

# TRANSCRIPT

## FAMILY AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE

### Inquiry into perinatal services

Wangaratta — 25 October

#### 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 Lauren Bowie.

**The DEPUTY CHAIR** — I call our next witness, Lauren Bowie. If you could just state your name and the purpose of you being here.

**Ms BOWIE** — I am Lauren Bowie from Wangaratta. In similar circumstances to Megan, my baby also required a transfer to the children's hospital after birth. Being separated from your child less than 24 hours after they are born, I think there needs to be better support and the availability of transfers for mothers to be with their children. I found out after I arrived at the Royal Children's Hospital in Melbourne, nearly a week after my baby was born, that there were services and support at the hospital, but due to having a caesarean I was not confident in travelling to Melbourne from Wangaratta to get to the hospital. But if I had had some sort of patient transport or some sort of medical assistance in getting to the children's hospital, I could have been there a lot sooner. I also experienced similar discrimination at Northeast Health for not having my child with me in the maternity ward. At one point I was actually bullied by three midwives to leave because I did not have my child with me. It was only because of the support of my family and me knowing myself that I did not leave, not until I was ready to leave.

So what I am here for is I think there needs to be some sort of support for mothers and an understanding of what happens when you have delivered a baby and for whatever reason they have to go to another hospital or to seek further treatment — you are separated. I think that there should be something in place to be offered to not only the mother but also the partner, as my husband here had to find his own transport down to Melbourne to be with our daughter after she was born.

Aside from that, I could say that the care that I received or that Chelsea received at the Royal Children's Hospital was just amazing. We are so lucky to have a facility like that in Victoria. I could not speak any more highly of the nurses and the doctors and everyone there at the Royal Children's Hospital, so we are very lucky. That is it.

**Ms BRITNELL** — Can I just thank you and the previous witness. We actually have not had anyone talk yet about the mother-baby separation issue, so I really appreciate the effort you have made. It is very difficult, and we appreciate it. Thank you.

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

**Witness withdrew.**