




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR CAIRNS

Record of Proceedings, 14 September 2023

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Women's Health Week; Cairns, Maternity Services

 **Mr HEALY** (Cairns—ALP) (2.28 pm): Women's Health Week was celebrated from 4 to 8 September, with the theme for 2023 being 'Grow Your Knowledge'. Women's Health Week is about supporting women to make informed decisions about their health and providing information that is not only accessible but, most importantly, easy to understand.

With the announcement that private maternity services will cease operations in Cairns—a decision by a private hospital—I was very happy to hear that the Palaszczuk government will invest an additional \$16 million to boost maternity services in regional, rural and remote communities. The Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service is working together with Ramsay Health. I am very happy to say that I have been sitting in those meetings, with the health minister and representatives from Ramsay Health, to ensure the transition of all women across to the fantastic public system that we have in Cairns. Each and every patient transitioning from Ramsay Health will have their care plans handed over to the capable team at Cairns Hospital.

Last year alone more than 2,000 babies were birthed at the Cairns Hospital to families right across the Far North region, as it already serves as a major referral hospital for women from the Tablelands, Cassowary Coast and Torres Strait who develop complications during pregnancy. Queensland Health leads the way nationally on midwifery group practice delivery and this additional investment of \$16 million across regional and remote Queensland to strengthen maternity services further demonstrates that families are at the forefront of the Palaszczuk government's priorities when it comes to health.

The midwifery group practice model allows mums to engage with the same midwife from the start of their second trimester right through to birth and beyond, with midwives able to conduct home visits throughout pregnancy and, just as importantly, through the postnatal care. As well as providing gold standard pregnancy care, a midwife might be the only person that an expectant mother can confide in and share concerns with about stresses in the home that could impact on the pregnancy, delivery and, more importantly, the care of a new baby. Part of the midwifery group practice model provides options for midwives to visit expectant mothers in their homes. In this more personal and comfortable setting, midwives can assess any other opportunities that may assist the family unit adjust post delivery and this is absolutely fundamental, particularly in regional areas where at some stages some of these families do not get the strong support of their family or other family members, so it is so vitally important.

It is pleasing to see the Cairns community embracing the holistic model of midwifery group practice by supporting the fundraising efforts of the great work done by the Far North Queensland Hospital Foundation to deliver a separate room for families that have experienced the trauma of early pregnancy loss. I am proud to be part of a government that gets the importance of midwifery services, unlike those opposite who cut them.