**Bek Messner u3198014, Krista Woods u3210283 and Sarah Clarke u3093980**

**Rural Women Matter - Establishing midwifery-led continuity of care in Yass**

The closure of rural maternity care facilities has limited rural women’s choice around models of care and birth location. Travelling to access care and give birth has led to negative social, emotional and safety impacts. Indigenous women are also particularly affected and continuously denied the right to supported cultural birthing practices. Evidence has shown that rural women experience higher rates of preterm birth which may be attributed to the higher proportion of young women and Indigenous women.

Continuity of midwifery care provides better maternal and neonatal outcomes and experiences compared to fragmented care. Positive outcomes include spontaneous vaginal birth of term babies, a positive birth experience, and greater confidence with breastfeeding. Published evidence supports the implementation of caseload midwifery models in rural settings with evaluations showing positive outcomes, especially for women with potential vulnerabilities such as age, socioeconomic status, and Indigenous ethnicity.

Our policy proposal, which will be an oral group presentation, is to utilise the growing body of evidence to implement a midwifery led continuity of care model in Yass, NSW, which currently does not offer birthing services despite increasing consumer demand. We will describe the implementation and evaluation strategies, including data collection and analysis to determine success and sustainably to inform future development of this model in other rural communities. To address the potential barriers of funding, staff shortages and safety concerns, our implementation strategies will include a strong emphasis on workforce recruitment, sustainability, and competency.

**References:**

Adelson, Fleet, J.-A., & McKellar, L. (2022). Evaluation of a regional midwifery caseload model of care integrated across five birthing sites in South Australia: Women’s experiences and birth outcomes. *Women and Birth: Journal of the Australian College of Midwives*. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2022.03.004>

Australian Broadcasting Corporation. (2020). *Yass women call for return of maternity services after some give birth on the side of the Barton Highway.* <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2020-03-15/women-in-yass-call-for-return-of-maternity-services/12052398>

Beecher, Greene, R., O’Dwyer, L., Ryan, E., White, M., Beattie, M., & Devane, D. (2021). Measuring women’s experiences of maternity care: A systematic review of self-report survey instruments. *Women and Birth: Journal of the Australian College of Midwives*, *34*(3), 231–241. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2020.05.002>

Bradow, Smith, S. D.-V., Davis, D., & Atchan, M. (2021). A systematic integrative review examining the impact of Australian rural and remote maternity unit closures. *Midwifery*, *103*, 103094–103094. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2021.103094>

Cheyne, H., Kildea, S., & Harris, J. (2019). How to monitor and evaluate midwifery continuity of care. In C. Homer, N. Leap, P. Brodie & J. Sandall (Eds.), *Midwifery continuity of care: A practical guide* (pp. 157-182). Elsevier.

Durst, Rolfe, M., Longman, J., Robin, S., Dhnaram, B., Mullany, K., Wright, I., & Barclay, L. (2016). Local birthing services for rural women: Adaptation of a rural New South Wales maternity service. *The Australian Journal of Rural Health*, *24*(6), 385–391. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajr.12310>

Evans, Veitch, C., Hays, R., Clark, M., & Larkins, S. (2011). Rural maternity care and health policy: Parents’ experiences. *The Australian Journal of Rural Health*, *19*(6), 306–311. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1440-1584.2011.01230.x>

Forster, McLachlan, H. L., Davey, M.-A., Biro, M. A., Farrell, T., Gold, L., Flood, M., Shafiei, T., & Waldenström, U. (2016). Continuity of care by a primary midwife (caseload midwifery) increases women’s satisfaction with antenatal, intrapartum and postpartum care: results from the COSMOS randomised controlled trial. *BMC Pregnancy and Childbirth*, *16*(1), 28–28. <https://doi.org/10.1186/s12884-016-0798-y>

Haines, Baker, J., & Marshall, D. (2015). Continuity of midwifery care for rural women through caseload group practice: Delivering for almost 20 years: Continuity of midwifery care for rural women. *The Australian Journal of Rural Health*, *23*(6), 339–345. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajr.12232>

Hartz, Blain, J., Caplice, S., Allende, T., Anderson, S., Hall, B., McGrath, L., Williams, K., Jarman, H., & Tracy, S. K. (2019). Evaluation of an Australian Aboriginal model of maternity care: The Malabar Community Midwifery Link Service. *Women and Birth: Journal of the Australian College of Midwives*, *32*(5), 427–436. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2019.07.002>

Jepsen, Mark, E., Nøhr, E. A., Foureur, M., & Sørensen, E. E. (2016). A qualitative study of how caseload midwifery is constituted and experienced by Danish midwives. *Midwifery*, *36*, 61–69. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2016.03.002>

Hennegan, Kruske, S., & Redshaw, M. (2014). Remote access and care: A comparison of Queensland women’s maternity care experience according to area of residence. *Women and Birth: Journal of the Australian College of Midwives*, *27*(4), 281–291. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2014.06.012>

Hoang, & Le, Q. (2013). Comprehensive picture of rural women’s needs in maternity care in Tasmania, Australia. *The Australian Journal of Rural Health*, *21*(4), 197–202. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajr.12043>

Josif, Barclay, L., Kruske, S., & Kildea, S. (2014). “No more strangers”: Investigating the experiences of women, midwives and others during the establishment of a new model of maternity care for remote dwelling aboriginal women in northern Australia. *Midwifery*, *30*(3), 317–323. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.midw.2013.03.012>

Kildea, McGhie, A. C., Gao, Y., Rumbold, A., & Rolfe, M. (2015). Babies born before arrival to hospital and maternity unit closures in Queensland and Australia. *Women and Birth: Journal of the Australian College of Midwives*, *28*(3), 236–245. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2015.03.003>

Lack, Smith, R. M., Arundell, M. J., & Homer, C. S. (2016). Narrowing the Gap? Describing women’s outcomes in Midwifery Group Practice in remote Australia. *Women and Birth: Journal of the Australian College of Midwives*, *29*(5), 465–470. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2016.03.003>

Longman, Kornelsen, J., Pilcher, J., Kildea, S., Kruske, S., Grzybowski, S., Robin, S., Rolfe, M., Donoghue, D., Morgan, G. G., & Barclay, L. (2017). Maternity services for rural and remote Australia: barriers to operationalising national policy. *Health Policy (Amsterdam)*, *121*(11), 1161–1168. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.healthpol.2017.09.012>

Sandall, Soltani, H., Gates, S., Shennan, A., Devane, D., & Sandall, J. (2016). Midwife‐led continuity models versus other models of care for childbearing women. *Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews*, *2016*(4), CD004667–CD004667. <https://doi.org/10.1002/14651858.CD004667.pub5>

Thornton, & Dahlen, H. G. (2018). Born before arrival in NSW, Australia (2000–2011): a linked population data study of incidence, location, associated factors and maternal and neonatal outcomes. *BMJ Open*, *8*(3), e019328–e019328. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2017-019328>

Tran, Longman, J., Kornelsen, J., & Barclay, L. (2017). The development of a caseload midwifery service in rural Australia. *Women and Birth: Journal of the Australian College of Midwives*, *30*(4), 291–297. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.wombi.2016.11.010>

Williamson, McCarthy, E. A., Oats, J. J., Churilov, L., Lappas, M., & Shub, A. (2021). Obstetric and perinatal outcomes for women with pre‐existing diabetes in rural compared to metropolitan settings in Victoria, Australia. *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Obstetrics & Gynaecology*, *61*(3), 373–379. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ajo.13295>