

6 September 2018

STATEMENT RE MIDWIFERY MODEL FOR RURAL MATERNITY SERVICES

Rural women have a right to feel confident they will be helped to safely deliver their newborn child into the world, regardless of where they live. Queensland women should also be able to have their babies as close to home as possible.

However, providing only midwifery-led services in rural and regional parts of the state places women and their babies at risk.

“World best practice is a collaborative approach with doctors and midwives working together,” said AMA Queensland President Dr Dilip Dhupelia.

“Women in labour deserve to have a collaborative doctor-led obstetric service in appropriate facilities that allow for management of emergencies when they arise, such as the need for a caesarean section. Midwives alone cannot deal with these situations.”

Dr Dhupelia said part of the solution lay with rural generalists, GPs who undertake a extra training to gain obstetric and anaesthetic qualifications that are fit for purpose for rural and remote Queensland.

Dr Bav Manoharan, Board Director of AMA Queensland and Executive member of the Queensland Council of Doctors in Training said ‘We have more than 70 doctors in the Queensland Rural Generalist Program every year – it’s the best program of its kind in the world, thanks to bipartisan support for many years, and recognises the unique discipline of practicing medicine in some of the most isolated parts of the state,’

“What we need now is for Hospital and Health Services to employ these rural generalists in rural and regional communities in larger numbers to sustain birthing services, and we need local councils and communities to do their part in providing incentives for them to stay, such as housing and sourcing employment for their spouses .” said Dr Manoharan.

Dr Dhupelia said the Queensland Flying Obstetrics and Gynaecology Service had been a world-leading service ifor many years, giving rural women access to specialist obstetrician in conjunction with local midwifery and theatre staff support.

“We believe that funding for this service has not kept up with the needs of these communities,” he said.

“AMA Queensland agrees that it is time to revisit rural maternity services to ensure safe, affordable and available healthcare for Queensland women and their families, but we need appropriate infrastructure and the right skilled workforce in place, as well as a collaborative working relationship with midwives.”

Dr Dhupelia said AMA Queensland has appointed a representative on the Rural Maternity Taskforce recently established by the Minister and looked forward to working collaboratively to arrive at sensible solutions for rural maternity services.

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