

MEDIA RELEASE

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SPIRIT 3 ALTERNATIVE

The current government spending on the Spirit of Tasmania 3 of approximately \$115 million over 4 years to subsidise a "sinking ship", whilst unfortunate, appears could have been better spent upgrading and marketing the Burnie/Wynyard Airport.

MLC for Murchison, Ruth Forrest, whilst acknowledging that much has already been invested in Spirit of Tasmania 3, has stated that any decision regarding the future of the Spirit of Tasmania 3 will require thorough consideration of all potential benefits and disadvantage, including flow on benefits. "It is irresponsible to continue to allow such financial loss with no foreseeable timely turnaround in the financial viability of Spirit of Tasmania 3" Ms Forrest stated.

In considering all options Murchison MLC Ruth Forrest suggested that full consideration of all options be undertaken, including the option of the State Government injecting some of the potentially saved funds into the Burnie/Wynyard airport – the gateway for tourism into the North West Coast.

"With projected losses of about \$40 million over 2005-2006 on the Spirit of Tasmania 3 it is time to look at all possible alternatives" Ms Forrest stated. "It is vital that we retain and build on tourism numbers on the North West and West Coast and by bringing tourists and business directly into the region, hopefully more people will come more often, if not for longer stays."

"The Burnie/Wynyard Airport should be upgraded to, and promoted as, the regional airport for the North West Coast, particularly now that this is the only airport in the region that has a flying school – one that has recently been expanded with plans to further expand to become a flying academy" Ms Forrest said.

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For further information, please phone 0419 879 524.

