

Freebirth

OFFICIAL

A freebirth is when a woman makes a conscious decision to give birth without the support of a registered health professional, such as a midwife or doctor registered with the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

This differs from a planned homebirth, where a woman's health and pregnancy have been assessed by trained AHPRA registered professionals, who use clinical evidence to guide their recommendations and care.^{1,2}

Birth attendants and doulas can provide valuable emotional and physical support during pregnancy and birth. However, they are not registered health professionals and are not trained to offer clinical advice or care, nor can they respond to medical emergencies if complications arise.

Safer Care Victoria (SCV) and the Consultative Council on Obstetric and Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity (CCOPMM) respect every woman's right to choose her preferred model of maternity care and place of birth. We also acknowledge that the decision to freebirth can be influenced by a range of complex and deeply personal factors, including past experiences, cultural considerations, access to healthcare and financial or logistical challenges.³⁻⁷

At the same time, we recognise that freebirth can carry risks, including potential complications during labour and birth, that may require urgent medical care. In recent years, there has been an increase in freebirths in Victoria and unfortunately, some have resulted in poor outcomes for mothers and babies, such as severe bleeding in the mother or breathing problems in the baby leading to long term health issues or even death.

SCV and CCOPMM strongly encourage women and families to seek care from trained AHPRA registered professionals, who can provide medical support when needed, helping to ensure the safest possible outcomes for mother and baby.

For more information on maternity services and birthing in Victoria, visit <https://www.vic.gov.au/having-a-baby> or contact your nearest public or private maternity care provider.

This statement uses the terms 'woman', 'her' and 'mother' which is intended to be inclusive of anyone who may use other self-identifying terms and aims to encompass all for whom this statement is relevant.



Louise McKinlay
Chief Executive Officer Safer Care Victoria
Chief Quality and Safety Officer Victoria



Professor Mark Umstad
Chair Consultative Council on Obstetric &
Paediatric Mortality and Morbidity

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