

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

### IMPACT STATEMENT PROVIDED BY:

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#### MY STATEMENT IS AS FOLLOWS:

I am horrified at the implications of the Maternity Services Review for independent midwives and women who wish to birth at home.

As a mother of two and a member of a community who strongly supports homebirth I have seen countless examples of women and families who have benefited from the caring support of an independent midwife and a home birth.

My own experience is that of a difficult first pregnancy and slow recovery and a feeling of isolation from a support system. Whilst the birthing centre provided a great service, it was at a distance - in many ways. I had to travel to it, I often did not know who I would be seeing and received inconsistent care adding to fear and uncertainty that many first time mothers feel.

Comparatively I chose a home birth for my second pregnancy and birth and enjoyed a level of care that went above and beyond my expectations. The level of professionalism was unquestionable, relationships between the independent midwife and other medical practitioners (as needed) worked remarkably well and connections with the wider community were supported as an essential part of a healthy pregnancy and birthing.

I cannot express adequately the difference between the two experiences and the joy and connections brought to my life that continue to sustain me and my family, five years on. My second pregnancy was not without its difficulties as I struggled with severe back problems and resulting incapacities, however no problem seemed too large for my midwife as she provided advice and support at any time of day or night. One cannot overstate the benefits of the level of care I received.

The most significant factor in choosing a home birth for my second but not first was MONEY. By the time I had gone through one birth in the hospital system, I realised money did not matter. Still being a low income family we chose to spend our 'baby bonus' on excellent quality care with our midwife - received no other support from the public purse and we cost the Commonwealth almost nothing.

Whilst home birthing families may still constitute a minority (in this country) with adequate funding and evidence based research that would demonstrate the health benefits - not to mention the saving to the public purse - I believe more women would make this choice, as they do in other more progressive countries, such as The Netherlands, or United Kingdom.

Denying midwives registration based on their exclusion from Public Liability insurance is ludicrous. It may be plausible if they could not obtain insurance due to risk. However, this is not the case; it is because they are too few to be profitable for an industry based on profit. Since when did become a crime, or be refused support because one is in a minority?

If the proposed changes go ahead it will effectively ban independent midwifery and deny Australian women access to the highest level of care available during pregnancy and child birth. This situation is not tolerable and must be reviewed.

Independent midwives are to be applauded and supported for their contribution to reducing the alarming rate of intervention that occurs in Australia as it related to birth.

Australian women must continue to have the choice to birth where they feel safest. Effectively banning homebirth with an independent midwife will not make birthing safer, it will simply turn hardworking dedicated professionals into criminals - hopefully not to be burned at the stake!