

13th April 2011

Attention:

Senate Finance and Public administration Committees

Parliament House

Canberra ACT

fpa.sen@aph.gov.au

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

To whom it may concern,

This submission is to urge you to reconsider the way complaints are handled against independent and privately practising midwives of Australia. The current situation of complaint handling by which independent midwives are held against is totally unacceptable, unfair, unjust and unethical.

I understand that some privately practising midwives are unable to continue to attend women in a homebirth setting due to restrictions put on them after a complaint has been made. No conditions should be placed on any midwife before an investigation has taken place.

I am writing to request that you think seriously about how the current procedure of complaint handling, via the Australian Practitioner Health Regulation Agency (APHRA) affects all health professionals, particularly the self employed independent midwives of Australia. If a privately practising (not employed by a hospital/birth centre) midwife is treated guilty until an investigation is held this will leave them unable to attend births with women, they have been seeing for many months. These pregnant women do not need the extra stress of finding a new midwife to attend them at home, in many cases there are not any other homebirth midwives servicing their area. Birth choices are important to women, and they should have the freedom to birth in their homes with a qualified midwife if they chose, respecting their human right of autonomy over their own bodies.

I am personally concerned that at any time a midwife could find her registration under restriction and this would exclude her from continuing to be the primary care provider for a woman choosing to birth at home. This will force the pregnant woman into the hospital system to birth, or birth unassisted at home. No one should be forced into a decision that they are not comfortable with, just because they are part of a minority group that chooses to birth at home, their midwife should still be able to attend them until a final decision is found, after an investigation is carried out.

I request that an urgent review of this process takes place immediately and that some balance be restored. Midwifery and homebirth is not a crime.

Respectfully,

Christine Grainger