

Weipa birthing services restored

Queensland women in the Western Cape region will no longer be forced to leave their homes, families and communities to have their babies after Health Minister Shannon Fentiman today [announced](#) planned births will recommence at Weipa from next month.

The Weipa Integrated Health Service will support around 50 low risk births each year for expectant mothers from the communities of Weipa, Mapoon, Napranum and Aurukun, with additional communities to be brought online as the service grows.

Rural Doctors Association of Queensland (RDAQ) President Dr Alex Dunn said it was wonderful news, not only for each individual birthing mother but for the entire surrounding region.

“It’s been more than 25 years since women have been able to chose to birth at Weipa,” Dr Dunn said.

“Birthing services should be delivered safely and as close to home and on Country as possible, and now, finally, women in these communities will avoid having to travel to Cairns, just to access maternity care that urban Queenslanders already receive,” he said.

“Weipa is a place very close to my heart, having spent 7 years there as a previous Med Super. It is a fantastic hospital and community, and this is an extremely welcome development.”

A Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) has been delivering antenatal and postnatal services in Weipa since late 2022 while work was underway to introduce a full birthing service. It will continue to provide wrap around support for women with higher risk pregnancies who will still need to travel to larger centres for specialised care.

This announcement comes just one week after Beaudesert celebrated 10 years since the restoration of birthing services at its hospital.

Dr Dunn said it was promising that another community can access such a fundamental service but there was still much more work to be done.

“It’s taken a lot of work over many years to make this a reality and I commend the Queensland Government for prioritising and valuing collaborative models of care, where midwives and rural generalists work together, in a woman-centred way, to support women to have the broadest range of choice possible,” he said.

“What was achieved for Beaudesert, paved the way for what is now a wonderful win for Weipa. Both are examples of what can and should be achieved across many more rural sites in Queensland,” he said.

“Local birthing is the keystone of healthcare in rural areas. When it’s supported by medical, midwifery and nursing capability it provides rural Queenslanders with access to anaesthetic, obstetric, paediatric and surgical services and, in turn, access to high quality critical and emergency care.

“On top of that, it attracts and retains doctors with specialty skills to live, work and stay rural in a rewarding and challenging career.

“RDAQ will continue to fiercely advocate to ensure equitable and safe birthing services and access to healthcare for all Queenslanders, no matter their postcode.”

Births are planned to resume at Weipa from 22 May 2024.