

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **RUTH FORREST EMPHASISES ELECTORATE CONCERNS IN HER INAUGURAL SPEECH**

In making her inaugural speech as part of the response to the 2005 State Budget, Ruth Forrest MLC raised many concerns of the people of the electorate of Murchison.

Ms Forrest expressed concern at the Government's lack of consultation with members of the rural sector, particularly those in agriculture, in formulating the *Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement*.

"Whilst the Agreement should provide a balance between a sustainable forest industry, agriculture and tourism opportunities, promising no loss of jobs and possibly job creation, farmers are understandably concerned at the restrictions that will impact on the effective management of their land, Ms Forrest said.

Ms Forrest said that whilst it is highly desirable to phase out old growth forest logging, this should be conducted over a timeframe that would ensure no negative impact on jobs, economic opportunity or erosion of business confidence in Tasmania.

"The funds that will be provided through the *Tasmanian Community Forest Agreement* will be vital to ensuring ongoing and expanding employment opportunities in the electorate of Murchison," Ms Forrest said.

Ms Forrest dwelt on the importance of the North West Hospital at Burnie being the Regional hospital to service the Circular Head and West Coast areas as well as the North West. She stressed the importance of training nurses and health professionals to meet the need in rural areas such as Circular Head.

"Fragmented health services are costly and inefficient and need to be addressed and overcome through the establishment of a single regional facility that will be achieved by securing and enhancing the current site in Burnie," said Ms Forrest.

Ms Forrest also stressed the need for the State Government to ensure funding for the 22 'Ambrose Home' beds to be provided to Emmerton Park Inc as it pursued the development of an amalgamated aged care facility.

Ms Forrest raised concerns at the proposal to shorten the runway at Wynyard airport by 300 metres in order to accommodate a residential development.

"It is vital that the Wynyard Airport, as the Regional Airport for the North West and West Coasts, be upgraded and not have its capacity reduced in any way that could threaten the long term viability of the airport," Ms Forrest said.

Ms Forrest expressed concern that Aboriginal Land handbacks were proving divisive rather than conciliatory, and called on the Government to look at avenues for reconciliation other than via land transfers.

Ruth Forrest MLC acknowledged the tremendous contribution of her predecessor, Tony Fletcher, over a 24 year period, and thanked her campaign team, family and supporters for their contribution to her election as the Member for Murchison.

25 May, 2005.

For further information, please phone 0419 879 524