

MEDIA RELEASE

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SPIRIT FARE PAYMENT OPTIONS FOR PENSIONERS

Ruth Forrest MLC for Murchison, is concerned that many Tasmanians planning to travel north over the next few months on the Spirit of Tasmania I, II or III may not be aware of a change in policy regarding payment of fares. Previously, a deposit of \$40.00 was required to secure a passage on booking, with the balance of the fare paid in full 30 days prior to sailing.

In September 2005 the Lennon Labor Government instigated a change of policy resulting in all passages having to be paid for, in full, within three days of booking. This does not include special discount fares which must be paid in full at booking. Passengers, including those who are entitled to a pensioner concession fare, are now being asked to pay the entire fare within three days of booking.

"This can put a significant financial strain on pensioners, who are one of the groups most likely to travel to mainland Australia by sea, who often book well in advance to secure one of a limited number of pensioner fares on each sailing, and are one of the groups who may be least able to afford full payment several months in advance" Ms Forrest stated.

Ms Forrest has been informed by administrative and reservation staff at Spirit of Tasmania, that this commercial decision was made at a Board and Ministerial level and if pensioners who found this difficult to pay, they could pay in instalments, of at least 25% of the fare. "Pensioners should be informed that this option is available at the time of booking, a situation that does not currently occur" Ms Forrest said.

"If pensioners are not aware of this option when making a booking or an enquiry, an option that has not been widely publicised, and they are not being informed by reservation staff, as this is not the policy, many may be financially disadvantaged even choosing not to travel" Ms Forrest stated.

For more information please contact 0419 879 524

Mr Des Hyland can be contacted as a member of the public who has encountered this policy change and is concerned about the lack of publicity and notification of a change - he has been travelling to the mainland on the Spirit of Tasmania for many years and has recently booked for this year. He has consented to providing his details to discuss this issue.

His contact number is 6442 2720

10 January 2006