
The Australian College of Midwives Inc

Bachelor of Midwifery (BMid)

Education Newsletter

Number 5, October 2000.

The Inaugural ACMI Bachelor of Midwifery Education Taskforce Meeting

On the 15th and 16th of July 2000 the ACMI Bachelor of Midwifery Education Taskforce (BMid) had their first meeting at the ACMI National office in Melbourne. As explained in the 4th Newsletter, in March 2000 the Australian College of Midwives (ACMI) in March 2000 endorsed and funded a proposal presented to it by the BMid Taskforce. The taskforce is comprised of midwifery academics from around Australia who had been invited to attend a 2-day meeting in Adelaide by the midwifery working party from Flinders University and the University of South Australia who had

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identified concern regarding disparities and inconsistencies in midwifery curricula across Australia. This concern, plus an interest in developing a national framework for the introduction of three year undergraduate midwifery programmes in Australia was the catalyst in contacting midwifery academics from around Australia who had also expressed an interest in such a project. At a meeting in Adelaide in December 1999 a national steering group was formed to investigate the feasibility of developing a framework for midwifery

education. A collaborative approach was viewed as the most effective means of securing uniformity in Australian midwifery education ensuring that all graduates are competent to practice woman-centred care in a range of settings.

Attendees at the second meeting of the Taskforce included: Nicky Leap (Project Coordinator), Jackie Kitschke (Project Officer), Vanessa Owen (ACMI President representing ACMI in Patricia Schneider's absence), Jan Pincombe (SA), Carol Thorogood (WA), Diane Cutts (VIC), Hilary Hunter (NSW), Jenny Browne (ACT), Trish David (TAS), Bev Turnbull (NT), Kathleen Fahy (QLD) and Alana Street (ACMI Acting EO). Apologies were received from Patricia Schneider (ACMI representative), Anne Nixon (International reference group) Sally Tracy (AMAP) and Marree Markus (Regulatory).

The meeting was very productive in building on the previous meeting held in Adelaide in December. The taskforce members each gave a summary of what is happening in their state/territory around the introduction of BMid. There has certainly been an increase in the exposure of BMid across Australia with some exciting new consortia formed and public forums held. (See the state/territory report).

The issue of funding in universities for BMid places was discussed with a plan for Jill White and Lesley Barclay to oversee negotiations for pilot funding from DETYA. An advertisement calling for expressions of interest from universities interested in pilot funding has appeared in the September issue of the ACMI Journal and is also to appear in the Nursing Review.

Clarification was sought regarding the interpretation of "consensus guidelines" and "Agreed components of a national framework" as reported in the 3rd

Newsletter. It was resolved that these phrases become "The ACMI National Accreditation Standards for Midwifery Education".

Bachelor of Midwifery Taskforce:	
Role: to make decisions, recommendations and promotion of BMid programmes.	
Coordinator - Nicky Leap	
WA:	Carol Thorogood
SA:	Jan Pincombe
TAS:	Trish David
VIC:	Diane Cutts
NSW:	Hilary Hunter
ACT:	Jenny Browne
QLD:	Kathleen Fahy
NT:	Bev Turnbull
AMAP:	Sally Tracy
Regulatory:	Maree Markus
ACMI:	Trish Schneider
Project Officer:	Jackie Kitschke

Proposed start dates for three year BMid Programmes:

Vic/Tas Consortium: 2002

SA: 2002

NSW: 2002-2003

ACT: 2003

QLD: 2003

NT and WA: unable to commit to any definite date.

Plans for contact with relevant stakeholders including the ANF, the Nurses' Registration Boards, Council of Deans and DONs of hospitals providing maternity services were made with contact to be made at both ACMI national and state/territory levels. This has already occurred in some states and territories.

A State/Territory Report

South Australia

ACMI SA gave a presentation to the Nurses Board members about the midwifery issues in South Australia and issues relevant to the BMid.

