

MEDIA RELEASE

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COMPARITIVE CAESAREAN TRENDS FOR ECHUCA REGIONAL HEALTH

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The Victorian Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity publishes an annual *Hospital Profile of Maternal and Perinatal Data*. The 2006 report released in November 2007 shows that the obstetric care delivered at Echuca Regional Health is comparable to the rest of Victoria and mothers and babies are in good hands. The data shows that the rate for elective Caesareans was identical to the state average at 13.5%. In 2006, 92.4% of elective caesarean sections were undertaken for medical reasons, rather than choice, with 69% of those being due to a previous caesarean.

The rate of Caesarean section at Echuca for 2006 for all births (elective and emergency) is just above the Victorian state average at 28.9% compared to 27.7% for all public hospitals. This is a good result as the generally accepted view is that a rural facility such as Echuca where GP obstetricians deliver all babies would normally be expected to have a higher Caesarean rate than average. This provides less risk for both mother and baby than attempting a difficult vaginal birth such as with forceps which is best left to specialists who regularly perform such procedures.

A high percentage of all caesareans (26.7%) were for Cephalopelvic disproportion (CPD) where the head of the baby will not pass through the outlet from the mother's pelvis and other causes of failure to progress or obstructed labour. This is also the greatest reason for emergency caesareans, with 47.9% being for these difficulties.

In terms of trends, over the past 6 years to 2006, the rate of Caesarean sections performed in Echuca remained closely in line with the state average, with only one peak in 2004 where it peaked 3.5% above the average. This correlates with the elective Caesarean data, where peaks in 2003 and 2004 saw Echuca Regional Health shift above the state average by 3.3% and 3.5% respectively. Overall, there has been an upward trend in Caesareans from an average for all public hospitals of 22.9% in 2001 to 27.7% in 2006. The rate at Echuca Regional Health has remained closely tied to the state average.

Private hospitals, as would be expected, maintain a much higher rate of elective Caesareans, at around 8% higher than the public hospital average. Private hospitals also have a much higher percentage of elective caesareans for other medical or non medical reasons at 14.1%).

[All data derived from the *Department of Human Services' Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity "Hospital Profile of Maternal and Perinatal Data – Echuca Regional Health Service 2006"*].