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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

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Maternity Services Review Update

Over 900 submissions to the Rudd Government's Maternity Services Review have been received.

The first group of over 400 submissions is now available on the Department of Health and Ageing's website (www.health.gov.au/maternityservicesreview)

Health professionals, researchers, governments, non-government organisations and other representative organisations have made submissions.

The majority are from individual consumers. Their personal accounts of experiences with maternity care sound a strong note of concern that our maternity system has become too focussed on medical intervention.

The publication of submissions coincides with the release of the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare's Report "Australia's Mothers and Babies 2006".

The report shows that the number of births continues to rise, as does the proportion of caesarean section births.

Caesarean section births increased to 30.8% in 2006 compared to the 2004 OECD average of 22% of births.

There were 282,169 births reported in 2006, an increase of 3.6 per cent on 2005.

The report also notes that 52.2% of indigenous mothers smoked during pregnancy and the indigenous fetal death rate, while improved, is still 1.6 times as high as for non-indigenous babies.

The Rudd Government is committed to improving maternity services. The Review of Maternity Services which I initiated earlier this year is now well advanced.

The remaining public submissions will be progressively posted on the website as they are processed.

I would like to thank all of those individuals and groups who have taken the time to provide their views to the Maternity Services Review.

I expect to receive a report from my department by the end of this year. The report will be publicly released in the New Year.

For all media inquiries, please contact the Minister's Office on 02 6277 7220.