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## **National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan Heralds a Real Change in Stillbirth Research and Bereavement Care in Australia**

Australia's leading stillbirth research centre has welcomed a new national plan setting out a roadmap to reduce the rate of stillbirth in Australia.

Today's launch of the National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan marks the first Australia-wide plan to strategically address the issue of stillbirth.

Professor Vicki Flenady, Director of the Centre of Research Excellence in Stillbirth (Stillbirth CRE), said the plan was a monumental step forward in the fight to end preventable stillbirth in Australia.

"The National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan is a significant milestone in our battle to save the lives of the six babies lost each and every day to stillbirth in this country," Professor Flenady said.

"It is the culmination of years of work by researchers, advocates and parents committed to stillbirth prevention. We thank the Australian Government and the Parliament for a bipartisan commitment to advancing this important, life-saving work," she said.

More than 2000 babies are stillborn every year in Australia; a rate that has changed little in two decades. This is despite research indicating up to 30 per cent of stillbirths could be avoided with the provision of better care.

The Stillbirth CRE, which leads a cohesive national program of research and implementation, has welcomed the overarching goal of the National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan, to reduce the rate of stillbirth in Australia by 20% within five years, and to ensure that, when stillbirth occurs, families receive respectful and supportive bereavement care.

Professor Flenady said the Federal Government's adoption of the plan heralded a real change in prioritising stillbirth at a national level.

"For too long, stillbirth has been approached as a personal tragedy, rather than a public health issue. As a result, funding into research and community awareness campaigns has been lacking" Professor Flenady said.

"The National Stillbirth Action and Implementation Plan highlights a clear shift from silence to action in Australia by delivering a roadmap to reduce stillbirth rates across the country, and particularly among communities most at risk of experiencing a stillbirth," she said.

The plan's five key priority areas, with recommended actions for the short, medium and long-term, are:

1. Ensuring high quality stillbirth prevention and care
2. Raising awareness and strengthening education
3. Improving holistic bereavement care and community support following stillbirth

4. Improving stillbirth reporting and data collection
5. Prioritising stillbirth research

Other significant issues raised in the report include a roadmap for decreasing inequities in stillbirth rates in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander, migrant, and rural and remote communities through culturally appropriate interventions and preventative care.

Improvements in the investigation and reporting of stillbirth, and the need for further stillbirth research, including the establishment of a national placental biobank, are also listed as priorities in the plan.

The Stillbirth Foundation funds research into prevention and education of stillbirth in Australia.

Stillbirth Foundation CEO Leigh Brezler said she was pleased the plan went beyond stillbirth education and research to include provisions for bereavement care and support for families.

“Stillbirth is extremely traumatic and carries significant personal, social and financial consequences for impacted families,” Ms Brezler said. “That is why we are pleased to see high-quality bereavement care and support for families who experience stillbirth included in the plan, as well as improving care in subsequent pregnancies for women who have experienced stillbirth.”

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