



SOUTH AUSTRALIA

**AUSTRALIAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION  
(SOUTH AUSTRALIA) INC**

Postal: PO Box 134 North Adelaide SA 5006  
First Floor Newland House 80 Brougham Place North Adelaide SA 5006  
Phone: (08) 8267 4355 Fax: (08) 8267 5349  
Email: [admin@amasa.org.au](mailto:admin@amasa.org.au) Web site: [www.amasa.org.au](http://www.amasa.org.au)

**Home birthing:  
not an option any expectant mother should consider**

AMA(SA) President Dr Andrew Lavender today said that planned home birthing is not an option any expectant mother should consider.

Dr Lavender was responding to increased public advocacy for home birthing, particularly in the light of concerns raised by some midwives that they will be unable to get insurance to practice homebirths under the new national registration scheme for health practitioners.

'Home birthing may appear to be an emotionally fulfilling option, but history has revealed it as clearly more dangerous for babies and mothers than birth in a hospital.'

'Current advocacy for home birthing fails to mention that even in highly selected cases – where the birth weight of the baby exceeds 2,500 grams and pregnancy exceeds 37 weeks – the mortality rate for babies is double that achieved in hospital.'

'It's impossible to predict or safely manage birth complications such as an impacted shoulder, impaired oxygen supply to the baby, or massive haemorrhage in the home. The safest place to be is in a hospital.'

'People must realise that when things go wrong, they can go very wrong - and wrong very quickly. Doctors cannot always rescue mothers and their babies from emergency situations when retrieval from home has cost valuable and potentially life-saving minutes.'

'It is bad for a mother and her baby as well, as the doctor and other health professionals, to be thrust into a complex emergency situation where there is no prior relationship and medical history, and where the medical team is fighting to prevent a bad outcome getting worse. It is traumatic for everyone.'

'Infant mortality in SA halved between 1986 and 2006. This is because of better participation in ante-natal care, with screening processes, of advances in maternal medical care and improved monitoring and management of birthing in hospitals – not because home birthing was promoted as an option. We must not be complacent about this.'

'Home birthing is a dangerous choice, which pays no regard to the rights of the unborn child to a safe and healthy birth with the best care available' Dr Lavender said.

**8 July 2009**

**Contact:** Dr Andrew Lavender (08) 8267 4355