



25 February 2019

Hon Greg Hunt MP  
Minister for Health  
PO Box 6022  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

Email: [Minister.Hunt@health.gov.au](mailto:Minister.Hunt@health.gov.au)

Dear Minister Hunt,

### **National Strategic Approach to Maternity Services**

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) has welcomed the opportunity to participate in the development of the new Strategic Directions for Australian Maternity Services (NSAMS) framework. We have provided a representative for the overarching Advisory Group and responses/feedback at all the public consultations. The consultation process for the development of this framework has been extensive and highly inclusive. Our Branches and midwife members have contributed to the consultation workshops around the country, webinars, on-line survey and both ANMF national submissions.

However, despite our extensive involvement in the consultation, the evidence provided, and consistent feedback in support of the model of care, *'continuity of midwifery carer'* has been omitted from the draft of the NSAMS framework.

The ANMF is Australia's largest national union and professional nursing and midwifery organisation representing the largest number of midwives in the country, with over 20,000 members registered as midwives. This is more than two thirds of all registered midwives employed in Australia, according to the total number of 26,369 shown in the Australian Government Department of Health National Health Workforce Data Set Midwives 2017 Fact Sheet.<sup>1</sup>

The ANMF is concerned that, without the specific inclusion of the *'continuity of midwifery carer'* model in the proposed framework, the current direction of planning for maternity services for women in Australia is contrary to what is best for women as demonstrated by international evidence.

*'Continuity of midwifery carer'* models, where women are provided with a known midwife during pregnancy, birthing and the postnatal period, have been well researched both in Australia and internationally, and are supported by evidence. Research shows that these models lead to better outcomes for women.<sup>2,3</sup> *'Continuity to midwifery carer'* is especially important for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women, their families and all women living in rural areas.

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<sup>1</sup> NHWDS Nursing and Midwifery Fact Sheets 2017:

<https://hwd.health.gov.au/webapi/customer/documents/factsheets/2017/Midwives%202017%20-%20NHWDS%20factsheet.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> Sandall J, Soltani H, Gates S, Shennan A, Devane D. Midwife-led continuity models versus other models of care for childbearing women. Cochrane Database Syst Rev 2016; 4: Cd004667

<sup>3</sup> Tracy SK, Hartz DL, Tracy MB, et al. Caseload midwifery care versus standard maternity care for women of any risk: M@NGO, a randomised controlled trial. The Lancet 2013; 382(9906): 1723-32.



Only 8% of women can access continuity of care midwifery caseload models nationally, with demand across the country far exceeding the services available. '*Continuity of midwifery carer*' should be accessible for every woman in Australia. It is not intended to deny women other options, however, these other options already exist.

The new NSAMS framework should emphasise the importance of ensuring women have access to their preferred model of care, models which are both cost effective and result in better outcomes. This framework is an opportunity to lead the way, apply the evidence to policy, and place women at the centre of care. The framework needs to name '*continuity of midwifery carer*', as a driver for embedding evidence-based practice nationally.

The ANMF is committed to working with the Australian Government to ensure the new strategic direction for Australian maternity services is a true reflection of its title: *Towards woman-centred care*, for the benefit of all women requiring maternity services in Australia. The inclusion of '*continuity of midwifery carer*' is an essential step in achieving this end.

Should you require further information on this matter, please contact Lori-Anne Sharp, Assistant Federal Secretary or Julianne Bryce, Senior Federal Professional Officer, ANMF Federal Office, Melbourne on 03 9602 8500, [lsharp@anmf.org.au](mailto:lsharp@anmf.org.au) or [jbryce@anmf.org.au](mailto:jbryce@anmf.org.au).

Thank you for your consideration of this issue. We look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

**Annie Butler**  
Federal Secretary