

MEDIA RELEASE

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FROM DENTAL TO MENTAL

20 September 2005

At the Wyndarra Centre Inc Annual General Meeting held at the Circular Head Community and Recreation Centre in Smithton on Thursday 22nd, guest speaker Ruth Forrest MLC delivered an engaging and thought-provoking presentation entitled "From Dental to Mental".

"I believe these two areas are possibly the most under resourced, understaffed and inaccessible to those most in need, especially to those of us living in rural communities, of all areas of health", Ms Forrest said in her opening remarks.

Ms Forrest told the meeting that since her election she has voiced concerns about these areas as well as the provision of health services to the North West region generally, including in special interest debates, budget estimate committee hearings and in personal meetings with the Minister for Health and Human Services.

"Whilst I know my concerns have been heard and acknowledged, very little effective action has been taken to remedy these problems," Ms Forrest said.

"Poor dental health results in many other health and social problems. Periodontic disease is linked with premature birth with the resulting health problems premature babies experience and heart disease in older people. It can have social impacts including low self esteem, poor self image, difficulty in obtaining employment and maintaining relationships."

Ms Forrest went on to talk about mental health services, which she said have also been severely under-resourced and almost ignored by Government, in recent years.

“For many years mental illness has been almost a taboo subject with people more likely to hide or ignore symptoms than to seek assistance. One of the frequently occurring mental health conditions that for many years has fallen into this ‘shameful’ category is depression,” Ms Forrest said.

“Depression is an affliction that sufferers become very adept at covering up. Beyond Blue is a group with laudable objectives who encourage us all to urge anybody we suspect is depressed to seek help. The big problem is identifying sufferers. With this ailment the sufferers themselves are often unaware that there is anything ‘different’ about them until they commit suicide.”

“Our reaction to these deaths is ‘Why???’ Far too many young people are lost this way in Tasmania, it is a tragedy to lose them, it is a tragedy to lose people at any age to this heartbreaking consequence that some see as the only way out of the feeling of sadness, a feeling that is unrecognised as depression.”

Ms Forrest urged members to be aware that the ‘normal’ feeling is not one of sadness and self-doubt, and if one is feeling this way one should tell his or her GP.

“These are two areas of the health budget which need urgent funding uplifts and increased awareness. My presentation was intended to cover from cradle to grave, and all those times in between, I think that dental to mental covers it all.” Ms Forrest said.

PLEASE NOTE EMBARGO

For further information, please phone 0419 879 524.