

Mackay Birth Centre Co-design approach

August 2024

Developed by Strategic Momentum Group in partnership with Mackay Hospital and Health Service, Health Infrastructure Queensland, the Friends of the Birth Centre and the Mackay community.



**Queensland
Government**

1

Introduction



The Mackay Birth Centre (MBC) Co-design approach outlines the process for meaningfully engaging with the Mackay community to design the birth centre infrastructure that meets the needs of local women and families.

This approach supports continued collaboration between Mackay Hospital and Health Service (MHHS), Health Infrastructure Queensland (HIQ), the Friends of the Birth Centre, and the community to deliver a facility that provides a safe, welcoming, inclusive and culturally appropriate environment for birthing. It is recommended that a Mackay Birth Centre Community Reference Group be established to support the co-design approach for the birth centre infrastructure.



2

Purpose of the Mackay Birth Centre Community Reference Group

The Mackay Birth Centre Community Reference Group will play an important role in ensuring that the birth centre infrastructure is designed in line with the agreed principles (see section 4) and reflects the needs and desires of the community.

The group will represent the community's perspective, ensuring that diverse voices are heard throughout the process, and in particular those of women, families and First Nations people. They will work to balance the clinical requirements with a home-like environment that is woman-centred and family-friendly.

The Community Reference Group will make informed recommendations to the steering committee by gathering input from the community using various methods, such as surveys and forums. They will facilitate effective communication and feedback among group members and the community, building trust and engagement.

Throughout the process, the Community Reference Group will consider the project's principles, budget and timelines to ensure that the birth centre is designed and developed to meet the community's needs while considering the project's constraints, governance and delivery plans.



3

Process behind this approach

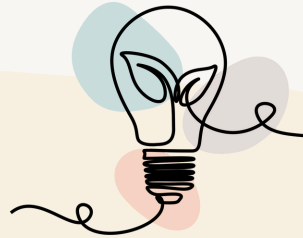
This Mackay Birth Centre Co-design approach was developed through a collaborative process involving key stakeholders in the planning and delivery of the new birth centre.

On 27 May 2024, a workshop was held with 21 participants, including representatives from Mackay Hospital and Health Service (MHHS), the Friends of the Birth Centre, community members and Health Infrastructure Queensland (HIQ).

The workshop, facilitated by an independent consultant, aimed to align participants on the project background, reaffirm the guiding principles and explore an approach for co-design.

The workshop outputs, summarising the discussions, ideas and next steps, have directly informed the content of this approach. This includes the governance structure of the MBC Community Reference Group, the engagement methods to be used, and the aspects of the birth centre to be co-designed with the community.

The process behind this approach reflects the ongoing partnership between MHHS, HIQ, the Friends of the Birth Centre, consumers and the broader Mackay community in delivering a birth centre that genuinely meets local needs and aspirations.



4

Mackay Birth Centre Principles

The following principles for designing the new Mackay Birth Centre have been developed through collaboration between HIQ, MHHS, Friends of the Birth Centre and community members. It is important that these principles are reflected in the design, and can be used to support engagement with the community.



Personalised, woman-centred and woman-led continuity of care with a known midwife at each stage of pregnancy, childbirth and postpartum with informed consent and wrap-around care



Calm, intimate and homely experience for women that is psychologically, physiologically and culturally safe, prioritises relationships and is welcoming for families and community



Designated, protected, quiet and sacred environment for antenatal, birthing and postnatal care, with timely access to the hospital, if needed

Mackay Birth Centre Principles



A centre that is distinct from the hospital with recognisable signage and external visibility. It has natural light and a direct connection to nature, along with private access, an accessible entrance and car park



Symbolises the identity and proud history of the Mackay Birth Centre and its trusted role and connection to the community



