

MEDIA RELEASE

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HEALTH PLAN PRO'S AND CON'S

The release of Tasmania's health plan held few surprises according the Murchison MLC Ruth Forrest. In many areas will provide a way forward to providing a safe and sustainable health service for Tasmania into the future, however there are areas that are lacking.

"One area of concern is that of access to services, particularly non-urgent patient transport and community/public transport. I have been informed that these will be considered and planned over the next few months but I would consider it a priority to have appropriate transport arrangements in place prior to making any change to existing services" Ms Forrest stated.

"The proposed changes to services at the Mersey and Burnie campuses, will enhance the safety and sustainability of health services for all residents of the North West and West Coasts, however these changes must be clearly and openly explained and clarified by the Minister in terms all people can understand to ensure there is no confusion or unrealistic expectations" Ms Forrest stated.

The primary health plan doesn't fully address or understanding the needs of the West Coast. "Decisions regarding the services provided at Rosebery have not fully considered the demographics of this region into the future or the wider needs of the community" Ms Forrest said.

"The extended hours for consultation and on call 24 hour medical cover that is to enhance an expanded community health service does address some issues, but ignores concerns of safety for nursing staff and patients where limited services are provided in the hospital and more are focussed in the community" Ms Forrest stated.

The Rosebery and Zeehan region will see the employment of over 1000 extra workers in the next two years with the planned ventures moving ahead. These people are not 'aged' as they will be young families and workers in their 40's and 50's and shouldn't be considered as part of Tasmania's aging demographic that this health plan is focussing on.

"The mining industry will not be employing 70 and 80 year olds and the health service needs of the increasing number of West Coast residents, combined with a younger age demographic, will have different needs from many other rural and remote areas of Tasmania" Ms Forrest stated.

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For further information phone 0419 879 524