My Midwives

Press Release

Rainbow Baby Project – The stillbirth, subsequent pregnancy support program

Thanks to the generous support and funding from Sydney 2 CAMberra, My Midwives, in partnership with Elle TENS, are launching a pilot program and world first. Over the next 12 months we will be supporting women and families as they continue their journey through a subsequent pregnancy, having previously had a child stillborn.

Many families who lose a child to stillbirth, bravely decide that they would still like to have more children. This can be an incredibly stressful and trying 9 months. These families have lived through a deep loss, which makes the intimate and close care of a private midwife, a real need.

The $25 000 funding for the pilot program, will enable 10 still-families to receive continuity of care, 24/7 support, additional scans attended with their midwife, who also makes home visits. The service can start from the day the family finds out they are pregnant and continues through until 6 weeks post birth and will not cost the family a single cent.

Whilst a private midwife is an option to all expectant mothers, and is subsidised by Medicare, My Midwives and Elle TENS believe that those who have suffered loss, should have this service provided without question.

My Midwives Founder and Managing Director Liz Wilkes said “Through the amazing donation of charity Sydney 2 CAMberra we are able to offer the security of a known midwife to the family", “A pregnancy after the devastation of stillbirth is a challenging time and evidence demonstrates that having a known midwife reduces stress and anxiety which is paramount”.

The Sydney 2 CAMberra Charity Ride was created to honour the memory of Cameron Belfield, who was stillborn in 2011. The Ride brings together still-families and their friends to raise funds, awareness and to bond with those who have suffered similar losses. Over 10 years the ride has raised over $10M dollars for research and programs to support the stillbirth community.

“Having the continuous support from our midwife at My Midwives right from the early stages of pregnancy after loss, made the pregnancy lighter and easier to carry. It was the best decision we could have made for ourselves in a challenging pregnancy after loss and I’m relieved to know other families will have that same option available too.”
- Tamara, Brisbane, QLD (stillmum and My Midwives Client)

The pilot will be formally launched in October and will run for approximately 12 months, thanks to the generous funding supplied by the Sydney 2 CAMberra bike ride and charity.

For enquiries, please contact Liz Wilkes on liz@mymidwives.com.au or Gavin Youngman on mail@gavinyoungman.com

Rainbow Baby Project

Supporting families to have their rainbow baby

BACKGROUND

Australia is one of the safest places in the world for a baby to be born, however every day in Australia, 6 babies are stillborn and 2 die within 28 days of birth (neonatal death). Midwifery continuity of care has been demonstrated to reduce the risk of stillbirth by between 16% and 25% and has been included as a foundational element in stillbirth reduction programs across the world.

The Rainbow Baby Project has been developed in loving memory of Austin Moore, Layla Youngman and My Midwives angel babies, to support families to have their rainbow baby.

My Midwives along with Elle TENS are committed to exploring ways to secure ongoing funding of the Rainbow Baby Project, nationally. It is our desire to support all families who have previously experienced a stillbirth or newborn loss, to access midwifery continuity of care for their subsequent pregnancy. This will not only reduce the risk of stillbirth, but also to support the family during pregnancy, birth & early parenting after their previous loss.

My Midwives vision is for all women and their families have access to an optimal start to their family journey through excellence in midwifery services and continuity of care by 2025.

Elle Tens is a medical device company dedicated to providing support and care to mothers, through the relief of pain. The device is recommended pain management in labour by midwives and obstetricians.

OVERVIEW OF THE RAINBOW BABY PROJECT

This project was originally conceived and developed during meetings between My Midwives Managing Director Liz Wilkes and the team at Elle TENS. Elle TENS have been involved with Sydney 2 CAMberra since its launch and having still parents on their senior executive team. In partnership, Elle TENS and My Midwives secured pilot funding from Sydney 2 CAMberra. My Midwives will be the operational force to deliver the Rainbow Baby Project to 10 families over the next 12 months. Those on the pilot will receive midwifery continuity of care, for pregnancy which follows a stillbirth or newborn loss.

The focus of the program is on contact and relational care – the woman and family do not need to explain their story over and over. The midwife is completely cognisant of a need for additional reassurance related to the families previous experiences including but not limited to additional fetal monitoring and potentially alterations to timingor mode of birth. Evidencedemonstrates these additional supports decrease mentalhealth issues and increase women's satisfaction in their care.

INCLUSIONS IN THE RAINBOW BABY PROJECT

- Women in this program will have a primary midwife who is on call 24/7 to provide face to face care at appointments, and phone calls and telehealth outside scheduled appointment times.
- The scheduled number of midwifery appointments during the antenatal period are generally10-15 appointments.
- Women who require additional visits for emotional and mental health support are able to schedule these as desired.
- Women and families are also able to access the midwife outside of appointments via phone. Online education workshops.
- The midwife is on call and will attend the woman in early labour within the woman's home or at a midwifery clinic and once labour is established, will attend the birthing hospital and provide labour and birth care for the entire experience until the baby is 4-6 hours old.
- Following the birth, the midwife provides postnatal care to both mother and baby daily for 5-7 days, on day 10, day 14 and then weekly. However, appointments and telehealth support 24/7 is available outside of these appointment times.
- At six weeks the midwife and birth team provide a comprehensive birth debrief.
- My Midwives also collaborates with additional support services such as Lactation Consultants and these will be available to women throughout their pregnancy journey.

