To whom it may concern,

I would like to submit to your enquiry into the governance of health professionals.

I would like to submit that the Nursing and Midwifery Board of Australia (NMBA) be changed from a single entity governing midwives and nurses to two distinct boards, one for midwives and one for nurses. A Midwifery Board would be the 3rd largest board of registrants and would constitute an adequate workload given the wide variety of midwifery practice.

Midwifery and nursing are two distinct professions. There are more and more midwives who do not have registration or qualifications as nurses. The NMBA is dominated by nursing expertise and this nursing expertise does not carry over into midwifery expertise. This is problematic because nurses do not have a complete understanding of midwifery practice.

When the board investigates complaints against midwives there may not be midwives with contemporary midwifery knowledge investigating the complaints. The midwife may not be judged by her peers but by nurses who have no understanding of midwifery practice as a discipline with separate paradigms to nursing.

Midwives in private practice and midwives who practice homebirth are particularly disadvantaged. A Midwives Board should include midwives with recent practice, understanding and experience, of the challenges and practicalities of homebirth. These challenges and practicalities are not understood by nurses. A midwife deserves to be, and legally should be, judged by her peers not by another profession with its own set of ethics and guidelines.

There have been many vexatious claims made about homebirth midwives. These claims have been investigated by people other than midwives with current knowledge. Implementing a Midwifery Board separate from Nursing would be cost effective, economical and would ultimately protect the public as midwives and the midwives complaints would be judged by their peers who have an understanding of independent homebirth midwifery practice.

In order for midwifery to flourish as a distinct profession the removal from the NMBA with its nursing focus, is needed.

Elizabeth Murphy