

Question on Notice
No. 600
Asked on 22 August 2013

MR HATHAWAY asked the Minister for Health (MR SPRINGBORG)-

QUESTION:

What initiatives has the Townsville HHS delivered in order to improve child and maternal health services to the people of Townsville and the North Queensland region?

ANSWER:

I thank the Honourable Member for Townsville for his question.

The Townsville Hospital and Health Service (THHS) is committed to strengthening child and maternal health services for people of Townsville and North Queensland by improving continuity of care across services which are accessible and seamless from the family's perspective.

The THHS has taken on the Maternal and Child Health Commitment to enhance additional access to home visits and community clinics for all mothers and families in the first 12 months following the birth of a baby, as represented in the Personal Health Record (Red Book). A benefit of this is the ability to provide a health service to families who may not have had contact before. By working in partnership with families, health professionals and the community the service can ensure prevention, promotion, protection, early detection and intervention of health and well being concerns. This has allowed Child Health Services to focus on the child as the centre of the family and community. Family is an important environment for children's health, development and well being.

The Townsville Hospital provides several programs for birthing mothers.

The Townsville Birth Centre and Midwifery Group Practice provides Continuity of Midwifery Care models. Within these models, a known midwife provides care to women across the continuum of the antenatal period, labour and birthing through to six weeks postnatally. The midwives work in collaboration with the obstetric staff of The Townsville Hospital.

Additionally, there are well established midwifery models providing access to care during the antenatal and postnatal periods, with midwives working in collaboration with The Townsville Hospital Obstetric Service. Midwifery models include: a Nurse Practitioner Midwife on Palm Island; Midwifery Group Practice in Charters Towers; Outreach services to the Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service and the Maternal Fetal Medicine service. The midwives within these models utilise case conferencing via video and tele links to consult with a named obstetrician on a scheduled plan or on an adhoc basis as required.

There is also the option of shared care with the General Practitioner and high risk maternity care. At Ingham, the maternity service is being re-established with two midwives providing antenatal and postnatal care to women of that area.

The Child Youth and Family Health Service (CYFHS) is the community based multidisciplinary service that provides health care focussing on children, adolescents and their families. CYFHS has over the last few years, strengthened services for families by making services more accessible through a range of settings, for example, in the home, in schools and in community facilities that are located close to the clients' home. The service covers Child and Family Health and the Infant Management and Parenting Skills (IMPS) Centre. The Child Health team is made up of qualified Child Health nurses who provide these programs and Early Intervention specialists who provide therapeutic support for parental mood and stress intervention, attachment and bonding and managing challenging child behaviours.

Services currently include a Hospital Liaison nurse whose role is to improve the transition between hospital and home and to provide information to families about their closest child health service including rural areas. This occurs at The Townsville Hospital four days a week and at the Mater Hospital once a week.

On discharge from hospital Child Health Townsville has an easily identifiable telephone phone number, 47 999 000, and the team encourages families to contact them for the opportunity to discuss anything in relation to child and maternal health. An Intake nurse provides information and advice and prioritises/triages referral contact with the service. This service has been used by families across North Queensland.

From this point families are referred to Child Health clinics including Growth and Development clinics, individual consultations for parents with concerns, Newborn Family Drop In clinics, child hood immunisation schedule clinics and parent education and support sessions. The clinics are located in several locations around Townsville and are in affiliation with community partners, including the Townsville City Council, various community centres, the Townsville Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Health Services and local pharmacies.

Townsville is also fortunate to have The Infant Management and Parenting Skills (IMPs) Day Stay Centre. The centre is an educational day stay centre providing intensive support, information and resources for families with babies and children aged 0-4 years. The centre holds parent information groups including the New Baby Group, the Triple P Parenting Program and the Young Parents Program. The centre is set up for individual days stays for parents to obtain support and advice in the areas of feeding, settling and sleep issues, excessive crying, managing the adjustments to parenthood and issues that can impact on optimal child development e.g. postnatal depression. The centre also has a Lactation Clinic for mothers with breastfeeding issues. IMPS is utilised by families across North Queensland

The new Maternal and Child Health Commitment has enhanced current midwifery models of care and child health home visiting programs that support parents with identified needs.

The THHS has commenced home visiting for mothers with new babies, at two and four weeks, for those who live within Townsville's local city limits. During the home visits families are provided with health information and support, including breastfeeding and nutrition, growth and development of children, anticipatory guidance around immunisation and providing a safe and secure home environment and if required, referral on to other service programs.

The THHS's plan is to increase universal home visiting to all mothers within the THHS region, including rural areas and for mothers birthing at the Mater Private Hospital.

Currently, families in rural areas are contacted after discharge by telephone to provide information on local child health support and services. An action plan is being developed by the Child Health nurses in rural areas to increase access to home visits.

The THHS is collaborating with the Mater Private Hospital around developing processes to deliver and promote access to the two and four week home visits for women birthing in the facility and to continue to provide all the child health services to these families.

The THHS is committed to ensuring all children in Townsville and North Queensland get the best possible start to life.