

STUDENTS – THE FUTURE
OF MIDWIFERY ISSUE

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midwifery

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news



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Cover Image

Midwifery Student Caitlin Hall and Midwife
Jessica McKenzie with mother and baby



The ACM would like to acknowledge
the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
custodians across the nation on whose
lands our midwives reside and
work and honour the collective elders
past and present.

President's Report

Terri Barrett, ACM President



Welcome to the winter edition of Australian Midwifery News. I sit here writing on a brisk day in May, reflecting on this year's International Day of the Midwife. As I predicted and feared 2019 is rapidly disappearing.

I know that many of you celebrated this special day with colleagues at workplace events, glamorous award ceremonies and of course the traditional IDM Day Walks. To those who have been recognised at celebrations we say congratulations and thank you for raising the profile of midwives within the community. For those of you who spent the day doing what midwives do every day, providing safe, quality care to families, we recognise you and acknowledge that every day you make such a difference to the women and families in your care.

This year the International Confederation of Midwives' theme, 'Midwives: Defenders of Women's Rights', is so significant in highlighting the vital role that midwives play in protecting the rights of women, girls and midwives by ensuring they can exercise their full human rights, particularly their reproductive and sexual health rights in their communities of practice.

The ICM theme has worldwide relevance and alongside our midwifery colleagues ACM celebrates and acknowledges the midwives fighting patriarchy, in countries, facilities and communities worldwide. Australia would be seen by most as a country with a first class, universal healthcare system, and yet we know that there are many instances where women's access to equity in regards to safe, quality healthcare is completely unacceptable.

There are worrying signs across the world in relation to policies that directly dismantle the human rights and dignity of women, with access to abortion under threat in a number of states in the United States. Here at home in Australia the risk to homebirth continues. I strongly suspect that we can thank the federal election for the temporary extension to the exemption to the requirement for Professional Indemnity Insurance for midwives undertaking homebirths. Despite every indication (again) that there would be no (further) extension I suspect that Prime Minister Morrison wisely decided that he did not want women's reproductive rights to become an election issue.

Whilst this is of course a positive outcome in that women will continue to have access to midwives should they choose to birth at home, we still have no permanent solution to this issue and will be faced with the same situation in December 2021. We need to maintain our attention in this space and ensure that state, territory and federal governments are in no doubt that we see this as a fundamental human right and will take whatever action necessary to see women

do not lose the right to receive care from a midwife when birthing at home.

IDM is not only about midwives being defenders. It is also an opportunity to highlight the right for a midwife to practise in a safe and enabling environment. Common in many workplaces is the abuse and bullying of midwives by colleagues and the abuse of those who stand up against such behaviour. There are many more stories of abuse that go unheard and unaddressed. There is still much work for us as a professional body to ensure that all midwives in Australia have the right to provide care across their full scope of practice.

On a very positive note, ACM did receive correspondence on IDM from Vijay Roach, the current RANZCOG President, recognising, acknowledging and valuing the collaborative care that midwives provide to women, before, during and after pregnancy. This was a lovely surprise and we will be seeking an opportunity to meet in the near future to discuss the resurgence of the Joint Committee on Maternity Services (ACM, RACGP, and RANZCOG).

With the election now decided we will be working hard to influence the final document of the National Strategic Approach to Maternity Services and work with key stakeholders to ensure that once endorsed the document has impact and influence in how maternity services are delivered.

Some of you may be aware that our CEO, Ann Kinnear, has advised her intention to retire later this year. Ann's contribution to the College since taking up the CEO position has been exceptional, leading the ACM through unification and into the amazing organisation it is today. She has been an outstanding leader for the ACM, recognised as a Fellow of the Australian College of Midwives at last year's Awards. The Board are actively recruiting to the CEO position as I write. Whilst Ann will be greatly missed we wish her all the best for the next chapter of her life.

As a Board our focus is maintained on the Strategic Plan. We met in May and completed a skills matrix to identify the needs of our next Community Director. Vince Kelly, our very first Community Director has been an invaluable member of the Board and finishes in November. He has been instrumental in the maturation of the Board and his contribution will be greatly missed.

In the near future we will be formally reviewing achievements against our current Strategic Plan and looking to refreshing our direction, developing a Plan from 2020 – 2023. Your Council representatives will assist us with this important work, ensuring that the direction of the ACM remains in tune with midwives in all states and territories.

Council are currently very busy considering nominations for the ACM Annual Awards which will be held in Melbourne at the Arts Centre on July 26th 2019. This year we have added