

Making a Complaint About Maternity Care



A Consumer Guide to
Understanding Your
Options and Raising
Concerns





Before You Begin

Making a complaint about maternity care can be emotionally challenging, particularly if your experience involved trauma, distress, grief, injury, or feeling unheard.

Before beginning the complaints process, it may be helpful to consider:



Do you have emotional or psychological support in place?



Is there a trusted support person who can assist you with reading, writing, or responding to correspondence?



Do you feel ready to engage with the complaints process?

Support may be available through your GP, psychologist, counsellor, social worker, perinatal mental health service, peer support organisation, or a trusted family member or friend.

Mums Matter Psychology, Centre for Birth Trauma Healing and the Gidget Foundation may also be able to assist, including access to psychologists with experience supporting individuals affected by birth trauma. See resource provided at the back of this guide for a comprehensive list.



Peer Support Through MCN



MCN offers peer support for a fee of \$50 to assist individuals navigating the complaints process.

This support may include:



**Email
support**



**Text message
support**



**Voice message
support**



**General information
and guidance
regarding complaint
pathways**

MCN can provide peer support and shared lived experience, but does not provide legal, medical, clinical, or psychological advice.



What MCN Can and Cannot Do

MCN CAN

- ✓ **Help you understand general complaint pathways**
- ✓ **Provide peer support and guidance**
- ✓ **Help you identify information that may be relevant to your complaint**
- ✓ **Share templates and resources**
- ✓ **Support you to communicate your concerns clearly and respectfully**

MCN CANNOT

- ✗ **Provide legal advice**
- ✗ **Provide medical or clinical advice**
- ✗ **Investigate your care**
- ✗ **Act on your behalf in a complaints process**
- ✗ **Guarantee a particular outcome**
- ✗ **Replace professional mental health support**



What Making a Complaint Can Achieve

Making a complaint may help you:

Seek an explanation about your care

Request an apology

Ask for a review of your care

Understand whether improvements will be made

Raise concerns about safety or quality of care

Contribute to broader improvements within maternity services

Many people find that making a complaint provides an opportunity to have their concerns acknowledged and documented.

However, complaints do not always result in the outcome an individual is seeking. Before commencing the process, it can be helpful to consider what outcome you hope to achieve.



Understanding Your Complaint Options

Depending on your circumstances, you may choose to:

- **Raise your concerns directly with the hospital or health service**
- **Contact the hospital's Consumer Liaison, Patient Experience, or Complaints Team**
- **Lodge a complaint with the relevant state or territory health complaints entity or ombudsman**
- **Seek independent legal advice if you are considering legal action**

Most public and private hospitals have formal processes for receiving, investigating, and responding to complaints.



Internal Hospital Complaints Processes

Many complaints are initially managed through the hospital or health service where the care was provided.

While hospitals have a responsibility to receive and respond to complaints, some individuals may feel dissatisfied with an internal review process, particularly when seeking independent oversight or broader accountability.

If you are making a complaint, it is reasonable to ask:

- **Who will review my complaint?**
- **What information will be considered during the review?**
- **Will staff involved in my care be asked to respond?**
- **What actions, if any, may result from the review?**
- **Will I receive a written response?**
- **What options are available if I remain dissatisfied with the outcome?**



Understanding the process can help you make informed decisions about next steps.



Tips for Writing an Effective Complaint

A well-structured complaint is often easier for a service to review and respond to.



Try to keep your complaint:

- ✓ Clear
- ✓ Factual
- ✓ Chronological
- ✓ Specific
- ✓ Respectful
- ✓ Focused on the events and outcomes you are seeking

Include

- Your full name and contact details
- Dates, times, and locations where relevant
- Names or roles of staff involved (if known)
- A description of what occurred
- Your concerns about the care provided
- The impact the experience has had on you
- The outcome or response you are seeking

Avoid

- Personal attacks
- Insults or abusive language
- Broad generalisations
- Assumptions that cannot be verified
- Highly inflammatory or aggressive language

A complaint can be firm and direct while remaining respectful and professional.



