

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **PERMANENT MAGISTRATE APPOINTMENT NEEDED FOR NORTH WEST COAST**

Legislative Councillor, Ruth Forrest MLC, said the failure of the State Government to appoint a permanent magistrate to North West Tasmania continues to compromise the judicial system on the North West Coast.

“The independence of the judiciary is paramount to ensure impartial decision making in the administration of justice. A magistrate is required to make decisions ‘without fear or favour’ and if a magistrate is on a temporary appointment, this capacity can potentially be compromised”, Ms Forrest stated.

The State Labor Government has previously committed to a transparent process of appointment of magistrates.

“The current process used by the Government in the appointment of temporary magistrates, without calls for expression of interest from the legal profession, is unacceptable”, said Ms Forrest.

Ms Forrest said that Tasmania now has three temporary magistrates, who have been appointed to assist in addressing the current backlog that exists in the courts – which is currently approximately three months on the North West Coast.

The Member for Murchison believes that this backlog warrants the appointment of an additional permanent magistrate.

“Some of these people will be remanded in custody during this time, and may be found not guilty when their case is heard. Those awaiting the hearing of their case, with unresolved issues hanging over them, experience extreme stress, even when not in custody”, Ms Forrest said.

“The appointment of a permanent magistrate on the North West is imperative to allow for not only the reduction of the existing backlog, but to meet the leave needs of the current permanent magistrate, including, annual, sick and professional development leave”, Ms Forrest stated.

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For further information, please phone 0419 879 524.