




Speech By
Hon. Shannon Fentiman

MEMBER FOR WATERFORD

Record of Proceedings, 29 November 2023

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

Maternity Services

 **Hon. SM FENTIMAN** (Waterford—ALP) (Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services and Minister for Women) (10.00 am): Yesterday I met with Meg and James, parents of baby Thea, as well as baby Thea's grandmother Salli. Their grief is heartbreaking. While that grief will continue, I want to commend Meg for her incredible bravery and conviction in bringing to my attention some commonsense improvements that Meg believes can be made in the delivery of maternity care in Queensland.

While the clinical review into Meg and baby Thea's care is ongoing, I can advise that we will progress a number of Meg's suggestions immediately including: increasing training in advanced neonatal resuscitation for all clinicians working in birthing suites and nurseries; providing clearer advice on the risks and options of induction medications for women; and, importantly, expanding postnatal support for women who experience stillbirth or neonatal death including home visits and fast-tracking grief and psychological counselling. These are simple changes, but they will make an enormous difference for so many families. Once again, I want to thank Meg, James and Salli for their bravery in sharing their story. I will continue to work with them to ensure our health system is providing the very best care to women and their babies.

I have made it clear that one of my top priorities is ensuring that all women in Queensland have access to high-quality, reliable and safe maternity services close to home. That is why the Palaszczuk government has committed \$42 million for regional, rural and remote maternity services. This funding is enabling models of maternity care to be strengthened and will support existing maternity sites to continue to provide safe birthing services.

I also recently announced that \$16 million will be invested over four years to support the expansion of midwifery care for women in regional and rural communities. Our government is also investing more than \$4 million in quality improvement activities including a comprehensive models of care review to make sure we can have sustainable models of maternity care in those locations that are most exposed to bypass.

We have established the new Queensland Chief Midwife Officer position—an Australian first—to further support woman-centred maternity care and expanded virtual care through providing 24/7 access to specialist obstetric and midwifery advice to better support those clinicians in regional and rural hospitals.

Last week I also announced that publicly funded homebirths will be available for women on the Sunshine Coast from the middle of next year. This initial investment of \$1.2 million will transform the landscape of childbirth in Queensland. It provides women with more choice and empowerment in maternity care. As Ann-Marie, a mum who had a homebirth said, 'I am really excited and happy for the women of Queensland to have this choice of care. Women should be able to choose where they birth.'

Women at our maternity round table told me they wanted three things: they wanted choice, they wanted continuity of care and they wanted it close to home, and that is what we are delivering. By listening to people like Meg and Ann-Marie, I want to ensure that Queensland hospitals are delivering the most compassionate and highest care possible.