

To the Senate Enquiry Inquiry into Health Legislation Amendment  
(Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 and two related Bills

When I was 21 I birthed my baby at home with professional midwifery care and it changed my life. I went on to birth two other babies with the safety and reassurance of midwifery care. Therefore it is distressing not to hear that homebirth with a Privately Employed Midwife could become illegal in Australia under the legislation before parliament.

When the changes were announce it was with great fan fare that women's choices would be expanded and supported more actively by the government but this legislation in fact is taking away my choice and that choice for future generations.

It has been said that homebirths with privately employed midwives is a minority choice and therefore is not a priority of this government. Since when were minority groups discriminated against in Australia? I thought this was a county committed to freedom of choice and women's rights.

Please do not erode choice for women but enshrine every choice being available for every woman.

I am now a midwife and attend homebirths. I am frightened for women who will not choose to go to hospital that they will have no choice but to birth without a qualified practitioner present. The implications of this are huge. Does this government want to be responsible for an increase of births without professional midwifery support therefore increasing risks to both mother and baby?

The changes were also supposed to help with improving co-operative care between midwives and doctors but this act marginalises midwives in private practice. Instead of assisting in improving maternity services for women it may send homebirths underground making women and birth attendants fearful and thus delaying access to appropriate medial assistance.

Currently I have good back up at my tertiary hospital and my clients are confident of receiving the best possible care when we require transfer to hospital.

We need to work towards quality access to all models of maternity care and cooperative respectful collegial relationships between midwives and doctors. Marginalizing minority groups will not facilitate this.

I believe that we are at a turning point in maternity services. If this government could have the commitment to women's choice that the New Zealand Government had we could have a model of care that gives women real control of their choice of caregiver and place of birth instead of maintaining patriarchal models that attempt to control and limit women's choice

Yours truly,

Sally Westbury