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Briefing Paper
Australian Health Workforce Ministerial Council

17 February 2011

Agenda Item No.: 4

HOME BIRTH POLICY FOR INDEPENDENT PRACTISING MIDWIVES

Outcome sought

The Health Policy Priorities Principal Committee (HPPPC) was asked to advise on a timeline for completing standards for homebirth services to address issues concerning PPMs following SA concerns.

HPPPC is recommending that the Australian College of Midwives (ACM) develop a Position Statement for all homebirths for presentation to AHMAC in June 2011. Once there has been agreement on the Position Statement it will be considered for adoption by the NMBA.

Sponsoring Jurisdiction: South Australia

The NMBA has confirmed that it has endorsed the Safety and Quality Framework for Privately Practising Midwives (the Framework).

Key Risks

- SA is concerned there are some PPMs not practising safely. This is in the context of at least one high profile case of a death in SA which is currently progressing through the courts. As a result SA is seeking to strengthen the current monitoring arrangements for PPMs.
- There is an overlap between these issues and the current PII exemption arrangements under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme. Thus, while this is a paper for noting, it may draw discussions from Ministers of any concerns they may have about the current exemptions arrangements.

Speaking Points

- **It is important that the development of essential clinical parameters for privately practicing midwives is driven by the relevant professional association as is recommended by the HPPPC.**
- **ACM is the appropriate professional body to develop and present the Position Statement on home birthing to AHMAC at the June 2011 meeting.**

Background

The current policy setting for home birthing services by PPMs relies on registration requirements which provide the two year exemption from holding professional indemnity insurance (PII) cover during the intrapartum period. This exemption ends on 30 June 2012.

This agreement for PII exemption was subject to certain conditions including that PPMs would adhere to the Safety and Quality Framework endorsed by the NMBA and that PPMs would report all home births according to the requirements of their jurisdictions.

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An agenda paper was put forward by South Australia to AHMAC on 3 February 2011 requesting that the NMBA be directed to develop a separate policy for PPMs. This was referred to the HPPPC on 9 February 2011 which is now recommending that the ACM develop a Position Statement for presentation at the AHMAC meeting in June 2011 and that this agreed Statement be adopted by the NMBA to guide practice.

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