



## Perinatal report recommends more support for mothers

The Victorian Parliament's Family and Community Development Committee has recommended a Perinatal Mental Health Plan, increased breastfeeding support for Victorian women, and efforts to grow and sustain Victoria's perinatal workforce.

In its report tabled in Parliament today, the Committee has made 86 recommendations following a comprehensive inquiry that heard from people across Victoria, including mothers and health practitioners.

"While Victoria's perinatal mortality rate is currently the lowest adjusted rate in 16 years and is lower than the national average, there are still gains to be made," said Paul Edbrooke, Chair of the Committee.

"Throughout the inquiry, the voices of families, nurses, midwives, support groups and health professionals have reinforced over and over again that there are improvements that can be made to Victoria's perinatal services sector, particularly in the areas of mental health, regional access to services, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander perinatal mortality rates, and poor breastfeeding rates.

"The impact that the loss of Commonwealth funding (in particular, for the National Perinatal Depression Initiative) will have on Victorian hospitals and medical facilities as well as on the mental and emotional health and wellbeing of Victorian families was obvious, as was the invaluable positive contribution of community groups to this sector.

"Across the board, but especially in regional areas, the perinatal workforce includes a range of health practitioners who face major challenges, including but not exclusive to a shortage of midwives and nurses, population growth, and workplace stress."

Some of the Committee's recommendations include:

- Ongoing funding to support the work of regional perinatal mortality and morbidity committees
- A review of discharge policies in public hospitals to ensure women receive postnatal support
- Expansion of models of perinatal care that provide positive outcomes for women and babies
- Establishment of day stay lactation clinics across the public health system
- A Perinatal Mental Health Plan to complement Victoria's 10-year mental health plan
- Ongoing funding for Perinatal Emotional Health Programs
- Increased training opportunities for rural and regional perinatal health practitioners
- Strategies to build the perinatal workforce
- Improved communication between hospitals and the Maternal and Child Health Service

- Expansion of Koori Maternity Service programs and funding
- Measures to ensure an interpreter is used for every woman who needs one.

“The Committee is keen to see its recommendations implemented to improve perinatal care for Victorian women, babies, and families,” Mr Edbrooke said.

The report is available from the Committee’s [website](#).

#### **Media queries**

For media comment contact Paul Edbrooke MP on (03) 9783 9822.

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