



NEW ZEALAND COLLEGE OF MIDWIVES (INC)

7 February 2012

The following comments can be attributed to the NZ College of Midwives CEO, Karen Guilliland:

“The College of Midwives believes Piri Weepu’s role modelling for fathers provides one of life’s treasures. We applaud and support his commitment to the smokefree campaign and would want nothing to interfere with the essential health messages he is modelling. It is concerning therefore to see this very important message being lost in the media coverage over the last few days. Obviously Piri Weepu is a caring father in a highly supportive whanau. The College of Midwives deeply regrets any implication that we were commenting on him or his families choices as we did not and were not.

“Midwives are health professionals committed to giving essential health information and messages to parents, assisting them to make the best choices when it comes to the health and wellbeing of their babies. We know that a smokefree environment provides the best health platform for our babies. Likewise, where possible, breastfeeding a newborn baby provides the best nutritional start in life. As health professionals midwives have an obligation to provide all of this information to parents. Therefore, when asked to comment on the Ministry’s smokefree health promotion strategy, the College supported other groups in pointing out that the messages about smoking needed to be clear and supportive of all the Ministry’s health messages, including breastfeeding.

“We also know that not all mums will be able to breastfeed for a number of reasons. It is with sincere regret that the consultation process used to ensure the smokefree message aligned with other public health messages such as breastfeeding, was largely ignored by the media coverage. This has created an upsetting diversion from the main message with some members of the public left with the perception that health professionals are unsupportive of dad’s bottle feeding their babies. Of course midwives and other health professionals support all families, whatever their circumstances, to do their best for their babies, including sharing the feeding times when breastfeeding is not possible. The help that a loving dad can bring to the mother and their new family is considerable and very welcome by everyone.”

ENDS