



Standing Committee on Health and Community Wellbeing

Inquiry into Annual and Financial Reports 2022-2023

ANSWER TO QUESTION TAKEN ON NOTICE

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

Reference: Hansard uncorrected proof transcript 16 November 2023 [PAGE 11]

In relation to: Home birth limitations – Syntocinon prescriptions

- 1) Minister, home birth is a great option for women and birthing people who want to use it and we have had some really good progress there on the access for that. It is really good to see. There is—we have heard reports of an operational problem and I will describe the operational problem to you. In home birth, it is a requirement that in the fourth stage of labour Syntocinon is used and midwives are not able to prescribe Syntocinon. They used to get this prescribed by doctors and they are telling us that they are no longer able to find doctors who will prescribe Syntocinon, so the practical implication of that is that people cannot access home birthing because they cannot conform with the requirement for Syntocinon. Have you come across this problem?
- 2) Can midwives are able to access Synto and if not what government might do to enable them to access Synto?

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

- 1) I have been advised by Canberra Health Services that prior to 2022 midwives obtained signature on the Homebirth medication from an Obstetrics and Gynaecology Consultant during a collaborative clinic for women planning a homebirth. Some challenges were experienced with the process of signing the medication order following staffing changes in the collaborative clinic, however these have now been resolved. At no time were any women prevented from accessing homebirth due to unsigned medication orders or dispensing of medications.
- 2) Syntocinon is part of the homebirth medication order set. Once a patient has been determined eligible for homebirth at around 36 weeks pregnant, midwives will obtain a signature on the homebirth medication order form from an Obstetrics and Gynaecology Consultant. The patient will have medication dispensed by a pharmacy and be given instructions for safe storage of any dispensed medications at home pending the homebirth.

Since July 2023, midwives can prescribe Syntocinon for the indication of 'active management of the third stage' under an approved Canberra Health Services medication standing order. Midwives must have the initial order signed by an Obstetrics and Gynaecology Consultant to enable dispensing from pharmacy. There have been no concerns reported in the past three months to November 2023 of midwives having difficulty getting homebirth medication orders signed to enable dispensing by pharmacy.

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