

**Question on Notice**  
**No. 30**  
**Asked on 14 February 2006**

MR MALONE asked the Minister for Health (MR ROBERTSON)-

QUESTION:

With reference to the Report of the Review of Maternity Services in Queensland conducted by Dr Cherrell Hirst which revealed that 36 of the 84 maternity services in the public sector that were providing maternity care in 1995 were now closed and since the report was delivered in March 2005 further maternity services including Miles, Springsure and Emerald have been shut down –

Will he detail the location of each maternity service (reported separately) that -

- (a) has been shut down since 1995;
- (b) the maternity services that have closed in the past 12 months; and
- (c) outline the public hospitals at which maternity services are still being provided by Queensland Health?

ANSWER:

The review of Maternity Services was carried out by an independent reviewer, Dr Cherrell Hirst AO, in response to a commitment by the Government to undertake a statewide review of birthing services.

Dr Hirst has been appointed by Queensland Health to oversee reforms to maternity services in her role as independent chair of the Maternity Services Steering Committee. Over the next 15 months the Committee will prioritise:

- developing the detail around the establishment of the Cooperative Centre for Mothers and Families;
- designing the development and evaluation of demonstration sites for models of care which offer enhanced choice and options for women and their families; and
- enhancing consumer participation through the development of information resources, such as a comprehensive website and a survey of consumers.

Dr Hirst is convening working groups to develop strategies and provide advice, including one on rural settings and design of rural clusters of care. The working party will work with other stakeholders from the rural sector to develop a template for sustainable Rural Clusters of Care which allows flexibility for local conditions and varying levels of human resource whilst managing risk and providing safe care for women and babies.

- (a) Attachment 1 provides details in relation to the 36 services identified by Dr Hirst that were providing care in 1995 that no longer do. The issue of closures is not a simple one and there are a number of reasons why a service may be closed or suspended, including:

- changing demographics such as an increase in older age groups and a corresponding drop in birth rates in some communities;
- low levels of birthing subsequently impacting on throughput, skill maintenance and ability to attract staff;
- general workforce shortages or lack of skills within available workforce, for example, obstetrics, anaesthesiology and midwifery; and
- inability of hospitals to meet Queensland Health Clinical Services Capability Framework for level 1 (minimum level) maternity service across infrastructure, support services, equipment and staff eg no operating theatre to enable emergency caesareans to occur.

While a number of the services listed are no longer operating birthing services in a planned way for anticipated deliveries, they are able to deal with an emergency situation or unexpected delivery. At these locations, planned or anticipated births are referred to a larger centre in the region. The safe and effective provision of services to remote areas and linkages with more extensive services in major facilities is a priority issue for the Maternity Services Steering Committee.

- (b) No maternity services have been closed in the past 12 months. However, there are a number of services that have been suspended in the last 12 months due to the unavailability of medical and/or nursing (midwifery) staff. Those services still suspended include Springsure, Monto and Moranbah.

Birthing services for low risk women have recommenced at Emerald as of 6 March 2006, however until the hospital is able to attract additional medical officers with qualifications in obstetrics and anaesthetics, all other women will need to travel outside of the District to birth. Birthing services for low risk women also recommenced at Charleville in February 2006.

- (c) A list of those public hospitals at which maternity services are still being provided by Queensland Health are detailed in Attachment 2.