My Midwives

My Midwives was founded in Toowoomba in 2010 by Liz Wilkes and it's co-directors, after being inspired to make a change following her participation in the National Review of Maternity Services. Originally starting with 5 midwives and 1 administrator in a small cottage in Toowoomba, in 2011 My Midwives became the first midwifery practice in Australia to be able to admit women into hospital using Medicare with the first Medicare birth in Australia.

My Midwives is now Australia's largest Private Midwifery Practice having three practices across Queensland and Victoria, employing 32 midwives and 10 administrators to provide midwifery continuity of care to Australian families. My Midwives has been responsible for over 3500 Medicare rebated births to date

Continuity of Midwifery Care:

A Chochrane systematic review (15 RCTs, n=17,674) of continuity of midwifery care found outcomes for women and babies are significantly improved when care is offered by a known and trusted midwife, usually delivered through a midwifery group practice. These findings include:

Decrease in

- Fetal loss and neonatal death
- Amniotomy
- Augmentation (Syntocinon)
- Epidural and spinal analgesia
- Preterm birth
- Episiotomy
- Instrumental birth
- Cost

Increase in

- Women with no analgesia in labour
- Spontaneous vaginal birth
- Longer labour (< hour)
- Known midwife at birth
- Feelings of control
- Satisfaction
- Sustained breastfeeding

My Midwives leads the way and with exceptional outcomes for clients and their families and have won awards in Queensland and Victoria for innovation and leadership in health care. The My Midwives team strive every day to best serve the woman who entrust us with the privilege of being part of their birthing journey.

MY MIDWIVES MISSION

INSPIRE – AWAKEN – IGNITE – SERVE the unique inner power of women

A sustainable earth begins with birth

MY MIDWIVES VISION

All women and their families have access to an optimal start through excellence in midwifery services and continuity of care by 2025.

Liz Wilkes

Midwife & Managing Director

Liz is a high achieving, entrepreneurial midwife who founded My Midwives, Australia's largest Medicare rebated private midwifery practice. Her passion is ensuring families have the best start which she believes is critical for sustainability of the planet - if we cannot get the start to life right from the perspective of wellbeing of mother and baby, connections and bonds, the health of both are impacted. She holds an MBA (with distinction) from Griffith University.

Liz is a committed midwifery leader who drives change, with nearly two decades experience in policy & advocacy. Most recently Liz was on the Obstetric Clinical Committee & Participating Midwife Reference Group to the MBS Taskforce amongst the wide array of representative roles she has held. Her knowledge on issues relating to midwives in primary health care, insurance, Medicare, collaborative arrangements, admitting rights to hospitals and midwifery workforce is unique.

Client Story

Tamara, Brisbane Queensland

We first met the My Midwives team back in 2018 when we were pregnant with our first son after two daughters. Karen, our midwife, provided continuous support and midwifery care throughout the pregnancy, assisting us to plan and prepare for a beautiful home birth for October of that year.
In August, 2 months before we were expected to welcome our baby boy to the world, we tragically were met with a cruel reality we did not see coming. We were rushed to the hospital where we met Karen and were informed that our boy Tallan had passed away. Our world was shattered. With Karen alongside us we birthed our beautiful boy into a silent room.

We knew for us our future involved trying for another baby. Another to love and care for and the moment we fell pregnant we knew we wanted to have the continuous care and support of Karen from My Midwives. Going into another pregnancy with a new sense of fear and anxiety was not easy emotionally or mentally. Second guessing every step of the way if everything was ok or that something was going to go wrong and it was only a matter of time.

For us we had the trusted support of someone who not only walked that path with us, but had the knowledge and awareness of how we felt from our very first prenatal appointment in the early stages of the pregnancy. Right from the very beginning with my second son I was able to express all my worries, concerns and fears. The relief of continuity of care meant I didn't have to delve into our history with someone new in the revolving door of medical professionals that we could have been met with in a different model of maternity care. Something no grieving parent wants to retell over and over again.

I had Karen attend my regular hospital appointments and checks, advocating for me where needed and asking the questions my grieving brain struggled to keep on top of, ultimately covering every aspect and truly giving me the chance at making informed choices for myself and my baby.

I had someone I could call on to support me at any time of day and would be there throughout my labour and birth. A midwife I'd already built a relationship with that knew everything first hand and not known from a file note.

Pregnancy after a baby born still requires such personal and tailored care in a consistent way and I believe should be readily available for every grieving family.

We welcomed our second son Baxter in November 2019 with Karen by our sides with teary filled eyes in a room that was filled with loud baby cries.