

December 3, 2008

CONSTITUENCY STATEMENTS

Braddon Electorate: Council of Australian Governments

Mr SIDEBOTTOM (Braddon) (9.45 a.m.)—I stand before you in what is a new era for federal-state relations following a very successful outcome to the weekend's COAG meeting. We talked about ending the blame game, and I think we have gone a long way towards achieving that. My own state of Tasmania did rather well in the final wash-up of what will be an additional \$15.1 billion injection from the Commonwealth across the country. Out of this, my lovely state of Tasmania will reap an additional \$284 million, which I am sure will be very welcome as we all work together to tackle the difficult times ahead. I should remind you, Madam Deputy Speaker, and others that this comes on top of many other streams of funding which will also have great benefit across my beautiful state. It includes \$175 million for health, \$80 million for education, \$19 million for housing, \$9 million for disability services and \$1 million for skills.

While Premier David Bartlett says the health funding may fall short over time, let me tell you how the newspaper headlines would be screaming if we had the other mob over there and they were still in government. This health injection comes on top of many other health initiatives from the Rudd government, which Tasmania will benefit from and which I will share with you. Only weeks ago I joined with the Tasmanian Minister for Health and Human Services, Lara Giddings, to announce a major patient transport package, which included \$10 million for vital infrastructure across the state. We have also put in \$8 million extra to help get on top of elective surgery waiting lists and are negotiating on a new \$7.7 million oncology service for northern Tasmania. And let us not forget—and how can we—the \$180 million over three years that will be injected to fund the Mersey Community Hospital, taking further pressure off the state health budget.

I must also note the increase in education funds that was part of the weekend deal. This will be boosted by another series of education initiatives, which affect us all in this chamber. These include \$42.4 billion for a national education agreement—hurrah; \$550 million for a national partnership on improving teacher quality—hurrah; \$540 million for a national partnership on literacy and numeracy—hurrah again; \$1.1 billion for a national partnership on low-achieving school communities—hurrah; \$807 million in extra funding for the program to give every year 9 to 12 student a computer in school—hurrah, hurrah; and \$970 million in early childhood reforms. All of these will help to boost our overall economy, along with a raft of other measures taken by this government. I hope others in my state will join with me in looking forward to a positive future. And I know my colleagues in this chamber on this side are very proud of what we have achieved to date.