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Health Ombudsman releases report into the safety and quality of maternity services provided by the Rockhampton Hospital

Queensland's Health Ombudsman has today released a report into the safety and quality of maternity services provided at five facilities within the Central Queensland Hospital and Health Service catchment, including the Rockhampton Hospital, which is the only Level 4 maternity service in Central Queensland. The report presents the findings of a systemic investigation that began following seven serious maternal incidents between May 2015 and August 2016.

The Rockhampton Hospital conducted an independent review which was completed in 2016 and made 35 recommendations. By January 2017, all recommendations had been implemented by Rockhampton Hospital, which involved a considerable amount of effort on the part of the staff and executive of the maternity service.

The Office of the Health Ombudsman (the office) commenced an own motion systemic investigation into the Rockhampton Hospital maternity service, having received a variety of individual complaints about the service between June 2015 and December 2018. Health Ombudsman Andrew Brown says the investigation revealed that the Rockhampton maternity service has made significant improvements in the last three years.

During the investigation, Mr Brown said it became apparent that there was a genuine commitment to providing a safe and quality maternity service. To this end, the Health Ombudsman said he did not consider it necessary to make any recommendations.

"It is clear to me that the Rockhampton Hospital maternity service has made substantial strides in the quality of services, and it continues to outperform peer facilities across Australia, providing safe and quality care," Mr Brown said.

"A small number of families experienced serious and/or tragic outcomes while receiving maternity care at the Rockhampton Hospital and the human impact of which is not to be diminished or forgotten," said Mr Brown. "However, the hospital's response to these incidents demonstrates a commitment to continuous improvement to provide the best care for the women of Central Queensland."

The key findings highlighted in the report include embedding the practice of maternity risk assessment, the expansion of the midwifery group practice model of care, stabilisation of staffing, and significant cultural improvements.

"In recognition of change efforts made, I do not consider it necessary to make any recommendation."

Mr Brown added that the challenge for Rockhampton Hospital is to maintain the quality and pace of the continuing improvements, and said: "I am confident that the maternity service understands its challenges in continually refining the service, and has the strategic and operational capability to continue on its journey."

The full investigation report is available to download from the OHO website at www.oho.qld.gov.au.

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