



Hamish Walker

Member of Parliament for Clutha-Southland

6 June 2019

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern
Prime Minister
Parliament Buildings
WELLINGTON 6160

Dear Prime Minister

I am enquiring about your recent commitment to take another look at the Lumsden Maternity Centre downgrade and what your findings have been?

Just 11 days ago on May 27, I wrote to you about the birth of a baby on the side of the road in the Lumsden area. Eleven days later another baby was born in the Lumsden area, unable to make it to a primary birthing facility more than an hour away.

I am writing to you again to reiterate my concerns for the safety of rural mothers and babies in Southland following the downgrade of the Lumsden Maternity Centre in April, and these two births. This is a matter of life and death.

An example I would like to bring to your attention is one in rural Queensland. In areas where obstetrics are available 6.1 babies in every 1000 are dying. This is compared to rural Queensland, where following the closure of rural maternity services in 2014, 23.3 babies in every 1000 are dying where no primary birthing facilities are available nearby. Any one death is one too many but I have grave fears this will happen here in Southland as a result of the Lumsden Maternity Centre being downgraded.

Under the Service Coverage Schedule it states that a Primary Birthing Facility must be funded by a District Health Board with a catchment of 100 pregnancies where a secondary service is more than 60 minutes away, of which Lumsden is from Invercargill.

It is incredibly unfortunate the Southern District Health Board used births, not pregnancy figures when making the decision to downgrade the Lumsden Maternity Centre. The local GP has in fact researched the figures through local laboratories using the addresses of pregnant women in the Lumsden catchment which revealed between 103-145 pregnancies per year for the past five years. Therefore there is an obligation under the Service Coverage Schedule for a primary birthing unit to be based in Lumsden. This number is only set to increase with the development of a 1000 section housing development at Kingston.

You said mothers were going elsewhere as full services, such as epidurals, were not available at the Lumsden Maternity Centre. Epidurals are not available at any primary birthing facility nationwide.

Wellington Office

A | Parliament Buildings, Wellington, 6160
P | 04 817 9052
E | hamish.walkerp@parliament.govt.nz

Gore Office

A | 15 Main St, Gore
P | 03 203 3000
E | gore.eo@parliament.govt.nz



Queenstown Office

A | 1085 Frankton Rd, Queenstown
P | 03 441 4093
E | queenstown.eo@parliament.govt.nz

Balclutha Office

A | 40B Clyde St, Balclutha
P | 03 418 4288
E | balclutha.eo@parliament.govt.nz

facebook.com/HamishWalkerMP

www.hamishwalker.co.nz

Quite evidently at Lumsden mothers are not going elsewhere, as 40% of pregnant local women were giving birth at the Lumsden Maternity Centre compared with the average 9% of local women who give birth at primary birthing facilities throughout New Zealand.

I look forward to hearing from you on your findings following you taking another look into the Lumsden Maternity Centre downgrade.

Thank you for your time on the matter.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'HW', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Hamish Walker
MP for Clutha-Southland