

MEDIA RELEASE

23 February 2009
For Immediate Release



The Royal Australian
and New Zealand
College of Obstetricians
and Gynaecologists

ABN 34 100 268 969

Excellence in Women's Health

College House
254 – 260 Albert Street
East Melbourne Vic 3002 Australia
Telephone: +61 3 9417 1699
Facsimile: + 61 3 9419 0672
E-mail: ranzocg@ranzocg.edu.au

SAFETY is the key focus of any changes to Maternity Services in Australia

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) today officially welcomed the Federal Government's maternity services review report released today.

'We are at a pivotal and exciting time in the delivery of maternity care with the Federal Government's commitment to review and improve maternity services in this country. We now hope that as a result of the review, there will be lasting improvements made to the provision of safe, multi-disciplinary care, improved choices for women in choosing particular models of care and better training of the maternity workforce,' said RANZCOG President, Dr Ted Weaver.

'It is vital that any reforms to the way maternity services are provided in Australia are able to be carefully evaluated to ensure that they do not have any adverse effects on pregnancy outcomes for mothers and babies.

'The College is very pleased that the first recommendation from the report highlights the need for consistent national data collection for perinatal and maternal morbidity and mortality.

'We congratulate the Federal Government and in particular Health Minister Nicola Roxon, for their commitment to reviewing and improving this essential service so that every mother and new-born, no matter where they live, receives the best possible care.

'Today Australia is one of the safest countries in which to give birth or be born and the Review highlights this. Generally, Australian women and their babies enjoy a system of high quality maternity care, though there are inequities in accessing care, and the College is supportive of the initiatives outlined for the care of remote and rural, and particularly, our indigenous women.

'The high standards of professional care provided by obstetricians working in both the public and private system, is a major contributor to our current enviable safety record. Without the provision of obstetric care provided by obstetricians working collaboratively with other health professionals in both private and public practice, Australia would not be the safe place that it is now for pregnancy and birth,' said Dr Weaver today.

'It is essential that all health workers providing maternity health services, work together to provide the best outcomes for mothers and babies. Trust and cooperation between all those involved in maternity care is vital to the provision of safe maternity care.

'We would argue that women do need the care of an obstetrician, working in cooperation with other maternity service providers in a multidisciplinary team to provide the maximum choice and the best possible care. Fortunately, most obstetricians are very committed to working collaboratively with the other key caregivers in maternity services to ensure a high level of care that is safe, women-centred and culturally appropriate.'

'We also need to urgently consider changes to work practices in maternity care to address Australia's low breastfeeding rates, high rate of postnatal depression and the general care of women postnatally,' said Dr Weaver.

The College applauds the initiative in the review that the National Health and Medical Research Council develop national multi-disciplinary guidelines for maternity care, and looks forward to working with other groups in this important area.

To view the RANZCOG submission to the Federal Government:

www.ranzcog.edu.au/fellows/pdfs/RANZCOG_Maternity_Services_Review_Submission_31Oct08.pdf

For further information or to arrange an interview with the President, please contact:
Julia Serafin, Marketing, Media & Communications Senior Coordinator, RANZCOG
(m) 0488 367 476; (e) jserafin@ranzcog.edu.au (w) www.ranzcog.edu.au