



**JACQUI DEAN**  
Member of Parliament for Waitaki

12 June 2019

Rt Hon Jacinda Ardern  
Prime Minister  
Parliament Buildings  
WELLINGTON 6160

Dear Prime Minister

I have grave concerns around maternity services in Wanaka and respectfully ask you to consider looking into the provision of services there, after a local mother was last week forced to give birth on her midwife's office floor when her baby arrived five days early.

I understand that you are already revisiting the provision of Lumsden maternity services, but I believe your investigations needs to be broadened to include Wanaka, with the lack of services there equally as critical.

Wanaka is one of the most remote areas in the country. Mothers have no access to a local birthing unit, the area's maternity hub, promised by the Southern District Health Board 16 months ago, has not been established and they are three and-a-half hours away from their nearest base hospital.

Wanaka maternity services are under huge pressure and it is only thanks to good luck and the goodwill of the area's overworked midwives that a tragedy has been averted.

The Southern DHB has suggested that pregnant women should get themselves to their nearest base hospital prior to the arrival of their baby. However, this latest incident reflects how out of touch they are, with this mother's plans to travel to Dunedin abandoned with the fast and unplanned arrival of her baby at her midwife's office.

I believe urgent action must now be taken before a more serious incident occurs and I respectfully ask that you intervene and help improve the safety of local families.

This issue isn't new, the local community has been campaigning for change for about 18 months, asking me last year to present a 3843-signature petition to Parliament seeking the creation of a sustainable model for rural community midwifery in the Wanaka region.

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Significantly the Southern DHB has Stats NZ information showing the number of birth age women in Central Otago, including Wanaka, is set to increase between 2018 and 2043, resulting in a projected 17-18 per cent rise in live births. However, the board has done little to acknowledge this growth, or indeed prepare for it.

Its Integrated Primary Maternity System of Care document released last year aimed to “develop a stronger system of care for primary maternity services across our whole district,” but after months of waiting the reality is nothing has changed for families in the Wanaka area.

The Southern DHB has dropped the ball here, failing to deliver appropriate and safe maternity services to Wanaka mothers.

This community has lost confidence in the services on offer and Upper Clutha people need action now. As Prime Minister I am appealing to you, on behalf of Wanaka families, to address this situation as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely



Hon Jacqui Dean  
MP for Waitaki

CC: Hon David Clark  
Minister of Health