Review of the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme for health professions

Submission by the Australian College of Midwives Consumer Advisory Committee

October 2014

The Australian College of Midwives Consumer Advisory Committee feel very strongly that a midwifery board, separate to the current nursing and midwifery board be created. As consumers of midwifery care we engage and utilise the skills of midwives specifically during our pregnancies and the birth of our children. Other health professionals such as nurses or doctors may also be involved in our care in some way but we engage primarily in midwifery care. We support midwives as a profession which is autonomous to nursing and in light of this we ask for a separate midwifery board where practice issues of midwives are assessed and regulated by a full board, which is both credible and cognisant of the issues in the provision of contemporary, safe maternity care.

Consumers have benefited greatly from the ability for eligible, privately practicing midwives to access Medicare and work autonomously. These advances allow more birthing options for women who choose private midwifery care and homebirth. We feel that it is vital that these midwives are regulated by a board which has a full and specialist knowledge in these areas of private practice and homebirth. This is a specialty midwifery area and consumers need to know that their midwives will have complaints against them managed in an appropriate and timely manner which includes the application of the principle of natural justice i.e. to be judged by peers who are competent to make a judgement. This will be better achieved by a midwifery board which has an understanding of the regulatory context for midwives in private practice providing a fee-for-service model.

As engaged maternity consumers, the consumer advisory committee advocates for a high level of consumer involvement in the development of the midwifery profession. A midwifery board with community representatives who are aware of the relevant issues for childbearing women and families is vital for ensuring accurate assessment of practice-related issues for midwives.

The Australian College of Midwives Consumer Advisory Committee welcomes the opportunity to contribute to this review and believes that maintaining the status quo is no longer in the interests of childbearing women in Australia and creates health system risks and sub-optimal protection of the public. We propose that the best option would be the establishment of a Midwifery Board – the Australian Midwifery Board.