"The Northern Territory’s midwives have a lot to celebrate on International Midwives Day," says Health Minister Robyn Lambley.

"In 2011 there were 647 midwives across the Northern Territory, delivering a range of wonderful programs and services to families as well as almost 4000 babies last year.

"By region, there were 1980 births in Royal Darwin Hospital and 661 in Darwin Private Hospital; 796 in Alice Springs Hospital; 343 in Katherine Hospital; 170 in Gove District Hospital and seven in Tennant Creek Hospital.

"As well, there were 38 home births in Darwin.

"Midwives provide continuity of care to women during the antenatal, birthing and postnatal period which, in turn, helps them prepare and plan for delivery and beyond.

"Midwives also provide antenatal classes and lactation support both in the hospital and at home.

"The Territory Government is extremely supportive of two research programs currently underway at Alice Springs Hospital.

"One is looking at the long term effects for children born to diabetic mothers and the other investigating the effects that the use of pituri – a local chewing tobacco-like plant – has on babies.

"This research will inform would-be mothers and clinicians and guide their responses into the future.

"The small team of midwives at Gove District Hospital offers holistic midwifery services and at Katherine Hospital, midwives provide outreach services to communities that do not have a midwife.

"Royal Darwin Hospital has a well developed Graduate Midwife Program that has resulted in 12 new graduate midwives employed so far this year.

"As well, Royal Darwin’s midwifery domiciliary program offers follow up care and support for new Mums.

"A midwife visits the mother and baby in their home to provide assessment, post-natal care and breastfeeding support for up to seven days after the birth.

"Women in Darwin are also able to access home birth services through connecting with a home birth midwife to inform them of the options associated with having a home birth.

"I would like to congratulate and thank the dedicated team of midwives across the Territory for the outstanding job they do, sometimes in testing circumstances, every single day."

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