

‘See, Stop, Scan’ key to ensuring best pregnancy outcomes for First Nations mums and bubs

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Pregnancy outcomes for First Nations mothers and their babies across the country have received a boost following the release of a pioneering public health campaign delivered by Menzies School of Health Research and Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance.

Launched at the recent 2024 Australian College of Midwives NT Conference, the Preterm Birth Prevention [‘See, Stop, Scan’ campaign](#), aims to educate and empower First Nations mothers by promoting engagement between health care providers and pregnant Top End women.

Alarming, First Nations women in the Northern Territory experience some of the highest rates of preterm birth in the world - currently double that of non-Indigenous populations. Preterm birth is birth before 37 weeks of pregnancy. It remains the single greatest cause of childhood death and disability in Australia.

Menzies Senior Research Fellow and Top End Alliance Lead, Dr Kiarna Brown, pointed to complex interactions between maternal and perinatal health outcomes and the determinants of health as key factors influencing the poorer health outcomes First Nations mothers and babies continue to experience.

“Despite significant successes in reducing the rates of preterm birth in a number of our states and territories, Aboriginal mothers still remain disproportionately affected by preterm birth – with rates twice that of the non-Aboriginal mothers in many jurisdictions,” Dr Brown said.

“The ‘See, Stop, Scan’ campaign has been informed by the Alliance’s key strategies to prevent early birth and will help the role Aboriginal mothers and their healthcare workers can play in ensuring the healthiest pregnancies for themselves and their babies and building strong communities.”

The campaign features posters, DL flyers and information sheets for antenatal clinics and GP clinics, offering the following advice:

- **See:** See your midwife early to make sure both you and baby stay strong and healthy.
- **Stop:** Smoking can cause harm to your baby, increasing the risk of being born too early or not growing properly.
- **Scan:** Having a scan of your baby in the second trimester to provide very important information about you and your baby.

Dr Brown said that as part of their yarning with women from across the Top End, many had mentioned that existing public pregnancy education was often unrelatable and inaccessible due to language and cultural barriers.

“Many reported having very limited knowledge about preterm birth and strategies for its prevention,” she said.

“Women want to know more about how to grow strong and healthy babies. By enabling this, we will have the opportunity to positively impact the health of future generations.”

Chair of the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance, Professor John Newnham, applauded the work of Dr Brown and her team at Menzies in leading this very important work.

“The challenge has always been to ensure all pregnant women, no matter where they live or which hospital they attend, are assessed for risk of preterm birth and are offered appropriate care to minimise that risk,” Prof Newnham said.

“The hope is that the Top End ‘See, Stop, Scan’ campaign will provide a roadmap for improved outcomes for all First Nations women and their children across the country.

“The Alliance is proud to work in true partnership with First Nations healthcare professionals, researchers, academics, organisations and women to ensure the next generation of First Nations Australians are given the best possible start to life.”

The See, Stop, Scan’ campaign is a result of the work the Alliance completed throughout the Every Week Counts National Preterm Birth Prevention Collaborative - a recently completed three-year Commonwealth funded program that has been working to reduce early births and pre-term births before week 37.

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Media contact | Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance

Phone: 0408 128 099 | Email: richie.hodgson@uwa.edu.au

Media contact | Menzies School of Health Research

Phone: (08) 8946 8680 | Email: media@menzies.edu.au

About the Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance

The Australian Preterm Birth Prevention Alliance is a national Alliance of clinical leaders, researchers, health departments, and communities working together to lower the rate of preterm birth across the country. This Alliance, established in 2018, is the world’s first national program aiming to safely lower the rate of early birth across its population.

About Menzies School of Health Research

Menzies is one of Australia’s leading medical research institutes dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and a leader in global and tropical health research. Menzies continues to translate research into effective partnerships and programs in communities across Australia and the Asia-Pacific region.