

A year of immense changes

This has been the year that has reaffirmed the aphorism that if it seems too good to be true, it is. The year when financial 'products' that promised double-digit returns have, universally, now been given double digits rampant. Yet to date Tasmania has stood up rather well: our unemployment rate is below the national average, house prices have wobbled but not dropped too much, and traditionally lower incomes continue to climb to near the national average.

For all the undignified bickering in the snake pit of federal parliament there has been decisive action and even a hint of bipartisanship when the chips were down and it became increasingly obvious that the chips could not stay up.

With a change of government last year in Australia it could be expected that politics might move from centre stage, yet there has been extraordinary interest in the American presidential elections. For someone who has clear memories of the civil rights movement and that great American Martin Luther King, it was for me an emotional experience to see the election of a black president. It surely signals an overdue change of direction for the USA and a reaffirmation of the strength of American democracy. A friend of

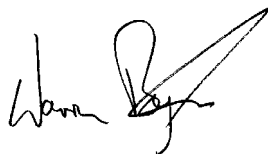
mine who lives in Phoenix, Arizona, e-mailed me when it was confirmed that Obama had won: 'I am so ... proud of my country!'

In this issue we have produced a 'G'Day USA' supplement with Tourism Tasmania. We have an excellent subscriber base in America and it is opportune for *TASMANIA 40°South* to 'do its bit' in maintaining our enduring friendship with America. We wish you well with your new president, and if you would like to visit us we will make you very welcome.

There seems little doubt that eventually Tasmania will not be isolated from much tougher economic circumstances, though much of what we enjoy is immune from recession or depression: the world's cleanest air and water, and perhaps our greatest non-monetary asset, the sense of community that we still retain. None of these is money-dependent.

There are rumblings that because of changing economic times somehow greenhouse gas emission reduction and other environmental considerations should be put on hold. This would be folly on the grandest scale – we have very little time left to tackle environmental issues. In this climate of financial adversity there are great opportunities for new green industries. Whether we like it or not we live in an environment, not an economy.

Finally, as has become our tradition, may I wish everyone in the *40°South* community – readers, writers, photographers, commercial partners and staffers – the very best for the festive season and a healthy and global-economics-defying 2009.



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TASMANIA 40°SOUTH

Issue 51 SUMMER 2008–2009

ISSN 1325–1058

PUBLISHER 40 DEGREES SOUTH PTY LTD

ACN 074 510 142

ABN 37 074 510 142

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EDITORIAL



COVER PHOTO: Princess Theatre,
Launceston PHOTO: ROB BURNETT