

I am writing to you in relation to the new proposals made to change the Health Legislation (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009. I have become aware that birth choices may be limited within Australia, by the suggested amendments. This is particularly true for women who choose to birth outside the hospital setting with the medical assistance of private midwives.

Registration of all health professionals under a National registration is a good thing for Australia. However, should a health professional be unable to register they will be forced out of practice. The requirement for registration, is to carry \$10,000,000 professional indemnity insurance and I understand there is no insurance body in Australia that offers insurance to independent midwives.

The hiring of independent midwives (who are not registered) to assist in a homebirth could indeed become illegal. Should the midwives assist women, that they may face prosecution.

There are a number of hospital policies that woman do not feel comfortable with. In addition, some hospitals have a caesarean-section rate of 30% of all women. This conflicts with the World Health Organisation standards that recommend 10% as an acceptable rate. Due to these factor I have known woman who have looked for an alternative to birthing within a hospital.

I am not aware of any midwife directed birth-centres (that usually have a low-intervention approach) outside Melbourne within Victoria. This then leads rural woman and city woman, who have not been able to be booked into midwife directed birth-centres, to consider homebirth should they choose to not attend a hospital.

Therefore, the likelihood of women opting to have a home birth without assistance is likely to increase should the new proposals for Health Legislation (Midwives and Nurse Practitioners) Bill 2009 be implemented. This could cause higher risk for the mother and baby.

Removing health services is a backwards step for Australia. In many other developed countries, such as Canada, UK, New Zealand and The Netherlands midwife directed treatment is upheld, even promoted and subsidised by the government. It has two strong benefits that should not be overlooked, relieving the overcrowded hospitals and established health systems and excellent outcomes for women and babies in terms of health and satisfaction with the birth experience (For more information about this please see: <http://www.homebirthservices.com.au/safety>)

Presently, my daughter wants to have a home birth. I would like to see this done with optimal care with either independent midwives or a medical doctor in attendance. I would not like to see this occur in an unassisted way.

I want to support the choices of all women. For those who choose hospital births and those who do not. I write so that their choices might be protected. I write on behalf of our daughters and granddaughters to come. Just as pain-relief and elective-caesareans are valid choices, so is the choice of where to birth.

I believe women need to feel supported in their birth choices, and, more importantly, be allowed the right to choose.

Please will you help the situation through providing a temporary Federal insurance for independent midwives? Or include a clause that allows midwives to operate without insurance until some is made available? It means a lot to me that independent midwives are not lost to Australia.

Yours Sincerely,
Lynda Brown