



## Join midwives on day of celebration

**BEV JORDAN**

**T**HE maternity unit at the new Norwest Private Hospital will open its doors to mums and dads-to-be as part of its celebrations for the International day of the Midwife tomorrow.

Staff are hoping that mums-to-be and those planning to have a baby will use the opportunity to have a look at the hospital's maternity unit.

The open day is from 9am to 3pm and special tours will be available from 9.30am to 11am and a barbecue from 11am to 1pm.

There will be a display on midwives in the foyer, trivia and a nappy-changing contest.

International Midwives Day recognises women, birth, families and the role of midwifery in all its diversity.

Funds raised on the day will help mothers and their babies on the remote Trobriand islands off Papua New Guinea.

According to history midwives have helped women with births for thousands of years.

Hippocrates, The Father of Medicine (470-370BC) inaugurated the scientific approach to healing of the sick.

From the 1st to 15th century midwives remained responsible for caring for women but their status in society varied from time to time, with midwives passing experience from neighbour to neighbour and mother to

daughter.

They were called wise women by the people by the middle ages but witches or charlatans by the authorities

Formal midwifery education began in the UK in 1726.

The very first midwives in the Australian colonies were Aboriginal women. They practised antiseptics long before Europeans did. Childbirth always took place on eucalyptus leaves.

It is recorded that among the white population 80 per cent of births took place in the same manner of the Aboriginal women, the use of leaves, bush materials and bark was common before and up to 1872.

In 1895 a Midwife Nurses Bill was legislated and in 1903 the Australian College of Midwives (NSW) was formed.

The 1901 census of NSW showed 1923 respondents describe themselves as midwives and all but one were self employed with minimal supervision.

In 1903 there were 151 midwives registered and a Royal Commission recommended that midwifery be restricted to medical practitioners and trained midwifery nurses who "should be subjected to examination, licence and control".

In 2005 there were 17,535 midwives registered in NSW.



**Ready, steady go! Danny and Jake Pavicevic, Alexi and Kingsley Hawkins line up with Funda Pavicevic who uses a plastic doll to practise changing nappies.**

Picture: PHIL ROGERS