

23 AUG 2011

TO THE PRODUCTIVITY COMMISSION:

I am writing to you in regard to the Productivity Commission, Early Childhood Development Workforce Draft Report (June 2011), in particular the section in Chapter 12.

My name is Elizabeth Ferguson and I am a Victorian Maternal and Child Health nurse working in this field of nursing for over 25 years. Over that period of time I have worked in both rural and metropolitan areas. I commenced my training through the hospital system for both general and midwifery nursing. I completed my diploma of community nursing majoring in Maternal and Child Health.

My concern with the submission is with the recommendations 12.2 and 12.3 in Chapter 12 of the draft report regarding the removal of Midwifery as a qualification prerequisite for MCH nurses. I would also like to voice my support for the value of scholarships for nurses wishing to study Maternal and Child Health.

I feel these recommendations will have a detrimental effect on the quality of Victorian MCH nursing service and the subsequent effect on the families of Victoria. The service is important for nurses to have the education and extensive knowledge from the antenatal and post natal period to early childhood.

I am strongly opposed to the removal of midwifery as a qualification prerequisite for MCH nurses. The knowledge and experience as a qualification midwife and general nurse has provided me with the knowledge and professional skills to practice Maternal and Child Health.

During my experience with both rural and metropolitan Maternal and Child Health Nursing I have found it imperative to have as much knowledge to assist family in giving them the care that they expect. I believe the quality and assistance given by Maternal and Child Health nurses is held in high regard by Victorian parents because of our skill base.

At present I work on the Maternal and Child Health Line and get many questions regarding breast feeding and complications within the antenatal and postnatal period. Just a few of these inquiries have included postpartum haemorrhages, mastitis, deep vein thrombosis and particularly women going through Antenatal and Postpartum Depression. I am finding many fathers and extended family are also now accessing maternal and child health experts to discuss concerns they have in the antenatal and post partum period not just the care of their infant or child.

I feel without the knowledge and skill I have obtained by my comprehensive education and experience, some outcomes would not have been as positive or as quickly resolved. I can recall a mother who I attended at a first home visit who complained of pain in the calf area. The

mother thought it was due to a strain, on examination it was obvious to be a deep vein thrombosis and she was referred back to hospital for treatment.

I can remember many instances especially in rural Maternal and Child health where I need to use my general and midwifery expertise to answer questions from both parents. I therefore feel it would be a barrier to my practice and is essential for my work within Maternal and Child Health .

I feel the framework of the Victorian MCH nursing service is founded on evidence based key ages and stages framework. Victorian families can access a wealth of knowledge which has a very high level of satisfaction following their access to the service.

I also would like to support any ongoing provision for scholarships for MCH post graduated programs as after working with colleagues who have attained scholarships know how it has helped attract more Maternal and child nurses in the field.

Lastly, I feel the Victorian Maternal Health is considered to be held in high regard within Australia and I am very concerned and saddened by the lack or limited consultation that the Productivity Commission has given to Victorian nurses. May I add the service has received calls from overseas such is our standing within the community. I am happy as I am sure any Victorian Maternal would be to meet with the Commission to discuss these concerns further. Please accept my thanks for considering my comments.

Regards

Elizabeth Ferguson