After your baby has died

Information for parents whose baby is stillborn or dies soon after birth

We understand that this must be a time of great shock and sadness for you. This information sheet is offered as a very basic guide to help you over the next few days.

Support at this time

Midwives and doctors will provide constant support and answer any questions you may have. They will automatically ask one of the hospital obstetric social workers to come and meet you, and they will work with you to help with emotional and practical concerns while you are in hospital and after your discharge.

Spending time with your baby

At first you may not be able to decide whether you wish to see or hold your baby after the birth. This must seem an enormous decision. Many parents find it helpful to spend time with their baby after birth. We will be open to your wishes.

Blessing and naming ceremony

The RHW Chaplaincy Service offer support and spiritual comfort. They can hold a naming or blessing ceremony for your baby. We can page them at your request, or you can ask your own religious representative to come to the hospital.

Family and children

Your social worker can help you think about the needs of your children and how to involve them. The Social Work department can give you written resources and story books.

Creating mementoes

We will offer you the opportunity to make some tangible mementoes of your baby – photographs, foot and hand prints and cot card – kept in a special memento booklet. You can help with creating these if you wish. If you do not wish these to be taken, we will respect your wishes. If you do not wish to take the mementoes home with you the hospital will hold these for you as you may wish to collect these at a later date.

Post-mortem

A post-mortem can help provide some information about why your baby died. Your doctor will discuss this with you. Your baby will not be examined unless you have given written consent. It is advisable for the post-mortem to be carried out as soon as possible to maximise the information gained. This may mean you have to plan your time with your baby very carefully to allow the post-mortem to take place. In order to provide you with the best information possible it may take several months until the results of the post-mortem are available.

Funeral arrangements

If you are 20 weeks pregnant or more – or if your baby died after birth, you must legally register your baby’s birth and arrange a funeral. Please be reassured that we can keep your baby safely here at the hospital for up to five days until you have had time to think about and make these arrangements. Your social worker will help you with these plans.
Maternity Bereavement Payment

You may be entitled to receive the maternity allowance payment through Centrelink. The midwives will complete their part of the form confirming your baby’s birth, and ensure you are given this claim form.

After your discharge

The RHW Home Midwifery Service, or your local home midwifery service, can usually see you at home to provide support and ongoing midwifery care. Before you leave hospital the doctors will discuss with you any follow-up arrangements. Your social worker will follow up with phone calls and can see you after discharge. The social worker will help you with information about planning for your baby’s funeral, bereavement supports and other resources. If at any time you would like to discuss the events surrounding the birth of your baby with the doctors or midwives, please contact the RHW social worker, who can arrange for this to occur.

If you wish to see your baby after your discharge from hospital, this can only be arranged through the RHW social workers. We are at work from 8.30am to 5pm Monday to Friday: phone 9382 6670. On weekends and public holidays we are on call 8am to 8pm. We can arrange a viewing of your baby by appointment: phone 9382 6111 and ask for the on-call social worker to be paged.

Contact phone numbers:

- Avoca and Barker Team midwives – 93826111 ask them to page your midwife
- Malabar midwives ph: 93826111 and ask them to contact your midwife
- Delivery Suite/Birth Centre 9382 6100
- My obstetrician
  ........................................
- Social Work Reception
  9382 6670 direct line or
  9382……. pager...........
- Midwifery Group Practice ph: 93826111 and ask them to page