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Victoria

To whom it may concern,

My name is Elaine Fry and I have practiced as a Maternal and Child Health nurse for 4.5 years. I work in a metropolitan area.

I am registered as a midwife and nurse with Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Authority. I completed a hospital based nursing certificate in 1982 and completed my hospital based midwifery qualification in 1984. I have worked predominately in midwifery until 2007 when I completed my Post Graduate Diploma of Maternal and Child Health. I currently work three days per week in Maternal and Child Health and one day per week in Midwifery. I find that both positions complement each other.

I was provided a scholarship from City of Greater Dandenong council in 2006. Access to this scholarship influenced my decision to become a MCH nurse because it helped me to complete the program of study necessary to practice competently in this role. One of my electives during this course was to study Lactation and I then sat the exam to become a Lactation Consultant. With my knowledge and extensive period of time working in Midwifery gave me a good understanding of lactation and assisted me in gaining this qualification. I also work in my MCH Practice as a Lactation Consultant and without this midwifery knowledge and experience I believe it would be very difficult. For breastfeeding rates to increase it is important that we have MCH Practitioners with Lactation experience which is gained firstly through the midwifery qualification. This increase in breastfeeding rates also decreases the cost on a whole to Victoria.

My submission is limited to Chapter 12 of the Early Childhood Development Draft Report and the "Child Health Workforce"

I am particularly concerned with recommendations 12.3 and 12.2 of the Draft Report regarding removal of midwifery as a qualification prerequisite for MCH nurses, and questioning the value of scholarships for the MCH programs of study. I believe that these recommendations would reduce the quality of the Victorian MCH nursing service, which in no small part, is dependent upon the robust qualification requirements and educational preparation of Victorian MCH nurses.

I am strongly opposed to the removal of midwifery as a qualification prerequisite for MCH nurse and believe my qualification in midwifery has given me a critical body of knowledge and invaluable professional skills to practice as a MCH nurse.

I can think of many examples where I have drawn upon my midwifery knowledge and experience in providing MCH nursing care and where client care may have suffered had I not obtained this qualification. Firstly as mentioned above regarding Lactation knowledge and experience which has been gained from having my midwifery qualification has an enormous benefit which has allowed me to be

part of the reason for increasing the breastfeeding rates. Without this qualification I may not have been able to determine the causes for the difficulties for my clients and may have actually given incorrect advice leading ultimately a decrease in breastfeeding rates.

As I have only completed my training in 2007 it was certainly a big shock for me realizing that I was one of the main professionals responsible for giving my clients advice and referring them to appropriate services as required. I then had to consider this huge responsibility and decide if I wanted to be placed in this stressful position of Maternal and Child Health and had to consider the risks involved if I did not refer the child on as required or had not given the appropriate advice. I do however have a Midwifery background of numerous years and felt that with this huge amount of knowledge I should not need to worry. Being able to correctly identify concerns is crucial in the health of my clients. If I did not have my Midwifery qualification I believe I would not attempt Maternal and Child Health. I have also travelled throughout Australia with my four children when they were babies and found that Maternal and Child Health was not as good in other states. Basically your baby was weighed and given the vaccinations and you left. There was no health promotion.

Hoping that you will take my submission and read it thoroughly and consider the detriment for our nation if the midwifery component is removed from Maternal and Child Health