

# TRANSCRIPT

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into perinatal services

Melbourne — 27 November 2017

#### Members

Mr Paul Edbrooke — Chair

Ms Cindy McLeish — Deputy Chair

Ms Roma Britnell

Dr Rachel Carling-Jenkins

Ms Chris Couzens

Ms Maree Edwards

Mr Bernie Finn

#### Witness

Ms Jessica Macpherson, CEO, St Kilda Mums.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** — I now call the next witness, Ms Jessica Macpherson. Welcome, Jessica. Would you like to introduce yourself?

**Ms MACPHERSON** — My name is Jessie, and I am the CEO of St Kilda Mums. We are a community organisation entirely funded by philanthropic donations and the community at large. Last financial year we helped 13 510 babies and children to the age of 12 years. We provided \$5.2 million worth of material aid, and we distributed 40 000 items. We collect donations of prams, cots and car restraints, clothing and toys, breast pumps, formula — you name it — anything baby-related. We make sure everything is clean and safe, and we pass everything on to social workers and maternal and child health nurses.

It has been very interesting listening to all of the speakers today. I was particularly interested in hearing about a connection between the provision of material aid and good mental health. It was not really touched on greatly, I felt — a little bit with Caroline Chisholm. But we really believe that being prepared for your baby, especially in the last trimester, is critical for a good health outcome. While I was sitting here listening to the lady from the Mercy speak, I got a message on our Facebook page from a mum who is 38 weeks. She is being induced and she has nowhere for her baby to sleep. She has contacted us via Facebook, and we have recommended that she get in touch — speak to a midwife, speak to the social worker at the hospital or, failing that, speak to her maternal and child health nurse.

Our service relies on the partnership with the health professionals. We do not serve the public directly, so this puts us in a bit of a tight spot unless a social worker is able to come to our warehouse in St Kilda, or we have a warehouse in Geelong and we also operate in Ballarat as Eureka Mums. But unless that is able to happen, this mum will probably leave hospital with nowhere for her baby to sleep. We have started a program called Safe Start, where we put emergency material aid in some hospitals so the social workers can access a portable cot, for example, for that baby. But I do not know which hospital she is being induced at.

For us, we see a gap in the service whereby any kind of material aid support is only provided by the state government through the enhanced care service after a live birth. There are women, families, leaving hospital without a car restraint, without a pram and without a cot, and there is nowhere for that baby to sleep. We heard from Petra from SIDS and Kids that the rate of SIDS deaths has dropped by 80 per cent, which is an extraordinary result, and we know there is a very strong link between a safe cot and safe sleeping spaces. We would like to know if we can bring the provision of material aid back to before the baby is born, even if it is just a month out, and we would like to be part of that solution in whatever way we can assist. Thank you.

**Ms EDWARDS** — Thanks very much. Well done.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** — Thank you. You have still got another 4 minutes if there is anything else you want to tell us.

**Ms MACPHERSON** — I know it is a very long day for you all. Please visit our website and you will see more about what we do. Thank you.

**Ms EDWARDS** — Bring your service to Bendigo.

**Ms MACPHERSON** — We are in Bendigo. We are supporting a group called Sunshine Bendigo.

**Ms EDWARDS** — Oh, yes.

**Ms MACPHERSON** — We have given Sunshine Bendigo our intellectual property, so they use the application that we have built that guides them through the safety check. We share that with Olivia's Place in Warragul and with Caroline Chisholm — we are hoping to run it out with Caroline Chisholm so that their Shepparton service can use the app as well. So yes, we are helping Sunshine Bendigo.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** — Thank you, Jessie.

**Witness withdrew.**