville High School. The Huon Valley Trade Training Centre project will receive about \$6.4 million to construct a new building at Huonville High School under the Rudd Government's Trade Training Centres in Schools program. The new centre will deliver qualifications in automotive, electrical, forestry, hospitality, horticulture and aquaculture and will cater for students from Dover District High School, Geeveston District High School, Woodbridge School and Huonville High School. Franklin Labor MP Julie Collins said "southern Tasmanian students will have increased access to world-class education and training opportunities as the trade training centre program aims to help young people become equipped with the skills to effectively and competitively participate in the workforce of tomorrow." (Sunday Tasmanian)

- Dec 14th Wood chip mills across Tasmania are facing closures over Christmas, with plummeting international demand for their product. With wood chips piled up at wharves around the state, mills at Triabunna, Launceston and Burnie were set to close for Christmas. The closures were planned to last for up to six weeks but the Forest Industries Association chief executive Terry Edwards says with no ships scheduled to pick up wood chips, mills could be shut for longer. "Each of those closures is because we have significant stockpiles and no market to send the chips to at this stage," he said. Mr Edwards says companies are facing significant pressures to find reliable markets. "There's a number of issues that are besetting the forest sector at the moment, not the least of which is the slowdown in our overseas markets for woodchips, which has meant woodchip companies are suffering and there'll be downturns in that area in the form of short term closures," he said. (www.abc.net.au)
- Dec 15th The Australia Post site in the Burnie CBD in the north-west of the State will be redeveloped to create an additional 425 square metres of retail and office space. City and Rural real estate agent and Burnie Chamber of Commerce president Andrew Barry said he expected business to snap up the additional tenancy opportunities quickly. With recent job cut announcements across the north-west coast, including at the Burnie paper mill, Mr Barry said the redevelopment was a positive step in providing new job opportunities in Burnie. Australia Post will remain on the site while work is being carried out. (The Advocate)
- Dec 16th Work has started on the multi-million dollar upgrade of the police station at Bellerive on Hobart's eastern shore. The police station was built in 1972. The upgrade will cost more than \$6 million and take 12 months. The Police Minister Jim Cox said the upgrade is needed to cope with the increasing workload. Police stations at Glenorchy (in the south) and Devonport (in the north-west) will be upgraded next year, as part of an \$18 million budget promise from the State Government. (www.abc.net.au)
- Dec 17th Construction of a bigger and better waterfront boardwalk is underway in Burnie in the State's north-west. Planned to be about four metres in width and using the structural elements of the current boardwalk, the \$1.26 million project is one of the Burnie City Council's successful applications to the Federal Government's \$650 million Jobs Fund. Sections of the boardwalk will be closed throughout the six-month construction phase, from January 4. Burnie Mayor Alwyn Boyd said the project would provide a vital link to two of the city's redeveloped precincts, West Park and the waterfront. "The new boardwalk will further enhance Burnie's impressive waterfront precinct, which was named a national finalist in this year's Keep Australia Beautiful Awards," he said. (The Advocate)
- Dec 19th Tasmanian Visitor Survey results released yesterday show a 4% rise in visitor numbers for the year to September 2009. The state defied the national trend to record 917,100 scheduled air and sea visitors in the first nine months with cruise ship and navy visitors taking the number to 1.04 million. Holidaying visitors accounted for 48% of all visitors. (The Advocate)
- Dec 19th Timber company Gunns Limited plans to close down its Austin's Ferry sawmill near Hobart in southern Tasmania with the possible loss of up

to 40 jobs. Forestry union state secretary Scott McLean said about 10 jobs would go at Christmas with another six in March. Formerly owned by Risby's and Boral, the site will close permanently in March 2011. The closure announcement comes after the loss of 35 jobs at the firm's three woodchip mills and in sales and administration in October. (The Mercury)

Dec 19th Cancer services in northern Tasmania took a leap forward yesterday with the announcement of 19 new jobs, \$8.7 million worth of equipment and new patient and student accommodation. Health Minister Lara Giddings said that by January 2011, the Holman Clinic would have its third linear accelerator. The new jobs come from the clinic's recently obtained advanced cancer training accreditation. The extra accommodation is for five medical students and six family units for patients who travel to Launceston for cancer treatment. The extra cancer jobs will be for nine radiation therapists, a physicist, three registrars including an advanced trainee in radiation oncology, a radiation oncology nurse, a social worker, a part-time dietician, an engineer and three administrative assistants. (The Examiner)

