



LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

STANDING COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, AGEING AND COMMUNITY
SERVICES Ms Bec Cody MLA (Chair), Mrs Vicki Dunne MLA (Deputy Chair)
Ms Caroline Le Couteur MLA

Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Maternity Services in the ACT

Submission Number: 01

Date Authorised for Publication: 20.11.2018



Date: 5th November 2018

The Committee Secretary
Standing Committee on Health, Ageing & Community Services
Legislative Assembly for the ACT
GPO Box 1020
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Dear The Committee Secretary

Re: Experience with maternity services in the ACT

My experience with the maternity services in the ACT has been overwhelming positive. I registered for the Canberra Midwifery Program around 10 weeks and was super excited to be enrolled in the program. I had heard great things about it and was aware that it could be hard to get a spot due to limited availability.

Once allocated my midwife I was surprised at just how much one-to-one care I was given. I had many home visits, a number of hospital visits and these occurred both prenatally and postnatal. The frequency seemed to depend on whether there were any complications that made it feel like the system exists to support the needs of pregnant women. These consults were an unexpected bonus and made things so effortless, especially for a first time mum.

My midwife upheld an exceptional standard of care throughout our home and hospital visits. It was obvious to me, working as a health care provider myself, that my midwife partook in continued education, provided well-researched and evidence based information, and took the time to respond to every concern I had. I felt so well tended to, not to mention safe in her care. Despite how busy her job clearly was I never felt rushed. This was the experience I had with my midwife, but also with midwives who were on call whilst mine was off duty.

The facilities at The Canberra Hospital were another great surprise. The rooms are inviting and non-clinical, which made me feel so at ease in the hospital setting. It was easy to feel comfortable and to begin to familiarise myself with the resources available both prenatally (ie. the library) and during labour (ie. bath, shower, small equipment used in labour). This familiarity meant I could taken advantage of them should I chose to. I really appreciated the absence of medical equipment and the homely feel of the Birth Centre. This setting is very conducive to the process of a natural labour. I strongly feel that every woman should have access to this type of setting, when her individual circumstances allow for it.

It was obvious during my labour that my Birth Preferences were completely honored by my midwife. I felt respected for the choices we had made, and also largely in control of my birth experience (as much as you can be!). I'm so grateful that the hospital system empowered me in this way.

I have a few comments on what could have improved my birth experience:

Firstly, on discharge it would have been great if women had a handful of ongoing consults with their midwife. I felt like the discharge was quite an abrupt ending to the support and care that I really still needed. My opinion is that the one-on-one care should have continued for another 5-6 sessions spread over 6-12 months. I believe this is an approach taken in some European countries (?Germany) and it may ultimately work to cut down health care costs in other ways.

Secondly, there are programs available that really encourage women to optimize their birth experience, and harness tools that lend towards natural birth when possible (and when not, still offers many useful tools). The evidence seems to support that women and their babies have a much more favorable outcome, and in doing so there is a reduced burden on the health care system. Programs such as Calm Birth facilitate this approach. I would love for programs such as this to be subsidized to support women, their babies and ultimately the health care system.

Overall, my experience with maternal services in the ACT has been exceptional. We really hope the services continues to meet the needs of women in the long-term.

Thank-you for taking the time to read my submission. I'd like my personal details to be kept confidential.

Sincerely,

██████████