

5th February 2021

Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE)

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The New Zealand College of Midwives is the professional organisation for midwifery. Our members are employed and self-employed and collectively represent over 90% of the practising midwives in this country. There are approximately 3,000 midwives who hold an Annual Practising Certificate (APC). These midwives provide maternity care to, on average, 60,000 women and babies each year. New Zealand has a unique and efficient maternity service model which centres care around the needs of the woman and her baby.

Midwives undertake a four-year equivalent undergraduate degree to become registered followed by a first year of practice program that includes full mentoring by senior midwives. The undergraduate curriculum meets all international regulatory and education standards. Midwives are authorised prescribers in relation to their Scope of Practice as determined by the Midwifery Council.

Midwives provide an accessible and primary health care service for women in the community within a continuity of carer model as Lead Maternity Carers. Midwives can also choose to work within secondary and tertiary maternity facilities, providing essential care to women with complex maternity needs.

The College offers information, education and advice to women, midwives, district health boards, health and social service agencies and the Ministry of Health regarding midwifery and maternity issues. Midwives interface with a multitude of other health professionals and agencies to support women to achieve the optimum outcome for their pregnancies, health and wellbeing

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Health, Community and Social Services Workforce Development Council

Reform of Vocational Education (RoVE)

WDCConsultation@tec.govt.nz

The New Zealand College of Midwives (the College) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the Reform of Vocational Education.

The College understands this consultation is only covering three aspects related to the Health, Community and Social Services Workforce Development Council (WDC) document. Rather than specifically responding to the consultation questions we are using this opportunity to request further information to clarify some aspects of the RoVe proposal. We are also providing some specific information about midwifery education and the profession to identify the differences between midwifery, and other health workforces which may be educated in tertiary institutions. Midwifery is a regulated profession which is required to practice autonomously in all settings. Midwives are accountable to the public, women, the midwifery profession, their regulatory body (the Midwifery Council) and various other statutory agencies (such as the Health and Disability Commissioner) for their practice.

1. Although the scope of the reform states that degree study is excluded (p. 5), other sections of the document appear to indicate that higher education is included (P810200). As the midwifery schools offer programmes which comprise both undergraduate degree and postgraduate degree study, we are requesting clarity about their inclusion, or omission in this reform.
2. In regards to the industry coverage of the WDC, midwifery as a profession in Aotearoa New Zealand encompasses some significant differences compared to other health professions, and midwifery leader / lecturer representation on a WDC is desirable.
3. Midwifery is a relatively small profession and midwifery schools within tertiary institutions are also relatively small (in comparison with the overall size of the institutions). Midwifery programmes have specific needs, and the College and the

midwifery education sector have expressed concern that changes (which may be intended to impact others programmes) could have unintended detrimental flow on effects to midwifery programmes.

4. The Midwifery profession is facing critical issues in Aotearoa; a significant workforce shortage, and a pressing need to address the disproportionate underrepresentation of Māori and Pasifika midwives within the workforce. The undergraduate midwifery education sector has a large role to play in developing and implementing the necessary solutions to these issues, which cannot be addressed by the RoVE proposals without significant sector involvement.
5. The Midwifery Council sets the competencies and the standards for pre-registration education for midwifery and not the educational institutions providing the degree programmes. The Midwifery Council has a range of regulatory functions such as approval of undergraduate educational programmes.
6. The Midwifery Council is also responsible for registering midwives, issuing practicing certificates and is responsible for the protection of the health and safety of women and babies during the childbirth process by providing mechanisms to ensure that midwives are competent and fit to practise midwifery.
7. The Midwifery Schools in Aotearoa are highly engaged with the sector already and have well established relationships with DHBs and other relevant entities. There are regular collaborations between midwifery school staff, the College and practicing midwives.

The College looks forward to receiving further information about this reform process and the answers to our questions. As described above, there are some significant differences between the midwifery profession and other health professions which are educated within tertiary institutions. Because of these differences the College recommends that midwifery representation on a workforce development council is necessary to ensure the needs of midwifery education and the profession are met. The Midwifery Schools are a key stakeholder group in terms of decision making about midwifery workforce education.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide this information.

Ngā mihi



Chief Executive

New Zealand College of Midwives | Te Kāreti O Nga Kaiwhakawhanau Ki Aotearoa