

This Week

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NW WAITING LISTS BLOW OUT

The Tasmanian Greens have added their voice to those raising concerns about the growing waiting lists for elective surgery, especially on the North West Coast, saying that it appears the situation is slipping further out of Labor's control.

Greens Opposition Leader and Shadow Health spokesperson Peg Putt MHA said that a twenty per cent increase

since December in patients waiting for elective surgery in the north-west sets off the alarm bell that current medical staff training, recruitment and retention strategies were still not hitting the mark.

"It is not good enough for Health Minister Lara Giddings to attempt to deflect these disturbing elective surgery waiting list figures for the north west, by claiming that the statewide lists are declining, and instead she should be treating this as a warning sign that any recruitment strategies in place are not yet adequate," Ms Putt said.

"Is Ms Giddings saying that until the elective surgery waiting lists statewide blow-out by twenty per cent at least, Labor will not prioritise putting in any extra effort to reduce the lists to a manageable level?"

"These waiting list figures show that too many Tasmanians have already, and continue to be, adversely affected by our health system not being able to meet the demand so they need to be acted upon swiftly instead of brushing them off and waiting for the situation to get worse."

"Ms Giddings must review whether current medical staff training, recruitment and retention strategies are working sufficiently, and get cranking on having sufficient nurses and doctors to not only bring these waiting lists down but also keep them down," Ms Putt said.

FIX QUEENSTOWN WATER NOW *DON'T WAIT FOR THE NEXT ELECTION*

The Tasmanian Greens have called on the State and Federal governments to pull their fingers out and stop passing the buck over Queenstown's water quality, saying that the first and foremost priority should be the provision of a clean and reliable water supply to local residents.

Greens Member for Lyons, Tim Morris MHA, said that it would be unacceptable for the future of Queenstown water supply to be left hanging until it became a useful pork-barrelling exercise just before an election, and called on the State and Federal governments to each contribute half of the cost of bringing Queenstown's water up to scratch.

Mr Morris also called for the State government to formulate a transparent list of basic infrastructure that urgently requires upgrading, such as local water and sewerage resources, so that the community can evaluate government priorities and help reduce the frequency of these important upgrades being ignored for years until they become useful pork-barrelling material for either a Federal or State election.

"Ensuring the provision of a reliable clean and safe water supply is obviously the responsibility of all tiers of government, and it would be utterly unacceptable for the fate of Queenstown's water being ignored until an election looms on the horizon making the water supply suddenly a useful pork-barrelling political football," Mr Morris said.

"People on the west coast have tolerated substandard water and sewerage infrastructure for far too long, and both the State and Federal governments need to pull their respective fingers out, come to the party bringing the necessary funding required to bring the community's water supply back up to acceptable standards."

"People have a right to clean, potable water, and governments must deliver as soon as possible."

"Hopefully fixing Queenstown's water supply is not being used as a political football, but it would go a long way to reassuring the local community if both the State and Federal governments front up with funded options sooner rather than later."

GREENS CONDEMN LABOR'S FUNDING FAILURE

Resulting in Closure of Working Women's Centre

The Tasmanian Greens have condemned the failure of the State government to fund the Working Women's Centre which has resulted in its decision to close.

Greens Opposition Leader Peg Putt MHA said that in other states the Federal funding contribution is matched by the State government but that despite years of lobbying for Tasmania to also pull its weight this obligation to working people has been squibbed by the Lennon Labor government.

"It is very distressing that the Working Women's Centre is to close especially in these circumstances where the Lennon Labor government must take prime responsibility because of their failure to provide matching State funds," Ms Putt said.

"In other states Working Women's Centres receive State funding to top up the Federal funding and the same willingness to help disadvantaged workers ought to have been shown by Labor in Tasmania."

"Just when Howard's new workplace laws are severely affecting all workers and in particular are affecting working women together with the welfare-to-work reforms, the Centre is a vital service we cannot afford to lose."

Ms Putt condemned the attempts by the Tasmanian Labor Party to paint the Centre's closure as all the fault of the Howard government when in fact the funding failure by the State Labor government has been the key issue.

PULP MILL LOG TRUCK INCREASE WILL DESTROY RURAL ROADS AND BRIDGES

The Tasmanian Greens have said that the potential massive increase in log trucks on Tasmanian roads revealed in Gunns' Pulp Mill Integrated Impact Statement (IIS) raised serious questions over another Bryan Green decision made during the caretaker period of government.

Greens Member for Bass and spokesperson on heavy vehicles Kim Booth MHA today said that confirmation of a massive increase in log trucks associated with the proposed pulp mill confirmed his worst fears, and Bryan Green now must explain on what advice he voted against the National Transport Council (NTC) third determination during the recent state election, which was simply trying to get road user charges paid by those who damage the roads.

Mr Booth explained that the determinations are supposed to reflect the costs associated with road damage caused by heavy vehicles and include both registration charges and fuel excise.

"Minister Bryan Green broke the caretaker conventions of Parliament when, during the recent state election, he voted to block a NTC proposal that would have seen heavy trucks, such as log trucks, contribute in a small way to road damage," Mr Booth said.

"Given that the proposed Pulp Mill IIS reveals that there is an expected massive increase in log truck traffic to and from the site, Mr Green's decision to vote against the NTC's proposal must have led the industry to breath a sigh of

relief but dismayed many local councils."

"Local governments around the state face massive bridge and road repair bills as a result of heavy vehicle damage, mainly log trucks, to their road systems and yet this ex-minister chose to vote against a national recommendation to adjust user charges to more accurately reflect the damage done to our roads by heavy vehicles."

"The local councils who stand to bear the brunt of the forecast forty per cent increase of log trucks on the East Tamar highway, and the increased log truck traffic expected on the Midland and Bass highways, would be justified in feeling very short-changed by Mr Green now they are looking at potential increased road costs but minus the portion of increased registration fees they could have had, if Mr Green had stood up for the community."

1080 POISON CONCERNS CONTINUE

The Tasmanian Greens have commended the government on the reduction in 1080 use announced today however noted that Minister Llewellyn has failed to rule out self regulation of 1080 use by the forestry industry which would see assessment largely taken out of departmental hands and placed into the private sector who had a vested interest in seeing native animals poisoned.

Greens Shadow Minister for Primary Industries Kim Booth MHA said that while it is heartening to see that policy can change the amounts of 1080 used in State forests and the agricultural sector, it is a shame that usage rates by the private forestry sector is not addressed.

"The ongoing outcry over the profligate use of 1080 will not be silenced by another government good news story, as concerns remain about proposed assessment changes which could see usage rates set to rise if self regulation is introduced and the forestry industry starts assessing native animal habitat sites that they are keen to clear fell," Mr Booth said.

"Despite the Minister admitting when questioned by the Greens that he does have concerns about the potential conflict of interest under the proposed self regulation changes, he has yet to say what he intends to do about it, and instead emphasises a good news

statement noticeably silent on this disturbing mater."

"It's hard to get excited about still using nearly 5 kilograms of one of the deadliest and nastiest poisons on earth to kill tens of thousands of native animals, including threatened species, each year."

"The government is crowing about the good news but Tasmania's clean, green image continues to suffer along with our native wildlife like the 200 000 Bennetts wallabies poisoned on King Island in May 2005."

Your Greens Representatives in Tasmania's State Parliament



Peg Putt
Denison



Nick McKim
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Kim Booth
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Tim Morris
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