

Media Release

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Holistic midwifery in north east Victoria

Pregnant women in the Wangaratta region of north east Victoria have access to an innovative midwifery service, the Community Midwife Program, which offers comprehensive antenatal and postnatal care.

The program is hosted by Northeast Health Wangaratta, a regional referral hospital with a catchment population of 70,000 people. Since its inception in 1999, the Community Midwife Program has facilitated 120 births per year. Women entering the program are assigned to one of five midwives who manage antenatal classes, testing, referrals and other routine assessments.

Women travel up to 150km to participate in the program and their needs are accommodated in the program structure and facilities. “The Team recognises that those travelling need to arrive in Wangaratta early in labour, the birthing rooms are homelike and accommodate partners and other family members as desired,” said Chris Giles, Director of Nursing at Northeast Health Wangaratta.

The program has been enthusiastically received by the greater Wangaratta community. Over 80% of women involved in the program rated their level of care during labour as excellent.

“The Community Midwife Program promotes greater choice in birthing for women,” said Chris Giles. “It acknowledges that pregnancy and birth are in the majority of cases, normal life events requiring minimal medical intervention and it supports women’s decision making about health care,” added Chris Giles.

Chris Giles will present a paper on the Community Midwife Program at the 7th National Rural Health Conference, which will be held at the Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart from March 1-4, 2003. The paper will be presented at 11:40am on Monday March 3 in the Ballroom South meeting room.

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7th National Rural Health Conference, 1 – 4 March 2003, Hotel Grand Chancellor, Hobart
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