

ACMI BACHELOR OF MIDWIFERY EDUCATION PROJECT

Vanessa Owen, *President*

This statement was released to the press on International Midwives Day 2000

The Australian College of Midwives, Inc. (ACMI) is pleased to announce its commitment to the development of Bachelor of Midwifery courses around Australia.

Currently in Australia, in order to become a midwife one must first become a registered nurse. In many other countries, in particular, the UK, New Zealand, Canada, parts of the USA and most European countries, the majority of newly qualified midwives are not nurses and have undertaken a three or four year program in midwifery. They emerge from their education as competent, safe practitioners, capable of working with women throughout their experience of pregnancy, childbirth and the postnatal period in a range of settings including hospitals, the community, and rural and remote areas. These new midwifery graduates, having focussed for so long on childbearing, are confident about their knowledge and skills. They collaborate with medical and other health practitioners if potential or actual problems arise and are able to act swiftly in the rare event of unforeseen emergency.

This new initiative will bring Australia in line with these countries by enabling direct-entry to the midwifery profession. This will have positive long-term consequences for the education of midwives and the development of maternity services across the country.

Throughout Australia, many women have contacted the ACMI, expressing interest in becoming midwives through similar non-nurse entrant midwifery programs. At the moment this choice is not available to them. Rather than waiting in the hope that this opportunity will become an option, some have enrolled in a five-year process to become midwives. They are required to complete a three-year Bachelor of Nursing program before they can begin their one or two year postgraduate midwifery education. In the words of Maureen:

"I knew I wanted to become a midwife after I had my first baby. I've enrolled in a Bachelor of Nursing program. It's interesting but it's not what I want to do. There are many of us on this course who do not

want to be nurses. We want to be midwives and wish we could have had the opportunity to do a Bachelor of Midwifery. I would have loved to have studied for three years to concentrate on becoming a practitioner in midwifery by following lots of women through their experience of pregnancy and birth."

The ACMI is pleased to launch an initiative that will enable people like Maureen to study for three years to become midwives. An ACMI Taskforce composed of midwifery educators from each state and territory has been formed to oversee the development of consensus guidelines that will form a national framework for the introduction of Bachelor of Midwifery education programs across Australia. This national framework will establish and articulate professional standards for the accreditation of the three-year Australian Bachelor of Midwifery (BMid) programs.

These programs will enable graduates to practise competently in a range of settings within the full scope of practice defined by the International Confederation of Midwives. Australian midwives will have a qualification that is internationally recognised and they will be able to practise anywhere in the world without having to undergo further education.

It will still be possible for qualified nurses to become midwives if they wish. Nurses will be able to apply for recognition of prior learning and experience in order to undertake a shortened version of the three-year midwifery degree program, as will others who have relevant tertiary qualifications. All midwifery students will graduate having completed the same internationally defined midwifery practice requirements and competency standards. Thus, potentially, all graduates will be competent to practise in the new models of maternity care that are being developed throughout Australia in response to women's expressed wishes, and the numerous national and international government documents recommending such initiatives.

As the professional body representing Australian midwives, the ACMI has a commitment to playing a

major role in the education, regulation and future direction of midwifery in Australia. The long-term aim of the ACMI is to collaborate with regulatory authorities and enter into partnerships in order to implement standards and accredit midwifery education programs across Australia.

For the first time in this country, there is an opportunity for all key stakeholders, including childbearing women, to collaborate in ensuring consistently high standards in midwifery education across all states and territories. These standards will aim to produce a confident, competent midwifery workforce, ready to meet the needs of Australian women and their families, whatever choices they make about how and where they have their babies.

This exciting new venture is welcomed by midwifery leaders and educators across Australia and has the full support of many childbearing women and potential student midwives.

If you are interested in knowing more about this project and/or would like your name to be added to the database of potential BMid students, please contact the Project Officer, Jackie Kitschke on 08 8201 3084 or e mail her on:

jackie.kitschke@flinders.edu.au
 <mailto:jackie.kitschke@flinders.edu.au>

Other inquiries can be directed to the Australian College of Midwives Incorporated National office, 03 9804 5071, or email austmid@ozemail.com.au.

Fellow's Directory of the College

Listed for information are the current Fellows of the College, who are entitled to use the nomenclature *FACM* after their name.

		Jenifer Cooling	SA (Distinguished Fellow)				
		Pamela Hayes	NSW (Distinguished Fellow)				
		Margaret Peters	VIC (Distinguished Fellow)				
Christine Adams	VIC	Lindy Dugard	ACT	Erol McArthur	VIC	Georgina Stamp	SA
Nola Aicken	VIC	Sandra Emerson	NSW	Netta McArthur	VIC	Rosemary Stehbens	SA
Elizabeth Andrews	Vic	Louise Everitt	NSW	Heather McCosker	QLD	Alana Street	TAS
Robyn Aulmann	NT	Raelene George	WA	Patricia McDonald	NSW	Jennifer Sullivan	NSW
Lesley Barclay	NSW	Pauline Glover	SA	Susan McDonald	WA	Annette Summers	SA
MarieBarton	QLD	Carol Godham	VIC	Betty McGuinness	VIC	Heather Sutton	SA
Susan Braybrook	VIC	Pauline Green	NSW	Carol McVeigh	QLD	Christine Thompson	VIC
Patricia Brodie	NSW	Ann Grieve	NSW	Roberta Murphy	WA	Jillian Thompson	WA
Judi Brown	SA	Jane Hall	VIC	Suzanne Murray	VIC	Carol Thorogood	WA
Helen Callaghan	NSW	Heather Hancock	SA	Michelle Nisbet	SA	Beth Waddington	SA
Jennifer Cameron	VIC	Carolyn Hastie	NSW	Maxine Reid	VIC	Caroline Weaver	QLD
Margo Canino	SA	Hilary Hunter	NSW	Jenifer Richardson	NSW	Joan Webster	Qld
Kaye Chapman	QLD	Helene Johns	VIC	Janette Robinson	NSW	Laurelle Williams	QLD
Betty Clarke	NT	Valerie Johnson	VIC	Maralyn Rowley	NZ	Moira Williamson	NSW
Rosemary Conroy	SA	Joy Johnstone	VIC	Helen Sandner	VIC	Lorraine Wilson	VIC
Catherine Cook	WA	Linda Jones	NSW	Anne Saxton	NSW	Chin Wong	ACT
Nan Cook	VIC	Margaret Lambert	NSW	Patricia Schneider	Qld		
Karen Coyle	WA	Mary Lantry	NSW	Frances Sheean	VIC		
Judith D'Elmaine	NSW	Moyra Lewis	SA	Mavis Smith	NSW		
Hannah Dahlen	NSW	Rhodanthe Lipsett	ACT	Valerie Smith	NSW		
Patricia David	TAS	Judith Lyons	VIC	Barbara Soong	QLD		
Joanne Davies	WA	Pamela Martin	WA	Elaine Smallbane	TAS		