

# Attachment

## Hobsons Bay City Council Submission: Early Childhood Development Workforce Study

Through our Children's Plan 2009-2013, the Council acknowledges that the "early years are of particular importance in the growth and development of happy, healthy and socially connected individuals". As such, the Council welcomes this study and several of its draft recommendations which seek to increase the skill set and qualifications of early childhood professionals.

However, concern is raised regarding *Draft Recommendation 12.2*, which refers to the possibility of withdrawing the scholarships for postgraduate study in Maternal and Child Health and *Draft Recommendation 12.3* which recommends Maternal and Child Health Nurses not be required to have qualifications in midwifery.

### Draft Recommendation 12.2

With regards to Scholarships, the Council has been providing these for the last 7 years with outstanding results. Over 85% of students offered a scholarship by the Council have gone on to take a permanent position with the Council after completion of their studies, and all have remained in the field of Maternal and Child Health. In discussion with these staff members, all have confirmed that having access to a Scholarship did impact on their decision whether or not to actually enroll in the course. Scholarships not only attract nurses to study as a Maternal and Child Health Nurse but also provide a very effective recruitment tool for the individual Councils. Scholarships have proved to be very cost effective and should be expanded to areas where recruitment is particularly difficult, eg. rural areas.

### Draft Recommendation 12.3

The proposed removal of midwifery as a mandatory qualification is not supported.

A midwifery qualification is critical in order to ensure that every child is given the best opportunity in life. The Maternal and Child Health Service starts from one week of age when both the mother and child are at their most vulnerable, when the specialist knowledge of a midwife is essential in preventing and identifying problems in the post partum period, and where the importance of breast feeding support is vital. As early discharge from hospital becomes more prevalent, the need for midwifery skills becomes even more important. It should be noted that midwifery experience is also utilised when families visit during subsequent pregnancies. In Victoria, the approach to families is holistic not fragmented, based on an evidence based model, and leads to superior

outcomes for the whole family. This is demonstrated by high participation rates compared to other states.

The proposal is not only incongruent with the rest of the report, which encourages an enhanced educational basis for all other early childhood workers, but appears to be an unqualified statement. The report does not offer any solid evidence that removing this qualification will attract more nurses to the profession. The arguments that nurses with this qualification are more costly is disproven in the report's own statistics (see table 12.2), which shows that Victorian nurses are not the highest paid in Australia, furthermore these figures do not take into account salary packaging opportunities available in other states that are not reflected in these statistics. There is no evidence offered to support the proposition that nurses are more easily recruited in states where this qualification is not mandatory. We are aware, although not compulsory, that many practicing Child Health Nurses in other states do hold midwifery qualifications.