




Speech By
Ann Leahy

MEMBER FOR WARREGO

Record of Proceedings, 4 June 2015

MOTION: OBSTETRIC SERVICES

 **Ms LEAHY** (Warrego—LNP) (6.19 pm): Tonight it is a pleasure to speak in support of this motion. I want to read a quote from Cherrell Hirst from her report on the review of maternity services in Queensland—

The ways in which we care for pregnant women and babies reveals a great deal about the kind of society we are and wish to be.

For many years mothers in rural and regional Queensland have been forced to travel or relocate for maternity care. This has happened in my electorate at Chinchilla. Mothers were unable to birth in their local home town of Chinchilla with their local family and support. When they went into labour, they had to call the ambulance or a family member would drive them an hour away to Dalby. Not only does this place a lot of extra stress on mothers but it also isolates them from their support mechanisms at a time when they are most needed. It also places mothers and babies at risk of birthing on the side of the Warrego Highway in an ambulance or in car, which are certainly not well equipped for birthing. The roadside is no place for a child to be born and we should not accept this in our society. It does concern me and it should concern all members of this House if babies are being born in these conditions.

I am pleased to advise that the LNP government in its last term resolved the issues with maternity services at the Chinchilla Hospital. This hospital now has recommenced full maternity services, including weekends. Maternity services can be delivered—pardon the pun—in regional areas, as can babies, and the Chinchilla experience demonstrates clearly that it can be done. If it can be done in Chinchilla, it can be done in Charters Towers, it can be done in Yarrabah, it can be done in Mossman, Cloncurry, Ingham and Weipa. I am also pleased to advise that at Chinchilla it has been reported to me that about 100 babies are being born per year in a safe and appropriate environment. I want to commend the wonderful staff at the Chinchilla Hospital, especially those who are involved in the maternity services, for their great work and support of mothers and babies across the Western Downs region. I also want to read a paragraph from an email from a health worker who was delighted with the return of these services in Chinchilla under the LNP government. She said—

Mr Springborg, I understand rural health is particularly close to your heart as you are a country boy at heart, having your own children born in rural Queensland. I appreciate your continued support for rural services and applaud all involved in the fight for continued maternity services 'in the bush'.

Mothers and babies, be they in Cooktown or Cunnamulla, should have access to safe birthing services in their own community. Speaking of Cunnamulla in my electorate, it has similarities with the communities mentioned in this motion. Cunnamulla has a high Indigenous population and mothers are often transferred to Charleville for birthing. However, culturally these women prefer to birth in their own community and that is why it is important to provide these services for low-risk pregnancies in these communities. There will always be a risk element with birthing regardless of choice of birthplace. However, safety in childbirth is related to the mother's emotional, psychological and physical wellbeing during labour. There is no doubt that this is influenced by the choices which are

made during pregnancy. It is our role to help give women choices, and this motion does that for the women of Ingham, Weipa, Charters Towers, Yarrabah, Mossman and Cloncurry. Women should not have to leave their family, leave their support or leave their community to access maternity services. As I said earlier in the words of Cherrell Hirst, and I will repeat them again—

The ways in which we care for pregnant women and babies reveals a great deal about the kind of society we are and wish to be.