

Senate Inquiry into the administration of health practitioner registration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) Submission - Prepared by [REDACTED] on 9 April 2011. Terms of Reference – In this submission I will be referring to the following highlighted points: On 23 March 2011 the Senate referred the following matter to the Finance and Public Administration References Committee for inquiry and report by 13 May 2011: The administration of health practitioner registration by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) and related matters, including but not limited to: (a) capacity and ability of AHPRA to implement and administer the national registration of health practitioners; (b) performance of AHPRA in administering the registration of health practitioners; (c) impact of AHPRA processes and administration on health practitioners, patients, hospitals and service providers; (d) implications of any maladministration of the registration process for Medicare benefits and private health insurance claims; (e) legal liability and risk for health practitioners, hospitals and service providers resulting from any implications of the revised registration process; (f) liability for financial and economic loss incurred by health practitioners, patients and service providers resulting from any implications of the revised registration process; (g) response times to individual registration enquiries; (h) AHPRA's complaints handling processes; (i) budget and financial viability of AHPRA; and (j) any other related matters. I am writing this submission out of concern for the lack of birthing options available to women in my community, the suspension of our local private practice midwife's registration, and the protracted time frame over which her investigation has spanned.

Referring to point (c) in the Terms of Reference above I would like to express my disbelief in the fact that the NMBA after suspending the registration of my sister have taken over 10 months to investigate allegations made against her, a private practice midwife. The uncertainty and lack of in depth information regarding the allegations has been both frustrating and stressful. For [REDACTED] it has been a very frustrating and stressful as she feels she can't move on with her life until this is resolved. It is a human rights issue, to deny someone the right to employment.

This has also impacted greatly on those in the local community for whom homebirth is their first option. It is denying woman the right to choose how, where and with whom they will birth. Once again I believe this is a human rights issue.

Many people within the community have written letters of concern to AHPRA regarding this situation, not one letter has been acknowledge, even after several request for a response.– Point (g) and (h). Why hasn't my sister been given more information regarding her case and more informed updates of how the investigation is going? Why weren't the communities letters acknowledged, considering the Board meets every month? Why hasn't action been taken to resolve this investigation sooner? It is my understanding that [REDACTED] registration was suspended with virtually no notice, and she was given no opportunity to defend or clarify her actions. At the time, she had many women booked to birth with her. This was very difficult for both the midwife and the families, some were due to birth within days and were forced to make alternative arrangements, at a very crucial and vulnerable time. Not to mention the added stress afforded to the couple who are grieving the loss of their baby, due to the dragging out of this investigation process. How difficult this situation must be for them. Referring to point

(f) Our midwife has not only had her career taken away, but her livelihood as well. As a sole parent, with a dependent teenager at home, it must be very difficult for her to manage financially. AHPRA has complete lack of concern for the effect it has on her livelihood. If someone's has their registration suspended there should be a time limit on how long it takes to investigate and reach a resolution to the issues that brought about the suspension in order for them to return to work or look for other work alternatives, it is a human rights issue to deny someone a livelihood. She is the sole provider, being a single mother [REDACTED] who she must support and educate on her own. [REDACTED] has also had the added expense of hefty legal fees related to this never ending investigation. [REDACTED] has been a registered midwife for more than 30 years, and has been attending women/families birthing at home for around 20 years. She has practised in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] for the past 8 – 9 years and has attended well over 100 births. She is well respected and widely sought after, within the district for her skills, professionalism and exceptional care and her midwifery services have been sorely missed. Living with my sister, I can testify to the exceptional service she provides the woman and families who engage her care. In March last year she was inducted onto the [REDACTED] 'Honour Role' acknowledging her excellent community service in midwifery. [REDACTED] is a very progressive community where homebirth is a very common and accepted birthing choice, however experienced private midwives are very scarce and women now have either had to travel away from home to access midwives, employ midwives for Melbourne (2 hours away), choose to birth in hospital, or choose to birth unattended or with a doula. Choices they would not be making or have to make if [REDACTED] was available to support them. I have been witness to impact this has had on [REDACTED] and for the women seeking her services, and cannot believe the treatment and complete lack of professional respect she has had bestowed upon her by NMBA/AHPRA, one cannot help but wonder if it is based on discrimination because she is a homebirth midwife. Where is democratic process and the right to be innocent until proven guilty

As a registered nurse myself, I am very concerned at the power the board has over my livelihood and that they can keep nursing professionals in a state of suspended animation for as long as they wish with no regard to their livelihood, without giving them the opportunity to defend themselves. This is a 'Human Rights' issue. I am aware that the NMBA and AHPRA are very new and transitioning into the new governance role, and this change over to National Registration, may be partly to blame for some of the confusion, delays and incompetence, many have been experiencing – Points (c) (f) (g) and (h)