

Birth Centre Co-Design

What is being communicated?	The purpose of this plan is to outline communications and engagement activities for co-design of the Birth Centre facilities as part of the Northside Hospital Project.		
Why are we communicating on this issue?	To ensure highly engaged stakeholders and the community are given the opportunity to contribute to the design and development of the Birth Centre and are kept informed on the progress of the project.		
Background/research/insights	- The ACT Government has completed a feasibility study examining birth centre options as part of the planning and development for the Northside Hospital Project (NHP). - This feasibility supported a standalone or stand alongside Birth Centre option. - The feasibility consultation included various community, advocacy and staff groups. - The feasibility outcomes were released in May 2025. - Planning and design for Northside Hospital has progressed with options now available to consult with key stakeholders. - The options for discussion include a stand alongside option and a refurbishment stand alone option. - All options for discussion meet the home like birthing objectives set forth in the feasibility. - Following presentation of options co-design will commence on the preferred location.		
Tier:	Tier 1		
Other directorates/agencies involved in	CHS	Spokesperson(s)	Minister Rachel Stephen Smith Gillian Geraghty, Director General & ACT Chief Engineer

Target audiences

Primary	Key stakeholders and stakeholder groups actively involved in the Birth Centre Feasibility study. Government partners and interested parties.
Key influencers/stakeholders	CONSULT: • CHS midwives and staff • Participants in the initial feasibility study • Special interest groups • Government partners • User groups INFORM: • Community • Staff INVOLVE/COLLABORATE: • CHS, HCSD

Risk and Sensitivities

Risk / Sensitivity	Mitigation
An election commitment has been made that the project will deliver a standalone Birth Centre. Managing this expectation.	• Transparent communication on the design process and how the Birth Centre objectives can be delivered in both stand alone and stand alongside versions currently being proposed.
Understanding of stand alone and stand alongside	• Explaining the differences and outcomes
Workforce and staffing	• Working with CHS to include messaging about models of care for the Birth Centre.

Approved by:
Action officer: Beth Burgess
Date: 12/11/2025



Key Messages

- The ACT Government is committed to providing high-quality, accessible maternity care that supports choice for pregnant people and their families.
- The ACT Government has completed a feasibility study examining birth centre options as part of the planning and development for the Northside Hospital Project (NHP).
- Following a motion passed in the Legislative Assembly in March 2023, the ACT Health Directorate (ACTHD), in collaboration with the Maternity in Focus team, undertook a detailed study to assess the feasibility of establishing a co-designed freestanding birth centre.
- The study, conducted by HealthConsult with input from a working group of subject-matter experts, explored three models:
 - **Stand-Alongside Birth Centre:** Located within the hospital adjacent to maternity services.
 - **Standalone Birth Centre:** A separate facility on the hospital campus connected to the main hospital via a covered walkway.
 - **Freestanding Birth Centre:** Located in a community setting away from a hospital, requiring ambulance transfer for emergency situations.
- The study recommends a home-like, culturally inclusive birthing environment while maintaining proximity to hospital services.
- This model supports Birthing with Country initiatives, aligns with consumer preferences, enhances midwife autonomy, and strengthens workforce attraction and retention.
- Next steps will include further co-design and infrastructure planning as part of the Northside Hospital Project ensuring the project aligns with contemporary maternity models, including culturally safe birthing practices for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.
- The co-design process for the birth centre will include clinicians, community, special interest groups and those involved in this study.

Communications & Engagement Action plan

When	What	Who	How	By
PHASE ONE: Release of the Feasibility Report – May 2025 COMPLETE				
22/5/25	Feasibility released on CHS website	CHS		COMPLETE
20/5/25	Media regarding the feasibility being launched – ABC Radio	iCBR		COMPLETE
24/5/25	Letters to stakeholders	MO		COMPLETE
PHASE TWO: Industry and key stakeholder design update – December 2025				
13 Nov	CHS internal staff session outlining options for the Birth Centre	CHS led		
	Email invitation from Northside Hospital Project for a project update session	iCBR		
	Develop presentation with integrated project team outlining the journey so far in the design and Birth Centre options. Optional CHS models of care	iCBR		
TBC	Industry Presentation – Northside Hospital Project Update and Birth Centre	iCBR to draft for CHS approvals		

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When	What	Who	How	By
	Have your say survey link to all participants			
	Birth Centre – Project Update			

PHASE TWO: Co-design sessions – Early 2026

	Session 1 – Topic Develop a joint SOA			
	Session 2 – Topic			

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Project: Communication Plan
Directorate/Business Unit: Infrastructure Canberra

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