

MEDIA RELEASE

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WREIDT ABANDONS THE NORTH WEST & WEST COAST

Concerns were expressed today by MLC Ruth Forrest regarding the intensifying tourism crisis on the North West Coast, and Minister Wreidt's avoidance of this region.

"The North West and West Coasts will suffer more than any other region in Tasmania with the axing of the Spirit III and yet our Tourism Minister has failed to pay us the courtesy of her presence and speak first hand to those that have the most to lose" said Ms Forrest.

Minister Wreidt today on ABC Radio said that she did not wish to enter into the regional airport debate which she described as "a thorny one for the North West Coast" and suggested it be left to local government to sort out. The Minister has met with tourism operators in the south in what appears to be an attempt at reassuring these operator's of their long term viability.

"The Minister must visit the North West and West coasts, not just as far as Devonport as planned next week, to speak with those who will be most affected to the point of not undertaking planned tourism ventures, instead of focussing on the well serviced population bases of Launceston and Hobart" Ms Forrest stated.

Ms Forrest has been vocal in expressing her opinion that if Spirit III is to be axed then a substantial upgrade of the regional airport for the North West, the Burnie/Wynyard airport needs to be developed.

"The joint working party, established to make recommendations on a two year Tourism Promotion Plan, whilst the intention is to consult widely, does not even have representation from the airlines that currently or potentially bring tourists directly into the North West region. Surely they are relevant to tourism here and should be included in this debate" said Ms Forrest.

"The Burnie/Wynyard Airport should be expanded, developed and promoted as the 'Air-gateway' to the North West, with short-stay flying holiday packages considered for travellers with limited time, thus providing many benefits to tourism and employment and more competitive prices for air travel, and greater capacity to expand freight opportunities", Ms Forrest said.

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