

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## HEALTH'S HIDDEN AGENDA?

The member for Murchison, Ruth Forrest MLC, stated her support for comments made by Dr Stitz, National President of the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RASC) and Dr Millar, Australian Medical Association (AMA) Tasmania Southern Division President, regarding the potential loss of accreditation as training hospital status for surgical registrars.

Ms Forrest voiced the same concerns several weeks ago when the shortage of anaesthetists and suitably qualified operating theatre staff resulted in a reduction in surgical services. "The Royal Hobart Hospital (RHH) is the major teaching hospital in our state and being a small state everyone, regardless of where they live, rely on the RHH maintaining this status" Ms Forrest said.

"In spite of the \$1.2 billion dollars that Minister David Llewellyn continues to remind us has been poured into health in the 2005-06 budget, this will not serve the needs of the people of Tasmania if we cannot meet the health needs of our state and maintain the necessary accreditation standards of our State hospital" stated Ms Forrest.

Two Surgeons based on the North West Coast publicly refuted the claims made by the AMA and RACS, suggesting the situation in parts of Northern Tasmania are not as critical. "The State Government has indeed put large sums of money into the Mersey Campus of the North West Regional Hospital and have had a degree of success in attracting medical specialists to fill some of the needs of North West Coast residents, however there remains serious shortfalls in many areas and the North West Coast continues to rely on services that are provided at the RHH, some of which may now be under threat" Ms Forrest said.

"The comments made have the makings of an advertising campaign to justify the funding poured into the Mersey Campus by the Government since reclaiming it from private ownership, money spent seemingly without any long term plan or strategy and inconsistent with the recommendations of several reviews conducted into North West Tasmanian health services over the last 2-3 years" Ms Forrest stated.

"If the State Government is indeed establishing a single base hospital for the North West coast, and perhaps this is the plan, Minister Llewellyn should declare the Government's intent. Why else would you spend so much on one hospital and so little on the other" Ms Forrest asks.

"If Tasmania's health system is to meet the needs of Tasmanian's into the future, a long term plan is required and recruitment of suitably qualified specialist medical staff from all disciplines is the main priority" Ms Forrest said.

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