

13/04/2011

Re: Inquiry into the administration of health practitioner registration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA)

To whom it may concern,

I write to you with grave concern for the unjust and unethical treatment of privately practicing midwives who have had their rights to practice within the community withdrawn **without due investigation**.

Likewise the transition from state to national registration and governance of health care practitioners has seen the processing of claims against midwives in private practice extend well beyond the 12 month mark, the bureaucratic abyss that is the current complaints protocol of AHPRA is totally unacceptable.

As a midwife in private practice I seek urgent review and remand of the complaints process currently employed by AHPRA. As a profession we have recently experienced the unacceptable events of several largely baseless complaint claims stripping practitioners of their right to continue business, effectively leaving the midwife guilty until proven innocent without opportunity for recourse.

Aside from the unnecessary emotional and financial havoc inflicted upon the lives and families of the midwives, the women who are left without a care provider are immediately faced with the extreme risk of psychosocial and emotional distress. The impact of 1) the loss of a known care provider and 2) choice of place of birth upon childbearing women cannot and must not be underestimated – **the public must be protected**.

Midwives must not have restrictions placed upon their practice without due investigation and fair hearing. Harsh financial and professional penalties must be applied to those individuals and organisations found to be making false or misleading complaints claims against any health care practitioner.

It is an extremely uncertain climate to be practicing the art and science of private practice midwifery; those of us that continue to do so are becoming increasingly vulnerable to excessive, unjust and unethical professional persecution. I implore you to protect the rights and wellbeing of the public through ensuring the fair, ethical and timely processing of complaints pertaining to privately practicing midwives – **innocent until proven guilty**.

Yours Sincerely,

Melody Bourne
Midwife in Private Practice