



**Doug Parkinson, MLC**  
Deputy Leader, Legislative Council  
Tuesday, 18 November 2003

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## **Thanks To Retiring Thyroid Experts**

Deputy Leader of Government Business in the Legislative Council Doug Parkinson today paid tribute to the role two doctors and a professor have played in warding off a major public health problem in Tasmania over the past thirty five years.

Inaugural members of the Tasmanian Thyroid Advisory Committee, Dr Stewart and Dr Vidor have retired after thirty-five years of voluntary service.

Professor Lewis has retired after 17 years of service chairing the Committee.

Mr Parkinson said Dr Stewart, Dr Vidor and Professor Lewis had played a pioneering role in getting the right level of iodine in the diet of Tasmanians.

"One of the few negative aspects of Tasmania's climate and topography is soil that is naturally low in iodine.

"Historically, this resulted in low iodine intake for many Tasmanians, which historically was treated with iodine tablets.

"However in the late 1960s Dr Vidor and Dr Stewart noticed a remarkable increase in the number of the patients they were seeing with thyrotoxicosis – a condition associated with too much iodine in the diet.

"They published their findings and alerted Tasmania to a major public health problem.

"As a result, the government established the Thyroid Advisory Committee to coordinate research on thyroid disease and advise the Minister for Health on policy concerning thyroid disease.

"The Thyroid Advisory Committee succeeded in reducing excess iodine intake, and the body of research compiled by the Committee led the world in this field during the late 1960s and early 1970s."

Mr Parkinson said iodine levels in Tasmania stabilised in the 1980s, however Dr Vidor and Dr Stewart again began to be concerned in the mid 1990s.

"Research conducted by the Menzies Centre in 1998-1999 confirmed Dr Vidor and Dr Stewart's suspicions that there was again too little iodine in the diet.

"As a result, and following advice from the Thyroid Advisory Committee, the then Minister for Health and Human Services Judy Jackson announced the Tasmanian Iodine Supplementation Program, through which bakeries in Tasmania were asked to

use iodised salt in preference to regular salt.

“Preliminary data suggests that this measure has improved the iodine status of Tasmanians, however the Thyroid Advisory Committee will continue to monitor levels over the next four years.”

Mr Parkinson said Associate Professor Steven Boyages, Professor Eastman, Professor Carmichael were also retiring from the Thyroid Advisory Committee.

“In order to retain access to the knowledge and expertise of outgoing members, Professor Lewis, Dr Stewart, Dr Vidor, Professor Boyages and Professor Eastman will form an Advisory Group that will continue to receive the minutes, be kept aware of the committee’s activities and be able to provide comment.”

The membership of the Thyroid Advisory Committee is now:

- Endocrinologist Dr John Burgess (replaces Professor Lewis as Chair)
- Endocrinologist Dr Tim Greenaway (Deputy Chair)
- Paediatrician Dr Graeme Bury (new member)
- Endocrinologist Dr Joanne Campbell
- Director Public Health Dr Roscoe Taylor
- State Nutrition Officer, Ms Judy Seal
- Manager Animal Health and Welfare Dr Mick Middleton
- State Food Officer Mr Eric Johnson.

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