



ACM MEDIA RELEASE International Day of the Midwife 5th May 2010

“The world needs midwives now more than ever” say the International Confederation of Midwives, WHO, UNFPA, UNICEF and the World Bank and now Save the Children

350,000 more midwives needed to achieve Millennium Development Goals 4, 5 and 6 by 2015

While Australia has moved to second place in the Mother’s Index, according to **Save the Children’s** 11th annual **State of the World’s Mothers** report released 4th May, it has slipped further into the bottom half of developed countries on the Children’s Index with a ranking of 28 out of 43. “We have more work to do and we need more midwives to do it with,” says Associate Professor Hannah Dahlen, Vice President and National Media Spokesperson for the Australian College of Midwives. “Australia needs around 2000 more midwives to meet the needs of women and their babies.”

“On Wednesday the 5th of May, midwives will be celebrating International Day of the Midwife and reminding everyone of the important and unique role that midwives play,” Dahlen said.

“This day offers us an opportunity as a society to celebrate midwives. This year women and midwives will welcome in a new era in maternity reform. From November 2010, for the first time in Australian history, women will be able to choose their own midwife for pregnancy, birth in hospital and for the postnatal period; and to access Medicare rebates for care from the midwife of their choice.” This follows historic legislative reform by federal Health Minister Nicola Roxon to give midwives access to the Medicare Benefits Schedule and the PBS.

Scientific evidence demonstrates that when women with normal pregnancies receive continuity of care from known midwives they are better supported, more satisfied with their care, require fewer epidurals and episiotomies, have more normal births and fewer babies dying under 24 weeks, being underweight or needing resuscitation or admission to a neonatal intensive care unit <http://www2.cochrane.org/reviews/es/ab004667.html>

Australian midwife Marg Phelan cycles around Australia for midwives, women, normal birth and breastfeeding.

Marg Phelan, a mother and midwife from the Northern Territory, feels so passionate about women’s right to access midwives that she is cycling around Australia to spread the word that women have the right to choose where and with whom they give birth and to be properly supported in these choices. Marg Phelan says, “we believe that every Australian woman is entitled to continuity of midwifery care and good support to help achieve a normal birth and be able to enjoy breastfeeding. Far too many women are not well informed about their options in pregnancy, childbirth and early parenting.”

Marg Phelan will be in Kununnara for International Midwives Day and will celebrate with local midwives and women. Money raised will go towards the Rhondanthe Lispett Trust, a scholarship fund developed by the Australian College of Midwives to raise money to help Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island women to study to become midwives. Indigenous women and babies are much more likely die during and after pregnancy. Other countries have achieved major improvements in outcomes for indigenous women and babies when they are cared for by indigenous midwives.

Maternity Coalition’s National President and mother of four, Lisa Metcalfe, says “improved access to continuity, which allows a woman to develop a relationship of mutual trust, respect and understanding with her midwife, is a substantial step forward.”

On the 5th of May remember International Midwives Day!

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Mar Phelan website <http://gogirlaustralia.net.au/>; Save the Children Report www.savethechildren.org.au