

MEDIA RELEASE

RUTH FORREST MLC
PO BOX 104
WYNYARD TAS 7325
TEL: 03 6443 8600
FAX: 03 6443 8603

HEALTH CASH CRISIS

Murchison MLC, Ruth Forrest, raised questions today of the crisis in health funding suggesting that the Department of Health is up to \$50M over budget. Treasurer Aird could neither confirm nor deny any budget overrun when he stated that "only four months into this financial year and it isn't possible to determine an overrun in a \$1 billion health budget".

Ms Forrest questions "if the Treasurer is not aware of a budget overrun at this stage of the financial year, even when a department is aware of the budgetary constraints, what financial state might the Department of Health and Human Services find itself in if urgent action is not taken now – are we looking at potentially an overrun of \$150M by the end of the financial year?"

Ms Forrest has criticised the State Government for covering up the extent of the health funding crisis through diversions such as the commitment to a new Royal Hobart Hospital and release of the Clinical Services Plan, which still falls short of a long term strategic plan and vision for the State's Health service.

"Health continues to lurch from one crisis to another with reported unsafe nursing staff levels in the Departments of Emergency Medicine and the operating theatres of major hospitals unable to be addressed due to lack of funds, lack of action in the recruitment of doctors to the rural and remote settings of Queenstown and King Island and a blow-out in the costs related to contractual arrangements to provide health care, continue to fuel this crisis" Ms Forrest stated.

"If safe staffing levels cannot be assured and patient safety is at risk, what does this say about where the priorities of this Government lie, particularly in light of \$15 M for football and an ever increasing budget blow-out at Elwick racecourse, to name but two" Ms Forrest questioned?

3 October 2006

For further information, please phone 0419 879 524.