

# Maternal Health Series

## Maternity and Art



He Sleeps in a Pram by Vee Malnar Oil on canvas, 50 x 50 cm

The ANU Gender Institute and Maternal Health Matters Inc. invite you to join us online for the third in our seminar series that will explore the impact of maternity on women's wellbeing and the transition to parenting.

*The health and wellbeing of mothers is critically connected to the best outcomes for infants and children and provides the basis for a healthy society.*

**Time**                      6.00 to 7.30 pm  
**Date**                      Thursday 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2024  
**Registration**          ASAP not to miss out [HERE](#)

Australia faces a challenge in achieving high quality maternity care in a safe, respectful environment so that women and birthing people emerge healthy and well. Perinatal wellbeing is a complex concept that is more than the absence of illness. Furthermore, an extensive eight nation study commissioned by the European Union concluded that the transition to parenthood was “a critical tipping point on the road to gender equality” (2006, p.11). This finding is of significance for women in Australia, underlining the need for improved, 21st century maternal and child health services and support for young families.

## Themes presenters will speak to

In this early 21<sup>st</sup> century there is most often a significant gap between the expectations and the experience of new mothers. Expectant and new mothers nevertheless bring with them skills and talents in a range of areas including through the Arts and therefore, women often reflect on their experience and representations of the maternal through Art. In this session the presenters will guide us through examples of these works, in light of the principles and ambitions of Maternal Health Matters.

There is a need to provide maternity services that honour the childbearing woman's human right to respect, autonomy, dignity and the attainment of the highest level of health; a maternity care system that does no harm. There is a need to minimize the disadvantage from the transition to mothering which has been identified of significant concern for women in Australia. Future health services are likely to have reduced financial budgets and thus there is an increasing need to deliver high value care.

### Presenters

**Denise Ferris**, artist and educator, is Professor Emerita at ANU, and was previously Head of School, Art and Design. She has lived on the Monaro in the high country of NSW for over four decades, photographing landscapes, revealing environmental change, the region's Indigenous history and her connection to place. Her photography and writing have also focused on the power of the visual to question representation and convey knowledge on the work of care, the maternal, and the institution of mothering. Previous exhibitions on maternal topics, examined broader social politics and familial relationships utilising a 19th century technique, the milk print. Through South-East Arts board membership and Art and Culture committee membership of Snowy Monaro Regional Council she advocates for the development of regional arts and culture.

**Bianca Williams** combines community sector and academic experience to address social justice issues. Bianca has over a decade's experience working with mothers, children and families in the community sector. She has a diploma in art therapy. Bianca has experience with project management and contributed to a number of maternal-themed community arts projects. Her PhD explored birthing parent's experience of pregnancy as mediated through art. Bianca is currently the Senior Policy Officer at Families Australia, where she provides advice to government and the community sector on national policy issues related to gender and families. A former lecturer and course convenor in Gender Studies, Bianca is currently a Visiting Fellow at ANU.



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