

MEDIA RELEASE

RUTH FORREST MLC
PO BOX 104
WYNYARD TAS 7325
TEL: 03 6443 8600
FAX: 03 6443 8603

WATER & SEWERAGE WOES

As the elected representative of much of regional and rural Tasmania, Murchison MLC Ruth Forrest is well aware of the ongoing challenges faced by Councils in smaller communities in ensuring safe, reliable and efficient water and sewerage services.

The Treasurer, Michael Aird, has stated that there is a need for structural reform through the proposed formation of a new Statewide or Regional Water and Sewerage Authority.

“The proposed State takeover of control and management of the critical and valuable water and sewerage assets and services ignores the foresight, planning and investment of the Burnie City Council, in the future needs of the Burnie region and would seek to financially disadvantage Burnie ratepayers” Ms Forrest stated.

“Burnie’s water and sewerage assets are one of the very few compliant services in Tasmania and as water becomes an even more important asset, it is vital that these services continue to be provided cost effectively and well managed, as has been the case by the Burnie City Council” Ms Forrest stated.

It is interesting to note that the Treasurer, Michael Aird’s plan, includes metering of all water use in the State. “The cost to ensure metering of all water users would be astronomical, how will this be funded?” questioned Ms Forrest.

“Domestic water metering does not occur anywhere in the Hobart area, surely the water use of the residents of the greater Hobart region should be assessed and paid for by the user, as there may be adequate income from this revenue raised to address many a water issue in areas including Sorrell, and the East and West Coasts” Ms Forrest suggested.

The proposed changes would also significantly negatively impact on the financial viability of many councils and result in significant increases in rates to fund other ongoing services.

“Burnie ratepayers, who have paid for and own their ‘state-of-the-art’ services, should not have to face paying double the current cost for water and significant rises in rates, to prop up other services and subsidise other ratepayers, when other models for service delivery have not been fully explored” Ms Forrest said.

“The entire State, under the proposed model, would be at the mercy of fees charged by the Government established GBE, with ratepayers of Burnie, and other councils, paying excessive and inflated costs for a service they have already successfully provided” Ms Forrest said.

“Not only will this proposal see the loss of the recent investment of over \$18 million in a new sewerage treatment plant and associated works, there is also a risk of loss of employment of local people with centralisation of the services to the south of the state” Ms Forrest stated.

“The impact of the proposed changes will effectively result in the need for forced amalgamation or mergers of local government municipalities in order for many councils’ to remain financially viable. Perhaps this is the Government’s hidden agenda” Ms Forrest stated.

May 28th 2007

For more information phone 0419 879 524