

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

Submission - Prepared by Helen Smith on 13 April 2011.

As a woman who has chosen to give birth to my second child at home, I am very concerned that the homebirth midwife I chose has been suspended from practicing for almost a year without access to timely natural justice.

I feel two separate issues are at stake here: the right to practice one's profession, and the impact a lengthy decision making process has on practitioners and communities.

I understand that the nurses board exists to protect the public, however I do not feel that the length of the suspension without access to natural justice is fair for the independent midwife. My understanding is that she has practiced as a midwife for 30 years - and as a homebirth midwife for 20 years. She has a length and breadth of experience that is of great value to the profession of midwifery. She is passionate about birth, and helping women to birth safely. Through a lengthy suspension, she has lost the right to follow her passion and use her knowledge. No doubt she has also experienced enormous personal costs, through loss of income and loss of connection to her profession.

I live in rural Victoria, and the impact of losing an experienced independent midwife has significant impacts on the community. Health practitioners such as GP's and independent midwives are already stretched. It is in the community's interest to have investigations handled quickly to enable greater access to a greater range of health professionals.

During the pregnancy and birth of my second child, I was cared for by an independent midwife who showed enormous knowledge, compassion and professionalism. I believe that the AHPRA should review their processes in order to show the respect and timely due process that such an experienced and respected practitioner deserves.