

TRANSCRIPT

FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

Inquiry into perinatal services

Wangaratta — 25 October 2017

Members

Mr Paul Edbrooke — Chair

Ms Cindy McLeish — Deputy Chair

Ms Roma Britnell

Dr Rachel Carling-Jenkins

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Witness

Ms Emma Avery.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Emma Avery is next. Emma, if you could just state your name and where you are from.

Ms AVERY — Hello, my name is Emma Avery, and I live here in Wangaratta. I am a mother to a two-and-a-half-year-old, and I am expecting my second baby in April. I have made use of the maternity services at Northeast Health, including their wonderful community midwife program and lactation clinic, which you have heard some about already. I speak to friends who are based in the larger metropolitan regions, and they realise that we do have it pretty good here in the country, receiving continuity of care throughout pregnancy to the birth of the baby.

No mother can ever predict how the birth of their baby can have such a great impact and change their lives. No amount of preparation and planning can prepare someone for the emotional curve ball or shock that could be the outcome of their birth. I commend the community midwife program and the lactation clinic and other related services for providing so much well-needed support to the mothers within Wangaratta and surrounding areas.

Shortly after my daughter was born in 2015 I heard the news that perinatal services, in particular the early motherhood service run from the community midwife centre, would potentially cease due to federal funding cuts. In our newly formed mothers group of 18 mums close to half of the women had made use of this service within the first two months of their babies' lives. We were shocked to hear that this service may not continue and collectively wrote a letter to our federal member, Cathy McGowan, at the time. I assume now that this funding was reinstated to this service.

Whilst I have never had to make use of the early motherhood service myself, it is something that could be a possibility. Many in this room would know that postnatal depression and other postnatal issues can strike anyone without warning following the birth of a baby. It could even potentially happen to me. I would describe myself as a generally happy and well person, but postnatal depression is something that is not predetermined, so it could happen to anyone in the community, and we do not know, so it is so important to have this service there.

I would also just like to point out at this time that I know Meg Rickard, who we did hear from before, through having children, through the toy library. She is a strong member of the community; she is a leader. She is the president of the toy library. I look up to her, and it was not until now that I learned her story. I am deeply shocked that this person who I look up to and who is so strong — I cannot believe it — went through something like that. So this postnatal depression issue could hit anyone, anytime, no matter how strong they are, before and after their baby.

So I call on the government in power, whether it is state, federal or local, to see that perinatal support is always in the front of mind and that the issue receives the funding it requires. Perinatal issues can affect communities and, without proper support or early treatment, can cause an uncertain future for the next generation of children coming into this world. Thank you for the opportunity to present briefly today. I do hope that this message will reach the relevant politicians and decision-makers when it comes time to re-fund or choose to make the services ongoing. Thank you.

The DEPUTY CHAIR — Thank you. That draws to an end our hearing in Wangaratta today. I would like to thank all of the witnesses who are here now and who presented earlier. We have heard some very, very valuable evidence that will be really useful to us going forward in putting our report together and our recommendations. I would like to thank Sue and Jenny from Hansard, who have been with us all day and yesterday in Bendigo, and our secretariat, Rachel and Greg. Thank you very much for helping us have a great outcome today.

Committee adjourned.