



National Association of
Specialist Obstetricians & Gynaecologists

Media Release Tuesday August 18 2009

Please Put the Safety of Babies and their Mothers Ahead of Home Birth Ideology: Specialist Doctors

Australia's peak group of obstetricians and gynaecologists today repeated its warning that home births – with or without a midwife – carry too much risk to babies and their mothers and the Government should resist calls to indemnify midwives outside of hospitals.

The President of the National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (NASOG), Dr Hilary Joyce, congratulated the Government-majority Senate Committee investigating proposed legislation relating to the role of midwives, for putting the safety of babies ahead of protestations by a small but vocal minority of people.

“I would urge all politicians to look to the evidence and to speak to the doctors and the midwives who have to deal with some of the tragic consequences of home births,” Dr Joyce said today.

“Australia has one of the safest and highest quality maternity services in the world where specialist doctors work side by side with qualified midwives to ensure babies and their mothers have a safe and successful birth experience.”

Dr Joyce said she was determined to help drive change in the way public and private hospitals present their maternity services to encourage all expectant mothers to opt for a safe and positive outcome under the care of specialist doctors and midwives working together.

“There is irrefutable evidence that women and babies are significantly safer in hospitals because of the immediate access to specialist care. Thankfully, only 0.25% of Australian women risk their lives and that of their babies by choosing a home birth.”

Dr Joyce said the Minister for Health and Ageing was acting in the best interests of babies and their mothers by refusing to financially endorse the unsafe practice of delivering babies at home.

“There are things that can go wrong suddenly in a birth which, if not under specialist care or near medical assistance, can result in an avoidable death or permanent injury,” Dr Joyce explained.

Dr Joyce said rather than call for the Government to fund insurance for an unsafe practice, politicians and health professionals should ask for funding to be directed to educating women and their families about the risks of home births.”

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.

For all media inquiries, please contact:

Dr Hilary Joyce

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*NB: Dr Hilary may be treating patients so may not be able to answer directly

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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