

Senate inquiry into the administration of health practitioner registration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency(AHPRA)

Submission_ - prepared by Elizabeth Sheppard on 12th April,2011.

Terms of reference- in this submission I will be referring to the following highlighted points:

On 23 March 2011 the Senate referred the following matter to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee for inquiry and report by 13 May 2011:

The administration of health practitioner registration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency(AHPRA) and related matters, including but not limited to:

(A) capacity and ability of AHPRA to implement and administer the national registration of health practitioners;

(B) performance of AHPRA in administering the registration of health practitioners;

(C) impact of AHPRA processes and administration on health practitioners, patients, hospitals and service providers;

(D) implications of any maladministration of the registration process for Medicare benefits and private health insurance claims;

(E) legal liability and risk for health practitioners, hospitals and service providers resulting from any implications of the revised registration process;

(F) liability for financial and economic loss incurred by health practitioners, patients and service providers resulting from any implications of the revisited registration process;

(G) response times to individual registration enquires;

(H) AHPRA's complaints handling process

(I) budget and financial viability of AHPRA; and

(J) any other related matters

I am writing this submission out of concern for the lack of birthing options in my local community(), after the suspension of our local private midwife's registration, and the lengthy time frame over which her investigation has spanned.

Referring to points (C, F and G) in the Terms of Reference above I would like to point out that the NMBA have taken over 10 months to investigate allegations made against our private practice midwife. During this time both the local community and our private practice midwife have been disadvantaged. Firstly the private practice midwife has been deprived of her career and livelihood. The economic ramifications for the midwife are obvious and indeed the NMBA/AHPRA should hold accountability for these ramifications. The protracted time frame over which her investigation has spanned seems unreasonably lengthy. Whilst it is the role of the nurses board to protect the public, therein lies a responsibility to the public in a small country community to provide women with birthing options. As a member of this community I made a well informed decision as to the best birthing option for myself and my child. I worry for the women seeking the same services in the area. Depriving a small community of such an experienced midwife (30 years) and therefore limiting women's birth options with such a lengthy investigation timeframe seems an impingement on basic human rights.

The transitioning of the NMBA and AHPRA into the new governance role may partly be blamed for this exceedingly lengthy investigation process. Certainly these investigation processes need to be scrutinised in the future to ensure processes do not continue to impact on rural areas where services are limited.

Yours sincerely,

Elizabeth Sheppard.