

Key Issues Brief

2.09 Maternity and Birthing on Norfolk Island

Key Issues

- Since the Australian Government became responsible for health services on Norfolk Island in July 2016, some community members have continually advocated for birthing services to resume on the Island.
- Norfolk Island birthing services ceased in 2013 with the retirement of the former GP/surgeon/obstetrician and unsuccessful recruitment activities.
- Significant changes over the past decade have affected the GP obstetric workforce, including rising indemnity costs and high-profile litigation cases. To retain an obstetric specialty, a minimum of 100 births per year must be completed.
- As with other rural and remote areas in Australia, expectant mothers travel to major metropolitan areas that can provide safer maternity services to mothers and babies.
- To assist with travel to the mainland, the Australian Government funds the Norfolk Island Patients' Travel Accommodation and Assistance Scheme (NIPTAAS), which funds flights and subsidised accommodation for expectant mothers travelling to the mainland.
- Prior to the introduction of NIPTAAS in July 2016, women travelling to the mainland for birth were required to meet the cost of travel, accommodation and other expenses personally.
- Women on Norfolk Island retain access to prenatal and antenatal care through their GPs and a midwife employed by the Norfolk Island Health and Residential Aged Care Service (NIHRACS).
- NIHRACS is not expected to have the facilities or specialised staff, including an on-call anaesthetist, to facilitate birthing now or into the future.

Sensitivities: Nil

Attachments: Nil

