

Roxby's baby boom

Roxby Downs is playing a huge part in the rising fertility rates of South Australia.

With one of the highest birthrates in regional South Australia the town has helped the state reach its highest fertility rate in 10 years.

In 2002-03 Roxby Downs had the highest crude birthrate in regional South Australia at 24.7 per 1000 resident population.

Ms Qualmann said because of the fertility rate, Roxby mothers would benefit from obstetrics services.

"I feel that Roxby needs obstetrics services so that mothers do not have to travel long distances to have their babies," she said.

According to the latest birth figures released by the Australian Bureau of Statistics, there were 17,800 newborns in South Australia in 2005.

This registers a total fertility rate of 1.79 babies per woman – a rise from 1.76 a decade ago but still below the national rate.

Roxby Downs mothers feel they and their babies are relatively well catered for in the town.

Young mother Regina Qualmann said she thinks there are sufficient child care services in town but there were several improvements that could be made to cater for children.

"I do feel Roxby needs more shaded areas, as it is really hot when you get back in the car when you are



BABIES GALORE: Regina Qualmann and her son Cameron live in Roxby Downs, which has one of the highest fertility rates in the state.

out," she said. "I also believe that Roxby needs to more child-friendly eating areas and more variety in kids clothing."

Australian Population Institute SA chairman Michael Hickinbotham said increases in fertility rates was heartening, but warned South Australia needs to do a lot more to boost population numbers to remain sustainable and competitive in the long term.

"The latest ABS figures show we are heading in the right direction but we still need to do more to attract more people to South Australia."

"The lifestyle that we all love in South Australia can only be maintained in the future if we take action now to prevent a population decline," he said.

South Australia's looming population crisis is highlighted by the fact the state has the oldest demographic and lowest population growth of any Australian state.

The State Government has set a state population target of two million by 2050.

South Australia's population recently grew to one and half million.