



College Statement

Title	Statement on Stand-alone Primary Childbirth Units
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The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) believes that the women and babies of Australia and New Zealand should have timely access to obstetric, paediatric, anaesthetic and midwifery services in pregnancy, labour and for at least several hours after birth. The RANZCOG accepts that some women who have been carefully assessed as being at lower risk of pregnancy complications will choose to labour in relatively low-technology primary care units.

Wherever possible, and certainly in metropolitan areas, such units should be sited within or immediately adjacent to a 24-hour obstetric facility, which must have anaesthetic / analgesia services, operating theatres and blood products with timely access to neonatal paediatric expertise and intensive care specialist consultation.

Where, by virtue of remote location, such onsite services cannot be provided, patients should be informed of the limitations of services available and the implications for intrapartum and postpartum care. Antenatal transfer to a centre with more comprehensive services should be offered.

In all circumstances where transfer may be necessary, formal systems must be in place to ensure safe, timely and rapid transfer of women and/or their babies who require specialist treatment. These arrangements should be collaborative and hold the safety of mother and baby as paramount. In addition, these arrangements must be subject to regular prospective practice audit and be supported by robust, consistent data collection systems.

The RANZCOG is concerned that in some situations in Australia and New Zealand funding issues and shortages of key health professionals are driving decisions on the appropriateness of different models of care, rather than considered assessment of best practice. The RANZCOG would welcome open debate on this matter between the community, relevant health professional groups and government representatives. Such debate should occur prior to changes in service delivery being made.

Disclaimer:

This College Statement is intended to provide general advice to Practitioners. The statement should never be relied on as a substitute for proper assessment with respect to the particular circumstances of each case and the needs of each patient.

The statement has been prepared having regard to general circumstances. It is the responsibility of each Practitioner to have regard to the particular circumstances of each case, and the application of this statement in each case. In particular, clinical management must always be responsive to the needs of the individual patient and the particular circumstances of each case.

This College statement has been prepared having regard to the information available at the time of its preparation, and each Practitioner must have regard to relevant information, research or material which may have been published or become available subsequently.

Whilst the College endeavours to ensure that College statements are accurate and current at the time of their preparation, it takes no responsibility for matters arising from changed circumstances or information or material that may have become available after the date of the statements.