



**Deputy Premier of Western Australia
Minister for Health**



Our Ref: 25-36066

Hon Stephen Dawson MLC
Deputy Chair
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000


Dear Mr Dawson

Thank you for your letter of 12 September 2013 regarding Petition 10 – Katanning District Hospital Maternity Services.

I understand that the loss of the obstetrics services at Katanning Hospital is a significant concern for the community within and surrounding Katanning. As you are aware the suspension of the intra-partum birthing services at Katanning Health Service was a result of the departure of the General Practitioner (GP) workforce required to maintain a 24 hour on call GP obstetrics roster essential for a safe obstetric service.

I have been assured by WA Country Health Service (WACHS) - Great Southern that all avenues for re-commencing a safe and affordable service are being pursued. Until the services can recommence the following actions have been undertaken by WACHS - Great Southern:

- Ongoing recruitment program through the Southern Inland Health Initiative, Rural Health West, WACHS - Great Southern and the Department of Health's International Recruitment Bureau to recruit appropriate staff to resume services.
- Comprehensive antenatal and postnatal care continues to be provided by Katanning Hospital midwives, including a home visiting midwifery service.
- Engagement with the local General Practice to provide antenatal and shared care clinics in group and one to one sessions with mothers.
- Use of Telehealth technology to reduce the need for mothers to travel during their pregnancy when engaging with clinicians.

St John Ambulance will be trialling an inter-hospital patient transport service pilot program in Katanning from October 2013, which will provide support to volunteer ambulance officers. The new service will allow St John Ambulance to employ casual transport officers to undertake hospital to hospital patient transfers.

Strategies to address the current situation will be regularly reviewed and refined; however are contingent on recruiting the appropriately trained and skilled GP workforce to work in Katanning.

Thank you for bringing this matter to my attention.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'KH', written over a horizontal line.

Dr Kim Hames MLA
DEPUTY PREMIER
MINISTER FOR HEALTH

2 OCT 2013