



# They fiddle, Rome burns

It is disappointing that Nigel Lyons thinks that there needs to be "creative and innovative" methods employed to enable safe and sustainable maternity services in rural areas ("Rural mums and babies" *Herald* 19/10).

Mr Lyons could look at the midwifery workforce. Midwives are educated and registered to care for the majority of pregnant women for their entire pregnancy, birth and post-natal care.

At present 99 per cent of Australia's midwives are

prevented from working to capacity, because of the vested interests of medical lobby groups.

Midwifery clinics in the Upper Hunter could return a safe, sustainable option to many women. Health bureaucrats – to the benefit of medical lobby groups – continue to resist the establishment of midwifery care.

Perhaps Mr Lyons should educate Hunter New England Health CEO, Terry Clout, who has recently advised the NSW Health Minister John Hatzistergos that

there are no plans for a midwifery model in Muswellbrook.

This is despite evidence that many women are not receiving basic pregnancy care and babies are not receiving important health checks.

Women in outlying areas like Merriwa have been without a local service for 15 years.

**Justine Caines  
Merriwa  
October 20**