



Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-2023

ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

Asked by **MS LEANNE CASTLEY MLA** on 16 November 2023: **DR GRANT HOWARD** took on notice the following questions:

Reference: Hansard uncorrected proof transcript 16 November 2023 [PAGES 49-50]

In relation to: Number of babies born with a “tongue-tie” and breast feeding programs

- 1) Is there a breastfeeding clinic for new mums currently running?
- 2) How long that would last for?
- 3) Is it just while they are in hospital, is it after they go home?
- 4) How many people go through that unit, I just understand the impact of what the needs are, because I know for babies, tongue tied, does that encompass all of that?
- 5) How many of those a year are born with a tongue tie?

MINISTER STEPHEN-SMITH: The answer to the Member’s question is as follows:

- 1) Yes.
- 2) Appointments at Canberra Hospital, Maternal and Child Health (MACH) are from the time of hospital discharge up until six months of age. Continued support is provided beyond this timeframe should parents or carers need additional assistance.

Breastfeeding classes and a lactation consultant are available for North Canberra Hospital (NCH) parents and carers while they are inpatients and outpatients of NCH during both the antenatal and postnatal periods. Whilst there is no formal cut-off for support, babies are generally 7 days or less on discharge from the program.

Tresillian Queen Elizabeth II Family Centre (QEII) provide breastfeeding support which can include virtual care appointments and home visits, day, overnight or four-night residential programs. QEII has several lactation consultants in addition to medical staff.

- 3) See response to Q2.
- 4) This data is not available as there is no individual unit for breastfeeding support. All CHS midwives and nurses with breastfeeding training support women during their breastfeeding journey. Some babies or parents require additional assistance to establish breastfeeding for many and varied reasons and this is provided by midwives and lactation consultants within the hospitals and many community settings when required.

The management of a tongue tie is dependent on the extent of the tongue tie and impact to feeding and baby's wellbeing. A baby with a tongue tie is assessed by medical officers, midwives and lactation consultants to see if the tongue tie has any effect on feeding.

When a baby has an identified tongue tie and a feeding problem, an assessment (Hazelbaker Assessment Tool for Lingual Frenulum Function) is performed to look at function and appearance. Centenary Hospital for Women and Children (CHWC) provide a tongue tie clinic for babies up to 28 days old. Paediatric services will provide support for tongue tie beyond 28 days of life. Babies born at NCH with a tongue tie are referred to CHWC. In some circumstances, a tongue tie may need to be surgically cut in the first few days after birth, however this may not be required until many weeks after birth. Staff working at Canberra Hospital work according to the Tongue Tie: Assessment, Management, and Division Procedure.

- 5) Neither CHS nor QEII keep data about babies who are born with a tongue tie.

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

Signature:



Date:

5/12/23

By the Minister for Health, Ms Rachel Stephen-Smith MLA