



Petition

Registration No.	15
Title	Bring back birthing to the Barkly
Presented on	9 June 2009
Presented by	Member for Barkly, Mr Gerry McCarthy MLA
Referred to	Health (Vatskalis)
Date referred	9 June 2009
Response due	14 October 2009
Response received	24 September 2009
Response presented	12 October 2009

Petition

BRING BACK BIRTHING TO THE BARKLY

The families of the Barkly are tired of being treated like second class citizens. We demand that the Minister of Health provide an on going service of a resident Obstetrician at the Tennant Creek Hospital. It is of cultural significance for local Aboriginal women to be able to birth in country and it is the right of all pregnant women to remain with family and friends at this momentous occasion in their life.

Our midwives are quite capable of assessing each ladies health as they build a strong bond with them and their families, only to have to leave and be cared for by strangers when it matters most. Our pregnant women are not ill and should not be required to undertake a 500km road trip to Alice Springs weeks prior to giving birth.

This is a celebration of life and it is hard to celebrate 500km away from family.

Response

Currently Tennant Creek Hospital offers antenatal care and some limited postnatal care. Birthing services for Barkly women are provided by Alice Springs Hospital.

I would like to inform the Assembly that the Department of Health and Families (DHF) is actively investigating different models of care for a birthing service at Tennant Creek Hospital. A Project Officer will commence in October 2009 to undertake a feasibility study for an appropriate service model.

The Project Officer will be guided by the NT's expert Maternity Services Clinical Reference Group (CRG), comprised of key obstetric and midwifery clinicians and consumer representatives. The CRG was established to guide the development of integrated maternity services across the Territory. I expect the findings and recommendations from the study will be presented to the Chief Executive Officer by the end of the year.

I await the outcomes of the feasibility study. I wish to emphasise that the safety of mothers and their babies is of paramount concern. It is essential that any birthing service at the Tennant Creek Hospital is developed to be safe, sustainable, supported by qualified professionals with access to rapid retrieval services if it is required.

I commend the signatories of the petition for their concerns and support for the expectant mothers in the Barkly region.