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Roxon's new insurance scheme welcome gift on Midwives Day

“Health Minister Nicola Roxon is to be commended today, on the International Day of the Midwife, for resolving the long running lack of professional indemnity insurance for midwives” said Associate Professor Jenny Gamble President of the Australian College of Midwives.

From 1 November 2010, midwives will be able to provide Medicare funded care to women in the community and in hospitals, thanks to major reforms legislated by the Rudd government in March 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,” Gamble 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”

The Commonwealth's insurance scheme involves a contract with an insurer who will provide the policies to midwives. The insurer covering claims up to \$100,000, the Commonwealth will pay for 80 cents in the dollar for claims above \$100,000 and up to \$2million and the Commonwealth paying all of any claims above \$2million. The policies will cover pregnancy and postnatal care in the community, and labour and birth care in a clinical setting.

ACM regrets that the policy will not include cover for midwives providing professional care to women who choose to labour and give birth at home. An exemption from the requirement to hold indemnity has been agreed by Ministers responsible for the national registration scheme. This will allow midwives to continue providing care for planned homebirth for the next 2 years, but ultimately a permanent solution will need to be found.

“The Australian College of Midwives welcomes Medical Insurance Group Australia's interest in offering midwives professional indemnity policies and look forward to assisting with letting midwives know how to contact the insurer” Gamble said.

Media contact:	Jenny Gamble, President	0404 080 518
	Hannah Dahlen, Vice President	0407 643 943
	Barb Vernon, CEO	0438 855 529