

**28 June 2019**

## **Health Ombudsman releases report into the safety and quality of maternity services provided by the Theodore Multipurpose Health Service**

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 (CQHHS) catchment, including the Theodore Multipurpose Health Service (MPHS), which is a Level 1 maternity service; it was previously a Level 2 maternity service prior to flooding in early 2011.

CQHHS conducted an independent internal review between August 2017 and January 2018 and found that the service had a positive culture, although there were significant gaps in the recency of practice for clinical staff and the capability of the maternity service. Following this review, the Chief Executive of CQHHS announced at a community meeting that planned birthing services would not be restored for safety reasons. During discussions between staff from this office and representatives from the Theodore community, it was evident that the decision did not take into account the cultural, emotional and financial risk felt by the community.

The Office of the Health Ombudsman (the office) conducted a systemic investigation that examined the issues identified through this review, an analysis of the investigative materials and community perspectives.

The investigation's main findings focused on safety and quality governance processes, major gaps in the capability of the Level 1 maternity service, and a lack of community consultation about the decision to maintain Level 1 maternity services in Theodore. The investigation found that the internal review had made 16 recommendations, however at the time of finalisation of this investigation the implementation of the recommendations had not commenced. As a result, Health Ombudsman Andrew Brown made one recommendation to ensure independent oversight of the implementation of these review recommendations.

The CQHHS review found that the Theodore MPHS maternity service required a complete redesign to ensure it meets the requirements for a safe and quality Level 1 maternity service, and that the redesign of antenatal and postnatal care options should be undertaken in close consultation with the community. Implementing the internal review recommendations will ensure that the established referral pathways for transfer to higher level facilities are embedded and that adequate policies and procedures are in place. Furthermore, clarity around the level of the service and its capability requirements will be clearly articulated to the community.

Mr Brown said the investigation revealed that opportunities were missed by CQHHS to engage with the community and hear their views on the decision to maintain Level 1 maternity services, which had created friction between the health service and the community.

"Effort now needs to be expended to rebuild the relationship and trust with the community to ensure it is meeting the needs of the community in implementing a reinvigorated Level 1 maternity service," said Mr Brown.

“I am confident that CQHHS and Theodore MPHS will undertake the work required to reach a reliable, safe and high quality level 1 maternity service,” added Mr Brown. “There is a significant body of work to be completed and to this end, I will maintain oversight of implementation of the review recommendations to ensure that they are actioned fulsomely and in a timely manner.”

The full investigation report is available to download from the OHO website at [www.oho.qld.gov.au](http://www.oho.qld.gov.au).

**Media enquiries:** [media@oho.qld.gov.au](mailto:media@oho.qld.gov.au)

**—ENDS**

