

30 October 2017

Women's health specialists welcome focus on rural health

The National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (NASOG) has welcomed the appointment of Emeritus Professor Paul Worley as Australia's first Rural Health Commissioner.

Dr Gary Swift, President of NASOG - a professional body for women's health specialists - said the appointment of Professor Worley was a much-needed recognition of the unique challenges facing the delivery of health care in rural and regional Australia.

"Professor Worley has broad experience in rural health care and his commitment to improving policies and services for remote health consumers will go a long way in helping to address these challenges," Dr Swift said.

Dr Swift said NASOG would seek a meeting with Professor Worley to discuss a number of issues which needed to be addressed immediately.

"An area of particular concern is the future of services funded under the Rural Health Outreach Fund which facilitates the provision of specialist services by obstetricians and gynaecologists in rural and remote areas of the country.

"This funding means that women who need these services can access them in rural and remote areas with the obstetrician-gynaecologist able to travel to locations to treat them when quite clearly it is impractical for these women to access these services in any other way.

"There was a situation this year where contracts for services had lapsed and while a three-month extension had been granted there was no guarantee of continuity of service after those three months.

"It is essential that these services be maintained and expanded and I urge Professor Worley to address this issue as a matter of priority."

Dr Swift said NASOG also was concerned about appropriate funding for the provision of locum specialist services, which is a critical to the continuity of services, and the broader medical role specialists play in rural and remote areas where access to medical services is limited.

"Women in need of the services of an obstetrician-gynaecologist are being disadvantaged in rural and remote areas of Australia and we must, as a matter of urgency, find a solution to these long-standing issues.

"I look forward to meeting Professor Worley in the near future and working with him to address these and other matters which are impacting access to essential specialist services."

For all Media Inquiries, please contact NASOG CEO Caroline Khalil on 0400 101 109.

About NASOG: The National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (NASOG) is a not-for-profit professional association representing specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the leading providers of specialist women's health services. Australia is recognised as one of the safest countries in the world to give birth or to be born. NASOG strongly endorses our collaborative, proactive model of obstetric and midwifery care for all women giving birth in Australia. The safety of this model of care is confirmed by research from Australia and around the world.