

April 13, 2011

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN;

I am writing this submission as a consumer of Australia's maternity system. I am pregnant with my second child and am planning to birth at home with the assistance of an independent midwife.

It has come to my attention that the current registration situation is unfair on professional midwives. In the event that a homebirth midwife has a complaint filed against them, conditions and restrictions prevent the midwife from practising to their professional capacity prior to any investigations taking place. During the preliminary stage of an investigation the onus is on the midwife to challenge the decision and show that they are 'not guilty'. No conditions should be placed on any midwife before an investigation has taken place – processing complaints in this manner is unfair, unjust and unethical.

As a consumer, my understanding of the purpose of interim conditions is to protect the clients of a midwife suspected of improper conduct; not to punish without determination. The imposition of conditions leaves the midwife with an unfair presumption of guilt rather than a presumption of innocence. Investigations into complaints can be lengthy, and to impose conditions during preliminary investigations will leave a homebirth midwife without access to income from her profession.

Similar to many mothers who plan homebirth with the assistance of a midwife, I am concerned over the unintended impacts the current situation may have on my upcoming birth. Conditions in place that prevent a midwife from continuing to attend homebirths could potentially leave me, or any other pregnant woman, without their chosen health care provider at any stage of pregnancy. This can have significant adverse impacts on me, my unborn baby and my entire family.

Continuity of care is one of the primary benefits of homebirth midwife-led care, and such a restriction on practising harms the mother. Should my midwife find her registration under restriction this would exclude her from continuing to be my main care provider and as I live in rural NSW and have limited access to homebirth providers, this will force me to birth unassisted at home or into the overcrowded hospital system.

As a homebirth client, I would prefer to have my midwife continue to provide the service I have entrusted her with, with alternative forms of supervision if the Nurses Board considers this necessary for ongoing safety of practice.

Midwifery and homebirth is not a crime. I request that an urgent review of this process takes place immediately and to ensure balance is restored.

Yours truly,

Shayla Razga