



31st March 2016

National Maternity Services Plan Version 2

Maternity Choices Australia is pleased to hear that the establishment of the next National Maternity Services Plan (NMSP V2) will be on the agenda at the next Council of Australian Governments (COAG) Health Council meeting planned for the 8th April 2016.

The original Plan was established in 2010, and expired on 30th June 2015. Without a renewal of the existing Plan or the establishment of a new Plan, the Australian State and Territory Governments will have no shared goal to work towards improving the quality and safety of Australian maternity services. The intention of the original Plan was to improve the quality of maternity services and increase access to continuity of care for all women of Australia.

Maternity Choices president, Leah Hardiman, is hopeful that the Federal Health Minister and all States and Territory Health Ministers will support the establishment and drive the implementation of the next Plan (NMSP V2). "The evidence has already been provided, women want continuity of care with a known care provider. Fragmented care does not deliver the quality and safety of the service that women need to improve health outcomes for themselves and their babies."

We would like to see Key Performance Indicators given to the States and Territories, setting incremental annual targets for increasing women's access to continuity of care over the life of the Plan. A National Advisory group or Standing Committee, including maternity consumer representatives, is required to oversee the implementation of the NMSP and will assure all women of Australia that our governments are committed to increasing access to respectful, high quality and safe maternity care.

Ms Hardiman adds, "We do believe we have the support of most Ministers, particularly the Federal Health Minister, the Hon. Sussan Ley MP and the Qld Health Minister, the Hon. Cameron Dick MP. We have seen a slight increase in women's access to continuity, particularly continuity of midwifery care, since the Plan's commencement in 2010, and we would like to see further commitment and coordinated action to achieve improvements in women's access to all models outlined in the original Plan."

Maternity Choices Australia expects to know the outcome via a communiqué within twelve hours of the completion of the COAG Health Council Meeting.

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