

MEDIA RELEASE

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MATERNITY SERVICES UNDER THREAT?

Murchison MLC Ruth Forrest is concerned that maternity services may be under threat in Burnie. Recent suggestions of significant changes to the provision of maternity services on the North West Coast will lead to uncertainty and doubt for women and their families who are pregnant or planning pregnancy.

Ongoing and longstanding delays in the signing of the contract between the State Government and Healthscope to continue to provide a public maternity service in Burnie, based at the North West Private Hospital, is a matter of concern.

"The absence of a formal, signed agreement and commitment to service is a source of uncertainty for women and families on the North West Coast as well as staff who provide this service, unless of course the Government is planning to resume the management and administration of public maternity services" Murchison MLC Ruth Forrest stated.

"Providing and maintaining a public maternity service including the vital high risk obstetric service, in Burnie, adjacent to the well equipped and staffed intensive care unit is vital to ensure women of the North West, far North West and West Coast of Tasmania have their health needs met" Ms Forrest said.

"It is also very important the more remote areas such as Smithton and Queenstown have appropriate and the necessary equipment, including an ultrasound machine, when an appropriately skilled operator is available, to avoid unnecessary transfers or delays" Ms Forrest stated.

"The North West Coast has always been a centre of excellence in the delivery of high quality maternity and neonatal care. The opportunity for women to give birth outside Burnie, in Devonport and Smithton should remain, however duplication of the high risk obstetric care that some women will require is unnecessary and costly as well as difficult to adequately staff" said Ms Forrest.

The delivery of maternity services on the North West Coast has been a focus of several recent reviews and the suggestion that public services be provided within the public sector is not new. "Both the Lennon Labor Government and the Hidding Liberal Opposition must be clear about their intentions for the future of the public maternity service" Ms Forrest said.

20 January 2006

For further information, please phone 0419 879 524.