

February 2024

MURCHISON MATTERS

Electorate update



Hon Ruth Forrest MLC

Independent Member for Murchison

Welcome to 2024. After a busy 2023, which saw Legislative Council elections in May, and concluded with additional Parliament sittings and a high Committee workload, I have enjoyed some time over Christmas with children and grandchildren. A welcome break before launching into another busy year. I am focused on getting out and about in this beautiful electorate, meeting with constituents and businesses, as well as a broad range of Committee work prior to the March resumption of Parliament.

Key issues that will continue to be my focus in supporting members of our community include relief for cost of living pressures, exacerbated by high electricity bills, and accessing health services and homes, noting the relentless pressure on our housing and health systems.

On a positive note, I am sure all residents of Murchison look forward to the long awaited opening of the new Cam River Bridge at Somerset and the redevelopment of the Burnie Arts and Cultural Precinct.

I look forward to working with you all throughout the year.

Focus on Education

I recently attended the 2024 Celebration of Education in Circular Head. This annual event awards students with scholarships to further their studies, through the Mayor's Education Fund, the Soroptimist International of Circular Head and the Rotary Club of Smithton.

The celebration and promotion of lifelong learning and support for students from regional areas is important. Celebrating achievements of recipients and supporting them as they prepare to commence their tertiary education will see benefits to the broader community as well as the individual. Congratulations to all those who were successful and best wishes for your future studies!

Of course with 30 schools in the electorate of Murchison, from primary schools through to colleges, it is difficult to get around them all, although I do try to call in for an informal visit to those that I can during my regular constituent visits. Some need major works to create contemporary learning spaces. Upgrades at Montello Primary School will commence after years of lobbying. Wynyard High is in real need of a major upgrade. I will continue to fight for schools in Murchison to ensure students have quality facilities and quality teaching. Thanks to all teaching & support staff for your dedication and hard work educating our students.



Committee Work

As well as work in the Chamber, Members of Parliament are appointed to various Committees. Committees inquire into specific matters, scrutinize public expenditure and review legislation, reporting back to Parliament.

I Chair a number of Committees including the Public Accounts, Gender and Equality, Workplace Culture Oversight, Government Business Scrutiny Committees and two inquiries into energy in Tasmania (one inquiry into energy prices, the other a broad inquiry into energy matters including Marinus Link and North West Transmission Development).

These Committees keep me very busy. They help hold the government to account!

Hearings are generally public and can be viewed on the website.

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

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Health Matters

Access to timely health care is critical for all Tasmanians. Sadly, too many wait too long for important surgery, or even to see a GP. Delays to care create poorer health outcomes and a greater burden on our already over-stretched health professionals and health system. Staff shortages and recruitment challenges across all areas, particularly in rural and remote areas, continue to exacerbate the strain on service delivery with a significant toll on our highly valued health workers from paramedics to nurses and specialist medical staff including GPs.

I will continue to advocate for all health workers and those seeking health care including reform to address disparities in access and the allocation of resources to ensure the overall resilience of the Tasmanian health system.

King Island

I am very much looking forward to the 68th King Island show on Tuesday 5 March, and welcome the opportunity to visit the island for a few days and catch up with the locals.

King Island is currently experiencing drought which is creating a financial and animal welfare issue.

I support the calls from farmers on the Island for the Tasmanian Government to assist with freight costs for additional fodder and/or grain or for transport of cattle to mainland feedlots. Shipping costs and reliability remain key issues for all King Islanders.

Please contact my office if you wish to catch up with me on the Island from 1st to 5th March inclusive.



West Coast

Mining is a key part of the Tasmanian economy and remains critical to the future of the West Coast. The announcement in November last year of the possible acquisition of Copper Mines of Tasmania Pty Ltd. by Sibanye-Stillwater has been welcomed, providing further certainty for West Coast residents and those seeking employment in this sector. I continue to support this crucial industry, as it is vital to the electrification of transport and communications.

The West Coast is home to many key industries including tourism/adventure tourism, aquaculture, and a thriving arts and culture sector. The diversity of this beautiful part of the world, and demonstrating that things can co-exist in a way that is sustainable is something I am proud to represent.

I look forward to continuing my regular visits to the West Coast and calling in for a chat with Cameron (Skirvo) at 7XS.

Homes for vulnerable people

An exciting new concept building was opened in Shorewell Park on 29 January by the Supported Affordable Accommodation Trust (SAA Trust) in partnership with Family Based Care Tasmania. This site will offer permanent homes to older persons living at risk of homelessness, allowing them to live safely and have access to aged home care services in a supported, independent shared living model.

Acknowledging that housing is an ongoing issue across Tasmania, and that we need many more homes of all kinds, it is pleasing to see this project beginning to address the current and foreseeable shortage of affordable accommodation for vulnerable people in our community.

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/>



Wynyard Office

I welcome inquiries from community groups and organisations about different kinds of assistance or advice that can be offered from my office in the main street in Wynyard opposite the Wynyard RSL.