



Mothers applaud ALP commitment to birth options

Victorian mothers welcomed today's announcement by the ALP promising women more options in birth care. Mothers and babies from Maternity Choices Australia, the birth care consumer representative group, attended the Brunswick announcement by Opposition leader Daniel Andrews.

Victorian Branch President of Maternity Choices Australia, Nicole Ford, said: "Community-based midwifery care should be an option available to every woman. Having a midwife who follows you through pregnancy, birth and your first weeks of parenting, who knows you and your family, is just so reassuring at a time which can be very challenging. This gives women the choice, control and continuity they want in a safe model that is fully supported by hospital services and doctors."

The ALP's announcement commits to re-starting the rollout of reforms introduced by the Commonwealth Government 4 years ago, but which have stalled at the state level.

Medicare rebates for private midwifery services and a full range of supporting provisions in were put in place in 2010. In return for this access to new Commonwealth funding, the states (including Victoria) committed to giving women the option of birthing in public hospitals with their own private midwife.

"We have all the pieces ready to give women this option, the Medicare money is available, the midwives are ready. What is needed is leadership from Government and our public hospitals, to finally put the pieces together and connect community care with hospital services".

"In Queensland, women are able to choose a private midwife for Medicare-rebated antenatal care, be admitted to a public hospital by their midwife for labour and birth care, and go home to home visits as needed. It's time this was an option for all Victorian women."

Giving women access to community-based midwifery care is not only safe, convenient and satisfying for women, it also saves public hospitals thousands of dollars per birth. Medicare, private health insurers and women pay for most of the care, reducing the strain on overloaded state health systems.

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