

Question on Notice
No. 1269
Asked on 16 September 2009

MS DARLING asked the Deputy Premier and Minister for Health (MR LUCAS)-

QUESTION:

How will the new centre at the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital providing specialist technology for pregnant women assist local northside families?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Sandgate for her question.

The Centre for Advanced Prenatal Care (CAPC) houses the Department of Maternal Fetal Medicine at Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital. The Centre provides tertiary level diagnostic obstetric ultrasound for women who may have an increased risk of having pregnancy or fetal complications, and women who have had a fetal anomaly identified elsewhere. Maternal Fetal Medicine specialists and genetic counsellors are available at all times to counsel women regarding the ultrasound findings, and to offer appropriate further investigations or specialist information, as may be indicated. Prior to the opening of the Centre, the specialists provided services through the Department of Medical Imaging, but services and therefore response times were limited due to a fixed number of available scanning and counselling rooms. The occasions of service have been increased from approximately 30 per week to 90 per week as a result of the opening of the Centre. All services are free of charge (or bulk billed) to Medicare eligible women.

There is also an increase in the availability of screening ultrasounds for high risk pregnancies, specifically the first trimester screening examination. A further advantage of having first trimester screening at CAPC is that genetic counsellors and doctors are readily available to discuss the results. All women with completed examinations are given their results and counselling immediately.

In summary, pregnant women have greater access to free obstetric imaging services with highly trained sonographers, doctors and counsellors. Though the service is geared to high risk women (previous significant medical or obstetric history, previous child with congenital abnormality, women over 35 years of age etc), referrals for any woman (hospital or GP) are accepted, subject to available appointments. For women with identified complications, the Centre provides a single location where they can access imaging, counselling, midwifery supports and multidisciplinary services. General Practitioners and specialists from district hospitals now have a single access point to refer women that may require maternal fetal medicine specialist care, and to contact maternal foetal medicine specialists for immediate and urgent advice.