The University of South Australia (UniSA) and Flinders University Adelaide (FAU) are both having their BMid curricula processed by various university committees. The universities plan to present their midwifery programmes for accreditation to the Nurses Board in the near future to include the

proposed three-year programs. The joint South Australia midwifery education working party have agreed upon common principles of the content of the curriculum and are constructing individual curricula according to their universities requirements with advice of a joint Advisory Committee.

Victoria

The Werna Naloo* Bachelor of Midwifery Consortium now has five university members with the recent addition of Victoria University. (* Werna Naloo is from the Ganai language and means "we, us, together". The Consortium considers this a most apt title that depicts "universities, midwives & women" working together.)

The Steering and Course Development Committee which is comprised of key stakeholders, a representative from each of the participating universities, Nurses Board of Tasmania and Victoria, ACMI (Vic and Tas Branches), Midwife Unit Managers and Midwives in Private Practice, meets regularly and consults as required with members of a Reference Group. This latter group is comprised of academics from the participating universities, representatives of Maternity Coalition Inc. and the Regional Directors of Nursing.

In June the Consortium held a successful Information and Curriculum Planning Day which was attended by 42 invited key stakeholders, consisting of past midwifery university students, Midwife Unit Managers, Midwives in Private Practice, academics, Maternity Coalition and the Regional Directors of Nursing representative. In addition, both the ACMI National President Vanessa Owen and the Victorian Branch President Julie Collette attended and were speakers.

The Consortiums' timeline is for the development of the core curriculum and each university document by the end of this year, submission of the documents to a tripartite accreditation process - university, ACMI and Nurses Board - during 2001, and for commencement of the program at the beginning of 2002.

Tasmania

The ACMI Tas had their AGM on the 12th of August at which Nicky Leap and Kathleen Fahy presented a session around the introduction of BMid in Tasmania. Issues

discussed included the problems facing students, the workforce, the current midwives, the employers, rural and remote midwifery practice, small regional and

Bachelor of Midwifery Ad hoc working party of taskforce:
Role: To be co-opted for political negotiations (e.g. DETYA).
Lesley Barclay and Jill White
Bachelor of Midwifery International Reference Group:
Role: To inform and provide advice to BMid Taskforce.
NZCOM: Sally Pairman - New Zealand
Lesley Page - United Kingdom
Ann Thompson - United Kingdom
Anne Nixon - Canada

country centres and the need to bring midwifery back into communities rather than centralised in large cities.

The University of Tasmania (UTas) then made a presentation about the Werna Naloo Consortium (explained above) and its introduction in 2002. A meeting between UTas and stakeholders is planned for the 31st of August.

Australian Capital Territory

The ACT may have its first BMid programme available by 2003. There is a lot of interest in Canberra for a BMid programme. The formation of the ACMI Taskforce has been useful to the ACT as it has given the project a national flavour. The Nurses Board ACT views midwifery as a part of nursing. Pilot funding from DETYA would be advantageous for the introduction of a BMid programme in the ACT.

Western Australia

Midwifery development is at a standstill in light of the King Edward review. The ACMI WA has expressed no interest in the BMid as they have other important issues to deal with in the Review. There is a new Executive Officer at the Nurses Board, (Margaret Watson) and Carol Thorogood is the designated midwife on the Board. The Nurses Board is supportive of BMid, they have written a discussion paper about BMid and Margaret Watson has had discussions with the Minister of Health for a Nurses and Midwives Act.

Northern Territory

There is only one university in the NT which is the Northern Territory University. This year is only the second year that midwifery education has been offered by the university. DONs want nurse/midwives for the rural areas. Alice Springs may be able to employ midwives from three year programmes but Darwin would prefer nurse/midwives.

Queensland

Kathleen Fahy has been officially voted as the Qld representative to the ACMI BMid Taskforce by Qld ACMI. Kathleen and Patricia Schneider met with Jim O'Dempsey, Executive Officer of Queensland Nursing Council (QNC). QNC has a by-law which requires that an applicant for a pre-registration midwifery course must be a registered nurse. Patricia Schneider is writing to QNC to request the initiation of a process to overturn this by-law. Kathleen has also spoken with Roy Drabble of the Queensland Nursing Union and expects to address their policy advisory committee in the near future. Letters were sent to the DONs of the Royal Women's and the Mater Mother's hospitals and Kathleen has been invited to address the senior staff of the Mater Mother's in November.

