

# LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Australian midwifery regulation in the Northern Territory

30 January 2002

Dear Editor

The article on Australian midwifery regulation by Pat Brodie and Lesley Barclay (AHR, vol 24 no 4 2001) was brought to the attention of the Nursing Board of the Northern Territory. Members of the Board were alarmed by a number of factual inaccuracies reported in the article and the fact that this article was able to be accepted for publication with so many inaccuracies.

## Legislation

A new nursing act was enacted in the Northern Territory in October 1999. Surprisingly, the article in the Australian Health Review refers to the old nursing legislation (*Nurses Act 1984*). This legislation was repealed when the new act was passed.

## Australian College of Midwifery Incorporated (ACMI) competency standards

The Nursing Board of the Northern Territory endorsed and adopted the Australian College of Midwives Competency Standards for Midwives in 1998, making it one of the first nurse regulatory authorities to do so. The article stated that only three nurse regulatory authorities had in fact adopted the competency standards. This is clearly incorrect.

Following the adoption of the competency standards they have been used to form the basis for the development of midwifery programs in the Northern Territory. The competency standards are also used when midwives seek to re-enter the profession after a period of non-registration. The midwife must be assessed as competent against the competency standards prior to the Board issuing a practising certificate.

Also since the introduction of the *Nursing Act 1999*, all midwives in the Northern Territory have been required to complete a self-declaration of their competence to practise midwifery and to declare that they practise in accordance with the ACMI competency standards prior to being issued with a practising certificate. Again the article incorrectly states that a self-declaration of competence is only required in Tasmania and Queensland.

Members of the Board are most concerned that at no time did the authors contact a member of the Board or the Board's professional staff seeking clarification on any matters in relation to the legislation, the competency standards or declarations of competency. A simple phone call would have provided accurate information. The article, as published, presents grossly inaccurate information, refers to non-existent legislation and certainly does not present a true picture of contemporary midwifery regulation in the Northern Territory.

Yours sincerely

Sandra Smiles

Chair, Nursing Board of the Northern Territory

## Reference

Brodie O & Barclay L 2001, Contemporary issues in Australian midwifery regulation, *Australian Health Review*, vol 24 no 4, pp103-18.