

Maternity service reopens

Lisa Dennis

The Castlemaine community gathered to rejoice and celebrate on Monday this week as Castlemaine Health's Maternity Service was officially re-opened.

The much loved and valued local service was closed abruptly almost 12 months ago pending a review.

Many of those who helped work behind the scenes to see the service re-opened gathered at Castlemaine Health's cafe on Monday to see Victoria's acting Chief Nursing and Midwifery Officer, Adjunct Professor Tanya Farrell, officially declare the new look service open.

It was a very emotional day for those who had campaigned to save the service and everyone who contributed their passion, ideas and input into creating a service which will take maternity care in Castlemaine into a healthy future.

The two-stage re-opening of the service began on March 22 this year with referrals for pregnancy care.

Birthing services have now reopened for births from 37 weeks gestation up to 42 weeks gestation, in line with the capability of the Level 2 maternity service.

Professor Tanya Farrell congratulated all those involved in seeing the service 'reborn'.

Ms Farrell said that everyone deserves access to care close to home and



Castlemaine Health board chair Peggy Ronnau, Consumer Committee member Kaitlyn Hough and baby Jude, Castlemaine Health executive director Clinical and Community DI Senior, Consumer Committee chair Anna Howard, Professor Tanya Farrell, Castlemaine Health CEO Sue Race, Project Consultant Fiona Faulks, GP Obs Dr Ronnie Moule and Dr Frances Harkin and her new bub and midwife Samantha Ward are pictured at Monday's celebration.

the new look model is one the health service can be extremely proud of.

Castlemaine Health CEO, Sue Race thanked everyone who had assisted in the journey.

"As we prepare to welcome the first babies born under the new model we wanted to acknowledge the hard work and dedication required to honour our commitment to maintain locally based maternity services.

"We believe all women deserve safe, respectful, individualised, evidence-based care," Ms Race said.

Castlemaine Health board chair Peggy Ronnau said they were delighted to see the service re-opened and their commitment to the Castlemaine community honoured.

Project Consultant Fiona

Faulks also spoke of the work behind the scenes creating the new midwifery-led model which offers local women and their families continuity of care - including the opportunity to have their midwife travel with them to Bendigo Health if required - and Consumer Committee chair Anna Howard who spoke about the community's important role in the process, including the consumer committee and the indigenous community.

Members of Support Birthing at Castlemaine Health (SBACH) which campaigned to save the service in the early days of the closure were also in attendance.

SBACH members vowing to continue to advocate and champion the vital local service moving into the future.