

SUPPORT FOR NEW PARENTS AND BABIES IN NEW SOUTH WALES

Name: Name suppressed
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Partially
Confidential

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to make this submission to this important topic. I had my first baby last year and am currently pregnant with my second baby which we expect next year. There are a few points I would like to raise to improve health outcomes for babies and their parents:

1. The wellbeing starts at birth. Pregnant women should have a choice where and how they birth their babies. I live on the northern beaches and dread what will happen to women once the NB hospital is open and Mona Vale and Manly birth habits will close. I would not want to give birth in a large private hospital (even as a public patient) with 10 birth rooms. Keep Mona Vale birth unit open as a midwife run birth house where low risk women can give birth with low intervention. The new hospital is nearby should women need to be transferred. In addition it is important to support a homebirth program. There are currently two private midwives on the beaches and I understand that the insurance exemption is running out in 2019. For this baby I have chosen a homebirth, attended by a qualified midwife and this option needs to continue to be available for other women, no matter their income (it will cost us thousands to have this baby at home)

2. The midwife support after birth is great but it would be more assuring if it was the same person who visits rather than different ones each time as different people have different advice and it makes new mums and dads unsure and insecure what to do

3. Support postnatal exercise. It has shown to be effective for postnatal depression and a great way to get out of the house with the baby and meet other mums. I did a lot last year and it was so helpful, but again, was lucky that I could afford it. These things should be supported

4. Provide support beyond the initial first weeks. When visitors stop coming and help isn't at hand, it becomes hard. Consider adding a new visit by a support worker at 3 and 6 months. Consider offering support for domestic duties for people who really struggle (if advised by the visiting g worker to be necessary)

5. Nutrition education: each pregnant woman should see a nutritionist and should have another visit booked just after birth and at baby age 4 months before they start solids. Setting up good eating habits early is vital for their whole life

6. Encourage paid parental leave: I don't know how women go back to work at 3 or 6 months with their babies being in sleep regression at the time and still breastfeeding frequently. The recommendation is to breastfeed for 12 months (6 months exclusively). 12 months parental leave should be affordable to each couple by providing more paid parental leave to both parents, not label them as double dippers. Encourage more men to take parental leave, my husband did 3 months and it was great for him and our child. This will benefit the mental health of the whole family. Thank you for considering these points.