

Staffing doubt for GP clinic

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A PACKED public meeting was told Tasmania would struggle to staff new GP super clinics promised for Clarence and Hobart.

The Bellerive meeting last night was told that the clinic planned for Clarence would offer extended opening hours, something demanded increasingly by Tasmanians.

Federal Government representatives said the hours would be as long as could be staffed.

There is already a State Government-run clinic at Rosny Park.

It was uncertain whether that would be merged or kept separate from the new clinic promised by federal Labor last year.

Health Minister Lara Giddings said the Clarence centre was different to the



PLANS: Lara Giddings and Julie Collins.

others to be set up around Australia because it already had staff working for the State Government.

"A final decision hasn't been made on whether the clinic could be separate or integrated," she said.

Outspoken GP Graeme Alexander said focus should be put more onto developing plans to boost and retain the depleted GP and nursing workforce of Tasmania.

Tasmania's general practice training program has had to turn away Tasmanian grad-

uates, Ms Giddings confirmed.

For 16 training places, 23 applications were made.

Dr Alexander said it was likely only one or two of the 16 were likely to stay in general practice because the profession was considered too hard.

Ms Giddings and federal Franklin Labor MP for Franklin Julie Collins said governments were tackling the issue.

Ms Collins said a GP super clinic service was expected to be running by late next year and a new building built in 2010.

But the meeting repeatedly asked about the shortage of general practitioners and allied health workers.

The Australian Government has committed \$223 million over four years to set up clinics in 31 places, with Clarence and Sorell among the first.

