



LATROBE COUNCIL



KENTISH COUNCIL



DEVONPORT CITY COUNCIL

# MEDIA RELEASE

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## **COASTAL MAYORS LOBBY FEDERAL MINISTERS FOR MERSEY COMMUNITY HOSPITAL SURETY**

With ongoing uncertainty on the future of the Mersey Community Hospital, a delegation of Mayor Peter Freshney (Latrobe Council), Mayor Don Thwaites (Kentish Council) and Mayor Steve Martin (Devonport City Council) have travelled to Canberra and today met with both the Federal Minister and Shadow Minister for Health and Aged Care to lobby for a longer term funding arrangement for the Mersey Community Hospital.

Mayor Freshney said “clearly the current two year funding agreement is not acceptable to our local communities and to keep the status quo is not an option, an issue we have today reiterated to our Federal representatives”.

“Our shared priority is very much about ensuring a longer term agreement for the Mersey and ideally, a ten (10) year agreement would provide certainty around service provision and health services generally for the 65,000 people who make up the Mersey Catchment.”

Federal Health and Aged Care Minister, The Hon Sussan Ley MP, was generally receptive to the concerns raised by the delegation, including the benefits of the hospital to the community and the critical role the Mersey plays in the state health system.

Federal representatives were keen to discuss the Federal Governments continued ownership of the Mersey as it remains the only Federally owned hospital in the country and is unique in the way in which it is funded.

The Mayors are very clear that ownership of the hospital is a Federal and State issue and that their primary concern is very much for the retention and provision of health services in our community and the whole State given the role outlined for the Mersey Community Hospital in the State Government’s White Paper.

Previous agreements around the Mersey Community Hospital have been primarily between the State and Federal Governments.

Mayor Thwaites said “the impact on the local community hasn’t necessarily been a priority during those deliberations but it is something that together we are strongly advocating for. We will continue to work together to ensure that health care for our communities is a key component of the decision making process under any ownership or funding model that may eventuate.”

The Mayors genuinely appreciated the support provided to them during their visit to Canberra, particularly by Senators Jonathan Duniam, Jacqui Lambie and Justine Keay MHR and their respective support staff.

Mayor Martin said “we were afforded every opportunity to meet with government representatives and our Tasmanian parliamentarians and their staff were extremely supportive and genuinely interested in our efforts to bring about better outcomes for the Mersey and our communities”.

“There is no doubt as Mayors, we will need to have ongoing discussion and negotiations with the State Minister for Health, Michael Ferguson, and that will be our priority on our return to the State tomorrow. Whilst there have been no guarantees, we are confident that the Mersey Community Hospital is now very much on the agenda and that those making decisions around its future are very much aware of the implications for our region and the State as a whole”.

The Mayors have also taken the opportunity to raise issues relating to the freezing of indexation of the Financial Assistance Grants and the impact on rural Councils in particular; the provision of flood mitigation funding; the disaster recovery arrangements; issues specific to their municipalities such as the Wild Mersey Mountain Bike Project; Devonport’s Living City; Mobile Black Spot Funding and a number of other issues.

**ENDS**