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REGARDING THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION FOR CHANGES TO MATERNITY CARE IN AUSTRALIA -

IMPACT STATEMENT PROVIDED BY:

Mara Macs

MY STATEMENT IS AS FOLLOWS:

I have 3 children.

My first baby was born within 45 min of waters breaking and first signs of labour. We were living 45min from the Box Hill hospital and I coincidentally happened to be visiting the hospital that day.

My second child was born at home within 1/2 an hour of waters breaking and first contractions. My husband ran in from work when her head had already been birthed. I didn't have time to go anywhere!

We moved to the country, and I was concerned for the ~~the~~ birth of my third child because the others had been so fast. We lived 15min from the local country hosp. and 40min from Ballarat Base hosp. My local doctor, who has been great for illnesses and accidents, did not relieve my anxieties saying I would not be able to call him - but would need to call the ambulance when I go into labour.

I did not want to birth in an ambulance, in our car or on the side of the road. Without his support I began preparing myself for a possible birth at home if it seemed labour was going to be quick again. I organized support from friends with no midwifery experience.

SIGNED:

DATE: I was absolutely relieved to find ^{that} a group of midwives included homebirthing in their practice from Ballarat. I felt very secure and safe to know they could support the birth. Knowing my previous births were

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quick they stored equipment in our house so they could get themselves to our home on short notice. ②

They were excellent, professional, thorough, careful, observant, experienced, supportive and caring midwives. They were backed by a supportable obstetrician at a hospital in Ballarat, where we were to go if there were any complications.

All my births were problem free although quick. The best experiences were at home.

Even though they were a result of necessity because of my fast births, if I were to birth again I would chose a homebirth.

At home I felt comfortable and safe. My experience with the midwives at home were of working together. I think because I was feeling safe and comfortable I had a greater respect for the experience and professionalism of the midwives.

At hospital, I apart from never meeting the midwives, and by chance getting one that was bossy, the foreign environment made me feel like a visitor intruding on someone else's workspace. I couldn't wait to get home.

There is no place like home for me and many other people. I very much want homebirth to be an option for Australian woman, for my own daughters and sons partners if it is what the chose, for homebirth to be an option into the future.

And for the professional work of midwives to be supported when they attend home births. I can't see why you don't think their work undermines safety. It wasn't my

The Honourable Nicola Roxon, MP
Minister for Health and Ageing
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2601

From: *Mara Macs*

Dear Minister,

I am writing as a concerned citizen regarding the proposed changes to maternity services, legislation for which is about to be presented to Parliament. While I understand that the new legislation seeks to provide benefits for midwives in clinical settings, which will certainly enhance maternity care overall, there is no provision in the new arrangements for independent midwives who care for women at home. In addition, Commonwealth-supported insurance cover for midwives will not extend to independent midwives, which will make them unable to register with the new National Registration Scheme for Health Care Providers. Without registration, independent midwives will be unable to practice, and homebirth will be effectively outlawed.

For a number of reasons, this situation is unacceptable. All women should have the right to decide where and with whom they birth their babies. Homebirth may be a minority choice in this country, but it is still a valid choice. Many women will continue to choose homebirth, often after hospital trauma. This legislation will merely serve to push homebirth 'underground', with all the attendant risks and anxieties that this produces.

The Australian College of Midwives has released a statement in which it expressed its concern that the new legislation will precipitate "a rise in unattended homebirths [which] will only get worse unless the government extends its proposed indemnity scheme to ensure healthy low risk women can continue to choose homebirth with competent networked midwives". If women are denied access to a high standard of midwifery care in their preferred venue, then there will certainly be a greater number of cases of women and babies placed at terrible risk through unattended homebirth.

Homebirth is a safe, evidence-based model of maternity care – it makes no sense to exclude it from the current legislation. Independent midwives provide an outstanding level of quality professional care, which has informed mainstream maternity practice for years. This legislation restricts midwifery practice – against scientific evidence, against the principles of women's informed choice, and against the safety of determined homebirthing women.

Please, in your position as Minister and author of this legislation, seek to amend the legislation before it is written into law. Act bravely by seeking to ensure that homebirth is a safe, indemnified and legal option for women in this country.

Yours sincerely

Mara Macs

