Separate Midwifery Board Needed

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I write this submission requesting the formation of a separate Midwifery Board within the AHPRA organisation.

I believe this matter to be of great importance and take interest in it as a student midwife, a future practitioner and perhaps most importantly as a consumer and mother who has employed the services of private midwives.

In order to ensure the practice of midwifery is able to be carried out effectively and safely for both midwives and the women they serve it is imperative that any regulatory board be made up of persons with a detailed working knowledge of all aspects of the profession.
These persons would ideally be currently practicing or have extensive previous experience and be familiar with all models of practice including Independent and Homebirth Midwifery. Alternatively they would be consumers with key interests in the delivery of midwifery care i.e. women using the services of midwives.

The current approach of grouping midwifery and nursing together does not acknowledge the significant difference between these two separate professions and creates risk of misunderstanding when it comes to making judgments about an individuals practice. In order to be able to effectively evaluate another's practice it is vital that the assessor has personal experience and first hand knowledge in dealing with similar scenarios in order to make informed, fair and reasonable judgments. This is especially significant in the cases of Homebirth Midwifery and Independent Midwifery Practice as there is still very limited understanding of these unique roles outside those who already work in these fields. The ability to make quality assessments regarding the care provided by a practitioner is essential to women being able access the full range of maternity care safely and for midwives to be able to work to the full scope of their practice. With due respect I propose that the current NMBA lacks in this capacity as privately practicing and homebirth midwives are grossly underrepresented.

At the risk of making a very crude comparison, if you want the quality of a brick wall assessed you do not ask a carpenter, you ask a brick layer. Both professions could build you a wall, but when it comes to a specific technique it makes sense to ask the experts in the precise method you are dealing with, the same can be said for nursing and midwifery.

I believe that the implementation of a separate Midwifery Board would be a cost effective and economical path to serving the needs of the health professions and protecting the public interest as midwives would then be judged by their peers who have the greater knowledge and understanding of the full scope and complexities of midwifery practices.

Thank you for your attention to this important topic.

Best Regards

Robin Stabler