

# Point of Care Guidelines for Supporting Rural & Remote Parents After Pregnancy Loss or Stillbirth

This document guides clinical staff to ensure trauma-informed, respectful, and accessible care for parents in rural and remote areas experiencing pregnancy loss. It has been co-produced with families with lived experience to reflect their voices, values, and needs. This guide addresses three care contexts: receiving care locally, travelling to metro health services, and travelling to rural or regional health services.

## Initial Contact & Acknowledgment of Loss

- Use clear, compassionate language: "I am sorry for your loss. How would you like us to support you?"
  - ◊ **Tip:** Avoid medical jargon. Offer space for silence and emotional expression.
- Acknowledge the isolation that may be experienced due to distance from support networks.
  - ◊ **Tip:** Ask if they have someone they would like contacted for support (local GP, social worker, family member).

## Receiving Care Locally or Travelling to Rural/Regional Services

### Accessing Support & Information

- Confirm the availability of bereavement care specialists or social workers at the local health service.
  - ◊ **Tip:** If unavailable, provide contacts for phone or telehealth-based support.
- Provide clear, verbal explanations before offering written information.
- Share Red Nose bereavement support materials and explain their availability.

## Autopsy & Medical Decision-Making

- Discuss autopsy and other procedures with respect for cultural and personal values.
  - ◊ **Tip:** Offer alternatives like placenta testing if autopsy is declined.
- Clearly explain next steps and when results will be shared.
  - ◊ **Tip:** Provide a contact person and direct phone number for follow-up.

## Funeral, Burial & Return to Community

- Ask about preferences for burial, cremation, or returning baby to home community.
  - ◊ **Tip:** Support funeral planning by offering information about local services and financial assistance.
- Link families with cultural or spiritual support where desired.

## Memory-Making & Decision Support

- Offer options like handprints, footprints, memory boxes, and naming ceremonies.
- **Resource:** Red Nose Treasured Baby service and birth card.
- Respect the family's pace and their individual grief style.
  - ◊ **Tip:** Let parents know it's okay to take time before making decisions.
- Handover to Local Support Services
- With consent, arrange warm handovers to:
  - ◊ Red Nose Bereavement Services
  - ◊ Local GP or health clinic
  - ◊ Local ACCHO or grief/social work services
- Share key contacts in print and digital formats:
  - ◊ **Red Nose 24/7 Grief & Loss Support Line:** 1300 308 307



## Travelling to Metro Health Services

### Preparation & Travel Logistics

- Provide clear directions, what to expect, and who to contact at metro hospital.
  - ◊ **Tip: Offer contact info for a social worker or liaison nurse.**
- Discuss financial and accommodation supports.
  - ◊ **Tip: Inform parents about Patient Assisted Travel Scheme (PATS) and similar resources.**
- Consider work or family responsibilities that may be affected by travel.
- Providing Trauma-Informed Metro Care
- Recognise urban hospitals may be overwhelming.
  - ◊ **Tip: Assign a single contact person to guide families through their stay.**
- Provide culturally sensitive and personalised care.
- If families wish to return home quickly, coordinate with their local services.

### Metro to Local Service Handover

- With consent, coordinate warm handover to:
  - Red Nose
  - Local health providers and community-based services
- Share key contact names and when families can expect follow-up.
  - ◊ **Tip: Use a written handover summary with a contact schedule.**

### Final Considerations for Rural & Remote Families

- Validate the unique challenges of grieving in rural and remote areas.
- Respect community ties and any cultural or spiritual needs.
- Ensure follow-up supports are in place before discharge.
  - ◊ **Tip: Offer telehealth or virtual support options when in-person care is not available.**
- Always ask permission before sharing personal or health information.

**By following these guidelines, clinical staff can deliver compassionate, trauma-informed, and accessible care to parents in rural and remote areas navigating the loss of a baby.**

