

**TO:** All media

**DATE:** 8 January 2022

**SUBJECT:** Media update on birthing support people

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***Please attribute the following to Margot Mains, Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District Chief Executive.***

Wollongong Hospital recognises the importance of women having a partner or support person with them during birth. Given the significantly high levels of COVID-19 transmission within the community, stringent measures are in place throughout all hospitals, including birthing units, for the safety of all.

Women can be supported by one person who will be screened via Rapid Antigen Test by staff before entering the birthing unit. If the support person returns a positive test, they will not be permitted to enter the birthing unit as they will need to self-isolate under current public health orders.

Women due to have their baby are being asked to have additional support people on standby, should their initial partner/support people test positive. Only COVID negative support people will be permitted to enter the Birthing Unit.

If the birthing woman is COVID positive, she can still have a COVID negative support person. However, that support person will then be deemed a close contact and subsequently need to commence a 7 day isolation period after leaving the birthing unit.

We acknowledge these are challenging circumstance for everyone, but maintain the safety of all of our patients and staff remains our biggest priority right now.