

1/25/3

3 December 1987

Ms Mary O'Regan  
Secretary of Women's Affairs  
Ministry of Women's Affairs  
Private Bag  
WELLINGTON

Dear Ms O'Regan

Thank you for your letter dated 2 September forwarding Miss Judi Strid's letter which raises questions concerning midwifery education. You ask for clarification of the issues. I apologise for the delay in replying.

Midwifery education has been a contentious issue for some time. It was hoped that a recent evaluation of the Advanced Diploma in Nursing (ADN) undertaken by the Department of Education, would provide the information needed to resolve some of the issues.

The evaluation encompassed various perspectives relating to the organisation and content of the courses. The main conclusions of the study were that the ADN courses were viewed in a generally favourable way by the majority of nurses who participated in the survey, and that the courses have positive effects on the levels of knowledge, ability and performance of the majority of entrants. The section relating to midwifery was inconclusive and gave no clear direction to possible changes.

Officers of this department recently met with representatives of the New Zealand Nurses' Association, members of the NZNA midwives special interest section, and representatives of the Department of Education. Recommendations regarding the preparation of midwives have been approved by the Minister of Health, and a joint press statement from the Ministers of Health, Education and Womens Affairs will shortly be released.

Direct entry into a midwifery training course is not supported by the Department. It goes against government policy for nursing education, which is that nursing preparation should be comprehensively based, with specialist preparation built on top of that base. The concept of direct entry is a United Kingdom and European approach, that has historically evolved to meet those countries needs.

This department is concerned that women receive the best possible care. Childbearing is an episode in the life of a woman, who is also part of a family and a community which experience all the health problems of the population at large. A broadly based nursing education provides the knowledge and skills to practice a holistic approach to health.

The educational basis of midwifery was improved when it was transferred from 6 month apprentice style hospital based programme to a 12 month student based course within the technical institute system.

There will undoubtedly be some changes made within the technical institute midwifery course, and we should be in a better position to advise you on these in a few weeks time.

Thank you for your interest.

Yours sincerely

pp. Sally Shaw  
Acting Assistant Secretary  
Workforce Development