

**December 2, 2008**

**ADJOURNMENT**

**Braddon Electorate: Forestry and Bass Highway**

**Mr SIDEBOTTOM** (Braddon) (10.54 p.m.)—At this very late hour, Mr Speaker, the story I am about to tell you should have been on the front page of every Tasmanian newspaper last Saturday. It was a good news story for the forest industry in Tasmania. Had there been protesters and people chained to machinery it may well have made the front page, but alas we did not rate as well in the eyes of the opinion makers. The story is about the opening of the new \$35 million Ta Ann rotary peel veneer mill at Smithton in the beautiful far north-west of my electorate. I was privileged to represent the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Tony Burke, at the opening in recognition of the contribution to the project by the federal government. The mill is truly a spectacular sight to behold, located in a massive state-of-the-art shed on the outskirts of Smithton, which started as a timber town early in Tasmania's history. The company Ta Ann Tasmania is a partnership between a Malaysian and a Japanese company and came about after a long-term campaign by Forestry Tasmania to promote local timber and its benefits across the globe.

Through a process of exporting timber Forestry Tasmania was able to prove up the benefits and qualities of Tasmanian eucalypts, and it has now paid off generously. Logs that were once chipped as waste or exported as unprocessed logs from the port of Burnie because they were too short for sawmillers are now put through the peeler and become more high-value veneers for construction ply, container flooring and specialty products.

The mill, which has a sister operation at Huonville in southern Tasmania, was established with significant financial support under the Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement, with funds from the industry development program. Ta Ann's Smithton operation will employ about 50 people and is a great example of what can be done with determination and innovation. Importantly, the resource for the mill comes from both sustainable regrowth and plantation timber. Old growth timber is not used by Ta Ann for its veneer.

The veneer produced is certified for sustainability to international standards under the Australian Forestry Standard and the Program for the Endorsement of Forest Certification. PEFC is the largest international certification scheme. This gives Ta Ann an advantage in the marketplace as the consumer becomes more aware of the need to support sustainable and responsible companies. It is great to see wood that would otherwise be chipped now made into a more valuable product and also creating more jobs and investment in regional Tasmania in Braddon. It is also worth noting that the building and site have been designed with expansion in mind so that further value adding may be an option down the track—for example, a full plywood manufacturing process once the current operation is well established. I am sure the region would welcome an increase in production and more development at the mill.

Last Friday I was also able to make another important announcement for the Circular Head region and Tasmania as a whole. It is something that will be welcomed by companies like Ta Ann as they send their products out to the world. Along with my state Labor colleague Bryan Green, I was able to announce a further \$4.7 million in spending on the Bass Highway—my famous Bass Highway—between Wynyard and Smithton. The extra projects are being funded by savings made on current works on the same stretch of road, and funded jointly by the federal and Tasmanian governments to the value of \$30 million. Mr Speaker, it is a road you have driven on several times, I know.

These upgrades will cater for the increasing traffic in the area and, indeed, improve safety. I first called for this particular work in August 2007, when I was but a candidate, and this is a great way to improve safety on what is a vital road for the region and adds to my pleas, Mr Speaker, over more than a decade, which you well know, for the upgrade of the Bass Highway. It is also a tribute to the many people who have worked on the existing upgrades. The jointly funded \$30 million Sisters Hills project originally involved the upgrade of a 15-kilometre section of the Bass Highway west of Burnie—the scene of over 90 crashes between 1993 and 2003, with the road's tight curves, crests, steep grades and narrowness being factors in many of these tragedies. The new works west of Carrolls Creek will straighten, flatten and widen the highway as well as improve the intersection with Rocky Cape Road and Yanns Road. The upgrade of the intersection at Broomhalls Road and Bramich Road junctions will improve safety and visibility for all road users. I know all those in this House who visit my electorate will travel more safely because of it.

Question agreed to.