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Minister for Health and Ageing

MEDIA RELEASE

30 June 2009

More GP and midwife training support means more choice for Australian mothers

From tomorrow, midwives and GPs, particularly those in rural and remote Australia, will get more support under a Rudd Government initiative to provide safe, quality maternity care to Australian women.

The Rudd Government is providing \$8 million over four years for two scholarship schemes:

- 110 eligible GPs to receive up to \$40,000 each for training to become GP obstetricians or GP anaesthetists.
- 20 midwives each year to receive two year scholarships of up to \$30,000 obtain the formal qualifications to provide Medicare-subsidised services and prescribe Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme subsidised medicines.

From today, eligible GPs who commence this training will be able to apply for the financial assistance. Midwife scholarships will become available for training commencing in the 2010 academic year.

It is part of the Government's \$120.5 million package of measures to improve choice and access to maternity services for pregnant women and new mothers in Australia, including recognising the important role played by qualified midwives in the birthing experience of many Australian women.

Women and their partners and families will benefit from improved access to a greater range of models of care, particularly in regional areas.

This proposal will also reduce the health inequalities and service gaps faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander mothers and babies and other disadvantaged populations.

The Government's commitment to a National Maternity Services Plan recognises the importance attached to maternity services by the over 270,000 Australian women who give birth each year, and their families.

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