

A year of prosperity ...

It would be easy to simply say 'the good times roll on'. We Tasmanians have enjoyed another year of prosperity, in most sectors. Unemployment is low and falling and there is a continuing increase in population, although not everyone believes the latter is beneficial. Rising house prices have seen the state capital listed in *The Australian* newspaper as the eleventh most expensive city in the world – based on prices over incomes. Gone are the days when Tasmanian real estate was so inexpensive that visitors marvelled as they disbelievably checked the real estate guides.

Tasmania unlimited, it would seem.

There are, however, some warning signals that must be heeded. The end of cheap oil has seen fuel prices begin to bite and to feed through to other commodities, resulting in changing spending patterns. In the farming sector globalisation is depriving at least some of us of a share of the current prosperity as traditional markets for vegetables, for example, are lost to overseas suppliers. Globalisation will doubtless impact on other sectors as well.

Environmental debate continues to be vigorous – and essential. There is now a growing realisation that Australia does not have an unlimited capacity to offer everyone a 'sea change'. In Tasmania we need to carefully examine how best to balance the use of coastal areas. It is clear that any development must be carefully scrutinised.

We are fortunate that we have retained large areas of wilderness in our national parks. However, even here the numbers of visitors have reached levels where some restrictions have been applied.

I can't help thinking that Tasmania remains a great place to live and that, whatever changes occur, our way of life will be far less affected than more crowded, environmentally stressed parts of the world.

So after another very good year may I wish all of our readers the very best for the festive season and for 2006. I would like to thank our commercial partners for their continuing support and I thank all the writers, photographers, our own staffers and others who take such pride in the production of *Tasmania 40°South*.

