

Culture shift crucial to addressing Queensland maternity crisis

The Rural Doctors Association of Queensland (RDAQ) has reaffirmed its stance on the need for a cultural shift to collaborative models of care to address Queensland's ongoing maternity crisis.

It follows the release of Queensland Health documents via the Freedom of Information Act earlier this week which reportedly revealed the extent of the problem, particularly in communities in northern Queensland.

RDAQ President Dr Alex Dunn said it was not surprising they highlighted workforce issues including fatigue, unsustainable on-call burdens, a lack of obstetric staff or midwifery coverage as factors contributing to units being put on bypass.

"It's clear the model of care we have now isn't working for many rural and remote Queenslanders," Dr Dunn said.

"Training, then attracting and retaining skilled General Practitioner Obstetricians (GPO) to live and work rurally is crucial to ensuring rural women are supported to birth as close to home as possible," he said.

"We know, whatever additional training and incentives are provided for the GPO workforce, the most decisive factor is the culture of the models and health services they work within.

"It's critical the government prioritise and place significant value on collaborative models of care where midwives and rural generalists work in collaboration, in a woman-centred way, and where women have choice and continuity of care and carer."

As the state's leading advocacy voice for rural doctors and communities, RDAQ is calling for:

- a cultural shift to collaborative care models
- better training for General Practitioner Obstetricians (GPOs)
- ongoing skill maintenance initiatives, including a 'skills swap' where Regional GPOs are involved in rural training and backfill rural GPOs undertaking skills maintenance.

RDAQ has long been a staunch advocate for improvement of maternity services in rural and remote Queensland. Its policies come from a background of extensive front-line experience with each of its previous four presidents being Rural Generalist Obstetricians (RGOs).

Immediate Past-President, Goondiwindi-based RGO Dr Matt Masel said it was encouraging Queensland Health had created a new position of Chief Midwife Officer which would have an important role in building models of care.

"They say it takes a village to raise a child, well, it also takes a team to bring a baby into the world in a safe, and supported way," Dr Masel said.

"Doctors, midwives, nurses, allied health, Indigenous services, and all involved in maternity care must work together to provide the type of care each mother wants, needs, and has a right to expect.

"RDAQ is committed to working collaboratively towards achieving just that."

In March this year RDAQ released its Maternity Policy Position detailing its key principles to ensuring safe and equitable care for rural women.

View RDAQ Maternity Policy Position [HERE](#).