

RE: Administration of health practitioner registration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA).

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to you today to complain about the process in which complaints against midwives are dealt with. The automatic guilty until proven innocent label is not acceptable and the timeframe in which investigations are taking place needs to be urgently overhauled. The current system in place is unwarranted and unethical to the midwife whose livelihood and reputation may be irreparably damaged and to their clients who will be left in the lurch without continuity of care during their pregnancy and birth. I'm sure you are already aware that most of the complaints against midwives, in this case independent midwives, are placed by doctors and hospital staff when a midwife and a labouring woman transfer from a homebirth. When a woman and midwife transfer from a homebirth this shows the hospital being utilised in an appropriate way, and demonstrates the level of care and professionalism by a midwife. If this current trend of imposing harsh interim conditions of a midwife's registration continues women and midwives may become increasingly cautious about their decision to transfer for fear of retribution. Speaking from a personal point of view, I have experienced both a hospital birth (caesarean section) and a homebirth. After my exceedingly positive homebirth experience I would not choose to go to hospital for my subsequent births unless medically required. The care I received during my pregnancy, birth and postnatal period was nothing short of exemplary and I would be happy to pay for my midwife's service out of my pocket many times over. If the scenario were to arise where I was pregnant and my midwife could no longer care for me I would prefer to birth at home unassisted and I'm sure I am not alone in these sentiments. Women deserve to have a full range of birthing options available to them, including having their choice of midwife to be with them if they choose to do so. The process of complaints needs to be investigated thoroughly as vilifying a midwife whilst an investigation is pending is not a suitable decision and affects the way in which midwives in Australia practice, and the choices that women make regarding their births. Thank you very much for considering my letter.

Regards,