

Senate Finance and Public Administration Committees PO Box 6100 Parliament  
House Canberra ACT 2600 Australia

Re:

To whom it may concern, I am writing to register my deep dismay with the current situation regarding the treatment of privately practicing midwives. I am aware that since the most recent legislation and the creation of a national registering body, several midwives have been reported to the national regulation agency and had conditions placed on their registration.

There are two major problems with the current complaint process.

Complaints against privately practicing midwives would appear to be of a vexatious or trouble making nature. As these complaints are usually generated by hospital staff when a woman is transferred into hospital in labour, the board needs to ensure that its processes do not encourage a McCarthy style reporting culture, as it currently seems to be when midwifery practice is merely different, not unsafe. Transferring in a timely manner is important for mother and baby safety. Both women and midwives need to be sure that they are able to transfer seamlessly without fears of being reported for seeking to birth at home.

That the board is placing restrictions on practice and registration for those midwives with complaints lodged against them before any investigation and decision is made about the cause of the complaint. This situation is completely unacceptable. Placing conditions on a midwife's practice before any investigation is clearly biased, unethical and completely judgmental. The women who have employed these midwives are disadvantaged by these restrictions; the midwives are left without income and redress. This process is one of 'guilty until proven innocent' and is contrary to everything that Australian law stands for. Obviously, if the midwife has done something criminal like practicing under the influence of drugs or alcohol or has sexually abused someone, then there is cause for legal action.

However, given that the current complaints are not regarding illegal activities, it is obvious that the situation by which privately practicing (independent) midwives are being processed if there has been a complaint against them is inappropriate. This current situation is totally unacceptable, unfair, unjust and unethical for privately practicing midwives and the women/families who employ them.

No conditions should be placed on any midwife before an investigation into the complaint has taken place and a decision made. The way inappropriate way that private midwives are being hounded in Australia is reminiscent of the middle ages in Europe and the 'Hammer of Witches'. I request that an urgent review of this process takes place immediately. Carolyn Hastie RM, RN, IBCLC, Master of Philosophy (midwifery), Graduate Diploma of Primary Health Care, Certificate of Sexual and Family Health (FPAWA) Fellow ACM, PhD student