5 Community Reference Group commitments

- Inclusivity and equity**
All members of the community should be included and have an opportunity to have a say. The co-design commitments should support community voices, respect all viewpoints, and maintain cultural safety by engaging elders and demonstrating cultural sensitivity and connection.
- Woman- and family-centric approach**
The co-design should prioritise a woman-centric and family-centric approach, ensuring that the design meets the needs of women and their families.
- Collaborative approach**
The co-design process should build trust early on, encourage collaboration, and ensure that all participants share common goals and agreed values.
- Effective communication and engagement**
The approach should involve engagement through various channels, such as engaging with staff, parent groups, playgroups, community fairs, and utilising QR codes. Information should be communicated in simple language.
- Transparency and accountability**
The co-design process should be transparent, with a clear feedback loop commitment from Community Reference Group members. This may include feeding back governance decisions to consumers and staff.
- Integrity and confidentiality**
All participants should commit to ethical conduct, openness, honesty, and confidentiality.
- Commitment to tasks and attendance**
Community Reference Group members should be committed to their tasks, attend meetings regularly, and provide timely feedback to ensure the project's success.
- Consideration of timeline and budget**
The co-design process should establish a realistic timeline and acknowledge the available budget. The group should commit to keeping the agreed-upon timeline and working within the given parameters.
- Governance and process understanding**
Participants should understand the governance structure and processes involved in the co-design approach. This understanding should be communicated effectively to all stakeholders.
- Fit for purpose and future-proofing**
The design should be realistic, aligned with the birth centre principles and cater to the needs of communities. It should also consider future-proofing for potential expansion.



6

Role and responsibilities

A Mackay Birth Centre Community Reference Group will be established to provide a formal platform for community engagement.

The group's responsibilities will include:

- Attending MBC Community Reference Group meetings
- Gathering input from and representing the broader community, including:
 - Mackay, Sarina, Dysart, Moranbah and surrounding areas
 - First Nations groups and elders
 - Friends of the Birth Centre
 - Mackay Birth Centre staff
 - Past and potential consumers (of both the Mackay Birth Centre and KemKem Yanga)
 - Culturally and linguistically diverse populations
 - LGBTIQ+ populations
- Engaging with the community through various methods (e.g. surveys, forums, meetings)
- Discussing and exploring diverse perspectives within the group, with a commitment to respectful dialogue and finding common ground where possible, while acknowledging that consensus may not always be achievable on all issues
- Making informed recommendations regarding the birth centre infrastructure to the HIQ Design Team based on community engagement and input
- Ensuring alignment with project principles, budget, timelines and governance processes
- Communicate outcomes and decisions back to the community



The MBC Community Reference Group will report into Health Infrastructure Queensland's Design Team.

HIQ Design Team (Project Control Group)

Provides
recommendations

Provides updates
and decisions

Mackay Birth Centre Community
Reference Group

Provides input
and feedback

Provides updates
and decisions

Mackay and surrounding
communities

7 Membership

MBC Community Reference Group members will be sought through an Expression of Interest process promoted through community networks.

Membership will aim to have about twelve representatives who reflect the diversity of the broader Mackay community, as well as one representative each from Mackay Hospital and Health Service and Health Infrastructure Queensland.

Note. While the Community Reference Group will be formed to focus specifically on community needs and perspectives, it will include clinical representation to support an integrated approach. Additional clinical engagement will be undertaken through other processes.



It is recommended that the twelve MBC Community Reference Group members include people to represent:

- KemKem Yanga (1 role)
- Aboriginal communities (1 role)
- Torres Strait Islander communities (1 role)
- Australian South Sea Islander communities (1 role)
- Friends of the Birth Centre (2 roles)
- Mackay Birth Centre midwives (1 role)
- Cultural and linguistic diversity (1 role)
- Mackay community (1 role)
- Broader community (outside Mackay, within MHHS catchment) (2 roles)
- Younger people / future users (1 role)

8 Expression of Interest process

An open Expression of Interest (EOI) process will be conducted to establish membership of the Mackay Birth Centre Community Reference Group.

The EOI aims to attract a diverse and representative group of community members committed to actively participating in the co-design process and ensuring the Mackay Birth Centre meets the needs of local women and families.

The EOI will be shared broadly with the Mackay community through various communication channels and networks. The process will outline the volunteer role, responsibilities and expectations of the Community Reference Group, as well as the desired membership categories representing the diversity of the Mackay region (see 'Membership', section 7).

Interested community members will be invited to nominate for the relevant membership category via a survey-based application process (a QR code linking to the survey could support this process). Contact details will be provided for any enquiries about the EOI or application process.

