

To whom it may concern,

My name is Maria O'Shannessy. I have practised as a maternal and child health nurse for 6.5 years. For the first four years I was the Enhanced maternal and child health nurse, working with vulnerable families. Since December 2008 I have been in this management role as co-ordinator of the service. I am a registered nurse (Diploma in Applied Science (Nursing) Lincoln Institute, 1984) and a registered midwife (Post Graduate Diploma in Midwifery, La Trobe University, 2003). Furthermore I have gained a Masters in Child, Family and Community Health, La Trobe University, 2004. Although I was not a recipient of a scholarship I have employed four nurses to our municipality as a direct result of the scholarship program. All four recipients have been loyal and committed to Moonee Valley and remain employed 2-3 years post graduation. The nurses were recruited at a time of staff shortages (only 60% of total FTE filled).

I am very concerned with draft recommendation 12.3 and the removal of midwifery as a pre requisite. This concern has been highlighted very recently with the completion of the annual survey by participating families in Moonee Valley. Numerous respondents commented on the importance of the nurses acknowledging their emotional and physical health and well being, especially in the early post natal period, as crucial to their (the mother's) adaptation to parenthood. As part of the revised Key Ages and Stages framework there is an emphasis on the maternal health and well being check at 4 weeks post partum. Nurses' ability to adequately assess and provide guidance at this visit is explicitly informed by the knowledge gained through midwifery. The emphasis and the naming in Victoria of the Maternal and Child Health Service is pointed and particular at reinforcing the importance of the mother in the relationship and to provide the services for the mother midwifery is the right and proper qualification. I would be very concerned to see it excluded.

The maternal and child health service in its current format is well respected and received by the families. Results from the annual survey demonstrate above 85% satisfaction across all domains. Participation rates are exceptional. In the last financial year Moonee Valley achieved rates of 85% of 18 month , 83% of 2 year olds and 73% of 3.5 year olds attending the service. To my knowledge these rates are much higher than the national average( 14% for 3.5 year olds nationally). 981 referrals were made to services to support children and 387 referrals to support mothers in the last financial year.

I would be more than happy to participate in further consultation with the productivity commission if invited to do so. I am very passionate about the service we provide in Victoria and feel committed to supporting its' continuation.

Regards,

**Maria O'Shannessy**