Dec 21st A southern Tasmania raspberry farm has more than tripled its employees this year, with recent rain producing a bumper crop. Westerway farmer Richard Clark began picking his raspberries at the end of November, two weeks earlier than last year. Mr Clark says the 120 pickers have already harvested about six tonnes of raspberries. (www.abc.net.au)

Dec 22nd Funding for infrastructure projects on the north-west and west coasts of Tasmania and the King Island abattoir worth almost \$20 million were unveiled by Premier David Bartlett today. Mr Bartlett announced the Government would provide a 15-year \$12 million loan for the King Island abattoir owned by JBS Swift. The Government will spend a further \$7.7 million on investment ready projects in the north west region of Tasmania including Smithton, Wynyard, Burnie, Devonport and the West Coast. Mr Bartlett said the investments would stimulate the economy and provide a confidence boost for local communities. Projects in Circular Head total \$3.97 million, Wynyard \$1.5 million, the West Coast \$675,000 and Burnie \$500,000. It adds to a \$20 million State and Federal Government assistance package for the north-west following the announced closure of the Wesley Vale paper mill and the uncertainty surrounding the Burnie mill. Mr Bartlett said money allocated for the Tarkine Road would be unlocked to fund the projects while the Government waited on final environmental approvals. Projects for the north-west and west coast package include:

- Smithton wharf and marina (\$1 million) - Presently owned and operated by TasPorts, the wharf requires remedial work. Investment will allow the realisation of the full potential of the wharf and marina as a key focus of this important coastal town. The funding will allow for the transfer of the facilities to the Circular Head Council and a cash injection to fund its future development.
- Reconstruction of the Tayatea Bridge (\$600,000) - This bridge was damaged beyond repair by floods about two years ago. When in operation the bridge provided an important link between the South of Arthur River tourism route and Smithton and Stanley.

- Wynyard wharf and precinct development (\$1.5 million) - Funding for the redevelopment of the wharf and jetty together with the enhancement of the precinct as a community public space. The Waratah-Wynyard Council is also looking at pedestrian access from east Wynyard to a westerly point past the wharf, adjoining Gutteridge Gardens.
- Corinna link road (\$400,000) - A 12.34 kilometre section of the Western Explorer, known as the Corinna Link Road, deteriorates rapidly each summer. Sections will be upgraded to a sealed road standard to allow safe passing in areas of inadequate sight distances, especially in those sections where the steepness causes corrugation and deep washouts.
- Oakleigh Park pedestrian rail crossing (\$500,000) - The State Government will match an Australian Government contribution of \$500,000 to improve pedestrian safety by providing an overpass. At the entrance to Burnie's CBD, it is the only link for pedestrians coming from the west into the city.
- Sustainable off-road vehicle and track management in the Arthur Pieman conservation area (\$1.5 million) - The Sustainable Off-Road Vehicle Management project will involve upgrades to the track network, works to protect Aboriginal heritage, the development of a new recreational vehicle permit system, education and interpretation material and other infrastructure required to enable effective recreational vehicle management.
- Development of new coastal walk at Arthur River (\$400,000) - A new walk at Arthur River will take visitors on a cultural journey through the landscape and interpret the rich Aboriginal heritage of the area, providing an exciting educational experience. The walk will be developed in close consultation with the Aboriginal community and will complement the works to protect Aboriginal heritage being done through the off-road vehicle project.
- Upgrade of access roads to shack nodes (\$220,000) - Funding will be used to greatly improve the standard of the access roads to the shack nodes within the Arthur Pieman Conservation Area.
- Tarkine marketing and promotion (\$250,000) - Promoting tourism in the Tarkine to complement existing State and regional tourism strategies.
- Iron Blow Lookout (\$200,000) - Funding will enable the redevelopment of the site that overlooks the original open cut mine for copper ore processed by the Mt Lyell mine. It will involve fencing off dangerous areas and the construction of a new viewing platform with disability access and the installation of interpretive signs. (The Examiner)

Dec 22nd The contract stalemate between National Foods and its milk suppliers is as good as over. Talks yesterday between the parties removed the final hurdle - the way milk prices are calculated. Both parties were reported as feeling positive after a four-hour meeting on Friday. National Foods corporate affairs general manager Geoff Lynch said that under the agree-

ment negotiated yesterday, the company's average supplier would receive 37.1 cents a litre for milk and a share of a \$1 million hardship assistance payment, which equated to a further 0.7 cents a litre. Tasmanian Suppliers Collective Bargaining Group spokesman Phil Beattie said that he would sign a new contract and recommend other members do the same. Mr Beattie said that he would talk to all members by telephone over the next day or two and try to organise a mass signing for January 7. (The Examiner)

