



National Association of
Specialist Obstetricians & Gynaecologists

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Australian Obstetricians Say New Study Showing High Home Birth Risks a Warning to Mothers-to-be and Midwives

Australia's peak group of specialist obstetricians and gynaecologists today urged midwives and pregnant women to heed the findings of a new Australian study that shows planned home births have a sevenfold higher risk of a baby dying during delivery and a 27-fold higher risk of a baby dying from asphyxia (lack of oxygen) than planned hospital births.

The President of the National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (NASOG), Dr Hilary Joyce said the study of home and hospital births in South Australia between 1991 and 2006, published in the latest edition of the *Medical Journal of Australia*, underscored the unnecessary dangers mothers-to-be (and their midwives) are exposed to when choosing to give birth away from the care of specialists in a hospital setting.

The findings also support the Federal Government's decision not to provide indemnity insurance and Medicare funding to midwives attending home births.

"A strong collaborative model of patient care with specialist doctors and midwives working together will ensure the safest outcome for Australian mothers and babies, and continue Australia's marvelous obstetric safety record," said Dr Joyce.

"One baby dying in labour is too many and this study confirms just how great the risk of having a birth outside a clinical setting can be. Many things can go wrong and they can go wrong quickly and without warning.

"As specialist doctors who believe in informed choice for families, we have long warned against fire brigade obstetrics. In so many cases, we see a mother and her baby in distress being rushed from a planned home birth to hospital. As this study shows, the outcome can be fatal and we believe, in many cases, such a tragedy can be avoided."

Dr Joyce recommended all politicians read the study conducted by Professor Marc Keirse, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynaecology at Flinders University in South Australia.

Dr Joyce said her organisation would continue to work closely with the Federal Government to deliver the optimal collaborative model of obstetric care to all Australian women.

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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 existing model of care is confirmed by research from Australia and around the world. www.nasog.com.au