

“Push for births at home”

By JOE SPAGNOLO

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MORE WA women should have their babies at home without medical or surgical intervention, Health Minister Jim McGinty says. They should consider home births as an option to having their babies in hospitals.

Mr McGinty foreshadowed spending more to boost midwifery services in WA and build family birthing centres.

Releasing a draft maternity care policy, Mr McGinty said too many women opted for hospital births. He denied trying to save the WA health system money by having pregnant women give birth at home, but wanted to challenge views that mothers should only have babies in hospitals.

“We (State Government) currently fund only 150 home births a year. I want to see that expanded,” Mr McGinty said. “In England and Europe (home births) are commonplace. It’s only here in Australia that we have almost an obsession with a medical intervention model when it comes to childbirth.

Child birth is not an illness. For most women, it should be a natural experience. For some who have complications hospitals are fine. Those women need high technology medical intervention to deliver their babies, but for most women childbirth should be a natural experience.”

He said WA had high rates of medical intervention.

WA's midwifery program last year was funded for 150 home births, but there had been a demand for many more, manager Karen Krute said.

Jennifer Fenwick, associate professor of midwifery at Curtin University, said surgical births in WA, such as caesareans, were used inappropriately. “Women are using things that they don't need to, like epidurals and ultrasounds,” she said. “Normal, healthy women are having three ultrasounds during their pregnancies, that's crazy.”

Copies of the policy can be seen at www.healthnetworks.health.wa.gov.au/maternitycare. Public submissions close on August 3.