

Question on Notice

No. 375

Asked on 10 May 2022

MR D LAST ASKED THE MINISTER FOR HEALTH AND AMBULANCE SERVICES (HON Y D'ATH)—

QUESTION

With reference to the announcement of a review into maternity services at the Bowen Hospital—

Will the Minister advise the outcome of the review and when the findings will be made available to the people of Bowen?

ANSWER

Bowen Hospital was one of the rural sites, across the State, selected to pilot the implementation of the Rural Maternity Services Planning Framework (Framework). The Framework was developed for the purpose of ensuring Hospital and Health Services (HHS) maternity services planning meet the needs of women and are safe and sustainable.

As per the Framework, rural maternity service planning is an iterative process and reviews are planned and regular. There is no set frequency with which rural maternity services should be reviewed. For further information see <https://clinicalexcellence.qld.gov.au/sites/default/files/docs/maternity/rural-maternity-service-planning.pdf>

I have been advised that the Mackay HHS formed the Bowen Maternity Steering Committee in January 2020 to ensure the planning review was undertaken using the principles of co-design, as per the Framework.

The HHS engaged an external facilitator to undertake community and staff engagement in February 2020. The verbal findings of the report were delivered to the Bowen Community Reference Group in May 2020. The HHS response to the COVID-19 outbreak meant that the delivery of the findings was delayed. The Bowen Community Reference Group was informed of the delay. In March 2021, the HHS recommenced engagement with the community members, that participated in the review where findings and opportunities for service enhancement were shared and discussed.

The opportunities for service enhancement identified through the process included:

1. Increased access to mental health services for antenatal and postnatal women.
2. Improved access to support for continence issues, lactation support and to address sexual dysfunction for postnatal women.
3. Improved access to antenatal and postnatal dietetic services for women with obesity.
4. Provide greater continuity of midwifery care for Bowen/Collinsville women.

5. Improve relationships between maternity services across Bowen, Collinsville and Proserpine facilities.
6. Improve communication and information sharing between maternity services and private General Practitioners.
7. Review accommodation and transport options for women who need to relocate for the birth.
8. Increase support for fathers around parenting role, including mental health support for depression and anxiety.

Mackay Hospital and Health Services is continuing to work with the community and staff in the implementation of the findings and service enhancements. Progress to date includes:

- Implementation of additional post-natal visits and links to the Child Health Service for new parents.
- Provision of a lactation consultant who visits Bowen from Proserpine monthly and video-links to individual women through digital media. Telehealth appointments with the lactation consultant are also available from the Bowen Hospital.
- Assigning a primary midwife within the Bowen team model to all women who attend Bowen Hospital to address continuity of care concerns.
- Provision of face-to-face outreach and telehealth dietetic services and gestational diabetes management and support for women during their pregnancy with obesity.
- Improved referral pathways for physiotherapy assessment and advice for incontinence and sexual dysfunction within Mackay Hospital and Health Service and to private providers.
- All antenatal providers are being consulted to complete the Handheld record to support integration of services.
- Provision of patient travel subsidy scheme options, including transport and accommodation providers.
- Mental health support for men is being investigated with outreach mental health service and on-line options being considered. Partners are included in antenatal classes and provided advice of how to seek help.
- Mapping of available mental health services for pregnant and postnatal women plus their partners so that a comprehensive list can be provided to women during antenatal visits.
- Upskilling of a midwife in management of post-natal depression and mental health issues.