



Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2020-2021 **ANSWER TO QUESTION ON NOTICE**

Asked by **LEANNE CASTLEY MLA:**

ACT Health Annual Report 2020-21, Home birth program

Topic: Expanding the home birth program – Recommendation 55 (p97)

Recommendation 55 (p97) of the Select Committee on Estimates 2018-2019 was that the ACT government “*examine the risks with expanding the home birth program to the northside catchment (through Calvary Hospital)*”.

The government agreed and the update notes “the government has commenced work ...this is expected to be completed in late 2021.”

In relation to:

1. Has the government examined the risks of expanding the home birth program to the northside catchment?
2. What are the outcomes?
3. Will the home birth program be expanded to the northside catchment?
4. Tell me about the program, how many people use it and the cost?

RACHEL STEPHEN-SMITH MLA: The answer to the Member’s question is as follows:–

1. Work has been collaboratively undertaken by the ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD) and Canberra Health Services (CHS) to examine the evidence base for expansion of the geographical boundaries of the publicly funded homebirth service operating out of CHS, including a review of other publicly funded homebirth services in Australia and their geographical boundaries in relation to relevant servicing hospital/s.
2. Further conversations are required between the ACTHD, CHS, Calvary Public Hospital Bruce, ACT Ambulance Service and ACT Insurance Authority on any potential expansion of relevant catchment areas / geographical boundaries and the resultant

impact on service capacity. The discussions between key stakeholders to operationalise the boundary expansion have taken longer than anticipated due to complexity of potential patient transfers and the flow on effect to the continuity of care program at Canberra Health Services.

3. See answer to question 2.
4. The Publicly-Funded Homebirth Trial commenced in October 2016. In June 2020, the ACT Government agreed or agreed in principle to all 12 recommendations of the Burnet Institute's Evaluation of the Publicly funded Homebirth Trial in the ACT Report. The overwhelming positive feedback shared in the report highlighted that the homebirth trial was well received and homebirth was considered an additional birth option for eligible women as part of the Continuity Midwifery Program at Centenary Hospital for Women and Children.

Since the trial finished in March 2020 there has been an average of 1 to 2 births per month at a cost of approximately \$13,450 per birth. As of January 2022, there have been 76 births through the Publicly Funded Home Birth Program.

Approved for circulation to the Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Signature:



Date: 11/4/22

By the Minister for Health, Rachel Stephen-Smith