

MEDIA RELEASE

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RUTH FORREST MLC ALLAYS CONCERNS OF CIRCULAR HEAD ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

Legislative Councillor, Ruth Forrest, said that the fears of the Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation regarding the Aboriginal Lands Amendment Bill should not be realised.

"Initial concerns that the legislation would exclude some people of Aboriginal descent from registering for the Land Council elections were allayed by Government in the course of debate," Ms Forrest said.

"The legislation is about establishing an elected roll for the TALC elections that will be maintained beyond the next TALC election," said Ms Forrest.

Currently the electoral roll established for a TALC election is destroyed after the election and eligible voters need to reapply to be placed on the roll for the next election.

"As many Aboriginal voters were unaware of this, many failed to apply for enrolment at the last TALC election," said Ms Forrest.

Ms Forrest said that the legislation provides a process for aboriginal people to apply to be placed on the roll by meeting a three part test to establish Aboriginality. This test is already enshrined in Federal law.

Ms Forrest said that the main area of concern was that the third part of the test was communal recognition by members of the Aboriginal community.

"The potential sticking point were the words "the Aboriginal Community". The Circular Head Aboriginal Corporation, among others, expressed a fear that this may not be inclusive of all Aboriginal communities within Tasmania," said Ms Forrest.

Ms Forrest said that, as part of the process, the 2001 TALC Election guidelines are also to be reviewed prior to the next election.

"These provide a framework for determining communal recognition, allowing for consultation of local Aboriginal communities.

"The Electoral Commissioner will have final determination of who will be entered on the Roll, with advice as necessary from members of Aboriginal communities," said Ms Forrest.

The Member for Murchison said that an assurance was given by Government that this advice would be far-reaching and inclusive of **all** aboriginal communities.

"This legislation will provide the opportunity for Aboriginal people to vote in TALC elections to decide who can manage land vested in the TALC.

"I encourage all people of aboriginal descent who wish to be included on the roll to apply."

Ms Forrest said that Government assurance was given that the TALC Roll will not be used in any other way to determine Aboriginality or eligibility to services such as health, education, pensions etc.

"However, being included on the Roll may be useful to members of the Aboriginal community to demonstrate eligibility for services provided to the Aboriginal Community members," said Ms Forrest.

For further information, please phone 0419 879 524.