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Mothers and babies, not dollars and cents, the focus in maternity care

Attacks on private maternity care ignore the basic right of mothers to choose the best care for themselves and their unborn child which is the real focus for all maternity care, according to the body representing obstetricians and gynaecologists.

National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (NASOG) President Dr Stephen Lane said he was outraged at recent attacks on medical specialists who make patient care their priority.

“This argument is forgetting about mothers and babies. This is not a discussion about cost; this needs to be about care. Where does the mother think her baby will get the best care? Where will she feel most comfortable giving birth? What support will she and her family need or want following delivery?” he said.

“To suggest health care professionals would put a child or mother at risk to get home by 5pm on a Friday is ridiculous and insulting. Obstetrics is a specialty where there is no start or finish time.

“All of these questions are personal, as they should be. This is about the safe delivery of babies, high-quality maternity care and happy families heading into the world confident in how they will care for their baby. And we know the better the experience overall, the better the outcome once a family is home.

“Most Australian doctors charge well below the Australian Medical Association fee for a private birth; around \$2000 in out-of-pocket costs is standard. It is unsurprising that the James Cook University study found an increase in fees over 25 years from 1992–2017 – a range of factors from improved technology through to CPI would account for cost increases. They are not comparing apples with apples.”

Dr Lane said the attacks this week on medical professionals were outrageous.

“We should not be spending our time on one-sided debates over public versus private care. We will not justify our roles as specialist obstetricians – no other specialty needs to.

“It is dangerous to link our great profession to intervention and medicalisation based purely on our specialty. It is a myth and causes harm and confusion to women. O&Gs choose this specialty path as there is no greater reward than caring for women and being part of their family’s journey. “

“We look after mums, and then we look after their daughters. Our members are proud to be O&Gs, as they should be.

“These are completely spurious claims, with no basis in fact, they are dangerous and irresponsible and will only confuse and upset women who only want the best for their baby. Everyone has the right to make an individual choice, and those choices should not be judged by anyone.

“Having a child is a life-changing moment in any parent’s life. As an obstetrician it is one of the great joys in life to share those moments with a family. To consider that women and their partners are being sent into a tailspin about the choice of where to have their baby because irresponsible people are saying it is unsafe or a ‘waste of money’ is distressing.

“Women have the right to choose what is right for themselves and their family, and they should continue to be supported to make those choices, not confused and condemned for it,” Dr Lane said.

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.

NASOG is Australia’s professional body for Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

