



**THE HON MARK BUTLER MP  
MINISTER FOR MENTAL HEALTH AND AGEING**

Mr Geoff Lyons MP  
Member for Bass  
PO Box 5035  
LAUNCESTON TAS 7250

Dear Mr Lyons

Thank you for your further representations of 10 February 2011 on behalf of Mr Peter Jacobson of Mowbray Heights, regarding the closure of the Lifeline office at Launceston. I apologise for the delay in responding.

I am concerned that Mr Jacobson continues to be upset by Lifeline's decision to relocate the single counselling line at Launceston to a more central location. Clearly this decision comes at some inconvenience to the volunteers living close to Launceston.

I can advise that the Department of Health and Ageing does not directly fund Launceston Lifeline. The role of the Department is to fund the Lifeline National Office, which is an independent non-governmental organisation. Lifeline National Office is responsible for contracting with Lifeline Centres to deliver the 13 11 14 service.

However, the Department's enquiries into these concerns have confirmed that Lifeline has given thorough consideration to the issues surrounding this decision. From a business improvement perspective, it appears that the consolidation will result in more calls being answered by Lifeline North West Tasmania than ever before and that peer support will be maximised amongst counsellors by having them rostered on together for overnight shifts.

A range of factors have been central to Lifeline North West Tasmania's decision to relocate its 13 11 14 telephony seats from Launceston to Devonport, including considerations such as rent and telephone costs. Another important factor which influenced this decision is that in the 12 months to December last year, the Devonport office has answered more calls per telephone seat than the Burnie and Launceston offices combined.

I understand that Lifeline Centres often run a variety of services across a number of locations in their local communities to help generate funding to supplement funding received from state and territory governments. Generating additional funding can be difficult in the current financial climate.

I am also advised that callers from these areas will continue to have their calls answered in the same way by Lifeline, and that there will potentially be a greater capacity for an even higher call answer rate. I have asked the Department to monitor this situation closely.

If Mr Jacobson has any further concerns about this matter, I encourage him to take these up with Lifeline directly.

I trust that the above information is of use.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Mark Butler', written in a cursive style.

**MARK BUTLER**

19 APR 2011