There is currently no university undertaking midwifery education in Queensland that is ready to commence a BMid programme in conjunction with other states in 2002 but we are hopeful of being ready for 2003.

New South Wales

Hilary Hunter is the newly appointed NSW representative of the ACMI BMid Taskforce. Hilary is a CMC at St George hospital and a midwifery educator linked to UTS. Hilary also has a small private midwifery practice. (Hot off the press: On 1st September, Hilary spoke to a meeting of midwifery educators from around NSW and informed them about the ACMI BMid Taskforce. The NSW midwifery educators plan to hold a further meeting to discuss the BMid at the NSW Midwives Association annual conference in Wollongong (27th and 28th October) and hope that they will be joined by representatives from the ACT).

Potential Students

The number of people inquiring about becoming a midwife without being a nurse first is increasing with their names being collected a database. If you know of someone who is interested in this entry into midwifery who would like some more information refer them to Jackie Kitschke the project officer at jackie.kitschke@flinders.edu.au or 82013442.

Midwives are not always nurses ...

What is a midwife ?

Some people confuse midwives with nurses. In fact a midwife is a health professional who cares for a woman in pregnancy, in labour and after her baby is born. The World Health Organisation recognises the midwife to be the safest, most cost effective, and appropriate care giver for the majority of low risk pregnant women globally. In New Zealand, Canada, the United States and most European countries midwives do not have to have a nursing qualification because midwifery is seen as a profession, with its own set of rules regarding education and practise. In these countries midwives are experts who provide total care for women and their babies, consulting with doctors when there is a medical problem.

An Exciting New Course for Midwives in Australia ...

You may have heard that there are soon to be 3 year Bachelor of Midwifery courses starting Australia wide in 2002. Students will not have to have completed nursing first. Among many qualities, it is envisaged that graduates from these courses will be women focussed, be able to practise in a broad range of midwifery contexts in collaboration with other disciplines, utilising international perspectives and evidence based practise, and be able to step confidently into their authorities as midwives. They will not necessarily be nurses, they will be midwives.

The ANF does not endorse a Bachelor of Midwifery. Why not ? Will the Nurses Boards, and (why) does it matter ?

In Australia, midwives are regulated by law as nursing subspecialists under Nurses Acts, registering to practise through the Nurses Board of each state. However, midwives are not always nurses, and the number who are not nurses will increase as graduates emerge from this Degree. How will they register? Under current legislation they will have to apply through the Nurses Board, fill out a statement about their competency as nurses and be given limited registration to work as midwives. This is inappropriate and disrespectful. AMALG and the ACMI are fighting for appropriate legislation for midwives.

Universities need to put the Bachelor of Midwifery courses up to Nurses Boards for course approval, in order to ensure graduates will be able to register to practise. Nurses Boards have no legal responsibility to have midwifery representation. The Australian Nurses Federation strongly opposes the Bachelor of Midwifery, primarily because it does not have a core nursing component. The South Australian secretary also stated recently that it is not in the 'best interests' of nurses, or the community. The Nurses Boards and the ANF have no process for community consultation about the Bachelor of Midwifery.

The Bachelor of Midwifery follows international trends, is backed by current evidence-based research and will address critical workplace shortages. Make your voice heard if you are concerned by the need for a Midwives Act and the opposition to the Bachelor of Midwifery.

What can you do ?

- Contact AMALG (Australian Midwives Act Lobby Group) via ACMI - SA Branch, PO Box 1063, Kent Town SA 5071. Tel : 8364 5729 or Marijke on (08) 8388 3146
- ACMI (Aust. College of Midwives Inc) National Taskforce for 3 Yr Bachelor of Midwifery
- Write to your state Nurses Board, the ANF at national and state level, expressing your concern
- Contact your local members of parliament.

written by : Jennifer Watkins, prospective B-mid student, Coordinator of Birth Matters
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