



MEDIA RELEASE

RUTH FORREST MLC

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LOSS OF BIRTH OPTIONS FOR HOBART WOMEN

The Member for Murchison, a midwife herself, is alarmed by the revelation that the proposed new Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH) will not provide a number of birth options for Hobart women, including access to Birth Centre births.

“The absence of planning for a Birth Centre or even ‘Labour, Delivery, Recovery’ rooms (Birth Suites), where families can labour, birth and remain together over the first important days following birth, is unacceptable and a step into the past rather than the future” Ms Forrest stated.

The Royal Hobart Hospital currently provides a range of options for women including Know Your Midwife (KYM) and Birth Centre options, that encourage normal birth and family involvement, however these models could be expanded through the development of women centered caseload midwifery models that provide greater choice for women and midwives.

“A Birth Centre does not necessarily need to be located within the new RHH but could be established nearby, as part of the RHH services, if this is seen as a preferred option. This could be achieved now to relieve some of the pressure on existing service with the increase in birth numbers in Hobart” Ms Forrest stated.

“These models of care, particularly caseload, are evidence based, cost effective and safe, demonstrating excellent outcomes for mothers and babies, with similar services in every capital city and many rural areas in Australia. It is unthinkable that this option will not be provided for the women and families of Hobart” Ms Forrest stated.

“The fact that these services have previously been provided and may no longer be an option, is a matter of great concern, as it will limit choice for women and their families at a time when expansion of care models should be occurring including caseload midwifery, not a reduction” Ms Forrest said.

“Consultation regarding the proposed maternity unit at the RHH that occurred in October 2007, has been totally inadequate, with many key stakeholders either not consulted at all or their input ignored – a situation that is all too familiar with this Labor Government” Ms Forrest stated.

Ms Forrest has called on the Government to ensure RHH Planning Group review the design of the Maternity and Obstetric Unit for the new RHH, before the final instructions are provided to the architects, and engage and listen to the key stakeholders, to ensure these options are included in the planning and development of this important new facility.

“It is vital that the new RHH Maternity service provides contemporary, cost efficient, safe and evidence based services to meet the future needs of families in the south of the State. What is being proposed is the complete opposite – a retrograde step that in no way looks to the future” Ms Forrest stated.

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Ms Forrest plans to make a speech on adjournment of Parliament today to elaborate on this issue and bring it to the urgent attention of the Government.