

**13 August 2018**

**STATEMENT RE RURAL MATERNITY SERVICES**

Expectant parents have a right to feel confident that whether they rely on the public or private health system, they will be helped to safely deliver their newborn child into the world. Queensland women should also be able to have their babies as close to home as possible.

However, the closure of regional and rural maternity services, in Queensland and around the country, is the result of several ongoing challenges including the difficulty attracting doctors, with obstetric and anaesthetic skills and midwives to work in smaller centres.

The Flying Obstetrics and Gynaecology Service was a world-leading service in giving rural women access to specialist obstetrician and midwifery support. Over the years, funding for this service has not kept up with the needs of these communities. It provides a mantle of safety for rural communities.

It is time to revisit the rural maternity services and make sure they remain safe, affordable and available to women and their families.

Part of the solution is to increase resourcing to the Queensland Rural Generalist Program, and similar programs, which recognise the unique discipline of practicing medicine in some of the most isolated parts of the state. Doctors can enter the program at various stages of their career and can specialise in anaesthetics, obstetrics and emergency care.

Having doctors with these advanced skills working in smaller centres also enhances the full suite of health services locally.

Any solution to rural delivery services access must include input from all the parties involved. AMA Queensland, the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland, the Royal Australian and New Zealand Colleges of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, General Practitioners, the College of Midwives and the health insurers all need to work closely with Queensland Health to achieve a workable solution and ensure that rural women can continue to access these important health services.

**ENDS**