



17 July 2020

Ms Samantha Diplock
Assistant Director, Maternity Policy Team,
Chronic Disease Management Section, Health Services Division,
Australian Government Department of Health
Expert Working Group Secretariat
Review of the Pregnancy Care Guidelines
Maternity Services Policy

Via email: maternity@health.gov.au

Dear Ms Diplock,

Public Consultation for the Review of the Australian Government Department of Health *Pregnancy Care Guidelines*

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback to the public consultation on the Australian Government Department of Health *Pregnancy Care Guidelines* currently under review, with specific reference to the sections relating to nutrition, nutritional supplements, physical activity, weight assessment and monitoring during pregnancy.

The Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (ANMF) is Australia's largest national union and professional nursing and midwifery organisation. In collaboration with the ANMF's eight state and territory branches, we represent the professional, industrial and political interests of 285,000 nurses, midwives and carers across the country.

Our members work in the public and private health, aged care and disability sectors across a wide variety of urban, rural and remote locations. We work with them to improve their ability to deliver safe and best practice care in each and every one of these settings, fulfil their professional goals, and achieve a healthy work/life balance.

Our strong and growing membership and integrated role as both a professional and industrial organisation provide us with a complete understanding of all aspects of the nursing and midwifery professions and see us uniquely placed to defend and advance our professions.

Through our work with members, we aim to strengthen the contribution of nursing and midwifery to improving Australia's health and aged care systems, and the health of our national and global communities.

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ANMF Journals

Australian Nursing and
Midwifery Journal (ANMJ)
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Australian Journal of
Advanced Nursing (AJAN)
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ABN 41 816 898 298



Midwives and Nurses Providing Care for Pregnant Women

The ANMF represents the largest number of midwives in the country, with more than 20,000 midwife members, which accounts for over 75% of the 26,369 midwives employed in Australia.¹ We also represent the interests of maternal, child and family health nurses and nurses working in general practice, both areas of nursing practice where our members are providing pregnancy care and support for women and their families.

Midwives are acknowledged as being the primary care provider of antenatal, labour and birth and postnatal care for mothers and babies. They work in consultation with women and their families to offer a frequent source of health information during pregnancy and throughout the continuum of midwifery care. They use current research for evidence-based practice when providing antenatal care to educate women and their families to optimise best outcomes, such as improving compliance with weight assessment, management and advising on optimal nutritional recommendations. The association between a healthy diet, appropriate nutritional supplementation and physical exercise in lowering the risk of complications in pregnancy is widely established.

Maternal, child and family health nurses work in partnership with families to care for babies and children until they start school. Their scope of practice includes the provision of information, support and advice on parenting, development and learning, child health, family health and wellbeing, safety, immunisation, breastfeeding, nutrition and family planning. They are well positioned to provide education based on current research and evidence-based resources for pregnant women using their service.

Nurses and midwives in general practice also play an important role in the provision of care to pregnant women. Their scope of practice in this setting includes: health promotion, illness prevention, education and research, population and public health, antenatal and postnatal care, and child and family health. They provide opportunistic education using current research and evidence-based resources to inform their practice when caring for pregnant women.

Revised *Pregnancy Care Guidelines*

The ANMF has considered the revised *Pregnancy Care Guidelines*, and would like to commend the Expert Working Group on their thorough, detailed and comprehensive work. These guidelines aim to improve quality of care and maternal and neonatal outcomes by ensuring pregnant women and their families are receiving the most current evidence-based information. This will assist women and their partners/ families to make informed choices regarding their health and the health of their unborn child, to achieve the best possible outcome for all.

The proposed guidelines are clear and the content relevant to assist midwives and nurses in the provision of antenatal education and care. The structure is succinct allowing health practitioners to

¹ Australian Government Department of Health National Health Workforce Data Set Midwives Fact Sheets (2017) <https://hwd.health.gov.au/webapi/customer/documents/factsheets/2017/Midwives%202017%20-%20NHWDS%20factsheet.pdf> [accessed 8 July 2020]



clearly understand the evidence base, recommendations and practice points underpinning the guidelines. The revised guidelines give due consideration to cultural and other dietary requirements. These guidelines will continue to be an important evidence-based resource for midwives; maternal, child and family health nurses; and nurses and midwives in general practice, in their work, providing care and support for pregnant women and their families.

Implementation and accessibility of the *Pregnancy Care Guidelines* to Health Practitioners

To facilitate health promotion, these revised guidelines will be an important resource for all health practitioners. A comprehensive communication strategy will be required to ensure the guidelines are freely available and accessible for implementation in practice. Once finalised, the ANMF is well positioned to assist the Department of Health to communicate the revised *Pregnancy Care Guidelines* to our midwife and nurse members.

We appreciate the opportunity to participate in this consultation process and provide our feedback on behalf of our membership. Should you require further information on this matter, please contact Julianne Bryce, Senior Federal Professional Officer, ANMF Federal Office, Melbourne on 0409 221 699 or jbryce@anmf.org.au.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Annie Butler'.

Annie Butler
Federal Secretary