



National Association of  
Specialist Obstetricians & Gynaecologists

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## **Government needs to now look at restoring Medicare safety net for pregnant women after double hit: National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists**

More expectant mothers will be tipped out of the private health system and into overcrowded public hospital beds, once a measure to means test Private Health Insurance becomes law, warns specialist obstetricians and gynaecologists.

The President of the National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (NASOG), Dr Andrew Foote warned there was already growing evidence that, since the Government dramatically cut the Extended Medicare Safety Net for Obstetrics in the 2009/10 Budget, more pregnant women were being forced onto the public health system where there may be less continuity of care with more junior doctors.

Means testing Private Health insurance will exacerbate the situation for mothers-to-be and their families, who now face a double financial whammy. Further, Dr Foote says these expectant mothers, who once were in private maternity units under the care of specialists, are now in public beds earmarked for elective surgery patients – exacerbating the waiting lists in public hospitals.

“We have seen a significant shift (7%-20%) of pregnant women moving to public hospitals since Government cut the obstetrics rebate from 80% to 20% of their out-of-pocket expenses,” Dr Foote says.

Dr Foote says that whilst he appreciates the pressure on the health budget, the Government must move to restore the Extended Medicare Safety Net for Obstetrics to cover the average out of pocket costs faced by women wanting to be cared for by their own specialist.

“We are not asking for the Medicare Safety Net rebate to be restored fully, nor do we want the most expensive specialists to be covered. We believe the just thing for families is to have the average out-of-pocket expenses (about \$2,000) for a pregnant patient and her baby covered by the Government.

“We know the new Minister for Health understands the desire of women to seek the best of obstetric care for themselves and their babies.

We look forward to working with Minister Plibersek to ensure all women and their families have affordable access to high quality obstetric care regardless of where they live or what their socio economic background is,” says Dr Foote. ENDS

**For all Media Inquiries, please contact:**

**Dr Andrew Foote President of NASOG 0417 675 212**

*(NB: Dr Foote is a working obstetrician and may be with a patient at the time of your call)*

**About NASOG:** The **National Association of Specialist Obstetricians and Gynaecologists** (NASOG) is a not for profit professional association representing specialist obstetricians and gynaecologists, the leading providers of specialist women’s health services. Australia is recognised as one of the safest countries in the world to give birth or to be born. **NASOG** strongly endorses our **collaborative, proactive model of obstetric and midwifery care** for all women giving birth in Australia. The safety of this existing model of care is confirmed by research from Australia and around the world. [www.nasog.com.au](http://www.nasog.com.au)