

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

2017 NSW RURAL HEALTH AND RESEARCH CONGRESS

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Stream: Rural Workforce – Sustain, Maintain, Gain

Keywords: Women's Health / Workforce

Title: Broken Hill: sustaining a rural midwifery caseload program

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Background: The Broken Hill Midwifery Group Practice (MGP) was launched 2 years ago. An all risk, no exit caseload midwifery program which also offers shared care with the local Aboriginal Maternal and Infant Health Service, the Royal Flying Doctor Service and out of area private obstetricians. Broken Hill also launched a midwifery led Early Pregnancy Assessment Service in early 2017, run by midwives within the MGP.

The MGP was launched during a period of workforce stability and positions were offered to midwives on a permanent full-time basis in order to maximise continuity of carer for women. Since then, a third of the midwifery workforce (3 MGP midwives and 2 Core midwives) went on maternity leave within a 3 month period and are planning to return to work part-time later this year.

Approach: Job-sharing within the MGP will be introduced to meet the needs of the workforce and sustain the current model of care - an unusual approach for a caseload midwifery program. Workforce retention is a common challenge faced by rural maternity services, thus we need to be flexible and innovative to accommodate our local workforce in order to ensure its sustainability.

Broken Hill Maternity also relies on ongoing financial investment to include new graduate midwives within the MGP in order to grow and sustain its local workforce for the future.

Outcomes / Results: Job sharing within the MGP will be implemented later this year. We will also present findings of a quantitative study conducted on the midwives working in this rural MGP since its launch in July 2015. This may have relevant implications for similar models in other rural facilities.

Take Home Message: Rural maternity services have a unique opportunity to be innovative and provide gold-standard maternity care that meets the needs of their community and workforce. There is potential for an amazing women-centred, holistic service to be sustained and to overcome common challenges such as workforce recruitment and retention.