

MEDIA RELEASE

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RUTH FORREST MLC HIGHLIGHTS PROBLEM OF INCREASING PREMATURE BIRTH RATES

In response to media reports this week about premature babies being sent to interstate hospitals for care, Member for Murchison, Ruth Forrest MLC, emphasised that a major issue of concern, not only in Tasmania but also nationally, is the high number of premature births.

Ms Forrest said that the government must look at ways of addressing the rate of premature birth in Tasmania and actually deal with the cause of the problem.

“From time to time, neonatal intensive care beds will be insufficient to meet demand, not only in Tasmania but also in Victoria and New South Wales”, said Ms Forrest.

“Research shows that the rate of premature birth increases when pregnant women and/or their partners smoke, pregnant women have poor dental health or live in low socio-economic areas”, the Member for Murchison said.

“The state government needs to address these issues as a matter of urgency, to ensure the health and wellbeing of Tasmanian families, as well as reducing costs to the health budget”, Ms Forrest said.

Ms Forrest acknowledged the trauma caused to families who are forced to access specialist medical care interstate, and are away from their own families for extended periods.

“The extremely stressful situation of having a baby prematurely is often further exacerbated by the lack of family support when parents are forced to go to the mainland”, said the Member for Murchison.

Ms Forrest calls on the government to address issues of smoking in pregnancy and poor dental health as initial steps in addressing this significant problem that has ongoing impacts for the health budget.

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For further information, please phone 0419 879 524.