



Right Birth - Your Choice

Who provides maternity care in Australia?

Maternity care is provided by number of health professional, in a variety of public and private settings, including at home, clinics in the community, standalone birth centres, birth centres attached to hospitals, and in hospital clinics and delivery suites / labour wards.

The primary providers in Australia are:

Midwife - is a person who has successfully completed a midwifery education programme that is based on the International Confederation of Midwives (ICM) Essential Competencies for Basic Midwifery Practice and the framework of the ICM Global Standards for Midwifery Education; who has acquired the requisite qualifications to be registered and/or legally licensed to practice midwifery and use the title 'midwife'; and who demonstrates competency in the practice of midwifery.

Midwives are experts in normal, healthy pregnancy and birth. They are also skilled at recognising any problems and at involving doctors and other health professionals in a woman's care if the need arises. Countries with low caesarean section rates and excellent maternal and perinatal outcomes are consistently rated as the best places in the world to be a mother and in all of these places *midwives* are the main providers of care, (WHO, 2015).

Midwifery continuity of care is care from a known midwife. Women have the same midwife caring for them throughout pregnancy, labour, and birth, and following birth, with the midwife involving other care providers if they are needed. This model of care is for up to six weeks after the birth and can be longer.

Midwives work in collaboration with obstetricians if complications occur.

General Practitioners – provide a shared care model where the GP provides pregnancy care, and labour and birth care is provided by hospital midwives and doctor, though some GPs may oversee labour care and be there for the birth. The GP remains in contact with the mother and baby, providing care for the family after the birth. GPs work in collaboration with obstetricians if complications occur.

Obstetrician - is a doctor who specialises in pregnancy and birth and is trained to intervene when pregnancy does not progress as expected and who has who has successfully completed an education programme and who has acquired the requisite qualifications to be registered and/or legally licensed to practice obstetrics; and who demonstrates competency in the practice of obstetrics. An obstetrician provides or oversees pregnancy care. Labour is monitored by midwives with the obstetrician usually attending the birth itself. They provide very limited or no care to you once home and will see you approximately six weeks after birth for a postnatal check.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner - is a nationally registered health profession under the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner Board of Australia (ATSIHPBA).



An Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioner is a primary health care professional providing high-quality, culturally-safe, clinical care services to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and communities.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Practitioners are independent practitioners who work alongside and collaboratively with other clinicians including doctors, nurses, midwives, allied health and oral health practitioners in a range of settings.

They may have a broad individual clinical scope of practice or work in a more specialised role, depending on a range of factors including the individual's qualification and competence, practice location, practice setting, level of supervision, and community need. They can assess, diagnose, treat, educate, and use scheduled medicines depending on their approved individual scope of practice outlined in a practice plan.

Other health professionals who may be involved:

- *Dietician* - an allied health professional who applies the science of food and nutrition to promote health, prevent and treat disease to optimise health.
- *Endocrinologist* - a registered medical practitioner qualified to diagnose and treat disorders of the endocrine system
- *Enrolled Nurse* – a person who is on the register maintained by the Nursing Midwifery Board, who works under supervision of a registered nurse demonstrates competence in the provision of person-centred care.
- *Genetic Counsellor* - a person who provides information on the inheritance of illnesses and their recurrence risks; explores the concerns of consumers and supports consumers dealing with these illnesses.
- *Registered Nurse* – a person who is on the register maintained by the Nursing Midwifery Board. Registered nurses may have their practice certificate endorsed to practise in a specific clinical area on completion of a recognised postgraduate course.
- *Nutritionist* - provides a range of nutrition services related to nutrition, public health nutrition, policy and research, and community health. It's important to note that the term 'nutritionist' is not regulated. Therefore, this title may be used by dietitians, nutrition scientists and nutrition graduates – and also those with very limited qualifications in nutrition.
- *Paediatrician* - a registered medical practitioner who specialises in treating sick children.
- *Psychologist* - A registered clinical psychologist is a psychologist who is an expert in mental health. They have undertaken highly specialised training in the assessment, diagnosis, formulation, and psychological treatment of mental health, behavioural, and emotional disorders across the lifespan.
- *Social worker* - an allied health professional who works with individuals maintaining a dual focus on both assisting with and improving wellbeing, identifying and addressing any issues that may impact on wellbeing. Social workers in maternity care may provide casework, counselling and advocacy.
- *Sonographer* – an allied health professional who operates an ultrasound machine to perform diagnostic medical sonographic examinations.



Community workers who may be involved:

- *Counsellor* - A counsellor is a person who can help you overcome difficulties in your life and make the changes you want to make. Counsellors in Australia do not need any special qualifications or training, though most do have qualifications and training. The term 'counsellor' is not regulated. Therefore, this title may be used by those with very limited qualifications. It is a good idea to check if the counsellor is registered with a professional body like the Australian Register of Counsellors and Psychotherapists.
- *Doula* – a person who provides non-clinical support during pregnancy. It is important to note that doulas are not able to provide clinical care. The term 'doula' is not regulated. Therefore, this title may be used by those with very limited qualifications. The highest doula qualification is a Certificate IV in Doula Support Services.

All the people providing you maternity care are required to provide respectful maternity care and ideally work together to support you during pregnancy, birth and transitioning to parenting.

References

Australian Government, 2021, Health Direct – [Allied Health Professionals](#)

Australian Government, 2021, Health Direct, [What is a counsellor?](#)

Australian Government; 2021, The Department of Education, Skills and Employment; [Accredited course details - 10564NAT - Certificate IV in Doula Support Services](#)

[Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency](#) works with health professional boards to help protect the public by regulating Australia's registered health practitioners

Council of Australian Governments, Health Council (2019), [Woman-centred care: Strategic directions for Australian maternity services](#)

[International Confederation of Midwives](#)

[The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics](#)

Australian Government; 2021, The Department of Education, Skills and Employment; [Accredited course details - 10564NAT - Certificate IV in Doula Support Services](#)

Sandall J, Soltani H, Gates S, Shennan A, Devane D; 2016; [Midwife-led continuity models of care compared with other models of care for women during pregnancy, birth and early parenting](#)

World Health Organisation, 2015, [Quality of care for every pregnant woman;](#)