- Dec 23rd Tasmanian Premier David Bartlett has committed \$1 million towards the Mersey Bluff redevelopment plan in Devonport in the State's north-west. Funding is intended to be spent on a new recreation precinct and plaza master plan for the Bluff. (The Advocate)
- Dec 23rd The Tasmanian Minister for Hospitality Michelle O'Byrne today officially unveiled the State's peak hospitality organisation's new name and logo. Ms O'Byrne said, not only was Tasmania the first Australian State to create a new Ministerial portfolio for hospitality, but was also the first State to combine the state branches of the Australian Hospitality Association (AHA) and Restaurant and Caterers Association into one body - the new Tasmanian Hospitality Association (THA). The THA currently represents over 350 hospitality venues throughout the State. The sector also employs more than 23,000 people in Tasmania, and delivers around \$1.29 billion in wages to the State's economy. The new THA structure will operate with three main streams - an accommodation college, a restaurants and catering services college, and a hotels and taverns college. (www.media.tas.gov.au)
- Dec 24th The State Government will be given first option to buy the King Island abattoir if the world's biggest meat company defaults on its \$12 million loan or decides to close the plant. Tasmanian Premier David Bartlett released the details of its low-interest loan to JBS Swift after pressure from the two opposition parties. Mr Bartlett said the Brazil-based company would use the money to upgrade refrigeration, boilers, blast freezer and spray chilling infrastructure at the abattoir. The loan guarantees the life of the plant and 90 jobs for the next 14 years. The company will also invest \$2 million in the abattoir. Mr Bartlett said increased automation, lower repair costs and higher abattoir yields would reduce the plant's operating costs and make it more sustainable. JBS Swift has 15 years to pay the loan back. (The Mercury)
- Dec 28th The \$350 million Musselroe wind farm in the State's north-east is finally under construction, after more than four years of delays. So far, new roads into the vast Cape Portland farm estate have been constructed, giant concrete foundation pads for the towering wind turbines built, the wind farm's control building completed and some electricity cabling work commenced. State Government spokeswoman Margaret Lindley confirmed yesterday the long-awaited project was "definitely going ahead". She said more than \$30 million had already been spent at the remote site, 140km north-east of Launceston, in preparatory work. The developer is Roaring 40s - a Tasmanian-based renewable energy company, half-owned by the Tasmanian Government through Hydro Tasmania, and half by the China Light and Power group. It is understood Roaring 40s has not yet locked in sale prices or power uptake contracts with

power companies for the 130 megawatts of green electricity that will be produced from Musselroe. (The Mercury)

Dec 28th Retail employment reached a record high in 2008-09, employing 29,000 Tasmanians, or 12.2 per cent of the state's workforce. Australian Bureau of Statistics data shows that despite a recent downturn, the retail sector has employed at least 24,000 Tasmanians since 2002 - the same year the Tasmanian Government lifted retail trading restrictions. Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry chief economist Richard Dowling said the figures indicated that the move had positively influenced employment growth. (The Examiner)

Dec 29th Tenders are being sought for a \$1.7 million autism centre to be built in Burnie in the State's north-west. The new Autism Specific Early Learning and Care Centre will be co-located at the Burnie City Council's child-care centre, Alexander Beetle House, with construction to begin early next year. Mayor Alwyn Boyd said the council was working with specialists in autism services on the design. Tenders close at 4pm on January 15. The centre is expected to open in June next year. (The Advocate)

Dec 30th Housing units are planned for vacant land in central Devonport in the State's north-west, where a development application for eight Victorian-style town houses was previously approved by the Devonport City Council but the apartments failed to attract buyer interest. The Housing Innovations Unit has confirmed the Steele Street site, opposite the Devonport Primary School, has been acquired for a number of social housing units under the Nation Building Economic Stimulus Package. (The Advocate)

Dec 31st The head of Tas Paper, Dr Jon Ryder, has been given \$60,000 from the State Government to look at the feasibility of converting the Wesley Vale mill land site into an industrial park. Dr Ryder said Tas Paper had identified a number of people who had the capacity to buy the site and convert it into a business park or venture. While all of the Wesley Vale mill will shut by the end of March, it would be "slowing down over the next couple of months", he said. (The Advocate)