

Members of the Joyous Birth communities nationally wish to register the strongest possible objections to the curtailment of independent midwives' practices by a cynical and unethical reporting process.

Midwives who are reported are facing a presumption of guilt which would never be placed on another health practitioner. Parity of reporting with those processes involved in the reporting of obstetricians would be an obvious and logical way to prevent the current iniquitous system which is obviously designed to remove women's access to home-based midwifery.

While the government and some lobby groups have continually insisted that the recent changes to legislation have been about expanding the possibilities in maternity care for Australian women, it is crystal clear that the real intention is to remove the right of women to bodily autonomy and the careprovider, and model of care, of their choosing.

Does the government really intend to override the natural rights of women to birth where and with whom they desire? It is not too late to alter legislation which removes the rights of women and midwives to freely birth and work as they choose.

The government's own international obligations, including a signature to the Beijing Declaration, require that this push to prevent midwives from working, to the detriment of birthing women and our families, be stopped immediately.

Although the requests of women affected by this legislation have thus far been ignored by legislators, we ask again that our needs and our voices be held paramount in this decision making process as we ought to have been from the beginning.

Homebirth is a human right.

Janet Fraser

National Convenor, Joyous Birth, Australian homebirth network.

On behalf of 2,000 members.