

# CONSTITUENT QUESTION

## House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Anita Dow MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Bridget Archer MP  
Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing

### QUESTION:

My constituent from Burnie wants to know exactly what the government and the minister are going to do to increase access for women on the north-west coast to private obstetrics and gynaecological care. Currently, women are having to travel out of the region if they want to access those services, and I want to know what the government's going to do about it.

### ANSWER:

While the Tasmanian Health Service (THS) provides public obstetric and gynaecology services across Tasmania, the service is mindful of the importance to women in having a choice of services, including access to private obstetrics and gynaecology services.

Ensuring women in North West Tasmania continue to have the option of accessing both public and private maternity care was a central principle in transitioning maternity services to the THS.

The transition established a shared care model that ensured existing private patients continue to have access to an equivalent model of care using THS midwives and facilities.

Privately practising obstetricians can secure admission rights to Tasmania's public hospitals to support additional choices for women, including at the North West Regional Hospital.

The THS is focused on providing high quality care and is currently recruiting for permanent obstetricians and gynaecologists. Any successful candidates will have the option of undertaking private practice, as part of their engagement.

The North West Regional Hospital is also exploring options to enable General Practitioners to undertake private birthing services within the Hospital.

I am advised that regional private obstetric workforce challenges are not unique to Tasmania and are influenced by several factors, including:

- obstetric workforce shortages;
- a national trend in women of childbearing age reducing their private health cover due to rising costs;
- high-cost indemnity insurance; and
- Medicare rebates that have not kept pace with increasing costs.

While the core levers that determine the viability of private practice sit with the Commonwealth, the THS are fully committed to facilitating a private maternity care option for women in the North West to ensure choice of high-quality care for mothers, and would welcome any new private providers interested in collaborating with the North West Regional Hospital.



Hon Bridget Archer MP  
**Minister for Health, Mental Health and Wellbeing**

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