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Roxon's new insurance scheme starts today: Pregnant women winners

Pregnant women's ability to choose a known midwife to provide their care in the community as well as in hospitals is one step closer to being a reality with the launch today of the new insurance policy for midwives by federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon under a Commonwealth Government Insurance scheme for midwives.

Midwife Tina Pettigrew from Geelong, Victoria, is one of many midwives who is excited about this new policy becoming available.

"This is a major step forward," Pettigrew said. "To be able to look after a woman throughout her pregnancy, follow her into the hospital to have her baby and follow her home again afterwards to help her settle into being a new mother is what I've always wanted to do. Now I can do all this with full indemnity cover"

The Commonwealth's insurance scheme involves a contract with an insurer, Medical Insurance Group of Australia (MIGA), who from today is providing the policies to midwives. The insurer will cover claims up to \$100,000. The Commonwealth will pay for 80 cents in the dollar for claims above \$100,000 and less than \$2 million and for all of any claim above \$2million. The policies will cover pregnancy and postnatal care in the community, and labour and birth care in a clinical setting.

"On behalf of all midwives, I wish to thank the Health Minister Nicola Roxon for resolving the long running lack of professional indemnity insurance for midwives" said Associate Professor Hannah Dahlen, of the Australian College of Midwives. "The College also welcomes MIGA's interest in providing this cover".

The provision of insurance cover for private midwives is one of the necessary precursors to midwives gaining access to Medicare funding for their care from 1 November this year.

Medicare funded midwives will be able to work in practices in the community, with other midwives, with doctors and with allied health professionals as well as in hospitals to offer more women the choice of having one-to-one care from a known midwife throughout their pregnancy, labour, birth and early parenting.

"We know that women and their babies experience measurable benefits from one-to one care from a midwife," Professor Dahlen said. "But midwives can't take up this historic opportunity to provide Medicare services without professional indemnity insurance, which has not been available since 2002. That's why we're excited about the Federal Government's moves to make indemnity accessible again"

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