Reviewer’s report

Title: A statewide review of postnatal care in private hospitals in Victoria, Australia

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Reviewer: Jen Leamon

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In places detail is provided that needs explanation to an international audience i.e hotel based care,

Feedback regarding development needs

Abstract.
The article is about the research relating to private post birth care in Victoria and the outcomes comparative to earlier research in the public sector. It is from my reading not useful/misleading to have women’s satisfaction of post birth considered here as this study did not gain such data from consumers.

Introduction / background
As this journal is available on line and therefore international some socio-political contextual information about post birth care would be useful which could capture the involvement of private care services. This section could also consider the international / national changing context regarding place of care and the types and roles of professional, lay, volunteer carers along with some analysis of the cost of care both in financial terms and public health terms of.

Methods
This section links clearly this work to previous work relating to public sector care and there is evidence of a publication history in relation to the wider study. The methods and sample appear appropriate. Further information could have been given regarding the development of the survey in association with the research objective and a summary of the themes identified from the analysis would have been useful. Within the key informant interviews no rational is provided for such a varied professional sample group and the focus of these interviews could have been more explicit again linked to the research objectives.

Results & discussion
Table 1 – results highlight a limitation of the survey touched on in the discussion – mode of birth linked to length of stay. There is some repetition regarding the issues of post birth hospital stay being linked to rest and recuperation extensive consideration of any evidenced benefits, comparisons to other states, countries organisation, provision and priorities of post birth care.

How old is the private care sector in its provision of care in Victoria, and did it
copy the public sector or develop something new in developing its systems of care?

The provision of well baby nurseries needs from an international perspective further explanation as to their function in public and private hospitals. This discussion could be linked to the findings regarding breast feeding. You note an interesting difference regarding the baby friendly initiative between private and public services which could be considered in relation to the private sector responsibility to respond to public health challenges. Table 2 could have been expanded, data permitting, to have included mode of feeding at 6 weeks as well as 6 months. Such information could be of value to the private/public sector in marketing their services.

Staffing is an international issue and dilemma in providing safe maternity care. When you identify how designated rotas are achieved in 50% of the time this is something worthy of deeper discussion regarding the local national context for midwives their professional status, development, career progression. Alongside the evidence that post birth care is changing and now involves multi-professional/lay/volunteer carers and return the discussion to the research objectives and how it developed knowledge for developing practice.

The development of hotel care is interesting and arguably commercialisation of post birth care by private companies, what of social enterprise and setting up a home based post birth care service and significantly has anyone asked women where their want to be cared for.

To ask the private provides about their views of women’s satisfaction indicates a need to follow up this study with one that directly engages women. This need is also highlighted by the use of a decade old reference to women’s satisfaction being higher in the private sector (page 18 reference 3), it is not know if this is the current situation?