

To whom it may concern,

It is with sadness and disbelief that I find myself urged to write regarding the Maternity Services Review and more recent Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, which states that not only will there be no Medicare benefits for Homebirth services, but also no professional indemnity insurance for private/independent midwives, effectively outlawing homebirth in this country.

I personally regard this as a slap in the face for all women, but especially myself and others who choose to homebirth. These changes will be responsible for taking the right to choose homebirth as a proven safe option for women in this country away from all women. It has been clearly indicated that because I am part of a minority who choose this model of care, that what I want for myself and my children does not matter, and if I do choose this in the future it would be a criminal act. Also private/independent midwives as a minority will essentially have no option but to abandon their practice, no-one has the right to force us to do this. You will be responsible for eliminating choice for women. I can see that women birthing in hospital will have more choice such as being able to choose their own midwife, but essentially anything attached to a hospital even the Community Midwifery Programs which offer homebirth, are subject to so many rules and regulations, it is simply not the same thing as homebirth with an independent Midwife. Giving Obstetricians (surgeons) total power over birthing women is unacceptable. If I wanted to birth under the direction of a hospital and Obstetricians rules and policies, I would birth in hospital. I am getting the idea that homebirth may well be attached to hospitals in some way, however, you need to understand that the majority of women who homebirth, want the care of an independant midwife, not a care provider who is subject to restrictive guidelines, which are not based on evidence nor safety at all. For example VBAC (vaginal birth after caesarean) would be considered "high risk". Let's examine this, the risk of a woman's uterus rupturing is less than 1% and even so there are usually signs of this which would indicate a need for medical aid. The risk of miscarrying after a routine amniocentesis is 1-2%, yet this medical diagnostic tool is recommended as a safe and necessary tool. VBAC carries less risk than amniocentesis yet is classed as high risk, not logical at all. Midwives are the experts in normal, low risk birth, they should have the power and autonomy to be the primary care providers for women and not be working under the direction of an Obstetrician, unless in very rare genuine high risk pregnancy and birth. Women who choose elective caesareans with no good reason, medical or otherwise are not forced to birth vaginally, even though the research emphatically states that vaginal birth is safest and best for both mother and child, and caesarean (particularly elective) comes with many risks. I believe you will find in New Zealand women aren't even allowed ro choose elective caesarean, unless it's medically indicated, how sensible, can we have some of this sense in Australia, please? The Obstetric model of care carries not only the highest cost, but comes with such high intervention and surgery rates with no improvement in outcomes, and this is where

our system is heading to allow these changes to occur. Even if homebirth is available attached to a hospital, it may as well not be available, I know many women who have used the Community Midwifery Programmes and end up using an Independent Midwife for following births due to dissatisfaction with so many restrictive, hospital based rules.

The future is looking very bleak for women I personally know who want to homebirth in the future, as well as for my own children, what choices will they have? I am fortunate that these changes probably won't directly effect me, but still I am not willing to stand by and allow such injustice and inequality to occur in my own country.

You are essentially leaving women forced to give birth in hospital, with no good reason, or birthing under the rules and policies of a hospital. Homebirth is safe, cost effective and carries very low intervention rates. To compare hospital birth with homebirth with an independent midwife is like comparing two different worlds, once you know the difference there is no going back. Women will now be forced to go it alone, without a midwife, to avoid being forced to birth in hospital, are you willing to bear the brunt of this, and any negative impact of this? No woman should be forced into this situation, and I am appalled that you are allowing it as a woman and mother. The women's rights movement just took 100 steps backwards.

I would like to know when you are going to listen to me and the other women who homebirth, the midwives who attend homebirths, we are small in number but mighty in voice. You have the power to make some real valuable change in maternity care, will you listen to me, or be controlled by the medical powers that be? Women have the right to be in control of their bodies and their choices, no-one else has this right, not you, not anyone. To take away the right of independent midwives ability to practice and womens ability to birth at home with one, is totally unacceptable, and removes a basic human right. You should be ashamed if you allow these changes to occur.

Regards,

Nicole Tricarico