



**Media release
For immediate release**

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Health service seeks midwives for new model of care

Maryborough District Health Service (MDHS) is seeking Midwife Group Practice (MGP) midwives to join its maternity services team as it introduces a new model of maternity care to better meet the needs of local families based on input from the community.

MDHS is introducing a Midwifery Group Practice - Case load Model of Care to provide safe and sustainable maternity services with better outcomes for women and their babies at all stages of care.

Under the new model, a primary midwife will provide care for a women from pregnancy right through to the post-natal period. The midwife will be supported by a small team of midwives and a collaborative, multi-disciplinary healthcare team, including an obstetric consultant and GP obstetricians.

The model provides opportunities for more local women to have their pregnancy care with the service and to birth locally when clinically appropriate, with referral to higher level health service partners in Bendigo or Ballarat when needed.

“This is the great news for women and families living in the Central Goldfields and Pyrenees Shire,” said Nickola Allan, Chief Executive Officer, Maryborough District Health Service.

“Under the midwifery group practice model, every woman booked for pregnancy care at Maryborough District Health Service will be allocated a primary midwife.

“The midwife will provide care for her during pregnancy, will be on call for her labour and birth, and will coordinate and provide care in the hospital and community after her baby is born,” she said.

Evidence shows women experience better outcomes when midwives are the primary maternity care providers who work collaboratively with other providers to coordinate maternity care.

“This model of care is particularly important for rural families and vulnerable groups,” said Mrs Allan.

“Our region has a higher level of disadvantage, a higher than average Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander population, and higher rates of risk factors such as smoking and obesity which can impact on pregnancy and the health of the baby.

“The new Maryborough model provides a cultural and clinically safe model of care with clear patient safety standards, and is more sustainable than our current roster-based system,” she said.

The Maryborough MGP – Case load Model of Care was developed by a broad governance committee including representation from the Department of Health, the Australian Nursing & Midwifery Federation and Safer Care Victoria, which is the state's peak authority for quality and safety improvements in health care.

It was co-designed with midwives, GPs and obstetricians working locally and from across the region, based on feedback from consumer representatives and women who have birthed within the health service catchment area.

The model is expected to be introduced by the end of the year, following a recruitment drive to support the midwifery group practice and once a formal industrial process is completed.

"We are looking forward to welcoming a team of passionate midwives to be part of this important journey right from the start. The development of this model is the culmination of an extraordinary amount of work and I would like to thank everyone involved," said Mrs Allan.

"With ongoing input from the project governance committee and consumers, we are confident we have kept the focus on the needs of local families," she said.

The approach is supported by the Australian College of Midwives.

"Since the 1990's, more than half of Australia's rural women have not been able to give birth in their hometown due to the closure of their local maternity units and midwife shortages," said Kellie Wilton, Principal Midwifery Officer, Australian College of Midwives.

"This places undue strain on communities and families, with pregnant women forced to move their care to larger cities in unfamiliar surroundings.

"Continuity of midwifery care is the gold standard of maternity care in Australia, and the Australian College of Midwives believes that every woman in Australia should have access to the maternity care of her choice.

"Models, like the one proposed in Maryborough, ensure that rural pregnant women are no longer disadvantaged and birthing women are now able to access the support and care they need."

To find out more about the midwife career opportunities available at Maryborough District Health Service visit the careers page at www.mdhs.vic.gov.au. Applications for a range of midwife roles close on Sunday 26 September.

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