

REGARDING THE PROPOSED LEGISLATION FOR CHANGES TO MATERNITY CARE IN AUSTRALIA -**IMPACT STATEMENT PROVIDED BY: Catherine Ryan, *****MY STATEMENT IS AS FOLLOWS:**

I live in Regional Australia, and my closest local hospital is unable to accept me for the upcoming birth of my child. My options are to travel over an hour at top speeds (in winter, probably nighttime, country roads) for hospital care, or to birth at home. From these practical considerations, it is crucial that families in my situation have this option to birth safely at home with a professional registered midwife. And from the important philosophical consideration of allowing people freedom of choice, it is crucial that ALL families also have this option safely and legally available to them.

Other reasons that support my decision to birth at home, and why I believe this option should not, as a human rights issue, be legally denied to Australian families are: -

- Childbirth is NOT an illness or accidental trauma. It is a completely natural process which, in the vast majority of cases does not require any external medical intervention. It is reasonably going to be a better experience in a place where a woman is safe and secure, surrounded by trusted colleagues. For many women, myself included, a hospital is a site of trauma and fear, not comfort, and home is therefore the best place for the family to be.
- For uncomplicated pregnancies/births, studies (UK and Netherlands) clearly show that there is no difference in numbers of healthy/unhealthy outcomes between home and hospital births.
- For those who choose to have access to greater immediate levels of medical interventions, our hospital system rightly exists to provide this care. And it rightly exists as back up care to planned home births, should it be required. But it should not be the only option for families who want to honour the Natural, rather than a Medicalised model of birth.
- My experience in investigating the two large regional hospitals available to me for my birth clearly lead me to believe, that despite what my wishes might be during the birth, hospital protocols (determined by large population scale risk analysis rather than my individual indicators and situation) would be the determining factor for actions. I believe we have the right to care in any situation where it is the person's experience which determines action and any medical interventions.
- Australia lags behind many other developed countries in the rate of safe, comfortable homebirth, especially New Zealand, the Netherlands and the UK. Our overmedicalisation of birth places undue and unnecessary strain on our hospital resources.

Finally, I simply don't understand the selfishness of those who are lobbying to have this well-proven model of maternity care denied to Australians. Surely if they choose to birth in hospital, that's their right and their choice. But it is wrong, and I believe a violation of our rights, for these people to insist and impose their preferences on others. Especially when this imposition is denying a family what may be the best and safest option for them.

SIGNED:**DATE:**

17.07.09