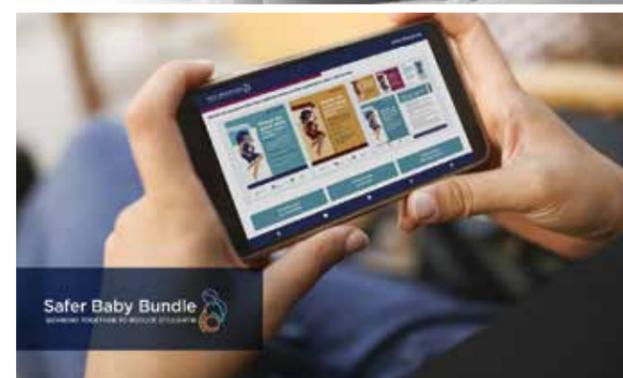


# SAFER BABY BUNDLE

by TIONIE NEWTH, BN MMID, Clinical Midwifery Consultant, Stillbirth CRE



Promoting the Safer Baby Bundle.



Accessing the Safer Baby Bundle Resources.



As a midwife, supporting women who bring new life into the world can be a source of great joy and a professional privilege unlike any other. But unfortunately, as many midwives experience first hand, far too many families' delight can turn to heartbreak through the devastating loss of a baby. We know more needs to be done to reduce this number. Adopting the Safer Baby Bundle initiative is a key and practical approach where we can truly make a difference.

Stillbirth is Australia's hidden health crisis, with six babies stillborn each day, or more than 2,000 each year. This personal tragedy for families is a serious public health problem, with far-reaching social, emotional, and financial burdens. The stillbirth rate in Australia is higher than in other high-income countries and has remained relatively unchanged for more than 20 years.

Not all stillbirths are preventable, but the latest research indicates that 20-30% of late gestation stillbirths could be avoided with improved care. The Safer Baby Bundle is a national initiative designed to help Australian maternity healthcare professionals improve antenatal care practices and reach this goal.

An initiative of the Centre of Research Excellence in Stillbirth (Stillbirth CRE), the bundle is a collection of interventions and resources based on five areas where improved practice can reduce the number of stillborn babies:

1. Supporting women to stop smoking in pregnancy.
2. Improving detection and management of fetal growth restriction.

3. Raising awareness and improving care for women with decreased fetal movements.
4. Improving awareness of going to sleep on either side after 28 weeks.
5. Improving shared decision-making about the timing of birth for women with risk factors for stillbirth.

The Safer Baby Bundle also emphasises the importance of overarching best practice care principles. This includes supporting women to access continuity of midwifery care, a vital component of the Safer Baby Bundle.

The bundle first launched in 2019 in Victoria with NSW, QLD, ACT and WA coming on in 2020 with plans this year to continue into NT, SA and Tasmania. This national roll-out is particularly exciting given the recent positive data from Safer Care Victoria, which showed promising results, including a 27% reduction in stillbirth rates across participating maternity sites in Victoria in 2020.

In Queensland, 39 maternity services are now implementing the Safer Baby Bundle, ranging from the state's largest maternity hospitals (Mater Mothers' Hospital, Gold Coast University Hospital and the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital) to smaller regional hospitals in Ayr, Biloela and Thursday Island.

I had the privilege of leading this work at Gold Coast University Hospital (GCUH) in March this year when GCUH launched the Safer Baby Bundle. The launch was attended widely by hospital staff and executive, with local

media also promoting the launch. One of our brave mothers, Hope Sharpin, also shared her personal, heartbreaking story of her stillborn baby Oliver, truly highlighting the importance of this work.

Behind the scenes, the Project Team at GCUH have been working hard educating and promoting the Safer Baby Bundle across the site. We are so pleased with the amazing uptake of over 80% of all midwives completing the module and trending upwards. As a maternity service, the introduction of the Safer Baby Bundle is changing the way we approach pregnancy management and emphasises the importance of awareness and early identification of women who have an increased chance of stillbirth. Overall, this awareness and the resources that come with the Safer Baby Bundle facilitate us to be more proactive by giving us the tools to educate and monitor women. Not only is this beneficial for women, but as midwives, knowing we play a part in reducing the number of families experiencing this tragedy is a great feeling.

Nationally, the Stillbirth CRE has also developed new Safer Baby Bundle resources, including a Masterclass for clinicians and new videos for antenatal clinic waiting rooms. Although stillbirth affects people from all walks of life, research shows that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities, people living in rural and remote areas, and refugees and some migrant women experience much higher stillbirth rates in Australia. The Stillbirth CRE is committed to creating a suite of resources to reach maternity health professionals and women receiving care across diverse communities, with new resources to come and current resources now available

with translations into 23 languages. The Stillbirth CRE continue to work with our advisory groups to create Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, and rural and remote versions of the Safer Baby Bundle Masterclass.

The focus in the future is on providing resources for women, midwives and obstetricians around making decisions for when it is safe to give birth for those women with an increased risk of stillbirth. These resources will include resources to support shared decision making and an e-learning module specifically around the timing of birth.

The Stillbirth CRE continues to promote the Safer Baby Bundle across Australia and encourage all maternity healthcare professionals to complete the free Safer Baby Bundle eLearning modules, accredited for CPD hours through the Australian College of Midwives. These interactive learning modules are based on the latest clinical evidence and provide an opportunity for all maternity healthcare professionals to update their knowledge of stillbirth prevention and improve their maternity care practices.

Since launching online learning in 2019, more than 7600 health professionals have completed training. Overwhelmingly, this program has been embraced by the Australian midwifery community, with 75% of completions identifying as midwives. We'd love to see even more midwives commit to learning more about stillbirth prevention by taking the Safer Baby Bundle eLearning at <http://learn.stillbirthcre.org.au>.