

12 April 2011

**Re. Submission to the Senate Inquiry into the Administration of health
practitioner registration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency
(AHPRA)**

To the Committee Chair and Committee Members,

I write with regard to the processing of complaints against independent midwives. As it currently stands, if an independent midwife has had formal complaints made against him/her to the Nursing and Midwifery Board, the board can decide to place interim conditions on his/her practice, prior to conducting an investigation into the allegations. For independent midwives, the interim conditions stipulate s/he must only practice in a hospital under supervision. The investigation is then referred to the HCCC and the conditions remain on the midwives' registration until the investigation is complete. Often it is the case that investigations begin up to a year after the interim conditions are placed.

This process assumes the independent midwife to be guilty of the allegations before an investigation has begun, the opposite in principle to the legal system. It can also have potentially significant ramifications for independent midwives' income and job security. For the clients of independent midwives, this could jeopardise the pre-natal and post-natal care they receive, and may mean their midwife cannot be present for the birth.

I request that an urgent review of this process takes place immediately, with the outcome that complaints made against midwives are investigated prior to any judgments and action taken against the midwife.

Sincerely,

Kathryn Bown