

Body, soul and a touch of scepticism

By ROSITA GALLASCH

MICHAEL Booth is an open sceptic but yesterday he was more than happy to test the skills of body reader and Body and Soul Festival organiser Stephanie Woodiwiss.

Manning the Launceston Skeptics stand at the festival, Mr Booth allowed Ms Woodiwiss to test her body reading skills on him. "It was very nice," Mr Booth said.

"I think that sort of experience where you get that sort of gentle touch and you get the benefits; that it helps you to relax, then it's a good thing."

"From our point of view, it is what it is, there's no layers of meaning behind it."

Ms Woodiwiss reads the muscles in the body and said every muscle holds a different emotional trigger.

"He said I was right with what I was saying, so I must have been on to something," Ms Woodiwiss said.

In the fourth year of the event, Ms Woodiwiss said crowds had been good with about 300 people passing through the doors on Saturday.

"In the first year a lot of



Festival organiser Stephanie Woodiwiss does a body reading for sceptic Michael Booth, of Launceston. Picture: NEIL RICHARDSON

people were kind of curious about what it was and thought it was a psychic expo, but it's more than that," Ms Woodiwiss said.

She said the festival gave the 47 stallholders the opportunity to share their passion about what they believed in and included everything from a medical herbalist, kinergetics, reflexology, the Church of

Scientology and tarot, palm and face readings.

Ms Woodiwiss said the range of free classes offered gave people the opportunity to try something they may normally be hesitant about because of the cost.

Gary Excell, a clairvoyant medium for almost 40 years, has attended the festival each year since it began.

Travelling from Queensland, his wife Kim Excell said they had already extended their stay in Tasmania by four days to accommodate all those wishing to have a reading from him.

She said her husband was getting a lot of repeat customers but also family and friends of people he had met previously.

Second breakout at centre

Asylum seekers flee

PERTH — The federal government will take action against detention centre service provider Serco if it has breached any part of its contract following two breakouts at Christmas Island.

A small group of detainees escaped the Christmas Island Detention Centre on Saturday night, just hours after about 200 asylum seekers returned having previously broken out on Friday night.

The Department of Immigration and Citizenship and Serco are trying to encourage the group of less than 100 asylum seekers to return to the centre.

Hasan Chalawi, an asylum seeker in detention in Darwin, said he had been told the men destroyed doors fitted with electronic locks in the Aqua and Lilac sections of the centre.

He said several others went to the coast to try to be photographed by residents

to highlight the "tragic situation of refugees in detention centres". Prime Minister Julia Gillard yesterday said the situation was well in hand and there was no risk of losing track of any of the asylum seekers.

"Christmas Island is just that: it's an island so there's nowhere to go other than other parts of the island," Ms Gillard said.

The government would investigate the incident to see if there had been any contractual breach by Serco. Opposition Leader Tony Abbott said the breakout was inevitable when there were thousands of people in detention.

Mr Chalawi said the asylum seekers decided to breakout because they had "lost the hope of obtaining a protection visa because the number of asylum seekers is increasing". He said there were frustrations about delays.