Complaint Email Template

**Subject: Complaint About Maternity Care
Received on [Date]**

Dear [Complaints Team / Consumer Liaison Officer],

I am writing to make a formal complaint regarding the maternity care I received at [Hospital or Health Service] on [Date(s)].

My concerns relate to:

- **[Concern 1]**
- **[Concern 2]**
- **[Concern 3]**

The impact of this experience has been:

[Briefly describe the impact on your physical, emotional, psychological, or practical wellbeing.]

I am seeking:

- **A written explanation of what occurred**
- **A review of the care provided**
- **Information about whether any improvements or changes will be implemented**
- **Advice regarding any further options available to me**

Please confirm receipt of this complaint and advise the expected timeframe for response.

Kind regards,

**[Full Name]
[Contact Details]**



Tailor this template to your experience and needs. It is okay to add more detailed if you feel comfortable

Looking After Yourself

Making a complaint can be emotionally demanding.



It is important to remember that you can pause the process at any time if you need to prioritise your wellbeing



Consider asking a trusted family member, friend, advocate, or support person to assist you in preparing, reviewing, or submitting your complaint.



You may also wish to access professional support before, during, or after the complaints process.



If you feel overwhelmed, distressed, unsafe, or at risk, please seek immediate support from a GP, mental health professional, crisis support service, or your nearest emergency department.

Disclaimer

This resource provides general information only and does not constitute legal, medical, clinical, or psychological advice.

The information provided is intended to support individuals in understanding complaint pathways and preparing complaints regarding maternity care. Every situation is different, and individuals should seek professional advice relevant to their circumstances where appropriate.

MCN does not investigate complaints, provide legal representation, or guarantee any particular outcome.

Support after birth trauma, baby loss or miscarriage

A parent-friendly guide to support services, peer support and urgent help.

You do not have to do this alone. These services may help after a difficult or traumatic birth, miscarriage, TFMR, stillbirth, infant loss or related distress.



1. Birth trauma & difficult birth support

- **Your GP** – a good place to start for local referral and mental health support
- **Centre for Perinatal Psychology** – cpp.com.au
- **Centre for Birth Trauma Healing** – birthtraumahealing.com.au
- **Gidget Foundation Australia** – gidgetfoundation.org.au
- **Mum's Matter** – mumsmatter.com.au
- **COPE Directory** – cope.org.au
- **Maternity Choices Australia** – maternitychoices.org.au
- **ForWhen** – forwhenhelpline.org.au
- **PANDA** – panda.org.au
- **SANE Australia** – mental health support & information – sane.org



2. Pregnancy loss, miscarriage, TFMR, stillbirth & infant loss

- **Pink Elephants Support Network** – miscarriage, early pregnancy loss (up to 20 weeks) & TFMR support – pinklephants.org.au
- **Bears of Hope** – support for pregnancy, birth & infant loss – bearsofhope.org.au
- **Through the Unexpected** – TFMR & fetal anomaly diagnosis support – throughtheunexpected.org.au
- **Red Nose** – safe sleep, pregnancy advice & bereavement support – rednose.org.au
- **Stillbirth Foundation Australia** – information, resources & advocacy – stillbirthfoundation.org.au
- **SANDS** – stillbirth & neonatal death support – sands.org.au



3. Mental health & crisis support

- **Lifeline** – 13 11 14
- **Beyond Blue** – 1300 22 4636
- **PANDA** – 1300 726 306
- **Suicide Call Back Service** – 1300 659 467
- **Mental Health Access Line** – 1800 011 511
- **Rural Health Connect** – ruralhealthconnect.com.au



If you need urgent help or are unsafe, call 000.



4. Extra support for dads/partners

- **Red Nose Bereaved Dads Online Support Group** – peer support with Red Nose – rednose.org.au/events/bereaved-dads-support-group-online
- **SMS4dads** – grief & loss message service for dads – sms4dads.com.au
- **Love From Dad** – website for dads navigating baby loss – lovefromdad.com.au
- **Bears of Hope** parent support and WhatsApp groups – bearsofhope.org.au/connect

Podcasts:

-  Still Parents Podcast
-  Guys and Grief
-  The Room Eleven Podcast
-  Dad Still Standing
-  Dad Always