**Attachment 1**

<b>Facility</b>	<b>Date of Closure</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Babinda	2000	
Barcaldine		As women are generally referred to Longreach, there have not been any deliveries for the past 18-24 months. Facilities still available for emergency births were appropriate.
Beaudesert	2004	
Blackall	2004	
Blackwater	Over ten years ago	Ante natal and post natal care is provided at Blackwater Hospital. This hospital does not meet the current QH Service Capability Framework for Level 1 (minimum) across built infrastructure, support services, equipment and trained staff. The question of birthing at Blackwater is not a contentious issue nor has it been raised by the community in recent times.
Boonah	1996	
Bowen	2000	
Childers	1995-96	
Clermont	2002	Multipurpose Health Service established in 2001
Collinsville	1999	Multipurpose Health Service established in 2005
Cooktown		Services scaled back in 2001 and planned births referred to Cairns. Cooktown Hospital hopes to resume a full birthing service for low-risk pregnancies towards the end of 2006, with at least one medical officer currently undertaking training in the necessary anaesthetic and obstetrics skills to provide the service. Multipurpose Health Service established in 1996.
Gatton	1999	
Gayndah	2003	
Hughenden	1997	
Ingham	2005	
Inglewood	1997	Multipurpose Health Service established in 2001
Jandowae	2002	
Kilcoy	2002	
Maleny	2001	
Maryborough	2003	
Millmerran	1997	
Mitchell	2001	
Mossman		While services for planned deliveries were suspended in 2003, Mossman Hospital still runs ante and post-natal clinics and has midwives available should an emergency labour situation arise and there is no time to transport the patient to Cairns Base Hospital. Multipurpose Health

		Service established in 2000.
Mount Morgan	2004	
Moura	2004	
Mundubbera	2000	Multipurpose Health Service established in 1999.
Palm Island		While technically no birthing service exists on Palm Island effort is made to provide 24 hour a day seven day a week midwifery coverage.
Quilpie	1999	Multipurpose Health Service established in 1999.
Richmond	1997	
Tara	1997	
Taroom	2002	
Texas	1999	Multipurpose Health Service established in 2000.
Weipa	1999	
Winton	2003	Multipurpose Health Service established in 2003
Wondai	2002	
Yeppoon	2001	

## Attachment 2

Hospitals	2006	
Atherton	✓	
Ayr	✓	
Biloela	✓	
Bundaberg	✓	
Caboolture	✓	
Cairns Base	✓	
Charleville	✓	Birthing services for low risk women recommenced in February 2006.
Charters Towers	✓	
Chinchilla	✓	
Cunnamulla	✓	
Dalby	✓	
Dysart	✓	
Emerald	✓	Birthing services for low risk women have recommenced as of 6 March 2006, however until the hospital is able to attract additional medical officers with qualifications in obstetrics and anaesthetics, all other women will need to travel outside of the District to birth.
Gladstone	✓	
GoldCoast	✓	
Goondiwindi	✓	
Gympie	✓	
Hervey Bay	✓	
Innisfail	✓	
Ipswich	✓	
Kingaroy	✓	
Logan	✓	
Longreach	✓	
Mackay Base	✓	
Mackay Base Birth Centre	✓	
Mareeba	✓	
Mater Mothers	✓	
Miles	✓	The Miles Hospital is still delivering babies, although the volume is less than 10 per year. When the hospital is redeveloped by the end of 2007, birthing will no longer occur here. Full consultation has occurred with the community and the Southern Area Health Service Clinical Network for Obstetrics and Gynaecology. Full antenatal and postnatal services will continue to be available.
Monto	✓	This service is presently suspended due to non-availability of medical staff. Pregnant women are currently being transferred to Bundaberg and Biloela for birthing.
Moranbah	✓	This service was suspended in September 2005 due

Hospitals	2006	
		to a shortage of midwives.
Mt Isa	✓	
Nambour	✓	
Proserpine	✓	
Redcliffe	✓	
Redland	✓	
Rockhampton	✓	
Roma	✓	
RBWH	✓	
RBWH Birth Centre	✓	
Springsure	✓	Birth services have been suspended from 16 January until Principal House Officer positions are filled. Pregnant women from Springsure are attending Rockhampton Base Hospital for birthing.
St George	✓	
Stanthorpe	✓	
Theodore	✓	
Thursday Island	✓	
Toowoomba	✓	
Townsville	✓	
Tully	✓	
Warwick	✓	