Representatives from MHHS, HIQ and FBC (one from each) will review the applicants and recommend CRG members. The Chief Executive of MHHS and the Deputy Director-General of HIQ will then review and confirm the final selection.

A range of methods for how the Expression of Interest could be promoted include:



social media posts



flyers and posters displayed in local hospitals, GP clinics, child health centres, libraries, schools and community notice boards



direct contact with existing groups and networks (Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, past and current Birth Centre consumers)



word-of-mouth promotion through local networks and community champions, such as midwives, GPs, and birthing consumer advocates.





9

Meeting frequency and location

The Mackay Birth Centre Co-design Community Reference Group will meet monthly for one hour during the design phase and will be adjusted to an appropriate cadence during delivery. The meeting day and time will be based on the availability of most group members.

It is important that, wherever possible, all members attend each meeting to ensure consistent representation and input from the community. If a member is unable to attend a meeting, they should provide advance notice to the group.

Meetings will be offered in virtual or hybrid formats to allow the maximum number of participants the flexibility to attend in the way that best suits them. Occasionally, in-person meetings may be scheduled to facilitate more in-depth discussions or workshops, depending on the availability and preference of the group members. These face-to-face meetings will be held at accessible community locations within Mackay.

Meeting agendas and minutes will be distributed to all members via email, and any additional materials or readings will be provided before each meeting to allow sufficient time for review. Members are expected to come prepared to participate actively in discussions.

Given these are voluntary positions, the frequency and format will be reviewed as needed to ensure they meet the needs of the group and align with the project timeline and key milestones. Flexibility will be maintained to adjust the meeting schedule as required to support the effective functioning of this group while being respectful of people's time.

Volunteer Community Reference Group members' time will be respected and valued.

10

Community engagement

Determination of the most appropriate forms of engagement will be based on consideration by, and recommendations from, the CRG. Various engagement methods to gather input from the community could include, for example:

-  Co-design surveys promoted widely through community networks and facilities
-  Workshops, forums and 'yarning circles' held at accessible community locations
-  Attendance at existing community events, meetings and groups
-  Engagement with targeted stakeholder groups, e.g. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Service, mothers' groups
-  Site visits and virtual/in-person meetings with Community Reference Groups
-  Newsletters, website and social media
-  Providing channels for enquiries and feedback

Information will be communicated in simple, accessible, culturally appropriate language across these multiple channels. The engagement approach will allow for flexible methods (e.g. online/in-person) and leverage existing networks, forums and events to maximise reach.

The co-design process will commence early in the project lifecycle to maximise the scope for input. Key milestones for engagement will align with the project.



11

Co-design scope

The Mackay and surrounding communities will have genuine opportunities to provide input and direction on aspects of the Mackay Birth Centre infrastructure, including location and design.

Location, for example:

- Accessibility and proximity
- Safety and security
- Cultural considerations and connection
- Sense of space and natural surroundings
- Integration with community and services

Design, for example:

- External building design, outdoor space and landscaping
- Internal layout and room configurations
- Family and community spaces
- Cultural spaces, artwork and acknowledgements

The project budget, clinical safety standards and other mandatory requirements will be clearly communicated to manage expectations regarding the scope of influence. However, extensive opportunities will be provided for the community to shape the look, feel and functionality of the Mackay Birth Centre to create a facility that is welcoming and culturally safe.

12

Conclusion

The Mackay Birth Centre Co-design approach outlines the steps for working closely with the Mackay community to design the birth centre built environment that meets the needs of local women and families. This approach will ensure that the community, especially women, families and First Nations people, have input in shaping the birth centre.

A Mackay Birth Centre Community Reference Group will be set up to represent the community's views. This group will gather ideas and feedback from the wider community and provide recommendations to the HIQ's Design Team, ensuring the birth centre is designed in line with the agreed principles, budget and timelines.

Through this genuine partnership between Mackay Hospital and Health Service, Health Infrastructure Queensland, Friends of the Birth Centre and the Mackay community, the resulting birth centre will be a welcoming, culturally safe facility that supports local families to have positive birthing experiences for generations to come. The Mackay Birth Centre Co-design approach represents an important step forward in community engagement and sets a strong foundation for the successful delivery of this project.

