




Speech By
Grace Grace

MEMBER FOR BRISBANE CENTRAL

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MOTION: OBSTETRIC SERVICES

 **Ms GRACE** (Brisbane Central—ALP) (6.05 pm): I am very pleased to support this motion. The Labor Party has a proud record of giving women more birthing options, and we are the party that responds to community concerns. In my electorate we have one of the longest running birthing units in the Royal Brisbane Hospital, and I attended there with the Minister for Health just a month ago. Over the years it has been modernised and it is now a very impressive unit indeed. Although it is in the middle of a hospital, it looks more like a hotel room than a hospital ward. As a place to give birth it is very relaxing indeed, and I believe aromatherapy is used to relax the women even more.

The day I was there we were celebrating the extension of eligible private practising midwifery services into the hospital. The case previously was that women could have their own personal midwife attend to them right up to the actual birth, but not at the birth itself. Under the model that was starting there, women now have the option of having continuity of care throughout their entire pregnancy and after. This reflects women centred care and real choice. This reform came about through national maternity reform and the strategic direction taken by all states and territories to increase access to midwifery models of care, but it is also what can be achieved when governments work cooperatively and engage the community and women in determining the services they want in their areas.

I am not quite sure what the opposition's motives for the motion are, as patently I am going to support wider availability of the best facilities for women wherever they are in Queensland. While there is a case to be made for having such centres in places like Charters Towers, Yarrabah, Mossman and Cloncurry, I would have thought that there was an equally strong case for a concentration of better health services in places not only in my inner-city electorate, but also places like Caboolture, Logan, the Gold Coast and Sunshine Coast and places where there is a very rapidly growing population. In that context, I cannot quite understand why these places have been singled out. As I said, no-one is going to deny the desirability of having low-risk birthing services around, but I would have thought that surely the main priority would be to target those areas where the birth rate is the highest. There is also the matter of home births, where more and more women make arrangements to have their children in familiar surroundings where they are comfortable. These are the sorts of things that this motion does not address.

Of course I reinforce what the health minister has been saying about funding. It is wonderful to tell people that they can have services, but someone at the end of the day has to pay for them. As members opposite know, the changes in funding proposed by the federal government mean that we will be in a severely constrained financial environment going forward. It is difficult for any government to undertake proper long-term planning when there is no funding certainty. We will be \$11.8 billion worse off under the system that Tony Abbott and Joe Hockey are inflicting on the states, and that is going to flow through heavily to services on the ground.

Nonetheless, Labor will deliver women centred care where patient safety is paramount. We will ensure the continuity of care model is delivered by midwives at the appropriate skill level. We will ensure that nurses and midwives in an ageing workforce context will be educated and trained for the future. We will invest in our nurses and midwives; not sack them. We do not see our midwives and nurses as a cost, but as essential to deliver better patient care and safety. We will deliver women centred midwifery continuity of care services and invest in the best trained nurses and midwives this government can deliver. We will plan for the future needs of the best local midwifery services wherever they are throughout Queensland.

I want to take a little bit of time to commend the midwives of this state. I know that many in this House have aunties, parents, sisters and mothers-in-law who are nurses and midwives. They do an outstanding job. They are the best trained and educated nurses in the world. They did not deserve the sacking they received from the previous government. However, when it comes to continuity of care in midwifery services, this government will deliver.