

MURCHISON MATTERS

Quarterly Update



Hon Ruth Forrest MLC

Independent Member for Murchison

2020 hasn't gone exactly to plan so far

Since my last newsletter our world has been turned upside down by COVID-19. I'm sure we have all been saddened watching things unfold overseas and are all extremely grateful that Australia and Tasmania in particular, acted quickly and avoided the terrible number of cases and deaths seen elsewhere in the world.

Thank you to Premier Gutwein, Minister Courtney and all those supporting them in Public Health and Emergency Services.

As there are many and varied views regarding COVID-19 I strongly encourage you to only rely on information from reliable sources and ignore rumours and unsubstantiated claims.

Thank you all for doing the right thing to keep so many of us safe and let's keep being kind to each other as we emerge from this!

2020 School Year

Families with children have faced some major challenges this year, with many students learning from home. It can't have been easy for parents juggling working from home commitments with their new found role of supporting their children's learning (although it provided some interesting Zoom meeting moments at times!)

I would like to recognise the fantastic work of teachers, support staff and schools during this time, as they put together huge amounts of learning materials and activities for their students who were able to stay home, but also maintained classroom learning for those who could not such as children of essential workers whose parents needed to work outside the home and other children who were unable to learn from home.



As children return to their classrooms the challenges will continue as students and teachers adapt to additional public health measures that are in place to keep everyone safe.

I encourage parents to access the resources available on the Department of Education website:

<https://www.education.tas.gov.au/parents-carers/novel-coronavirus-covid-19/>

This link explains measures in place to limit the impact and risk of COVID-19 in our schools.

International Year of the Nurse & Midwife

The World Health Organisation has declared 2020 the **International Year of the Nurse and Midwife**, honouring the 200th anniversary of Florence Nightingale's birth. Instead of celebrating, nurses and midwives around the world are working harder than ever, often in tragic circumstances to care for people wherever they are in the world.

At a local level I would like to recognise & thank all the staff at North West Regional (NWRH) & North West Private Hospitals (NWPB) for their hard work & dedication to care and who have felt the brunt of Tasmania's COVID-19 outbreak.

I also acknowledge & thank all healthcare workers & staff at Mersey Community Hospital (MCH) & Launceston General Hospital (LGH) who worked longer than their usual assigned hours to assist with the additional workload during the recent closure of the NWRH and NWPB. Hopefully there will be opportunities to celebrate in the near future.

Hon Ruth Forrest MLC

PO Box 104

Wynyard TAS 7325

P: +61 3 6430 8400 M: +61 419 879 524

www.ruthforrest.com.au



June 2020

MURCHISON MATTERS

Quarterly Update cont.

Business as Usual

Whilst it seems that COVID-19 has dominated everything to date, the regular day to day work of Parliament has continued in the background.

Parliamentary sitting days are only a small part of what we as Members of the Legislative Council do.

Regular committee work has continued. I have attended many 'virtual' meetings from the comfort of my Wynyard office to ensure that Government activity and decisions continue to be scrutinised. The Subordinate Legislation Committee, tasked with scrutiny of the Notices under the COVID-19 Act, is meeting twice a week for at least two hours each meeting.

If you would like to know more about the Parliamentary Committees I sit on visit the Parliament of Tasmania website: <https://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/>

I have also been busy keeping the people of Murchison updated throughout the COVID-19 emergency via my Facebook page and through information updates on my website as well as by asking COVID-19 related questions in Parliament. You can see all these on my website as well.

Family Violence

In the late June sitting week I will be bringing on a number of motions for debate including a Motion focusing on what family violence and domestic abuse is, the incidence and need for a whole of Parliament, non-partisan, whole of government approach to preventing family violence in all its forms.

We know that restrictions & other measures required during the COVID-19 pandemic have increased the risk of many to escalation of violence. We as a community need to take a stand & condemn this behaviour, assisting and supporting victims. We must also support perpetrators to modify their behaviour.

Did you know...

You can view Parliament in session via the live webcast on the Parliament of Tasmania website: <http://www.parliament.tas.gov.au/>



Mental Health Matters

We have all faced some uncertain times recently due to the outbreak of COVID-19 and this has meant a heightened state of anxiety and worry for many on our community.

Experiences of events such as these frequently include anxiety and panic, depression, anger, confusion and financial stress. Health care workers, people placed in quarantine, people whose employment has been impacted and those who suffered life threatening cases of COVID-19 are at increased risk of long-term mental health problems.

I encourage anyone who feels that their mental health (or that of a friend, colleague or family member) has been impacted during this time to seek assistance.

Here are some services which may be useful or alternatively speak with your GP for advice:



Mental Health Services	1800 332 388
Tas COVID Lifeline	1800 984 434
Lifeline Crisis Help	13 11 14
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800
1800 RESPECT	1800 737 732
Mens Line Australia	1300 789 978
Drug and Alcohol	1300 139 641

Wynyard Office

My Wynyard Office has been closed for a number of weeks now but has still been available for assistance via phone, email or social media.

I would like to thank you all for your patience during this time.

We are now open, applying strict hygiene and social distancing measures.

Subject to further review we soon hope to make our community space available for meetings.

I also plan to resume my regular regional visits and can't wait to catch up with you in person in the near future!