

MEDIA RELEASE

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LACK OF UNIFORMITY

MLC for Murchison and Midwife, Ruth Forrest has grave concerns that the directive given to midwives employed by the Royal Hobart Hospital, regarding the wearing of the Department of Health & Human Services corporate uniform, does not support the philosophy or research evidence surrounding the provision of contemporary birthing practices in Tasmania, nationally or internationally.

“I acknowledge that whilst the uniform may be smart and portray a professional image, which in many fields of health is seen to demonstrate professionalism and ‘uniformity’, it is quite inappropriate in a modern birthing setting” Ms Forrest stated.

“This uniformity is an important patient safety issue with regard to recognition and privacy, in many clinical areas, but it is inappropriate in a childbirthing setting, particularly where midwives work in model such as the ‘Know Your Midwife’ (KYM) scheme or in caseload models where the midwife provides continuity of care to a woman throughout her childbearing experience and is well known to the women and their families in the midwife’s care” Ms Forrest said.

“If midwives working in these models wear a uniform, this creates a power imbalance and a barrier between the midwife and the woman with the midwife seen as ‘the professional’ who makes decisions about the care a patient or client receives, whereas in a partnership model, the woman and her midwife are equal and make decisions regarding care in a similar manner, through discussion, sharing of knowledge and each taking responsibility for their decisions” Ms Forrest said.

“Current research clearly shows that midwifery led low risk birth centres are safe, cost effective and highly sought after by childbearing women. I therefore call on the Minister for Health, Lara Giddings to reconsider this ill-informed decision, thus ensuring the women and the midwives who provide a high quality, evidence based service, have the opportunity to meet the philosophies of contemporary birthing, avoid the power imbalance and barriers that the wearing of a uniform results in and promote an optimal birthing experience for the women of Tasmania” Ms Forrest stated.

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