



THE HON NICOLA ROXON MP
Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

10 September

Maternity services discussion paper launched

As part of the Rudd Government's development of a national action plan for maternity services, Health Minister Nicola Roxon today launched a discussion paper on improving maternity services in Australia.

Preliminary figures suggest Australia may be on the cusp of a new baby boom. In 2005, 267,793 women gave birth to 272,419 babies, the second highest number of births in Australia's history, second only to 1971.

The Discussion Paper canvasses a wide range of issues, including:

- Whether midwives should be supported to play a greater role in birth and in postnatal care
- Opportunities for women to access a range of birth care options, including in public and private hospitals and at home
- Shortages of maternity professionals, especially in rural and remote areas
- The complex set of challenges facing the maternity workforce
- Transport for women in remote areas to access maternity services
- The high rate of caesarean sections in Australia compared to other countries
- Access to antenatal and postnatal services across the community, and
- Rising levels of postnatal depression

All Australian women should be able to access high quality, safe maternity services, from early pregnancy through to postnatal care.

The Discussion Paper is a critical part of developing a comprehensive review of maternity services in Australia.

The review is being led by the recently appointed Chief Nurse and Midwifery Officer, Ms Rosemary Bryant, and will identify the key gaps in current services, determine what is needed to deliver change, and help set national priorities. It will play a significant role in ensuring Government funding can be effectively targeted and comprehensive services provided.

As part of the development of the review, Ms Roxon has already met with a wide range of health professionals, individuals and organisations involved in maternity services.

The success of the review depends on community input, and the Government encourages all interested individuals and organisations to contribute.

Copies of the discussion paper can be found at
<http://www.health.gov.au/maternityservicesreview>

Submissions are due by Friday 31 October 2008, and can be made by emailing
maternity.services.review@health.gov.au or mailing

The Secretariat
Maternity Services Review
MDP 94, GPO Box 9848
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Media inquiries only – please contact Sean Kelly on 0417 108 362

Any other inquiries, please contact the Department on 02 6289 1664