

# Christmas shoppers find their niche as market hits city

Nikita McGuire

PATRONS wanting to get their hands on the best homemade goodies in Launceston were treated to a plethora of items at the Niche Market Bazaar, which was held at the Albert Hall on Saturday.

With about 60 stallholders items for sale included soaps from Bee Native products, jewellery from Noox Jewel-

lery, recycled art from Bent Tasmania, berry products from Longford Berries and embroidery art from Old at Heart, with 20 percent of the money made on the day going to St Giles.

Christmas carols echoed throughout the hall as Christmas baubles, rocky road and other treats got shoppers in the festive mood.

The Christmas-themed

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Debbie Hingston, Deb's Succulent Garden

event aim was held to raise funds to purchase life-enhancing equipment for the

6000 who use the services St Giles provide. A very green exhibitor was Debbie Hing-

ston from Deb's Succulent Garden, with a large range of potted and hanging plants for sale.

"I do everything I can with succulents," she said.

"I put them into beautiful pots of all kinds from animal shaped, to lovely terracotta pots and soon I'll be doing Christmas wreaths.

"I've been doing this for about six years now. I've got half an acre out at Legana

so lots of room to grow and propagate my succulents and I love coming to the market to sell them."

The market was the last of three Niche Markets to have taken place in the North and North-West this year, with another held in Devonport last week.

Running for 11 years, Niche is one of Tasmania's most successful design-and-make enterprises.

# Abortion pathway provides clarity but obstacles remain

Andrew Chounding

WOMEN'S health services in the North of Tasmania have welcomed the implementation of a statewide referral pathway for women seeking access to surgical terminations, but Labor said obstacles still exist.

On October 4, the Department of Health implemented statewide guidelines for general practitioners and women's health services, clarifying the pathways to obtain a surgical termination in Tasmania.

Under the new guidelines, directions have been provided so all women have access to surgical services, with a priority placed on public access for patients who meet the defined vulnerability criteria.

Family Planning Tasmania chief executive Cedric Manen said he welcomed the guidelines, explaining they provided clarity for patients and medical services.

"Previously, they didn't define what that vulnerable criteria was, so it was up to the hospital system to allow and or deny based on their definition of vulnerability," he said.

"This very clearly lays it out, and I would say it's capturing most women that require that type of support."

Under the current system, women who meet the vulnerability criteria will have access to no-cost surgical termination at the Launceston General Hospital, or North-West Regional Hospital, while those with private healthcare will have access to private services in the South and North-West of the state.

Women's Health Tasmania chief executive Jo Flanagan said the pathway represented an important step forward in reducing stigma and supporting services for women seeking a termination.

"Abortion was removed from the Criminal Code in 2013, but since then, we've been struggling to have the service system to support the legislation," she said.

"What the new referral pathway guarantees is that women will be able to receive this service like any other sexual and reproductive health service in their local public hospital.

"It ensures access and equity for women across Tasmania, and it makes this health service, the provision of this health service, consistent across Tasmania."

Ms Flanagan said while the pathway had placed specific emphasis on women who met the vulnerability criteria, the statewide process would ensure all women had access

to affordable services.

"We have what are called brokerage funds, that's money that you can use to purchase services," she said.

"The patients who won't be referred to the public hospitals will be women who don't have private health insurance because women with private health insurance will go to the private system, but everyone else will be reviewed to see if they made the vulnerability criteria."

Ms Flanagan said women without private health insurance who did not meet the vulnerability criteria could go to the private system, with the cost of their procedure brokered by a prescribed health service.

Newstead Medical Centre partner and GP Dr Toby Gardner said while the pathway was a good outcome for vulnerable women, it still presented barriers for some seeking a termination.

"It's not good for Launceston based women who fall into the private category, they still need to travel 2 hours to the North-West or Hobart to access a service," he said.

Dr Gardner said the majority of his referrals were private patients who would not be granted a termination at the LGH.

He said most of the women would need to spend the night in the North-West or South following the procedure - further compounding the termination process.

Labor Women spokeswoman Michelle O'Byrne said the guidelines deeming only vulnerable women could qualify for the services through a state hospital was an obstacle for those seeking a termination.

"Termination is legal in Tasmania. The fact is this government has thrown obstacle after obstacle in the way of access," she said.

"Women should not have to prove or disclose their vulnerabilities in order to access public healthcare."

Health Minister Jeremy Rockliff said the statewide guidelines were based on the principles of equity.

"Surgical Terminations up to 16 weeks were previously only available to vulnerable women at the Royal Hobart Hospital resulting in an inequity where women in the North and North-West had to travel and often be away from home to access this procedure," he said. Mr Rockliff said The Department of Health was not aware of any women who had been denied access to a surgical termination on the grounds of being insufficiently vulnerable under the new pathway.



HOMEOWN: Tamar Valley Truffles manager Marcus Jessup, with Piccolo the dog, and his truffles. Picture: Craig George

## Tasty treats offered at festival

Dana Anderson

DAY one of the annual Farmgate Festival tickled taste buds and had the community supporting local farmers and producers.

Muddy Creek Apples, located at Legana, is a 130-acre apple farm, hub of the festival, and where chairwoman Claudia Vinson was set up.

Ms Vinson said last year had been the best year for the festival since its inauguration, but this year's numbers were back to normal.

"The festival plays into that strength of support local and you will be able to see the

produce grown right here in our own valley," she said. "It's nice for the farmers to feel that support from the community."

Tamar Valley Truffles - a producer of black Perigord truffles - is included in the festival and offers attendees the opportunity to learn more about the fungus while sampling products made from it.

Manager Marcus Jessup said truffle season started in mid-June and continued until September.

"The festival is good to get groups together ... and teach people how truffles grow and

form," he said.

Village Olive Grove is also on the festival program and attendees can sample their oil, along with olives and dukkah.

Owner Allen Baird said the grove was something he and his wife had wanted to do after they were inspired by similar farms in Slovenia.

The pair planted the trees at the grove in 2004/05, and the first harvest was in 2011.

"I think we depend mostly on the land, the soil, the climate, the rainfall, we depend on nature. The rest is just careful management," Mr Baird said.