



MEDIA RELEASE

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HEALTH REFORM NOT HOSPITAL REFORM

With the ink drying on the deal for funding arrangements for the Prime Minister's health reform package, Murchison MLC Ruth Forrest has warned that State Premier's and Health Minister's must now turn their attention to the model of health care that will be delivered under this reform package.

"Whilst there are a number of positive aspects to this reform package including more training places for health professionals, more community and clinician involvement in governance in health care provision, other aspects of this reform package have the capacity to fragment health services, duplicate others and not address or avoid the blame game or cost shifting issues that have plagued the current arrangement" Ms Forrest said.

"A move away from the unhealthy focus on hospitals must occur to a model that encompasses an integrated health care model, supporting the prevention of illness or its early detection and treatment, is essential" Ms Forrest claimed.

"This integrated health service will only be achieved through an emphasis on primary health services, including the 'poor cousins of health care' mental health and dental health, aged care and hospitals, all receiving equal attention" Ms Forrest said.

"If we are to have any capacity to reduce or even contain the ever increasing costs of health services, more attention and funding, must be directed to primary and preventative health care – we need to keep people out of hospitals as there are inherently risky places to be" Ms Forrest stated.

"There must also be consideration given to the financial impact on smaller States such as Tasmania when facing pressures to meet the benchmarks set for waiting times for surgery and times in the emergency department, when circumstances such as an outbreak of the H1N1 virus (swine flu) that can effectively shut down elective surgery for some time" Ms Forrest warned.

"If Tasmania finds itself always playing catch-up as a result of having some of the longest waiting times in the country, a limited capacity to absorb extra or peaks in demand and no access to the promised cash bonuses for meeting and exceeding these targets, the State's coffers could suffer" Ms Forrest suggested.

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