

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## TASMANIAN HOSPITAL WAITING LIST FARCE

Ruth Forrest MLC, has raised an issue of major contradiction within the Governments claim of an improvement in surgery waiting times.

"It is incredulous that the Government is claiming a 4% reduction in the waiting times for elective surgery, when at the same time, a directive from the Department of Health has instructed Gynaecologists not to place women requesting laparoscopic sterilisation on a waiting list", Ms Forrest stated.

The reason given for this is that this procedure has been classified as a 'non-essential elective procedure'.

"This classification now brings laparoscopic sterilisation into the same classification as cosmetic surgery. It will be interesting to see whether vasectomy incurs the same restriction", Ms Forrest stated.

Laparoscopic sterilisation is a procedure that is generally a day procedure, requiring minimal time in hospital. It is not a procedure that ties up hospital beds or resources, thus increasing the waiting time for other surgery.

"This is a classic example of the Government looking in all the wrong places in an attempt to address the major issue of waiting times for elective surgery and the health budget", Ms Forrest stated.

According to the directive, an attempt will be made for women currently on the waiting list, to have the surgery in the next few weeks.

Women seeking laparoscopic sterilisation will be unable to access this operation through the public sector, unless there are other underlying medical conditions that necessitate the procedure.

"This is yet another example of lack of consultation with relevant stakeholders, with administrators making decisions regarding clinical care that should only be made by clinicians, who have the best interests of their patients health at heart", the Member for Murchison said.

Approximately 100 of these procedures are performed each year on the North West Coast alone. Many of these women are unable to successfully use other forms of contraception and have made definite decisions about their reproductive health and plans.

"Women already on waiting lists have experienced unplanned pregnancies during the current waiting time as they cannot afford to use the private health system. Women should be able to access this, whilst not 'life-saving' surgery, but certainly important health option through the public sector", Ms Forrest stated.

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For further information, please phone 0419 879 524.