



Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance
Services
Minister for Women

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Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliament
George Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letter regarding petition numbers 3978-23 and 3955-23, tabled in Parliament on 24 October 2023, in relation to Biloela Maternity Ward.

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring that all women in Queensland have access to high-quality, reliable maternity services as close to home as possible.

There are currently workforce shortages for obstetric and midwifery staff not only here in Queensland but across Australia and the world. These shortages are impacting the ability to deliver birthing services, including at Biloela. To support birthing services across regional, rural and remote Queensland, the Queensland Government is investing \$42 million over four years from 2023-24 to enable models of maternity care to be strengthened and support existing maternity sites to continue providing safe birthing services.

The programs to be funded from the \$42 million initiative include:

- funding the training of 20 GPs in regional, rural and remote areas to complete additional obstetrics training;
- the expansion of midwifery care for women from regional and rural communities, totalling \$16 million over four years;
- the establishment of the new Queensland Chief Midwife Officer position – an Australian first – to further support woman centred maternity care;
- quality improvement activities targeted at locations most exposed to birthing bypass, including a comprehensive models of care evaluation to co-design sustainable models of maternity care, totalling \$4 million over four years;
- supporting implementation of the Queensland Birth Strategy so that women can make more informed decisions;
- expanding virtual care through providing 24/7 access to specialist obstetric and midwifery advice to better support clinicians in regional, rural and remote hospitals;
- funding education and skills maintenance in maternity emergency management education, supporting midwives through scholarships and training doctors and midwives on best practice woman-centred care and collaboration;
- increasing maternity staffing capability through building obstetric capacity.

The funding aims to facilitate birthing options for women from regional, rural and remote Queensland.

In addition to the investment in maternity services across the State, the Biloela Hospital will be upgraded under the Palaszczuk Government's \$930 million Building Rural and Remote Health Program (BRRHP) Phase Two.

The new Biloela Hospital will deliver a new modern, fit-for-purpose building to support the delivery of contemporary models of care for local communities with new clinical spaces and medical technologies.

Planning will begin shortly with constructions expected to commence mid-2024, weather and approvals permitting.

I trust this information is of assistance to the petitioners.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Shannon Fentiman', written in a cursive style.

Shannon Fentiman MP

Minister for Health, Mental Health and Ambulance Services

Minister for Women

Member for Waterford

