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MATERNITY SERVICES MUST BE OBSTETRIC-LED AND COLLABORATIVE

The AMA has made a submission to the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing on the proposed new National Maternity Services Strategy.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said today that the AMA is adamant that national maternity services must use a collaborative care model that is led by obstetricians or general practice obstetricians.

Dr Bartone said that best-practice maternity care in the 21st century is provided by a multi-disciplinary team of health professionals.

“Obstetricians are the leaders and, along with midwives, are the key carers, but the team also includes general practitioners, anaesthetists, psychiatrists, obstetric physicians, pathologists, haematologists, paediatricians, and nurses,” Dr Bartone said.

“Current evidence supports that this model of care – led by an obstetrician or GP obstetrician – is the safest for mothers and babies, and optimises a range of other health outcomes.

“Obstetrician-led or GP obstetrician-led care means that, at a minimum, there will be initial assessment by either an obstetrician or GP obstetrician, and assessment and regular review during labour.

“Models of care should not result in situations where obstetricians only become aware of a labour problem once it has become acute or serious.

“Women should be encouraged and supported to make their own choices about their maternity care.

“But they should be fully informed about the risks and benefits of each model as it relates to their own specific health situation, pregnancy, and circumstances, after assessment by an obstetrician or GP obstetrician.

“In many instances, GPs are the health professionals who start the conversation with women about having children.

“GPs are best placed to provide continuity of care for women before, during, and after their pregnancies.

“And GPs are especially important in providing whole of maternity care for women in rural and remote communities.”

Dr Bartone said that significant additional Federal Government funding will be needed to ensure safe, high-quality, and easily accessible maternity services across Australia.

The AMA used the following principles to assess the draft strategy:

- The primary objective of all maternity services should be healthy mothers and babies.

- Ideology and practitioner-specific agendas should not determine maternity policies and services.
- Policies and services should be evidence-based.
- Policies and services should consider the woman, her baby, and family.
- Funding should follow models of care which improve the health and survival of mothers and babies, are cost effective, and improve women's experiences.

The AMA submission is at <https://ama.com.au/submission/ama-submission-draft-strategic-directions-public-hospital-maternity-services>

29 November 2018

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