

Baby boom hits Australia

by UPI

CANBERRA, Australia -- A government bonus to new parents is credited with prompting Australia's biggest baby boom in more than three decades. Official figures released Monday show the country recorded 265,900 births in 2006, the highest number since official records began, with the exception of 1971, The Australian reports. The number of children a woman is likely to have over her lifetime rose from an average of 1.79 in 2005 to 1.81 in 2006. Credited with encouraging Australians to have more children is the government's introduction in 2004 of a baby bonus, currently worth \$4,000 per infant. Government statistics show Australians are having their babies later in life, producing the highest-ever median ages for new parents. The median age for a first-time mother approaches 31 years while the average age for a new father is just over 33 years, according to the newspaper. The highest proportion of teenage mothers was recorded in the country's Northern Territory with 63.9 out of every 1,000 women aged 15-19 giving birth in 2006.

Copyright © 2007, by United Press International. All Rights Reserved.

Baby boom hits Australia by UPI